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Government Specifications

for verification of research outputs in RAS

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Research Services

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1. Introduction

This document outlines the assessment criteria used by Research Services to undertake the verification of research outputs submitted in the University's Research Activity System (RAS). These criteria consist of consolidated information drawn from historical Federal Government specifications for both the Higher Education Research Data Collection (HERDC) and the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) Submission Guidelines.

2. Definition of Research

Only research outputs that meet the accepted definition of research (being the short form of *research and experimental development*, often abbreviated to R&D) ¹ are eligible for acceptance under these guidelines. Literature reviews that are predominantly a summary of the current knowledge and findings of a particular research field or topic and do not include any critical assessment or report any new findings or original experimental work, do not meet the above definition and must be excluded.

Research is defined as creative and systematic work undertaken in order to increase the stock of knowledge – including knowledge of humankind, culture and society – and to devise new applications of available knowledge. For an activity to be a R&D activity, it must satisfy five core criteria:

1. To be aimed at new findings (novel);
2. To be based on original, not obvious, concepts and hypotheses (creative);
3. To be uncertain about outcomes (uncertain);
4. To be planned and budgeted (systematic); and
5. To lead to results that could be possibly reproduced (transferable and/or reproducible).

The above definition encompasses pure and oriented basic research, applied research and experimental development.

¹ [OECD \(2015\), Frascati Manual 2015: Guidelines for Collecting and Reporting Data on Research and Experimental Development, OECD Publishing, Paris.](#)

3. Research Outputs

All research outputs must meet all of the following criteria:

- meet the definition of research (see [Section 2](#))
- have one or more eligible researchers listed as author(s) or creator(s) either within (e.g. in the by-line) or on that research output (see [Section 4.3](#))
- be an eligible research output type (see [Section 3.1](#))
- have a verifiable year of publication (see [Section 4.2](#))

3.1 Eligible Research Output Types

Traditionally research outputs are characterised by:

- substantial scholarly activity, as evidenced by discussion of the relevant literature, an awareness of the history and antecedents of work described, and provided in a format which allows a reader to trace sources of the work, including through citations and footnotes
- originality (i.e. not a compilation of existing works). Scholarly editions and scholarly translations must have a major demonstrable original research component in the edition or translation to be considered for inclusion
- veracity/validity through a peer review process (see [Section 4.5](#)) or by satisfying the quality control processes of a commercial publisher (see [Section 4.1](#))
- increasing the stock of knowledge
- being in a form that enables dissemination of knowledge

Publication is more than the release of a work. It implies quality control (such as peer review or in-house quality control) and enhancement through processes such as assessment or review, editing, copy-editing, design, and conversion of the work to an appropriate format.

Eligible research outputs take the form of publications and creative arts research outputs. There are four types of publications. These are:

- Books – Authored Research
- Book Chapters – Chapters in Research Books
- Journal Articles – Refereed, Scholarly Journal
- Conference Publications – Full Paper Refereed

There are also four categories of creative arts research output. These are:

- Original Creative Works
- Live Performance of Creative Works
- Recorded/Rendered Creative Works
- Curated or Produced Substantial Public Exhibitions and Events

Creative research outputs are explained in further detail in the [ECU Guidelines for Creative Arts Research Outputs](#) document.

Creative Arts Research Outputs must be submitted with a Research Statement. This is a written statement of no more than 1900 characters which identifies the research component of the output. Statements will be required to identify the research background, contribution and significance.

There is also one final eligible output category which is a Research Report for an External Body.

3.2 Books – Authored Research

To be included in this category the output must meet the definition of research (see [Section 2](#)) and meet all of the following:

- must be a major work of scholarship
- must have an International Standard Book Number (ISBN)
- must be written entirely by a single author/creator, or by joint authors/creators who share responsibility for the whole book
- must have been published by a commercial publisher (see [Section 4.1](#)), or if not published by a commercial publisher, must have been peer reviewed (see [Section 4.5](#))
- have one or more eligible author/creator (see [Section 4.3](#))

The following types of books are likely to meet the eligibility criteria for the 'Book' publication type:

- critical scholarly texts (e.g. music, medieval or classical texts)
- new interpretations of historical events
- new ideas or perspectives based on established research findings

The following types of books are unlikely to meet the eligibility criteria for the 'Book' publication type:

- textbooks
- anthologies
- edited books
- books that are not published by a commercial publisher and/or offered for sale
- revisions or new editions
- creative works such as novels
- translations (unless they have a major demonstrable original research component)
- manuals and handbooks
- theses (PhD, Masters and Honours)

N.B. Many of the books published by professional bodies do not report original research findings but report the results of evaluations, or compile existing information for the benefit of professionals or practitioners. ECU will assess these publications very carefully against the definition of research and only count those publications which are major works of scholarship and report original research activities for the first time. Freely available research-related reports published by external institutes or public agencies and departments are also unlikely to meet these criteria.

