

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY & PERFORMANCE EVIDENCE

ROPE – ARC Fellowships

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Purpose of ROPE is “to enable evaluation of a researcher’s activities, outputs and achievements, in the context of career and life opportunities and experiences, including, where relevant, significant career interruptions.” It recognises that researchers have diverse experiences that affect **capacity, productivity** and **contributions**. ROPE seeks to provide clear account of this. For career interruptions, success rate can increase if the interruption is effectively communicated. Table 1 lists the principals of ROPE.

Table 1 - List of research opportunities, interruptions and performance evidence (source: Arc Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) Statement July 2020)

Research Opportunity encompasses research activities that contribute to development of a research career. These provide context to performance evidence. Research opportunity includes:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - research training - employment in research positions (FTE, in/outside academia) - research and development activities - industry engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - research environment, including supervision, mentoring and leadership - professional development - research management experience, and - access to research and support facilities.
Significant interruptions occur in a career that affects a researcher’s capacity, productivity or contribution. Interruptions may also extend beyond duration of a specific event and full extent of interruption can be included under ROPE for consideration, including:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - unemployment - non-research employment - limited or no access to facilities and resources - such as through workplace interruptions - disaster management and recovery - misadventure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - medical conditions - disability - caring and parental responsibilities, and - community obligations, including Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultural practices and protocols.
Performance Evidence should be presented in the context of sector and discipline expectations, and demonstrate research quality , contributions to the research field and sector. It incorporates all research activities, outputs and achievements evaluated in the context of research impact, as appropriate to each discipline, and research opportunity. Performance evidence includes:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - publications - intellectual property - non-traditional research outputs - research income, including grants and industry funding - research supervision and advice, including HDR student completions - professional development, mentoring and research leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fellowships, memberships, awards, and keynote addresses - policy development and advice - research impact, including the use of research to achieve environmental, cultural, social or economic changes or improvements, and - research collaboration.
Implementation. ROPE assessment criterion is structured relative to scheme objectives – Review Instructions to Applicants. ROPE statements should be:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - clear, contextualised, constructively presented - contain all information necessary for assessors to evaluate research activities, outputs, achievements and impact relative to career and life opportunities and experiences. - Significant career interruptions, where relevant, should be presented simply, quantified where possible, noting that the impact of the interruption may last longer than a defined period. Personal or confidential information should not be included. 	

Guide to Specific ROPE Sections (Based on DE22)

Each round varies, so one **must download and follow closely** the *Instruction of Applicants (ITA)* for each type of grant and round. The following are tips to assist in providing appropriate response to questions common in the ROPE section and should be used alongside the ITA.

TABLE 2 – ROPE Section within D1 Project Description (DE22)

INVESTIGATOR/CAPABILITY

Describe the:

- Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) including record of high-quality research outputs appropriate to the discipline/s.
- capability of candidate to build collaborations both within Australia and internationally.

This section is within the project description, and the essential goal here is to enable the assessors to evaluate your research outputs and achievements in the context of the opportunities you have had and in relation to the project. Describe your *major* research opportunities, any *significant* interruptions to your research, and provide performance *evidence* that is appropriate for your discipline (see Table 1). This should be written as a narrative that highlights your **emerging independence** and **potential for leadership** in the field. Consider this as building a case for the ARC to invest in you as an independent researcher, and that you are the most ideal person to carry out the project.

You may wish to start by summarising your research focus and/or expertise. This could be followed by highlighting your research opportunities and any *significant* interruptions, although they are also covered elsewhere (section F) so just include major aspects to provide some context (i.e. avoid too much repetition). Include in your narrative your specific contributions to advancement of knowledge and towards your major achievements. If you have suitable metrics, use these to support strong statements on your performance. If you have papers or other research outputs with terrific statistics (e.g. citations), make clear your role in the research and emphasise your specific innovations and contributions bearing in mind that most papers have multiple authors. Consider your strengths, particularly regarding data that supports what is unique about you and emphasise it; this could be your approach, analytical skills or rigour, as well as thought-leadership, idea generation and approach to developing/testing hypotheses.

