### Investigator Grants 2021 Peer Review Guidelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opening date:</th>
<th>03 February 2021</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Closing date and time:</td>
<td>17.00 ACT local time on 31 March 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth policy entity:</td>
<td>National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance and enquiries:</td>
<td>NHMRC Research Help Centre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Phone: 1800 500 983 (+61 2 6217 9451 for international callers)

Email: help@nhmrc.gov.au

Note: NHMRC’s Research Help Centre aims to provide a reply to all requests for general assistance within two working days. This timeframe may be longer during peak periods or for more detailed requests for assistance.
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1 INTRODUCTION

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) is responsible for managing the Australian Government’s investment in health and medical research in a manner consistent with Commonwealth legislation, guidelines and policies. NHMRC has a responsibility to ensure taxpayers’ funds are invested appropriately to support the best health and medical research. Expert peer review assists us in fulfilling this responsibility.

This guide outlines the overarching principles and obligations under which the Investigator Grant peer review process operates, including:

- obligations in accordance with legislation, guidelines and policies
- how to disclose interests and manage conflicts, and
- standards and best practice for the conduct of peer review.

NHMRC will publicly notify the sector of any change in peer review process via its communications, such as through NHMRC’s website and newsletters.

This guide should be read in conjunction with the:

- Investigator Grants 2021 Guidelines, available on GrantConnect, which set out the rules, objectives and other considerations relevant to NHMRC funding.
- Policy on the Disclosure of Interests requirements for prospective and appointed NHMRC committee members (Section 39 Committees). This Policy outlines peer reviewers’ responsibilities in order to ensure all disclosures of interests are addressed in a rigorous and transparent way throughout the period of a peer reviewer’s participation in NHMRC Committees.

2 KEY CHANGES

NHMRC recognises the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Australia’s health and medical research community and has updated assessment processes to reflect these impacts.

Peer reviewers must follow these updated processes:

- In track record assessment, peer reviewers must consider COVID-19 related circumstances, as outlined by applicants, under the provisions of NHMRC’s Relative to Opportunity Policy.
- Peer reviewers should note that applicants have been advised that they may include information on any potential significant and long term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on their proposed research, and proposals for managing such risks, as part of their research risk management plan within the grant proposal.
- Peer reviewers are not to let the potential impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the proposed research affect the assessment of the research proposal of an application (e.g. the feasibility of accessing certain patient or population groups with social distancing restrictions in place).
- Peer reviewers must note that changes to the research proposal of a funded application, necessitated by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g. the commencement of a project needs to be delayed by six months until COVID-19 restrictions are eased) will be considered through NHMRC’s Postaward management and grant variations processes. Such considerations do not form part of the peer review assessment of the proposal, particularly given that the long term impacts of the pandemic are still unknown.
• Section 4.3.6.2 encourages peer reviewers to use gender-neutral language in the assessment of applications, in particular in their written feedback.

Peer reviewers should note the following significant changes for the Investigator Grants 2021 grant opportunity:

• The Statements of Expectations (Appendix H) have been updated to clarify that applicants must apply at a Level commensurate with their experience, profile and academic level. Guidance has also been added on the number of years post-PhD and academic level typically expected for applicants at each Level.
• Applicants are now required to provide a justification for their selected Category and Level of Investigator Grant. This applicant justification will be considered by peer reviewers when reviewing an applicant's Track Record relative to opportunity.
• NHMRC is introducing Peer Review Mentors (PRMs) to assist with training and mentoring peer reviewers. PRMs will participate in a recorded panel discussion addressing common questions and/or perceptions/myths identified during the first two Investigator Grant rounds. PRMs will also be available during the assessment phase of peer review in a "mentoring" capacity to assist peer reviewers with any additional process-related questions or advice they may require to complete their assessments.
• Investigator Grant peer review has moved from a panel structure to an Application-centric model for the 2021 round. With the removal of grant review panels, each application will now be allocated to the five ‘best fit’ independent peer reviewers based on conflict of interest and suitability declarations. NHMRC anticipates this change will further improve peer reviewer suitability with assigned applications.
• Investigator Grant applications will be submitted in Sapphire, NHMRC’s new grants management system, for the first time this round.
• Revised NHMRC Relative to Opportunity Policy (Appendix I) – The Policy has been revised by categorising and updating reference to Relative to Opportunity circumstances typically considered during peer review, including disability, illness and unemployment (noting that applicants can nominate any circumstance impacting productivity).
• A new approach to assessment of track record ‘relative to opportunity’, incorporating a new ‘Career Context’ concept, is being trialled for the 2021 Investigator Grant round as part of the revised Relative to Opportunity Policy. Guidance for peer reviewers on implementation of the policy concept has been developed (Appendix J).

3 PRINCIPLES, CONDUCT AND OBLIGATIONS DURING PEER REVIEW

The peer review process requires all applications to be reviewed by individuals with appropriate expertise. This carries an obligation on the part of peer reviewers to act in good faith, in the best interests of NHMRC and the research community and in accordance with NHMRC policies (outlined below).

3.1 NHMRC’s Principles of Peer Review

NHMRC’s Principles of Peer Review (the Principles) are high-level, guiding statements that underpin all NHMRC’s peer review processes, and include:

• Fairness. Peer review processes are fair and seen to be fair by all.
• **Transparency.** Applies to all stages of peer review.
• **Independence.** Peer reviewers provide independent advice. There is also independent oversight of peer review processes by Peer Review Mentors (PRMs) and Observers.
• **Appropriateness and balance.** There is appropriate experience, expertise and representation of peer reviewers assessing applications.
• **Research community participation.** Persons holding taxpayer-funded grants should willingly make themselves available to participate in peer review processes, whenever possible, in accordance with the obligations in the Funding Agreement.
• **Confidentiality.** Participants respect that confidentiality is important to the fairness and robustness of peer review.
• **Impartiality.** Peer review is objective and impartial, with appropriate processes in place to manage disclosures of interest.
• **Quality and excellence.** NHMRC will continue to introduce evidence-based improvements into its processes to achieve the highest quality decision-making through peer review.

Additional details underpinning the Principles can be found at Appendix A.

### 3.2 The Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research

The [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) (the Code) requires researchers participating in peer review do so in a way that is ‘fair, rigorous and timely and maintains the confidentiality of the content’.

The Code is supported by additional supplementary guidance, including [Peer Review: A guide supporting the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#).

### 3.3 Disclosures of Interest

#### 3.3.1 What is an interest?

NHMRC is committed to ensuring that interests of any kind are dealt with consistently, transparently and with rigour, in accordance with sections 16A and 16B of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014* (made under the subsection 29(2) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2013* (PGPA Act)).

In particular, under section 29 of the PGPA Act, “an official of a Commonwealth entity… who has a material personal interest that relates to the affairs of the entity must disclose details of the interest”. This obligation is ongoing and not limited to a particular point in time.

For the purposes of this document, the terms “material personal interest” and “interest” are regarded as interchangeable, and whilst the term “interest/s” has been used for ease of reading, this policy includes guidance on each.

#### 3.3.2 What is a Conflict of Interest (CoI)?

A CoI exists when there is a divergence between professional responsibilities (as a peer reviewer) and personal interests. Such conflicts have the potential to lead to biased advice affecting objectivity and impartiality. By managing any conflict, NHMRC maintains the integrity of its processes in the assessment of scientific and technical merit of the application.

For NHMRC peer review purposes, interests may fall into the broad domains of:
- Involvement with the application under review
- Collaborations
- Working relationships
- Teaching or supervisory relationships
- Professional relationships and associations
- Financial relationships or interests
- Social relationships or associations
- Other relevant interests or relationships

For further information, peer reviewers should consult the NHMRC Policy on the Disclosure of Interests Requirements for Prospective and Appointed NHMRC Committee Members (Section 39 Committees).

Researchers frequently have a CoI that cannot be avoided. Decision making processes in research often need expert advice, and the pool of experts in a field can be so small that all the experts have some link with the matter under consideration. An individual researcher should therefore expect to be conflicted from time to time, be ready to acknowledge the conflict and make disclosures as appropriate.

An outline of potential CoI situations and guidance is provided for peer reviewers at Appendix B.

3.3.3 Disclosure of Interests in the Peer Review Process

Peer reviewers must identify and disclose interests they may have with any of the Chief Investigators (CIs) on applications they will be reviewing. After appointment as a peer reviewer, but before assessing any applications, peer reviewers are required to disclose their interests in writing. While interests must be disclosed at the beginning of the peer review process, new or previously unrecognised interests must be disclosed at any stage of the peer review process. Declarations must include details that substantiate when collaborations occurred (i.e. month and year). NHMRC will use these details to verify and determine the level of conflict. Any peer reviewer who has an interest that is determined by NHMRC to be a ‘high’ CoI will not be able to participate in the review of that application. However, they can provide scientific advice at the request of NHMRC.

3.3.4 Failure to disclose an interest

A failure to disclose an interest without a reasonable excuse will result in the termination of the peer reviewer’s appointment under section 44B of the NHMRC Act (section 44B also covers failure to comply with section 29 of the PGPA Act).

It is important for peer reviewers to inform NHMRC of any circumstances which may constitute an interest, at any point during the peer review process. Accordingly, peer reviewers are encouraged to consult the secretariat if they are uncertain about any disclosure of interest matter.

3.4 Freedom of Information (FoI)

NHMRC is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 1982 which provides a statutory right for an individual to seek access to documents. If documents that deal with peer review fall within the scope of a request, the FoI process includes consultation and exemptions. NHMRC endeavours to protect the identity of peer reviewers assigned to a particular application.

3.5 Complaints

NHMRC deals with any complaints, objections and requests for clarification on the peer review process. NHMRC may contact peer reviewers involved to obtain additional information on
Further information about the NHMRC complaints process can be found on the NHMRC website.

4 INVESTIGATOR GRANT PEER REVIEW PROCESS

4.1 Overview of the Investigator Grant peer review process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31 March 2021</td>
<td>Deadline for Investigator Grant application submission</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early – Mid-April 2021</td>
<td>Initial application eligibility review and confirmation[^]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-April 2021</td>
<td>Peer reviewers disclose interests and suitability against applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late April – Early May 2021</td>
<td>Assessments against the <em>Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria</em> obtained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-May 2021</td>
<td>Peer Review Mentor Panel Discussion Video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late May – Mid-June 2021</td>
<td>Peer reviewers review applications and submit scores against Investigator Grant assessment criteria for each allocated application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2021</td>
<td>Notification of outcomes[^]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[^]Eligibility can be determined at any stage throughout the process.

*Dates are indicative
Further information on the steps outlined in this process is provided in section 4.3 *Reviewing Investigator Grant applications*.

## 4.2 Roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of those participating in the Investigator Grant peer review process are identified in the table below.

