2018 Project Grant Funding Round Guidance for External Assessors
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Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the 2018 National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Project Grants peer review process as an external assessor.

This guidance document provides information on your roles and responsibilities as an external assessor, as well as key information to assist you in completing your assessment. If you require further guidance, please contact NHMRC as described below.

Confidentiality and Privacy

You are reminded of the importance of confidentiality and privacy regarding all aspects of the peer review process. Anyone directly engaged with the peer review of an application must not contact applicants about their application.

NHMRC peer reviewers are bound to act in accordance with the provisions of the Privacy Act 1988 and the confidentiality requirements under section 80 of the NHMRC Act. See the NHMRC Funding Rules and the NHMRC’s Privacy Policy, available on the NHMRC website, for further details.

Resources

In addition to this guidance document, external assessors should refer to the following attached documents when completing their assessments:

- 2018 NHMRC Project Grant Category Descriptors (Attachment A)
- Guidance on the assessment of applications against the Project Grant assessment criteria (Attachment B)
- Section 6.1 of the 2018 Guide to NHMRC Peer Review (Attachment C)

Detailed guidance on how to submit external assessments in RGMS are in Submitting an external assessment in RGMS (Attachment D).

Contacts

Requests for assistance, including with RGMS, should be directed in the first instance to the NHMRC Research Help Centre by calling 1800 500 983 between 9am and 5pm (AEST) Monday to Friday, or by emailing help@nhmrc.gov.au.

All other enquiries can be directed to the NHMRC Assigners Academy team at academy@nhmrc.gov.au.
NHMRC 2018 Guidance for External Assessors

Roles and Responsibilities

NHMRC endeavours to obtain two written assessments from external assessors for each application submitted to the Project Grant scheme. As an external assessor, it is your role to be an independent reviewer of the application you have been invited to assess, and provide a written assessment focusing on the key strengths and weaknesses of the application, using the NHMRC Project Grant Category Descriptors (Attachment A) as a guide. You must also identify and advise NHMRC of all real or potential conflicts of interest you may have with any aspect of the application prior to undertaking the assessment.

Your assessment, once completed, will be provided to the applicant/s as part of the Assessors’ Report, which contains assessments from two external assessors as well as a Primary and Secondary Spokesperson. The Assessors’ Report does not reveal the names or institutional affiliations of the external assessors or Spokespersons. Applicants are allowed up to 10 days to submit an Applicant Response (rebuttal), after which a ranked list of applications for consideration by a Grant Review Panel (GRP) is generated and used to determine which applications will progress to full review. If the application for which you have provided an assessment proceeds to full review, the assessment will be presented to the GRP by the Secondary Spokesperson when panels convene in late 2018, and will be used to inform panel discussions.

For detailed information on the Project Grant peer review process, please refer to the 2018 Project Grant scheme-specific peer review guidelines, which can be accessed on the NHMRC website at https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants-funding/apply-funding/project-grants.
Conflicts of Interest

A conflict of interest (COI) exists where there is a divergence between the individual interests of a person and their professional responsibilities such that an independent observer might reasonably conclude that the professional actions of that person are unduly influenced by their own interests. COIs in health and medical research are common and it is important that they are disclosed and dealt with properly.

For NHMRC peer review purposes, interests may fall into the broad domains of:
- involvement with the application under review
- collaborations
- professional relationships and interests
- social relationships and interests
- teaching or supervisory relationships
- financial relationships and interests
- other interests or relationships.

For detailed information on NHMRC’s Disclosure of Interests policy, please refer to section 4.3 of the 2018 Guide to NHMRC Peer Review, which can be accessed on the NHMRC website at https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants-funding/apply-funding/project-grants.
External Assessments

External assessments should be submitted via RGMS within 14 calendar days.

External assessors are required to assess applications according to the following assessment criteria, using the attached *NHMRC Project Grant Category Descriptors* (Attachment A) as a guide:

- Scientific Quality
- Significance of the Expected Outcomes and/or Innovation of the Concept
- Team Quality and Capability – Relative to Opportunity.

External assessments should focus specifically on the major strengths and weaknesses of the application. Budget comments and overall comments are desirable but not compulsory. External assessors should not express unfamiliarity with any aspect of Australian research or research costs. The overall comments section provides an opportunity to ask specific questions concerning aspects of the proposal that require clarification, if desired.

