



**Australian Government**  

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**Australian Research Council**

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**RESEARCH WORKFORCE  
STATEMENT**

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## Purpose

The purpose of this statement is to articulate the Australian Research Council's (ARC) contribution to a strong Australian research workforce.

## The Australian Research Council

The Australian Research Council (ARC) is a Commonwealth entity within the Australian Government. The ARC's purpose is to grow knowledge and innovation for the benefit of the Australian community through funding the highest quality research; assessing the quality, engagement and impact of research and providing advice on research matters.

The ARC funds research and researchers under the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP). The NCGP consists of two elements—Discovery and Linkage. Within these elements are a range of schemes structured to provide a pathway of incentives for researchers to build the scope and scale of their work and collaborative partnerships. The majority of funding decisions under the NCGP are made on the basis of peer review.

The ARC evaluates the quality of research undertaken in higher education institutions through the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) program. ERA is an established evaluation framework that identifies research excellence in Australian higher education institutions by comparing Australia's research effort against international benchmarks. ERA assesses quality using a combination of indicators and expert review by research evaluation committees.

The ARC is also responsible for developing and implementing an Engagement and Impact assessment, announced by the Australian Government in December 2015 as part of the National Science and Innovation Agenda (NISA), which will assess the engagement of researchers with end-users, and show how universities are translating their research into economic, social, environmental and other impacts.

## Context

Discovery and Linkage comprise a range of complementary schemes to support researchers at different stages of their careers, build Australia's research capability, expand and enhance research networks and collaborations, and develop hubs and centres of research excellence.

Funding is provided on a competitive basis and is predicated on funding excellence, at whatever stage that occurs in a researcher's career or research including for new, next stage or divergent projects. Every proposal submitted to each scheme round is assessed through an extensive peer review process to identify the preeminent research and researchers in the round.

The ARC supports and facilitates research training and career opportunities for excellent Australian and international researchers—Discovery—including through opportunities for researchers to work in industry settings—Linkage.

The ARC's support for the research workforce is one element of a broader framework. There is significant interest in planning for Australia's future research workforce, with the main driver being to inform capacity building to ensure Australia's ongoing competitiveness. Significant stakeholders in this area are government, the higher education sector and the Learned Academies.

The global dimension of the research workforce is also well accepted with governments worldwide adopting a common focus on attracting and retaining researchers, participating in global initiatives and encouraging their researchers to collaborate with other researchers around the world.

## ARC Support

NCGP funding schemes provide support for the research workforce, including:

- research higher degree candidates, and honours students (*Discovery Indigenous* scheme only)
- early-career researchers
- mid-career researchers
- experienced researchers or research leaders
- research support staff.

In particular, the ARC actively seeks to support:

- female researchers
- researchers returning after a career break or with non-traditional research careers
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers.

NCGP support is delivered by funding directly or indirectly:

- higher education organisations
- government organisations
- businesses
- private non-profit organisations.

## Principles

To support a strong research workforce, the ARC is:

- Excellence** Funding the highest-quality eligible researchers, research and research students in all disciplines through a competitive peer review process.
- Participation** Supporting participation by researchers in the research workforce at all career stages and from under-represented groups, by:
- funding eligible researchers at different career stages through fellowship and award schemes
  - developing the research expertise of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers
  - utilising eligibility and selection criteria that support researchers at particular career stages and in under-represented groups
  - providing fair access to ARC funding for all eligible researchers and promoting diversity and equity principles.
- Flexibility** Providing a framework which gives researchers flexibility in shaping their careers, by:
- utilising assessment processes and grant conditions that allow for both career and family responsibilities
  - facilitating opportunities for researchers from diverse career and research backgrounds to access NCGP funding
  - providing eligibility and assessment processes, and grant conditions that encourage researchers to work with industry/end-user organisations and support movement between sectors

- utilising funding mechanisms which offer a range of support (individual salaries through fellowships and awards, research project costs, access to infrastructure, and establishment of centres, networks and hubs).

**Capacity**

Providing support mechanisms to attract and retain the highest quality researchers, by:

- facilitating the conduct of research and research training in high quality and supportive research environments
- encouraging mentoring of early career researchers
- promoting mentoring of women researchers, including through the ambassadorial role of the named Australian Laureate Fellowships
- fostering domestic and international collaboration
- facilitating access to infrastructure.

**Evaluation**

Monitoring the outcomes of ARC mechanisms for strengthening the Australian research workforce and committing to a process of continuous improvement.

## Further information

Further documentation is at [www.arc.gov.au](http://www.arc.gov.au) and includes the: *ARC Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) Statement; Gender Equality in Research Statement; Policy Statement Eligibility and Career Interruptions*, grant guidelines and agreements for NCGP schemes and international support information.

## Contact

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