



**Australian Government**  
**Australian Research Council**

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Discovery Early Career Researcher Award for funding commencing 2026  
(DE26)**

**Version 1.1**

**Release Date: 12 February 2025**

- All participants should read the *Discovery Program Grant Guidelines -Fellowships (2024 edition)* (Grant Guidelines) available on [GrantConnect](#) and specific *Instructions to Applicants* documents available on Grant Connect as they contain important information for Research Office staff and individual participants preparing applications.
- The Australian Research Council (ARC) does not respond to queries from individual participants. Individual participants should direct all queries regarding ARC grant opportunities to their Administering Organisation's Research Office (or equivalent). If further information regarding the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP) is required, the Research Office should contact the NCGP at [arc-ncgp@arc.gov.au](mailto:arc-ncgp@arc.gov.au).
- Information regarding the Research Management System ([RMS](#)) is available at the [ARC website](#), or by contacting [rmssupport@arc.gov.au](mailto:rmssupport@arc.gov.au) for assistance.

This Frequently Asked Questions document will be updated as required.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. Timing of Grant Opportunities

#### 1.1 Where are the key dates for upcoming ARC Grant Opportunities advised?

Dates of all upcoming ARC Grant Opportunities are published on the NCGP scheme timelines on the [ARC Grants Calendar](#).

#### 1.2 When will the Funding Outcomes be announced?

The ARC publishes anticipated Funding Announcement dates. Please refer to the Scheme Calendar PDF on the [ARC Grants Calendar](#).

### 2. Application information

#### 2.1 Can I include requests for domestic and international travel in my application?

Yes. You can include requests for domestic and international travel in accordance with the requirements set out in the relevant Grant Guidelines, noting that researchers should include a realistic plan of how their research will be undertaken. Where an application is successful, any changes to the proposed travel plans due to the impact of environmental factors (e.g., natural disasters, pandemics, etc.) will be managed as a post award issue.

#### 2.2 What font size can I use for figures, tables, or pictures in my application to comply with ARC submission requirements?

Applicants should ensure that the text is readable both online and in print as detailed in the Instructions to Applicants. It is recommended that 12pt font is used. Readability also needs to be ensured for text within figures and tables. It is recommended that 10pt font is used.



#### 2.3 Can I use generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in writing my application?

Please see the advice to participants in ARC's Policy on Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in the ARC's grants programs available on the [ARC website](#).

#### 2.4 How should I complete the Question D1 'What is the proposed budget for your project'?

The ARC strongly recommends entering a simplified budget into the Budget Table at Question D1. Rather than list every item, each category (e.g., Travel, Field Research, Equipment) should have a one-line budget figure.

For example, if you are requesting two sets of Travel in Year 1, one at a cost of \$5000 and another at a cost of \$1500, the Budget Table should show only the total amount of funding requested for travel in Year 1: i.e., \$6500. The request will need to be justified in Question D2 'Justification of funding requested from the ARC'.

	Travel		6,500
	Total Travel Costs	 	6,500
	Travel		6,500
	Trip 1	 	5,000
	Trip 2	 	1,500

**Note:** You will not be able to enter all 'Personnel' as a one-line budget figure, as the DECRA Salary is automatically entered into the Budget Table and will require its own budget line.

### **3. Career Interruptions**

#### **3.1 How do I enter my career interruptions in the Application Form? Will assessors be able to see the details of my interruptions?**

Information on how to enter the candidate's career interruptions can be found in Question B6 'Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) – Career Interruptions' of the Instructions to Applicants (ITAs). Examples of how career interruptions can be entered can be found in the Appendix of the ITAs.

Assessors will not be able to see the details of the entered career interruptions, nor will they be made visible in the PDF.

Assessors will only see the total period which RMS will automatically calculate using the entered career interruptions. The following question and answers from Question B6 will be viewable:

**Question:** Has the participant experienced a significant interruption that has impacted on research opportunity?

**Answer:** 'Yes' or 'No'

If answered 'Yes' and career interruptions are entered, the following statement will appear:

**Question:** Total Period of Career Interruptions

**Answer (auto-fill):** 'Researcher [Participant Name] has reported a career interruption of [duration] since [Year of earliest interruption].'

#### **3.2 Regarding career interruptions - If applicants are seeking an extension at B15, does the period of extension need to match the period of career interruptions listed at B6?**

Not necessarily, B6 includes all career interruptions to inform ROPE, whereas B15 are the allowable career interruptions that determine eligibility for the scheme as defined in the Grant Guidelines.

#### **3.3 Regarding career interruptions - can you please confirm whether a primary carer of a dependent child is entitled to claim two-years career interruption for each dependent child regardless of the amount of leave taken as per the DE26 ITAs? If yes, can the two-years interruption be included at both B6 and B15?**

A researcher can claim up to two years per child if they are the primary carer as an allowable career interruption in B15, regardless of the leave taken. However, B6 asks about significant career interruptions for assessment of ROPE and requires applicants to enter the exact amount of leave taken.

