



Australian Government

Australian Research Council

Assessor Handbook

ARC Centres of Excellence commencing in 2023
(CE23)

A guide for both **General** and **Detailed** Assessors on the selection process for assessing CE23 Expression of Interest applications (EI23) and full applications (CE23)

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Key Dates and Notes – ARC Centres of Excellence commencing in 2023

Detailed Assessors – Expressions of Interest applications (EI23)

Task	Expression of Interest Dates (EI23)	Detail
Assessment Period	16 August 2021 – 15 September 2021	<p>Check the application details for any Conflict of Interest as soon as the Research Management System (RMS) email containing assignments has been received; then accept or reject assignments in RMS (to allow for timely re-assignment of the rejected assignments).</p> <p>Assess each application assigned using an A-E rating scale and give a written report against two of the assessment criteria.</p> <p>Submit assessments to the ARC on or before this deadline date.</p>

Detailed Assessors – Full applications (CE23)

Task	Full application Dates (CE23)	Detail
Assessment Period	5 April 2022 – 17 May 2022	As above except assess each application assigned using an A-E rating scale and give a written report against all five of the assessment criteria.

General Assessors – Expressions of Interest applications (EI23)

Task	Expression of Interest Dates (EI23)	Detail
SAC Induction teleconference	Week commencing 2 August 2021	Teleconference with SAC members to provide information on the Centres process overall and on the EOI assessment process specifically.
Assessment Period	16 August 2021 – 20 October 2021	Carriages 1, 2, 3 and 4 Assess EOI applications independently to determine preliminary and provisional rating and ranking.
Rejoinder	23 September 2021 – 7 October 2021	Applicants to read comments from Detailed Assessors and submit a Rejoinder.
Review and finalise assessments	8 October 2021 – 20 October 2021	Carriages 1, 2, 3 and 4 Review Detailed assessments and Rejoinders. Revise and finalise ratings and ranks in RMS.
SAC Meeting for shortlisting EOIs	17 November 2021 – 19 November 2021	Virtual meeting. SAC members discuss EOIs and shortlist for full application.

General Assessors – Full applications (CE23)

Task	Full Application Dates (CE23)	Detail
Assessment Period	5 April 2022 – 23 June 2022	As above
Rejoinder	25 May 2022 – 9 June 2022	As above
Review and finalise assessments	10 June 2022 – 23 June 2021	As above
Interview preparation	30 June 2022 – Friday 29 July 2022	SAC members read full applications and note specific issues for discussion at teleconference and questions for interviews.
Pre-SAC meeting teleconference	12 July 2022	Teleconference with SAC members to discuss interview process, potential interview questions, and feedback. SAC members may also discuss full applications for interview shortlisting.
SAC Meeting – Interviews and Selection Meeting	1 August 2022 – 5 August 2022	Interviews and Selection Meeting held in Canberra (TBC). SAC members conduct interviews and discuss full applications and interviews to provide funding recommendations and feedback.

1. Overview

This Handbook provides information, instructions, and advice for both **Detailed** and **General** Assessors on the assessment process for the ARC Centres of Excellence scheme, under the Australian Research Council's (ARC) [National Competitive Grants Program \(NCGP\)](#). The NCGP supports the highest-quality fundamental and applied research and research training under two funding programs, [Discovery](#) and [Linkage](#). The ARC Centres of Excellence scheme sits within the Linkage Program.

The ARC Centres of Excellence are prestigious focal points of expertise through which high-quality researchers collaboratively maintain and develop Australia's international standing in research areas of national priority.

ARC Centres of Excellence facilitate significant collaboration which allows the complementary resources of universities, publicly funded research organisations, other research bodies, governments, and businesses to be concentrated to support outstanding research in all fields, except Medical Research.

The Objectives and Assessment Criteria for the ARC Centres of Excellence covered in this Handbook are listed in Appendices 1 and 2. They are also available in the Linkage Program *Grant Guidelines – ARC Centres of Excellence commencing in 2023* located on [GrantConnect](#).

Applications for funding of ARC Centres of Excellence are invited every three years. It is a two-part application process and three-part assessment process. Applicants submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) application and if successful, an invitation is made to complete a full application. The assessment process comprises the assessment and shortlisting of EOI applications, followed by the assessment of full applications. Applicant teams are then invited to attend an interview with the ARC SAC.

The role of all Assessors in this scheme is to contribute to both the high-quality assessment of EOI applications and full applications.

This Handbook does not cover the assessment of applications under any other ARC funding scheme.

The [Research Management System \(RMS\)](#) is the web-based computer system available for the preparation and submission of research applications, assessments and rejoinders for the ARC. The **RMS Handbook for Assessors**, a guide for **General** and **Detailed** Assessors to navigate the RMS assignment and assessment process is available on the [ARC website](#).

Detailed and General Assessors have different roles in the peer review process. Key aspects of their roles are outlined in [Sections 2.2](#) and [Section 2.3](#) respectively.

2. The Assessment Process

Peer review plays a critical role in the assessment of ARC Centres of Excellence (Centres) EOI applications and full applications. Applications are assessed by Detailed Assessors and a Selection Advisory Committee (SAC) comprised of General Assessors.

Detailed Assessors are assigned applications to review for their specific expertise in a field of research. Detailed Assessors provide detailed assessments with scores and written comments against assessment criteria for each application.

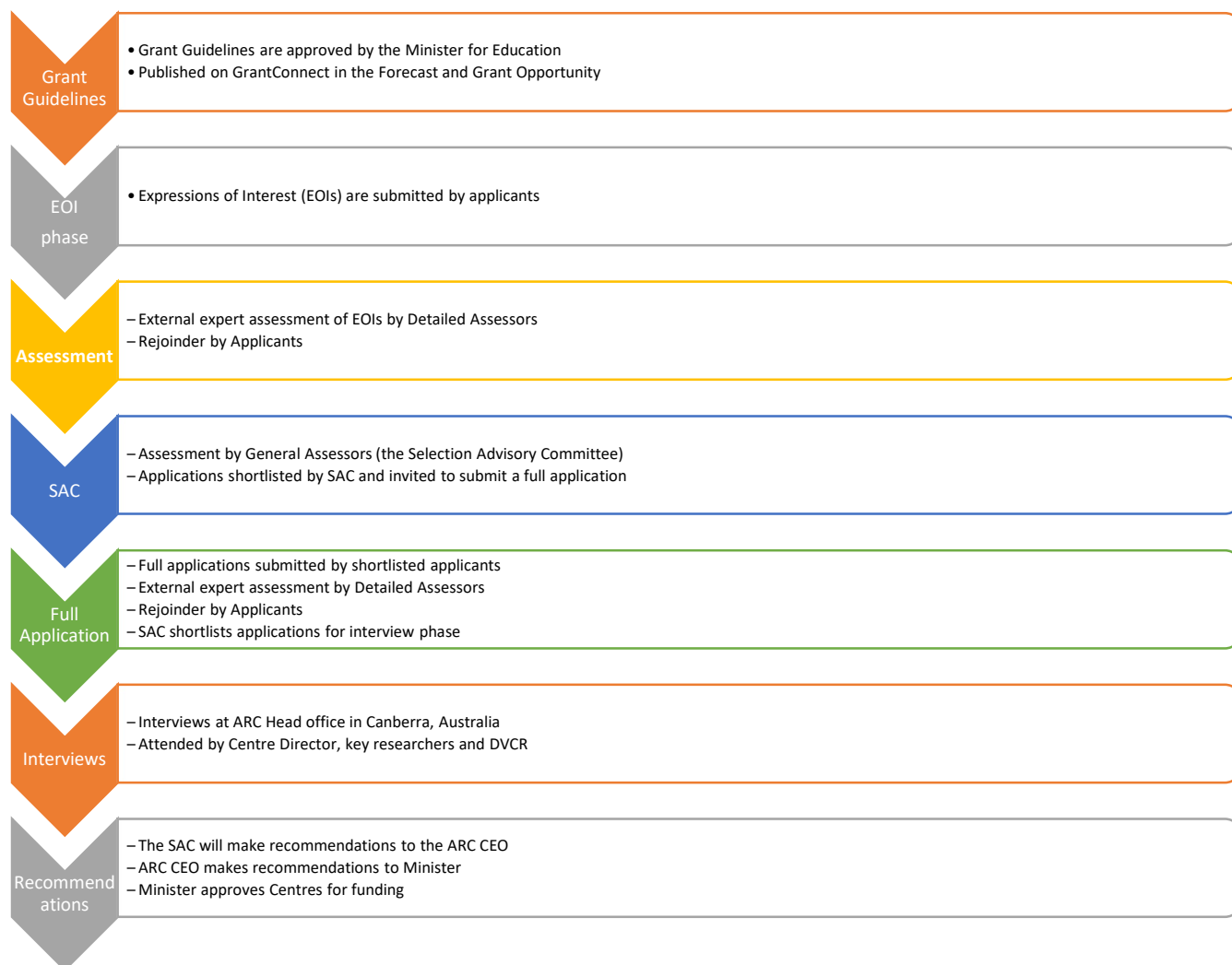
General Assessors utilise knowledge of their disciplinary areas and a broad understanding of intellectual and methodological issues, good research planning, and experience in assessing and/or managing major research entities. Each application has a lead General Assessor (known as Carriage 1) who is typically close to the academic field of the application, and 3 General Assessors (known as Other Carriages) with supplementary expertise.

