

Research and Innovation Services
Guide to Writing ARC
Application Title, Summary &
National Interest Text Statement



On 31 October 2018, the Hon. Dan Tehan MP, Minister for Education, announced a 'National Interest Test' would be introduced in all ARC applications and **that the Minister may consider the National Interest Test in determining which applications to approve**. As such it is critical that researchers ensure that adequate time is taken to address this question.

The ARC will now provide the following to the Minister when making their recommendation of applications to be funded:

- Application Title
- Application Summary
- National Interest Test Statement
- Researcher(s)
- Recommended budget
- Administering Institution
- ARC Project ID/Reference

It is critical that researchers' responses to both the Application Summary and National Interest Test statements are in plain English, clear and concise. It is also important to note that the audience for these statements are the ARC CEO, the Minister and the public **not** peer assessors.

The ARC have included detailed advice on each of these parts in the [Instructions to Applicants](#) documents for each funding opportunity. The ARC Grant Guidelines, published on GrantConnect, outline the grant selection processes, including the NIT process.

This guide provides advice to assist you with drafting Parts A1 – Application Title; A4 – Application Summary; and A6 – National Interest Test Statement.

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1. Application Title

The Application Title will be reviewed by assessors, the Minister, and, if successful, the public. It will be published on the ARC website if your application is successful.

Please take care in drafting your Application Title and **read the Instructions to Applicants carefully.**

Excerpt from ARC DP21 Instructions to Applicants

Provide a short title. (No more than 75 characters, approximately ten words).

- *The title should be an accurate reflection of the research and will be visible to assessors.*
- **Avoid** the use of acronyms and quotation marks.
- **Do not use** all upper case characters.
- *This title may be modified and used for public release.*

Considerations when drafting your Application Title

Do...	Do not...
Follow the above guidelines carefully!	Exaggerate the title to grab attention rather than as an accurate reflection of the research.
Ensure the title can be understood by the general public, ARC CEO and the Minister. Ask friends and family to review for plain English.	
Consider potential first reactions of all audiences including the Minister, detailed and general assessors and the general public, some of whom may not read further than the title.	

2. Application Summary

The Application Summary is a plain English summary of your application. It should stand alone and make sense to the Minister and the public. The Application Summary will be included with the ARC's recommendation to the Minister along with the National Interest Statement Text so these two responses should be different. It is important to remember it will be published on the ARC website should your application be successful.

Note: The Application Summary will also be read by assessors but does not form part of the assessment criteria for your application.

Excerpt from ARC DP21 Instructions to Applicants

Provide an Application Summary (which is used by the Minister to consider the application), focusing on the aims, significance, expected outcomes and benefit of this project. Write the Application Summary simply, clearly and in plain English. If the application is successful, the Application Summary is used to give the general public an understanding of the research. Avoid the use of acronyms, quotation marks and upper case characters. No more than 750 characters, approximately 100 words.

Application Summaries must follow this format:

Aims:

- For example: This project aims to address/investigate/review ...; by utilising/advancing/conceptualising ...

Significance:

- For example: This project expects to generate new knowledge in the area of ... using an innovative approach/using interdisciplinary approaches/utilising new techniques ...

Expected outcomes:

- For example: Expected outcomes of this project include... /enhanced capacity to build institutional/disciplinary collaborations/theory development/refined methods/improved techniques...

Benefits:

- For example: This should provide significant benefits, such as ...
- Examples of Application Summaries for funded projects can be found on the [ARC website](#).

Important:

- In following the format above, the summary will outline the aims of the project, provide the significance of the research, outline expected outcomes and benefits, including scholarly, public or commercial.
- When describing benefits ensure that the description is consistent with the [ARC Medical Research Policy](#).
- Use aspirational terms; for example, The project aims to.../The intended outcome of the project is.../The anticipated goal of the project is... rather than definitive terms; The project will.../This will ensure.../This project will guarantee ...
- Do not use first person language. Use 'The project aims to...' rather than 'I aim to' 'We aim to' or 'They aim to' in the summary.
- Use plain English and avoid the use of terminology unique to the area of study.
- **Avoid** the use of quotation marks and acronyms.
- **Do not** use all upper case characters in the text.
- Use Australian English spelling.

Considerations when drafting your Application Summary

Do...	Do not...
Follow the above guidelines carefully!	Confuse terms aims/outputs/outcomes/benefits
Refer to ARC Research Impact Pathway for some examples of research outputs, outcomes and benefits.	Repeat in Part A6 - National Interest Test Statement
A readability assessment aiming for a grade level of 10-12.	
Seek review by friends and family for plain English.	