### Investigator Grant Peer Review Participants Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roles</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer Review Mentors (PRMs)</td>
<td>Peer Review Mentors (PRMs) are senior researchers with experience in conducting Investigator Grant peer review.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The PRM's role is to assist with the training and mentoring of peer reviewers on peer review processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PRMs do not assess applications or provide advice on the scientific (or other) merits of individual applications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Where applicable, PRMs need to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• familiarise themselves with this document and other material as identified by NHMRC staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• participate in a recorded panel discussion addressing common peer review questions and/or perceptions/myths</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• assist peer reviewers with their duties and in understanding what is expected of them</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• mentor peer reviewers through the assessment stage of peer review, as required or requested, including responding to peer reviewer enquiries ensuring that;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• the advice provided is consistent with NHMRC peer review processes and leads to an outcome where applications are appropriately considered against the Investigator Grant assessment criteria (<em>Appendix C</em>) and associated category descriptors (<em>Appendix D</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• peer reviewers consider relative to opportunity, including career disruptions where applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• peer reviewers consistently consider the assessment against the Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria (<em>Appendix F</em>) for applications with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health focus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer reviewers</td>
<td>Peer reviewers need to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• familiarise themselves with this Guide and other material as identified by NHMRC staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• identify and advise NHMRC of all interests they have with applications assigned to them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• provide a fair and impartial assessment against the Investigator Grant assessment criteria and associated categories featured in <em>Appendix C</em> and <em>Appendix D</em>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Senior NHMRC Staff** | NHMRC staff with appropriate expertise may be involved in:  
- reviewing allocation of applications to peer reviewers, and  
- assisting and advising on the peer review process. |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| **NHMRC Staff**        | Under direction from the CEO, NHMRC staff will be responsible for overall administration of the peer review process and for the conduct of specific activities.  
   NHMRC staff will:  
   - invite individuals to participate in the Investigator Grant scheme peer review process as required  
   - determine whether disclosed interests pose a conflict and the level of that conflict.  
   - act as the first point of contact for peer reviewers and community observers  
   - provide briefings to peer reviewers  
   - determine eligibility of applications  
   - assign applications to the appropriate peer reviewers  
   - review peer reviewer written summaries for inappropriate comments  
   - ensure that all peer reviewers are provided with the necessary information to review each application, and assisting and advising on the peer review process as required  
   - assist the PRM in responding to peer reviewer enquiries, and  
   - seek feedback from participants in the peer review process on improvements for future processes. |
| **Indigenous health research peer reviewers** | Applications nominated as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health will be considered by an Indigenous Health Research peer reviewer with appropriate expertise in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.  
   Indigenous health research peer reviewers will review how well each application addresses NHMRC’s Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria (Appendix F). |
Indigenous health research peer reviewers will not be required to participate in scoring. They will act as external experts and provide guiding comments to the peer reviewers relating to the Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria.

In some instances, Indigenous health research peer reviewers may also be invited to participate in scoring of applications. In these instances, they may also provide an assessment against the Investigator Grant scheme assessment criteria and associated category descriptors (Appendices C and D).

### Community Observers

NHMRC invites respected members of the general community to observe whether NHMRC policy and procedures are being adhered to during the peer review process. Observers assist NHMRC in ensuring that the assessment of all applications is fair, equitable and impartial.

Observers will be briefed on the processes and procedures of the peer review of Investigator Grant applications. They will not participate in the review of any application.

Observers will:
- identify and advise NHMRC of all conflict of interests
- monitor the procedural aspects of peer review, and
- provide feedback to NHMRC on the consistency of peer review processes and policies.

Observers may raise issues of a general nature for advice or action as appropriate with NHMRC staff.

### 4.3 Reviewing Investigator Grant applications

All Investigator Grant applications are assessed against the Investigator Grants 2021 Assessment Criteria and the associated Category Descriptors at Appendices C and D. Further guidance on assessing applications against the Investigator Grant assessment criteria is provided at Appendix E.

Applications that are accepted by NHMRC as relating to the improvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health (see section 4.3.1) are also assessed against the Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria as set out at Appendix F.

#### 4.3.1 Identification of applications with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health focus

Applications relating specifically to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s health will be identified by information provided in the application. Researchers with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health expertise will check whether these applications have at least 20% of their research effort and/or capacity building focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.

For applications confirmed as relating specifically to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research, NHMRC will endeavour to obtain an external assessment against the Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria (Appendix F) from an assessor with expertise in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. For further information on assessing applications that have a focus on the health of Indigenous Australians, see Guidance for Assessing applications against the Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria at Appendix G.
The assessment against the *Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria* will be considered by peer reviewers when scoring the assessment criteria at Appendix C.

### 4.3.2 Receipt and initial processing of applications

NHMRC staff will verify that Investigator Grant applications meet eligibility criteria. Applicants will be advised if their application is ineligible. However, in some instances these applications will remain in the peer review process until their ineligibility is confirmed. Eligibility rulings may be made at any point during the annual New Grant Program round.

Applications to Investigator Grants will be submitted in two categories, Emerging Leadership (EL) and Leadership (L), comprising five levels of salary, as set out in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Salary Levels</th>
<th>RSP Tiers</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>L3</td>
<td>LT4</td>
<td>NHMRC Leadership Fellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L2</td>
<td>LT3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L1</td>
<td>LT2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging Leadership</td>
<td>EL2</td>
<td>ELT2</td>
<td>NHMRC Emerging Leadership Fellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EL1</td>
<td>ELT1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The EL Category is restricted to researchers who are ≤10 years post-PhD or equivalent and comprises two salary levels (EL1 and EL2) with corresponding Research Support Packages (RSPs). The L Category comprises three salary levels (L1, L2 and L3) with four tiers of RSP (LT1, LT2, LT3 and LT4). The tier of RSP is not tied to the level of salary for Leadership Investigator Grants. The *Statements of Expectations* for each level of Investigator Grant is at Appendix H.

### 4.3.3 Disclosure of interests and peer reviewer suitability

Peer reviewers will be provided with a summary of each application and disclose their interests within NHMRC’s grant management system, in accordance with the guidelines provided at section 3.3 and Appendix B.

Some peer reviewers may have a disclosure of interest for which they require a decision. In this case, NHMRC will assess the information provided by the peer reviewer and provide a ruling on the level of Col.

Peer reviewers are also required to select their level of suitability for applications, based on the information available to them in the application summary.

### 4.3.4 Assignment of applications to peer reviewers

Taking into account CoIs and peer reviewer suitability, NHMRC staff will assign applications to
peer reviewers. It is expected each reviewer will be assigned approximately 30 applications. However, this is subject to change depending on the number and peer review area of applications. Each application will be assigned up to five reviewers.

4.3.5 Briefing

NHMRC will provide peer reviewers with briefing material with further details on their duties and responsibilities in the Investigator Grant peer review process. This will be made available to peer reviewers prior to assessing applications. Further information may be provided as necessary throughout the peer review process.

4.3.6 Assessment of applications

Peer reviewers will be given access to applications (where no high Col exists) and will be required to assess and enter their scores in NHMRC’s grant management system. Peer reviewers will assess all applications assigned to them against the assessment criteria, using the category descriptors, taking into account career disruptions and other relative to opportunity considerations (Appendix I), where applicable.

NHMRC will obtain a minimum of four independent assessments for each application, with a target of obtaining five independent assessments for each.

Peer reviewers will be able to seek clarification from independent PRMs on peer review processes during the assessment phase.

Peer reviewers are required to provide a brief summary of their assessment for each application they assess, summarising the strengths and weaknesses of the application. This feedback will be provided to the applicant. Peer reviewers must remember their obligation to remain fair and impartial when providing their feedback to applicants.

To ensure they provide independent scores, peer reviewers are not to discuss applications with other peer reviewers.

Peer reviewers must ensure scores and single summary statements are completed by the nominated due date. If peer reviewers are unable to meet this requirement, they must contact NHMRC promptly to discuss alternative arrangements.

Peer reviewers’ scores will be used to create ranked lists of applications from which funding recommendations will be based. The overall score will be determined using each peer reviewer’s score for each of the assessment criteria. The rating, as calculated arithmetically to three decimal places, will take account of the weighting of each criterion.

4.3.6.1 Relative to opportunity and career disruption

Peer reviewers must take into account productivity relative to opportunity and, where applicable, career disruption considerations in the assessment of Track Record. This reflects NHMRC’s policy that assessment processes should accurately assess an applicant’s track record and associated productivity relative to stage of career, including consideration as to whether productivity and contribution are commensurate with the opportunities available to the applicant.

Applicants must justify in their applications their selected Category and Level of Investigator Grant. This applicant justification will be considered by peer reviewers when reviewing an applicant’s Track Record relative to opportunity.

The Statements of Expectations for each Category and Level have been updated to clarify NHMRC’s expectations of applicants applying at each Level.

To assist peer reviewers with their assessment, further details regarding relative to
opportunity and career disruptions as well as implementation of the revised track record assessment for Investigator Grants are provided at Appendices I and J.

4.3.6.2 Mitigating unconscious gender bias in peer review

NHMRC is committed to addressing gender equality to promote fairness, transparency, equality and diversity in health and medical research. Fostering gender equality in peer review is a strategic objective, underpinned by NHMRC’s Gender Equality Strategy 2018–2021.

Consistent with international practice and to ensure that NHMRC grant applications continue to receive objective and impartial assessments, NHMRC is raising peer reviewers’ awareness of unconscious bias in the assessment process.

This is also consistent with the NHMRC document Peer Review: A guide supporting the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, which states that peer reviewers should be aware of how their own biases (conscious or unconscious) could affect the peer review process, including in relation to gender, ethnicity, nationality, institutional employer and research discipline.

Peer reviewer participation in the online Harvard Implicit Association Test for gender and science

In support of the objective, NHMRC encourages peer reviewers to complete the online Harvard Implicit Association Test (IAT) for gender and science. The IAT for gender and science, used by several research funding agencies nationally and internationally, is designed to help participants identify any implicit associations they may have between gender and participation in a science career.

By completing the test, peer reviewers gain a better understanding and increased awareness of how unconscious attitudes may affect their decisions, which prepares them to carry out their duties to the high standards of fairness and rigour expected by NHMRC. Peer reviewers should continue to follow all peer review principles and processes outlined in these guidelines, ensuring that each application is accurately reviewed against the assessment criteria (Appendix C). NHMRC does not have access to, nor does it seek, peer reviewers’ information and results for the IAT for gender and science in the peer review process.

Peer reviewers must also familiarise themselves with any additional materials provided by NHMRC about unconscious bias awareness and implicit associations for gender and science during the peer review process.

Use of gender-neutral language

To reduce unconscious gender bias, NHMRC has strongly advised applicants to use gender-neutral language. This will limit the opportunity for unconscious gender bias to affect the assessment process.

NHMRC also encourages peer reviewers to use gender-neutral language in the assessment of applications. This means that when preparing written material peer reviewers should:

- avoid the use of gendered pronouns such as he/she or her/his, and instead use gender-neutral alternatives such as CIA/CIB, CI last-name or plural pronouns (they/their) when referring to applicants.
- avoid the use of first names, and
- use gender-neutral nouns where appropriate e.g. parental leave rather than maternity/paternity leave.

The use of gender-neutral language in applications is encouraged, but does not form part of the assessment criteria and therefore should not influence your scoring of applications. Peer reviewers are required to consider the proposal on its merits, taking relative to opportunity considerations into account when assessing Track Record.
Where gender dimensions are important for the research being proposed, applicants have been advised they should be included in the application. Please refer to the scheme-specific category descriptors at Appendix D for information on whether gender dimensions are to be considered as a part of assessment.