Experts from each group assess applications against the assessment criteria and contribute to the process of scoring and ranking research applications. These reviews assist in the evaluation, selection, shortlisting, recommendation, and funding of successful applications. The CEO of the ARC then makes recommendations to the Minister for Education and Youth who decides which Centres will be allocated funding under the NCGP.

The peer review process for Centres is based on the assessments completed by Detailed Assessors and the Selection Advisory Committee (SAC) as General Assessors who assess, moderate and compare the applications using an A-E scale and rank within that scale to facilitate the overall assessment process.

All Detailed Assessors are typically assigned a small number of applications to assess and rank in accordance with their individual expertise. General Assessors will be assigned a larger number of applications, a number of which may be well outside their area of research expertise.

A diagram of the assessment process is below.



2.1 Assessment for ARC Centres of Excellence

ARC Centres of Excellence - Expression of Interest applications (EOIs)

Assessment process

- EOI applications are assessed by both Detailed Assessors and General Assessors.
- Detailed Assessors are assigned one or more EOI applications, while General Assessors are assigned a number of EOI applications as either Carriage 1 or Other Carriage. ARC Executive Directors assign both Detailed Assessors and General Assessors.
- Detailed and General Assessors log in to RMS to check their assignments for any Conflicts of Interest and accept or reject the assignment (see Sections 2.2, 2.3 and 4.1 of this Handbook for more information).
- Detailed Assessors provide a written report and an A-E rating against the scheme assessment criteria (see Appendices 1 and 2 of this Handbook). If more than one EOI application has been assessed, the Detailed Assessor may be prompted to provide a unique rank within the list of assessed EOI applications. Completed assessments must be submitted to the ARC through RMS by **15 September 2021**. The text from the assessments completed by Detailed Assessors is anonymously provided to the applicant for Rejoinder. Detailed Assessors have no further tasks after this point.
- General Assessors assess the EOI applications to which they have been assigned as a Carriage (this may be as Carriage 1, 2, 3 or 4) and provide a rating only against each of the scheme assessment criteria using the rating scale provided in Section 2.4 of this Handbook. This should be a preliminary assessment only and General Assessors **should not submit their initial assessments in RMS at this stage**.

Review

- When the rejoinder period closes, the General Assessors are able to review their initial assessment in the context of the assessment comments and ratings provided by the Detailed Assessors and the Rejoinders provided by applicants (if any).

- Final ratings should be finalised in RMS using the rating scale provided in Section 2.4 of this Handbook. General Assessors are also prompted to provide each EOI application with a unique rank within their list of assigned EOI applications. This is useful to distinguish the ranking of EOI applications where a number of applications are equally ranked by RMS. Once General Assessors are comfortable with their own ratings/ranks for all assigned EOI applications, they submit their final assessments to the ARC by **20 October 2021**.

EOI Shortlisting Meeting

- General Assessors (the SAC) will attend a virtual meeting to discuss the EOI applications and shortlist EOI applications for an invitation to submit a full application. All Carriage members should consider each EOI application within their assigned list and be prepared to articulate reasons for shortlisting or not. Carriage members will be asked to comment on the strengths/weaknesses of the EOI applications on their assigned list.
- Prior to the meeting the ARC will also give General Assessors access to other EOI applications that they are not conflicted with. General Assessors should also form an opinion of the merit of all other EOI applications in addition to the EOI applications they have been assigned as Carriages. The ARC will provide additional guidance on the shortlisting process prior to the meeting and suggested feedback to be provided to unsuccessful EOI applications.

Following the shortlisting meeting, the ARC will advise applicants of the outcome of the EOI application shortlisting. EOI applications which have been shortlisted will be invited to submit a full application. Brief qualitative feedback on unsuccessful EOI applications will also be provided to applicants based on the SAC's comments.

ARC Centres of Excellence Full Application

The **Assessment** and **Review** stages for the full application assessment process are the same as for the EOI application assessment process.

- Completed assessments by Detailed Assessors for full applications must be submitted to the ARC through RMS by **17 May 2022**.
- Final assessments by General Assessors for full applications must be submitted to the ARC by **23 June 2022**.

Preparation for applicant interviews

- SAC members will meet via videoconference to prepare for the interview phase of the selection process. SAC members may need to discuss the merits of full applications which are to progress to the interview phase, as the SAC may choose to shortlist which full applications will proceed to interview. The ARC will provide further guidance on requirements for possible shortlisting and the overall interview process prior to the videoconference.

Interviews and Selection Meeting

- The interviews and selection meeting are held over 5 days. Over the initial 4 days, all SAC members will interview applicant representatives at the ARC. Please note: The ARC will monitor the COVID 19 situation in relation to domestic and international travel and will provide advice prior to the interviews and selection meeting scheduled for August 2022.
- Following the conclusion of interviews, on day 5 SAC members will meet to discuss the interviews and full applications. SAC members will be asked to consider each full application against the assessment criteria, taking into consideration information from the full application, assessments, rejoinder and the interviews. SAC members will then recommend which full applications are recommended for funding to the ARC. Budgets for recommended full applications are also discussed and recommended funding levels for each Centre are agreed by the SAC. The SAC will also discuss and provide detailed qualitative feedback for full applications not recommended for funding.

It is important to note that for reasons of fairness to applicants, the ARC cannot use your assessment if you do not follow the assessment procedures outlined in the following sections.

2.2 Detailed Assessors

RMS Profile

A Detailed Assessor's RMS profile plays an essential role in the assignment process as information contained in the profile assists with the matching of applications with appropriately skilled Detailed Assessors. It is important that Detailed Assessors ensure that their RMS profile is up to date and contains the following details:

- **Expertise text:** Please outline your expertise briefly. The following format is suggested "My major area of research expertise is in a, b, c. I also have experience in research q, r, s. I would also be able to assess in the areas of x, y, z. The research facilities and techniques I use are l, m, n."