**Please note that external assessments are intended to provide constructive feedback on the application and SHOULD NOT contain scores, inappropriate language, or comments/questions inconsistent with the assessment criteria. Any such material included in external assessments will be removed by NHMRC.**

Where external assessors believe the proposed research is replicating previous research, they may raise this in their assessment providing references so applicants have the opportunity to respond in their rebuttal.

A full description of each assessment criterion and further guidance on reviewing applications can be found in the attached *Guidance on the Assessment of Applications against the Project Grant Assessment Criteria* (Attachment B) and section 6.1 of the 2018 Guide to NHMRC Peer Review (Attachment C).

**Relative to Opportunity and Career Disruption**

Project Grant applicants are provided with the opportunity to include in their application a brief explanation of any relative to opportunity circumstance(s) and/or career disruption(s) and the impact they have had on their research and research achievements and associated productivity. Relative to opportunity considerations allow for the accurate assessment of 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. External assessors should consider relative to opportunity considerations across all assessment criteria.

Circumstances considered under “relative to opportunity” include, but are not limited to:

- amount of time spent as an active researcher
- career disruption (see below for further details)
• available resources, including situations where research is being conducted in remote or isolated communities
• building relationships of trust with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities over long periods and subsequent impact on track record and productivity
• clinical, administrative or teaching workload
• relocation of an applicant and his/her research laboratory or clinical practice setting or other similar circumstances that impact upon research productivity
• research outputs and productivity commensurate with time spent employed in other sectors and restrictions on publication associated with time spent working in other sectors (e.g. industry, policy and government)
• for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants, community obligations including “sorry business”
• the typical performance of researchers in the research field in question.

A career disruption, which is a type of relative to opportunity consideration, is defined as a prolonged interruption to an applicant’s capacity to work due to pregnancy, major illness/injury and/or carer responsibilities. Interruptions must involve either a continuous absence from work for periods of 28 calendar days or more and/or a long-term partial return to work that has been formalised with the applicant’s employer.

Applicants are required to nominate the periods in the last five years where they have had a career disruption, and provide details of additional research outputs (those that occurred in the relevant preceding years) that they want reviewers to consider when assessing their application. Peer reviewers must consider this information when evaluating track record, and allow for the inclusion of additional outputs in their assessment of the application such as publications and translation outcomes. An example of a career disruption consideration can be found in section 4.7 of the 2018 Guide to NHMRC Peer Review, available at https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants-funding/apply-funding/project-grants.

Industry-relevant experience

External assessors should consider the value and impact of industry-relevant expertise, industry skills, experience and achievements when assessing applicants’ track records. NHMRC has developed the Guide to Evaluating Industry-Relevant Experience (available at https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants-funding/peer-review) to assist peer reviewers in this task. Further information on recognising industry-relevant experience can also be found in section 6.1 of the 2018 NHMRC Funding Rules.

Use of Impact Factors and other metrics

Assessment of track record should take into account the overall impact, quality and contribution to the field of all of the published journal articles from the 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 or the previous Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) Ranked Journal List when assessing applications. Further guidance can be found in section 4.8 of the 2018 Guide to NHMRC Peer Review, available at https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants-funding/apply-funding/project-grants.
Budgets

External assessors are encouraged to provide budget comments with reference to the following questions:

- Is the duration of the grant appropriate to meet the research aims?
- Are the requested salaries, Direct Research Costs and/or Equipment costs appropriate?

Further details on permitted uses of NHMRC funds can be found in the following documents:

- Section 8.3 of the *2018 NHMRC Funding Rules*, which was provided in the RGMS-generated *Files required for external assessment* email.
### Attachment A – 2018 NHMRC Project Grant Category Descriptors