A common question we have to deal with is how to not make this repetitive of the other ROPE sections. Our suggestion is that the other sections contain lots of supporting details while here is a chance to focus down to essential information you want to convey that best supports your strengths and suitability for the fellowship and feasibility for achieving exciting outcomes from your project.

Table 3 – Exert from ITA on DE22 F17.

DE22 - F17. ROPE

Details of the DECRA candidate's career and opportunities for research, evidence of research impact and contributions to the field, including those most relevant to this application.

Upload a PDF of up to five A4 pages and in the format described in [Appendix B](#) of these instructions. The PDF must provide the following information that is relevant to the DECRA candidate's circumstances and opportunities in the order set out below:

- AMOUNT OF TIME AS AN ACTIVE RESEARCHER
- RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

- RESEARCH ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

AMOUNT OF TIME AS AN ACTIVE RESEARCHER

Provide:

- The number of years since the DECRA candidate graduated with their highest educational qualification.
- A total FTE figure for periods of significant career interruption during that period.

For example, "I was awarded my PhD (x) years ago in (year) and in that period I have experienced a total of two years (at X.X FTE) of career interruptions".

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

Provide details, relative to the DECRA candidate's specific opportunities considerations (both negative and positive) and the effect this has had on their research. This may include:

- The research opportunity the DECRA candidate has had in the context of their employment situation, including employment outside academia, any unemployment or part-time employment they may have experienced, and the research component of their employment conditions.
- A description of the DECRA candidate's role:
 - o If the DECRA candidate is university-based, indicate as appropriate the percentage of their current role(s) in research-only, teaching and research, teaching-only, teaching and administration, research and administration, administration-only academic, researcher in business, program or project manager or other business role, giving any additional information (for example, part-time status) needed to understand their situation. Give an indication of what percentage of time they have spent in those roles; or
 - o If the DECRA candidate is industry based, indicate as appropriate the percentage of their current role in industry, research and administration, researcher in business, program or project manager or other business role, giving any additional information (for example, part-time status) needed to understand their situation. Give an indication of what percentage of time they have spent in those roles.
- The research mentoring and research facilities that have been available to the DECRA candidate during their career.
- Any other aspects of the DECRA candidate's career or opportunities for research that are relevant to assessment and that have not been detailed elsewhere in this application (e.g. any circumstances that may have slowed down their research and publications or affected the time they have had to conduct and publish their research).

RESEARCH ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Provide a statement outlining any further evidence of the DECRA candidate's achievements and significant contributions to the field. This can include:

- o Prizes, honours and awards
- o Research supervision, mentoring and advice
- o Invited keynote and speaker addresses
- o Research income
- o Commercial outcomes such as patents, IP licences and resulting benefits
- o Identifiable benefits outside of academia
- o Other professional activities
- o Describe how the DECRA candidate's research has led to a significant change or advance of knowledge in their field, and outline how their achievements will contribute to this application.

Note that F18 provides an opportunity to describe the contribution of significance of the DECRA candidate's publications. This section should be devoted to other outputs.

AMOUNT OF TIME AS AN ACTIVE RESEARCHER

State exactly what is requested. (i.e. “I was awarded my PhD (x) years ago in (year) and in that period I have experienced a total of two years (at X.X FTE) of career interruptions.”)

If interruptions are complicated, a statement that summarise the equivalence in years you have worked as a researcher post-PhD may assist.

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

A fellowship is an investment in you, not just in the research you will undertake. You must consider this a marketing document, where you are providing a value proposition to the assessors that highlights you are worth investing in. Therefore, the assessors want to understand and appreciate who you are, so provide clear information on your past employment and research opportunities, including aspects that have enhanced or detracted from your research. Consider writing this as a **narrative**, as it may be easier to read. Use sub-headings to make it easy to follow and assessors can find where you address criterion. UQ provides a [template](#) for this section that you should use. However, consider the order you use some of the sub-headings so that they work to your strengths.

