ASSIGNER PROCESSES

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1. Introduction

This guide provides NHMRC Assigners Academy members with step-by-step instructions for declaring Conflicts of Interest (CoI) and suitability, identifying external assessors, monitoring their progress and securing assessments using NHMRC’s Research Grants Management System (RGMS).

This document should be read in conjunction with the current Guide to NHMRC Peer Review and the Project Grants scheme-specific peer review guidelines, available on the Apply for Funding page of the NHMRC website.

It is also expected that anyone referring to this guide is familiar with the basics of RGMS as outlined in the RGMS User Guide – Introduction to RGMS.

1.1. Support

Further information and assistance with Assigner processes is available from the Assigners Academy Team via email or from NHMRC’s Research Help Centre (RHC) by phone between 9am and 5pm AEST/AEDT Monday to Friday.¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Email</th>
<th><a href="mailto:academy@nhmrc.gov.au">academy@nhmrc.gov.au</a></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>1800 500 983 (or +61 2 6217 9451 for international callers)</td>
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¹ Opening hours vary on public holidays and at certain other times. Refer to the NHMRC website for current hours.
2. Getting Started

2.1. Assigners Portal

Links to Assigner functions, information and help in RGMS are grouped on the Assigners tab.

To access these links:

1. From the RGMS Home page, select the Assigners tab.
2. Navigate to the Quicklinks for Assigners or Information and Help section and select the appropriate link.

2.2. Downloading Application Documents

Application documents are made available to Assigners for the purposes of declaring CoI and Assigner suitability, as well as identifying external assessors. These can be downloaded as a zip file via one of two methods:

i) by manually generating a download link following the instructions below; or

ii) by clicking on the auto-generated download link sent to you via email (note: if you did not receive a link via email, you will need to use the manual method outlined below).

IMPORTANT NOTE:
You will require a zip file expander program, such as WinZip or PeaZip (PC) or StuffIt Expander (Mac), to extract individual application documents from the downloaded file.
1. From the RGMS Home page, select the Assigners tab.

2. Navigate to the Quicklinks for Assigners section and select Review application documents.

3. The Download Documents List page will open. At the bottom of the display, select New Download Documents.

4. The Create Download Documents page will open. Complete the following steps:
   a. In the Round field, enter an asterisk followed by either the current year (e.g. *2017) or scheme name (e.g. *project grant) and choose the appropriate funding round from the auto lookup. Alternatively, by selecting the Browse icon, you can Show All available choices. Then select the appropriate round and press Add.
   b. From the Document Type drop-down menu, select Application Documents – Assigner.
   c. Select Save.

5. The Download Documents: download - Properties page will open. Use the Properties drop-down menu to select Documents – Assigner.
6. A new screen will open on the same page. Complete the following steps:
   
a. Navigate to the **Name** field. If your name is not already populated in this field, begin typing your surname and choose an option from the auto lookup. Alternatively, by selecting the **Browse** icon, enter your surname and select **Filter**. Then select your name and press **Add**.
   
b. Use the **Download Purpose** drop-down menu to select one of the following:
      
      i. **Determine Col** – This selection provides summary application and team information for determining Cols and your suitability as an Assigner.
      
      ii. **Allocate Assessors** – This selection provides detailed application information for identifying suitable external assessors.
   
c. Enter a password in the **Password** field, noting that: (i) it must be no more than 20 characters in length; and (ii) you will need to remember the password to open the downloaded zip file.
   
d. Navigate to the **Generate Zip File** drop-down menu and select **Yes** from the list.
   
e. Select **Save** to save your data and generate the zip file.

7. Refresh the page using the refresh icon in the top menu bar. A URL hyperlink will appear. Initiate the download process by selecting the hyperlink. You will have 120 hours (five days) to download the zip file via the hyperlink.
   
a. If prompted to save or open the zip file, **Save** it to your computer.
   
b. If the URL does not appear, an error message appears (e.g. Status 404 Error) or nothing happens when you select the URL, close the error message, wait 2-5 minutes, refresh the page and re-select the URL.

8. Open the zip file on your computer using a zip file expander program, such as WinZip or Peazip on a PC. Apple Mac’s default Archive Utility program has known issues with password-protected zip files. If your Mac encounters problems, StuffIt Expander is recommended. You will be required to enter the password created in Step 6c to open the files.
9. **Extract the application documents to a folder on your computer. This will save having to enter the password each time the documents are opened.**

   a. The extracted files will include a csv file titled “AAA_<Assigner Name>” which lists the CIA name and application ID of all the application documents that have been downloaded.