The following category descriptors are used as a guide to scoring an application against each of the assessment criteria: 1) Scientific Quality; 2) Significance of the Potential Outcomes and/or Innovation of the Concept; and 3) Team Quality & Capability, relative to opportunity. While the category descriptors provide peer reviewers with some benchmarks for appropriately scoring each application, it is not essential that all descriptors relating to a given score must be met. The descriptors are a guide to a “best fit” outcome.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Scientific Quality - 50% Feasibility can include contribution of Associate Investigators</th>
<th>Significance and/or Innovation - 25% Significance of the expected outcomes AND/OR Innovation of the concept</th>
<th>Team Quality &amp; Capability relevant to this application 25% Relative to opportunity, does not include Associate Investigators</th>
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<tr>
<td>7 Outstanding by International Standards</td>
<td>The proposal has a research plan that: is well-defined, highly coherent and strongly developed; has a near flawless study design; is highly feasible with all of the required expertise, research tools and techniques established; would be highly competitive with the best, similar research proposals internationally.</td>
<td>The planned research: will result in a highly significant advance in knowledge in this field which addresses an issue of great importance to human health; will result in fundamental outcomes in the science underpinning human health issues; will translate rapidly into fundamental or commercialisable outcomes that will transform the practice of clinical medicine, public health or in health policy; will almost certainly be the subject of invited plenary presentations at national and international meetings; will almost certainly result in highly influential publications; is highly innovative and introduces advances in concept(s); will use very advanced approaches which will optimise outcomes.</td>
<td>Relative to opportunity, the applicant team: has expertise that specifically targets the proposed research both in terms of its depth and/or breadth; has over the last 5 years, a combined record of research achievement that is outstanding by international standards commensurate with their field of research; research achievement may include contributions to translational outcomes such as patents, commercial outputs, and public policy or implementation of change in practice; research quality as exemplified in the top 5 publications of each CI; research productivity as exemplified by total outputs for the team; has senior members with outstanding national and international reputations in the field of research relevant to the application; may involve junior members who are very strong contributors to the overall team quality &amp; capability or will have the capacity to do so due to the availability of very strong mentoring by other members of the team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Excellent</td>
<td>The proposal has a research plan that: is clearly defined, coherent and well developed; has a strong study design; is feasible with all required tools, techniques and expertise established; is likely to be competitive with strong, similar research proposals internationally.</td>
<td>The planned research: will result in a significant advance in knowledge in this field which addresses an issue of importance to human health; is likely to result in fundamental outcomes in the science underpinning human health issues; is likely to translate into fundamental or commercialisable outcomes that will transform the practice of clinical medicine, public health or in health policy; will be the subject of invited plenary presentations at national and international meetings; will result in influential publications; is highly innovative in concept; will use advanced approaches to enhance outcomes.</td>
<td>Relative to opportunity, the applicant team: has expertise that is highly relevant to the proposed research both in terms of its depth and/or breadth; has over the last 5 years, a combined record of research achievement that is excellent by international standards commensurate with their field of research; research achievement may include contributions to translational outcomes such as patents, commercial outputs, and public policy or implementation of change in practice; research quality as exemplified in the top 5 publications of each CI; research productivity as exemplified by total outputs for the team; has senior members with excellent national and/or international reputations in the field of research relevant to the application; may involve junior members who are strong contributors to the overall team quality &amp; capability or will have the capacity to do so due to the availability of strong mentoring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Very Good</td>
<td>The proposal has a research plan that: is generally clear in its scientific plan and is logical; raises only very few minor concerns with respect to the study design; is feasible in all, or almost all areas - required techniques and tools either established or nearly established; may not be highly competitive with similar research proposals internationally.</td>
<td>The planned research: will advance knowledge in this field which addresses an issue of importance to human health; may result in fundamental outcomes in the science underpinning human health issues; very few concerns regarding feasibility may translate into fundamental or commercialisable outcomes that will transform the practice of clinical medicine, public health or in health policy; could be the subject of invited plenary presentations at national and international meetings; is likely to result in some very strong publications; is innovative in concept; will use well established approaches to good effect.</td>
<td>Relative to opportunity, the applicant team: raises only minor concerns regarding the depth and/or breadth of expertise relevant to the proposed research; has over the last 5 years, a combined record of research achievement that is well above average by international standards commensurate with their field of research; research achievement may include contributions to translational outcomes such as patents, commercial outputs, and public policy or implementation of change in practice; research quality as exemplified in the top 5 publications of each CI; research productivity as exemplified by total outputs for the team; members have very good and growing national and/or international reputations in the field of research relevant to the application; may involve junior members who are valuable contributors to the team quality &amp; capability or will have the capacity to do so due to the availability of some mentoring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Good</td>
