Preparing your ARC ROPE
ARC Discovery Project

This information is based on the current ARC Rules, last year’s Instructions, assessor’s comments and expert external advice. It was updated on 14 January 2015.

What is a ROPE?
Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) provides a way for the ARC to compare your research CV to everybody else’s, on the basis of your time and capacity (opportunity) to undertake the proposed research. This is one of the most important parts of the application. It is worth 40% of the assessment for Discovery, 35% for DECRA and 20% of the assessment for Linkage. Some assessors read candidate’s ROPEs first, to get a sense of the team.

ROPE is more than a list of publications. It allows you to present your work in context. It is your opportunity to showcase your skills and achievements as well as demonstrate the benefits of your research and why your research should be considered superior to other candidates’.

How to get started
Read the ARC’s Instructions to Applicants and Funding Rules. Pay attention to them and follow them. The ARC tells you exactly what it wants you to do.

Read an example ROPE or two from the library of successful grant applications (http://www1.rmit.edu.au/browse;ID=vfmnsisnrx3f1).

What is required?

F12. Details on your career and opportunities for research.
Write a maximum of 5250 characters (approximately 750 words).
Provide and explain:
(i) The number of years since you graduated with your highest educational qualification;
(ii) The research opportunities that you have had in the context of your employment situation (for example, Early Career Researcher), the research component of your employment conditions, and any unemployment or part-time employment you may have had;
(iii) If you are university based, indicate as appropriate the percentage of your current role in research-only, teaching and research, teaching-only, teaching and administration, research and administration, administration-only academic, researcher in business, program or project manager or other business role, giving any additional information (for example, part-time status) needed to understand your situation. Give an indication of what percentage of time you have spent in those roles; or
If you are industry based, indicate as appropriate the percentage of your current role in industry, research and administration, researcher in business, program or project manager or other business role, giving any additional information (for example, part-time status) needed to understand your situation. Give an indication of what percentage of time you have spent in those roles;
(iv) Any career interruptions you have had for childbirth, carer’s responsibility, misadventure, or debilitating illness;
(v) The research mentoring and research facilities available to you; and
(vi) Any other aspects of your career or opportunities for research that are relevant to assessment and that have not been detailed elsewhere in this Proposal (e.g. any circumstances that may have slowed down your research and publications or affected the time you have had to conduct and publish from research.
How to answer

- Answer the questions in the given order and number them, i.e. (i) - (iv).
- If you have multiple Chief Investigators, answer in the third person (Professor Example has...). That way, it is easy for reviewers to understand whose ROPE they are reading.
- In regards to tone, think of yourself as writing for a non-specialist but interested reader, such as a minister.
- Start with a clear summary statement – ‘I am scholar of...I was awarded my PhD five years ago in November 2011, from the University of.... My thesis pursued...Since then 75% of my work time has been devoted to research; 15% to teaching, and 10% to administration and engagement’.
- Lead the reader where you want them to go, and write clearly and concisely.
- One way to structure this section is to write a short paragraph on each recent past position you have held, in reverse date order, and outline: any grants you have been awarded to conduct your research; your research time allocation; projects you have undertaken; mentoring you have received (e.g. specific names of academics) and provide (e.g. HDR supervision); peer and industry networks you have established; publishing opportunities; any workshops/seminars/programs you have developed, coordinated or administered; and the research facilities available to you at RMIT.
- This section is all about elaborating on how you have used the resources available to you to generate research opportunities. For example, ‘in this year, in this environment, I was exposed to...method/team/project work...which resulted in...publication in the leading journal of...’
- Don’t discuss teaching or non-research activities in detail. The focus is on your opportunities for research.
- Don’t assume the assessors know the questions. If a question is not relevant don’t just state ‘Not applicable’ or ‘None’. Say ‘I have had no significant career interruptions’ (for example).
- Be positive.
  Not good: ‘I don’t have much time for research’.
  Better: ‘My workplan allows 10% of my time for research, 80% teaching and 10% administration. I have made the most of this by...’
  Not good: ‘I have a heavy teaching load.’
  Better: ‘I teach x hours per week over y courses, each of which has in excess of z students.’ Be careful – assessors have heavy teaching loads, too.
- Your concluding paragraph on career interruptions should outline the specific month or year when your work was impacted by the noted event, but does not need to elaborate on any personal or confidential details. End this discussion positively by stating how during this difficult time you were still able to produce...research outputs.
- Have one person edit all the ROPEs so that they are consistent and flow well as a group. This helps to build a clear impression that you are working well as a group.
- Note that sections F12 to F16 will be pasted into the online form which will remove all formatting apart from line spacing and caps.

F13. Recent significant research outputs & ARC grants.

