



Australian Government

Australian Research Council

General Assessor Handbook

A guide for **General Assessors** on the selection and assessment of applications under the Linkage Program Grant Opportunities for Centres of Excellence 2026

Release date: 23 September 2024

Contents

1. Overview	3
2. The assessment process	3
2.1 General Assessors	4
2.2 Scoring and ranking assessments	6
2.3 Important factors to consider when assessing	6
3. General Assessors: Selection Advisory Committee (SAC) meeting preparation	7
3.1 Roles and responsibilities before the SAC meeting	7
3.2 Roles and responsibilities at the SAC meeting and information on the Selection Meeting	9
4. Ensuring integrity of process	10
4.1 Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest (COI)	10
4.2 Research integrity and research misconduct	11
4.3 Applications outside the General Assessor's area of expertise	11
4.4 Eligibility.....	11
4.5 Unconscious bias	11
5. Contact details for queries during the assessment process	12
Appendix: Centres of Excellence Scoring Matrix and assessment criteria considerations	13
Centres of Excellence Expressions of Interest 2026 (CEEI26).....	13
Centres of Excellence (CE26)	15

1. Overview

This Handbook provides instructions and advice for **General Assessors** on the assessment process for Centres of Excellence 2026.

Centres of Excellence consists of an Expression of Interest (EOI) and Full Application stages. The information in this document is applicable to both stages unless otherwise specified.

Additional action may be required at the Full Application stage. Such information will be provided to General Assessors before any action is required.

If at any time, you have questions regarding the General Assessment process please contact the scheme team at ARC-College@arc.gov.au.

This scheme is part of the Linkage Program of the Australian Research Council's (ARC) [National Competitive Grants Program \(NCGP\)](#).

The ARC Centres of Excellence grant opportunity facilitates significant collaboration at scale which enables the complementary resources of universities, other research organisations, governments and businesses and not for profit organisations to support outstanding pure basic, strategic basic and/or applied research in all fields (except medical research). The ARC does not fund experimental development.

The ARC Centres of Excellence are prestigious focal points of expertise through which high-quality researchers collaboratively maintain and develop Australia's international standing in research areas of national priority.

The specific objectives and assessment criteria for the grant opportunity covered in the Handbook are listed in the [Appendix](#), and are also available in the relevant Grant Guidelines on [GrantConnect](#).

2. The assessment process

Peer review is the method used to assess ARC applications and is undertaken by 2 groups of experts known as General and Detailed Assessors. Experts from each group assess applications against the relevant grant opportunity assessment criteria and contribute to the process of scoring and ranking research applications. Detailed Assessors' comments should be useful for both General Assessors and applicants. Detailed Assessors' comments and scores are considered by General Assessors as part of their assessment of applications, while Detailed Assessors' comments are treated in applicants' rejoinders. The objective of the assessment process is to ensure that the highest quality research applications are recommended to the ARC Accountable Authority for funding. The ARC Accountable Authority then makes recommendations to the relevant Minister who decides which projects will be allocated funding under the NCGP. The Minister for Education is the accountable authority for the Centres of Excellence scheme.

The Centres of Excellence scheme utilises Detailed and General Assessors at both the EOI and Full Application stages. Approximately 20% of applications will be invited from the EOI stage to submit a Full Application. Shortlisted EOIs recommended to proceed to Full Application will be approved by the ARC Board.

The [Research Management System \(RMS\)](#) is the online system used for the preparation and submission of research applications, assessments and rejoinders for the ARC. The [RMS User Guide for Assessors](#), assists **General** and **Detailed** Assessors to navigate the RMS assignment and assessment process. This User Guide is available on the ARC [Assessor Resources](#) page. Here, assessors can also find additional information about the peer review process.

General and Detailed Assessors have different roles in the peer review process. Key aspects of the role of General Assessors are outlined in [Section 2.1](#).

General Assessor scores and ranks are now available to eligible applicants once grant outcomes are announced in RMS). General Assessors need to be aware that the scores released to applicants are those submitted by General Assessors prior to the RMS Meeting Application being finalised for the SAC meeting.