<td>The proposal has a research plan that: is generally solid in its scientific plan, but may not always be clear in its intent and may lack some focus; raises several minor concerns regarding the study design; raises doubts about the feasibility in some areas; is not likely to be competitive with similar research proposals internationally.</td>
<td>The planned research: may incrementally advance knowledge in the field which addresses an issue of some importance to human health; is unlikely to result in fundamental outcomes in the science underpinning human health issues; several minor concerns regarding feasibility is unlikely to translate into fundamental or commercialisable outcomes that will transform the practice of clinical medicine, public health or in health policy; is unlikely to be the subject of invited plenary presentations at international meetings; may result in some good but not excellent publications; is solid in concept; will in the main use standard approaches.</td>
<td>Relative to opportunity, the applicant team: raises some significant concerns regarding the depth and/or breadth of expertise relevant to the proposed research; has over the last 5 years, a combined record of research achievement that is average by international standards commensurate with their field of research; research achievement may include contributions to translational outcomes such as patents, commercial outputs, and public policy or implementation of change in practice; research quality as exemplified in the top 5 publications of each CI; research productivity as exemplified by total outputs for the team; members have good and growing national and/or international reputations in the field of research relevant to the application; may involve some junior members who would have the potential to add to the team with mentoring, but there is little or no evidence of a mentoring framework to support them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Scientific Quality - 50%</td>
<td>Significance and/or Innovation - 25%</td>
<td>Team Quality &amp; Capability relevant to this application - 25%</td>
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<td><strong>3 Marginal</strong></td>
<td>Feasibility can include contribution of Associate Investigators</td>
<td>Significance of the expected outcomes AND/OR Innovation of the concept</td>
<td>Relative to opportunity, does not include Associate Investigators</td>
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<tr>
<td>The proposal has a research plan that:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• is somewhat unclear in its scientific approach and goals</td>
<td>• addresses an issue of some importance to human health</td>
<td>• members have made contributions to the field of research but there are significant concerns regarding the depth and breadth of relevant expertise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• contains some major design flaws</td>
<td>• may result in some publications</td>
<td>has over the last 5 years, a combined record of research achievement quality (as exemplified by the top 5 publications of each CI) and productivity (totality of outputs) and/or translation into practice, that places them at an average level for their peers/cohort</td>
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<tr>
<td>• raises major concerns about the feasibility and thus the likelihood of successful completion.</td>
<td>• may have some innovative and novel aspects, while others underpin or extend existing knowledge.</td>
<td>members have established national reputations but do not yet have strong international profiles.</td>
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<td><strong>2 Unsatisfactory</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The proposal has a research plan that:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• is unclear in its scientific approach and goals</td>
<td>• addresses an issue of some concern to human health</td>
<td>• is deficient in some areas of expertise that will be required to successfully complete the proposed research</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• contains several major study design flaws</td>
<td>• provides a program of research which will not significantly advance current knowledge in the field</td>
<td>has published only a few works in relevant and other fields of research</td>
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<tr>
<td>• raises several major concerns about the feasibility and thus the likelihood of successful completion.</td>
<td>• has relatively little innovation or novelty.</td>
<td>members are not well known nationally or internationally in the relevant research fields.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1 Poor</strong></td>
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<td>The proposal has a research plan that:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• contains a research plan which does not seem to be feasible</td>
<td>• The planned research:</td>
<td>• Relative to opportunity, the applicant team:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• is unlikely to be successfully completed.</td>
<td>• does not address an issue of more than marginal concern to human health</td>
<td>• is heavily underpowered in terms of relevant expertise required to successfully complete the research program</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• will not advance current knowledge in the field</td>
<td>• is not productive to any significant extent in relevant fields</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• only follows behind previously well documented and studied concepts or previously well used approaches</td>
<td>members are not well known nationally or internationally in the relevant research fields.</td>
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Attachment B – Guidance on the Assessment of Applications against the Project Grant Assessment Criteria

