



Development Grant Scheme

Peer Review Guidelines 2019

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1. Introduction

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) is responsible for managing the Australian Government's main investment in health and medical research in a manner consistent with Commonwealth legislation and guidelines. We have a responsibility for ensuring that taxpayers' funds are invested wisely and fairly to support the best health and medical research.

[NHMRC Corporate Plan 2018-2019](#) includes NHMRC's strategic directions, the major health issues for this period, how NHMRC will deal with these issues and a strategy for medical research and public health research. NHMRC investment of the Medical Research Endowment Account (MREA) is guided by the strategic direction and major health issues outlined in the *NHMRC Corporate Plan 2018-2019* and incorporates Targeted Calls for Research and strategic priorities including measures to improve gender equality in funded rates.

NHMRC invests in the highest quality research and researchers, as determined through peer review, across the four pillars of health and medical research: biomedical, clinical, public health and health services.

The review process relies on the expertise and commitment of researchers who choose to serve on NHMRC Grant Review Panels (GRPs), and forms the basis of NHMRC's decision-making when recommending applications for funding.

These Peer Review Guidelines outline the overarching principles and obligations under which NHMRC's peer review process operates, including:

- important information about the standards and best practice for the conduct of peer review
- obligations in accordance with legislation and guidelines
- guidance on how to declare and manage conflicts of interest in NHMRC peer review.

These Guidelines are aligned to the *NHMRC Principles of Peer Review* (see section 4) which apply to all funding programs peer reviewed by NHMRC. They must be read in conjunction with:

- Development Grant Scheme 2019 Guidelines
- NHMRC Funding Agreement.

2. Definitions

The [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) (the 2018 Code) describes peer review as the impartial and independent assessment of research by others working in the same or a related field. In the context of funding research grant applications, peer review involves the assessment of the scientific or technical merit of applications by individuals (peers) with knowledge and expertise appropriate for the applications they are reviewing.

All terms in this document have the same meaning as given in the NHMRC Funding Agreement, unless stated otherwise.

3. Enquiries

For enquiries regarding NHMRC's grant programs, researchers are directed to the relevant grant program's web page on the NHMRC website or to the [RGMS Training Program](#) for guides on navigating the Research Grants Management System (RGMS).

Researchers requiring further assistance should direct enquires to their Administering Institution's Research Administration Officer (RAO). RAOs can contact NHMRC's Research Help Centre (RHC) for further advice.

NHMRC's RHC

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

E: help@nhmrc.gov.au

Please see the [RHC webpage](#) for opening hours or more information.

4. Key changes to the Development Grant Scheme peer review process

This document incorporates those previously referred to as the Guide to NHMRC Peer Review 2018 and the 2018 Development Grant scheme-specific peer review guidelines

5. Principles, obligations and conduct during peer review

The peer review process requires applications to be reviewed by people with the expertise to assess the application. This carries an obligation on the part of reviewers to act in good faith, in the best interests of NHMRC and the research community and in accordance with NHMRC policy, *NHMRC's Principles of Peer Review*, the 2018 Code and the requirements of relevant Australian Government legislation and guidelines.¹

NHMRC expects GRP members to exemplify integrity in all involvement with the peer review process. This includes, but is not limited to, the maintenance of absolute confidentiality and not using their involvement (or information obtained from their involvement) to gain an advantage for themselves or any person, or to cause detriment to NHMRC.

Participants involved in the peer review process and their precise roles may vary between funding schemes. Refer to section 7 for a description of the roles and responsibilities of participants in the Development Grant Scheme peer review process.

With the exception of schemes that conduct interviews e.g. Centres of Research Excellence, the identity of peer reviewers (including expert peer reviewers, GRP members, Chairs and Assistant Chairs) is confidential and will not be revealed to the applicant at any time.

Key participants in the peer review process will be acknowledged on the NHMRC website without reference to the specific application that they assessed, following the peer review process.

5.1. NHMRC's Principles of Peer Review

The Council of NHMRC endorsed the following Principles of Peer Review (the Principles) on 14 March 2013. The Principles are high-level, guiding statements that underpin NHMRC's peer review processes.

- **Fairness.** Peer review processes are fair and seen to be fair by all involved.
- **Transparency.** All stages of peer review are transparent.
- **Independence.** Peer reviewers provide independent advice. There is also independent oversight of peer review processes by independent Chairs and Observers.
- **Appropriateness and balance.** The experience, expertise and operation of peer reviewers are appropriate to the goals and scale of the funding vehicle.
- **Research community participation.** Persons holding taxpayer-funded grants should willingly make themselves available to participate in peer review processes, including mentoring of junior researchers, whenever possible.²
- **Confidentiality.** Participants respect that confidentiality is important to the fairness and robustness of peer review.
- **Impartiality.** Peer review is objective and impartial, with appropriate processes in place to manage real and perceived conflicts of interest (CoI).
- **Quality and excellence.** NHMRC will continue to introduce evidence-based improvements into its processes to achieve the highest quality decision-making through peer review.

¹ Including the *National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992*, the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*, and the *Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines*.

² The 2018 Code R28 states that researchers have a responsibility to participate in peer review in a way that is fair, rigorous and timely and maintains the confidentiality of the content.

5.2. Understanding the Principles

Fairness

- Peer review processes are designed to ensure that peer review is fair and seen to be fair by all involved.
- Peer review participants have an obligation to ensure that each application is judged consistently and objectively on its own merits, against published assessment criteria. Peer reviewers must be fair and impartial and not introduce irrelevant issues into consideration.
- Applications will be subject to scrutiny and evaluation by individuals who have appropriate knowledge of the fields covered in the application.
- Peer reviewers should ensure that their assessments are accurate and honest and that statements are capable of being verified.³
- All complaints to NHMRC relating to the process are dealt with independently and impartially.
- Complaints processes are outlined on the NHMRC website. If an applicant is not satisfied with the outcome of an internal review, a complaint may be lodged with the NHMRC Commissioner of Complaints.