Consider who has provided you with supervision and mentorship, and what has been their value, status and/or contribution to your development. Name *past* and *current* researchers who have had a positive influence on your development as a researcher.

Consider the types of research facilities you have accessed, and their value and/or contribution to you:

- Equipment and infrastructure, and consider emphasising if you accessed specialised facilities (are they world leading? If so, how?).
- Other forms of research training that assisted in developing your skills, including courses, visiting other laboratories, supervising student projects
- Perhaps you were working in a challenging environment, with limited supervision and resources – what actions did you take to enable you to obtain positive research outcomes?
- Perhaps you have experiences working in industrial research laboratory and research management; what additional value did these experiences provide?

Consider highlighting circumstances that have slowed down research and publication or affected time you had to conduct and publish. For example, interruptions or working on industry-funded or commercially sensitive projects (e.g. delays in publication due to patent applications, focus on milestone delivery, confidential reports). What you write should always be to *enhance your application*, not detract from it. Consider wisely the message you wish to convey about yourself.

RESEARCH ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

- **Prizes, honours and awards** – state most recent first (reverse chronological order). Provide enough information on the award and why you got it.
- **Research supervision, mentoring and advice** - provide information on those you have helped in an official capacity and those you have mentored in an unofficial role. Highlight any successes such as career paths or major awards that have arisen as part of your support.

- **Invited keynote and speaker addresses** – could provide a summary statement and then list with most recent first. Distinguish the most prestigious talks (keynotes, plenaries), local/international, and if you had any support provided. Could include year, talk-title, conference title, place, date.
- **Research income** – could provide a summary statement (total income, number of projects, type of grants), and then list with most recent first. Include all types of grants, including competitive (ARC, internal university) and industry grants. Could state year, role (CI, Lead-CI), title, grant-body, duration, amount.
- **Commercial outcomes** such as patents, IP licences and resulting benefits – when listing patents, state the status of it if as well as if/how it is being used. This is particularly important because many patents are filed but are not subsequently supported. This section may be appropriate to include consulting advice, translative R&D activities, training of industry staff, and consider the value of research to partners that may be more valuable than patents but challenging to quantify.
- **Identifiable benefits** outside of academia – consider how your research has had wider impact. Have you engaged with community groups or industry bodies or government/council offices? Has your work influenced policies or processes or has it informed practice?
- **Other professional activities** - consider roles such as editorial boards, conference organizing committees, chairing conference sessions, reviewing roles, editor for special issues, advisory roles and membership of academic, practitioner or research committees.

Describe how the DECRA candidate's research has led to a significant change or advance of knowledge in their field, and outline how their achievements will contribute to this application

In developing a narrative for this section, step back and look at the proposal and consider how your body of work has led to it. For each of your major achievements (i.e. a significant change or advancement in knowledge), explain their importance in terms of the research you did, and with respect to the proposal.

In providing your response, you could write about achievements in turn, or using headings such as 'significant change'; 'advancing knowledge'; and 'how achievements contribute to the proposal'. Choose whichever conveys your narrative most effectively.

It's important to be specific here to reflect on you (we suggest writing in first person, and to predominately use "I" and "my" rather than "we"). If you made a significant change/advancement, state how and why.

- Focus on the research – not outputs, papers and metrics.
- Highlight where you were a thought leader; state if you are the first to do something, but describe why that is significant for the field, especially if it wasn't an obvious thing to do.
- Consider the impact and influence of your research. Can you demonstrate value by highlighting if your research outcomes led to further research funds, new theories and directions?

Depending on your narrative, consider providing a paragraph on how, or which of, your past research achievements are relevant to this proposal. It is important to make some connection to how these underpin your proposed research in Project Description. This should not just be emphasizing a similar research area or expertise, but rather try to draw out specific aspects that drive new innovations, the project objectives or methods that really suggest how your contribution to the project has arisen. Be enthusiastic when providing the narrative.

