**Attachment A**

**2015 NHMRC Project Grants Category Descriptors**

The following category descriptors are used as a guide to scoring an application against each of the assessment criteria: 1) Scientific Quality; 2) Significance of the Potential Outcomes and/or Innovation of the Concept; and 3) Team Quality & Capability, relative to opportunity. While the Category Descriptors provide peer reviewers with some benchmarks for appropriately scoring each application, it is not essential that all descriptors relating to a given score must be met. The Descriptors are a guide to a “best fit” outcome. The process of consistently referring panel members to these descriptors is vital to ensuring equity, thoroughness and process consistency both within and across all Peer Review Panels.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>Scientific Quality 50% (Feasibility can include contribution of Associate Investigators)</th>
<th>Significance and/or Innovation 25%</th>
<th>Team (does NOT include Associate Investigators) Quality &amp; Capability relevant to this application 25% - Relative to opportunity</th>
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| Outstanding by International Standards | The proposal has a research plan that:  
- is well-defined, highly coherent and strongly developed.  
- has a near flawless study design.  
- is highly feasible with all of the required expertise, research tools and techniques established.  
- would be highly competitive with the best, similar research proposals internationally. | The planned research:  
- will result in a highly significant advance in knowledge in this field which addresses an issue of great importance to human health.  
- will result in fundamental outcomes in the science underpinning human health issues.  
- will translate rapidly into transforming fundamental outcomes in the practice of clinical medicine, public health or in health policy.  
- will almost certainly be the subject of invited plenary presentations at national and international meetings.  
- will almost certainly result in highly influential publications. | Relative to opportunity, the applicant team:  
- has expertise that specifically targets the proposed research both in terms of its depth and/or breadth.  
- has over the last 5 years, a combined record of research achievement quality (as exemplified by the top 5 publications of each CI) and productivity (totality of outputs) and/or translation into practice that is outstanding by international standards commensurate with their field of research.  
- has senior members with outstanding national and international reputations in the field of research relevant to the application.  
- may involve junior members who are very strong contributors to the overall team quality & capability or will have the capacity to do so due to the availability of very strong mentoring by other members of the team. |