Attach a PDF of no more than 20 pages outlining the following:

(1) List your recent significant outputs most relevant to this Proposal.
- You must number your research outputs continuously.
- Mark with an asterisk the research outputs most relevant to this Proposal.
- Provide full details of any co-authors/co-editors, including their order on the output
• Include the acceptance date if listing in-press publications or programmed creative presentations.  
• Outputs should be split into the five categories:  
  - scholarly books –do not include edited books under this heading;  
  - edited research books, including prestigious reference works;  
  - scholarly book chapters;  
  - refereed journal articles;  
  - refereed conference papers only when the paper was published in full in the proceedings;  
  - other (e.g. industry reports, major exhibitions, compositions or performances).

How to answer
• For your publications, use exactly the headings (i)-(vi) provided, in that order.  
• Number publications consecutively.  
• Don’t forget to asterisk publications relevant to the proposal so it’s clearly visible to reviewers. For example:  
  * 1. Citizen, J (2005) The definitive history of...  
• Don’t cheat and put publications in the wrong category, i.e. reports and edited books cannot be listed as books and refereed conference abstracts are not to be included with refereed conference papers.  
• Don’t note book reviews, conference presentations, media op-eds, etc, unless there is a very important reason why they will assist your pitch. Unlike orthodox research outlets, these forums do not create knowledge in a way that will allow scholars to build on them over time.  
• Briefly outline anything notable, such as: invited key note addresses, awards for best conference paper, research was fully funded by professional body, etc...  
• Do provide full references, including all authors, page numbers (or numbers of pages for books, so substantial works are clearly visible), ISBNs, DOIs, and citation counts so reviewers can compare common characteristics in publication lists (note where you obtained your citation counts from, such as Google Scholar).  
• Do check spelling.  
• If a research output has been accepted for publication but has not yet been published, include the date of acceptance. Don’t include items under review.  
• In the Other category you can include non-referred items, such as contract research reports, submissions to government, industry inquiries, original artworks or fiction writing, curated exhibitions and other items counted as HERDC research outputs that reflect engagement with, and activity in the field, such a newspaper/blog writing. Do use sub-headings to organise these works. You may sparingly mention some under review work here if highly pertinent to the project, but F12 (vi) may be a better place to do so.  
• Do NOT include references to outdated ERA journal rankings of A*, A, B, C.... If it is relevant, you may like to use the Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC), or any other current ranking system. Likewise, the ARC now subscribes to the view that journal impact factors are a poor measure of an individual’s research performance. Instead you may want to highlight Google Scholar citations if this will be particularly impressive.  
• Do ensure a consistent bibliographical style for all of your publications, across all ROPEs in the team.

(2) Details of ARC grants awarded in the last 10 years on which you have been a CI, PI or Fellow as
detailed below by using the below template.

- Give the ARC grant number;
- CI/PI/Fellow name in the order that they appear on the grant;
- The amount funded;
- The years for which the grant was awarded;
- Title of the grant;
- Nominate the reference numbers of the research outputs in the last 10 years given above in F12 Part (1) that arose from or were in part of your ARC grants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Id</th>
<th>CI/PI/Fellow Name/s</th>
<th>Amount Funded</th>
<th>Amount of Years</th>
<th>Project Title</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*Add additional lines where necessary.

**How to answer**

- Ensure you use the template.
- If you have no grants, write ‘None’.
- If this question is not relevant to a participant, for example a PI with non-academic background, the participant should include a short explanatory statement as to why the question is not applicable to their background and role, or include any relevant information (for example, relevant outputs such as policy advice, and other professional publications). This is also the case with F14.

**F14. Ten career-best research outputs**

Attach a PDF listing your ten career-best research outputs (5 pages maximum), which must:

- Provide the full reference for each of your ten best research outputs.
- Next to each provide information on any ARC grant scheme on which you were a Chief Investigator or Fellow from which they originated.
- Add a statement of a maximum of 30 words explaining and justifying the impact or significance of each research output.
- Asterisk the publications relevant to this Proposal.

**How to answer**

- Carefully select your 10 best publications. Get advice if you need it.
- The 30 word statements are important. Keep them to 30 words. Although you might need to go over length for a couple, don’t risk annoying the reader with a lot more.
- Order items in terms of significance and impact (e.g. monograph, refereed journal article, etc.).
- Describe the significance/impact of your work, rather than merely providing a summary of its contents. While ‘significance’ is explainable in academic terms; ‘impact’ concerns the demonstrable contribution beyond academia that the research makes to the economy, society, culture, national security, public policy or services, health, the environment, or quality of life.
- Significance can be exemplified in the following ways:
• By highlighting novelty and innovation, such as: conducting research on previously neglected topic, untested assumptions, original method, etc.
• Discussing the consequentiality of your inquiries. For example, ‘I explained...to clarify...’
• Has the work been disseminated widely in certain arenas? Such as civil society?
• Has the research output formed the basis of an academic program?