Tips

- Ensure you understand yourself and how you have contributed to the research endeavour and try to communicate this. For example, what makes you special and why should the ARC invest in you?
- Ensure you follow the ARC guidelines on *significant* career interruptions. If you have career interruptions, ensure its easy for the assessors to interpret by making clear statements like:
 - Consider incorporating precisely FTE of your interruption “... I have experienced a total of 1.5 years (at 1 FTE) of academic interruptions ...”
 - Consider incorporating precisely the full-time equivalence (i.e.1 FTE) you have worked in research post-PhD say “I have worked the equivalence of 3.5 years (1 FTE) post-PhD
- You may have very good and justifiable reasons for low publication rates, so ensure these reasons are made clear to the assessors. If you have prepared high-level reports for industry, say so. For example:
 - “...most of my industry-based research outputs remain confidential and are published within high-level reports. This has slowed journal publications due to protection of sensitive information and a focus on delivery against project milestones...”
 - “...while most of my research with industry is of a strategic research nature (i.e. pre-competitive and long-term) rather than applied research and/or commercially-sensitive, there are still delays in publication and a priority given to delivering against milestones to ensure business impact from the research that also ensures renewed funding ...”
- It is often good to highlight that despite factors that have adversely affected performance you have many achievements.
- Market yourself by providing evidence to support your strengths, including examples of *leadership* and *innovation*.
- Emphasise your *specific* contribution to research (i.e. advancement in knowledge) and use evidence to support your case rather than the evidence (statistics) being the focal point. This is particularly important when referring to high-cited papers where you are not the lead author.
- Consider ways to show the value of your research outputs beyond numbers of citations:
 - Library should be consulted to understand the variety of ways in which to consider metrics that go beyond just reporting citations. Examples include Field-Weighted Citations and Essential Science Indicators to relate your citations relative to others in the same discipline. Another method is to consider how your citations rank for your best articles when compared to others in the same journal and year of publication?
 - Has your work led to a new research direction for the field?
 - Is your research referred to in a positive manner by others?
- If you have invited keynotes/talks, make it clear the nature of these and emphasise prestigious ones and when and to what extent you may have received support (e.g. free-registration, honorarium, travel, etc..).
- Evidence of research excellence can also include things like how your research led to renewed funding from an industry partner or stimulated new research collaborations.
- Ensure there is a link between your ROPE and the subject of the project and your suitability to conduct it

- In presenting information, use subheadings that are in line with the Instructions to Applicants. That is, make it easy for reviewer to understand and find information to support you.
- Always provide evidence to support statements

Things not to do - common mistakes

- Don't overstate your case if it could lead to the perception of being dishonest/fake, deliberately misleading, or deliberately ambiguous
- Don't claim something that is not yours to claim.
 - A common example is listing a grant as if you are CI. This can happen when someone has worked on or is funded by a grant, and thus have contributed to the outcomes from it but was not awarded it. It also happens when someone has contributed to its preparation but was not included as a CI; in this case, one could perhaps state clearly that one is not a CI but describe their role in its formulation. For example, you could say *'I provided a review of the field for the CI's and provided technical advice that assisted in the preparation of the grant proposal'*; but be wary about claiming that you wrote the grant but then weren't included on the CI list unless you can provide clear justification or evidence why you weren't.
- Don't claim invited talks to be keynotes when they are not.
 - Be careful how you list things and avoid being deliberately vague or misleading - an assessor may take a dim view of it
- Avoid using "we" too often in reference to your research without emphasising your specific contributions
- Avoid using data or facts that emphasise weaknesses. For example, be selective in the performance metrics you chose to use and how you present them.
- Avoid making it hard to determine extent of significant career interruptions
 - A common mistake is providing a list of interruptions without totalling them up. Even stating, "0.6 FTE for the last 5 years" is not as clear as "working the FTE of 3 years" (i.e. don't rely on the assessor to do the calculation.)
- Avoid including irrelevant information or emphasising interruptions that are not significant.
- Always follow the Instructions to Applicants.