4.3.6.3 Industry-relevant experience

Peer reviewers are to recognise an applicant’s industry-relevant experience and outputs. To assist peer reviewers with their assessment, the Guide to Evaluating Industry-Relevant Experience is provided at Appendix K.

4.3.6.4 Use of Impact Factors and other metrics

Peer reviewers are to take into account their expert knowledge of their field of research, as well as the citation and publication practices of that field, when assessing the publication component of an applicant’s track record. Track record assessment takes into account the overall impact, quality and contribution to the field of the published journal articles from the grant applicant, not just the standing of the journal in which those articles are published.

It is not appropriate to use publication metrics such as Journal Impact Factors. The San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DoRA) makes recommendations for improving the evaluation of research assessment. NHMRC is a signatory to DoRA and adheres to the recommendations outlined in DoRA for its peer review processes.

4.3.6.5 Enhancing reproducibility and applicability of research outcomes

Peer reviewers are required to consider the general strengths and weaknesses of the experimental design of the proposal to ensure robust and unbiased results. Assessment of the experimental design should include consideration of the following, as appropriate:

- scientific premise of the proposed research (i.e. how rigorous were previous experimental designs that form the basis for this proposal)
- techniques to be used
- details for appropriate blinding (during allocation, assessment and analysis)
- strategies for randomisation
- details and justification for control groups
- effect size and power calculations to determine the number of samples/subjects in the study (where appropriate)
- consideration of relevant experimental variables, and
- sex and gender elements of the research to maximise impact and any other considerations relevant to the field of research necessary to assess the rigour of the proposed design.

4.3.6.6 Research Integrity Issues

The peer review process can sometimes identify possible research integrity issues with applicants (e.g. concerns about possible plagiarism, inconsistencies in the presentation of data, inaccuracies in the presentation of track record information) or the behaviour of other peer reviewers. NHMRC has established specific processes for addressing research integrity concerns that arise in peer review. Peer reviewers must not discuss their concerns with other peer reviewers as this may jeopardise the fair assessment of an application. Instead, these issues should be raised with NHMRC separately from the peer review process. Advice about
how to raise concerns and a description of how this process is managed are provided on the NHMRC website.

Applications that are the subject of a research misconduct allegation will continue to progress through NHMRC peer review processes while any investigations are ongoing. NHMRC liaises with the institution regarding the outcome of any investigation and, if necessary, will take action under the NHMRC Research Integrity and Misconduct Policy available on the NHMRC website.

### 4.3.6.7 Contact between peer reviewers and applicants

Peers reviewers must not contact applicants about their application under review. If this occurs, the peer reviewer may be removed from the process, and there is the potential for exclusion from future NHMRC peer review.

Where an applicant contacts a peer reviewer, the relevant application may be excluded from consideration.

In either case, contact between applicants and peer reviewers may raise concerns about research integrity and NHMRC may refer such concerns to the relevant Administering Institution.

### 4.3.6.8 Principles for setting conditions of funding for NHMRC grants

Setting a condition of funding (CoF) on a grant through the peer review process is, and should be, a rare event. When this does occur, the peer reviewers or NHMRC will use the principles set out below to decide the CoF. These principles aim to achieve a consistent approach, minimise the number of conditions set and ensure conditions are unambiguous and able to be assessed.

CoFs relate to the award of funding, the continuation of funding or the level of funding. They do not relate to conditions which affect either eligibility to apply or subsequent peer review.

The principles are:

- NHMRC seeks to minimise the administrative burden on researchers and Administering Institutions.
- CoFs must not relate to the competitiveness of an application (e.g., project requires more community engagement); these issues should be considered during peer review and be reflected in the scores for the application.
- Any CoFs must be clear and measurable, so that the condition can be readily assessed as having been met.

### 4.3.6.9 Documentation

Peer reviewers may be required to retain personal notes that they made during the peer review process for a certain period, and if so, these must be held securely and in accordance with reviewers’ obligations of confidentiality. NHMRC will notify peer reviewers of any such requirements prior to the peer review process.

### 4.3.6.10 Funding Recommendation

Application scores from all peer reviewers are used to create three ranked lists (Leadership, Emerging Leadership 2 and Emerging Leadership 1). Each ranked list has a pre-determined total budget within the scheme’s budget allocation. These ranked lists will be used to prepare funding recommendations to NHMRC’s Research Committee and Council for advice to the CEO, who will then make recommendations to the Minister for Health.
4.3.6.11 Notification of Outcomes

NHMRC will notify applicants and their Administering Institution’s Research Administration Officer of grant application outcomes.

Feedback will be provided to all applicants in the form of an Application Assessment Summary and a single summary statement from each assigned peer reviewer. The Application Assessment Summary will contain numerical information on the competitiveness of the application that will be drawn from the scores given by peer reviewers.
Appendix A – Understanding the Principles of Peer Review

Fairness

- Peer review processes are designed to ensure that peer review is fair and seen to be fair by all involved.
- Peer reviewers have an obligation to ensure that each application is judged consistently and objectively on its own merits, against published assessment criteria. Peer reviewers must not introduce irrelevant issues into the assessment of an application.
- Applications will be subject to scrutiny and evaluation by individuals who have appropriate knowledge of the fields covered in the application.
- Peer reviewers should ensure that their assessments are accurate and that all statements are capable of being verified.
- Complaints processes are outlined on the NHMRC website. All complaints to NHMRC relating to the peer review process are dealt with independently and impartially.

Transparency

- NHMRC will publish key dates, all relevant material for applicants and peer reviewers, and grant announcements on its website and/or via GrantConnect.
- NHMRC publicly recognises the contribution of participants in the peer review process, through publishing their names on the NHMRC website.¹

Independence

- The order of merit determined by peer reviewers is not altered by NHMRC. However, additional applications may be funded ‘below the funding line’ in priority or strategic areas.

Appropriateness and balance

- Peer reviewers are selected to meet the scheme’s objectives and to ensure adequate expertise to assess the applications received.
- NHMRC endeavours to ensure that peer reviewers are selected with regard to an appropriate representation of gender, geography and large and small institutions.

Confidentiality

- NHMRC provides a process by which applications are considered by peer reviewers in-confidence. In addition, NHMRC is bound by the provisions of the Privacy Act 1988 in relation to its collection and use of personal information, and by the commercial confidentiality requirements under section 80 of the NHMRC Act.
- Peer reviewers are to treat applications in-confidence and must not disclose any matter regarding applications under review to people who are not part of the process.
- Any information or documents made available to peer reviewers in the peer review process are confidential and must not be used other than to fulfil their role.
- NHMRC is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 1982 which provides a statutory

¹ Such information will be in a form that prevents applicants determining which particular experts were involved in the review of their application.
right for an individual to seek access to documents. If documents that deal with peer review fall within the scope of a request, there is a process for consultation and there are exemptions from release. NHMRC will endeavour to protect the identity of peer reviewers assigned to a particular application.

Impartiality

- Peer reviewers must disclose all interests and matters that may, or may be perceived to, affect objectivity in considering particular applications.
- Peer reviewers must disclose interests with applications being reviewed, including:
  - research collaborations
  - student, teacher or mentoring relationships
  - employment arrangements
  - any other relationship that may, or may be seen to, undermine fair and impartial judgement.
- Disclosures of interest are managed to ensure that no one with a high conflict is involved in the assessment of relevant applications.

Quality and Excellence

- NHMRC will continue to introduce evidence-based improvements into its peer review processes.
- Any significant change will be developed in consultation with the research community and may involve piloting new processes.
- NHMRC will strive to introduce new technologies that are demonstrated to maximise the benefits of peer review and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the process while minimising individual workloads.
- NHMRC will undertake post-scheme assessment of all its schemes with feedback from the sector.
- NHMRC will provide advice, training and feedback for peer reviewers new to NHMRC peer review.
- Where NHMRC finds peer reviewers to be substandard in their performance, NHMRC may provide such feedback directly to the peer reviewer or their institution.
Appendix B – Guidance for Declaring and Assessing Disclosures of Interest

Conflicts of interest are frequently regarded as a positive indicator that peer reviewers are recognised leaders who:

- have expert advice or skills
- have been given professional opportunities
- have received government funding, and
- are supported by the companies working to raise the standard of individual and public health throughout Australia.

A disclosure of interest does not mean that a peer reviewer has engaged in an inappropriate activity. It is a collaboration or relationship which may, or could be perceived to, impact impartial peer review and thus needs to be disclosed and transparently managed (where necessary) to safeguard the integrity of the peer review process. It is the peer reviewer’s responsibility to disclose all interests. Failure to do so without a reasonable excuse may result in the peer reviewer being removed from the peer review process in accordance with subsection 44B(3) of the NHMRC Act.

In determining if an interest is a conflict, peer reviewers should give consideration to the following values that underpin the robust nature of peer review:

- **Excellence through expert peer review:** The benefits of peer reviewers’ expert advice need to be balanced with the risk of real and or perceived interests affecting an impartial review.
- **Significance:** Not all interests are equal. The type of interest needs to be considered in terms of its significance and time when it occurred.
- **Integrity through disclosure:** Peer review rests on the integrity of peer reviewers to disclose any interests and contribute to transparently managing any real or perceived conflicts in a rigorous way. The peer review system cannot be effective without trusting peer reviewers’ integrity.

In determining if an interest is a ‘High’, ‘Low’, or ‘No’ CoI, the responsibility is on the peer reviewer to consider the specific circumstances of the situation. This includes:

- the significance of the interest
- its impact on the impartiality of the reviewer, and
- maintaining the integrity of the peer review process.

Once a peer reviewer discloses an interest they can provide a brief explanation of the interest in NHMRC’s grant management system to enable a judgement of its significance. Wherever possible, peer reviewers are encouraged to provide sufficient detail in the explanation such as the date (month and year) of collaborations. Disclosures of interest are to be documented for conflicts of interest with both CIs and AIs.