2.1 General Assessors

RMS profile

It is important that General Assessors ensure that their RMS profile is up-to-date and contains the following details:

- 1. Expertise text:** Please outline your expertise briefly. The following format is suggested “My major area of research expertise is in a, b, c. I have additional research experience in q, r, s. I would also be able to assess in the areas of x, y, z. The research facilities, techniques and methodologies I use are l, m, n”.
- 2. Field of Research (FoR-2020) Codes:** Please include between 6 and 10 FoR codes at the 6-digit level that reflect your key areas of expertise.
- 3. Employment History:** Please ensure that your employment history is kept up to date, to enable your organisational conflicts of interests to be identified in RMS.
- 4. Personal Details:** Please ensure your personal details are up to date, including conflicts of interest and personal material interest declarations.

This information will be used to match assessors with applications and should accurately represent your research expertise.

The Selection Advisory Committee

The Selection Advisory Committee (SAC) is responsible for reviewing applications, Detailed Assessors' assessments, and applicants' rejoinders, and for final deliberations and recommendations to the ARC Accountable Authority.

For each grant opportunity, Executive Directors select General Assessors to form a SAC. SAC members have a crucial role in the peer review process. SACs may include members from the ARC College of Experts (CoE) and other eminent members of the wider research community as well as members from research end-user communities such as Industry Experts. SAC members are chosen to provide a combination of relevant expertise and experience to support the objectives of the grant opportunity.

Following the deadline for submission of applications, ARC Executive Directors assign each application to General Assessors. The lead General Assessor (Carriage 1) is usually closely associated with the application's academic field and other General Assessor(s) (Other Carriage) have supplementary expertise. Carriage 1 has primary responsibility for the application, which will include speaking to the application and its assessments and rejoinder at the SAC meeting. Other Carriages have a responsibility to assist Carriage 1 in resolving initial recommendations, often through discussions in advance of the SAC meeting, and adding their evaluation to Carriage 1's during the SAC meeting.

Note: General Assessors are not required to agree on or align their scores for an application, but if the scores are disparate, they need to understand why their opinions differ to facilitate discussion at the SAC meeting.

For the Centres of Excellence, Detailed Assessors are assigned by an Executive Director at the ARC. The monitoring of assignments, acceptance, rejection, and submission is managed by ARC staff. If the assigned Detailed Assessors and reserves become unavailable, an ARC Executive Director will assign additional Detailed Assessors.

General assessment process

All General Assessors must declare any conflicts of interest (COI) and reject the assignment as soon as possible if a COI exists. This will assist the ARC with the timely re-assignment of applications (see [Section 4.1](#) for further information). If a General Assessor is unsure of whether a COI exists, they must seek advice from the ARC before proceeding with accepting an assignment by emailing ARC-College@arc.gov.au as soon as possible.

When assessing applications General Assessors must rely solely on the information provided within the application including referenced publications and preprints and should not seek additional information from any sources. This includes following any hyperlinks that may have been provided in the application. The inclusion of webpage addresses/URLs and hyperlinks is only permitted under certain circumstances such

as publications (including preprints) that are only available online and Letters of Support. Webpage addresses/URLs and hyperlinks should not be used to circumvent page limits, nor should they provide information that is not contained in the application. All information relevant to the application must be contained within the application.

Saving preliminary assessments

Following the assignment process, General Assessors independently read and assess all of their assigned applications against the relevant assessment criteria, based on an [A to E Scoring Matrix](#) (although the matrix provides guidance on the expected averages across the entire set of applications, each application must be marked on its own merits). These preliminary assessment scores should be saved as drafts in RMS (**but not submitted**). General Assessors enter scores into RMS; they do not enter text.

In the rejoinder process, applicants receive anonymised Detailed Assessors' comments only without the commensurate scores. The applicant then has an opportunity to provide a rejoinder to address any issues raised by the Detailed Assessors.

After the rejoinder process has closed, General Assessors review the Detailed Assessors' comments and scores and the applicants' rejoinder text. Detailed assessments and rejoinders will inform General Assessors' scores and at this point General Assessors can review and if necessary, revise and save their preliminary scores. General Assessors then ensure that their draft scores are entered in RMS (**but not submitted**) before the preliminary assessment due date determined by the ARC, enabling their co-Carriages to view the scores and to facilitate discussion and ensure that all co-Carriages have an opportunity to understand the reasoning behind any differences in Carriage scores.

Revising and submitting final assessments

For applications that have a difference in scores between the General Assessors, Carriage 1 is responsible for contacting the other Carriage(s) to discuss their scores. General Assessors are not required to agree on or align their scores for an application, but if the scores are disparate, they need to understand why their opinions differ to facilitate discussion at the SAC meeting. Following this discussion, final scores and ranks must be **submitted in RMS** by the required final due date.