In B15, an allowable career interruption is certified by the DVCR for the purpose of assessing candidate eligibility. The allowable career interruptions and associated timeframes for eligibility are listed in the Grant Guidelines and include up to two years per child.

### **4. Time Commitments**

#### **4.1 How much time must I commit to the research activities relating the project?**

As per the Grant Agreement, it is a requirement for the participant to commit a minimum of 80% (0.8 FTE) of their time on research and research capacity-building activities related to the DECRA. Research capacity-building activities could include activities that develop the participant's emerging capability for research leadership and supervision of HDR students, but these activities do not include the participant undertaking a major administrative role.

#### **4.2 How much time can I spend on activities not related to the Discovery Early Career Researcher Award such as teaching?**

As per the Grant Agreement, the participant may not spend more than 20% (0.2 FTE) of their time on activities not related to the DECRA such as teaching. The DECRA will not be extended to accommodate any periods of teaching.

### **5. Logistics support for Antarctic research**

#### **5.1 What logistics advice should I seek if my proposed research project included Antarctic research?**

If your proposed research project includes Antarctic research that will require logistical support, please contact the [Australian Antarctic Division](#) for advice about available logistical support prior to submitting your application.

### **6. Assessment of applications**

#### **6.1 Requests Not to Assess process**

A Request Not to Assess (RNTA) form is now submitted in RMS as detailed on [GrantConnect](#) and the [ARC website](#).

#### **6.2 What is the maximum character limit for justification for RNTA?**

If a request includes the name of a current ARC College of Experts member, as listed on the [ARC website](#), or in RMS at the time of submitting the RNTA form, the request must be accompanied by a justification (the maximum character count for the justification has been increased to 2,500 characters).

### **7. The National Interest Test (NIT)**

#### **7.1 What is the NIT statement and how is it assessed?**

Information regarding the requirements of the National Interest Test, including examples and detailed FAQs, can be found on the [ARC website](#).

### **8. Budget**

#### **8.1 What are the expectations for non-mandated contributions in applications submitted for upcoming Grant Opportunities?**

For those schemes where Grant Guidelines do not require minimum co-contributions by participating organisations the ARC understands that the level of cash and/or in-kind contributions pledged by Administering Organisations to show support for a proposed research project may vary. Noting that Administering Organisations still need to consider the feasibility of the proposed research project if there are reduced contributions.

ARC assessors will be instructed that they should not make assumptions about an Administering Organisation's level of commitment and support of an application solely based on lower levels of pledged additional cash and/or in-kind support than historically provided.

#### **8.2 What salary and stipend figures will appear in the Discovery Early Career Researcher Award 2026 (DE26) application form?**

The salary and stipend figures for DE26 have been updated to 2025\$ in RMS and are displayed in the table below.

**Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DECRA) candidate Salary and Stipend rates 2025\$:**

Discovery Early Career Researcher Award salary	\$126,693.00
Higher Degree by Research stipend	\$33,533.00

The salary and stipend figures will be indexed again once the fellowships are awarded so they will be paid at the appropriate rates.

Updated salary and stipend rates are available on the [ARC website](#).

**9. What has changed from last round? Summary of changes to the DE26 Application Form and DE26 Instructions to Applicants (ITAs)**

**9.1 Part B - Participant Details including ROPE**

**Question B7 - Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) - Career Narrative** is a new question designed to provide an overview of the participant's career opportunities for research, including any periods of research only employment, access to periods of research leave, and proportions of time allocated for research, teaching and administrative responsibilities.

Please note, Question B7 - Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) - Career Highlights from the last round has been removed.

**Question B8 - Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) - Evidence of the participant's research impact and contributions to the field, including those most relevant to this application.** – This question has been updated to remove references to mentoring and leadership components. A new question on mentoring and leadership has been added at B9.

**Question B9 - Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) – Mentoring and Leadership** - is a new question designed to provide information about the participant's emerging leadership and mentoring capability, including details of any experience and achievements in research training. This question has replaced the previous question on numbers of PhDs, Masters and Honours student completions.

**Question B10 - Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) - Research Outputs Context** has now decreased to 1,500 Characters or approximately 200 words since the annotation function for 10 Career – Best Research Outputs previously included at B10 is now provided at B11.

**Question B11 - Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) – 10 Career-Best Research Outputs** has a validation so that participants can only list up to 10 outputs. Text box now allows up to 150 characters, approximately 20 words annotation per output.

**9.2 Part E - Classifications and Other Statistical Information**

**Question E1 - Does this Application align with any of the National Science and Research Priorities?** This is a new question, for reporting purposes only, seeking information regarding which National Science and Research Priorities the application aligns with.

**Question E2 - Does this Application align with any of the National Reconstruction Fund priority areas?** This is a new question, for reporting purposes only, seeking information regarding which priority areas for the National Reconstruction Fund the application aligns with.

**Question E3 - Does this Application align with any other Australian Government priority areas?** This is a new question, for reporting purposes only, to replace the previous 'Australian Government Priority areas' question.