The written declaration of interest is retained for auditing purposes by NHMRC. The details below provide general examples and are not to be regarded as a prescriptive checklist.
## HIGH Conflict of Interest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Associated with Application and/or Chief Investigator (CI)</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaborations</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Working relationships</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional relationships and interests</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social relationship and/or interests</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching or supervisory relationship</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Direct financial interest in the application</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other interests or situations</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔</td>
<td>The peer reviewer feels that there are other interests or situations not covered above that could influence/or be perceived to influence, the peer review process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LOW Conflict of Interest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaborations</strong></td>
<td>✔ Peer reviewer and a CI on the application have collaborated more than three years ago.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✔ Within the last three years the peer reviewer has published with the CI as part of a multi-author collaborative team (i.e. ≥10 authors) where the peer reviewer did not interact or collaborate with the CI directly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✔ A co-worker is planning future collaborations with a CI.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✔ Peer reviewer and a named AI on the application are actively collaborating or have previously collaborated within the last three years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✔ Without financial gain or exchange, a peer reviewer and a contributor of the research team have shared cells/animals/reagents/specialist expertise (biostatistician) etc. but have no other connection to each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✔ Collaboration between a peer reviewer’s colleague/research group and a CI, where the peer reviewer did not participate or have a perceived interest in the collaboration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✔ Peer reviewer is considering/planning/or has planned a future collaboration with a CI on the application but has no current collaborations or joint applications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Working relationships</strong></td>
<td>✔ Peer reviewer has the same employer, is part of the same organisation or is negotiating employment at the applicant’s institution.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| | ✔ Peer reviewer and a CI work:  
| | • at the same institution and do not know each other  
| | • in the same Faculty or College of a university but in different Schools or Departments and do not know each other  
<p>| | • in the same organisation, but the peer reviewer or applicant holds an honorary appointment. |
| | ✔ Peer reviewer and a CI work for two organisations that are affiliated but there is no direct association/collaboration. |
| | ✔ Peer reviewer and a CI are on the same scientific advisory committee, review board, exam board, trial committee, Data and Safety Monitoring Board etc., but otherwise have no association that would constitute a ‘High’ decision. |
| <strong>Professional relationships and interests</strong> | ✔ Peer reviewer’s organisation is affiliated with the CI’s organisation. |
| | ✔ Where two organisations are affiliated but there is no direct association/collaboration between the CI and peer reviewer and there is no other link that would constitute a ‘High’ decision. |
| | ✔ When the peer reviewer’s institution has an indirect affiliation/association with the organisation(s) that may have, or may be perceived to have, a vested interest in this research. |
| <strong>Social relationship</strong> | ✔ Peer reviewer’s partner or an immediate family member has a known personal/social (non-work)/perceived relationship with |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>and / or interests</th>
<th>a CI on the application, but the peer reviewer themselves does not have any link with the CI that would be perceived or constitute a ‘High’ decision.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching or supervisory relationship</td>
<td>✔ Peer reviewer taught or supervised the applicant for either undergraduate or postgraduate studies, or co-supervised a CI, or the peer reviewer’s research was supervised by a CI, more than three years ago.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial interest in the application</td>
<td>✔ Peer reviewer has an associated patent pending; supplied goods and services, improved access to facilities, or provided cells/animals etc. to a named CI for either undergraduate or postgraduate studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other interests or situations</td>
<td>✔ Peer reviewer may be, or may be perceived to be biased in their review of the application. For example, peer reviewer is a lobbyist on an issue related to the application.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C – Investigator Grants 2021 Assessment Criteria

Applications for Investigator Grants 2021 are assessed by peers on the extent to which they address the assessment criteria:

- Track record, relative to opportunity (70%), including selected Level
- Knowledge Gain (30%).

Applications will be assessed against the category descriptors at Appendix D.

**Track Record** - NHMRC defines ‘Track Record’ for the Investigator Grant scheme as the value of an individual’s past research achievements, relative to opportunity, not prospective achievements, using evidence. Assessment of Track Record comprises peer reviewers’ consideration of:

- Publications (35%)
- Research Impact (20%)
- Leadership (15%).

**Knowledge Gain** - NHMRC defines ‘Knowledge Gain’ for the Investigator Grant scheme as the quality of the proposed research and significance of the knowledge gained. It incorporates theoretical concepts, hypothesis, research design, robustness and the extent to which the research findings will contribute to the research area and health outcomes (by advancing knowledge, practice or policy).

Track Records are assessed relative to opportunity, taking into consideration selected Level and any career disruptions, where applicable (see Appendix I).

It is recognised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants often make additional valuable contributions to policy development, clinical/public health leadership and/or service delivery, community activities and linkages, and are often representatives on key committees. If applicable, these contributions will be considered when assessing research output and track record.
Appendix D – Investigator Grants 2021 Category Descriptors

The following category descriptors are used as a guide to scoring an application against each of the assessment criteria.

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 are met.

The category descriptors are a guide to a “best fit” outcome. Peer reviewers will consistently refer to these category descriptors to ensure thorough, equitable and transparent assessment of applications.

Assessing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Contributions
It is recognised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants make additional valuable contributions to policy development, clinical/public health leadership and/or service delivery, community activities and linkages, and are often representatives on key committees. If applicable, these contributions should be considered when assessing research output and track record.
**Track Record, relative to opportunity (70%), including selected Level Publications (35%)**

Table 1. Publications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Performance Indicator</th>
<th>Category Descriptors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 7     | Exceptional            | Relative to opportunity (including career stage) and to their field of research, the applicant demonstrates:  
- an *exceptional* record of publications in terms of quality and contribution to science |
| 6     | Outstanding            | Relative to opportunity (including career stage) and to their field of research, the applicant demonstrates:  
- an *outstanding* record of publications in terms of quality and contribution to science |
| 5     | Excellent              | Relative to opportunity (including career stage) and to their field of research, the applicant demonstrates:  
- an *excellent* record of publications in terms of quality and contribution to science |
| 4     | Very Good              | Relative to opportunity (including career stage) and to their field of research, the applicant demonstrates:  
- a *very good* record of publications in terms of quality and contribution to science |
| 3     | Good                   | Relative to opportunity (including career stage) and to their field of research, the applicant demonstrates:  
- a *good* record of publications in terms of quality and contribution to science |
| 2     | Satisfactory           | Relative to opportunity (including career stage) and to their field of research, the applicant demonstrates:  
- a *satisfactory* record of publications in terms of quality and contribution to science |
| 1     | Weak or limited        | Relative to opportunity (including career stage) and to their field of research, the applicant demonstrates:  
- a *weak or limited* record of publications in terms of quality and contribution to science |
## Research Impact (20%)

### Table 2. Reach and significance of the research impact (Emerging Leadership and Leadership) (7%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emerging Leadership Score</th>
<th>Category Descriptors</th>
<th>Leadership Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Knowledge:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• a paradigm changing development that has led to (a) new knowledge within the</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>field that is recognised across multiple countries, (b) significant influence</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>beyond the specific field of research or (c) the development of a new field(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of research that has been recognised across multiple countries/beneficiaries</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Health:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• a paradigm changing development that has improved health or health systems,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>services, policy, programs or clinical practice that (a) had a significant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>impact on health with an extensive reach, (b) had a profound impact on health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with a modest reach, (c) profoundly improved the health of Australia's</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Indigenous people or (d) led to a significant, scalable and sustainable change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in health systems and services in a large number of communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Economic</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• development of a service delivery or system change, prevention program,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>intervention, device, therapeutic or change in clinical practice that led to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(a) the generation of significant commercial income or (b) a profound reduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in healthcare costs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Social</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• changes in policy that have had (a) a significant impact on the social well-</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>being, equality or social inclusion of very large numbers of people at a</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>national level or across multiple countries or (b) a profound impact on the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>social well-being of the end-user, public and community of a smaller number of</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>individuals at a national level or across multiple countries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Applicants do not need to demonstrate all types of research impact.

For the assessment of research impact, different seven point scales are used for Emerging Leadership and Leadership applicants. This is to recognise that early and mid-career researchers will have had less time to accumulate research impact than more senior researchers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emerging Leadership Score</th>
<th>Category Descriptors</th>
<th>Note: Applicants do not need to demonstrate all types of research impact</th>
<th>Leadership Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 7                        | an exceptional knowledge, health, economic and/or social impact | Knowledge:  
  • a major development that has led to (a) new knowledge within the field that is recognised nationally or across multiple countries, (b) a major influence beyond the specific field of research or (c) a major influence on the development of a new field(s) of research that has been recognised nationally or across multiple countries/beneficiaries  
  Health:  
  • an important development that has improved health or health systems, services, policy, programs or clinical practice that (a) had a major impact on health with an extensive reach, (b) had a significant impact on health with a modest reach, (c) led to a significant improvement in the health of Australia’s Indigenous people or (d) led to major scalable and sustainable change in health systems and services in a number of communities  
  Economic:  
  • development of a service delivery or system change, prevention program, intervention, device, therapeutic or change in clinical practice that led to (a) the generation of considerable commercial income or (b) a major reduction in healthcare costs  
  Social:  
  • changes in policy that have either had (a) a major impact on the social well-being, equality or social inclusion of very large numbers of people at a local, state/territory or national level or (b) a significant impact on the social well-being of the end-user, public and community of a smaller number of individuals at a local, state/territory or national level | an excellent knowledge, health, economic and/or social impact | 5 |
| 6                        | an outstanding knowledge, health, economic and/or social impact | Knowledge:  
  • a change that has led to (a) new knowledge within the field that is recognised nationally or across multiple countries, (b) had some influence beyond the specific field of research, or (c) some influence on the development of a new field(s) of research that has been recognised nationally or across multiple countries/beneficiaries  
  Health | a very good knowledge, health, economic and/or social impact | 4 |
| 5                        | an excellent knowledge, health, economic and/or social impact | Knowledge:  
  • a change that has led to (a) new knowledge within the field that is recognised nationally or across multiple countries, (b) had some influence beyond the specific field of research, or (c) some influence on the development of a new field(s) of research that has been recognised nationally or across multiple countries/beneficiaries  
  Health | a good knowledge, health, economic and/or social impact | 3 |
| 4                        | a very good knowledge, health, economic and/or social impact | Knowledge:  
  • a change that has led to (a) new knowledge within the field that is recognised nationally or across multiple countries, (b) had some influence beyond the specific field of research, or (c) some influence on the development of a new field(s) of research that has been recognised nationally or across multiple countries/beneficiaries  
  Health | a very good knowledge, health, economic and/or social impact | 3 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emerging Leadership Score</th>
<th>Category Descriptors</th>
<th>Leadership Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Note:</strong> Applicants do not need to demonstrate all types of research impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>a good knowledge, health, economic and/or social impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• a development that has improved health or health systems, services, policy, programs or clinical practice that (a) had some impact on health with an extensive reach, (b) had a major impact on health with a modest reach, (c) led to a major improvement in the health of Australia’s Indigenous people, or (d) led to some scalable and sustainable change in health systems and services in a small number of communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• development of a service delivery or system change, prevention program, intervention, device, therapeutic or change in clinical practice that led to (a) the generation of some commercial income or (b) some reduction in healthcare costs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• changes in policy that have had (a) some impact on the social well-being, equality or social inclusion of very large numbers of people at a local, state/territory or national level or (b) an impact on the social well-being of the end-user, public and community of a smaller number of individuals at a local, state/territory or national level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>a satisfactory knowledge, health, economic and/or social impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>a weak or limited knowledge, health, economic and/or social impact and/or the applicant has not supplied robust verifiable evidence</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• the development of new knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• improved health systems and services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• reductions in health care costs or economic growth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• improvements in social well-being, equality or social inclusion.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is limited or weak evidence of:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a weak or limited knowledge, health, economic and/or social impact and/or the applicant has not supplied robust verifiable evidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score</td>
<td>Performance Indicator</td>
<td>Category Descriptors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 7     | Exceptional               | Relative to opportunity and to their field of research, there is robust verifiable evidence that the applicant’s research program made:  
|       |                            | • an **exceptional** contribution to the knowledge, health, economic and/or social impact |
| 6     | Outstanding               | Relative to opportunity and to their field of research, there is robust verifiable evidence that the applicant’s research program made:  
|       |                            | • an **outstanding** contribution to the knowledge, health, economic and/or social impact |
| 5     | Excellent                 | Relative to opportunity and to their field of research, there is robust verifiable evidence that the applicant’s research program made:  
|       |                            | • an **excellent** contribution to the knowledge, health, economic and/or social impact |
| 4     | Very good                 | Relative to opportunity and to their field of research, there is robust verifiable evidence that the applicant’s research program made:  
|       |                            | • a **very good** contribution to the knowledge, health, economic and/or social impact |
| 3     | Good                      | Relative to opportunity and to their field of research, there is robust verifiable evidence that the applicant’s research program made:  
|       |                            | • a **good** contribution to the knowledge, health, economic and/or social impact |
| 2     | Satisfactory              | Relative to opportunity and to their field of research, there is robust verifiable evidence that the applicant’s research program made:  
|       |                            | • a **satisfactory** contribution to the knowledge, health, economic and/or social impact |
| 1     | Weak, Limited or No       | Relative to opportunity and to their field of research, the applicant’s research program made:  
|       |                            | • a **weak, limited or no** contribution to the knowledge, health, economic and/or social impact and/or  
<p>|       |                            | • the applicant has not supplied robust verifiable evidence |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Performance Indicator</th>
<th>Category Descriptors</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 7     | Exceptional           | Relative to opportunity and to their field, there is robust verifiable evidence that the applicant made:  
- an **exceptional** contribution to the research program that led to a knowledge, health, economic and/or social impact  | Leadership **AND/OR** instrumental role in a research program |
| 6     | Outstanding           | Relative to opportunity and to their field, there is robust verifiable evidence that the applicant made:  
- an **outstanding** contribution to the research program that led to a knowledge, health, economic and/or social impact  | Leadership of a component **AND/OR** collaborative role (e.g. co-investigator) in a research program |
| 5     | Excellent             | Relative to opportunity and to their field, there is robust verifiable evidence that the applicant made:  
- an **excellent** contribution to the research program that led to a knowledge, health, economic and/or social impact  | Leadership of a component **AND/OR** collaborative role (e.g. co-investigator) in a research program |
| 4     | Very Good             | Relative to opportunity and to their field, there is robust verifiable evidence that the applicant made:  
- a **very good** contribution to the research program that led to a knowledge, health, economic and/or social impact  | Contribution to a research program |
| 3     | Good                  | Relative to opportunity and to their field, there is robust verifiable evidence that the applicant made:  
- a **good** contribution to the research program that led to a knowledge, health, economic and/or social impact  | Contribution to a research program |
| 2     | Satisfactory          | Relative to opportunity and to their field, there is robust verifiable evidence that the applicant made:  
- a **satisfactory** contribution to the research program that led to a knowledge, health, economic and/or social impact  | Contribution to a research program |
| 1     | Weak, Limited or No   | Relative to opportunity and to their field, the applicant made:  
- a **weak, limited or no** contribution to the research program that led to a knowledge, health, economic and/or social impact  | Limited or no contribution to a research program |