### 2.3. Declaring Conflicts of Interest (CoI) and Assigner Suitability

Having downloaded all application documents (see **Section 2.2**), Assigners are required to declare CoI and their suitability to act as an Assigner against each application. Instructions for completing these declarations are provided below.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:**

Save your work often. RGMS will 'time out' after 30 minutes of inactivity and DOES NOT recognise typing as an activity. A time out will cause you to lose any unsaved data.

1. From the RGMS **Home** page select the **Assigners** tab.
2. Navigate to the **Quicklinks for Assigners** section and select **Declare conflicts of interest**.
3. From the **Round** field, use the browse icon to open the **Assigner Rounds** screen and select the appropriate round (e.g. **2017_Project Grant_funding_commencing_2018**).
4. Select **Add**.
5. Ensure the **Assigned** filter is set to **All**.
6. To display all applications against which you must declare CoI and Assigner Suitability, select **Filter**.

7. For each application listed, review the application title, team and institution to determine if you have a potential CoI. You may need to refer to the application summary you downloaded previously; see **Section 2.2** for more details.
8. To declare your CoI level for an application:
   a. Click within the **CoI** box and select: (i) **Ruling Required** – you are unsure whether a CoI exists; (ii) **Yes** – you have a CoI; or (iii) leave the field **blank** - you have no CoI.
   b. For applications where you select **Yes** or **Ruling Required**, use the **Note** field to provide sufficient detail regarding your conflict. NHMRC will review the information and issue a CoI ruling based on the information you provide.

9. Next, determine your Assigner Suitability for each application listed. Assigner Suitability reflects expertise and does not take CoI into consideration. In particular, a high CoI does not mean you have no expertise with a particular application. Please record your Assigner Suitability as if you have no CoI. You may need to refer to the application summary you downloaded previously; see Section 2.2 for more details.

10. To indicate your appropriateness to act as the Assigner for an application, click within the **Assigner Suitability** column and select:
    a. **Yes** (default for this field) - this application is within my area of expertise
    b. **Moderate** - I work within this research field and can identify external assessors qualified to review this application
    c. **Limited** - I have limited knowledge of this research field but could act as an Assigner if required
    d. **No** - this application falls outside my area of expertise and I do not feel I could act as an Assigner for this application

11. As you complete CoI declarations and Assigner Suitability selections on each application, click into the **Declaration Complete?** box and change the default setting of **No** to **Yes**.

12. Select **Save** after declaring your CoI and Assigner suitability for each application and again once all declarations are complete. If your CoI declarations require more than one page in RGMS, always select **Save** prior to moving to another page. RGMS will not retain unsaved data when moving between pages.

2.4. Customising Email Stationery

RGMS uses email templates for issuing and cancelling invitations to external assessors. These templates may be customised by Assigners as follows.

1. From the RGMS **Home** page, select the **Assigners** tab.
2. Navigate to the **Quicklinks for Assigners** section and select the **Configure assessor invitation emails** link.
3. The **Profile and CV List** page will open. Select one of the hyperlinks against your details or select the **Properties** icon to open the **General - Properties** page of your Profile and CV.

4. Navigate to the **Properties** tab drop-down menu and select the **Assigner** link.
5. The Profile and CV: Assigner - Properties page will open. Complete the following steps:

a. Ensure the Email address field is populated with the email address you wish to use for Assigner-related correspondence. By default, this field contains a full stop ‘.’.

b. If you want copies of RGMS-generated emails containing your signature block sent to the email address entered in Step a, tick the CC addressee on emails you generate? box.

c. Enter your preferred email salutation in the Sign off and signature block field.

d. Select the Initialise email address and text check box at the bottom of the page, then select Save.
   i. RGMS will insert default invitation and cancellation text into the relevant fields.
   ii. Refresh your browser by clicking the refresh icon to view the changes.

e. To preview an example of the emails, select the Generate sample invitation email or Generate sample cancellation email check boxes and select Save. A sample email will be sent to the email address entered in Step a.

f. Select Save to save all changes and selections.