Transparency

- NHMRC will publish key dates⁴ and all relevant material including grant program requirements, assessment criteria and scoring processes, peer review guidelines, guidance to applicants and grant announcements on GrantConnect, the NHMRC website and through direct electronic communications.
- NHMRC publicly recognises the contribution of participants in the peer review process, through publishing their names on the NHMRC website.⁵

Independence

- The order of merit determined by GRPs is not altered by NHMRC staff, Research Committee (RC), Council or the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).⁶ GRP Chairs are independent and are not involved in the peer review of any application before that panel. Chairs act to ensure that NHMRC's processes are followed for each grant program, including adherence to the principles of these Guidelines.

Appropriateness and balance

- GRPs are established to meet the objectives and breadth of disciplines covered by applications received.
- NHMRC endeavours to ensure that panels are constituted to provide the required balance of experience and expertise, including the breadth required to assess multidisciplinary applications whilst also ensuring conflicts of interest are dealt with appropriately.⁷
- NHMRC endeavours to ensure that panels are constituted to ensure an appropriate representation of gender, geography and large and small institutions.

Research community participation

- Persons holding NHMRC grants willingly make themselves available to participate in NHMRC peer review processes whenever possible.⁸ Consistent with the 2018 Code, it is important that participants in peer review:

³ Peer reviewers should provide citations for all claims made.

⁴ NHMRC Act, Section 8

⁵ Such information will be in a form that prevents applicants determining which particular experts were involved in the review of their application.

⁶ NHMRC Research Committee (RC) may recommend funding additional applications 'below the line' in priority areas, such as research to improve the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

⁷ When the panel considers that the advice of key experts who have had to leave the meeting due to conflicts is essential, the Chair may request those experts to return to the meeting to answer technical questions, but absent themselves before scoring takes place.

⁸ The 2018 Code.

- are fair and timely in their review
- act in confidence and do not disclose the content or outcome of any process in which they are involved
- declare all conflicts of interest, do not permit personal prejudice to influence the peer review process and do not introduce considerations that are not relevant to the review criteria
- do not take undue or calculated advantage of knowledge obtained during the peer review process
- give proper consideration to research that challenges or changes accepted ways of thinking
- prior to their involvement, make themselves aware of relevant NHMRC policies and procedures.

Confidentiality

- All participants in peer review act in confidence and must not disclose any matter regarding applications under review to people who are not part of the process.
- Any information or documents made available to panel members during peer review are confidential and must not be used other than to fulfil their role or following the review if required by court order or statute.⁹
- NHMRC will endeavour to protect the identity of GRP members and peer reviewers assigned to any particular application, unless NHMRC is required to release such information by relevant legislation. On these occasions NHMRC will provide notification to the peer reviewers and panel members.

Impartiality

- Peer review participants must declare all interests and matters that may, or may be perceived to, affect their judgement on particular applications.
- GRP members must disclose relationships with other members of the panel, or with grants being reviewed by other panel members, including:
 - research collaborators
 - student, teacher or mentoring relationships
 - employment arrangements
 - any other relationship that may, or may be seen to, impair fair and impartial judgement.
- GRP Chairs manage conflicts of interest to ensure that no one with a significant conflict is involved in decision making on relevant applications.

Quality and excellence

- NHMRC will continue to introduce evidence-based improvements into its peer review processes.
- Any significant change will be developed in consultation with the research community and may involve piloting new processes in smaller or one-off grant programs.
- NHMRC will strive to introduce new technologies that are demonstrated to maximise the benefits of peer review, and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the process while minimising individual workloads.
- NHMRC will undertake post-program assessment of all its grant programs, based on feedback from applicants, panel members, Chairs, RC and the NHMRC Commissioner of Complaints.
- NHMRC will provide advice, training and feedback for peer reviewers new to NHMRC peer review.
- Where the GRPs find external peer reviews to be substandard, NHMRC may provide such feedback directly to the reviewer or their institution.

5.3. Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research

The [*Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018*](#) (the 2018 Code) articulates the broad principles that characterise an honest, ethical and conscientious research culture. It establishes a framework for responsible research conduct that provides a foundation for high-quality research, credibility and community trust in the research

⁹ As per the Deed of Confidentiality signed by panel members.

endeavour. It outlines the expectations for the conduct of research in Australia or research conducted under the auspices of Australian institutions.

All participants in NHMRC peer review are required to be familiar with the 2018 Code.

5.4. Disclosure of Interests

NHMRC is committed to ensuring that interests of any kind are dealt with consistently, transparently and with rigour in accordance with Part 5, 42A of the NHMRC Act, sections 16A and 16B of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014*¹⁰ and the *NHMRC Privacy Policy* and disclosure procedures.

An “Interest” is defined in section 4 of the NHMRC Act as meaning “any direct or indirect, pecuniary or non-pecuniary, interest”. Under section 29 of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act), “an official ... who has a material personal interest that relates to the affairs of the entity must disclose details of the interest”.

A material personal interest arises in any situation in which a participant in a peer review process has an interest which may influence, or be perceived to influence, the proper performance of the participant’s responsibilities to NHMRC. The perception of an interest is as important as any actual interest.

Guidance on the management of disclosure of interests, including conflicts, is provided below. Panel members and external peer reviewers will receive separate detailed instructions regarding the process for completing the Col process within RGMS and a briefing on disclosure requirements under the PGPA Act.

5.4.1. Failure to declare an interest

The NHMRC Act requires interests to be identified and specifies the courses of action that apply when this requirement has not been met.

- Section 42A of the NHMRC Act requires members to disclose interests in matters being considered.
- Paragraph Section 44B(3)(b) requires the Minister or the CEO to terminate the appointment of a member for failing to comply, without reasonable excuse, with the disclosure of interest requirements outlined in the NHMRC Act.