The table above provides a breakdown of performance indicators for applicants contributing to research programs, categorized from exceptional to weak, limited, or no contributions, with descriptors for each score level.
### Leadership (15%)

#### Table 5. Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Performance Indicator</th>
<th>Category Descriptors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 7     | Exceptional            | Relative to opportunity (including career stage) and to their field of research, the applicant demonstrates **exceptional** performance in:  
- supervision, mentoring, training and/or career development of staff and/or students within and/or beyond their research group  
- experience and contribution to the peer review of publications and grant applications, nationally and/or internationally  
- contribution to community engagement, public advocacy, government advisory boards or committees, professional societies at a local, national and/or international level  
- non-research contribution(s) to department, centre, institute or organisation e.g. leadership or membership of committee  
- conception and direction of a research project or program  
- building and maintaining collaborative networks necessary to achieve research outcomes within and/or beyond their institution. |
| 6     | Outstanding            | Relative to opportunity (including career stage) and to their field of research, the applicant demonstrates **outstanding** performance in:  
- supervision, mentoring, training and/or career development of staff and/or students within and/or beyond their research group  
- experience and contribution to the peer review of publications and grant applications, nationally and/or internationally  
- contribution to community engagement, public advocacy, government advisory boards or committees, professional societies at a local, national and/or international level  
- non-research contribution(s) to department, centre, institute or organisation e.g. leadership or membership of committee  
- conception and direction of a research project or program  
- building and maintaining collaborative networks necessary to achieve research outcomes within and/or beyond their institution. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Appraisal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relative to opportunity (including career stage) and to their field of research, the applicant demonstrates <strong>excellent</strong> performance in:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- supervision, mentoring, training and/or career development of staff and/or students within and/or beyond their research group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- experience and contribution to the peer review of publications and grant applications, nationally and/or internationally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- contribution to community engagement, public advocacy, government advisory boards or committees, professional societies at a local, national and/or international level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- non-research contribution(s) to department, centre, institute or organisation e.g. leadership or membership of committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- conception and direction of a research project or program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- building and maintaining collaborative networks necessary to achieve research outcomes within and/or beyond their institution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relative to opportunity (including career stage) and to their field of research, the applicant demonstrates <strong>very good</strong> performance in:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- supervision, mentoring, training and/or career development of staff and/or students within and/or beyond their research group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- experience and contribution to the peer review of publications and grant applications, nationally and/or internationally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- contribution to community engagement, public advocacy, government advisory boards or committees, professional societies at a local, national and/or international level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- non-research contribution(s) to department, centre, institute or organisation e.g. leadership or membership of committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- conception and direction of a research project or program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- building and maintaining collaborative networks necessary to achieve research outcomes within and/or beyond their institution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relative to opportunity (including career stage) and to their field of research, the applicant demonstrates <strong>good</strong> performance in:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- supervision, mentoring, training and/or career development of staff and/or students within and/or beyond their research group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- experience and contribution to the peer review of publications and grant applications, nationally and/or internationally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- contribution to community engagement, public advocacy, government advisory boards or committees, professional societies at a local, national and/or international level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- non-research contribution(s) to department, centre, institute or organisation e.g. leadership or membership of committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- conception and direction of a research project or program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- building and maintaining collaborative networks necessary to achieve research outcomes within and/or beyond their institution.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2 | Satisfactory | Relative to opportunity (including career stage) and to their field of research, the applicant demonstrates **satisfactory** performance in:  
- supervision, mentoring, training and/or career development of staff and/or students within and/or beyond their research group  
- experience and contribution to the peer review of publications and grant applications, nationally and/or internationally  
- contribution to community engagement, public advocacy, government advisory boards or committees, professional societies at a local, national and/or international level  
- non-research contribution(s) to department, centre, institute or organisation e.g. leadership or membership of committee  
- conception and direction of a research project or program  
- building and maintaining collaborative networks necessary to achieve research outcomes within and/or beyond their institution. |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Weak or limited | Relative to opportunity (including career stage) and to their field of research, the applicant demonstrates **weak or limited** performance in:  
- supervision, mentoring, training and/or career development of staff and/or students within and/or beyond their research group  
- experience and contribution to the peer review of publications and grant applications, nationally and/or internationally  
- contribution to community engagement, public advocacy, government advisory boards or committees, professional societies at a local, national and/or international level  
- non-research contribution(s) to department, centre, institute or organisation e.g. leadership or membership of committee  
- conception and direction of a research project or program  
- building and maintaining collaborative networks necessary to achieve research outcomes within and/or beyond their institution. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Performance Indicator</th>
<th>Category Descriptors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 7     | Exceptional           | The proposed research:  
• is supported by an extremely well justified and reasoned hypothesis/rationale  
• has a scientific framework, design, methods and analyses that are flawless, highly developed and highly appropriate  
• demonstrates to an extremely high level that it addresses an issue of critical importance to advance the research or health area (not prevalence or magnitude of the issue)  
• has or has access to exceptional technical resources, infrastructure, equipment and facilities, and if required, has access to additional expertise necessary to achieve proposed outcomes  
• will result in extremely significant and transformative changes/outcomes in the scientific knowledge, practice or policy underpinning human health issues  
• will lead to extremely significant research outputs (e.g. intellectual property, publications, policy advice, products, services, teaching aids, consulting, contract research, spin-offs, licensing)  
• would be extremely competitive with the best, similar research proposals internationally. |
| 6     | Outstanding           | The proposed research:  
• is supported by a very well justified and reasoned hypothesis/rationale  
• has a scientific framework, design, methods and analyses that are well developed and highly appropriate with only a few minor weaknesses  
• demonstrates to a very high level that it addresses an issue that is very important to advance the research or health area (not prevalence or magnitude of the issue)  
• has or has access to outstanding technical resources, infrastructure, equipment and facilities, and if required, has access to additional expertise necessary to achieve proposed outcomes  
• will result in very highly significant and substantial changes/outcomes in the scientific knowledge, practice or policy underpinning human health issues  
• will lead to very highly significant research outputs (e.g. intellectual property, publications, policy advice, products, services, teaching aids, consulting, contract research, spin-offs, licensing)  
• would be highly competitive with the best, similar research proposals internationally. |
| 5     | Excellent             | The proposed research:  
• is supported by a well justified and reasoned hypothesis/rationale  
• has a scientific framework, design, methods and analyses that are well developed and highly appropriate with several minor weaknesses  
• demonstrates to a high level that it addresses an issue that is of considerable importance to advance the research or health area (not prevalence or magnitude of the issue)  
• has or has access to excellent technical resources, infrastructure, equipment and facilities, and if required, has access to additional expertise necessary to achieve proposed outcomes  
• will result in highly significant and substantial changes/outcomes in the scientific knowledge, practice or policy underpinning human health issues  
• will lead to highly significant research outputs (e.g. intellectual property, publications, policy advice, products, services, teaching aids, consulting, contract research, spin-offs, licensing)  
• would be highly competitive with the best, similar research proposals internationally. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 4     | Very Good | The proposed research:  
- is supported by a well justified and reasoned hypothesis/rationale  
- has a scientific framework, design, methods and analyses that are well developed and highly appropriate with a few minor concerns  
- demonstrates that it addresses an issue that is of importance to advance the research or health area (not prevalence or magnitude of the issue)  
- has or has access to very good technical resources, infrastructure, equipment and facilities, and if required, has access to additional expertise necessary to achieve proposed outcomes  
- is likely to result in significant and substantial changes/outcomes in the scientific knowledge, practice or policy underpinning human health issues  
- is likely to lead to significant research outputs (e.g. intellectual property, publications, policy advice, products, services, teaching aids, consulting, contract research, spin-offs, licensing)  
- would likely be competitive with high quality, similar research proposals internationally. |
| 3     | Good | The proposed research:  
- is supported by a justified and sound hypothesis/rationale  
- has a scientific framework, design, methods and analyses that are developed and appropriate with several minor concerns  
- demonstrates that it is addressing an issue that is of some importance to advance the research or health area (not prevalence or magnitude of the issue)  
- has or has access to good technical resources, infrastructure, equipment and facilities, and if required, has access to additional expertise necessary to achieve proposed outcomes  
- could result in significant and substantial changes/outcomes in the scientific knowledge, practice or policy underpinning human health issues  
- could lead to significant research outputs (e.g. intellectual property, publications, policy advice, products, services, teaching aids, consulting, contract research, spin-offs, licensing)  
- would be somewhat competitive with high quality, similar research proposals internationally. |
| 2 | Satisfactory | The proposed research:  
|   |                 | • is supported by a reasoned hypothesis/rationale  
|   |                 | • has a scientific framework, design, methods and analyses that are generally sound but may lack clarity in some aspects and/or may contain notable weaknesses/concerns  
|   |                 | • demonstrates that it is addressing an issue that is of marginal importance to advance the research or health area (not prevalence or magnitude of the issue)  
|   |                 | • has or has access to some/most but not all of the technical resources, infrastructure, equipment and facilities, and if required, has access to additional expertise necessary to achieve proposed outcomes  
|   |                 | • could result in appreciable improvements/outcomes in the scientific knowledge, practice or policy underpinning human health issues  
|   |                 | • could lead to moderately significant research outputs (e.g. intellectual property, publications, policy advice, products, services, teaching aids, consulting, contract research, spin-offs, licensing)  
|   |                 | • would be marginally competitive with high quality, similar research proposals internationally. |
| 1 | Marginal to Poor | The proposed research:  
|   |                 | • has a weak hypothesis/rationale  
|   |                 | • has a scientific framework, design, methods and analyses that have significant flaws and may contain major weaknesses  
|   |                 | • demonstrates that it is addressing an issue of some concern to advance the research or health area (not prevalence or magnitude of the issue)  
|   |                 | • does not have access to the technical resources, infrastructure, equipment and facilities or access to additional expertise necessary to achieve proposed outcomes (if required)  
|   |                 | • is unlikely to result in improvements/outcomes in the scientific knowledge, practice or policy underpinning human health issues of significance  
|   |                 | • is unlikely to lead to research outputs (e.g. intellectual property, publications, policy advice, products, services, teaching aids, consulting, contract research, spin-offs, licensing) of significance  
|   |                 | • is unlikely to be competitive with similar research proposals internationally. |
Appendix E – Guidance for Assessing Applications Against the Investigator Grant 2020 Assessment Criteria

