



Australian Government

Australian Research Council

Medical Research Policy

Policy:	Medical Research Policy
Version:	2020.1
Issued:	December, 2020
Date for review:	December, 2022
Owner:	Policy and Strategy Branch

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The Australian Research Council

The Australian Research Council (ARC) is a Commonwealth entity within the Australian Government. The ARC's purpose is to grow knowledge and innovation for the benefit of the Australian community through funding the highest quality research, assessing the quality, engagement and impact of research and providing advice on research matters.

The ARC funds research and researchers under the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP). The NCGP consists of two elements—Discovery and Linkage. Within these elements are a range of schemes structured to provide a pathway of incentives for researchers to build the scope and scale of their work and collaborative partnerships. The majority of funding decisions under the NCGP are made on the basis of peer review.

The ARC evaluates the quality of research undertaken in higher education institutions through the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) program. ERA is an established evaluation framework that identifies research excellence in Australian higher education institutions by comparing Australia's research effort against international benchmarks. ERA assesses quality using a combination of indicators and expert review by research evaluation committees.

The ARC is also responsible for developing and implementing an Engagement and Impact (EI) assessment, which assesses the engagement of researchers with end-users, and shows how universities are translating their research into economic, social, environmental and other impacts.

1. Purpose and scope

This policy is applicable to the ARC's NCGP. It may also be relevant to other ARC-administered grants programs, as specified in the relevant Grant Guidelines.

Applications that involve medical research as defined in this policy are not eligible to be funded. The intended aim of this policy is to reduce the likelihood of applicants preparing and submitting applications to the ARC which are ineligible for funding.

For the purposes of this policy, the definition of medical and health research includes laboratory-based studies, clinical studies and group/community-based studies that aim to understand the causes, treatment and/or prevention of human diseases and/or the maintenance of human health. The ARC does not normally fund research with these aims.

Applications will be considered ineligible if they include pre-clinical or clinical medical or health research, including investigations in which humans, animals, or their tissues are used to assess new treatments (including chemical, pharmaceutical, electronic, mechanical, bioengineering treatments), interventions or tests as a means to prevent, detect, treat, understand, diagnose or manage a human disease or medical condition. The ARC may, however, fund related research to address specific Australian Government medical and health research priorities¹, either solely or in concert with the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC).

¹Industrial Transformation Research Program (ITRP) applications that address a medical research-related priority identified under the ITRP may be submitted, provided the application clearly addresses the objectives of the ITRP. Consistent with this Policy, the main aim of the application must not be to understand the causes, treatment and/or prevention of human diseases and/or the maintenance of human health.

2. Eligible research

Research eligible for ARC support:

- (a) research where the aim is the fundamental understanding of biological processes not directly related to human medical and/or health interventions and outcomes (e.g. human biology not related to health); or
- (b) research where the aim is the development of basic knowledge and/or technology platforms including management systems, that may have future medical and/or health applications which are clearly specified as being outside the scope of the application; or
- (c) research (including observational research) where the aim is to understand the normal human life cycle (e.g. infancy, childhood, adolescence and ageing) and/or traits and behaviour using human participants or populations, except if it involves a health intervention or diseases not specific to those normal cycles; or
- (d) the use or development of equipment, facilities, tools, games, devices, smart phone applications and other software or items to support eligible research as listed above.

3. Ineligible research

Research ineligible for ARC support:

- (a) research with direct medical and/or human health aims or purpose, including research on the understanding, aetiology, diagnosis, monitoring, management or treatment of physical or mental disease or other medical and/or human health conditions; or
- (b) research for the development or testing of diagnostic procedures or therapeutic goods (including devices), for the purpose of better understanding human medical and/or health conditions and/or developing treatments for medical and/or human health conditions that involves the use of:
 - i. animals, or
 - ii. human tissue, or
 - iii. the use or development of in vivo models of medical and/or health conditions, either animal or cellular; or
- (c) interventional research in humans, particularly clinical or pre-clinical trials of diagnostic procedures or therapeutic goods (including devices and apps), or research aiming to modify the medical and/or human health condition or behaviour of the human participants; or
- (d) the use or development of equipment, facilities, tools, games, devices, smart phone applications and other software or items to better understand, diagnose, monitor, manage or treat medical and/or human health conditions.

4. Process

If applicable, applications must include justification detailing why the application is considered to be compliant with this policy. The ARC may rely solely on the Medical Research Statement in the application to determine whether an application is eligible.

The ARC may, in its absolute discretion, seek further advice from its Medical Research Advisory Group, an expert committee convened by the ARC.

Recognising that an integrated research project or program may sometimes include a small element of research not supported under this policy, the ARC may, but is not obliged to, deem such an application eligible for assessment provided the application predominantly comprises eligible research as set out in this policy.

Applications are still subject to all other eligibility requirements set out in the relevant Grant Guidelines.

Applications deemed ineligible cannot be recommended or approved for funding under the *Australian Research Council Act 2001*.

5. Definitions

Disease	Any deviation or interruption of the normal structure or function of any part, organ or system (or combination thereof) of the body that is manifested by a characteristic set of symptoms and signs and whose aetiology, pathology and prognosis may be known or unknown.
Human health conditions	Pertaining to diseases (as defined above), syndromes, pathological conditions, injuries, signs, symptoms, problems and/or conditions that generally lead to contact with, or utilisation of, health services.
Intervention/al	Includes interventions designed to understand and/or change human health conditions, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – clinical or pre-clinical trials in human participants – the collection and/or use of body organs, tissues or fluids e.g. skin, blood, urine, saliva, hair, bones, tumour and other biopsy specimens or exhaled breath – behavioural interventions; or – dietary interventions.
Medical research	For the purposes of the ARC Medical Research Policy, medical research also includes dental research.
Therapeutic Goods	As defined in Section 3 of the Therapeutic Goods Administration Act 1989, or any successor legislation.

6. Contact details

Stakeholder Relations

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Number	Date Approved	Approved By	Brief Description
1.1	14 December 2020	SMG	Routine policy review