It is important for participants to inform NHMRC of any circumstances which may constitute an interest.

5.4.2. What is a Conflict of Interest (Col)?

A Col 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.

Cols in the research area are common and it is important that they are disclosed and dealt with properly. Cols have the potential to compromise judgments and decisions that should be made impartially. Such compromise could undermine community trust in research.

Financial Cols are foremost in the public mind but other conflicts of interest also occur in research, including personal, professional and institutional advantages.

For NHMRC peer review purposes, interests may fall into the broad domains of:

- involvement with the application under review
- collaborations
- working relationships
- professional relationships and interests
- social relationships or interests

¹⁰ Made under subsection 29(2) of the PGPA Act.

- teaching or supervisory relationships
- financial relationships or interests
- other interests or relationships.

The perception that a Col exists is also a serious matter and raises concerns about the integrity of individuals or the management practices of the institution.

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

Reviewer's interest/s declaration will enable NHMRC to determine:

- whether or not, after the interest has been declared, the reviewer should be involved in the peer review process in relation to a particular application
- if reviewers are to be involved, the scope of such involvement (e.g. provide a score or report but not be involved in further discussion or the final scoring /ranking of an application).

5.4.3. Potential Col guide

The following 'Col Situations' and 'Additional Guidance for Work and Professional Col' tables outline matters that may need to be considered when deciding the level of potential conflicts and provide some examples of specific situations where Cols in the peer review process apply.

The tables are intended to be for guidance only. They are representative of Col situations rather than definitive, as each situation is different and needs to be considered on its merits. The tables are provided to assist participants in the peer review process to identify the types of circumstances in which Cols might arise, but are not intended to be checklists.

Note that Cols relate to Chief Investigators (CI) – **not** Associate Investigators (AI).

Col situations requiring further clarification

| Situation | Explanations and examples | Conflict level ¹¹ |
|--------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| Application under review | Reviewer is a named participant on the application under review. | High |
| | Reviewer had discussions/input into the study design or research proposal of this application. | High |
| Collaborations | Reviewer had actively collaborated re publications (co-authorship), pending applications, existing NHMRC or other grants. | High |
| | Reviewer has an indirect collaboration e.g. collaborating co-worker, member of a research or discussion group, co-author of a large multi-author paper where involvement was minimal, provided cells/animals etc. to applicants without financial gain or exchange. | Obtain a ruling from NHMRC |
| | Reviewer is planning, or have been approached to be involved in a future grant application or other future collaborative relationship with this applicant(s). | Obtain a ruling from NHMRC |

¹¹ Indicative only. Experienced NHMRC staff will exercise judgement when deciding the level of conflict and, in doing so, will consider the particular circumstance of each potential conflict.

| Situation | Explanations and examples | Conflict level ¹¹ |
|--|--|--|
| Working relationship | Please refer to Additional Guidance table below. | |
| Professional relationships and interests | Please refer to Additional Guidance table below. | |
| Social relationship and/or interests | There is a personal/social relationship between the reviewer, their partner or other member of their family and the applicant. | Usually High, may need a ruling from NHMRC |
| | Reviewer has a personal / social relationship with the applicant's partner or other member of their family. | Usually High, may need a ruling from NHMRC |
| Teaching or supervisory relationship | For either undergraduate or postgraduate studies, reviewer has taught or supervised the applicant; reviewer co-supervised the applicant; reviewers own research was supervised by the applicant. | High |
| Financial interest in the application | Reviewer has an associated patent pending; supply goods and services; improved access to facilities; provide cells/animals or similar to the applicant. | Usually High, may need a ruling from NHMRC |
| | Reviewer receives research funding or other support from a company and the research to be reviewed may impact upon the company. | Usually High, may need a ruling from NHMRC |
| Other interests or situations | Reviewer has a previous or pending dispute (may require consideration of events earlier than the last five years). | High |

Additional guidance for work and professional Col

| Situation | Explanations and examples | | Conflict level ¹² |
|----------------------|---|---|------------------------------|
| Working Relationship | Reviewer has the same employer or are part of the same organisation | Where a reviewer and an applicant work at the same independent Medical Research Institute (e.g. Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute, The Garvan Institute of Medical Research etc.) or in the same University/ Hospital Department | High |

¹² Indicative only. Experienced NHMRC staff will exercise judgement when deciding the level of conflict and, in doing so, will consider the particular circumstance of each potential conflict.

| Situation | Explanations and examples | | Conflict level ¹² |
|-----------|---|---|---|
| | | Where a reviewer or applicant holds a position of influence within an organisation, or has a pecuniary interest, e.g. Dean of Faculty or School/ Institute Directors. | High |
| | | Where a reviewer and an applicant work for the same institution but at different campuses and do not know each other | Low |
| | | Where a reviewer and an applicant work in the same faculty but in different schools/departments and do not know each other. | Low |
| | Reviewer is working in the same department (or equivalent) within an organisation | | High - in most situations due to perceived Col relating to potential financial benefit from showing favour towards application, and the likelihood that the reviewer and applicant know each other. |
| | Reviewer work in the same locality but for a different organisation, i.e. Where a reviewer works for a University and an applicant works for an affiliated Medical Research Institute (or vice versa), such as relationships between: | When there is a direct association/collaboration between the reviewer and applicant, where the reviewer may have or may be perceived to have a vested interest in this research. | High |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The University of Melbourne and Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research (WEHI); or • The University of New South Wales and The George Institute for Global Health. | Where two organisations are affiliated but there is no direct association/collaboration between the reviewer and applicant (e.g. researchers located at the University of Melbourne faculty that has no direct association/collaboration with applicant at WEHI). | Low |