Investigator Grants support the research program of outstanding investigators at all career stages. The assessment criteria for Investigator Grant applications are:

- Track record, relative to opportunity, including selected Level Publications (35%)
  - Research Impact (20%)
  - Leadership (15%)
- Knowledge Gain (30%).

The following advice should be taken into consideration when assessing applications.

Track Record (70%)
NHMRC’s Relative to Opportunity Policy (Appendix I) has been revised by categorising and updating reference to Relative to Opportunity circumstances typically considered during peer review, including disability, illness and unemployment (noting that applicants can nominate any circumstance impacting productivity).

Additionally, a new approach to assessment of track record ‘relative to opportunity’, incorporating a new ‘Career Context’ concept, is being trialled for the 2021 Investigator Grant round as part of the revised Relative to Opportunity Policy.

This broadened scope is intended to ensure that each applicant’s track record and associated productivity are considered in the context of their specific career circumstances, strengthening support for NHMRC’s objective that all applicants are assessed relative to opportunity.

Guidance for peer reviewers on implementation of the policy concept has been developed at Appendix J.

NHMRC defines ‘Track Record’ for the Investigator Grant program as the value of an individual’s past research achievement, relative to opportunity, not prospective achievements, using evidence-based components. Assessment of Track Record comprises peer reviewers’ consideration of:

- Publications (35%)
- Research Impact (20%)
- Leadership (15%).

1. Publications
Assessment of publications will use a seven-point scoring system, supported by category descriptors. Peer reviewers will be required to form a judgement based on the applicant’s publications from the past 10 years (taking into account career disruptions) and the five best publications from those 10 years, as highlighted by the applicant.

Publications category descriptors are at Table 1 of Appendix D.

2. Research Impact
Assessment of an applicant’s research impact will be based on:

i. the reach and significance of their claimed research impact (7%)
ii. the contribution of their research program to the research impact (6%)
iii. the contribution of the applicant to the research program (7%).

These three components of research impact are assessed separately using three seven-point scoring systems supported by category descriptors at Tables 2, 3 and 4 of Appendix D.

For the assessment of ‘reach and significance’, the seven point scoring system is further divided for Emerging Leadership and Leadership applicants (Table 2 of Appendix D). This is to recognise that early and mid-career researchers will have had less time to accumulate research impact.

NHMRC defines the impact of research as the verifiable outcomes that research makes to knowledge, health, the
economy and/or society. Impact is the effect of the research after it has been adopted, adapted for use, or used to inform further research.

Research impact is the verifiable outcomes from research and not the prospective or anticipated effects of the research. For example, a prospective publication linked to the applicant’s research program is not demonstrated or corroborated impact.

Research impact also includes research that leads to a decision not to use a particular diagnostic, treatment or health policy.

---

**Research Impact**

The verifiable outcomes that research makes to knowledge, health, the economy and/or society. Impact is the effect of the research after it has been adopted, adapted for use, or used to inform further research.

---

**Research Program**

A cohesive body of research by the applicant, not limited to an individual case study (as used in a clinical context) or a single publication. It may be recent or in the past.

---

**Research program’s contribution to the research impact**

The degree to which the applicant’s research program was necessary to achieve the impact(s) (knowledge, health, economic, and/or social impact).

---

**Applicant’s contribution to the research program**

The level of the applicant’s contribution (e.g. leadership, intellectual and/or technical input) to the research program.

---

### Figure 1: Key definitions for the assessment of Research Impact

Peer reviewers should consider, based on the corroborating evidence provided:

- the reach of the research impact
- the significance of the research impact in:
  - informing knowledge to advance research
  - improving products, processes, behaviours/prevention, policies, practices
  - improving the nation’s economic performance
  - improving the health and well-being of the community.

For the purposes of assessing impact, NHMRC uses four specific descriptors:

- **Knowledge impact** – Research that has contributed to discoveries and/or demonstrable benefits emerging from adoption, adaption or use of the discovery to inform further research.
- **Health impact** – Research that has contributed to improvements in health through new therapeutics, diagnostics, or disease prevention; or by contributing to improvements in disease prevention, diagnosis and treatment, health policy, health systems, and quality of life.
- **Economic impact** – Research that has contributed to the economic performance of the nation in which the research program was conducted, and/or for which the impact was intended, by creating new industries, jobs and valuable products, and reducing health care costs. An economic impact may also contribute to social or health impacts, including human capital gains and the value of life and health.
- **Social impact** – Research that has contributed to improvements in the health of the society, including the well-being of the end user and the community. This may include improved ability to access health care services and to participate socially.
Peer reviewers should note that applicants can demonstrate the contribution of their research program within a single category of impact (knowledge, health, economic and social) or across multiple categories. As one research program may result in multiple impact types, peer reviewers should refer to the definitions of the four impact types when assessing claims. If impacts from one research program are claimed across multiple categories, the overall research impact score is determined holistically and on balance across the different categories (it is not additive).

For applicants who have provided impacts for more than one research program, peer reviewers are to determine whether any one of the research programs and their impacts have been sufficiently demonstrated and corroborated, and score accordingly. Applicants are not to be scored in an additive method for multiple research programs.

**Reach** is the extent, spread, breadth, and/or diversity of the beneficiaries of the impact, relative to the type of research impact.

**Significance** is the degree to which the impact has enabled, enriched, influenced, informed or changed the performance of policies, practices, products, services, culture, understanding, awareness or well-being of the beneficiaries (not the prevalence or magnitude of the issue).

Applicants were instructed to include one research program to demonstrate research impact(s) across one or more of thefour types of impact. A research program is a cohesive body of research by the applicant, as opposed to disparate bodies of research that each have different objectives and impacts. It is not limited to an individual case study (as used in a clinical context) or a single publication. A research program may be recent or in the past.

Applicants need to outline the research program with corroborating evidence that can be independently assessed by peer reviewers. Applicants were required to provide evidence sufficient and strong enough to demonstrate their claims for all three impact criteria. Applicants may use the same evidence across the three impact criteria if appropriate. Peer reviewers will need to decide whether the impact claims have been sufficiently demonstrated and corroborated. A poorly corroborated or non-corraborated research impact or contribution to impact should receive a score of one, in alignment with the category descriptors.

Peer reviewers should consider the degree to which the applicant’s research program was necessary to achieve the impact(s) (knowledge, health, economic, and/or social impact) based on robust and verifiable evidence. The relationship between the applicant’s research program (including related activities) and the impact may be foreseen or unforeseen, and may be an end product or demonstrated during the research process. Research impact examples may include the adoption or adaptation of existing research.

Relative to opportunity and to the applicant’s field of research, peer reviewers should consider the level of the applicant’s contribution (e.g., leadership, intellectual and/or technical input) to the research program based on robust and verifiable evidence.

**Verification of evidence provided against research impact claims**

Peer reviewers can verify evidence provided by applicants. If an applicant has not provided evidence of their research impact, they should receive a score of one, in alignment with the category descriptors. Peer reviewers must not seek evidence to support the research impact claims of an applicant who has not provided evidence.

Peer reviewers should also note that, for corroborating evidence, it is the quality of the evidence provided, not the quantity, that should be considered. Applicants only need to provide evidence sufficient and strong enough to verify the claims, not all evidence that may be on the public record. A poorly or non-corraborated research contribution should receive a score of one, in alignment with the category descriptors at Tables 2, 3 and 4 of Appendix D.

Examples of evidence are listed in Table 1 below. Evidence examples may be relevant to more than one research impact type.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of impact</th>
<th>Description of research impact</th>
<th>Examples of evidence (not exhaustive)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge impact</td>
<td>New knowledge, demonstrating the benefits emerging from adoption, adaption or use of new knowledge to inform further research, and/or</td>
<td>• recognition of research publications (e.g. citation metrics, particularly field weighted) • data sharing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Understanding of what is effective. | contribution to registries or biobanks  
| | prizes and conference presentations  
| | uptake of research tools and techniques  
| | evidence of uptake of the research by other disciplines  
| Health impact | Improvements in health through new therapeutics, diagnostics, disease prevention or changes in behaviour; or improvements in disease prevention, diagnosis and treatment, management of health problems, health policy, health systems, and quality of life.  
| | policy or program adopted  
| | a clinical guideline adopted  
| | international or national practice standards adopted  
| | improved service effectiveness  
| | Phase I, Phase II and Phase III clinical trials underway or completed  
| | improved productivity due to research innovations (e.g. reduced illness, injury)  
| | Quality-Adjusted Life Years, Disability-Adjusted Life Years, Potential Years of Life Lost, Patient Reported Outcome Measure and other relevant indicators  
| | relative stay index for multi-day stay patients, hospital standardised mortality ratio, cost per weighted separation and total case weighted separation  
| | reports (including community and government)  
| Economic impact | Improvements in the economic performance of the nation in which the research program was conducted, and/or for which the impact was intended, through creation of new industries, jobs or valuable products, or reducing health care costs, improving efficiency in resource use, or improving the welfare/well-being of the population within current health system resources. An economic impact may also contribute to social or health impacts, including human capital gains and the value of life and health.  
| | Health Care System Savings  
| | reduction in Medicare Benefits Schedule/Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme costs  
| | improved productivity due to research innovations (e.g. reduced illness, injury)  
| | improved service effectiveness  
| Product Development | a research contract with an industry partner and an active collaboration  
| | granting of a patent  
| | execution of a licensing agreement with an established company  
| | income from intellectual property  
| | raising funding from venture capital or other commercial sources or from government schemes that required industry co-participation  
| | successful exit from start-up company (public market flotation, merger or acquisition)  
| | development of pre-good manufacturing practice prototype  
| | successful generation or submission of:  
| | o a regulatory standard data set  
| | o applications for pre-market approval of a medical device  
| | o a new drug or device for registration (e.g. by
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social impact</th>
<th>Food and Drug Administration, European Medicines Agency, Therapeutic Goods Administration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improvements in the health of society, including the well-being of the end user and the community. This may include improved ability to access health care services, to participate socially (including empowerment and participation in decision making) and to quantify improvements in the health of society.</td>
<td>product sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• uptake or demonstrated use of evidence by decision makers/policy makers</td>
<td>• qualitative measures demonstrating changes in behaviours, attitudes, improved social equity, inclusion or cohesion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• qualitative measures demonstrating changes in behaviours, attitudes, improved social equity, inclusion or cohesion</td>
<td>• improved environmental determinants of health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• improved social determinants of health</td>
<td>• changes to health risk factors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. **Leadership**

