



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

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Discovery Early Career Researcher Award for funding commencing 2025  
(DE25)**

**Version 1.1**

**Release Date: 31 October 2023**

- All participants should read the Discovery Program Grant Guidelines - Fellowships (2023 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 [arc-systems@arc.gov.au](mailto:arc-systems@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 now 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 to ensure readability 12pt font is used and it is recommended that for the readability of text within figures and tables 10pt font is used.

#### 2.3 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.

**2.4 Do I have to meet the ARC application and project limits at the time of the grant opportunity closing date, to be eligible to apply?**

No. As per section 4.10 of the Discovery Program Grant Guidelines – Fellowships (2023 edition), DECRA candidates no longer need to meet the project limits requirements at the grant opportunity closing date. If a DECRA application is successful, the DECRA candidate must meet the project limits under section 4.9 of the Grant Guidelines, before the project can start. Project limits can be met by relinquishing existing active project(s), or relinquishing role(s) on existing active projects or withdrawing application(s) that would exceed the project limits. This may not need to occur until all applications are announced.

It is Your responsibility to determine if applying for, or holding, a project under these Grant Guidelines will affect an individual researcher's eligibility for other ARC grant opportunities as other ARC grant opportunities may have different project limits. We reserve the right to change project and application limits in future grant opportunities.

**3. Career Interruptions**

**3.1 COVID-19 has affected my academic record. Is this considered a career interruption as part of Question B6 'Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) – Career Interruptions'?**

Yes. The Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) assessment criteria allows inclusion and consideration of any significant career interruption, which has affected a participant's ability to undertake and contribute to research.

Career interruptions arising from COVID-19 can be included under ROPE.

**3.2 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 DECRA candidate 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].'

#### **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 DECRA Fellow 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 emerging capability for research leadership and supervision of HDR students, but do not include a major role in administration.

##### **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 DECRA candidate 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 2500).

#### **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 take into account 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 2025 (DE25) application form?**

The salary and stipend figures for DE25 have been updated to 2023\$ in RMS and are displayed in the table below.

### **Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DECRA) Candidate Salary and Stipend Rates 2023\$:**

Discovery Early Career Researcher Award candidate	\$112,897
Higher Degree by Research	\$29,880

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 DE25 Application Form and DE25 Instructions to Applicants (ITAs)**

### **9.1 The Form Parts in the DE25 Application Form have been re-ordered.**

The Form Parts in the Application Form have been changed to the following order to assist assessors in finding the information most crucial to their assessments:

- Part A – Administrative Summary
- Part B – Participant Details including ROPE (previously Part F)
- Part C – Project Description (previously Part D)
- Part D – Project Cost (previously Part E)
- Part E – Classification and Other Statistical Information (previously Part B)
- Part F – Project Eligibility (previously Part C)

### **9.2 Part A – Administrative Summary**

- Question A5 - The National Interest Test Statement has been made visible to assessors as it now provides an input to the peer review assessment of the application.

### **9.3 Part B - Participant Details including ROPE**

- Question B2 - Current country of residence will no longer be viewable by the assessors.
- Question B6 'Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) - Career Interruptions' has been rebuilt so that participants can enter all periods of career interruption and RMS will automatically calculate their total interruptions. Additionally, the question has been updated so that the assessors will not see the specific dates, full time equivalent and category of each interruption, nor will this information be populated into the application PDF. Assessors will only be able to see the total period of interruptions to help determine research opportunity.

- Question B7 - Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) - Career Highlights is **a new question** intended to promote equity, recognising that applicants may have varied research opportunities and focusing the evaluation on the quality rather than quantity of an applicant's research activities. An applicant can list up to 5 career highlights, such as prizes, awards, industry engagement, keynote and speaker addresses, research income, discipline specific accolades, intellectual property, supervision, non-traditional research outputs or any other career or research opportunity highlight.
- Question B8 - Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) - Details of the DECRA candidate's career, evidence of research impact and contributions to the field, including those most relevant to this application. – This is **a new question** linked to the 'Investigator/Capability' assessment criteria and intended to demonstrate an applicant's capability, mentoring and capacity building skills and achievements.
- Question B9 - Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) - How many PhDs, Masters and Honours students that the DECRA candidate has supervised have completed their degree? - This is **a new question** linked to 'Investigator/Capability' selection criteria intended to demonstrate an applicant's mentoring and capacity building skills and achievements in supervision.
- Question B10 - Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) - Research Outputs Context has now increased the character limit to 3,000 characters, or approximately 400 words. 1) There is 200 words or up to 1,500 characters in total to provide clear information that explains the relative importance of different research outputs and expectations in the DECRA candidate's discipline. 2) There is up to 200 words or 1,500 characters in total to provide clear information in the form of an annotation about the research impact of each of the ten selected career-best outputs. Each annotation can be up to 20 words in length.
- Question B11 - Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) – 10 Career-Best Research Outputs now has a validation so that applicants can only list up to 10 outputs. Please note - applicants will receive an error message in RMS if more than 10 research outputs are added to Question B11. Although research outputs listed for this question that exceed the limit of 10 will appear if the 'generate PDF' option is selected and the error message will not show on the PDF, the application will not be able to be submitted through RMS until the error is resolved and the applicant has listed no more than 10 research outputs.
- Question B17: Project Relinquishment and Application Withdrawal will no longer be viewable by assessors.