- **Field of Research (FoR) Codes:** Please include between six and ten 6-digit FoR codes that reflect your key areas of expertise. You should include the 2008 FoR codes for the EOI applications and update them to the 2020 FoR codes for the full application.
- **Employment History:** Please ensure that your employment history is kept up to date, to enable your organisational conflicts of interests to be identified by RMS.
- **Personal Details:** Please ensure your personal details are up to date, including conflicts of interest and personal material interest declarations.

Note: If applicable - Obligated assessors (those who are participants on an ARC project currently receiving funding) are required to keep their RMS profile up to date and to undertake assessments as required in the relevant Commonwealth grant agreement for their project(s).

Assignment of Applications

For ARC Centres of Excellence, both EOI applications and full applications are assigned to Detailed Assessors following an initial invitation and using information from their RMS profile. Detailed Assessors are assigned in RMS by an ARC Executive Director.

Detailed Assessments

Detailed Assessors provide scores and written comments addressing the assessment criteria on each application and may be assigned a number of applications within their field of research or across a broader disciplinary area on the basis of their RMS profile expertise text and FoR codes. Detailed Assessors are asked to:

- Complete in-depth assessments of applications in RMS, providing scores and comments against scheme specific criteria (refer to Appendices 1 and 2 for the assessment criteria for the EOI application and the full application for ARC Centres of Excellence commencing in 2023)
- Identify the merits or otherwise of the application with respect to the assessment criteria
- Assess and score the application for each assessment criterion separately.

Detailed Assessors are asked to provide a minimum of 500 characters (approximately 75 words) per assessment criterion and a minimum of 3,500 characters (approximately 525 words) for the overall assessment.

Detailed Assessor comments are made available to Applicants anonymously once the Rejoinder process has been opened.

Detailed Assessors may receive applications to assess at any stage of the assessment process due to late COIs being declared by other assessors.

If a Detailed Assessor identifies a COI with an assigned application this **must** be declared to the ARC via email to ARC-Peer_Review@arc.gov.au and no further participation in the assessment process should take place for that application.

How to Ensure High Quality Detailed Assessments

Detailed Assessors can refer to the [ARC Peer Review webpage](#) for **examples** of good Detailed assessments.

Detailed Assessors are asked to provide high quality, constructive assessments with the following:

- **Objective** and professional comments.
- **Detailed** comments on the merits or otherwise of the application with respect to the assessment criteria (one or two sentences is not sufficient). Applications should present as a national research entity with a highly integrated Research Program. It should address the objectives of the ARC Centres of Excellence scheme and not be a network or loosely linked group of smaller projects.
- **Sufficient** information to allow applicants to provide a Rejoinder to comments about the application.
- **Comments that align closely with ratings**—for example, an ‘A’ rating should not be submitted if an application is assessed as being of limited merit against a criterion. Further, if a ‘D’ rating is given, then suitable constructive criticisms and comments justifying the rating are required. It is important to remember that applicants see only the comments and the SAC will see both comments and scores. It is essential that your scores and comments are fit for purpose and provide appropriate information for the person using them.
- **Comments that are fair, meaningful and balanced**, addressing only issues relevant to the application in terms of the assessment criteria. Comments should provide a sound, comprehensive account of, and justification for, views about the application, while respecting the care with which applications have been prepared.
- **Comments free** from platitudes, exaggeration and understatement.

- **Timely submission** via RMS as early as possible is appreciated, and by the ARC deadline is required.

Refer to the [ARC Peer Review webpage](#) for examples of good quality Detailed assessments. The webpage also provides links to two new supplementary guides, the Peer Review Guide and Disclosure of Interests and Management of Conflicts of Interest Guide, supporting implementation of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (the Code).

How to Avoid Inappropriate Assessments

Detailed Assessors **should not** use the following in their assessment comments, as this may render the assessment inappropriate:

- Excessive use of acronyms
- Generic comments used in multiple assessments
- Very brief assessment text
- Scores which do not align with assessment text
- Scores that are included within the assessment text
- Information that identifies researchers named on other applications
- Advice about their own identity, standing in, or understanding of, the research field in the application
- The outcome or status of relevant research not mentioned in the application
- Restatement or rephrasing of any part of the application
- Comments about the potential ineligibility of an application. All queries regarding eligibility should be sent to ARC-College@arc.gov.au from General Assessors OR ARC-Peer_Review@arc.gov.au from Detailed Assessors
- Comments comparing one application with another in this round
- Text that has been copied from a previous assessment
- Text that appears to be discriminatory, defamatory or distastefully irrelevant (such as gratuitous criticism of a researcher and/or Eligible Organisation).
- Assumptions of the impact of COVID-19 on the proposed research in the application

Under no circumstances should Detailed Assessors contact researchers and/or institutions about a submitted application or seek additional information from any sources. This includes following any hyperlinks that may have been included in the application. The inclusion of webpage addresses/URLs and hyperlinks is only permitted under certain circumstances such as publications that are only available online and letters of support. Webpage addresses/URLs and hyperlinks should not be used to circumvent page limits, nor should they provide information that is not contained in the application. All information relevant to the application must be contained within the application.

Treatment of Inappropriate Assessments

Inappropriate assessments compromise the integrity of the peer review process. To be fair to all applicants, the ARC will reject assessments with inappropriate or highly subjective comments from individual assessors about any aspect of the application. If the ARC considers an assessment to be inappropriate, the ARC may request that an Assessor amend the assessment or may remove the assessment from the process.

The ARC website also contains information for applicants advising how to request that the ARC review an assessment that contains inappropriate elements during the rejoinder period.

2.3 General Assessors

RMS Profile

It is important that General Assessors ensure that their RMS profile is up to date and contains the following details:

- **Expertise text:** Please outline your expertise briefly. The following format is suggested “My major area of research expertise is in a, b, c. I also have experience in research q, r, s. I would also be able to assess in the areas of x, y, z. The research facilities and techniques I use are l, m, n”.

- **Field of Research (FoR) Codes:** Please include between six and ten 6-digit FoR codes that reflect your key areas of expertise. You should include the 2008 FoR codes for the EOI applications and update them to the 2020 FoR codes for the full application
- **Employment History:** Please ensure that your employment history is kept up to date, to enable your organisational conflicts of interests to be identified by RMS.

This information will be used to match assessors with applications and should therefore represent the research expertise.

General Assessors are selected to form a SAC to oversee the peer review process. The General Assessors are chosen to ensure relevant expertise based on the requirements of the scheme. The SAC for ARC Centres of Excellence may include members who are eminent members of the wider national and international academic community and/or key industry groups. The ARC Centres of Excellence SAC is a single multi-disciplinary panel and are discipline experts who also have experience in assessing and/or managing large research entities.

Following the deadline for submission of applications (both EOI applications and full applications), Executive Directors at the ARC assign each application to General Assessors. The lead General Assessor (Carriage 1) is usually closely associated with the application's academic field and other General Assessor(s) (Other Carriage or Carriage 2, 3 or 4) have supplementary expertise. Carriage 1 has primary responsibility for the application, which will include speaking to the EOI application or full application, the relevant assessments and rejoinder and interview comments, as well as taking the lead in providing feedback at the shortlisting and selection meetings.

Detailed Assessors for the ARC Centres of Excellence scheme are assigned by an ARC Executive Director (see Section 2.2 above for more information on Detailed Assessors). Table 1 below provides an overview of the SAC format and assignment requirements for the ARC Centres of Excellence scheme.

The Selection Advisory Committee

Table 1: Overview of SAC format and assignment requirements for the ARC Centres of Excellence scheme

Scheme	SAC Detail	Assignment Detail
ARC Centres of Excellence	<p>The SAC is comprised of academic and industry experts (where required) and is a single, multi-disciplinary panel, with representation from the following disciplines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Biological Sciences and Biotechnology (BSB) - Engineering, Information and Computing Science (EIC) - Humanities and Creative Arts (HCA) - Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Earth Sciences (MPCE) - Social, Behavioural and Economic Sciences (SBE) 	<p>ARC Executive Director assigns 4 General Assessors</p> <p>ARC Executive Director assigns 4 Detailed Assessors and up to 4 Reserves</p>

General Assessment Process

All assessors must declare any Conflicts of Interest (COI) and reject the assignments on which they are conflicted as soon as possible. This will assist in the timely re-assignment of applications. See Section 4.1 for further information on COIs.