When all final scores are submitted, RMS produces a ranked list of all applications (see [Section 2.2](#) for further information). This list is used at the SAC meeting to assist with the identification of applications that are of sufficient quality to be fundable. The ranking of applications on this list is not final and the meeting process provides several opportunities for the SAC to discuss and review all applications, as outlined below.

Inappropriate assessments

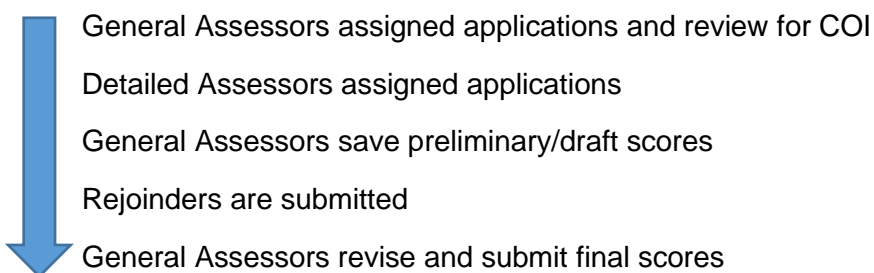
If General Assessors are concerned about the appropriateness of any assessment text or comments that do not match scores from Detailed Assessors, or identify a potential COI or potential breach of confidentiality, including but not limited to, the use of generative Artificial Intelligence technology¹, then they **must** contact the ARC by sending an email to ARC-College@arc.gov.au as soon as possible. The ARC will investigate the concerns and decide whether an assessment should be amended by the Detailed Assessor or removed from the process. The latter happens only in rare circumstances and requires ARC Senior Executive approval.

Order of the assessment process

The following diagram provides an overview of the General Assessor's assessment process.

¹ [Policy on Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in the ARCs grants programs 2023.pdf](#)

Diagram 1: Overview of the General Assessor Assessment Process



2.2 Scoring and ranking assessments

Scoring

When applying the Scoring Matrix, General Assessors should have regard for the specific grant opportunity objectives (see [Appendix](#)) and assessment criteria.

Scoring applications against assessment criteria can be a difficult exercise when Assessors might only look at a small sub-set of applications. Bands within the Scoring Matrix ideally represent a distribution across all applications submitted to a grant opportunity.

Only the very best applications should be recommended. As a guide, approximately 10% should fall into the top scoring band ('A'). These would have been assessed as near flawless applications across all assessment criteria.

A Scoring Matrix for the scores A to E is provided in the [Appendix](#) and should guide scoring by both Detailed and General Assessors.

Ranking

Each application must have a unique rank. Although RMS will use the **overall application scores** to automatically rank an Assessor's assessments as these are completed in RMS, if multiple applications have the same **overall application scores** these applications will be flagged and the assessor must assign a unique rank to differentiate equally scored applications. Differentiation should be based on how you compare the applications in relation to the Scoring Matrix.

Assessments should be submitted when all applications have been assigned 1) a score and 2) a unique ranking.

2.3 Important factors to consider when assessing

Objectives and assessment criteria

Each grant opportunity has specific objectives and assessment criteria. Assessors must have regard to both the objectives and the assessment criteria as outlined in the relevant Grant Guidelines and the [Appendix](#) of this document.

National Interest Test (NIT)

Applicants must provide a NIT statement, which outlines the national interest of their research proposal. This statement is provided with other elements of an application recommended for funding for final consideration by the Minister.

The NIT statement provided by the applicant is part of their application, is required to be certified by the DVCR and will be available to all assessors. It should be considered as part of the assessment of the application. The National Interest Test is to be used with the rest of the information in the application to inform an assessor's assessment of the Assessment Criteria as included in the [Appendix](#).

The ARC will accept the DVCR's certification as final and will not review or make requests for changes to a NIT. Additional information regarding the National Interest Test is available on the [ARC website](#).

Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE)

The ROPE assessment criterion requires all Assessors to identify and consider research excellence relative to a researcher's career and opportunities for research. It aims to ensure that NCGP assessment processes accurately evaluate a researcher's career history relative to their current career stage and consider whether their productivity and contribution is commensurate with the opportunities that have been available to them.

The required elements of ROPE vary according to the objectives of each grant opportunity. All General Assessors should be familiar with the full [ROPE statement](#) located on the ARC website.

Interdisciplinary research

The ARC recognises the value of interdisciplinary research and the ARC's commitment to supporting interdisciplinary research is outlined in the [ARC Statement of Support for Interdisciplinary Research](#).