As per section 4 of the Project Grant scheme-specific funding rules, all applications are assessed against the three assessment criteria:

- Scientific Quality (50%)
- Significance of the Expected Outcomes AND/OR Innovation of the Concept (25%)
- Team Quality and Capability, relevant to the application - relative to opportunity, taking into account career disruptions where applicable (25%).

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

Scientific Quality (50%)

This includes the clarity of the hypotheses or research objectives, the strengths and weaknesses of the study design and feasibility.

Applications may be assessed in terms of, but not limited to the following questions.

Clarity of the hypothesis or research objectives

- Has the method/framework/approach been partially tested?
- What outcome is sought in the proposed study? What exactly is the outcome measure?
- Is it well integrated and adequately developed?

Is there a clear and appropriate research plan?

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the study and its design?
- Have any major pitfalls or problems been overlooked? Are there more advanced and appropriate alternative approaches that should be used or considered?
- Is the plan well informed by knowledge of the literature?
- Is the design appropriate for the aims of the research?
- That is robust and enables reproducibility of research (see section 4.10 of the Guide to NHMRC Peer Review 2018)?

Feasibility

- Does the research plan successfully address the stated hypothesis or research objectives?
- Are the goals achievable?
- Is the team appropriate? Are they capable of achieving the goals? Do they have the right skills and expertise?
• Do the team, including Associate Investigators, have all the required tools and techniques established in their laboratories?
• Is the team, including Associate Investigators, operating in an appropriately supportive research environment?

Significance of the Expected Outcomes AND/OR Innovation of the Concept (25%)

This includes the potential to increase knowledge about human health, disease diagnoses, or biology of agents that affect human health, or the application of new ideas, procedures, technologies, programs or health policy settings to important topics that will impact on human health.

Applications need not be rated on both significance and innovation. Truly innovative ideas and research may not reveal their significance until sometime in the future (this is the case for many Nobel Prize winning discoveries). Similarly research of the highest significance such as important randomised clinical trials or public health intervention studies may use ‘tried and true’ methods only, yet be of immense significance to health.

Applications may be assessed in terms of, but not limited to the following questions.

Significance

• Would the likely outcome of this study significantly advance knowledge in this field?
• If successful, will the study have a significant impact on the health issue at question?
  o Impact could be measured by advancement in general scientific knowledge, clinical and/or public health applications, policy development or change
  o 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)
• What is the likely interest from other researchers, conference organisers, journals, community groups, and policy makers in the outcomes of the research?

Innovation

• Is the proposed research new/novel or creative (has imagination been used)?
• Are the aims transformative?
• Are the techniques cutting edge?
• If successful, could the research result in a paradigm shift?
• Will the research affect current practices or approaches and other researchers within this field of research?
• Is the research proposal a strong candidate for the Marshall and Warren Award?
• Is the proposed study innovative enough that it will be the subject of invited plenary presentations at international meetings?
• Is it likely that the results from the study will yield highly influential publications?
• How well does the proposal describe the new ideas, procedures, technologies, programs or health policy settings?

Team Quality and Capability relevant to the application – relative to opportunity, taking into account career disruptions where applicable (25%)

Team Quality and Capability is considered in terms of whether an applicant’s previous research demonstrates that the investigator(s) has the appropriate mix of research skills and experience to achieve the proposed project and/or ability to deliver the proposed project. Team Quality and Capability will be judged on the most recent five years, except where there is a career disruption.

Where an application involves a CI team, the combined track record of all CIs is considered and each CI will be assessed relative to opportunity (including career stage). The assessment of the team is not weighted to the CIA but the team as a whole. Associate Investigators are not considered as part of the team track record.

NHMRC strongly encourages research teams to include early career researchers (ECRs). The contribution of ECRs and their capability/capacity (relative to opportunity) to undertake the proposed research under the mentoring of experienced team members will be taken into consideration when assessing against this criterion.

Team Quality and Capability may encompass the national and international standing of the applicant(s) based upon their research achievements, including but not limited to:

• research outputs relevant to the proposed field of research (most recent significant publications, publications that illustrate innovation and significance to past accomplishments, impact or outcome of previous research achievements, including effects on health care practices or policy, awards or honours in recognition of achievements).
• contribution to discipline or area (invitations to speak at international meetings, editorial appointments, specialist and high level health policy committee appointments).
• other research-related achievements (influence on clinical/health policy or practice or provision of influential advice to health authorities and government, impacts on health via the broad dissemination of research outcomes; e.g. via mainstream media, the community or industry involvement).
• mentoring environment to support junior/emerging researchers.

Team Quality and Capability is considered in relation to opportunity, with regard to factors such as career disruption, administrative and clinical/teaching load, and typical performance (including publications) for the field in question. See section 6.2 of the 2018 NHMRC Funding Rules for detailed descriptions of relative to opportunity and career disruptions. This also includes appropriately recognising an applicant’s industry relevant experience and outputs (see Attachment A of the 2018 Guide to NHMRC Peer Review).
The table below guides assessors on what NHMRC considers acceptable and unacceptable when providing feedback on an application.

