

ROPE Consultation Feedback Template

1. Submission Process

Please use this template to address the questions you consider relevant to you and/or your organisation.

Questions should be answered in conjunction with information provided in the Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) consultation paper available at: www.arc.gov.au/consultations.

The ARC prefers to receive feedback electronically at the email address below.

Deadline

The due date for stakeholder feedback is **COB Friday 21 April 2017**.

Contact

Contact: Strategy and Governance Section
Postal address: GPO Box 2702, Canberra ACT 2601
Email: ARC-SG@arc.gov.au
Telephone: +61 2 6287 6633

2. Privacy Collection Statement

All submissions, excluding optional information as listed below, will be treated as public documents and may be made available to the public, in full, on the ARC website, unless you indicate that you would like all or part of your submission to remain in confidence. Automatically generated confidentiality statements in emails do not suffice for this purpose.

Respondents who would like part of their submission to remain in confidence should provide this information in the respondent details section below. Legal requirements, such as those imposed by the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*, may affect the confidentiality of your submission.

You may also make submissions anonymously or using a pseudonym.

The ARC may be required to release submissions for other reasons including for the purpose of parliamentary processes or where otherwise required by law (for example, under a court subpoena).

Relevant legislation and resources

- Privacy Act 1988
 - Australian Privacy Principles (APPs)
- Archives Act 1983
- Freedom of Information Act 1982

3. Respondent details

Mandatory information	
Name*	Early and Mid-Career Researcher Forum
Submitting as individual or institution*	<i>Institution</i>
Institutional affiliation (where relevant)*	Early and Mid-Career Researcher Forum of the Australian Academy of Science
Would you like your response to remain confidential and/or anonymous?	No
Contact email	emcr@science.org.au
Optional information	
Category that best describes your current role	<i>Other (specify below)</i>
If other, please provide details	Advocacy group for Early and Mid-Career Researchers
Gender	Prefer to not specify
Title that best describes your academic status (where applicable)	<i>Choose an item.</i>
If other, please provide details	<i>Enter 'other' details here.</i>
Age	<i>Choose an item.</i>
Number of years since your PhD (where applicable)	<i>Choose an item.</i>
Category that best describes your field of research (if applicable)	<i>Select from the options provided.</i>
Would you be willing to discuss your comments in confidence with an ARC staff member?	Yes
* may be made public	

4. Consultation Questions

For all respondents

Question 1: Should the ROPE components be streamlined (see **ROPE consultation paper– Table 1**)?

Select: Yes

If Yes, what changes would you suggest?

In the context of Early and Mid-Career Researchers, the predominant funding schemes of interest are the DECRA, DP, LP and FT schemes. The purpose of the ROPE section within these schemes is to provide applicants an opportunity to demonstrate their achievements relative to their opportunity. In the current format, it is the opinion of the EMCR Forum that the ROPE does provide some positive biases towards younger researchers. Such biases are necessary to ensure the future scientific leaders in Australia are judged on a level playing field in an increasingly competitive funding landscape. Also streamlining the ROPE process would allow for a reduced application time when applying for multiple schemes. Similarly, as an EMCR progresses through the DECRA scheme to FT, DP and/or LP, the streamlining of ROPE will provide continuity.

Question 2: Are the current time periods allocated for consideration of the ROPE components appropriate (see **ROPE consultation paper–Table 2**)?

Select: No

If No, what changes would you suggest?

An argument can be presented for the time periods of assessment for the DP, LP, DECRA and FT schemes to be limited to a 5 year limit. The longer timeframe of 10 years may bias towards later stage researchers who have demonstrated output across the full 10 year period. Focussing on the most recent 5 year period would level the playing field for all researchers. The EMCR Forum does not see this as detrimental to later stage researchers. All current research intensive applicants will have strong track records within the 5 year period.

Question 3: Should the page limits for the common components of ROPE be harmonised across the NCGP funding schemes (see **ROPE consultation paper–Table 3**)?

Select: No

If Yes, how?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Question 4: Are the details of the ROPE components appropriate? See the ROPE statement (see **ROPE consultation paper–Attachment A**) and Instructions to Applicants (see **ROPE consultation paper–Attachment B**)?

Select: No

If No, what changes would you suggest?

Of particular importance regarding the ROPE components is the element of career interruptions. With the drive towards increased diversity of funded researchers (gender, ethnicity, etc) a greater consideration of the types of career interruptions needs to be made. For example, while the element refers to “misadventure, or debilitating illness” it does not make reference to “disability”. The EMCR Forum would suggest the use of more inclusive language, eg “Career interruptions include, but are not limited to, misadventure, debilitating illness, etc”. Many EMCRs today are engaged in differing family/home situations, which may entail carer responsibilities. This may not lead to a career interruption per se, but impact on their research relative to opportunity. It is duly noted that the FT scheme does provide some opportunity to prepare a narrative on this topic and this could be extended to other schemes..

Question 5: ROPE is a part of the ‘Investigator’ selection criterion. Is the allocated weighting to this selection criterion appropriate (see **ROPE consultation paper–Figure 1**)?

Select: No

If No, why not?