| Situation | Explanations and examples | | Conflict level ¹² |
|--|---|---|------------------------------|
| Professional relationships and interests | Reviewer is also a member of the same scientific advisory committee, review board, exam board, trial committee etc. | Where a reviewer holds a membership in which they may be perceived to have a vested interest, i.e. pecuniary or other direct interests with the proposed research, e.g. when another board/committee member is associated with the grant application (a member of the CI team or is Faculty/Department Head where the research is to be conducted.) | High |
| | | Reviewer is a member of the same advisory board or committee but otherwise have no links or association that would constitute a High ruling. | Low |
| | Reviewer or their organisation are affiliated with the applicant's organisation, i.e. where a reviewer and an applicant work for different organisations that have active/ongoing collaborations or affiliations, such as affiliations between: | Where there is a direct link/collaboration between the applicant and assessor, in which the assessor may have or may be perceived to have a vested interest in this research. | High |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The University of Melbourne and Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research (WEHI), or • The University of New South Wales and The George Institute for Global Health, or The Schools of Health Sciences at two or more different universities, as part of a research or teaching collaboration. | Where two organisations are affiliated but there is no direct association/collaboration between applicant and reviewer (e.g. researcher located at the University of Melbourne and has no direct link/collaboration with individual at WEHI). | Low |

| Situation | Explanations and examples | | Conflict level ¹² |
|-----------|--|--|------------------------------|
| | Reviewer or their organisation is affiliated or associated with organisations such as pharmaceutical companies, tobacco companies etc. | When a reviewer or their institution has an affiliation/association with the organisation(s) that may have or may be perceived to have vested interest in this research e.g. a pharmaceutical company that has provided drugs to the applicants for testing. | High |
| | | When a reviewer or their institution has an indirect affiliation/ association with the organisation(s) that may have or may be perceived to have a vested interest in this research, e.g. reviewer is employed at a large institution in an area distant from the organisation(s) in question. | Low |

5.4.4. Disclosure of Interest

Assessors invited to participate in a peer review process will be asked to declare any actual or perceived Interests they have. Members of NHMRC GRPs will be asked to declare their Interests after appointment, but before assessing applications, through RGMS.

Members will be asked to make a disclosure of Interests for each application that they will review.

These processes are consistent with *NHMRC's Policy on the Disclosure of Interests Requirements for Perspective and Appointed Committee Members*.

5.4.5. Managing Conflicts of Interest during peer review

Under the PGPA Act, the disclosure obligation continues following appointment, for example as soon as practicable after a member becomes aware of an interest or where there has been a change in the nature or extent of the interest.

For any material personal interest, the NHMRC Act and PGPA Act require that the member not be present when the matter that relates to the interest is considered, or take part in any decision of the panel in relation to the matter unless it has been determined otherwise.

5.5. Contact between applicants and peer reviewers

Applicants must not make contact or attempt to influence anyone about their application who is directly engaged with its peer review (such as GRP members or external peer reviewers). Such action must be reported to NHMRC and may result in their applications being excluded from consideration.

Similarly, anyone directly engaged with the peer review of an application must not contact applicants about their application.

5.6. Privacy and confidentiality

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 *Development Grant Scheme 2019 Guidelines* and the *NHMRC Privacy Policy* for further details.

5.7. Freedom of Information

NHMRC is subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (the FOI Act) and is committed to meeting the Australian Government's transparency and accountability requirements.

Subject to its FOI obligations, NHMRC remains committed to maintaining the confidentiality of grant applications, the peer review process and the privacy of people participating in peer review. If an FOI application is received in relation to a peer review document, NHMRC will take into account the nature of those documents and where appropriate, consult with anyone whose personal information or business information may be affected by the release of those documents.

Peer reviewers should familiarise themselves with *NHMRC's Freedom of Information Processes and Policy* before commencing peer review.

5.8. Relative to opportunity and career disruption

Panel members are required to assess each application against the assessment criteria for the funding program. Panel members must take into account productivity relative to opportunity and career disruption considerations as outlined in the *Development Grant Scheme 2019 Guidelines*. 'Relative to opportunity' should be considered across all assessment criteria.

As an example of career disruption considerations: If, in the last five years, an applicant took 18 months maternity leave before returning to an active research career, then that applicant can add on an extra 18 months to the normal duration counted for all of the applicant's outputs. These outputs include publication and translation outcomes: refer to Appendix D of the *Development Grant Scheme 2019 Guidelines*. A peer reviewer must then take into consideration in their assessment of track record, the additional outputs provided by the applicant to account for the career disruption.

5.9. Use of Impact Factors and other metrics

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

It is not appropriate to use publication metrics such as Journal Impact Factors or the previous Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) Ranked Journal List when assessing applications.

The San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DoRA) makes recommendations for improving the evaluation of research assessment. NHMRC is a signatory of DoRA and adheres to the following recommendations, as outlined in DoRA, for its peer review processes.

General recommendation:

- Do not use journal-based metrics, such as Journal Impact Factors, as a surrogate measure of the quality of individual research articles, to assess an individual scientist's contributions, or in hiring, promotion, or funding decisions.

NHMRC has addressed this recommendation by eliminating the use of Journal Impact Factors and ERA in the assessment of research achievement of applicants.

Recommendations for funding agencies:

- Be explicit about the criteria used in evaluating the scientific productivity of grant applicants and clearly highlight, especially for early-stage investigators, that the scientific content of a paper is much more important than publication metrics or the identity of the journal in which it is published.

NHMRC publishes assessment criteria and provides detailed descriptors in relation to each criterion for each of its grant programs. The weighting of each criterion and the elements which are taken into consideration are also included.

- For the purposes of research assessment, consider the value and impact of all research outputs (including datasets and software) in addition to research publications, and consider a broad range of impact measures including qualitative indicators of research impact, such as influence on policy and practice.

NHMRC requires consideration of a broad range of measures that affect the assessment of an applicant's research achievement. These include both quantitative and qualitative measures, such as the scientific value of publications and influence on current dogma, policy or practice.