Interdisciplinary research can be a distinct mode of research, or a combination of researchers, knowledge and/or approaches from disparate disciplines. 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; researchers 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 research discipline.

Assessors are required to assess all research on a fair and equal basis, including applications and outputs involving interdisciplinary and collaborative research. To assist with this, the ARC facilitates consideration of applications by relevant General Assessors with interdisciplinary expertise or where not feasible, applications are allocated to General Assessors who have broad disciplinary expertise regardless of discipline grouping. Interdisciplinary applications should be allocated to Detailed Assessors with specific interdisciplinary expertise or to Detailed Assessors from the different disciplines covered in the application.

Preprints or comparable resources

General Assessors should consider the merit of publications including preprints and comparable resources that are listed in the application. Assessors may access hyperlinks and evaluate if a citation included in the application is a crucial part of the research discourse, and evaluate the suitability, quality and relevance of the research output to help them determine the quality and novelty of the proposed research. However, Assessors should not use online search engines to identify or evaluate applicants' publications that are not included within the application.

Preprints or comparable resources can be included in any part of an application. This includes within the Research Outputs list and the body of an application. An application will not be deemed to be ineligible for the citing and listing of preprints or comparable resources.

A preprint or comparable resource is a scholarly output that is uploaded by the authors to a recognised publicly accessible archive, repository, or preprint service (such as, but not limited to, arXiv, bioRxiv, medRxiv, ChemRxiv, Peer J Preprints, Zenodo, GitHub, PsyArXiv and publicly available university of government repositories etc.). This will include a range of materials that have been subjected to varying degrees of peer review from none to light and full review. Ideally, a preprint or comparable resource should have a unique identifier or a DOI (digital object identifier). Any citation of a preprint or comparable resource should be explicitly identified as such and listed in the references with a DOI, URL or equivalent, version number and/or date of access, as applicable.

Inclusion of preprints or comparable resources within the body of the application should comply with standard disciplinary practices for the relevant field.

3. General Assessors: Selection Advisory Committee (SAC) meeting preparation

3.1 Roles and responsibilities before the SAC meeting

After the assessment period has closed General Assessors will:

1. be unable to access applications for a short period whilst ARC staff undertake administrative functions to prepare for the SAC meeting.
2. be advised by the ARC when the RMS Meeting Application (App) opens.
3. have access to all applications allocated to their panel in the RMS Meeting App where they do not have a COI.
4. be required to attend a pre-meeting videoconference to be updated on the SAC meeting processes.

Carriage 1: Reviewing applications in the RMS Meeting Application

The RMS meeting application will contain a ranked list of applications. Prior to the SAC meeting, Carriage 1 should review the Detailed and General Assessors' assessments and scores, and the applicant's rejoinder, and consider whether they believe there are any applications that have received an inappropriate ranking.

Particular attention should be given to applications where a ROPE case (see [Section 2.3](#)) has been made that has been neglected by Detailed Assessors, where an application has received less than the desired number of detailed assessments, or where an anomalous Detailed assessment may materially affect the ranking of the application. Carriage 1 should identify such applications by emailing ARC-College@arc.gov.au and prepare a recommendation for consideration by the SAC.

ARC staff will also identify applications with 'disparate' scores and will flag these for the attention of SAC members, noting that these applications are not automatically discussed at the selection meeting. SAC members can request these (or any other) applications to be tagged for discussion at the meeting. Carriage 1 will be expected to lead discussion on these applications.

It is recommended that SAC members read the summary of all highly ranked applications and those tagged in RMS as 'To Discuss by SAC' (accessible through the RMS Meeting App) as they are expected to contribute to discussions for all applications during the meeting.

Carriage 1: Preparing a draft budget recommendation (Full Application stage only)

For highly ranked applications or applications tagged for discussion in RMS as 'To Discuss by SAC', it is Carriage 1's responsibility to recommend a draft one-line budget amount for each funding year of the application to the SAC. The draft budget recommendation is entered directly into RMS (details are in the section below) prior to the SAC meeting.

The draft budget recommended for each year must not exceed the amount requested in the application. Budget recommendations are discussed by the SAC members and the recommended budget is forwarded to the ARC Accountable Authority as part of the SAC's funding recommendations.

Carriage 1 may need to discuss or justify their budget recommendation at the SAC meeting and should therefore bring their own notes to the meeting on how they arrived at their final recommended funding amount.