3.3 Book Chapters

To be included in this category the book chapter must meet the definition of research (see [Section 2](#))

Eligible book chapters are those that meet all of the following criteria:

- be a contribution, consisting substantially of new material, to an edited compilation in which the material is subject to editorial scrutiny. A book chapter may be included if it has been published previously, provided it constitutes substantial new knowledge and constitutes original research
- be a chapter in a book that is offered for sale in the form of:
 - hard copies, bound
 - CD-ROMS, packaged, and/or
 - E-books, on subscription or fee basis
- be a chapter in a book that has an International Standard Book Number (ISBN)
- be a chapter in a book that has been published by a commercial publisher

The following types of book chapters are likely to meet the eligibility criteria for the 'Book Chapter' publication type:

- a scholarly introduction of chapter length to an edited volume, where the content of the introduction reports research and makes a substantial contribution to a defined area of knowledge
- a critical scholarly text of chapter length, e.g. in music, medieval or classical texts
- critical reviews of current research

The following types of book chapters are unlikely to meet the eligibility criteria for the 'Book Chapter' publication type:

- chapters in textbooks
- entries in reference books
- anthologies
- revisions of chapters in edited books
- forewords
- brief introductions
- brief editorials
- chapters in books that are not published by a commercial publisher and/or offered for sale
- appendices
- literary or creative pieces such as collections of short stories
- translations (unless they have a major demonstrable original research component)
- case studies
- encyclopaedia entries

3.4 Journal Articles

To be included in this category the journal article must meet the definition of research (see [Section 2](#)).

The articles must:

- be published in a scholarly journal
- be peer-reviewed (see [Section 4.5](#))
- have one or more eligible researcher (see [Section 4.3](#))
- have an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN). Some journals may be regularly published as separate volumes with an ISBN rather than an ISSN. Provided that the publication is clearly identified as an edition of a journal, and not a book, articles in such publications may be eligible if they meet all other criteria. If an ISSN does not appear in the journal: external evidence such as an ISSN number being cited in an extract from an authoritative journal listing, such as the Thomson-Reuters Master Journals List or from the Scopus database

The following types of journal articles are likely to meet the eligibility criteria for the 'Journal Article' publication type:

- commentaries and communications of original research
- research notes
- letters to journals, provided that the letter satisfies the definition of research) and the requirements for journal articles in this section
- critical scholarly texts which appear in article form
- articles reviewing multiple works or an entire field of research
- invited papers in journals
- articles in journals which are targeted to both scholars and professionals
- articles in a stand-alone series

The following types of journal articles are unlikely to meet the eligibility criteria for the 'Journal Article' publication type:

- letters to the editor
- case studies
- articles designed to inform practitioners on existing knowledge in a professional field
- articles in newspapers and popular magazines
- editorials
- book reviews
- brief commentaries and communications of original research
- reviews of art exhibitions, concerts, theatre productions

3.5 Conference Publications

To be included in this category, the conference publication must meet the definition of research (see [Section 2](#)).

The conference publication must:

- be published in full. The papers may appear in any format, e.g. a volume of proceedings, a special edition of a journal, a normal issue of a journal, a book or a monograph, CD or conference or organisational web site
- be peer reviewed (see [Section 4.5](#))
- be presented at conferences, workshops or seminars of national or international significance
- have one or more eligible researcher (see [Section 4.3](#))

N.B. Conference publications do not require an ISBN or need to be published by a commercial publisher.

The types of conference publications that are unlikely to meet the criteria include:

- keynote addresses
- plenary addresses
- participation in discussions as a panel member
- poster presentations
- facilitation of workshops at conferences
- abstracts of conference publications
- papers that appear only in a volume handed out to conference participants

3.6 Research Reports for an External Body

To be included in this category, the research report must meet the definition of research (see [Section 2](#)).

The research report must:

- be commissioned or solicited by an external body, such as a government department or private company
- be publicly available
- have one or more eligible researcher (see [Section 4.3](#))

The type of reports that are unlikely to be eligible to meet the criteria include:

- Submissions to public inquiries and consultations, including government or parliamentary inquiries
- Policy blogs or online commentaries/articles
- Briefing notes

N.B. In the Research Activity System (RAS), Research Reports for an External Body provide the option for entering a Research Statement, but this is not mandatory for this particular output type.

4. Other Requirements for Verification

4.1 Commercial Publisher

A commercial publisher is an entity for which the core business is publishing books and distributing them for sale. If publishing is not the core business of an organisation, but there is a distinct organisational entity devoted to commercial publication (and its publications are not completely paid for or subsidised by the parent organisation or a third party), the publisher is accepted as a commercial publisher.

Higher Education Providers (HEP) and other self-supporting HEP presses are also regarded as commercial publishers, provided that they have responsibility for distribution in addition to publication.

4.2 Year of Publication

The year a research output is published must be verifiable as this information informs eligibility requirements for inclusion in internal and external reports. Research outputs must only be claimed once.