**Question E4 - To what extent does your application align with each of the following types of research activity? – Applied research, Pure basic research or Strategic basic research.** This is a new question, for reporting purposes only, to indicate which type(s) of research activity the project best aligns with by selecting a percentage weighting for each research type. The research may be proportioned across one or more research type(s), but the percentage must total 100.

Definitions of these types of research activity can be found on the ARC website, the Grant Guidelines and the Instructions to Applicants document.

### 9.3 Part F – Project Eligibility

**Question F3 – Experimental Development.** New question -Will ARC funds awarded under this Scheme be used for activities classified as 'experimental development' according to the definition in the Grant Guidelines?

## 10. Discovery Early Career Researcher Award 2026 (DE26) Information Session Questions and Answers – 4 February 2025.

### 10.1 Question B10 - (ROPE) Research Outputs Context states that “if preprints or comparable resources are cited, these should be explicitly identified in the reference list by including [PREPRINT OR COMPARABLE] after the reference”. Can references be included in B10 or is B11 - (ROPE) 10 Career-Best Research Outputs more appropriate?

Information included in B10 should help assessors understand the disciplinary context of the participant’s research achievements, without repeating information provided elsewhere in the application. Inclusion of preprints or comparable resources within the body of the application should comply with standard disciplinary practices for the relevant field. The reference should include a DOI, URL or equivalent, version number where available and/or date of access. In C1- Project Description the indication [PREPRINT OR COMPARABLE] is only required in the reference list and not in the project description itself.

If the research output you wish to reference in B10 is neither included in B11 - (ROPE) 10 Career-Best Research Outputs, nor included as a reference in the reference list at the end of C1, the full reference details for this output can be provided in B10.

### 10.2 Can forthcoming outputs (i.e., outputs that are ‘in press’) be discussed in Question B10 – (ROPE) Research Outputs Context?

The definition of ‘in press’ outputs does not include outputs that are under contract with a publisher but have not yet been written or completed, or outputs that have been submitted to a publisher but have not yet been accepted for publication.

Research outputs that are in press, i.e., outputs that are complete and accepted for publication, can be discussed in B10 – (ROPE) Research Outputs Context. The publisher’s acceptance date must be stated in the application and the acceptance record should be retained by the Administering Organisation for audit purposes.

### 10.3 Given Feasibility is weighted at 15% of the assessment criteria and, in contrast to other years, Feasibility isn’t included as a heading in C1- Project Description, can we get clarity on how Feasibility is assessed?

Feasibility has not been a heading in the Project Description section of DECRA for the past two rounds. Feasibility is assessed across the relevant sections of application, including the participant’s capability to undertake the project ROPE (B7-B11); the suitability of the design of the project in Project Quality and Innovation (C1 – Project Description); the evidence that there are sufficient supports at the administering organisation for the successful completion of the project in the Administering Organisation Letter of Support (C2); and in the appropriateness of the

budget design in Part D, including in the Justification of funding requested from the ARC (D2).

- 10.4 If the proposed project intends to use the Administering Organisation's cash contribution to fund laboratory materials that would be used by both the DECRA who is not involved in experimental development research and additionally a PhD candidate funded by the Administering Organisation whose research involves experimental development, how should this be reflected in the DE26 application to avoid a breach of the ARC experimental development policy?**

The Australian Research Council Act 2001 (amended 2024) excludes the use of ARC funding for activities classified as 'experimental development'. Experimental development activities may be included in an application, where these activities are to be funded from non-ARC sources. In such instances, the application must make clear this differentiation in the relevant parts of the application. Such clarification can be provided in one of the following parts of the application: C1 – Project Description and D3 – Details of non-ARC contributions, as well as C2 – Administering Organisation Letter of Support.

Administering organisations are responsible for certifying that ARC funds will not be used for experimental development.

- 10.5 In the Instructions to Applicants, Appendix B – Experimental Development Examples there are no Humanities, Arts, and Social Science (HASS) examples. Would you consider adding some examples for HASS?**

We are considering adding HASS examples to this Appendix in future rounds, depending on feedback regarding the new Experimental Development Question (F3) from applicants, research offices and members of the ARC Selection Advisory Committees.

- 10.6 Why are DECRA applicants not allowed to request partial PhD funding from the ARC, since only \$50K in project funding is allowed annually, a full PhD stipend funding request consumes a significant portion of the available project funds.**

As per the Discovery Program – Fellowships Grant Guidelines (2024 edition) ARC funding can be requested for a single full time equivalent (FTE) PhD in the DE26 application. If the application is successful, the Administering Organisation can split 1 PhD stipend into 2, each at 0.5 FTE.

- 10.7 Does the ARC have a date for the release of the new ARC Scheme Calendar?**

The Australian Research Council (ARC) understands the importance of the Scheme Calendar for future planning and is in the process of developing one for 2025/26.

## **11. Changes to document**

- Added section from the DE26 Opening Information Session for DE26 Questions and Answers – 4 February 2025.