When assessing applications General Assessors must rely solely on the information provided within the application and should not seek additional information from any sources. This includes following any hyperlinks that may have been provided in the application. The inclusion of webpage addresses/URLs and hyperlinks is only permitted under certain circumstances such as publications that are only available online and letters of support. Webpage addresses/URLs and hyperlinks should not be used to circumvent page limits, nor should they provide information that is not contained in the application.

We suggest that General Assessors keep personal working notes as they do their assessments, to facilitate discussions at the EOI shortlisting meeting and the interviews/Selection Meeting. These personal working notes are your own record of your views on each application and must not be sent to the ARC or other SAC members.

Preliminary Assessment

Following the assignment process, while the Detailed Assessors are undertaking assessments, General Assessors independently read and assess all their assigned applications against the two relevant criteria, based on an [A to E Scoring Matrix](#). These assessment scores can be saved in RMS (but not submitted) or recorded by the General Assessor in their own working notes.

During the Rejoinder process, the comments from Detailed Assessors are provided anonymously to the applicant. The applicant then has an opportunity to provide a Rejoinder in RMS to address any issues raised by the Detailed Assessors.

After the Rejoinder process has closed, General Assessors review the Detailed Assessors' comments and scores and the applicants' Rejoinder text. Detailed assessments and Rejoinders inform General Assessors' scores and at this point General Assessors can review and if necessary, revise and save their preliminary scores.

General Assessors then ensure that their scores are entered in RMS (but not submitted) before the preliminary assessment due date determined by the ARC, enabling their co-Carriages to view the scores and write personal working notes to facilitate discussion at the EOI shortlisting meeting and the interviews/Selection Meeting.

You should not discuss your scores for applications with other Carriages until you have submitted your scores in RMS, and you should not allow their scores to influence yours. Unlike some other ARC schemes, we want you to make your assessment independently of other Carriages. It does not matter if there is discrepancy between the scores of various assessors. There will be opportunity for discussion on the EOI applications and full applications at the selection meetings.

Revising and Submitting Final Assessments

Once the General Assessor is comfortable with their preliminary scores, they can submit these scores in RMS.

When all final ratings are submitted, RMS produces a ranked list of all applications — see [Section 2.4](#) for more details. This list is used at the EOI shortlisting meeting to assist with the identification of applications that are of sufficient quality to be shortlisted. The ranking of EOI applications on this list is indicative only and the meeting processes for the ARC Centres of Excellence scheme allow the SAC to discuss and review all EOI applications.

The ranked list of full applications is also an indicative list only to facilitate discussions at the Selection Meeting, because recommendations will be made following the interview process. The final recommendations to fund or not is based on all aspects of the full application assessment process including interview performance—a poor interview from a highly ranked full application may lead to that application not being recommended for funding.

Inappropriate Assessments

If General Assessors are concerned about the appropriateness of any assessment text from Detailed Assessors, or identify a COI, then they **must** contact the ARC by sending an email to the ARC via ARC-College@arc.gov.au as soon as possible.

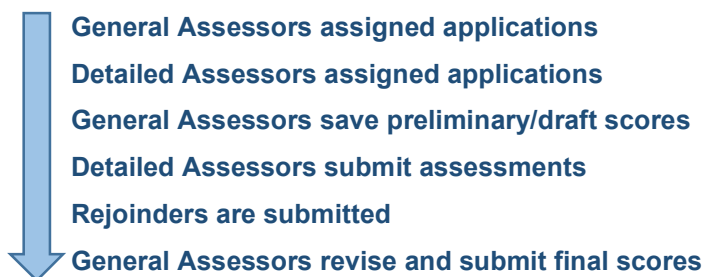
The ARC will investigate the concerns and decide whether an assessment should be amended or removed from the process. If inappropriate assessments are identified early in the assessment process, the ARC may ask the assessor to amend their assessment or assign an alternative assessor to the application

If the assessment cannot be amended, it can be removed by the ARC. This happens in rare circumstances and requires the CEO's approval.

Order of the Assessment Process

The following diagram provides an overview of the General Assessor's assessment process.

Diagram 1: Overview of the General Assessor Assessment Process



2.4 Rating and Ranking Assessments – All Assessors

Rating Scale

When applying the Scoring Matrix, Assessors should take into consideration the ARC Centres of Excellence scheme objectives and the assessment criteria (see Appendices 1 and 2 of this Handbook) and summarised below.

The ARC Centres of Excellence are prestigious focal points of expertise through which high-quality researchers collaboratively maintain and develop Australia's international standing in research areas of national priority. ARC Centres of Excellence facilitate significant collaboration which allows the complementary resources of universities, publicly funded research organisations, other research bodies, governments and businesses to be concentrated to support outstanding research in all fields, except Medical Research.

Scoring applications against assessment criteria can be a difficult exercise when assessors might only look at a small number of applications.

Only the very best applications are recommended at both the EOI application and full application stages. As a guide, those in the top scoring band ('A') would be assessed as near flawless across all selection criteria.

A Scoring Matrix for both Detailed and General Assessors is provided in **Table 2** below.

Table 2: Scoring Matrix for ARC Centres of Excellence – EOIs and Full Application

Score	Criteria	Recommendation
A	Outstanding: Of the highest quality and at the forefront of research in the field.	Recommended unconditionally
B	Excellent: Of high quality and strongly competitive.	Strongly support recommendation
C	Very Good: Interesting, sound and compelling.	Support recommendation with reservation
D	Good: Sound, but lacks a compelling element.	Unsupportive of recommendation
E	Uncompetitive: Uncompetitive and has significant weaknesses or more fatal flaws.	Not recommended

Ranking

Detailed and General Assessors who have been assigned multiple applications must establish a ranked list. Assigning scores to each assessment is a convenient way of initially ranking applications. RMS will use your scores to automatically rank applications assigned to you.

Each application must also have a unique rank, therefore assessors who have multiple assessments of applications with an identical final rank are prompted by RMS to give each assessment a unique rank to differentiate between them. Differentiation should be based on how you compare the applications in relation to the Rating Scale.

Detailed Assessors cannot leave an assessment criterion score blank for any reason. Assessments can only be submitted when all applications you have been assigned to have 1) a score given and 2) a unique ranking.

2.5 Important Factors to Consider When Assessing – All Assessors

All Assessors of ARC Centres of Excellence EOI applications and full applications must take into consideration the following when undertaking assessments.

Objectives and Assessment Criteria

Assessors must take into consideration both the objectives and the assessment criteria as outlined in the Grant Guidelines and Appendices 1 and 2 of this Handbook.

Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE)

Assessment of Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) requires assessors to identify and consider research excellence relative to a researcher's career and life experiences. It aims to ensure that NCGP assessment processes accurately evaluate a researcher's career history relative to their current career stage and considers whether their productivity and contribution is commensurate with the opportunities that have been available to them.

The required elements of ROPE vary according to the objectives of each grant opportunity. All General and Detailed Assessors should be familiar with the full ROPE statement located on the [ARC website](#).

Research Impact

The Research Impact Principles and Framework provided on the [ARC website](#) provides a definition of research impact and examples of where research components fit into an impact pathway. You should include applicants' information about the intended benefit of their proposed ARC Centre of Excellence when assessing an application against a feasibility and benefit assessment criterion.