6. If you wish to customise the default text, you may do so by clicking into either the Default invitation text or Default cancellation text fields and using standard text-editing techniques to change and then Save the text. However, NHMRC recommends that you retain the default text.

7. Should you wish to reset the text of your emails back to the RGMS default:

a. Navigate to the Profile and CV: Assigner - Properties page, as described in Section 2.4.

b. Uncheck the Initialise email address and text check box and select Save.

c. Reselect the Initialise email address and text check box so that it is now checked and select Save again.
2.5. Accessing Your Applications

Once Col and Assigner suitability declarations have been made (see Section 2.3) and NHMRC has ruled on any conflicts, applications are allocated to Assigners for the purposes of identifying external assessors. These applications and associated tasks are accessed/initiated via two main pages:

- **Assigner Application List** – This page displays a list of all applications that you are responsible for assigning and allows you to open each one.
- **Assigner Application – General Properties** – This page displays application-specific information. You can access most functions and tasks associated with the selected application from this page.
- If the task you are performing cannot be completed from either of these two pages, specific instructions in this guide will direct you to the appropriate page.

To access the Assigner Application List page and Assigner Application – General Properties pages:

1. From the RGMS Home page, select the Assigners tab.
2. Navigate to the Quicklink for Assigners section and select any of the following links: Declare conflicts of interest, Identify potential assessors, Assign applications to assessors, or Monitor and manage assigned applications.
3. If RGMS does not display your applications when the page opens, complete the following:
   a. By default, RGMS filters for and displays the current Project Grants round. Use the Browse icon and select Add if you wish to choose another round and funding scheme.
   b. Ensure the Assigned drop-down menu is set to Yes.
   c. Ensure the Active Applications drop-down menu is set to Yes.
   d. Select Filter to display your applications.
4. From the list of applications, select either an application hyperlink or the Properties icon to open an application.
5. The **Assigner Application – General Properties** page will open. Navigate to the **Properties** tab drop-down menu and select the **Assignments** link.

6. The **Assigner Application – Assignments Properties** page will open. It contains:
   
a. Various tabs – These link Assigners to additional functions and data.
   
b. Title – This includes the application number and CIA name associated with the selected application.
   
c. Status filter – In RGMS, there are four invitation/assessor statuses, (see paragraph 6d below). By default, this filter displays all four. To narrow your search results, click one or more statuses to deselect.
   
d. Table of external assessors and current assignments - By default, any potential external assessors already assigned to the application are displayed, including those who have declined invitations. The current status of each external assessor assignment or potential external assessor is also displayed with a coloured arrow:
   
   i. **New** – an invitation is yet to be sent.
   
   ii. **Decision Pending** – an invitation has been sent, but a decision is yet to be received/entered.
   
   iii. **Accepted** – an invitation has been accepted.
   
   iv. **Inactive** – an invitation has been either cancelled or declined.
   
   e. Action buttons – These execute various functions in RGMS.
3. Selecting External Assessors

IMPORTANT NOTE

Before selecting external assessors, you need to have downloaded the application documentation as well as declared Col and Assigner suitability. See Section 2 for more details.

3.1. Identifying Suitable Assessors

In addition to the application documents downloaded in Section 2.2, RGMS provides several other resources to help identify external assessors. Instructions for using these resources are outlined below.

3.1.1. Application Details

1. Navigate to the Assigner Application List page to view your applications. See Section 2.5 for more details.

2. To review details of a specific application, select the relevant application by clicking on the Application hyperlink or Properties icon.

3. The Assigner Application – General Properties page for that application will open. Select the Application tab to view application details including:
   a. Application Documentation – Select any of these hyperlinks to open/download the associated document.
   b. Application Team Members
   c. Nominated Possible Assessors
   d. Research Keywords.
3.1.2. Chief Investigator (CI) Publications

Examining CI publications can help define their research involvement and expertise, and in turn the required expertise of external assessors. It can also help identify potential assessors who may be conflicted due to their status as a co-author.

To view CI publications associated with an application:

1. From the Assigner Application – General Properties page, select the CI Publications tab. Individual publications are displayed for each CI on the application, including:
   - CI Role
   - CI Name
   - Year of publication
   - Type of publication
   - Title of the Article/Abstract/Chapter
   - Authors – Note: most recent co-authors (within five years) have a high CoI & therefore cannot act as an assessor.
   - Title of the Journal/Conference/Book.

