Introduction to Grant Writing (Grant Writing 101)

“Grantober” – Workshop One
Introduction to Grant Writing

A welcome to the wonderful world of grant writing

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Getting Started

• Sign up for UQ research mailing list
• Read the weekly HaBS Research Update
• Use information on the UQR&I site
• Go to UQR&I workshops
• Go to Faculty workshops
• Use the Faculty grant development and readership schemes
• Find other readers both in and beyond your specific field
• Email, phone or drop in
  • There is no such thing as a silly question
### What sort of grant?

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<th>Fellowship</th>
<th>Basic Research</th>
<th>Translational Research</th>
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And many other targeted grant opportunities from these and other funding bodies.
ARC or NHMRC?

Research ineligible for ARC support:

• Research with **human health and/or medical goals**, including research on the understanding, aetiology, diagnosis, monitoring, management or treatment of **physical or mental disease or other health conditions** in humans; or,

• Research involving the use or development of **animal models of human health** conditions, or the use of animals for the **development or testing of therapeutic** goods (including devices) or procedures, for the purpose of better understanding human health or developing treatments for human health conditions; or

• Interventional research in humans, particularly **clinical or pre-clinical trials** of therapeutic goods (including devices), or research **aiming to modify the health** of the human participants; or,

• The use or development of equipment, facilities, tools, games, devices, smart phone applications or other items to **understand, diagnose, monitor, manage or treat human health conditions**.
ARC or NHMRC?

NHMRC Broad Research Areas:

• Basic Science
• Clinical Medicine and Science
• Health Services Research
• Public Health
Use the UQR&I site
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Finding and Applying for Funding

Finding and Applying for Funding section

- **Grants Calendar**
  Overview of grant rounds throughout the year

- **Research Awards and Prizes**
  Support for Research Awards and Prizes at UQ, and Fellowships of the Learned Academies

- **Searching for Opportunities**
  Funding opportunities databases, Research Bulletin and Mailers

- **ARC**
  Overview of ARC programs with links to scheme pages

- **NHMRC**
  Overview of NHMRC programs with links to scheme pages

- **UQ Internal Schemes**
  Overview of internal schemes program with links to scheme pages

- **Other Major Schemes**
  Overview of other major/international schemes with links to scheme pages

- **Preparing and Submitting Applications**
  Budget preparation, Library, Business Services, Grants Library, NFRs, NIPs, Definition of Research, Codes and Classifications
Use the UQR&I site
Researchers

• Most successful projects are submitted by **TEAMS**, not **INDIVIDUALS**
• For a Fellowship, assessors will want to see evidence of a **SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT** with **MENTORS** who will be genuinely engaged with the Fellow
• Work with senior academics to put together an optimal team with **COMPLEMENTARY** skills, clear **ROLES**, and opportunities for junior CIs to be mentored and to **BUILD CAPACITY**
• Assessor will want evidence that your senior colleagues are genuinely committed and not just lending their CVs
• But note that there are limits on how many ARC or NHMRC grants a person can hold (many senior staff are “maxed out”)
• Senior colleagues can be mentioned in the text (ARC) or added as AIs (NHMRC) if they cannot be named as Investigators
**Project**

- Project should be a logical extension of work you have already done. New, but clearly linked.
- Cite yourself and mention pilot/preparatory work to show that you are already active and the idea has some support
- Proposal must ask a question
- Avoid “Study 1 will demonstrate that...” – if you already know what you’ll find, it’s not research
- Project outline should be very specific and provide some detail
- You need to look as if you are ready to start
- Make clear that you understand the logistical difficulties of your field
- There should be a “big picture” aspect to it as well
- You need to make the assessors want you to get the grant
Strategic Research Priorities

• The SRPs are those challenges which are the most important facing Australia and its place in the world; they provide the framework within which elements of the Australian Government’s research expenditure can be prioritised in areas of strategic importance to Australia. These challenges are:

  • Living in a changing environment
  • Promoting population health and wellbeing
  • Managing our food and water assets
  • Securing Australia’s place in a changing world
  • Lifting productivity and economic growth.

• Addressing these challenges requires effort from across the full spectrum of research disciplines, including the physical and life sciences, engineering, information and communications technology and the humanities and social sciences.