Interdisciplinary Research

The ARC recognises the value of interdisciplinary research and the ARC's commitment to supporting interdisciplinary research is outlined in the ARC Statement of Support for Interdisciplinary Research.

Research undertaken in an ARC Centre of Excellence is expected to be interdisciplinary, innovative and transformational. An objective of the ARC Centres of Excellence scheme is to link existing Australian research strengths and build critical mass with new capacity for interdisciplinary, collaborative approaches to address the most challenging and significant research problems.

Interdisciplinary research can be a distinct mode of research, or a combination of researchers, knowledge and/or approaches from disparate disciplines. Under the NCGP, examples of interdisciplinary research may include researchers from different disciplines working together in a team, researchers collaborating to bring different perspectives to solve a problem, researcher(s) utilising methods normally associated with one or more disciplines to solve problems in another discipline and one or more researchers translating innovative blue sky or applied research outcomes from one discipline into an entirely different applied research discipline. Such research is expected of ARC Centres of Excellence.

Assessors are required to assess all research on a fair and equal basis, including applications and outputs involving interdisciplinary and collaborative research. To assist with this, the ARC facilitates consideration of applications by relevant General Assessors with interdisciplinary expertise or where not feasible, applications are allocated to General Assessors who have broad disciplinary expertise regardless of discipline grouping. Interdisciplinary applications should be allocated to Detailed Assessors with specific interdisciplinary expertise or from different disciplines.

Data Management Requirements

In line with responsibilities outlined in the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018) and international best practice, the ARC encourages researchers to deposit data arising from research projects in appropriate publicly accessible repositories.

The Project Description section of a full application for ARC Centres of Excellence requires researchers to briefly outline their plans for the specific management of data generated through the proposed Centre. In answering this question, researchers are not asked to include extensive detail of the physical or technological infrastructure. However,

a general compliance response is not helpful. Assessors must consider how the researcher plans to make data as openly accessible as possible for the purposes of verification and for others' future research. Where it is inappropriate to disseminate or re-use data, assessors must consider the validity and timeliness of any justification provided.

COVID-19 guidance

The ARC requests all ARC assessors to continue to assess each application based on the content of that application only and without making assumptions about the impact of COVID-19. Therefore, assessments must not include scores and comments that make assumptions about the viability of a proposed ARC Centre of Excellence due to the potential impacts of COVID-19. An assessment that include assumptions about the impact of COVID-19, could be considered an [inappropriate assessment](#). The ARC will investigate a potential inappropriate assessment and decide whether an assessment should be amended or removed from the process.

The ARC has also advised the research sector that we understand that the level of co-contribution pledged above and beyond the minimum threshold is likely to be reduced in future applications due to the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. ARC application forms include validations to ensure that minimum contribution requirements are pledged in applications. The ARC requests all ARC assessors not to make assumptions about an Administering Organisation and Other Eligible Organisations' level of commitments and support of an application solely based on lower levels of pledged additional cash and/or in-kind support than provided historically for previous ARC Centres of Excellence. This is particularly important for full applications for ARC Centres of Excellence that will contain requested budgets.

For reference the ARC has published [Pre Award Guidance](#) document for preparing applications: Responding to the impact of COVID-19 for applicants on the ARC website for the Australian research community. In the guidance the ARC acknowledges that the future impacts of COVID-19 are difficult for anyone to determine while the pandemic continues to evolve. Hence, the ARC has advised researchers preparing applications during this time, to ensure that application information is accurate and realistic at the time of submission. If an application is successful, but circumstances have changed since the time of submission, the ARC will manage variations to the proposed research as a post award issue.

3. General Assessors: Selection Advisory Committee (SAC) Meetings Preparation

3.1 Roles and Responsibilities before the SAC Meetings

After the assessment period (both EOI application and full application stages) has closed General Assessors will:

- be unable to access applications for a short period whilst ARC staff undertake administrative functions to prepare for the SAC meetings
- be advised by the ARC when the RMS Meeting Application (App) opens and access to assigned applications reappears
- also have access to all applications in the RMS Meeting App where they do not have a COI.
- be required to attend a pre-meeting videoconference to be updated on the SAC meeting processes and relevant information

Reviewing Applications in the Meeting App

Prior to the SAC meetings, all Carriages should review the Detailed and General Assessors' assessments and scores.

EOI

- At the EOI shortlisting meeting all Carriage members will be expected to contribute to discussions about the EOI applications they have assessed, noting that Carriage 1 leads the discussion. All other SAC members will also participate in these discussions.

Full application

- The SAC will meet virtually before the interviews/Selection Meeting, at which they will be provided detailed information on the interviews/Selection Meeting process, as well as to briefly discuss the full applications to determine if any should not proceed to interview.
- In addition to full applications that SAC members are already assigned to, additional preparation is required for the interviews and selection meeting. SAC members are expected to read the full applications they will be interviewing and review the assessments, scores and rejoinders. Other SAC members should read critical sections such as the Project Description which will allow them to constructively participate in the final deliberations for recommendation.

Feedback to Applicants

Unsuccessful EOI applications and full applications will receive formal written feedback from the ARC. This feedback will be provided by the SAC based on the recommendations at each stage. Suggested standard feedback text will be made available to SAC members prior to each meeting for reference. While Carriages will be primarily responsible for determining feedback, all SAC members may provide appropriate feedback on those applications they have considered.

3.2 Roles and Responsibilities at the SAC and information on the EOI Shortlisting Meeting and Interviews

Detailed information on the roles and responsibilities of SAC members for each assessment stage of the ARC Centres of Excellence scheme will be provided to SAC members prior to each meeting. At least two videoconferences will be held during the scheme round process and written documentation will be supplied.

The role of the Chair is to:

1. lead the committee through the process to make a recommendation on the applications
2. call the panel to a vote for applications and
3. ensure the meeting runs in a timely manner.

For applications where the Chair is conflicted out of the room, the Deputy Chair will act in the role. Where multiple conflicts arise, other SAC members may also be called on to be acting Chair.

When you are Carriage 1 on an application, your role is to:

1. lead discussion for that application making a recommendation to shortlist the EOI or not, and at full application fund/not fund
2. vote on applications when called by the Chair
3. recommend to shortlist an EOI application or not, and a one-line budget for full applications that are recommended for funding later.

All other Carriages and panel members will:

1. participate in discussions of whether or not an EOI application should shortlisted and later a full application be recommended for funding
2. vote on applications when called to do so by the Chair.

ARC staff are responsible for:

1. providing secretariat support for meetings
2. providing procedural and probity advice to the SAC
3. ensuring that correct administrative procedures are followed
4. ensuring COIs and inappropriate discussions are managed correctly.

4. Ensuring Integrity of Process

4.1 Confidentiality and conflict of interest (COI)

The [ARC Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Policy](#) is designed to ensure that all COIs are managed in a rigorous and transparent way. It aims to prevent individuals from influencing decisions unfairly and to maintain public confidence in the integrity, legitimacy, impartiality and fairness of the peer review process.

Any individual who is reviewing material for the ARC must agree to a confidentiality and COI statement, and must clearly disclose any material personal interests that may affect or might be perceived to affect, their ability to perform their role.

All assessors must maintain an update-to-date RMS profile, including personal details, current employment details and previous employment history within the past two years. This information will assist the ARC with the identification and management of organisational conflicts of interest.

Assessors reviewing ARC grant applications who have identified a COI must reject the grant application assigned in RMS to assist the ARC in the management of COIs.

Examples of material personal interests that are considered by the ARC to be COIs include holding funding with a named participant within the past 2 years or having been a collaborator or co-author with a named participant on a research output within the last 4 years. For more information on the timeframes that apply for common COIs, please refer to the [Identifying and Handling a Conflict of Interest in NCGP processes](#) document.