For the assessment of Leadership, peer reviewers are required to review applicant outputs over the past 10 years (taking into account career disruptions) across each of the four Leadership elements:

- Research Mentoring
- Research Policy and Professional Leadership
- Institutional Leadership
- Research Programs and Team Leadership.

The assessment of Leadership will be against the category descriptors at Table 5 of **Appendix D**.

**Knowledge Gain (30%)**

NHMRC defines ‘Knowledge Gain’ for the Investigator Grant program as the quality of the proposed research and significance of the knowledge gained. It incorporates theoretical concepts, hypothesis, research design, robustness and the extent to which the research findings will contribute to the research area and health outcomes (by advancing knowledge, practice or policy).

For the assessment of ‘Knowledge Gain’ peer reviewers are to consider:

- the clarity and justification of the research hypotheses/rationale
- the strengths and weaknesses of the scientific framework, study design, methods and analyses
- whether the proposal tackles a major question addressing an issue of critical importance to advance the research or health area (not prevalence or magnitude of issue)
- the access to the technical resources, infrastructure, equipment and facilities, and if required, access to additional expertise necessary to achieve the proposed outcomes
- access to the technical resources required to achieve project outcomes
- the potential for significant and transformative changes/outcomes in the scientific knowledge, practice or policy underpinning human health issues
- the potential research outputs including: intellectual property, publications, policy advice, products, services, teaching aids, consulting, contract research, spin-offs, licensing etc.

The significance of the study is not a measure of the prevalence/incidence of the health issue (e.g. cancer versus sudden infant death syndrome) but the extent to which the study will address the health issue.

Track Records are assessed relative to opportunity, taking into consideration selected level and any career disruptions, where applicable (see **Appendix I**).

Category descriptors for Knowledge Gain are at Table 6 of **Appendix D**.
Appendix F – Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria

To qualify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research, at least 20% of the research effort and/or capacity building must relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.

Qualifying applications must address the NHMRC Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria as follows:

- **Community engagement** - the proposal demonstrates how the research and potential outcomes are a priority for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities with relevant community engagement by individuals, communities and/or organisations in conceptualisation, development and approval, data collection and management, analysis, report writing and dissemination of results.

- **Benefit** - the potential health benefit of the project is demonstrated by addressing an important public health issue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This benefit can have a single focus or affect several areas, such as knowledge, finance and policy or quality of life. The benefit may be direct and immediate, or it can be indirect, gradual and considered.

- **Sustainability and transferability** - the proposal demonstrates how the results of the project have the potential to lead to achievable and effective contributions to health gain for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, beyond the life of the project. This may be through sustainability in the project setting and/or transferability to other settings such as evidence based practice and/or policy. In considering this issue, the proposal should address the relationship between costs and benefits.

- **Building capability** - the proposal demonstrates how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and researchers will develop relevant capabilities through partnerships and participation in the project.

Peer reviewers will consider these in their overall assessment of the application, when scoring the Assessment Criteria set out in Appendix C.
Appendix G – Guidance for assessing applications against the Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria

Peer reviewers should consider the following when assessing applications that have a focus on the health of Indigenous Australians. The points below should be explicit throughout the application and not just addressed separately within the Indigenous criteria section.

Community Engagement

- Does the proposal clearly demonstrate a thorough and culturally appropriate level of engagement with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community or health services prior to submission of the application?
- Is there clear evidence that the level of engagement throughout the project will ensure the feasibility of the proposed study?
- Has the application demonstrated evidence that any of the methods, objectives or key elements of the proposed work have been formed, influenced or defined by the community?
- Were the Indigenous community instrumental in identifying and inviting further research into the health issue and will the research outcomes directly benefit the ‘named’ communities?
- Is there a history of working together with the ‘named’ communities e.g. co-development of the grant, involvement in pilot studies or how the ‘named’ communities will have input/control over the research process and outcomes across the life of the project?

Benefit

- Does the proposal clearly outline the potential health benefits (both intermediate and long term, direct and indirect) to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?
- Does the proposal demonstrate that the benefit(s) of the project have been determined or guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities or organisations themselves?

Sustainability and Transferability

- Does the proposal:
  - Provide a convincing argument that the outcomes will have a positive impact on the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, which can be maintained after the study has been completed?
  - Have relevance to other Indigenous communities?
  - Clearly plan for and articulate a clear approach to knowledge translation and exchange?
  - Demonstrate that the findings are likely to be taken up in health services and/or policy?
- Will the outcomes from the study make a lasting contribution to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their wellbeing?

Building Capability

- Does the proposal outline how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and/or communities will benefit from capability development?
- Does the proposal outline how researchers and individuals/groups associated with the research project will develop capabilities that allow them to have a greater understanding/engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?
Appendix H – Statements of Expectations

The following Statements of Expectations describe the typical research experience and academic level expected at each Investigator Grant Level, and are to be used as a guide for applicants when selecting the Category and Level of their Investigator Grant application.

All applicants are required to provide a justification of the selected Category and Level in the application form. NHMRC expects that applicants will apply at an appropriate Level to help achieve parity and fairness for all Investigator Grant applicants.

Recognising the diversity of the sector and the many different settings in which researchers are employed, NHMRC recognises that individuals can achieve academic promotion for a range of reasons unrelated to their research career (e.g. teaching and learning, administration, community engagement). Investigator Grant Levels are not strictly correlated with academic levels. The required justification will support assessment where applicants fall outside the broad benchmarks.

Peer reviewers will consider this justification when assessing an applicant’s track record relative to opportunity.

Applicants who have previously held an NHMRC Fellowship or Investigator Grant are expected to apply at a Level commensurate with their previous or currently held Fellowships, factoring in the career progression that those grants support. Applicants are reminded that previous NHMRC Fellowships or Investigator Grants held affect eligibility to apply at some Investigator Grant Levels. Applicants who have never received an NHMRC Fellowship or Investigator Grant should refer to these expectations and apply at a Level commensurate with their experience and profile.

The descriptors provide a broad benchmark and it is not essential that all elements be met.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Level 3 (L3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is expected that L3 Investigator Grant recipients will typically be more than 20 years post-PhD (or equivalent) and appointable at Academic Level E, and be leading international authorities in their research area with demonstrated:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• significant original contributions of major importance that have had a positive impact on health and medical research, the health system, economy and/or the health of the population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• experience in leading a major independent research program(s) involving national and international collaborative networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• national and international contributions through leadership in their scientific discipline (e.g. in research policy and on advisory committees)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• extensive supervision, mentoring and promotion of early and mid-career researchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• significant leadership roles within their department, centre, institution or organisation, that extend beyond their research.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Level 2 (L2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is expected that L2 Investigator Grant recipients will typically be between 15 and 20 years post-PhD (or equivalent) and appointable at Academic Level D or E (or equivalent), and be leading national and rising international authorities in their research area with demonstrated:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- substantial and original contributions that are of major benefit to health and medical research, the health system, economy and/or the health of the population
- experience in leading an independent research program(s) involving national collaborative networks
- national and possibly international contributions to their scientific discipline (e.g. research advisory boards, peer review)
- supervision, mentoring and promotion of early and mid-career researchers
- leadership roles within their department, centre, institution or organisation that extend beyond their research.

### Leadership Level 1 (L1)

It is expected that L1 Investigator Grant recipients will typically be between **10 and 15 years post-PhD** (or equivalent) and appointable at **Academic Level C or D (or equivalent)**, and be national authorities in their research area with demonstrated:

- original contributions that are of major benefit to health and medical research, the health system, economy and/or the health of the population
- ability to independently conceive and direct research programs, coordinate a team of researchers and generate national collaborations
- national contributions to their scientific discipline (e.g. public advocacy, peer review, research advisory boards or professional societies)
- supervision, mentoring and promotion of early and mid-career researchers
- contribution(s) within their department, centre, institute or organisation that extend beyond their research e.g. membership of regulatory or management committees.

### Emerging Leadership Level 2 (EL2)

It is expected that EL2 Investigator Grant recipients will typically be between **5 and 10 years post-PhD** (or equivalent) and appointable at **Academic Level B (or equivalent)**, and be recognised for their expertise in their research area with demonstrated:

- original contributions of influence in their field of expertise
- ability to contribute to the conception and direction of research projects, while developing independence
- experience in supervising a small research team
- national contributions to their scientific discipline (e.g. public advocacy, community leadership, peer review and professional societies)
- contributions within their department, centre, institution or organisation e.g. organising journal clubs, seminar series etc.

It is also expected that Emerging Leadership applicants will be working within a larger team under the mentorship of more senior researchers.
Emerging Leadership Level 1 (EL1)

It is expected that EL1 Investigator Grant recipients will typically be between 0 and 5 years post-PhD (or equivalent) and will be beginning to gain recognition in their research area with demonstrated:

- original contribution(s) in their field of expertise
- ability to contribute to the conception of research projects
- scientific contributions within their region, state or territory (e.g. community leadership, state level contribution to a professional society)
- limited but developing supervision of research staff and students
- contributions within their department, centre, institution or organisation e.g. organising journal clubs, seminar series etc.

It is also expected that Emerging Leadership applicants will be working within a larger team under the mentorship of more senior researchers.

Guidance on relationships between NHMRC Fellowship schemes and the Investigator Grant Levels is provided in Table 1 below.
Table 1. Guidance on relationships between NHMRC Fellowship schemes and Investigator Grant Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current NHMRC Fellowship</th>
<th>Corresponding Investigator Grant Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior Principal Research Fellowship</td>
<td>Leadership Level 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia Fellowship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Research Fellowship</td>
<td>Leadership Level 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practitioner Fellowship Level 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practitioner Fellowship Level 1</td>
<td>Leadership Level 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Research Fellowship Levels A and B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Development Fellowship Level 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Development Fellowships Levels 1 and 2</td>
<td>Emerging Leadership Level 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translation of Research into Practice (TRIP) Fellowship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Career Fellowship</td>
<td>Emerging Leadership Level 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translation of Research into Practice (TRIP) Fellowship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix I – NHMRC Relative to Opportunity Policy

Purpose

NHMRC’s goal is to support the highest quality research that will lead to improvements in health over the short or long term. Peer review by independent experts is used to identify well-designed feasible projects that address a significant question and are undertaken by researchers with demonstrated capacity to perform high quality research.

