Interdisciplinary Research

ARC Statement of Support for Interdisciplinary Research

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The Australian Research Council

The Australian Research Council (ARC) is a non-corporate Commonwealth entity established under the *Australian Research Council Act 2001* (ARC Act). The ARC is responsible for administering the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP), assessing the quality, engagement, and impact of research, overseeing the Australian research ethics and integrity framework, and providing advice and support on research matters.

The ARC is focused on driving world-class research and innovation for the advancement of Australian society. The ARC plays a critical role in providing ongoing investment in university research and encouraging the adoption and translation of that knowledge, to increase its impact and achieve greater national benefit for Australia.

Overview

The ARC is committed to supporting the highest-quality fundamental and applied research across all disciplines. This includes fostering excellence in research that traverses or transcends disciplinary boundaries and which synthesise or integrate methods and knowledge from multiple disciplinary domains.

This document outlines the processes the ARC has in place to ensure equitable assessment and evaluation of interdisciplinary research under the NCGP.

What is Interdisciplinary Research

Interdisciplinary research is conducted across the research landscape alongside other discipline-specific or single-discipline modes of enquiry. Like all forms of research, interdisciplinary research ranges from applied through to theoretical research. Interdisciplinary research can be a distinct mode of research or a combination of researchers, knowledge and/or approaches from disparate disciplines. Interdisciplinary research is taken as an overarching term that incorporates a multitude of terms used to describe research approaches that do not fit within a traditional single disciplinary structure.

Under the NCGP, examples of interdisciplinary research may include researchers from different disciplines working together in a team, researchers collaborating to bring different perspectives to solve a problem, researcher(s) utilising methods normally associated with one or more disciplines to solve problems in another discipline and one or more researchers translating innovative blue sky or applied research outcomes from one discipline into an entirely different applied research discipline.

Principles

The ARC undertakes to:

Excellence

- Identify and support the highest quality research irrespective of the disciplinary grounding, approach or methodology of that research

- Ensure that excellence in interdisciplinary research is appropriately recognised in research assessment measures

- Provide funding opportunities for researchers to collaborate and explore interdisciplinary approaches to research and to engage in emerging fields.

Access

- Assess all research on a fair and equal basis, including proposals and outputs involving interdisciplinary and collaborative research

- Ensure that ARC peer review and assessment processes, including expertise of assessors and College of Expert (CoE) members represent the diverse range of proposals and submissions received including those which are interdisciplinary

- Work to remove administrative barriers to collaboration between universities, and between universities and end users to facilitate the conduct of interdisciplinary research.

- In planning new initiatives, consider the effect of requirements on researchers involved in interdisciplinary research.

Evaluation and review

- Maintain engagement with issues that influence the ARC's operating environment including emerging priorities, the needs of stakeholders, as well as global trends and best practice with regard to interdisciplinary research

- Undertake continuous improvement through analysis and self-assessment to ensure that funding opportunities and research evaluation systems reflect world standards, are achieving their aims and are meeting the needs of ARC stakeholders

- Monitor and periodically review policies and procedures relating to interdisciplinary research to ensure they are commensurate with sector expectations, that they are being implemented as specified, and that the ARC is achieving its aims

Initiatives in place

National Competitive Grants Program

The ARC identifies and promotes excellence across all research discipline areas (except health and medical) in Australia's higher education institutions. It is well placed to fund interdisciplinary research as it is not limited to funding single discipline areas. The diverse fields of research that the ARC funds easily allows interdisciplinary research to be embedded within the NCGP schemes.

In support of its commitment, the ARC:

Identification	Identifies interdisciplinary research by: • asking researchers submitting a proposal to the ARC to identify whether their research project is interdisciplinary and in what ways the research is interdisciplinary to help with assignment, assessment and to *continue to monitor the evolution of how research is conducted, including the growth of interdisciplinary and team-based approaches to research* • using FoR categorisation to identify whether a research project is interdisciplinary to help with assignment for evaluation
Eligibility	• accepts interdisciplinary research proposals under all main funding schemes of the NCGP. In cases where interdisciplinary research is considered to be of particular importance references may be included in either the scheme objectives or selection criteria • encourages both individual and team-based research projects under key schemes across Linkage and Discovery Programs
Targeted schemes	• from time to time as directed, establishes specific initiatives to support either mechanisms considered to facilitate the conduct of interdisciplinary research, or particular interdisciplinary areas of research
Assessment and evaluation	• facilitates consideration of proposals by relevant College of Expert (CoE) members with interdisciplinary expertise or where not feasible allocates to CoE members who have broad disciplinary expertise regardless of discipline grouping • appoints CoE members on the basis of broad disciplinary expertise • allocates interdisciplinary proposals to external assessors with specific interdisciplinary expertise or from different disciplines • as required, convenes selection panels involving members with interdisciplinary expertise
Monitoring/reporting	• from time to time will analyse outcomes of selection rounds to identify whether interdisciplinary proposals are achieving different success rates • from time to time analyse outcomes of selection rounds to identify patterns and trends in interdisciplinary research to inform policy and schemes
Engagement	• participates in relevant forums relating to interdisciplinary research

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Document control

Number	Date Approved	Approved By	Brief Description
1.0	4 October 2016	CEO	ARC Statement of Support for Interdisciplinary Research
1.1	9 February 2018	CEO	Minor amendments and addition of further information on Engagement and Impact assessment has been included.
2.0	27 June 2024	A/CEO	Information on ERA and EI has been removed.