The definition of 'published' in this context is the date the research output was released to its intended audience. Publications which are published as 'advance' or 'in press online' may be reported either in the year that they published online or the year of final publication. The key requirement, as stated above, is that the publication is claimed only once.

Letters from authors, editors etc. stating what year a research output was published in, even though the year is not stated within or on the work as the year of publication, are not acceptable evidence of the year of publication. There are two exceptions:

- for journal articles and/or conference publications that are produced on CD or are web-based, and do not contain a date published within or on the work being claimed, a letter from a journal editor or conference organiser verifying the published date may be acceptable.
- the date a conference was held may be acceptable evidence of the year of publication.

The year of publication is normally the latest of the year indicated as published, printed or the year of copyright. Pages showing the stated year of publication must be included in verification material.

In circumstances where the published year stated on the research output does not correctly reflect the date it was released to its intended audience, supportive verification material must be provided. A letter from the publisher will be considered sufficient supportive verification material.

4.3 Author Affiliation

The author/creator of the research output must be affiliated with ECU and the affiliation must be identified either within or on the work being claimed.

Where author affiliation with ECU is not identified within a work, the following evidence retained in the verification material would be sufficient to demonstrate author affiliation and should include:

- a statement from the author/creator indicating that he or she undertook the research leading to the publication in his or her capacity as a staff member or student of ECU and either:
 - a statement from the Director of Human Resources or Dean of Students (or equivalent) indicating that the author/creator was an appointee or student of ECU in the appropriate year (or earlier if that was when the research leading to the publication was conducted) or
 - an extract from ECU's staff or student list that lists the author/creator

Students (domestic or international) are considered to be those students undertaking HDR training to achieve a Research Doctorate (including Professional Doctorates) or a Research Masters.

Adjunct fellows, honorary staff members and staff on leave are considered affiliated if ECU is identified in the by-line.

4.4 Group/Consortia Authorship

Outputs may include in the by-line both individual authors and a group author e.g. consortia. Members of the group author may then be individually listed in the acknowledgements section of the output. Members of the group author are considered non-author contributors, or collaborators.

Therefore, if a researcher is only identified on an output as a member of a group author, they unfortunately do not meet authorship requirements. The output is not eligible for inclusion in RAS unless an ECU researcher is specifically named as an individual author on the by-line.

The only exception to this is where some groups designate authorship by group name without individual authors in the by-line. If there are no individual authors or writing committee identified on the paper, the named members of the group author are considered authors of the work.

4.5 Peer Review

An acceptable peer review process is one that involves impartial and independent assessment or review of the research output in its entirety before publication, conducted by independent, qualified experts. Independent in this context means independent of the author/creator.

Peer review is required for journal articles and conference publications. It is also required for books and book chapters that are not published by a commercial publisher.

For journal articles, any of the following are acceptable as evidence of peer review:

- listing on the ARC's Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) latest available journal list²
- listing in [Clarivate Analytics Master Journal List](#)
- classification as 'refereed' in the [Ulrich's Global Serials Directory](#)
- a statement in the journal which shows that contributions are peer reviewed
- a statement or acknowledgement from the journal editor which shows that contributions are peer reviewed
- a copy of a reviewer's assessment relating to the article

For conference publications, any of the following are acceptable as evidence of peer review:

- a statement in the conference proceedings which shows that contributions are peer reviewed
- a statement or acknowledgement from the conference proceedings editor which shows that contributions are peer reviewed
- a copy of a reviewer's assessment relating to the conference paper

For books and book chapters that are not published by a commercial publisher any of the following are acceptable as evidence of peer review:

- a statement in the book which shows that contributions are peer reviewed and in the case of book chapters, which indicates which chapters are peer reviewed, if this does not apply to all content
- a statement or acknowledgement from the publisher or editor which shows that contributions are peer reviewed
- a copy of a reviewer's assessment relating to the book or book chapter

N.B. A statement from an author that a publication was peer reviewed is not acceptable. The existence of a national or international advisory board is also not sufficient evidence that all relevant publications were assessed by members of it.

² The 'ERA Journal Lookup' tool is located on the [RAS homepage](#) and contains the current ERA eligible journal list. Government specifications for the verification of research outputs in RAS

4.6 Foreign Language Publications

Foreign language publications are eligible. The same verification evidence is required in English as for any other works. It is not necessary to translate the entire publication, but all relevant sections required for the verification of information to demonstrate that it meets the criteria of the category against which it is being claimed should be translated. This includes evidence that the work is a major work of scholarship and meets the definition of research.

4.7 Format

Works in any format, including electronic works, are eligible to be counted, provided they meet all relevant criteria in these specifications for the publications category against which they are being claimed.

5. Further Assistance

If you require further assistance, please contact:

Research Systems Coordinator

Research Services

Email: researchsystemssupport@ecu.edu.au