Strategic Writing Guide for 2025 ARC Discovery Projects - Expressions of Interest

The Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Projects (DP) scheme provides grant funding for research projects undertaken by individual researchers or research teams. The intended outcome of the Discovery Program is to contribute to the growth of Australia's research and innovation capacity by generating new knowledge and results in the development of new technologies, products and ideas, the creation of jobs, economic growth and an enhanced quality of life in Australia. The Discovery Projects scheme provides project funding of between $30,000 and $500,000 per year for up to five years.

Discovery Projects for funding commencing in 2025 (DP25) will be run in a two-stage application process, commencing with an Expression of Interest (EOI). Shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit a full application.

Assessment Criteria for the EOI are weighted as follows:

• Investigator(s)/Capability (30%)

• Project quality and innovation (70%)

Applications invited to submit a full application will be assessed using the following weighted assessment criteria:

• Investigator(s)/Capability (30%)

• Project quality and innovation (45%)

• Benefit (15%)

• Feasibility (10%)

This document is designed to help you pitch a competitive DP25 EOI.

Helpful links

Research Office ARC DP Webpage: https://research.uq.edu.au/research-support/research-management/funding-schemes/australian-research-council-arc/arc-discovery-projects

ARC RMS: https://rms.arc.gov.au

GrantConnect: https://www.grants.gov.au

Research Office Presentations and Slides: https://www.uq.edu.au/research/research-support/research-management/applying-and-submitting-proposal/presentations-and-slides

UQ Library (metrics-impact-engagement): https://web.library.uq.edu.au/library-services/services-researchers/metrics-impact-engagement

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Assessment of EOIs

All DP25 EOIs will be assessed by members of the ARC College of Experts. UQ College of Expert members will not be involved in the assessment your application, in accordance with the ARC Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Policy. College of Expert assessors will be allocated by disciplinary fit using an algorithm that matches applications with assessors. This is based primarily on Field of Research (FOR) classification code matching, with oversight

from the ARC Executive Directors, who may consider the EOI in its entirety when allocating College of Expert assessors.

Choose your FOR codes carefully to ensure the application is directed to the appropriate College members for assessment. If your project is multi-disciplinary ensure that the FOR codes are appropriately weighted to reflect your project.

EOIs will be scored and ranked relative to other EOIs, and these rankings will be used to produce a shortlist of EOI applications. Applications recommended for shortlisting will be considered by the ARC Chief Executive Officer for decision on invitation to full application.

There will be no rejoinder process for EOIs. Unsuccessful EOIs will receive their scores, application rank and banded feedback. Shortlisted EOIs will be invited to submit a full application in RMS.

Considerations when developing the EOI

To pitch a successful EOI we strongly recommend that you consider the big picture of your full application as they are essentially two stages of a single application rather than two distinct applications. The purpose of the EOI is to assess the quality of the project and the capacity and capability of the investigator team to deliver the project outcomes, with the details of feasibility and benefit considered in the full application. The better formulated the overall project is, the more compelling the EOI pitch will be.

In response to feedback from researchers on duplicate data entry into RMS, some parts of the EOI (Part A and most of Part B) will auto-populate from the EOI into the full application and will be locked from further changes. This means that the named participants, participating organisations, and the basic design of the research program outlined in the application summary of your EOI cannot be changed in the full application. Any changes to the project team or organisations involved in the application will need to be requested and approved by the ARC post-award as a variation. Given the EOI and Full Application are two stages of a single DP application this is no different than previous rounds where circumstances that arose during the assessment of the DP application (such as a CI changing organisations) would be managed post-award if the grant was successful.

Please note that the EOI assessment will not consider eligibility under the ARC Medical Research Policy, but this will be a requirement in the full application. If you are selected to submit a full application this is not confirmation that the ARC considers your application to be eligible. Therefore we recommend that in developing your EOI, you are mindful that your proposed project is eligible under the ARC Medical Research Policy.

Further, the EOI will not include a budget, but you should consider that your proposal will be cost-effective, affordable and consists of eligible budget items. This will both aid the overall pitch of your EOI and ensure you are in a position to prepare a competitive full proposal should your application be shortlisted.

EOI applications will consist of three parts:

- Part A - Administrative Summary
- Part B - Participant Details
- Part C - Project Description

EOI Part A Administrative Summary

In this section you will outline your application title, list your project investigators and participating organisations, provide a summary of the application and the relevant Field of Research classification codes.

All responses in this section (A1-A5) will auto-populate into the full application and will be locked from further edits so we recommend that these are compelling and consistent with your future full application.

A4. Application Summary

Compelling Application Summary statements are written simply, clearly and in plain English (Australian Spelling) using aspirational terms ('the project aims to…') rather than definitive terms ('the project will…') when describing the aims. This statement is used by Minister, ARC and Assessors – so your statement needs to speak to each of these audiences. We recommend you follow the ARC required format when crafting this summary:

- Aims (What do you plan to do?)

- Significance (Why is it important?)

- Expected outcomes (What will the project achieve once completed?)

- Benefits (Who/what will benefit?)

EOI Part B Participant Details

This section primarily informs the Investigator(s)/Capability assessment criteria (30%), though it should be noted that the Part C Project Description may also contribute to this criteria:

"Taking into account research opportunity,
- *Record of high-quality research outputs appropriate to the discipline(s)*
- *evidence of excellence in research training, mentoring and supervision (where appropriate); and*
- *the capability of the investigator or team to build collaborations both within Australia and internationally".*

Most responses in this section (B1-B16, but not B17 certification by participant) will auto-populate into the full application and will be locked from further edits.