3.1.3. Ineligible Candidates

For each application, RGMS generates a list of individuals who cannot be approached to review that application. It is essential that you review this list prior to assigning potential assessors.

1. From the Assigner Application – General Properties page, select the Ineligible Candidates tab. Ineligible candidates are displayed for the selected application.

2. If the list is large, use the Name filter to narrow your search. Enter an asterisk followed by the potential external assessor's surname (e.g. *surname) to see if the name appears in the list.
3.1.4. Candidates Based on Keyword Matches

Each applicant should have identified five keywords relevant to their proposed research project. The Candidates Based on Keyword Matches tab compares those keywords to keywords entered in the Profile and CV section of all RGMS account holders. Any matches are displayed in this tab.

IMPORTANT NOTE

When selecting potential assessors, you must not approach RGMS account holders with “DO NOT CONTACT” next to their name. For all other candidates, you are still required to check the Ineligible Candidates tab to confirm whether an invitation can be sent. See Section 3.1.3 for more details.

To identify candidates based on keywords:

1. From the Assigner Application – General Properties page, select the Candidates Based on Keyword Matches tab.

2. In the Minimum Matches With Application field, enter a number between 1 and 5 according to the number of keywords that you are seeking to match (Tip: to increase the number of results, try entering a lower number).

3. Selecting Filter will display the following information for all RGMS account holders with at least the specified number of keyword matches:
   a. Name
   b. Institution
   c. Email icon to open an email pre-addressed to the potential assessor
   d. Phone number
   e. State
   f. Broad Research Area
   g. Number of Keyword Matches.

4. Upon identifying a potential external assessor, select the plus icon next to the Name field to examine:
   a. Which keywords associated with the application match potential assessor keywords
   b. Field(s) of Research in which the potential assessor has worked or is working.
3.1.5. Keyword Search Tab

Similar to the Candidates Based on Keyword Matches tab (see Section 3.1.4 for more details), the Keyword Search tab compares RGMS account-holder keywords to a custom list of keywords you create.

1. From the Assigner Application – General Properties page, select the Keyword Search tab.

2. The two main filters on this page are:

   a. The Keyword Name Contains field, which is a free-text lookup field that allows you to search against a single keyword.

   b. An and/or drop-down menu and three rows of two keyword lookup fields, which allow you to perform more complex searches by combining a string of keywords. For example, the search below filters for researchers who have entered the keywords ‘gene’ and ‘RNA binding proteins or RNA processing’ and ‘genetic engineering’ in their RGMS Profile and CV.

3. Searches can be further narrowed by selecting a Broad Research Area, Field of Research and/or State from the associated menus/fields.

4. Once all search criteria have been set, select Filter to display a list of matching researchers.
3.2. Assigning Assessors to Applications

Regardless of the method used to identify a potential external assessor, once selected, the assessor must be assigned to the application in RGMS before being invited to provide an assessment.

**IMPORTANT NOTE**

You can assign as many potential assessors to an application as is necessary, although only two invitations can be active (sent/pending/accepted/assessment complete) at any given time.

3.2.1. Single Assignments

To assign potential assessors to a single application:

1. Navigate to the Assigner Application – General Properties page for the relevant application. See Section 2.5 for more details.

2. From the Properties tab drop-down menu, select the Assignments link.

3. The page displays assignment properties and any assessors already associated with the application. At the bottom-left of the display, select New.
4. The **Create Assignment** page will open. If the potential assessor has an RGMS account, begin typing the candidate’s surname into the **Candidate** field and select the relevant name from the list that appears. Alternatively, use the Browse icon to select and add the potential assessor.

5. If the potential assessor is an Overseas External Assessor (OSEA) or an Australian who does not have an RGMS profile, enter the relevant details in the **Candidate Without RGMS Profile** field. For candidates without an RGMS account, it is essential that you supply RGMS with the correct email address.

**IMPORTANT NOTE**
A different process applies to inviting OSEAs See Section 4.4 for more details.

6. To complete this process, select **Save And Return**. The potential assessor can now be invited to review the application.

### 3.2.2. Multiple Assignments

A potential assessor that you select for one application may also be suitable to review other applications. Where that is the case, once the assessor has been assigned to one application (see Section 3.2.1 for more details), the same assessor can be quickly assigned to other applications as follows.

1. Navigate to the **Assigner Application – General Properties** page for any application to which the assessor has already been assigned. See Section 2.5 for more details.