To prepare a one-line budget for each year of funding, Carriage 1 should consider the following:

1. The extent to which specific budget items are well-justified
2. Whether the budget items are supported or not supported as outlined in the Grant Guidelines for the relevant grant opportunity
3. The minimum/maximum funding amounts relevant to the specific grant opportunity's Grant Guidelines
4. The costs of any recommended remunerated participants
5. Whether they are satisfied that the project can still be completed with the recommended budget
6. Whether the budget for the application has been considered on merit and at this stage not compared to other applications

Carriage 1: Entering draft budgets in RMS Meeting Application before the Selection Meeting (Full Application stage only)

Following the ARC email confirming that RMS Meeting Application is opened, Carriage 1 can enter the draft budgets directly in RMS.

1. Prepare draft budgets for your Carriage 1 applications that have an overall application rank from 1 to the bottom of the Discussion Range (the Discussion Range will be tagged in the RMS Meeting application) or tagged as 'To Discuss by SAC'.
2. Prepare a draft budget figure (\$) for each year of funding of your Carriage 1 applications.
3. In RMS, open specific scheme Meeting Application (see below)

Scheme Round	Panel	Actions
DE22 Round 1		Open

4. Under 'Carriage' select and filter the Carriage 1 applications and select 'Apply'.

Application Id

Grant Status

Awards
All applications

Discipline Groups

Carriage
Carriage 1 Applications

- a) Enter the draft budget total for each year, then select 'Save Draft'.

Draft Budget

[Save Draft](#)

Editing Instructions:
Please enter your draft budget in the Funded field in the Total line (the top line of the budget) for each applicable year. Only enter in whole dollars to total field per year. Note: A red box will appear if you enter more than the requested amount. A blue box will appear if you enter less than the minimum amount of funding required.

Supported \$0 / \$359,997 (0%) Requested

Description	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		Year 4		Year 5	
	Requested	Funded	Requested	Funded	Requested	Funded	Requested	Funded	Requested	Funded
Total	\$118,306	\$0	\$117,846	\$0	\$123,845	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Personnel	\$96,681	\$0	\$98,581	\$0	\$100,510	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Enter a total figure for each year in the top line of the budget table, then select 'Save Draft' at the top left of the budget table.

Note:

Draft Budget

[Save Draft](#)

Editing Instructions:
Please enter your draft budget in the Funded field in the Total line (the top line of the budget) for each applicable year. Only enter in whole dollars to total field per year. Note: A red box will appear if you enter more than the requested amount. A blue box will appear if you enter less than the minimum amount of funding required.

Supported \$274,000 / \$359,997 (76%) Requested

Description	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3	
	Requested	Funded	Requested	Funded	Requested	Funded
Total	\$118,306	\$100,000	\$117,846	\$125,000	\$123,845	\$0
Unspecified Funding	\$0	\$100,000	\$0	\$125,000	\$0	\$0

Pink highlighting indicates unsaved changes.

A red box indicates you have entered more than the requested amount, you will need to reduce your draft total for this year.

3.2 Roles and responsibilities at the SAC meeting and information on the Selection Meeting

Each SAC meeting will comprise a Chair, Deputy Chair, SAC members (Carriage 1, Other Carriages and panel members) and ARC Staff.

The role of the Chair is to:

1. lead the committee through the process to make a recommendation on the applications
2. call the panel to a vote for applications when necessary and

3. ensure the meeting runs in a timely manner

For applications where the Chair is conflicted out of the room or is Carriage on an application, the Deputy Chair will act in the role. Where multiple conflicts arise, other SAC members may be called on to be acting Chair.

When you are Carriage 1 on an application, your role is to:

1. lead discussion for that application giving a brief summary of the strengths and weaknesses, and then making a recommendation to support, not support or vote
2. vote on applications when called by the Chair
3. **Full Application stage only** - recommend a one-line budget for applications that are recommended for funding (the draft budget should already be entered in RMS).

All other Carriages and panel members will:

1. contribute to discussions of whether an application should be supported, not supported or voted on
2. vote on applications when called to do so by the Chair

ARC staff are responsible for:

1. providing secretariat support for meetings
2. providing procedural advice to the SAC
3. ensuring that correct administrative procedures are followed
ensuring COIs and any potential inappropriate discussions are managed correctly

4. Ensuring integrity of process

4.1 Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest (COI)

The [ARC Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Policy](#) is designed to ensure that all COIs are managed in a rigorous and transparent way. It aims to prevent individuals from influencing decisions unfairly and to maintain public confidence in the integrity, legitimacy, impartiality and fairness of the peer review process.