It is important that each participant provide high quality responses that align with the rest of the EOI. Use this section to showcase each participants individual expertise. Below is some advice on specific components of Part B to assist you in the development of your application. Please see the Research Office DP website for templates (for B3 and B16 where relevant).

B10. Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) - Career Highlights

This question asks you to provide up to 10 career highlights including a short context statement. This question is relatively new and we've noticed that many applicants list the highlight but do not provide any context. Strong responses will briefly explain the importance/prestige of the highlight and what it signifies. Consider, is it the premier award in your field? Were you the only person to achieve this or one of many? Is it a national or international highlight? Are you the first person at your career stage or in your discipline to achieve it?

B11. Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) - Details of the participant's career and contributions to the field, including evidence of high-quality outputs, collaboration and excellence in research training and mentoring (where appropriate).

This section is an opportunity for you to outline evidence of research impact and contributions to the field that are not research outputs (as these are covered in B13 and B14). In this response, describe how your research has led to a significant change or advance of knowledge in your field and outline how this will contribute to this proposed project. Craft your response in a way that best tells your story and focuses on your strongest points. Space is limited but try not to cram too much information in – use white space strategically and use sub-headings to direct the assessors attention. Include evidence-based content that can be understood by the intelligent non-specialist.

Consider the following questions when framing your response:

- What was the state of play before and after your research?

- What did you do that was novel?

- What outcomes/impact has been seen, and/or is there evidence for translation/uptake of your research (evidence base)

B13. Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) - Research Outputs Context

In B13 you are asked to provide information that explains the relative importance of your research outputs in disciplinary context. This can include publication and citation metrics and other content relevant to the discipline. Publication metrics are not necessarily appropriate to all researchers or every discipline, which is why including discipline specific context is important. It helps assessors, who may not be an expert in your field, to understand the disciplinary context of your publication record.

When crafting your response, consider using headings or white space to break-up the sections and aid readability. The ARC asks that you do not repeat information that appears elsewhere in your application, so be mindful of this.

Introduction

Space allowing, you might like to start with a short contextualising sentence, briefly stating the major shape of your research output. This might be a statement about your research strengths, or a list of your major outputs.

Also consider outlining the disciplinary conventions about author placement, or to explain how commercial-in-confidence conditions have affected the number of outputs during a particular period.

Publication Track Record

Highlight first/last authorship, esteem of journals where you published in your field, specific indicators of recognition within your field (citations, hot papers, metrics indicators). If relevant to your field, you might also include non-traditional outputs (with context about their relevance to your field).

Reach

If your articles are being cited broadly, you might consider listing the number of countries (or the countries themselves) citing your work.

EOI Part C Project Description

The Project Description primarily informs the Project Quality and Innovation (70%) assessment criteria, though it should be noted that the Part A Administrative Summary and Part B Participant Summary may also contribute to this criteria:

- *"Contribution to an important gap in knowledge or a significant problem*
- *Novelty/originality and innovation of the proposed research*
- *Appropriateness of the proposed research design*
- *Potential to create new knowledge and research capacity, and economic, commercial, environmental, social and/or cultural benefits for Australia".*

This document should be prepared in MS Word format using the provided template (see Research Office DP website) and, when finalised, converted to PDF, then uploaded into the application in RMS. Your project description must be no more than 2 A4 pages and use the following headings, in this order: PROJECT TITLE, PROJECT QUALITY AND INNOVATION, REFERENCES, and ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS (if required).

The information you include under these headings should address the assessment criteria, and to assist with this, the ARC has provided five questions (below) to guide your response in the PROJECT QUALITY AND INNOVATION section.

1. How does the research aim to address a significant gap in knowledge or problem?

2. What are the key research questions of the project?

3. What methods and/or conceptual/theoretical framework will be used in the project?

4. What is the anticipated new knowledge that will be created by the project?

5. How might the research result in economic, environmental, social and/or cultural benefits to Australia?

Subheadings are helpful in directing and navigating your reader through salient points of your proposal. We recommend you use the questions as subheadings to support the reviewers ability to assess your application against the assessment criteria.

Striking the right balance

Two pages to cover all of the five questions with sufficient detail is challenging. If you write too much in one section, there will be limited space to respond to the other questions.

Unfortunately, there is no one-size fits-all advice for what the optimum balance might be. Every project is different: some require more justification than others (i.e. more information about how the aims will address the gap in knowledge or problem); others involve many and/or complex methods and techniques that require a lot of explanation. But in either case, think in terms of adjusting each response to fit the Project Description, rather than the other way around.

Feedback and Revision

After drafting your Project Description, get feedback from non-experts as well as experts. Non-experts sometimes notice errors or omissions that experts have become 'blind' to through over-familiarity. Also, try to consider it from a reviewer's perspective: that is, in terms

of the Assessment Criteria. If your project description isn't persuasive and isn't answering all of the five questions, revise it. The UQ Research Office will provide Eligibility and Compliance reviews of EOIs prior to submission.

Next Steps if selected for Full Application

If your EOI is shortlisted you will be invited to submit a Full application. The full application will include:

- Locked information from your EOI including the Part A - Assessment Summary and Part B - Participant Details (excluding B17 certification by participant)

- National Interest Test Statement

- Expanded Project Description and Capability Statement

- Budget and Budget Justification

- Medical Research Statement

The UQ Research Office will provide both grants crafting support and Eligibility and Compliance checking on full applications.