2. From the **Properties** tab drop-down menu, select the **Copy Assignments** link.
3. To select one of the assessors already assigned to that application, begin typing their surname into the **Assignees/Candidates** field and select a name from the list that appears. Alternatively, use the **Browse** icon to display a list of all assessors currently assigned to that application.

4. To select the additional application/s to which you want the assignment/s copied, begin typing the application number directly into the **Target Applications** field and select an application from the list that appears. Alternatively, use the **Browse** icon to display a list of all applications for which you are responsible as an Assigner.

![Create Assignments](image)

5. Once you make your selections in the **Assignees/Candidates** and **Target Applications** fields, change the default answer of **No** to **Yes** in the **Create Assignment** drop-down menu.

![Create Assignments](image)

6. To complete the process, select **Save** or **Save And Return**. The potential assessor(s) you selected are now assigned to the additional application(s).

7. For each potential assessor copied to another application, check the Ineligible Candidates List to verify the assignment is allowed. See **Section 3.1.3** for further details.
4. Managing External Assessor Invitations

Once a suitable assessor has been identified and assigned to an application (see Section 3 for more details), the potential assessor can be invited to review the application.

The invitation email provides a hyperlink to an online form where the potential assessor can indicate their willingness to review. Depending on the potential assessor’s reply, one of the following processes will be initiated:

- **Yes** – The Assigner Application – Assignments Properties page updates the Assessor status to ‘accepted’ by displaying a green arrow. For more details on assessor status, see paragraph 6d, Section 2.5.
- **Yes (with potential Conflict of Interest)** – The Assigner will receive an email from RGMS indicating a ruling is required. The email contains a link directly to the Assigner Application – Assignments Properties page where you can view the conflict details and enter a ruling. See Section 4.6 for more details.
- **No** – The Assigner will receive an email providing a link back to the Assigner Application – Assignments Properties page where you can initiate a new invitation to the next potential assessor on your list.

Further instructions for sending and managing external assessor invitations are provided below.

**IMPORTANT NOTE**

A different process applies to inviting OSEAs. See Section 4.4 for more details.

4.1. Prior to Sending an Invitation

Before you send an invitation to a potential assessor, it is important to consider any circumstances that may impact their ability to accept. These include:

- Has the candidate declared a period of unavailability that precludes them from completing an assessment at this time?
- Is the candidate serving on a Grant Review Panel (GRP)?
- Has the candidate accepted six assessment invitations?

If one or more of these circumstances exist, RGMS will not prevent you from inviting the candidate, but the likelihood of a successful invitation is diminished. To answer these questions, complete the following steps:

1. Navigate to the Assigner Application – Assignments Properties page for the relevant application. See Section 2.5 for more details.

2. Select the 📚 icon in the Info column associated with the candidate to whom you wish to send an invitation.
3. The **Assignment Portlets: Personal Details** portlet will open. Select the **Commitments and Unavailability – This Year** tab, which displays:
   
a. **Candidate Unavailability** – Dates that the candidate cannot participate in peer review.
   
b. **Candidate Assigner Academy Membership** – ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ will be displayed.
   
c. **Candidate Panel Membership** – Displays the current funding round if the candidate is a panel member.
   
d. **Candidate External Assessments – Maximum of Six Accepted** – Indicates how many assessment invitations from the current funding round the candidate has already accepted.

4. The **Personal Details**, **Research Alignment**, and **Publications** tabs provide additional information about the candidate.

4.2. Inviting External Assessors

To invite an external assessor to review an application:

1. Navigate to the **Assigner Application – Assignments Properties** page for the relevant application. See Section 2.5 for more details.

2. Select the **Last Name** of the assessor to whom you wish to send the invitation.
3. From the **Properties** tab drop-down menu, select **Invitation**.

![Properties Tab](image)

4. The default invitation text you set up earlier (see **Section 2.4** for more details) will appear in the **Invitation** field. If you wish, you can amend the default text by clicking in the **Invitation** field and using standard text editing techniques. Any changes made here apply to this invitation only.