Any individual who is reviewing material for the ARC must agree to comply with the confidentiality and COI statement and must clearly disclose any material personal interests that may affect, or might be perceived to affect, their ability to perform their role.

All Assessors must maintain an up-to-date RMS profile, including personal details, current employment details and previous employment history within the past 2 years. This information will assist the ARC with the identification and management of organisational conflicts of interest.

Assessors reviewing ARC grant application who have identified a conflict of interest must reject the grant application assigned in RMS to assist the ARC in the management of conflicts of interest.

Examples of material personal interests that are considered by the ARC to be COIs include holding funding with a named participant within the past 2 years or having been a collaborator or co-author with a named participant on a research output within the last 4 years. For more information on disclosure of COIs, including material personal interest declarations, please refer to the [Identifying and Handling a Conflict of Interest in NCGP processes](#) document.

In RMS, Assessors will be asked to indicate their willingness to comply with this policy before proceeding to assess. They can do this by selecting the 'Accept' button.

Extract from the ARC [Policy on Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in the ARC's grants programs](#) (July 2023):

The [ARC Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Policy \(2020\)](#) requires that all officials and individuals carrying out ARC business, including assessors and peer reviewers, are required to preserve the principles of confidentiality outlined in the policy. **Release of material into generative AI tools constitutes a breach of confidentiality and peer reviewers, including all Detailed and General Assessors, must not use generative AI as part of their assessment activities.**

Assessors are asked to provide detailed high quality, constructive assessments that assist the Selection Advisory Committees to assess the merits of an application. The use of generative AI may compromise the integrity of the ARC's peer review process by, for example, producing text that contains inappropriate content, such as generic comments and restatements of the application.

4.2 Research integrity and research misconduct

If in the course of undertaking an assessment you identify or suspect a potential research integrity breach or research misconduct, please notify the ARC Research Integrity Office (researchintegrity@arc.gov.au) in accordance with Section 5 of the [ARC Research Integrity Policy](#). Please do not mention your concerns in any assessment comments.

The ARC Research Integrity Office will consider whether to refer your concerns to the relevant institution for investigation in accordance with the requirements of the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research \(2018\)](#). You should provide sufficient information to allow the ARC to assess whether there is a basis for referring the matter to the institution and to enable the relevant institution to progress an investigation into the allegation (if required).

Foreign financial support, foreign affiliations and foreign honorary positions. Participants applying for ARC grants are required to answer questions in their application relating to foreign financial support and foreign affiliations, including current and previous associations. Participants are required to declare:

- foreign financial support (cash or in kind) for research related activities
- current or past associations or affiliations with a foreign sponsored talent program (for the last 10 years)
- current associations or affiliations with a foreign government, foreign political party, foreign state-owned enterprise, foreign military and/or foreign police organisations

If in the course of undertaking an assessment you identify or suspect a potential issue of foreign interference, please send an email highlighting your concerns to the ARC via ARC-College@arc.gov.au as soon as possible.

In RMS, Assessors will be asked to indicate their willingness to comply with this policy before proceeding to assess. They can do this by selecting the 'Accept' button.

4.3 Applications outside the General Assessor's area of expertise

The ARC receives applications from many scholarly fields. Occasionally you will be asked to assess an application that does not appear to correspond closely with your area of expertise. As a General Assessor, your views are valuable as they are being sought on the entire application, drawing on your expert knowledge as a researcher. If you are concerned about a particular application's research area and your ability to provide a robust assessment, **please contact the ARC via ARC-College@arc.gov.au before rejecting the assignment.**

4.4 Eligibility

If, while assessing an application, you have concerns about eligibility, ethics or other issues associated with an application, **you must not include this information in your assessment.** Please send an email highlighting your concerns to **the relevant scheme team via ARC-College@arc.gov.au** as soon as possible. The ARC is responsible for investigating and making decisions on these matters, and Assessors should not conduct investigations at any point. Please complete your assessment based on the merits of the application **without** giving consideration to the potential eligibility issue.

4.5 Unconscious bias

General Assessors should also be aware of how their unconscious bias could affect the peer review process.