In most NHMRC grant schemes, peer reviewers are asked to assess the track record of the applicants as well as the proposed research. However, NHMRC recognises that not all research careers are the same and therefore peer reviewers are asked to assess track records “relative to opportunity”, taking into account circumstances that have affected the applicant’s research productivity.

The purpose of this document is to outline NHMRC’s Relative to Opportunity Policy with respect to:

- peer review of applicant track records
- eligibility to apply for Emerging Leadership Investigator Grants.

Policy approach

NHMRC considers Relative to Opportunity to mean that peer reviewers should assess an applicant’s track record of research productivity and professional contribution in the context of their career stage and circumstances, by taking into consideration whether the applicant’s productivity and contribution are commensurate with the opportunities available to them.

The policy has two components:

- **Career Disruption** – a prolonged interruption to the ability to work due to pregnancy, illness/injury and/or carer responsibilities. Career Disruptions are taken into account in track record assessment and in determining an applicant’s eligibility to hold an Emerging Leadership Investigator Grant (in terms of years since they received their PhD).

- **Other Relative to Opportunity considerations** – any other personal or professional circumstances affecting research productivity. These circumstances are taken into account in track record assessment.

In addition to NHMRC’s Principles of Peer Review, particularly fairness and transparency, the following principles support this objective:

- **Research opportunity**: Researchers’ outputs and outcomes should reflect their opportunities to advance their career and the research they conduct.

- **Fair access**: Researchers should have access to the funding available through NHMRC’s grant program consistent with their experience and career stage.

- **Career diversity**: Researchers with career paths that include time spent outside academia should not be disadvantaged. NHMRC recognises that time spent in other sectors, such as industry, may enhance research outcomes for both individuals and teams.

NHMRC expects that peer reviewers will give clear and explicit attention to these principles to identify the highest quality research and researchers. NHMRC recognises that life circumstances can be varied and therefore it is not possible to implement a formulaic approach to applying Relative to Opportunity considerations during peer review.
Consideration of career circumstances during peer review of grant applications

Under the Relative to Opportunity policy, researchers’ career circumstances are considered during track record assessment. This aims to take into account salient research opportunity considerations over the course of a research career and is not intended to address minor changes to life circumstances.

Circumstances considered during peer review include, but are not limited to:

**Research**
- research role(s) and responsibilities, career stage, and amount of time spent as an active researcher

**Resources and facilities**
- available resources and facilities, including:
  - the extent to which any additional research personnel and/or collaborators contribute to the applicant’s research program
  - situations where research is being conducted in remote or isolated communities

**Professional responsibilities**
- clinical, administrative and/or teaching workload
- time employed in other sectors
- building relationships of trust with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities over long periods

**Personal circumstances**
- disability (including mental health conditions and psychosocial disability) or illness
- caring responsibilities that do not interrupt the applicant’s career for an extended period (that would meet the definition of a Career Disruption) but still affect research productivity
- for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants, community obligations including ‘sorry business’
- any other personal circumstances

**Other circumstances**
- relocation of an applicant and their research laboratory or clinical practice setting
- periods of unemployment
- calamities, such as pandemics, bushfires or cyclones.

Relative to Opportunity considerations do not include:
- minor (or short-term) changes that occur during the normal course of conducting research, e.g. broken equipment or delayed ethics approval
- minor (or short-term) medical conditions
- recreational leave or general administrative activities related to research, such as preparation of grant applications and publications or committee-related activities.
Consideration of Career Disruption during peer review and in determining eligibility for Emerging Leadership Investigator Grants

A Career Disruption is defined as a prolonged interruption to an applicant’s capacity to work, due to:

- pregnancy
- major illness/injury
- carer responsibilities.

The period of Career Disruption may be used:

- to determine an applicant’s eligibility for an Emerging Leadership Investigator Grant
- to allow for the inclusion of additional track record information for assessment of an application
- for consideration of track record relative to opportunity by peer reviewers.

A period of Career Disruption is defined as:

- a continuous absence from work for 90 calendar days or more, and/or
- continuous, long-term, part-time employment (with defined %FTE) due to circumstances classified as Career Disruption, with the absence amounting to a total of 90 calendar days or more.¹

In determining eligibility of Emerging Leadership Investigator Grant applicants, the 10-year limit on the number of years post-PhD may be extended commensurate with the period of the Career Disruption.

NOTE: For the purposes of peer review, circumstances not meeting the definition of Career Disruption may be considered under the career circumstances provisions above.

¹ For example, an applicant who is employed at 0.8 FTE due to childcare responsibilities would need to continue this for at least 450 calendar days to achieve a Career Disruption of 90 calendar days.
Appendix J – Implementation of the Relative to Opportunity Policy
Investigator Grant Scheme 2021 Guidance for peer reviewers

Peer review of applications to most NHMRC grant schemes includes assessment of each Chief Investigator’s track record “relative to opportunity”.

To make this assessment, peer reviewers are required to consider each applicant’s record of research productivity and contribution taking into account their Career Context, Career Disruptions, career stage and time spent as an active researcher.

Specifically:

- Peer reviewers should make a holistic assessment of whether the applicant’s research productivity and contribution presented for Track Record assessment are commensurate with the opportunities available to them. To do this, peer reviewers should consider the information provided in the Career Overview, Career Context and Career Disruption sections of the application, as well as the number of years post-PhD or equivalent (where applicable).

- Although applicants provide an estimate of FTE years spent in active research, this is a guide only. Peer reviewers must consider the applicant’s overall circumstances, opportunities for research and the associated impact on their research productivity, as described by the applicant.

- Key considerations include but are not limited to:
  - applicant career stage
  - the typical performance of researchers in the research field
  - opportunities for the applicant to engage in research, taking into account as applicable:
    - the number of years they have been research active
    - professional responsibilities and employment situations
    - personal and other circumstances (such as carer responsibilities and disability)
    - the resources and facilities available to the applicant.

- In arriving at a score for each element of the Track Record assessment relative to opportunity, peer reviewers should refer to the Investigator Grants 2021 category descriptors (Appendix D).

Peer reviewers are expected to consider each applicant’s circumstance on its merits, while maintaining consistency in judgement and reasoning across all applications assigned to them.
Appendix K – Guide to Evaluating Industry-Relevant Experience

Principles

NHMRC is committed to ensuring that knowledge from health and medical research is translated through commercialisation (e.g. by pharmaceutical or medical devices companies), improvements to policy, health service delivery and clinical practice.

Therefore, as a complement to other measures of research excellence (e.g. publication and citation rates), NHMRC considers industry-relevant skills, experience and achievements in its assessment of applicants’ track records.

These measures recognise that applicants who have invested their research time on technology transfer, commercialisation or collaborating with industry, may have gained highly valuable expertise or outputs relevant to research translation. However, NHMRC acknowledges that these researchers will necessarily have had fewer opportunities to produce traditional academic research outputs (e.g. peer reviewed publications).

Therefore, peer reviewers should:

• appropriately recognise applicants’ industry-relevant experiences and results
• allow for the time applicants have spent in commercialisation/industry for “Relative to Opportunity” considerations.

Who might have industry experience or be preparing for industry experience?

Many applicants to NHMRC may have had industry experiences of various kinds. Examples include, but are not limited to:

1. Researchers who have left academia to pursue a full time career in industry (e.g. in pharmaceutical, biotechnology or start-up companies). In such instances, outputs must be assessed relative to opportunity, as there may have been restrictions in producing traditional research outputs (such as peer reviewed publications), but highly valuable expertise gained or outputs produced relevant to research translation (such as patents or new clinical guidelines).

2. Academic researchers whose work has a possible commercial focus. These researchers might not have yet entered into commercial agreements with industry and have chosen to forego or delay publication in order to protect or extend their intellectual property (IP).

3. Academic researchers who have translated their discovery into a collaborative agreement with industry. The researcher may be collaborating with the company in further research and development; may have a licensing agreement; or may have licensed or assigned their IP to the company. A researcher may ultimately leave the academic institution and become Chief Executive Officer, Chief Scientific Officer, Chief Technology Officer, Scientific Advisory Board Member or consultant for a start-up or other company, based on their experience.

4. Academic researchers who are actively collaborating with companies, for example by providing expert research services for fees. Publications of such work might be precluded or delayed according to contract arrangements. The specialised nature of this research might also restrict publication to specialised journals only, as opposed to generalist journals.
## Relevant industry outputs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of experience/output</th>
<th>IP</th>
<th>Collaboration with an industry partner</th>
<th>Established a start-up company</th>
<th>Product to market</th>
<th>Clinical trials or regulatory activities</th>
<th>Industry participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Advanced**               |    | • Patent granted: consider the type of patent and where it is granted. It can be more difficult to be granted a patent in, for example, the US or Europe than in Australia, depending on the patent prosecution and regulatory regime of the intended market  
• National phase entry and prosecution or specified country application  
• Executed a licensing agreement with an established company  
• Significant research contract with an industry partner  
• Long term consultancy with an industry partner  
• Achieved successful exit (public market flotation, merger or acquisition)  
• Raised significant (>10m) funding from venture capital or other commercial sources (not grant funding bodies)  
• Chief Scientific Officer, Executive or non-executive role on company boards | • Produced sales  
• Successful regulator submission to US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), European Medicines Agency, TGA etc.  
• Medical device pre-market submission e.g. FDA 510(k) approved  
• Phase II or Phase III underway or completed | • Phase II or Phase III underway or completed | • Major advisory or consultancy roles with international companies |
| **Intermediate**           |    | • Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) or 'international application'  
• Provisional patent  
• Established a formal arrangement such as a consultancy or research contract and actively collaborating  
• Incorporated an entity and established a board  
• Has raised moderate (>1m) funding from commercial sources or government schemes that required industry co-participation (e.g. ARC Linkage, NHMRC Development Grant) | • Generated regulatory standard data set  
• Successful regulatory submission to Therapeutic Goods Administration or European Conformity (CE) marking  
• Medical device: applications for pre-market approval  
• Phase I underway or completed  
• Protocol development  
• Patient recruitment | • Phase I underway or completed | • Advisory or consultancy role with a national company |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Preliminary</strong></th>
<th><strong>IP generated</strong></th>
<th><strong>Approached and in discussion with an industry partner under a non-disclosure agreement. No other formal contractual arrangements.</strong></th>
<th><strong>Negotiated licence to IP from the academic institution</strong></th>
<th><strong>Developed pre-good manufacturing practice (GMP) prototype and strong supporting data</strong></th>
<th><strong>Drug candidate selected or Investigative New Drug application filed</strong></th>
<th><strong>Pre-clinical testing</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>