![Auto Text](image)

5. Additional options available under the **Actions** banner include:

   a. **Candidate is a Friend?** – By default, invitation greetings use the addressee’s title and last name, as entered on the Assessor’s Profile and CV page in RGMS. To use an alternative name, check this box and enter a substitute in the **Preferred Name** field (e.g. entering ‘Bob’ will result in the greeting ‘Dear Bob,’). This change applies to the current invitation only.

   b. **Candidate Lives Overseas?** – This mandatory field determines whether RGMS generates a standard invitation or an invitation containing instructions tailored to an Overseas External Assessor (OSEA) (see **Section 4.4** for more details). Select either **Yes** (candidate is an OSEA) or **No** (candidate resides in Australia) from the drop-down menu.

   c. **CIA Gave Consent For An Overseas Assessor?** - When submitting an application, applicants are asked whether or not they consent to their application(s) being reviewed by an OSEA. RGMS displays their nomination with either a green tick for **Yes** or a red cross for **No**. If consent has not been given, you must not assign the application to an OSEA.

   d. **Candidate is Eligible?** – RGMS verifies the eligibility of each candidate against the list displayed on the **Ineligible Candidates** tab (see **Section 3.1.3** for more details). If the selected candidate is not eligible to review this application, a red cross appears, which prevents RGMS from generating an invitation email. Otherwise, a green tick indicates the candidate is eligible. If ‘Calculating...’ is displayed, refresh the page by clicking on the icon at the top of the screen.

   e. **Send Invitation Email** – Select **Yes** from the drop-down menu to confirm that you are wanting/ready to invite the assessor. You will not be given the option to select ‘Yes’ if you already have two active invitations against an application. In that event, follow up or cancel any pending invitations first, then try again.

   f. **Cancel Automatic Email Resend** – By default, RGMS resends the invitation if there is no reply within four days. If you wish to cancel this automatic process, select **Yes** from the drop-down menu.
6. When you are satisfied with the invitation text, as well as any options you may have applied, select **Save** or **Save And Return** to send the invitation. RGMS will generate the invitation and send an email to the candidate.

4.3. Cancelling an Invitation

Assigners may cancel an invitation to an external assessor at any time (e.g. sent to the wrong person or no reply from the candidate). To do this:

1. Navigate to the **Assigner Application – General Properties** page for the relevant application. See [Section 2.5](#) for more details.

2. From the **Properties** tab drop-down menu, select the **Assignments** link.

3. To cancel an invitation to a potential external assessor, select the assessor's **Last Name**.

4. The **Assigner Application – Assignment Properties** page will open. From the **Properties** tab drop-down menu, select **Invitation**.
5. The default cancellation text you set up earlier will appear in the Cancellation field (see Section 2.4 for more details). If you wish, you can amend the text by clicking in the Cancellation field and using standard text editing techniques. Any changes made here apply to this cancellation only.

6. Select Yes from the Cancel Invitation drop-down menu.

7. Select Save or Save And Return. This will generate and send a cancellation notice via RGMS.

4.4. Coordinating Review by Overseas External Assessors (OSEA)

IMPORTANT NOTE:

NHMRC encourages inviting OSEAs to review an application. Before inviting assessors residing overseas – including New Zealand – it is vital that you understand different conditions apply to an OSEA, as opposed to an assessor residing in Australia:

- An OSEA DOES NOT use RGMS to complete an assessment, instead completing an offline assessment template which is then emailed to nhmrc.overseasassessments@nhmrc.gov.au
- NHMRC staff upload completed OSEA assessments into RGMS
- Please do not instruct an OSEA to open an account in RGMS. An OSEA should not open an RGMS account for the sole purpose of submitting an assessment, nor will an OSEA be granted access to a new account in RGMS if one is requested
- Even if an OSEA appears to have an RGMS account, they cannot use it to complete an external assessment. An OSEA profile in RGMS is incompatible with the external assessment process
- Assigners CANNOT accept an invitation on behalf of an OSEA in RGMS. Forward all OSEA correspondence indicating acceptance to nhmrc.overseasassessments@nhmrc.gov.au

For clarification on matters regarding an OSEA, contact nhmrc.overseasassessments@nhmrc.gov.au
Assigners may contact OSEA to review an application, provided this has been consented to by the applicant (see note below).

**IMPORTANT NOTE**

When submitting an application, applicants are asked whether they consent to their application being reviewed by an OSEA. RGMS displays their nomination in the **CIA Gave Consent For An Overseas Assessor**? field with either a green ‘Yes’ or a red ‘No’ (see Section 4.2 for more details). If consent has not been given, Assigners must not invite an OSEA to review the application.