You need to make a case for how your proposal addresses these problems. Not as an add-on, it should be integral to the project from the title onwards.

Writing Your Grant

• Title, short summary and opening sentence of your Project Description must tell you assessor two things –
  • What you are going to do and why
  • Why it is crucial to the future of Australia

• ARC and NHMRC are both highly competitive. Many projects rated as “Very Good” and “Highly Fundable” will NOT be funded.

• You must make the assessors and panel members WANT the grant to be funded. Inspire them.
Know Your Audience - 1

• Grant Assessors
  • Provide narrative assessments and ratings (5-point scale ARC; 7-point scale NHMRC)
  • You get to read and respond to the narratives but do not see the ratings
• These people are Australian and international academics
• Some will be in your narrow research field, but most will be in the general area but not topic experts
• They will have 1-20 projects to assess in a short timeframe
• They are also busy with their day jobs, journal work, other deadlines, family lives etc.
• They are tired, cross and easy to annoy

• DON’T ANNOY THEM
• DO INSPIRE THEM
Know Your Audience - 2

• ARC College members OR NHMRC Panel members
  • Australian experts

• These people read your proposal, assessor reports, and rejoinder, and make recommendations about funding

• Each takes the lead on 100-150 applications

• They will spend up to 15 minutes on your application

• They have no choice but to be guided largely by assessor ratings, so **DO NOT ANNOY** the assessors
Project Description

• You are not writing a paper. You are writing in order to persuade someone who is tired, bored and overworked that you are worth funding to do your project.

• **DON’T** provide a literature review. **DON’T** spend the first three pages giving “background”. **DON’T** write around the project. Get to the point.
  • The first two sentences must tell the reader what you are going to do and how it will solve an important problem
  • Everything else must be directly relevant to the project.

• Have a well-articulated, specific, plan. It must look as if you are just waiting for the money and could start on Tuesday. Focus on the project, not on the theoretical basis of your methodology. A timeline is good. Nobody imagines you will stick to it, but it shows you have thought it all through.
Project Description

• Demonstrate that you have the capacity
  • cite yourself (in **bold**)
  • mention pilot work, experience in similar projects, previous collaborations or other work
  • show that YOU are the best person in Australia/the world/the universe to do this project, and UQ is where it must be done.

• Demonstrate that you understand the logistical difficulties in your field.
  • Do you need multiple ethics clearances or parental consent?
    • Mention that you have begun the process, or have done it successfully before.
  • Does your field have poor response rates, high dropout, lots of non-English speakers?
    • Mention how you have dealt with this in the past
Project Description

• Make it easy to follow
  • use diagrams and flow charts
  • be consistent with your terminology – one concept, one term
  • minimise the use of acronyms
  • break up the page with paragraph breaks, diagrams, ragged right
  • follow the layout rules exactly
  • you do not have to use **ALL** the space
Other Content Considerations

• Asking for funds for a PhD student – only do this if you can point to a specific aspect of the project that the student will do. If there would be opportunities for a student to work but it’s not central to the project, the assessors/panel will expect them to get an APA/IPRS

• Is now the time? Don’t be afraid to put off for 12 months if you don’t feel you have the project adequately prepared, need to expand the team and project, etc
  • If eligibility is running out, you have to make a judgement call
  • DECRA – can only apply twice – think hard about when

• Partnering with less well-performing institutions
  • This is likely to pull down your score for “research environment” so think hard about whether it is essential and what sort of case you can make for your colleagues
This should not need to be said

• Proof read. Then put it away. Then proof read again.

• Check for consistency.

• Check your grammar and spelling. If you are not sure about apostrophes and such, *ask an older person*. We love correcting young people’s grammar.

• Make sure that your citations actually support the points you are making. Assessors have been known to check.

• Do not lie.

• Do **NOT** copy useful sections from other people’s work without acknowledgement. This will be noticed, and it will ruin your career.
In Summary

• Start early
• Read and follow the instructions
• Ask for help
• Use all available resources
  • Grantober
  • Grant Development Workshop – November
  • Grant Reading – Feb/March
  • Help with rejoinders/responses – ad hoc
• Have a clear plan
• Write clearly
• Avoid excessive modesty

If you get knocked back, start writing the next application. Prove them wrong.