Note: In RMS, assessors will be asked to indicate their willingness to comply with this policy before proceeding to assess. They can do this by selecting the 'Accept' button.

4.2 Research integrity and research misconduct

If in the course of undertaking an assessment you identify or suspect a potential research integrity breach or research misconduct, please notify the ARC Research Integrity Office (researchintegrity@arc.gov.au) in accordance with Section 5 of the [ARC Research Integrity Policy](#). Please do not mention your concerns in your assessment comments.

The ARC Research Integrity Office will consider whether to refer your concerns to the relevant institution for investigation in accordance with the requirements of the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research \(2018\)](#). You should provide sufficient information to allow the ARC to assess whether there is a basis for referring the matter to the institution; and to enable the relevant institution to progress an investigation into the allegation (if required).

Foreign financial support, foreign affiliations and foreign honorary positions. Participants applying for ARC grants are required to answer questions in their application relating to foreign financial support and foreign affiliations, including current and previous associations. Participants are required to declare:

- foreign financial support (cash or in kind) for research related activities
- current or past associations or affiliations with a foreign sponsored talent program (for the last 10 years)
- current associations or affiliations with a foreign government, foreign political party, foreign state-owned enterprise, foreign military and/or foreign police organisations

If in the course of undertaking an assessment you identify or suspect a potential issue of foreign interference, please send an email highlighting your concerns to the ARC via ARC-College@arc.gov.au (General Assessors) or ARC-Peer_Review@arc.gov.au (Detailed Assessors) as soon as possible.

Note: In RMS, assessors will be asked to indicate their willingness to comply with this policy before proceeding to assess. They can do this by selecting the 'Accept' button.

4.3 Applications outside an assessor's area of expertise

The ARC receives applications from many scholarly fields. For ARC Centres of Excellence, as a General Assessor you will be asked to assess applications that do not appear to correspond closely with your area of expertise. Your views are valuable as they are being sought on the entire application, drawing on your expert knowledge as a researcher and familiarity with large research investments or large research groups. If you are a **General Assessor** and are concerned about a particular application's research area and your ability to provide a robust assessment, **please contact the ARC via ARC-College@arc.gov.au before rejecting the assignment.**

If you are a **Detailed Assessor** and believe that the ARC has misunderstood your broad expertise or has made an error in assigning an application to you, please give **early notice** of your view by rejecting the applicable application/s in RMS and entering a reason in the Reject Reason comment box. It is also important to review your RMS profile expertise text and FoR codes.

4.4 Eligibility

If, while assessing an application, you have concerns about eligibility, ethics or other issues associated with an application, **you must not include this information in your assessment.** Please send an email highlighting your concerns to **the ARC via ARC-College@arc.gov.au** (General Assessors) or ARC-Peer_Review@arc.gov.au (Detailed Assessors) as soon as possible. The ARC is responsible for investigating and making decisions on these matters, and

General and Detailed Assessors should not conduct investigations at any point. Please complete your assessment based on the merits of the application without giving consideration to the potential eligibility issue.

Display Errors in Research Outputs

The ARC is aware of some research output display errors that are system issues and cannot be corrected by RMS users. Any applications that are affected will not be deemed to breach eligibility requirements and all General and Detailed Assessors should disregard research output display errors in their assessment of applications. Examples of possible research output display errors include symbols, foreign language characters and subscript/superscript that does not render correctly.

4.5 Unconscious bias

Assessors should also be aware of how their unconscious bias could affect the peer review process.

Unconscious biases are pervasive and may relate to perceptions about a range of attributes including:

- gender and/or sexuality
- social/cultural background
- career path
- institutional employer
- discipline

The ARC encourages Assessors to recognise their own biases and be aware of them in their assessments. A selection of short, online tests for identifying unconscious biases is available via Harvard University's '[Implicit Social Attitudes' demonstration sites](#).

5. Contact details for queries during the assessment process

For **all** assignment and assessment as well as accessibility enquiries please email **the ARC via** ARC-College@arc.gov.au (General Assessors) or ARC-Peer_Review@arc.gov.au (Detailed Assessors).

For all questions relating to the SAC and SAC meetings, contact ARC-College@arc.gov.au

Appendix 1 – Expressions of Interest (EI23)

Grant Guidelines

The Linkage Program - ARC Centres of Excellence commencing in 2023 (the Grant Guidelines) can be found [here](#).

Scheme objectives

The objectives for the ARC Centres of Excellence are to:

- a. undertake highly innovative and potentially transformational research that aims to achieve international standing in the fields of research envisaged and leads to a significant advancement of capabilities and knowledge;
- b. link existing Australian research strengths and build critical mass with new capacity for interdisciplinary, collaborative approaches to address the most challenging and significant research problems;
- c. develop relationships and build new networks with major national and international centres and research programs to help strengthen research, achieve global competitiveness and gain recognition for Australian research;
- d. build Australia's human capacity in a range of research areas by attracting and retaining, from within Australia and abroad, researchers of high international standing as well as the most promising research students;
- e. provide high-quality postgraduate and postdoctoral training environments for the next generation of researchers;
- f. offer Australian researchers opportunities to work on large-scale problems over longer periods of time; and
- g. establish Centres that have an impact on the wider community through interaction with, and beneficial outcomes for, higher education institutions, governments, industry and the private and non-profit sectors.

Assessment criteria

All ARC Centres of Excellence EOI applications which meet the eligibility criteria will be assessed and merit ranked using assessment criteria 'a' and 'b' as listed below.

a. Research program - Quality and Innovation **70%**

Demonstrate this through identifying how the Centre:

- addresses the objectives of the ARC Centres of Excellence grant opportunity;
- will be innovative and potentially transformational, and lead to significant advancement of knowledge, expertise and technologies;
- will build effective collaboration and critical mass across groups of researchers;
- is assembled into an effective and integrated research program (including the proposed conceptual framework, design, human resource commitments, methods and analyses, project structures, budget planning and risk mitigation strategies); and
- will build effective and high quality national and international partnerships, exchanges and networks.

If the project involves research pertaining to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities describe:

- the strategies for enabling collaboration with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities (for example, dialogue/collaboration with an Indigenous cultural mentor);
- any existing or developing, supportive and high-quality relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities; and
- any personal affiliations with local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities that can facilitate the proposed research.

b. Investigators/Capability 30%

Demonstrate this through identifying:

- the contribution of the Centre Director, CIs and PIs to the proposed research program and their demonstration of appropriate capability, capacity and commitment to the Centre; and
- the extent to which the investigators are suitable and relevant to the conduct and delivery of the proposed research program, giving consideration to Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE).

Additional Notes When Assessing EOI Applications

Assessment of PIs and their roles

The ARC recognises that in some cases a proposed PI from a Partner Organisation may not be a researcher or have an academic background. All ARC assessors must pay close attention to the role and contribution described in the project description when assessing investigators' track record. It is expected that the nature of a satisfactory or strong track record may vary depending on the role the proposed PI is undertaking. CE23 applications do not require a Partner Investigator from every Partner Organisation.

Selection Criteria	Primary points of reference in EOI application	Secondary points of reference in EOI application
Research program – Quality and Innovation	Part C1	Part A4
Investigators/Capability	Parts C1.4 and D	Part A2

Appendix 2 – Full Applications (CE23)

Grant Guidelines

The Linkage Program - ARC Centres of Excellence commencing in 2023 (the Grant Guidelines) can be found [here](#).