Assessments by OSEA are managed as follows.

1. Initiate an invitation as outlined in Section 4.2. At Step 5b, select ‘Yes’ from the **Candidate Lives Overseas?** drop-down menu, then continue with the remaining steps to generate the invitation.

2. The invitation email generated by RGMS will request the OSEA to contact NHMRC via email to indicate their willingness to review the application. This alerts NHMRC to contact the OSEA. NHMRC then coordinates review of the application.

**IMPORTANT NOTE**

Where Assigners receive an email from OSEAs indicating their willingness to assess a Project Grant application, please forward this email to the Project Grants team at projects.rulings@nhmrc.gov.au.

3. Once the assessment is complete and has been uploaded in RGMS by NHMRC on the OSEA’s behalf, the Assignments table for that application will be updated to reflect a completed external assessment. Refer to Section 5.2 for assistance with navigating to and interpreting the Assignments table.

4.5. Accepting or Declining an Invitation on an External Assessor’s Behalf

On occasion, external assessors may contact an Assigner outside RGMS to indicate their willingness to review an application. It is important that external assessors’ decisions are recorded in RGMS to either: (i) allow them access to applications; or (ii) signal that an alternative assessor is required. Instructions for recording external assessors’ decisions in RGMS are outlined below.

1. Navigate to the **Assigner Application – General Properties** page for the relevant application. See Section 2.5 for more details.

2. From the Properties tab drop-down menu, select the Assignments link.

3. Select the relevant assessor’s Last Name.
4. The **Assigner Application – Assignment Properties** page will open. Select the appropriate response in the **Candidate’s Decision** drop-down menu:

   a. **Accepted (Assigner)** – External assessor has accepted the invitation.

   b. **Decline (Assigner)** – External assessor has declined the invitation.

5. If known, enter the candidate’s **Reason for Declining** and **Suggested Replacements** in the fields provided.

6. Select **Save** or **Save And Return** to register the candidate’s decision in RGMS.

4.6. **External Assessor Conflicts of Interest (Col)**

All potential external assessors must declare Col when accepting an invitation to review an application. If a potential Col is identified by a candidate, the Assigner will receive an email from RGMS indicating a ruling is required. The email contains a direct link to the **Assigner Application – Assignment Properties** page, where Col details can be viewed. After evaluating the Col details, the Assigner must enter a ruling in RGMS. For information on what constitutes a Col, refer to [Section 4.3.2. What is a Conflict of Interest?](#) of the Guide to NHMRC Peer Review 2017.

**IMPORTANT NOTE**

NHMRC will rule on any Col declarations from OSEA. Refer to [Section 4.4](#) for more details.

To enter a Col ruling:

1. Click the hyperlink in the email. This takes you to the **Assigner Application – Assignment Properties** page in RGMS.
2. From the Properties drop-down menu, select **Conflict of Interest**.

3. The **Assigner Application – Conflict of Interest** page will open. Complete the following steps:

   a. Review any comments in the **Col Comments – Candidate** field.
   b. Enter comments detailing your ruling in the **Col Comments – Assigner/NHMRC** field.
   c. Select the appropriate conflict level (High, Low or None) from the **Col Ruling** drop-down menu, using the below matrix as a guide.
   d. Select **Save** or **Save And Return** to record your ruling. This also generates an email to the candidate with results of the Col ruling.
The matrix below covers most common conflict circumstances. Notice that associations between EAs and Associate Investigators are almost always considered Low-level conflicts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Col Category</th>
<th>Col Details</th>
<th>Col Level when association involves CI(s)</th>
<th>Col Level when association involves AI(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>EA is a named investigator on the application (CI/Al)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publications/Co-author (Potential External Assessor and a team member)</td>
<td>EA is on the same publication less than 5 years ago and less than 20 authors</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EA is on the same publication less than 5 years ago, more than 20 authors, neither is first or last author, no direct collaboration</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EA is on the same publication more than 5 years ago / any number of authors / either can be first or last author</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration Application/Grant</td>
<td>Collaborated more than 5 years ago</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaborated less than 5 years ago</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>Mentoring relationship more than 5 years ago</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentoring relationship less than 5 years ago</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentoring relationship with colleague of team member</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team member mentored colleague of EA</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Association</td>
<td>Large Institution - No collaborations or associations</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Small Institution - No collaborations or associations</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Same school/faculty/department</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Monitoring External Assessor Progress

Assigners can track the progress of external assessments using various tools in RGMS. Assigners can also extend due dates, if needed. Relevant functions are outlined below.