The value of the research achievement is indicated by:

- the number of citations of individual publications
- success in obtaining peer reviewed grants
- contribution to translational outcomes such as patents
- commercial output
- public policy or implementation of change in practice
- invitations to conferences
- mentoring, leadership
- speaking engagements
- numbers and types of prizes and awards
- contribution to the research community.

Applicants and peer reviewers should refer to the assessment criteria and category descriptors for each grant program. Citation metrics such as h-index, m-index or g-index used in isolation can potentially be misleading when applied to the peer review of publication output, as they do not describe the impact, importance or quality of the publication(s). They are also dependent on the citation practices of different research fields and are therefore not a reliable comparative measure across research fields. Such metrics must be considered within a broad range of measures as outlined above and used with caution.

5.10. Industry-relevant experience

NHMRC is committed to ensuring that knowledge from health and medical research is translated from the research sector to industry, including through commercialisation (e.g. pharmaceutical or medical devices companies) and improvements to health service delivery (e.g. the Australian State and Territory governments, and providers of health care).

In order to appropriately recognise the value of industry-relevant expertise, industry skills, experience and achievements are considered in assessing applicants' track records.

This recognises that applicants with experience in sectors other than public sector research (e.g. private industry, government or health care) may have gained highly valuable expertise or produced outputs (e.g. patents or new clinical guidelines) relevant to research translation. This may have limited the applicant's opportunity to produce more traditional research outputs (e.g. peer reviewed publications).

Peer reviewers should appropriately recognise an applicant's industry-relevant experience and outputs. To assist peer reviewers with their assessment, a *Guide to Evaluating Industry-Relevant Experience* is available on the [NHMRC website](#).

5.11. Enhancing reproducibility and applicability of research outcomes

Assessors are required to consider the general strengths and weaknesses of the experimental design of the proposal to ensure robust and unbiased results. Assessment of the experimental design should include consideration of the scientific premise of the proposed research (for example, how rigorous were previous experimental designs that form the basis for this proposal), effect size and power calculations to determine the number of samples/subjects in the

study, sex and gender elements of the research to maximise impact and any other considerations relevant to the field of research necessary to assess the rigour of the proposed design.

6. Overview of the Development Grants peer review process

6.1. Important dates

Participants in the Development Grants peer review process should note the following dates:

| Date | Event |
|------------------------------|---|
| 6 February 2019 | Applications close |
| Phase 1 | |
| Early February 2019 | Expert Peer Reviewers (EPRs) declare Conflicts of Interest (ColIs) against applications and nominate suitability. Each EPR will generally be assigned 8-10 non-conflicted applications to assess. |
| March 2019 | EPRs score each application and submit reports to NHMRC |
| Early April 2019 | Not for Further Consideration (NFFC) process |
| Phase 2 | |
| Early April 2019 | Non-NFFC applications are allocated to Grant Review Panels (GRPs) |
| Early April 2019 | GRP members declare ColIs against applications |
| Early April – early May 2019 | GRP members assess and score all non-conflicted applications allocated to their GRP |
| Early April – early May 2019 | Assigned Scientific and Commercialisation Spokespersons will assess requested budgets and provide the GRP with a recommended budget |
| Mid May 2019 | NHMRC collates ranked list based on scores |
| Mid May 2019 | GRP members review ranked list |
| Late May 2019 | Members nominate applications that require further discussion at the GRP meetings |
| Late May 2019 | GRP meeting dates to discuss only nominated applications, as required |
| July/August 2019* | Notification of outcomes |

*Dates are indicative only

7. Roles and Responsibilities

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

| Roles | Responsibilities |
|--|---|
| Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander expert | <p>Applications that relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research will be considered by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health expert against the Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria (see the <i>Development Grant Scheme 2019 Guidelines</i>). An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander expert will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify and advise NHMRC of all real or perceived CoIs they have with applications • provide written assessments on applications focusing on the strengths and weaknesses against each of the four research excellence criteria. |
| Panel Chair | <p>The Chair's role is to ensure that NHMRC's procedures are adhered to and that a fair and equitable consideration is given to every application being reviewed by the GRP. Chairs are independent to the review of applications, and must manage the process of peer review in accordance with these guidelines.</p> <p>Chairs will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before the meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ identify and advise NHMRC of all real or perceived CoIs they have with applications to be reviewed ○ familiarise themselves with all applications being considered for which they are not conflicted. • At the meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ask members to declare any associations between GRP members ○ keep discussions on time and focused ○ ensure NHMRC policies and procedures are followed ○ assist members with their duties and understanding of what is expected of them ○ take appropriate action for each late declared CoI ○ promote good engagement by all members in discussions ○ ensure applications are assessed against the Category Descriptors appropriately (see the <i>Development Grant Scheme 2019 Guidelines</i>) ○ facilitate the discussion of budgets and assist the panel to resolve budget discussions where required ○ ensure discussions are consistent for all applications ○ record and notify NHMRC of any requests for clarification or advice. |
| Assistant Chairs | <p>Assistant Chairs will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before the meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ identify and advise NHMRC of all real or perceived CoIs they may have with applications ○ review each non-NFFC application to ensure compliance with NHMRC requirements. • At the meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ record key points regarding an application's strengths and weaknesses ○ record all reasons for adjusting the requested budgets, as necessary ○ ensure budget discussions are consistent across all applications discussed and inform the Chair if inconsistencies arise. |