Scheme objectives

The objectives for the ARC Centres of Excellence are to:

- a. undertake highly innovative and potentially transformational research that aims to achieve international standing in the fields of research envisaged and leads to a significant advancement of capabilities and knowledge;
- b. link existing Australian research strengths and build critical mass with new capacity for interdisciplinary, collaborative approaches to address the most challenging and significant research problems;
- c. develop relationships and build new networks with major national and international centres and research programs to help strengthen research, achieve global competitiveness and gain recognition for Australian research;
- d. build Australia's human capacity in a range of research areas by attracting and retaining, from within Australia and abroad, researchers of high international standing as well as the most promising research students;
- e. provide high-quality postgraduate and postdoctoral training environments for the next generation of researchers;
- f. offer Australian researchers opportunities to work on large-scale problems over longer periods of time; and
- g. establish Centres that have an impact on the wider community through interaction with, and beneficial outcomes for, higher education institutions, governments, industry and the private and non-profit sectors.

Assessment criteria

All invited ARC Centres of Excellence applications which meet the eligibility criteria will be assessed and merit ranked using the assessment criteria listed below. Criteria weightings for the applications are noted against criteria 'a' to 'e'.

a. Research program - Quality and Innovation **20%**

Demonstrate this through identifying how the Centre:

- addresses the objectives of the ARC Centres of Excellence grant opportunity;
- will be innovative and potentially transformational, and lead to significant advancement of knowledge, expertise and technologies;
- will build effective collaboration and critical mass across groups of researchers;
- is assembled into an effective and integrated research program (including the proposed conceptual framework, design, human resource commitments, methods and analyses, project structures, budget planning and risk mitigation strategies); and
- will build effective and high quality national and international partnerships, exchanges and networks.

If the project involves research pertaining to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities describe:

- the strategies for enabling collaboration with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities (for example, dialogue/collaboration with an Indigenous cultural mentor);
- any existing or developing, supportive and high-quality relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities; and
- any personal affiliations with local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities that can facilitate the proposed research.

b. Investigators/Capability 20%

Demonstrate this through identifying:

- the contribution of the Centre Director, CIs and PIs to the proposed research program and their demonstration of appropriate capability, capacity and commitment to the Centre; and
- the extent to which the investigators are suitable and relevant to the conduct and delivery of the proposed research program, giving consideration to Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE).

c. Institutional Support 20%

Demonstrate this through identifying:

- the extent to which the Centre is aligned with the research focus and strategic direction of the Administering Organisation; and
- how the combined level of support and commitment from the Administering Organisation, Other Eligible Organisations and Partner Organisations will be sufficient for the proposed Centre.

d. Governance, leadership and mentoring 20%

Demonstrate this through identifying:

- the appropriateness of the organisational structure of the Centre, including:
 - proposed management arrangements and responsibilities (including management of dispersed and diverse teams and reporting arrangements both internally and externally)
 - financial systems, strategic and translation plans, milestones for achievement of objectives and delivery of outputs, outcomes and benefits, and draft Key Performance Indicators
- the relevance of the performance measures listed in the application to the proposed Centre’s objectives, project outputs, outcomes and benefits, and their appropriateness for assessing the Centre’s performance;
- the leadership ability and vision of the Centre Director and leadership team including their capacity to perform the responsibilities of the role including strategic planning and management;
- the contribution of the Centre to research training and mentoring at the Honours, postgraduate and postdoctoral level; and
- the contribution of the Centre’s education and engagement programs to professional development, ethical and technical training, and outreach.

e. Outcomes and linkages

20%

Demonstrate this through identifying the:

- proposed research program articulates the path to Research Impact of the proposed research program in terms of delivering benefit to Australia;
- links with Australian researchers in universities, other research organisations, industry and strategic agencies that will facilitate collaboration in, and application of the outcomes of, the proposed research program;
- partners and end-users which will be involved in the translation of outcomes arising from the proposed research program;
- plans and strategies in place for translation of research outcomes including: knowledge transfer, knowledge application, and if applicable, technology transfer, including fostering a culture of innovation, focus on outcomes and Centre legacy;
- supporting organisational arrangements and plans in place relating to ownership and potential exploitation of intellectual property and/or utilisation or commercialisation of research (where appropriate);
- proposed research program expands Australia’s knowledge base and research capability and enhance Australia’s international reputation and competitiveness;
- proposed research program makes a significant contribution to one or more of the Science and Research Priorities;
- proposed research program delivers effective outcomes commensurate with the request for appropriate resources (value for money);
- proposed Centre involves partners and end-users in development of strategic and translation plans and proposed Centre governance; and
- proposed Centre develops and enhances high-level international linkages to benefit the research, training and translation of program outcomes.

Additional Notes When Assessing Full Applications

Disciplines which have large numbers of authors

Where possible, we ask applicants to list all authors in references. In some disciplines where there are extremely large numbers of authors, in addition to the name of the relevant CI/PI, the ARC has suggested that the first two authors be listed in the reference and that ‘et al’ will be permitted, providing there is enough information so that the reference can be verified if necessary.

Selection Criteria	Primary points of reference in full application*	Secondary points of reference in full application*
Research program – Quality and Innovation	TBC	TBC
Investigators/Capability	TBC	TBC
Institutional Support	TBC	TBC
Governance, leadership and mentoring	TBC	TBC
Outcomes and linkages	TBC	TBC

* Full application forms are expected to be available for Applicants to complete in December 2021. The points of reference will be updated prior to the opening of assessments for full applications.

Appendix 3 – Glossary

Applicant means the Administering Organisation submitting the application on behalf of the participants.

Application means the Expression of Interest application or full application for ARC Centres of Excellence commencing in 2023.

ARC means the Australian Research Council, as established under the ARC Act.

ARC Act means the *Australian Research Council Act 2001*.

ARC College of Experts (CoE) means a body of experts of international standing appointed to assist the ARC to identify research excellence, moderate external assessments and recommend applications for funding. Its members are specialist and generalist experts in their knowledge fields drawn from the Australian research community.

The [ARC website](#) provides information on who is a member of the College of Experts.

ARC website means <http://www.arc.gov.au>.

Carriage 1 means the General Assessor with the primary responsibility for the application.

CE23 means ARC Centres of Excellence commencing in 2023.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) means the person holding the position of ARC Chief Executive Officer in accordance with the ARC Act or any person acting in that position.

Conflict of interest is a situation in which someone in a position of trust has competing professional or private interests. Such competing interests could make it difficult for an individual to fulfil his/her duties impartially and could improperly influence the performance of their official duties and responsibilities.

The ARC [Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Policy](#) is available on the ARC website at www.arc.gov.au.

Detailed assessment means an assessment process completed by the Detailed Assessor which involves an in-depth assessment of applications. A Detailed assessment provides scores and comments against the scheme specific selection criteria. The Detailed assessment is then taken into consideration by General Assessors (i.e. CoE or SAC members) in the later stages of the peer review process.

Detailed Assessors means assessors that are drawn from the Australian and international research community and are assigned applications to review for their specific expertise in a field of research. A Detailed Assessor completes in-depth assessments of applications by providing scores and comments against the scheme specific selection criteria.

EI23 means the Expression of Interest application.

Expression of Interest (EOI) means a preliminary request to the ARC for the provision of financial assistance for a research program. In RMS an EOI may be referred to as an application.

For Codes means Field of Research Codes as defined in the Australian Bureau of Statistics' *Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classification (ANZSRC)* (2008 and 2020).

Full application means a request to the ARC for the provision of funding which is submitted in accordance with the relevant Grant Guidelines following the shortlisting of an EOI.

General Assessment means a review process completed by the General Assessor(s), taking into consideration the scores and comments provided by Detailed Assessors and the applicant Rejoinder. Scores on each of the relevant scheme selection criteria are provided as part of the General Assessment.

General Assessors means the assessors appointed to a Selection Advisory Committee (SAC) for each scheme round, which may be drawn from the ARC College of Experts. General Assessors contribute knowledge of their discipline areas and a broad understanding of intellectual and methodological issues and good research planning. Each application has a lead General Assessor (known as Carriage 1) who is typically close to the academic field of the application, and one or more General Assessors (known as Other Carriages) with supplementary expertise.