Unconscious biases are pervasive and may relate to perceptions about a range of attributes including:

1. gender and/or sexuality
2. social/cultural background
3. career path

4. institutional employer
5. discipline

The ARC encourages Assessors to recognise their own biases and be aware of them in their assessments. A selection of short, online tests for identifying unconscious biases is available via Harvard University's ['Implicit Social Attitudes' demonstration sites](#).

5. Contact details for queries during the assessment process

For **all** queries relating to assignment and assessment, accessibility, SAC and SAC meetings, please email ARC-College@arc.gov.au

Appendix: Centres of Excellence Scoring Matrix and assessment criteria considerations

Assessors assign a score and do not have to consider the weighting of a criterion as this is applied automatically within RMS. Assessors should use their judgement and experience to assess the appropriate score within the context of the relevant discipline.

Grant Guidelines

The objectives and assessment criteria below are from the *Linkage Program Grant Guidelines: ARC Centres of Excellence (2024 edition)* which are available on [GrantConnect](#).

Objectives

The ARC Centres of Excellence schemes objectives are to:

- undertake internationally innovative, collaborative and transformational interdisciplinary research to address the most challenging and significant research problems, advance knowledge, and deliver knowledge impact;
- synergise Australian research strengths, create new national and international networks and research programs to ensure that Australian research builds critical mass, is globally connected and has the capacity to work on large-scale problems over an extended period of time;
- build capacity and a diverse and inclusive Australian research workforce by attracting and retaining, from within Australia and abroad, established researchers of high international standing as well as high potential early and mid-career researchers and research students;
- develop an exemplary research culture that provides high-quality career development opportunities for research students and early and mid-career researchers and promotes a diverse, equitable and inclusive research environment;
- establish research programs that lead to significant knowledge impact and end-user impact through the delivery of outcomes for partners including industry (private sector, not-for-profits, community groups, and/or government and government agencies); and
- create new knowledge and understanding that is value for money, with the potential to enhance the scale and focus of research in Australian Government priority areas and deliver economic, commercial, environmental, social and/or cultural benefits for Australia.

Scoring Matrix

Assessment criterion	(A) Exceptional Of the highest quality and at the forefront of research in the field. Approximately 10% of Applications should receive scores in this band.	(B) Outstanding Of high quality and strongly competitive. Approximately 15% of Applications should receive scores in this band.	(C) Excellent Interesting, sound and compelling. Approximately 20% of Applications should receive scores in this band.	(D) Very Good Sound, but lacks a compelling element. Approximately 35% of Applications are likely to fall into this band.	(E) Good Has significant weaknesses. Approximately 20% of Applications are likely to fall into this band.
----------------------	---	---	--	---	---

Centres of Excellence Expressions of Interest 2026 (CEEI26)

Key Dates and Notes

General Assessors

Task	CEEI26 Dates	Detail
Assessment Period	27/09/2024 – 19/11/2024	Carriages 1, 2, 3 and 4 Assess applications independently to determine preliminary and provisional scores and ranking.
Rejoinder	06/11/2024 – 19/11/2024	Applicants to read comments from Detailed Assessors and submit a rejoinder.
Review and finalise assessments	20/11/2024 – 28/11/2024	Carriages 1, 2, 3 and 4 Review Detailed assessments and rejoinders. Revise and finalise scores and ranks in RMS.
SAC Selection Meeting	16/12/2024 – 18/12/2024	SAC members discuss shortlist and recommend applications.

Assessment criteria – Centres of Excellence Expressions of Interest 2026 (CEEI26)

Assessment criteria and weightings	Assessment criteria details
Research Program – Quality and Innovation: 70%	<p>Demonstrate how the Centre will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – undertake innovative and transformational research at the leading edge internationally; – synergise Australian research strengths and build critical mass with enhanced capacity for interdisciplinary, collaborative approaches to address the most challenging and significant research problems and advance knowledge; and – build high quality new national and international networks and research programs to ensure that Australian research is globally connected and has the capacity to work on large-scale problems over longer periods of time. <p><u>If the project involves Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander research additional criteria include:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the project’s level of collaboration, engagement, relationship building and benefit sharing with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and First Nations Organisations and Communities; – the project’s strategy and mechanisms for Indigenous research capacity building within the project; – the project’s level of internal leadership of Indigenous research; – the project’s adherence to the Australian Indigenous Data Sovereignty Principles (2018); and – the project’s understanding of, and proposed strategies to adhere to, the AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research (2020) and NHMRC’s guidelines on Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities (2018).
Investigators – Capability and Alignment: 30%	<p>Demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – how the Centre Director, CIs and PIs have appropriate capability and skills, to conduct and deliver the proposed Research Program, taking into account Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE); – the capacity of the Investigators to develop a diverse and inclusive Australian research workforce; and – the capability of the Investigators to realise knowledge impact and/or end user impact in the fields aligned to the proposed Research Program.