| Roles | Responsibilities |
|--|--|
| Expert Peer Reviewers (Phase 1): Scientific or Commercialisation | <p>NHMRC will endeavour to obtain eight assessments from Expert Peer Reviewers (EPR) for each application in Phase 1. EPRs will either be Scientific or Commercialisation based on their expertise and each application will be assessed by up to four Scientific EPRs and four Commercialisation EPRs.</p> <p>The EPRs will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be selected based on the expertise required to provide a fair assessment of an application but may not have the necessary expertise to cover all aspects of an application • declare all CoIs they may have with any aspect of an application prior to undertaking its assessment • notify NHMRC if an application does not meet eligibility criteria, including formatting requirements • consider all relative to opportunity statements or career disruptions declared by the applicant • score each application against the Development Grants scheme Category Descriptors (see the Development Grant Scheme 2019 Guidelines) and provide a brief written assessment focusing on the application's major strengths and weaknesses • maintain the confidentiality of information designated as such by applicants in accordance with section 80 of the NHMRC Act • score and comment on the Scientific Merit of the Proposal Assessment Criterion if assessing as a Scientific EPR • score and comment on both the Record of Commercial Achievements and Commercial Potential Assessment Criteria if assessing as a Commercialisation EPR. <p>Anonymised comments from EPRs will be collated and provided to applicants after peer review has been completed, noting that NHMRC will not review these reports.</p> |
| Grant Review Panel Members (Phase 2) | <p>All GRP members are responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying and advising NHMRC of all real or perceived CoIs they have with applications • providing a fair, thorough and impartial assessment against the three Assessment Criteria in a timely manner • considering all relative to opportunity statements and career disruptions declared by applicants • scoring against either the scientific or commercialisation assessment criteria for all applications allocated to their GRP (except where a high CoI exists) • preparing and participating in discussions of applications. |
| Scientific Spokespersons (Phase 2) | <p>Scientific Spokespersons are responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scrutinising the proposed budget to ensure grant duration, Personal Support Packages, Direct Research Costs, and equipment requests are appropriate for the described project and are fully justified • keeping a record of any proposed adjustments with input from the Commercialisation Spokesperson • rescore applications that are nominated for discussion • leading discussion of applications nominated for discussion at the GRP meeting regarding the appropriateness of the requested budget. |

| Roles | Responsibilities |
|---|--|
| Commercialisation Spokespersons (Phase 2) | <p>Commercialisation Spokespersons are responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scrutinising the proposed budget to ensure grant duration, Personal Support Packages, Direct Research Costs, and equipment requests are appropriate for the described project and are fully justified • providing input to the Scientific Spokesperson on any proposed budget adjustments • rescoring applications that are nominated for discussion • supporting the Scientific Spokesperson in the discussion of applications nominated for discussion at the GRP meeting regarding the appropriateness of the requested budget. |
| NHMRC Research Scientists | <p>NHMRC staff with extensive research expertise will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify potential EPRs and GRP members based on application topic areas • allocate applications to EPRs, GRP members and nominate Scientific and Commercialisation Spokespersons • assist and advise on the GRP process • Chair and/or Assistant Chair GRPs where required. |
| NHMRC Secretariat | <p>NHMRC Secretariat will be responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being the first point of contact for Phase 1 EPRs and Phase 2 GRP members • inviting potential EPRs and GRP members based on advice from NHMRC Research Scientists • providing administrative support and advice to the EPRs, Chairs, Assistant Chairs, and GRP members on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ maintaining accurate records of ColS ○ ensuring Chairs are aware of ColS declared by GRP members ○ the management of declared ColS • preparing the NFFC list after Phase 1 assessments are complete • preparing the ranked list of applications for Phase 2 GRP members • facilitating access by non-conflicted GRP members to applications • preparing the order in which applications will be reviewed during the GRP meeting • recording and notifying NHMRC Research Scientists of any requests for clarification or advice. |

| Roles | Responsibilities |
|---------------------|---|
| Community Observers | <p>The GRP meeting may have independent Community Observers present to observe procedures. All Community Observers will be briefed on GRP meeting procedures and will need to declare CoIs, where a high CoI exists, they will be required to leave the meeting while that application is discussed. Community Observers do not participate in the discussion of any application.</p> <p>The primary responsibilities of the Community Observer are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify and advise NHMRC of all real or perceived CoIs they may have with applications under review • monitor procedural aspects of the GRP's conduct during the meeting • provide feedback to NHMRC on the consistency of procedures. |

8. Peer review process

NHMRC's peer review process is designed to provide a rigorous, fair, transparent and consistent assessment of the merits of each application according to the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research* to ensure that only the highest quality, value for money research is recommended for funding (see [NHMRC website](#)).

All applications are assessed against the Assessment Criteria and scored using the Category Descriptors, as set out in the *Development Grant Scheme 2019 Guidelines*.

Applications that are accepted to relate to the improvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health are also assessed against the Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria as set out in the *Development Grant Scheme 2019 Guidelines*.

Applications are assessed relative to opportunity, taking into consideration any career disruptions as per the *Development Grant Scheme 2019 Guidelines*.

8.1. Peer review process: Phase 1

8.1.1. Recruitment of Expert Peer Reviewers

NHMRC Research Scientists and staff will identify up to eight (four scientific and four commercialisation) EPRs for each eligible application. Each EPR will be assigned approximately eight to ten applications to assess.

8.1.2. Declaring Conflicts of Interest and suitability to assess applications

EPRs will be provided with the Snapshot Summary Report, asked to declare any CoIs, and indicate their suitability to review each application. EPRs will only be given access to the full application if they have a low or no CoI. For information on what constitutes a CoI, refer to Section 4.4 of this document.

All EPRs must notify the Secretariat immediately if a CoI is identified at any point in the process. The EPR will be required to destroy any soft or hardcopy files in their possession pertaining to applications for which they have declared a late high CoI. Any late declared CoIs may delay the assessment of applications.

8.1.3. Allocation of applications to Expert Peer Reviewers

NHMRC Research Scientists will allocate applications to EPRs taking into consideration the declared expertise and any declared CoIs. EPRs will be notified of their allocated applications by the Secretariat.