GrantConnect is the Australian Government's whole-of-government grants information system, which centralises the publication and reporting of Commonwealth grants in accordance with the CGRGs.

Grant Guidelines are Legislative Instruments, required by the ARC Act and approved by the Minister, outlining information for the relevant scheme/s relating to eligibility criteria, application process, assessment process, and any other additional accountability requirements that the ARC considers necessary.

Linkage Program means the grant opportunities funded under the Linkage Program of the NCGP which consists of: Linkage Projects, Linkage Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities, Industrial Transformation Research Hubs, Industrial Transformation Training Centres, Special Research Initiatives, the ARC Centres of Excellence, Learned Academies Special Projects, Supporting Responses to Commonwealth Science Council Priorities and other grant opportunities as updated from time to time.

Other Carriage means the General Assessor with secondary or tertiary responsibility for the application.

Participant means all named participants on an application (i.e. CIs and PIs,); and all unnamed researchers such as postdoctoral research associates and postgraduate researchers working on a project.

Rejoinder means a process by which applicants are given an opportunity to respond to assessment comments made by external (Detailed) assessors via a written submission. Rejoinders are not viewed by external assessors but are considered by an ARC SAC during the moderation and recommendation process.

RMS means the ARC Research Management System at <https://rms.arc.gov.au>. Further information on RMS can be found at <http://www.arc.gov.au/rms-information>.

RMS Meeting App refers to the RMS meeting application available to SAC members in preparation for/and at the selection meeting.

Scoring Matrix refers a set of rating guidelines provided to assessors on the degree of merit associated with particular matrix in relation to the relevant grant opportunity assessment criteria

Selection Advisory Committee (SAC) means a group of experts from industry and/or academia appointed to assist the ARC to evaluate applications and to provide a recommendation for to the CEO. A SAC may be drawn from the ARC College of Experts.

Appendix 4 – Frequently Asked Questions

1. **How do I know if I have a conflict of interest (COI) with the EOI application or full application I am assessing?**

A COI arises where the assessor's other interests or associations could, or could be seen to, improperly influence the performance of their duties as an assessor. Refer to the '[Conflict of Interest](#)' section in this Handbook for detailed information about COIs. In most instances, it is easy to ascertain if you have a COI. Typical COIs include: one or more of the named investigators on the EOI application or full application are employees of your institution; you have a close personal involvement (including enmity) with one of the named investigators; you have a professional involvement with one of the named investigators (e.g. you have published with him/her in the last four years; you have supervised his/her PhD in the last 5 years). If you are uncertain, please contact the ARC.

2. **What if I'm not sure if I have a conflict of interest or not?**

The [ARC's Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Policy](#) provides guidance on conflicts. Further guidance is provided through [Identifying and Handling Conflicts of Interest in NCGP processes](#). Where there is still doubt, assessors should email the relevant scheme team via ARC-College@arc.gov.au (General Assessors) or ARC-Peer_Review@arc.gov.au (Detailed Assessors).

3. **Although I don't have a COI with the EOI application or full application, I feel that I cannot provide an impartial assessment (e.g. because I have a problem with the theoretical approach, or I don't have expertise in this field of research). What do I do?**

Advise the ARC immediately by email. The ARC will consider the situation and provide advice regarding whether you can assess the EOI application or full application, or if you should 'Reject' the EOI application or a full application in the assignment list.

4. **My RMS login and password appear to be incorrect. What do I do?**

Your login is your email address, and it is not case sensitive. However, passwords are case sensitive, so check that your capitalisation is correct and the caps lock is not on. If you have forgotten your password, you can click the "Reset Password" link at the bottom of the page. If you continue to experience problems, contact the ARC by email to ARC-Systems@arc.gov.au.

5. **Why do I have to keep changing my password for RMS?**


The Australian Research Council is a Government entity and as such, our systems must comply with the whole of government security policy. This policy is set out by the Australian Signals Directorate and is publicly available [here](#) for you to access. The relevant controls can be found on pages 86-88.

These policies are put in place to protect the information within Australian Government systems, including personal information relating to our ARC assessors. The increasing use of technology as a way of doing our business requires us to strengthen our information security.

6. **What if I pick up eligibility issues as part of my assessment?**

Eligibility is managed as a separate process to the peer review process. Any eligibility issues should be emailed to the relevant scheme team via ARC-College@arc.gov.au (General Assessors) or ARC-Peer_Review@arc.gov.au (Detailed Assessors) for investigation. Assessments should be completed based on the merit of the application. It is important not to include potential eligibility issues in assessments.

7. **I don't see the EOI application or full application in its entirety.**

The EOI application or full application PDF can be accessed by clicking on the  icon in the same row as the application ID in the assessments page. You can also request an assessment

package containing the PDFs for all EOI applications or full applications assigned to you by clicking on the 'Assessment Package' button at the top right of the Assessments page.

8. I have finished my assessment of a particular EOI application or full application, but the system will not allow me to submit. Why is this?

You will not be able to submit any assessments until all of your assessments have been rated and ranked. Once completed the 'Finalise' button will appear, and you will be able to submit your assessments for EOI applications or full applications to the ARC.

9. How do I know if I have successfully submitted my assessments?

Once you have successfully submitted your assessments, the information in the Assessments page will appear greyed out.

10. I have submitted my assessments but want to edit or change some. What can I do?

Once your assessments have been submitted you will not be able to edit any of this information.

If you have submitted your assessments by accident or wish to make changes before the closing date, email the ARC and request that your assessments be de-submitted.

11. I cannot see any EOI applications or full applications for assessment when I click on the Assessments link on my RMS Home page.

Before you can access EOI applications or full applications for assessment, you must first accept them from within the Assignments page.

12. Should I discuss my final scores with the other Carriages assigned to an EOI application or full application?

You should not discuss your scores for EOI applications or full applications with other Carriages until you have submitted your scores in RMS, and you should not allow their scores to influence yours. Unlike some other ARC schemes, we want you to make your assessment independently of other Carriages. It does not matter if there is discrepancy between the scores of various assessors. There will be opportunity for discussion on the EOI applications and full applications at the selection meetings.

13. Why have I lost the assessments I have been working on?

The most common reason for assessments to be lost is when an assessor has two sessions of RMS open at the same time. It is best practice to only have one session of RMS open at a time and to ensure you save your assessments regularly. RMS runs best with Google Chrome.

14. As a General Assessor when do I submit my assessments?

General Assessors should not submit any assessments until after the Detailed Assessments have been completed and Rejoinders have closed.

15. As a General Assessor why can't I see the Detailed Assessments and Rejoinders?

You will not be able to view the Detailed Assessments or Rejoinders until those modules have been closed in RMS. You will be notified when you have access to the Detailed Assessments and Rejoinders.

Appendix 5 – RMS Profile

Detailed Assessors' RMS profiles play an essential role in the assignment process as they assist with the matching of applications with appropriately skilled Detailed Assessors. It is important that Detailed Assessors ensure that their RMS profile is up to date and contains the following details:

- **Expertise text:** Please outline your expertise briefly. The following format is suggested “My major area of research expertise is in a, b, c. I also have experience in research q, r, s. I would also be able to assess in the areas of x, y, z.”
- **Field of Research (FoR) Codes:** Please include between six and ten 6-digit FoR codes that reflect your key areas of expertise.

Note: Obligated Assessors (those who are participants on an ARC Project currently receiving funding) are required to keep their RMS profile up to date and to undertake assessments as required in the relevant Grant Agreement for their project.

The ARC and the Australian research community thank you for your effort and time reading these instructions and undertaking assessments. The ARC would be unable to fulfil its role of supporting excellence in research without your help.