Centres of Excellence (CE26)

Key Dates and Notes

General Assessors

Task	CE26 Dates	Detail
Assessment Period	02/04/2025 – 21/05/2025	Carriages 1, 2, 3 and 4 Assess applications independently to determine preliminary and provisional scores and ranking.
Rejoinder	08/05/2025 – 21/05/2025	Applicants to read comments from Detailed Assessors and submit a rejoinder.
Review and finalise assessments	22/05/2025 – 04/06/2025	Carriages 1, 2, 3 and 4 Review Detailed assessments and rejoinders. Revise and finalise scores and ranks in RMS.
SAC Selection Meeting	14/07/2025 – 18/07/2025	SAC members discuss shortlist and recommend applications.

Assessment criteria – Centres of Excellence (CE26)

Assessment criteria and weightings	Assessment criteria details
Research Program – Quality and Innovation: 20%	<p>Demonstrate how the Centre will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – undertake innovative and transformational research at the leading edge internationally; – synergise Australian research strengths and build critical mass with enhanced capacity for interdisciplinary, collaborative approaches to address the most challenging and significant research problems and advance knowledge; and – build high quality new national and international networks and research programs to ensure that Australian research is globally connected and has the capacity to work on large-scale problems over longer periods of time. <p><u>If the project involves Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander research additional criteria include:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the project's level of collaboration, engagement, relationship building and benefit sharing with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and First Nations Organisations and Communities; – the project's strategy and mechanisms for Indigenous research capacity building within the project; – the project's level of internal leadership of Indigenous research; – the project's adherence to the Australian Indigenous Data Sovereignty Principles (2018); and – the project's understanding of, and proposed strategies to adhere to, the AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research (2020) and NHMRC's guidelines on Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities (2018).
Investigators – Capability and Alignment: 20%	<p>Demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – how the Centre Director, CIs and PIs have appropriate capability and skills, to conduct and deliver the proposed Research Program, taking into account Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE); – the capacity of the Investigators to develop a diverse and inclusive Australian research workforce; and

Assessment criteria and weightings	Assessment criteria details
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the capability of the Investigators to realise knowledge impact and/or end user impact in the fields aligned to the proposed Research Program.
<p>Governance, Leadership and Institutional Support: 20%</p>	<p>Demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the appropriateness of the organisational structure of the Centre, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leadership: The ability and vision of the Centre Director and leadership team, including their capacity for strategic planning and management ▪ Roles and responsibilities: the suitability of the governance structure for the management of dispersed teams and the appropriateness of the allocation of roles and their associated reporting arrangements for delivery of Centre objectives ▪ Operational organisation: suitability of specified milestones, strategic and research translation plans and design of financial systems for achievement of objectives and delivery of outputs, outcomes and benefits – alignment and relevance of draft key performance indicators to the proposed Centre’s objectives, project outputs, outcomes and benefit; and – how the combined level of support and commitment from the Administering Organisation, Other Eligible Organisations and Partner Organisations will be sufficient for the proposed Centre.
<p>Research Environment, Mentoring and Culture: 20%</p>	<p>Demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the quality of the Centre’s plans to promote equity, diversity and inclusion within a supportive and vibrant research environment, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the development of research and professional skills for research students ▪ career development of early and mid-career researchers through the provision of leadership and professional skills training, mentoring, as well as opportunities to lead research projects and supervise research students – contribution of the Centre to developing good practice in Responsible Research through appropriate training in research integrity, ethics, reproducibility, open research strategies and data management; and – the quality of the Centre’s plans for public engagement and outreach.
<p>Outcomes and Linkages: 20%</p>	<p>Demonstrate that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the proposed research program articulates pathways to knowledge impact that delivers benefit to Australia; – partners and end-users are strongly engaged in the proposed research program through clear strategies for knowledge exchange (and co-creation); – the supporting organisational arrangements and plans relating to ownership, mobilisation of intellectual property and commercialisation of research are mature; – the proposed research program delivers effective outcomes for its requested resources; and – the proposed research program will develop high level international linkages to achieve the program’s research, training, and translation and impact outcomes.