5.1. Monitoring External Assessor Progress for Multiple Applications

The Assigner Application List page allows you to quickly monitor the progress of external assessors for all your applications. It also allows you to filter for applications that meet specified criteria.

1. Navigate to the Assigner Application List page to view a list of your applications. See Section 2.5 for more details.

2. For each application listed, progress against relevant tasks (e.g. number of external assessors who have accepted invitations and completed assessments) is displayed in columns to the right. The columns are:

- **Invitations** - the number of external assessors invited to review an application.
- **Resend** - the number of invitations that have been resent due to no response within four days.
- **Accepted** - the number of external assessors who have accepted an invitation to review an application.
- **Completed** - the number of completed assessments.
- **Declined** - the number of external assessors who have declined an invitation to review an application.
- **Overdue** - the number of assessments that are past their due dates.
- **Cancelled** - the number of invitations cancelled on an application.
3. Filter options at the top right of the page allow you to customise which applications are displayed according to the criteria you enter (see step 2 above for an explanation of the different criteria). This can assist with identifying applications requiring attention. To filter by criteria:

   a. Enter the desired number range(s) in the available fields. For example, to view only applications with four or more declined invitations, enter ‘4’ in the left column, next to Declined. The resulting search will display only those applications with at least four declined invitations, up to the highest number recorded in RGMS, as the right column is set to infinity.

   b. After entering your criteria, select Filter to display a list of applications meeting your specified criteria.

   c. If you wish to reset the filters and display all applications, clear any values from the fields and select Filter again.

5.2. Monitoring External Assessor Progress for a Specific Application

The assignments table on the Assigner Application – Assignments Properties page allows you to quickly monitor the progress of external assessors for a specific application. The information provided in this table can be customised to monitor the progress of invitations, responses and/or assessments.

To customise the assignments table:

1. Navigate to the Assigner Application – Assignments Properties page for the relevant application. Follow steps 1 through 6 in Section 2.5 for more details.
2. The assignments table at the bottom of the page is your main point of reference for monitoring external assessor progress. In addition to providing general information, such as the name and title of each potential assessor, at a glance, you can track:

   a. **Assessments Complete** – This column shows the date each external assessment was completed and displays the total number of complete external assessments against an application at the bottom of the column.

   b. **Status** – The current status of each external assessor assignment or potential external assessor is displayed with a coloured arrow:

      i. **New** 🚀 – an invitation is yet to be sent.
      ii. **Decision Pending** 🕊️ – an invitation has been sent, but a decision is yet to be received/entered.
      iii. **Accepted** 🔐 – an invitation has been accepted.
      iv. **Inactive** 🚫 – an invitation has been either cancelled or declined.

   c. **CoI Ruling Request?** – A checkmark here alerts you to a potential assessor who agreed, in principle, to review the application, but may have a Conflict of Interest. This requires you to issue a ruling. See Section 4.6 for more details.

   d. **Cancelled** – If an invitation was cancelled, the date(s) and total number of cancellations will be displayed here.

   e. **Note** – Any notes or reminders you wish to leave for yourself can be entered as free text.

5.3. Extending the Due Date for External Assessments

External assessors are initially asked to complete their assessments within 14 calendar days from the date they accept the invitation. Once an external assessor accepts the invitation to review an application, Assigners may change the due date, if required.

**IMPORTANT NOTE**

The due date cannot be extended past the **Assessment Must Be Completed By** date for that application. See Step 3 below for further details.
To change the due date of an assessment:

1. Navigate to the Assigner Application – Properties page for the relevant application. Follow steps 1 through 6 in Section 2.5 for more details.

2. Select the hyperlink in the Last Name column of the relevant external assessor.

3. Check the Assessment Must Be Completed By date. Any extension to the Assessment Due Date cannot extend past this NHMRC-determined date.

4. Select the calendar icon next to the Assessment Due Date field. A calendar will appear as a pop-up window under the field.

5. Select the new Assessment Due Date.

6. Select Save.

7. If you extend the due date of an assessment that was flagged as overdue, it will reset, removing the overdue assessment flag. The external assessor will also be notified that the due date has changed.