When indicating expertise, it is expected that EPRs should have at least a moderate or high level for the majority of applications in either a scientific or commercial capacity. EPRs should only indicate no expertise in cases where they feel strongly that they do not have the expertise to assess an application.

8.1.4. Expert Peer Reviewers assess and score applications

EPRs will be required to review, score and provide a brief written assessment on all applications allocated to them. EPRs will be allocated between approximately eight and ten applications. Assessors are responsible for ensuring the written comments they provide comply the table below. The review and subsequent scoring of applications must be conducted using the Category Descriptors (see the *Development Grant Scheme 2019 Guidelines*).

Scientific EPRs will only score against the Scientific Merit of the Proposal assessment criterion. Commercialisation EPRs will score against both the Record of Commercial Achievements and Commercial Potential assessment criteria. The written assessments of applications that progress to Phase 2 will be provided to GRP members.

Reviewing applications

Reviewers are required to assess the application relative to the scheme-specific Assessment Criteria and where applicable, the Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria. Assessments should focus on the strengths and weaknesses of the application.

The table below guides assessors on what NHMRC considers acceptable and unacceptable when providing feedback on an application.

| Do | Do Not |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do provide constructive feedback. • 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. • Do refer to the category descriptors associated with the Assessment Criteria. • Do consider both the strengths and weaknesses of the application relative to the Assessment Criteria. • Do consider any career disruptions and other “relative to opportunity” considerations to understand the longer term impact these have on scientific output. • Do provide references for any body of work that you think the applicant has overlooked. • Do prioritise major concerns over minor. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not provide ‘nil’ comments or leave the space ‘blank’. • Do not provide broad statements which suggest that the application may or may not be worthy of funding. • Do not indicate a lack of expertise to review an application within the assessment. • 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. • 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. • Do not provide scores in the commentary. • Do not focus on numerous minor matters that the applicant/s may not have the ability to respond to. • Do not provide inappropriate comments. More specifically, do not provide comments that are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Irrelevant ○ Personal ○ Unscientific/unprofessional ○ Offensive ○ Discriminatory ○ Biased ○ Defamatory (see examples below) |

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.

8.1.5. Not For Further Consideration (NFFC)

The Not For Further Consideration (NFFC) process aims to identify and remove applications that are assessed as being less competitive than other applications in the round. Based on the EPRs scores, the least competitive applications will be removed from further consideration except where:

- the application did not receive two or more EPR assessments for either the scientific or commercialisation assessment criteria
- the application received only two assessments for any criterion and the scores are two or more points away from each other and the highest score would have ordinarily excluded the application from the NFFC list
- the application relates to an NHMRC strategic research priority and achieves a notional score that is category 4 or higher.

Once the EPR scores have been finalised, and the NFFC applications identified, they will be removed from peer review. Applications that have not been deemed NFFC will progress to Phase 2.

8.2. Peer review process: Phase 2

8.2.1. Establishment of Grant Review Panels

GRPs are established to review all applications that have progressed to Phase 2 of the peer review process and the Phase 1 written assessments of those applications. The number of GRPs established and the number of members on each is dependent on the number of Phase 2 applications. Each GRP is led by a Chair with support from an Assistant Chair; both are independent within the peer review process and do not participate in the assessment or scoring of applications. Each GRP is supported by a dedicated NHMRC Secretariat who will interact with GRP members as necessary (see Section 8).

GRP members are selected for their expertise and experience by NHMRC Research Scientists. Some Phase 1 members may also be invited to participate in Phase 2. The Guiding Principles for Peer Review Panel Membership Nomination and Appointments, endorsed by NHMRC's Research Committee, are applied when determining each GRP's membership.

NHMRC endeavours to limit occurrences where the Chief Investigator (CI) of an application is a member of the GRP that is reviewing their application. NHMRC will make every effort to ensure there are no instances where the Chair or Assistant Chair is a CI on an application being reviewed by the GRP.

Information will not be revealed to the applicant regarding which GRP their application has been allocated to or about the membership of any GRP.

8.2.2. Identification of Conflicts of Interest and suitability

GRP members will be provided the Snapshot Summary Report of each application and asked to declare any CoIs. Members will only be given access to a full application if they have a low or no CoI. For information on what constitutes a CoI, refer to Section 4.4.

GRP members must notify the Secretariat immediately if a CoI is identified at any point during the peer review process. It is important all CoIs are declared early. CoIs that are not declared until the GRP meeting are likely to cause procedural delays and extend the meeting time.

NHMRC may review CoI declarations or make a ruling where required. GRP members must review and confirm all NHMRC CoI rulings in advance of the meeting.

8.2.3. Access to full applications

GRP members will be given access to all applications and the associated EPR reports that are allocated to their panel, excluding any applications where they have been ruled to have a high CoI. When accessing a full application, GRP members should revisit whether they have a CoI that was not initially evident and contact the Secretariat immediately to report one. The GRP member will be required to delete or destroy any files in their possession pertaining to applications with which they have declared a late high CoI.

8.2.4. Applications requiring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander assessment

Applications relating specifically to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander health will be identified on a preliminary basis by information provided in the application.

NHMRC Assigners Academy members with Indigenous health expertise, in consultation with NHMRC Research Scientists, will confirm that applications have at least 20% of their research effort and/or capacity building focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. Those applications deemed appropriate will be subject to evaluation using NHMRC's Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria (see the *Development Grant Scheme 2019 Guidelines*).

Advice on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health applications will be provided by an expert with the appropriate expertise.

8.2.5. Grant Review Panel member briefing teleconference

NHMRC will conduct a briefing teleconference after members have accessed the full applications. The briefing will cover duties and responsibilities associated with peer review. Any changes to the scheme for the current application round will also be highlighted and discussed as required.

8.2.6. Scoring applications

GRP members will read the complete application and independently review and score all non-conflicted applications assigned to them. Each application will be assessed relative to opportunity against the assessment criteria, with reference to the Category Descriptors.