#### 9.4 Part C – Project Description

- Question C1 - Project Description has had the page limit reduced from 10 to 7 pages. The selection criteria covered elsewhere in the Application Form have been removed from the Project Description question. That is why the C1 questions addressing the assessment criteria have also been reduced.

For instance, instead of the former heading “Feasibility”, applicants are encouraged to address these selection criteria across the relevant sections of their application: including, ROPE (B7-B11); Project Quality and Innovation (C1 – Project Description); the Administering Organisation Letter of Support (C2); and the Budget Justification (D2).

## **9.5 Part D – Project Cost**

- Question D1 - What is the proposed budget for the project? In the Budget Table at Question D1, individual items are to be entered only in the Personnel sections. All other categories (Travel, Field Research etc.) should have a one-line budget figure giving the total funding request and contributions for that section. Details regarding the items making up this total amount should be provided in Question D2 (Justification of funding required from the ARC) and Question D3 (Details of non-ARC contributions) as appropriate.
- Question D2 - Justification of funding requested from the ARC has had the page limit reduced from 5 to 3 pages.

## **9.6 Changes to DE25 Application Form**

The Application Form and Instructions to Applicants have been streamlined to reduce duplication and to eliminate collection of the information that is no longer required.

9.6.1 The below questions were removed. Note the question numbers relate to their position in the last scheme round (DE24). Some of the questions have been removed where requirements are met through certification, where they duplicate information provided elsewhere in the application, or where they do not align with scheme objectives or assessment criteria.

- Question B6 - What is the nature of the proposed international collaboration activities?
- Question C3 - Current Funding
- Question C4 - Other applications(s) for funding
- Question D1 - Please confirm that potential risks have been taken into consideration for the proposed project, including the impacts of COVID-19.
- Question F3 - Fields of Research (FoR-2020) for the candidate
- Question F4 - Expertise Text
- Question F7 - What will the DECRA candidate’s time commitment be to research activities related to this project?
- Question F13 – Eligibility Current Research Fellowship or Award funded by other Australian Government agencies.

9.6.2 The ROPE questions have been updated:

- Question B6 ‘Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) - Career Interruptions’ has been rebuilt so that participants can enter all periods of career interruption and RMS will automatically calculate their total interruptions. Additionally, the question has been updated so that the assessors will not see the specific dates, full time equivalent and category of each interruption, nor will this information be populated into the application PDF. Assessors will only be able to see the total period of interruptions to help determine research opportunity.

- Question B7: Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) - Career Highlights.
- Question B8: Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) - Details of the DECRA candidate's career, evidence of research impact and contributions to the field, including those most relevant to this application.
- Question B9: Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) - How many PhDs, Masters and Honours students that the DECRA candidate has supervised have completed their degree?
- Question B10: Research Outputs Context has now increased the character limit to 3000 characters, or approximately 400 words. 1) There is 200 words or up to 1500 characters in total to provide clear information that explains the relative importance of different research outputs and expectations in the DECRA candidate's discipline. 2) There is up to 200 words or 1500 characters in total to provide clear information in the form of an annotation about the research impact of each of the ten selected career-best outputs. Each annotation can be up to 20 words in length.
- Question B11: The Research Outputs listing has been reduced to a maximum of 10 career-best outputs.

9.6.3 Question D2: Justification of funding requested from the ARC has had the page limit reduced from 5 to 3 pages.

## 10. Discovery Program Information Session for DE25 Questions and Answers – 17 October 2023.

### 10.1 B4. Research Load (non-ARC Grants and Research). What is the relevant date to determine the descending order of a candidate's Research Load (which may be different depending on the status of the project): is it the date of submission of the grant application, date of approval, etc.? And, is the listed order an eligibility requirement?