3. National Interest Test (NIT) Statement

National Interest is defined as:

*“ the extent to which the proposed research will contribute to Australia’s national interest through its potential to have **economic, commercial, environmental, social or cultural benefits** to the Australian community ”*

Applications that satisfy the NIT and score highly will be recommended to the Minister for funding. Responses to NIT in your application must clearly state how the research to be supported will contribute to Australia’s national interest through its potential to have **economic, commercial, environmental, social or cultural benefits** to the Australian community. The target audience is the ARC CEO and the Minister who are unlikely to be experts in your field.

The NIT is **not** about blocking high quality research from being funded. The intent of the NIT is to provide a statement to enable the community to understand the value of the Government’s investment in research.

With the introduction of the NIT, the initial application rounds provided the opportunity to craft a variety of statements to address the NIT without prescriptive guidance. Now, the following guidance will assist applicants to improve NIT Statements in future rounds. Noting that in previous application rounds the recent introduction of the NIT was taken into account—a NIT Statement that has previously been accepted, may not be accepted in a future application round if the following guidance is not followed.

Note: The National Interest Test Statement may be read by assessors but does not form part of the assessment criteria for your application.

Excerpt from ARC Instructions to Applicants

*Outline the extent to which the research contributes to Australia’s national interest through its potential to have economic, commercial, environmental, social or cultural benefits to the Australian community. **Write the description of national interest simply, clearly and in plain English** between 750 and 1125 characters (between approximately 100 and 150 words).*

Considerations when drafting your National Interest Test Statement

- NIT Statements must be between 750 and 1125 characters (between approximately 100 and 150 words).
- NIT Statements should explain research activities, outcomes and benefits in plain English so that it is accessible to the Australian community.
- NIT Statements should be clear and understandable to lay individuals not disciplinary experts—check the readability of NIT Statement text before submitting.
- NIT Statements should be reasonable—that is, realistic and specific to the research project being proposed.
- NIT Statements should be logical and must not overstate the outcomes of the research (be accurate about whether the outcomes are likely to solve all of a major problem, or contribute to the solution).
- NIT Statements will be made public—careful attention should be given to writing and grammar. Acronyms should be avoided or spelt out.

- NIT statements must be stand-alone statements—they may not always be read in tandem with application summaries and project titles. *However, they should not repeat information from the project summary. They are about “why”, not repeating “what”.*
- NIT Statements must provide an adequate explanation of the benefit to the Australian community that is beyond the intrinsic value of undertaking the research or the reputation of a particular research discipline.
- Suitable NIT Statements relate proposed research to policies or government initiatives, or to industry and economic values.
- Be clear about who benefits from the research—all, or a specific section of Australia.
- Some directions include:
 - Development of a new product, process, industry or market (which then has a described value, savings or worth)
 - Relating the work to existing or proposed policies and the issues they are focussed on addressing – perhaps in reports, commissions, data
 - Applications of the work, which then have a benefit
 - Increased understanding of something – which then has a described benefit that ensues
 - Better capacity to address a current problem – with what this alleviates or solves described.
- The following should not be the sole rationale for why the proposed research is being undertaken:
 - enhancing the discipline’s reputation
 - training of the research workforce (instead, this could be linked to outcomes and their value)
 - production of academic publications (this is an output of the research).
- If the proposed research is about an international matter, it is important that the NIT Statement strongly relates the research outcomes to Australia’s role and the impact for Australia.

4. Updated process for the recommendation of ARC funding incorporating NIT

The process by which ARC applications are funding have now been updated to include the assessment of the National Interest Test. The current process of the peer review by external assessors and the ARC SAC (panels) still remains unchanged. The changes are after the peer review process as outlined below:

- *The SAC makes recommendations to the ARC CEO on which applications should be approved for funding, which applications should not be approved for funding, and the level of funding and duration of each grant.*
- *In making recommendations to the Minister the CEO will:*
 - *consider the recommendations from the SAC;*
 - *consider the applicant’s response to the National Interest Test;*
 - *seek information from Administering Organisations on applications where there is concern about how they meet the National Interest Test based on the information provided in the application form; and*
 - *make grant recommendations to the Minister that satisfy the National Interest Test and which are eligible for funding.*
- *If the Minister does not approve a project recommended by the ARC CEO (for any reason), applicants will be notified by receiving the feedback that their application was ‘recommended to but not funded by the Minister’.*

5. Essential Tools

- ARC grant guidelines for the specific funding opportunity (login to [GrantConnect](#))
- ARC Instructions to Applicants for the specific funding opportunity (login to [GrantConnect](#))
- UON website: www.newcastle.edu.au/research-and-innovation/resources/grants/apply
 - Subscribe to our ARC [email lists](#)

Our email lists are our primary source of communication for funding opportunities, important announcements, advertisement of deadlines, updates from funding bodies, etc.

- Questions? Contact research-applications@newcastle.edu.au