There is a mismatch in the Investigator % across several of the schemes that EMCRs would typically apply for. Using the FT scheme as a benchmark, this scheme aims to fund individuals on a 4 year fellowship. Rightly so, the weighting of the scores is skewed towards the individual (40%). Conversely, the DP scheme provides funds to research teams for projects of scientific discovery. Having the same Investigator % sends the wrong message to researchers, that a DP is as much about the investigator(s) as an FT. In this case the DP % should be reduced. This in turn would encourage CIs to include EMCRs on their proposals. With respect to the DECRA it is the opposite case; the Investigator % is lower than the FT. Applicants may interpret that DECRA is about the project, not the individual. Overall realignment of the Investigator % for fellowship vs projects seems warranted.

Question 6: Is ROPE meeting its objective, that is, do applicants have suitable opportunity to compete on a level playing field by addressing their research performance evidence in the context of their opportunities to conduct research?

Select: No

If No, why not?

Overall the ROPE is balancing the playing field to allow EMCRs to compete for competitive funds. There is still more that can be done, so that researchers with atypical career pathways can also compete. As outlined in the responses to other questions, the areas of career interruption and Investigator % could be improved.

Question 7: Does ROPE advantage one discipline group over another, for example, in terms of evidence sought? Is there alternative evidence that could be considered?

Select: No

If Yes, please suggest other evidence.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Question 8: Are the ROPE requirements clear and easy to understand?

Select: Yes

If No, why not?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Question 9: Could the structure of the information requested on career interruption be improved? For example, would it be preferable to ask researchers to identify career interruptions in a table like the one below?

From when	To when	Reason
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Select: Yes

If Yes, please provide details:

A more uniform/structured section for REPORTING career interruption would improve the way information is presented by researchers, and importantly remove some of the subjectiveness of assessors. Anecdotally many people find it difficult to discuss career interruptions without feeling guilt around “making excuses” for impeded progress. Structuring this section to have a mix of predefined “drop-down” answers in addition to free form boxes for writing a narrative, would assist any researcher who has experienced a career interruption. Given that interruptions early in someone’s career can have significant impact to their future career, EMCRs would benefit from a more structured section. On this point we note with interest that the European Research Council has defined allowances to account for career interruptions due to maternity leave. For each child born, 18 months is removed from the mother’s effective “time since PhD awarded” thus extending periods of eligibility for certain schemes. This period can be longer if a longer documented amount of leave is actually taken. For paternity leave, any period of leave is similarly removed from a father’s effective “time since PhD”. Such an approach formalises the impact of parental leave as a career interruption, shifting away from a subjective individual justification of an interruption to a more objective and consistent evaluation. If such a rule were to be adopted in Australia, we would however propose a fixed extension be awarded to the primary carer, rather than specifically mothers, so as not to incentivise gender inequities in primary caring responsibilities.

Question 10: Are there any other comments you wish to make?

The ROPE aspects of the ARC funding system has served a role in rebalancing the playing field for the diversity of researchers seeking funding support. As the funding becomes more competitive it is essential that steps are made to encourage and assist this diversity of people. The EMCR Forum welcomes the opportunity provided by the ARC to highlight how the ROPE can be improved to further assist EMCRs; noting this should not be arranged as a charity for young researchers. The two main points of (i) limiting ROPE timeframe to 5 years, and (ii) more structure and definition around career interruption, are identified as easy improvements the ARC can make to the ROPE to continue the levelling of the playing field.

For researchers

Question 11: Are the ROPE elements of the proposal form easy to complete?

Select: *Yes/No*

If No, why not?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Question 12: Is ARC guidance on ROPE sufficient for you to complete the ROPE elements of the proposal form?

Select: *Yes/No*

If No, what additional guidance could be provided?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Question 13: Has there been an instance where you have not provided information about a career interruption when you had a legitimate reason to include it?

Select: *Yes/No*

If Yes, why?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Question 14: Does your career stage affect whether you include career interruption information in the ROPE statement in Proposals? If yes, how?

Select: *Yes/No*

If Yes, how?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Question 15: What are the perceived benefits or drawbacks of including career interruption information in ROPE statements in Proposals?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Question 16: Are there other elements that you consider should be included as part of ROPE?

Select: *Yes/No*

If yes, what are they?

Click or tap here to enter text.

For assessors

Question 17: Does the ARC provide you with sufficient guidance to help you assess ROPE criteria?

Select: *Yes/No*

If No, what additional guidance could be provided?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Question 18: Do you have any concerns about the application of ROPE during the assessment process? If yes, do you have any suggestions about how the ARC could improve the process?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Question: 29: What are the qualities of an excellent ROPE statement, that is, that help in your assessment of the ROPE information?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Question 20: Would further clarification of ROPE criteria and eligibility, including more defined language within the ROPE statement itself, help you provide more consistent assessments?

Select: *Yes/No*

If Yes, please describe.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Question 21: Have ROPE statements been appropriately and consistently addressed in selection panel meetings you have attended?

Select: *Yes/No*

If No, why not?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Question 22: Do you have any suggestions for improvements to the selection panel's consideration of ROPE statements?

Click or tap here to enter text.

For research office staff

Question 23: Is the guidance provided by the ARC sufficient to help you answer researchers' questions about ROPE?

Select: *Yes/No*

If No, what additional guidance could be provided?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Question 24: What sort of guidance does your Research Office provide to researchers to help them complete the ROPE elements on the proposal form?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Question 25: Are there circumstances in which your Research Office might advise a researcher not to include career interruption information in the ROPE section of their proposal?

Select: *Yes/No*

If Yes, why?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Question 26: What further support could the ARC provide to Research Offices regarding ROPE?

Click or tap here to enter text.