| Excellent | The proposal has a research plan that:  
- is clearly defined, coherent and well developed.  
- has a strong study design.  
- is feasible with all required tools, techniques and expertise established.  
- is likely to be competitive with strong, similar research proposals internationally. | The planned research:  
- will result in a significant advance in knowledge in this field which addresses an issue of importance to human health.  
- is likely to result in fundamental outcomes in the science underpinning human health issues.  
- is likely to translate into fundamental outcomes in the practice of clinical medicine, public health or in health policy.  
- will likely be the subject of invited plenary presentations at national and international meetings.  
- will likely result in influential publications. | Relative to opportunity, the applicant team:  
- has expertise that is highly relevant to the proposed research both in terms of its depth and/or breadth.  
- has over the last 5 years, a combined record of research achievement quality (as exemplified by the top 5 publications of each CI) and productivity (totality of outputs) and/or translation into practice that is excellent by international standards commensurate with their field of research.  
- has senior members with excellent national and/or international reputations in the field of research relevant to the application.  
- may involve junior members who are strong contributors to the overall team quality & capability or will have the capacity to do so due to the availability of strong mentoring. |
| 5 Very Good | The proposal has a research plan that:  
- is *generally clear* in its scientific plan and is logical.  
- raises only a few *minor concerns* with respect to the study design.  
- is *feasible in all, or almost all areas* - required techniques and tools either established or nearly established.  
- may not be highly competitive with similar research proposals internationally. |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| The planned research:  
- will *advance* knowledge in this field which addresses an issue of importance to human health.  
- *may result in fundamental outcomes* in the science underpinning human health issues.  
- OR *may translate* into fundamental outcomes in the practice of clinical medicine, public health or in health policy.  
- *could be* the subject of invited plenary presentations at international and national meetings.  
- is *likely to result in* some *very strong* publications.  
- is *innovative in concept*.  
- will use *well established* approaches to good effect. |
| Relative to opportunity, the applicant team:  
- raises only *minor concerns* regarding the depth and/or breadth of expertise relevant to the proposed research.  
- has over the last 5 years, a combined record of research achievement quality (as exemplified by the top 5 publications of each CI) and productivity (totality of outputs) and/or translation into practice which places it *well above average* for their peers or cohort.  
- members have *very good and growing* national and/or international reputations in the field of research relevant to the application.  
- may involve junior members who are *valuable contributors* to the team quality & capability or will have the capacity to do so due to the availability of some mentoring. |
| 4 Good | The proposal has a research plan that:  
- is *generally solid* in its scientific plan, but may not always be clear in its intent and may lack some focus.  
- raises *several concerns* regarding the study design.  
- raises *doubts* about the feasibility in some areas.  
- is not likely to be competitive with similar research proposals internationally. |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| The planned research:  
- may *incrementally* advance knowledge in the field which addresses an issue of some importance to human health.  
- is *unlikely to result in fundamental outcomes* in the science underpinning human health issues.  
- OR *is unlikely to translate* into fundamental outcomes in the practice of clinical medicine, public health or in health policy.  
- is *unlikely* to be the subject of invited plenary presentations at international meetings.  
- may result in some *good but not excellent* publications.  
- is *solid in concept*.  
- will in the main use *standard* approaches. |
| Relative to opportunity, the applicant team:  
- raises *some significant concerns* regarding the depth and/or breadth of expertise relevant to the proposed research.  
- has, over the last 5 years, a combined record of research achievement quality (as exemplified by the top 5 publications of each CI) and productivity (totality of outputs) and/or translation into practice, that places them at an *average level* for their peers/cohort.  
- members have *good and growing* national and/or international reputations in the field of research relevant to the application.  
- may involve some junior members who would have the potential to add to the team with mentoring, but there is little or no evidence of a mentoring framework to support them. |
| 3 Marginal | The proposal has a research plan that:  
- is *somewhat unclear* in its scientific approach and goals.  
- contains *some* major design flaws.  
- raises *several concerns* about the feasibility and thus the likelihood of successful completion. |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| The planned research:  
- addresses an issue of *some importance* to human health.  
- may result in some publications.  
- may have some innovative and novel aspects, while others underpin or extend existing knowledge.  
- is *solid in concept*.  
- will in the main use *standard* approaches. |
| Relative to opportunity, the applicant team:  
- members have made contributions to the field of research but there are *significant concerns* regarding the depth and breadth of relevant expertise.  
- has over the last 5 years, a combined record of research achievement quality (as exemplified by the top 5 publications of each CI) and productivity (totality of outputs) and/or translation into practice, that places them at an *average level* for their peers/cohort.  
- members have established national reputations but *do not yet have strong international profiles*. |
| 2 Unsatisfactory | The proposal has a research plan that:  
- is *unclear* in its scientific approach and goals.  
- contains *several* major study design flaws.  
- raises *several major concerns* about the feasibility and thus the likelihood of successful completion. |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| The planned research:  
- addresses an issue of *some concern* to human health.  
- provides a program of research which will *not* significantly advance current knowledge in the field.  
- has relatively *little* innovation or novelty. |
| Relative to opportunity, the applicant team:  
- is *deficient* in some areas of expertise that will be required to successfully complete the proposed research.  
- has published only a few works in relevant and other fields of research.  
- members are *not well known* nationally or internationally in the relevant research fields. |
| Poor | The proposal has a research plan that:  
|      | • contains a research plan which **does not** seem to be feasible.  
|      | • is **unlikely** to be successfully completed. | The planned research:  
|      | • does **not** address an issue of more than marginal concern to human health.  
|      | • will **not** advance current knowledge in the field.  
|      | • only follows behind previously well documented and studied concepts or previously well used approaches. | Relative to opportunity, the applicant team:  
|      | • is heavily **underpowered** in terms of relevant expertise required to successfully complete the research program.  
|      | • is **not productive** to any significant extent in relevant fields.  
|      | • members are **not well known** nationally or internationally in the relevant research fields. |