- Scientific members will provide a score against the Scientific Merit of the Proposal criterion.
- Commercialisation members will provide scores against both the Record of Commercial Achievements and Commercial Potential criteria.

To ensure impartiality and independence of assessments, GRP members must not enter into dialogue when reviewing and scoring the applications. The one exception is the discussion between an application's Scientific and Commercialisation Spokespersons concerning any budget adjustments.

8.2.7. Spokespersons budget reviews

All GRP members will receive an allocation of applications for the purpose of reviewing the budget and for which they will be the Spokesperson. Scientific Spokespersons are responsible for budget scrutiny and are to note any budget adjustments that may be required. The Commercialisation Spokesperson also considers the budget and should communicate to the Scientific Spokesperson any concerns or comments they have on the budget.

Both the Scientific and Commercialisation Spokespersons will adhere to the NHMRC policy relating to budget requests on Personal Support Packages (see the *Development Grant Scheme 2019 Guidelines*).

8.2.8. Preparation of the ranked list and nomination of applications requiring discussion

NHMRC will develop a ranked list based on the scores entered by GRP members prior to the meeting. The list will identify the overall rank and rating, weighted score for each criterion and standard deviation, notional category and requested and recommended budget.

1. Rating - will be determined by including each GRP member's score for each of the Assessment Criteria. The rating, as calculated arithmetically to three decimal places, will take into account the weighting of each of the three criterion.
2. Category - this will be deemed, based on the calculated rating, as follows:

| Rating range | Category |
|---------------|----------|
| 1.001 - 1.500 | 1 |
| 1.501 - 2.500 | 2 |
| 2.501 - 3.500 | 3 |
| 3.501 - 4.500 | 4 |
| 4.501 - 5.500 | 5 |
| 5.501 - 6.500 | 6 |
| 6.501 - 7.000 | 7 |

GRP members will be provided a Col-tailored ranked list and then invited to consider whether any applications require discussion at the GRP meeting. If an application is nominated, the GRP member must identify whether they have nominated the application:

- for additional budget scrutiny
- based on concerns with a specific selection criterion score, noting Scientific GRP members can only nominate discussion of the Scientific criterion and Commercialisation GRP members only the two commercial criteria.

8.3. At the Grant Review Panel meeting

The GRP will meet via teleconference to discuss only those applications that have been nominated by members prior to the meeting. Only nominated applications will be discussed at the GRP meeting.

The GRP meeting will be held to discuss only the nominated assessment criterion and/or a budget for an application. For example, if commercial assessment criteria were not nominated for discussion, commercial aspects of the application will not be able to be discussed and therefore rescoring of those assessment criteria will not be available during the GRP meeting.

If applications and/or application budgets have been nominated for discussion, the process at the GRP meeting will be:

- the Chair will outline the format of the discussions
- the nominating GRP member(s) will briefly outline their reason for the nomination
- other GRP members will be able to raise any additional issues they consider appropriate but only against the nominated assessment criterion and/or budget
- discussion should be related directly to the application's strengths and weaknesses against the assessment criteria. It is important the GRP members consider the merits in relation to the assessment criteria
- once the Chair has determined that all the raised concerns have been sufficiently discussed, the assessment criterion nominated for discussion will be re-scored by the relevant non-conflicted GRP members.

8.3.1. Principles for setting conditions of funding for NHMRC grants

Setting a condition of funding (CoF) on a grant through the peer review process is, and should be, a rare event. When this does occur, the GRP uses the principles set out below to decide the CoF. These principles aim to achieve a consistent approach, minimise the number of conditions set and support conditions that are unambiguous and able to be assessed should a condition be necessary. They are designed to complement the *Development Grant Scheme 2019 Guidelines* and the *NHMRC Funding Agreement*. Any CoF must not duplicate requirements set out in these documents.

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

The principles are:

- NHMRC seeks to minimise the administrative burden on researchers and Administering Institutions.
- CoFs must not relate to the competitiveness of an application (e.g. project requires more community engagement); these issues should be considered during peer review, and be reflected in the scores for the application.
- Any CoFs must be clear and measurable, so that the condition can be readily assessed as having been met. For example, where a CI has applied for salary support from multiple grant sources, a CoF should stipulate that the applicant cannot receive more than 100% of salary support from NHMRC.

8.4. After the Grant Review Panel meeting

After the meeting concludes, the following takes place:

1. Funding recommendations – NHMRC reviews the list of application outcomes and determines which applications will be recommended for funding. NHMRC's Research Committee recommends applications to be funded, through Council, to the CEO who submits them for approval to the Minister with portfolio responsibility for NHMRC.
2. Funding announcements – after Ministerial approval, applicants and RAOs will be advised of the outcome of applications electronically (under embargo as required).
3. Assessment comments – each application will receive a report containing all the anonymised EPR comments provided on their application during Phase 1.
4. Application Assessment Summary (AAS) – all applications that proceed to Phase 2 will receive an AAS, which will indicate:
 - a) the weighted GRP scores against the three Assessment Criteria:
 - i. Scientific Merit of the Proposal – 40%
 - ii. Record of Commercial Achievements – 20%
 - iii. Commercial Potential – 40%.
 - b) overall score of the application
 - c) quartile position of the application
 - d) funding cut-off score.

8.5. Grant Review Panel documentation

GRP members must retain their speaking notes and any other notes they take of the peer review process until the outcomes of the deliberations are finalised. For GRP meetings, this is after discussion of the last application and when the Secretariat has confirmed all data entry is complete. After this time, both hard copy and electronic notes should be disposed of appropriately.

9. Complaints

Applicants may contact NHMRC seeking clarification on the outcome of their application for funding, or to state an objection to any part of the peer review process. Information on the objection and complaints process is provided on [NHMRC's website](#).