• Impact may be demonstrated in the following ways:

  o By highlighting policy or practical impact.
  o Did the work spark any significant debate?
  o Note citations/coverage in official reports and in the national media.
  o Note any prestigious outlets or collaborations with significant experts, including publications in any dedicated special issues of journals with contributions from leadings scholars.
  o Include quotes from referees, assessors or examiners where relevant.
  o Note any books that have gone to paperback.
  o Include publication sales figures if available.
  o List any awards won or honours received.

• Do NOT include references to outdated journal rankings or impact factors. You may include Google Scholar citations, but it is important that impact and significance be portrayed in its own right.

F15. Further evidence in relation to research impact and contributions to the field, including reference to those most relevant to this Proposal.

Write a maximum of 11,250 characters (approximately 1,500 words). In this section:
• Describe your Research Impact relative to opportunity and in the context of discipline/end user benefits. Outline significant achievements and outcomes that have contributed to a tangible impact for end users.
• Describe how your research has led to a significant change or advance of knowledge in your field, and outline how your achievements will contribute to this Proposal.
• Include research outputs other than academic publications. Examples may include patents, IP licences, other research support income, relevant consultancies, policy advice and other professional activities.

How to answer
• This is your opportunity to elaborate on your contribution, not only to your field of research, but outside academia, by providing evidence of impact in a way similar to the 30 word statements.
• One way to structure this section is to provide an overarching narrative that describes your research to date, elaborating on three or so specific contributions, or how you have contributed to three or so areas of scholarship, themes, etc. Indicate what impact you have made and give evidence of this, i.e. the policy or practical impact of your work.
• Another useful approach is to ask yourself: ‘What am I already famous for/beginning to become known for? How so? And by implication, how will that trajectory be enhanced through doing this project?’
• Go into detail about what you have achieved, rather than outlining what you have done.
• Discuss your wider impact in the field as evidence of the respect of your peers, for example: invitations to speak at academic conferences, invitations to provide expert opinion for public
interest groups or in media interviews, commissioned or invited work resulting from publications, etc.

- Use this section to demonstrate why you are the best person to undertake the research project. Be succinct and explicit, explain and justify. Show how this proposal builds on your previous work, taking it further. For example: ‘This shows that CI...is well equipped to undertake xyz’; or ‘This is evidence the CI...is an international authority on xyz.’

- Discuss collaborations with significant experts and how they relate to your research plan.

- Note how your work has been referenced by key scholars in the field and/or how it has been covered in the media.

- Apart from your publications, how have you helped advance your discipline more generally? For example: ‘My work connects...perspectives with...and...studies’, or ‘My work sits at the cutting edge of/at the intersection of the rapidly developing frontier of...recent debates on...debates and developments in the field of...and has already produced important studies/methods/pilot findings...on issues closely related to this proposal’. What have your HDR students achieved?

- Impact might also include take up of academic outputs by disciplines other than your own.

- Note membership in relevant professional organisations and boards.

- Be confident, but do not over-claim. Assessors can see through this.

- Do not dilute an otherwise strong list by including invitations to speak at local non-academic gatherings (like Rotary Club) or internal RMIT grants. These detract from your other achievements.

- You have 11,250 characters. That means that the ARC expects a substantial answer. Don’t write 250 words. You don’t have to use every character, but you do need to be thorough.

**Further information**

The Research Whisperer has published advice on how to present your research career:

- Telling research career stories – Part 1 & Part 2, Tseen Khoo, Sept 2013
  [http://theresearchwhisperer.wordpress.com/2013/09/10/research-career-stories-1/](http://theresearchwhisperer.wordpress.com/2013/09/10/research-career-stories-1/)

  In these two articles, Tseen talks about how to take the messiness of your career trajectory and present it as a coherent narrative.

- Pruning your research publications list, Jonathan O’Donnell and Narelle Lemon, 15 Nov 2011.

  I got sick of writing ‘where are your page numbers’, ‘ISBN please’ and similar comments on people’s publication list, so Narelle and I sat down and wrote out what we wanted people to do.

  [http://theresearchwhisperer.wordpress.com/2012/05/15/assess-application-part-1/](http://theresearchwhisperer.wordpress.com/2012/05/15/assess-application-part-1/)

  Tseen talks about how she reads a track record when she is assessing grants. This is the view of an assessor, your audience.

**Contacts**

In the first instance, please discuss your Discovery application with your School Deputy Dean (Research).

In the College, we have people who can work with you on your application. Start with:

- Jonathan O’Donnell, Senior Advisor, Research Development
  Mobile: 0425 755 829 (Tuesday to Friday only)
  DSGrants@rmit.edu.au