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<th>Do</th>
<th>Do Not</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Do provide constructive feedback.</td>
<td>• Do not provide ‘nil’ comments or leave the space ‘blank’.</td>
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<td>• Do ask questions, provide comment or seek clarification on concerns if the process allows for an applicant to respond (rebuttal) Note that applicants must be able to address these questions without modifying their research proposal.</td>
<td>• Do not provide broad statements which suggest that the application may or may not be worthy of funding.</td>
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<td>• Do refer to the category descriptors associated with the Assessment Criteria.</td>
<td>• Do not indicate a lack of expertise to review an application within the assessment.</td>
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<td>• Do consider both the strengths and weaknesses of the application relative to the Assessment Criteria.</td>
<td>• Do not question the integrity of the application or applicant/s. Any integrity concerns must be raised with NHMRC separately. See NHMRC’s website for more information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Do consider any career disruptions and other “relative to opportunity” considerations to understand the longer term impact these have on scientific output.</td>
<td>• Do not raise issues of eligibility in the assessment. If you have concerns about the application or applicant/s eligibility they should be raised with NHMRC separately.</td>
</tr>
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<td>• Do provide references for any body of work that you think the applicant has overlooked.</td>
<td>• Do not provide scores in the commentary.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Do prioritise major concerns over minor.</td>
<td>• Do not focus on numerous minor matters that the applicant/s may not have the ability to respond to.</td>
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<td>• Do not provide inappropriate comments. More specifically, do not provide comments that are:</td>
<td>• Do not provide inappropriate comments.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• irrelevant</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• personal</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• unscientific/unprofessional</td>
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<td>• offensive</td>
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<td>• discriminatory</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• biased</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• defamatory (see examples below).</td>
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Examples of inappropriate comments:

• “like all researchers at University X, the Chief Investigator (X) has a poor track record……” [researchers who are not named on the application are irrelevant to the application]

• “The applicant/institution already receives too much funding and NHMRC must fund more in X field” [comment is irrelevant to the Assessment Criteria or
application]

- “The applicant is strongly supported by his spouse” [refers to a personal rather than professional relationship.]
- “The idea that this research could determine……is clearly ludicrous” [unscientific/unprofessional language]
- “The Chief Investigator A has no idea about anything” [offensive]
- “this applicant is a woman and will probably take maternity leave at some point and this could affect her ability to undertake the research” [discriminatory]
- “my university is much better at this type of research” [biased].
- “The Chief Investigator A has probably stolen data from X” [defamatory].

Assessors’ comments are not previewed by NHMRC prior to distribution to applicants. Any potentially inappropriate comments brought to NHMRC’s attention will be reviewed objectively. If NHMRC determines that the comment/s is inappropriate then NHMRC, whenever it is possible and reasonable to do so, will take action. Actions taken will depend on the stage of the peer review process and will be proportional to the extent or nature of the comments. Actions may include redaction, instructions to the panel, new assessment by a replacement assessor or any other action NHMRC considers appropriate to mitigate the impact of the comments.
Attachment D – Submitting an external assessment in RGMS

IMPORTANT NOTE
Save your work often. RGMS will time out after 30 minutes of inactivity and does not recognise typing as an activity. NHMRC recommends completing your assessment offline and pasting your comments into the relevant section in RGMS to avoid loss of data.

1. From the RGMS Home page select the Assessors/Panel Members tab.

2. Under Quicklinks for Assessors, select Complete my assessment(s).

3. The Assessment Detail List page will open. In the Round field, begin typing 2018 and select 2018_Project Grant_funding_commencing_2019.

4. Begin typing your last name in the Assessor field and select your name from the options that appear.

5. In the RGMS Application ID field, enter the Application ID for the application for which you wish to submit an assessment (of the format APPxxxxxxx).


7. Select the Properties icon for the application.

9. The Assessment Detail: External Assessment – Part 1 – Selection Criteria - Properties page will open. Enter your comments into the appropriate Comment field for the three Selection Criteria. These three sections are compulsory.

10. Select Save and then Return to go back to the Assessment Detail: Home – Properties page.

11. Hover over the Properties tab and select External Assessment – Part 2 – Comments and Verification.
12. The Assessment Detail: External Assessment – Part 2 – Comments and Verification - Properties page will open. Enter your budget and overall comments in the appropriate fields. These two sections are not compulsory.

13. From the Verify External Assessment dropdown menu, select Yes, Assessment is complete.

14. Select Save. This locks your assessment and submits it to NHMRC. Once submitted, you will be unable to make any further changes to your assessment.