The relevant period of research load funding is from 2024 to 2028, so anything receiving funding during that period should be listed. Listing the earliest first would make it easier to read. The order will not be an eligibility issue if the content is complete.

### 10.2 B6 ROPE – Career Interruptions, if an applicant has had legitimate career interruptions but was still able/required to work at 1.0FTE in research based employment, is there a way for them to still claim an estimated quantified Career Interruption in Section B6 of DECRA applications that is still allowable i.e. if an applicant has had a Career Interruption that they estimate at 0.2FTE, but still technically worked 1.0FTE, are they able to still claim a Career Interruption in Section B6? If so, is evidence required for these circumstances?

Yes, quantified career interruptions can be specified at B6 when they have occurred concurrent with 1.0FTE. The DVCR, or equivalent, must be satisfied that there is evidence to support all career interruption claims. They can then certify the career interruption and its quantification. Please note that all periods of career interruption must be significant and not overlapping, occur after the conferral of a candidate's PhD, or equivalent, and be certified by the DVCR, or equivalent.



**10.3 How should applicants deal with the percentage of time dedicated to research post PhD? E.g. - researcher A has worked on a standard 40/40/20 employment contract; researcher B has been 1.0FTE for research. Can researcher A's employment conditions be entered into B6 under the Non-research employment category even though they are concurrent with research employment?**

The candidate is unable to claim "Non-Research Employment" because their employment conditions include a research component. They cannot claim the terms of their work contract as an allowable career interruption under the Non-research employment category at B6 or B16 if they have a research component in their employment conditions. In contrast, if a candidate is on a Teaching Only contract this would constitute a "Non-Research Employment" career interruption. Candidates are able to briefly describe their research opportunities, including the notional allocation of teaching and research activities specified in their employment contract, in Question B8 if they choose to outline such details for assessors.

**10.4 At B7 "Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) - Career Highlights" applicants are asked: "Using no more than 750 characters (approximately 100 words in total or 20 words per highlight), outline up to 5 career highlights, including a short context statement for each, where relevant." Can you please confirm the 20 words per highlight is a guide, and as long as the applicants are within the 750-character count limit, this will not be an eligibility concern?**

Yes, the ARC can confirm that the 20 words allocated to each career highlight is a guide, and it will not be an eligibility issue, but we advise candidates to enter roughly the same amount of information for each highlight, so assessors have adequate information to inform their assessment.

**10.5 B10 is a two-part question with total character count of 3,000 characters (1,500 characters for the first part and 1,500 characters / up to 20 words for the second part). Can you please confirm if applicants need to be within these individual limits to be eligible (e.g., that Research Offices need to cut and paste into Word to check each section is not over 1,500 characters, and the second part is not over 20 words per statement), or if it is sufficient to be within the total 3,000-character limit?**

The total character limit for Question B10 (Research Outputs Context) is 3,000 characters, or approximately 400 words. This means that question B10 in the DE25 Application form will not validate if the maximum character count is exceeded. The ARC guide for B10 is that:

- 1) The character limit is more important given its role in determining validation. The number of words is a guide and dependant on the length of the words you use.
- 2) The exact numbers of words an applicant uses for each of the two responses required under Question B10 can vary slightly but needs to abide by the upper limit of 3,000 characters.
- 3) We would like the annotation for each of the 10 best publications to be proportionate. The validation is based on characters so if you use approximately the same number of characters, but the number of words vary it is acceptable. The general premise is that we receive a similar amount of information for each output.

**10.6 Regarding career interruptions - If applicants are seeking an extension at B16, 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 B16 are the allowable career interruptions that determine eligibility for the scheme as defined in the Grant Guidelines.

**10.7 Previously, applicants indicated in their ROPE the percentages of their time on research/teaching/administration. Should applicants claim FTE "lost" based on these percentages at B6? Do the Research Offices now need to keep evidence for this?**

No. Applicants cannot claim career interruptions when they hold positions with standard allocations for research, teaching, and administration (e.g., 40/40/20) as there is a research component involved in their employment conditions. They can outline the details of such FTE allocations in B8, if relevant.

**10.8 B8 for the DE25 scheme is titled as 'Details of the DECRA candidate's career and opportunities for research, evidence of research impact and contributions to the field, including those most relevant to this application', however the instructions state that only 'Evidence of Research Impact and Contributions to the Field' needs to be addressed. Should details of the candidate's career and opportunities be described here, as indicated in the title?**

Yes, details of the candidate's career and opportunities can be described here along with the evidence of research impact and contributions to the field.

**10.9 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 DE24 ITAs? If yes, can the two-years interruption be included at both B6 and B16?**

Yes, the researcher can claim up to two years per child if they are the primary carer as an allowable career interruption in B16, 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 B16, 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.

**10.10 How can I list my career highlights?**

In Question B7 (Career Highlights) applicants have the option to list up to 10 career highlights (for FT) and 5 career highlights (for DE). For instance, if a candidate has been awarded a series of fellowships and they want all of them to be counted as 1 of 10 highlights, then they could state that 'For X achievement/discovery I have received Y fellowships and the most significant of these is Z Fellowship of a value of \$A'. Noting, the applicant response to question B7 cannot exceed 1500 characters (approximately 200 words) for FT or 750 characters (approximately 100 words) for DE and the application form will not validate if this character limit is exceeded.

In other words, a themed approach to this question is permissible so that a candidate can group together numbers of relevant awards or achievements under separate, individually numbered highlights.

**10.11 For ARC career interruptions, international relocation can apply up for three months interruption per relocation. Just wondering if the relocation only takes two weeks, can applicant still claim three months interruption?**

The total interruption per international relocation cannot exceed three months. In this case if it has taken two weeks to relocate then only two weeks can be claimed. Relevant evidence must be maintained and certified by the DVCR or equivalent.

**10.12 Are any supporting documents required for claiming three months interruption? Given the difficulty for this would documents such as air ticket and/or contract or residential lease contract suffice?**

There should be supporting evidence if making a claim for a career interruption. The documents need to be acceptable to the DVCR or equivalent.

**10.13 The ITAs specify the use of institutional letterhead in C2 'where possible'. As this has changed from a statement of support to a Letter of Support, is the expectation that all Letters of Support be signed by an appropriate authority (ie. DVCR)?**

Letters of Support do not need to be signed as they will now be included as part of the DVCR certification of the application.

**10.14 Is someone eligible for DECRA if they have been awarded a PhD but not yet graduated?**

The PhD needs to be conferred by the time DECRA applications close for submission (7 December 2023).

**10.15 In relation to open schemes, is there possibility of extension for those caught up in current Middle East political unrest?**

This will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. Applicants should contact their Research Office in the first instance and the Research Office is to contact the ARC regarding this.

**10.16 Does the Research Office need to keep "evidence" of all career interruptions listed in B6 and if so, what evidence is acceptable as proof of career interruptions e.g. for unemployment etc? Is this evidence of career interruption also required for all ARC fellowships (i.e. including Industry Fellowships also)?**

Yes, the Research Office needs to keep evidence. The type of evidence is up to the DVCR as they will need to certify that the information is correct in the application.

**10.17 What level of detail do you want in the budget information for justifications. Does it need to be line by line or less justification?**

The budget justification needs to provide the SAC with enough information in order to make a judgement about whether the items are essential to the project and appropriate for what is being requested.

**10.18 How strictly do you want applicants to adhere to the ‘no duplication of information within the application’ requirement?**

The request to not include information provided elsewhere in the application, is not an eligibility requirement, it is advice so that applicants present the strongest case for funding and don't repeat highlights listed in one part of the form in other sections, such as re-listing some of their ‘10 best career outputs’ in the ‘career highlights’ section. Ideally, the career highlights section would include aspects of their career not already listed in other sections of ROPE.

**10.19 For question B9 of the DE25 application, can you please clarify if the numbers reported for Masters student completions as Principal Supervisor can include both Master by Research and Master by Coursework theses? Can a DE candidate count supervision completion given changing organisations? Also, does it count when the DE candidate was an equal co-supervisor?**

In response to Question B9 (How many PhDs, Masters and Honours students that the DE candidate has supervised have completed their degree), the candidate can enter both types of theses ‘Master by Research’ and/or ‘Master by Coursework’ if the latter includes an applicable supervised research component as this is defined by the Administering Organisation

At Question B9 the DE candidate should enter the total numbers of completed supervisions as principal supervisor in their career. This will include supervisions completed as principal supervisor at organisations where they have previously held academic appointments and supervised graduate students.

In their response to B9 candidates should only provide the total number of completions where they have been the principal supervisor as designated by the Administering Organisation. Candidates can elaborate on the significance of their record of associate supervision in B8 if they wish. Please be aware that information entered on the application form needs to be accurate and certified by the DVCR, or equivalent.

**Changes to document**

- Added section from the Discovery Program Information Session for DE25 Questions and Answers – 31 October 2023.
- Part D – Project Cost updated to heading – now is 9.5 – 31 October 2023