

ARC DISCOVERY-PROJECTS REJOINDERS 2008 FOR FUNDING COMMENCING IN 2009

Applicants to the 2008 round of ARC Discovery-Projects grant scheme will be able to access assessor reports and begin drafting rejoinders in the ARC's on-line Grants Application Management System (GAMS) from the morning of Tuesday 1 July 2008.

For information relating to accessing assessor reports and submitting rejoinders in GAMS, please find below the ARC's Rejoinder Process Instructions, which can also be accessed on their website at http://www.arc.gov.au/applicants/assessor_rejoinders.htm.

Also attached are notes from a workshop on "How to Draft Your Rejoinder", presented by Prof John Sutton, Dr Amanda Barnier and Mr Colm Halbert in 2006. The notes offer a personal perspective on tackling commonly encountered issues associated with the rejoinder process, from staff with insight into the challenges of writing an ARC grant application, as well as the positive use to which the rejoinder process can be put. Our thanks to John, Amanda and Colm for allowing these notes to be widely distributed by the Research Office.

Timeframe for Submission:

The timeframe for submitting rejoinders via Divisions has been communicated to applicants by email and is reproduced below. Please ensure you comply with Divisional procedures to ensure the final "local submit" deadline of 12.00 noon on Friday 11 July 2008 is met.

Note for external fellowship applicants: Divisions have put in place local reader and mentor services for the compilation of rejoinders – please contact your Macquarie academic staff contact for details, or the relevant administrative staff member or Associate Dean of Research listed below.

Summary of Key Dates:

Tuesday 1 July	ARC GAMS access to assessor reports and rejoinders
Monday 7 July	Draft rejoinders submitted to Division for review
Thursday 10 July	Final day for incorporating Divisional feedback into rejoinder
Friday 11 July	All rejoinders to be "locally submitted" in GAMS by 12.00noon
Monday 14 July	Research Office to submit all rejoinders to ARC by 6.00pm

The time between the "local submit" and final submission to the ARC is required to allow the Research Office enough time to resolve any validation issues in GAMS before the final deadline.

Divisional Contacts for Rejoinders:

L&P	Colm Halbert	chalbert@vc.mq.edu.au
HUM	Christine Boman	christine.boman@humn.mq.edu.au
SCMP		HODSCMP@scmp.mq.edu.au
EFS	Kerry Todd-Smith	ktoddsmi@efs.mq.edu.au
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ASAM	Lee McGrath	lee.mcgrath@vc.mq.edu.au
ICS	Linda Kerr	lkerr@ics.mq.edu.au
ELS	Jane Yang	jyang@els.mq.edu.au (cc: pnelson@els.mq.edu.au)
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ARC Rejoinder Process Instructions

Please note:

- Only the lead researcher who originated the Proposal may edit and submit a rejoinder. Other named participants may view the rejoinder but do not have editing access.
- You will be able to submit a rejoinder even if you have not received any Assessment Reports.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ACCESSING ASSESSMENTS AND SUBMITTING REJOINDERS:

1. Log into GAMS using your GAMS User ID and password

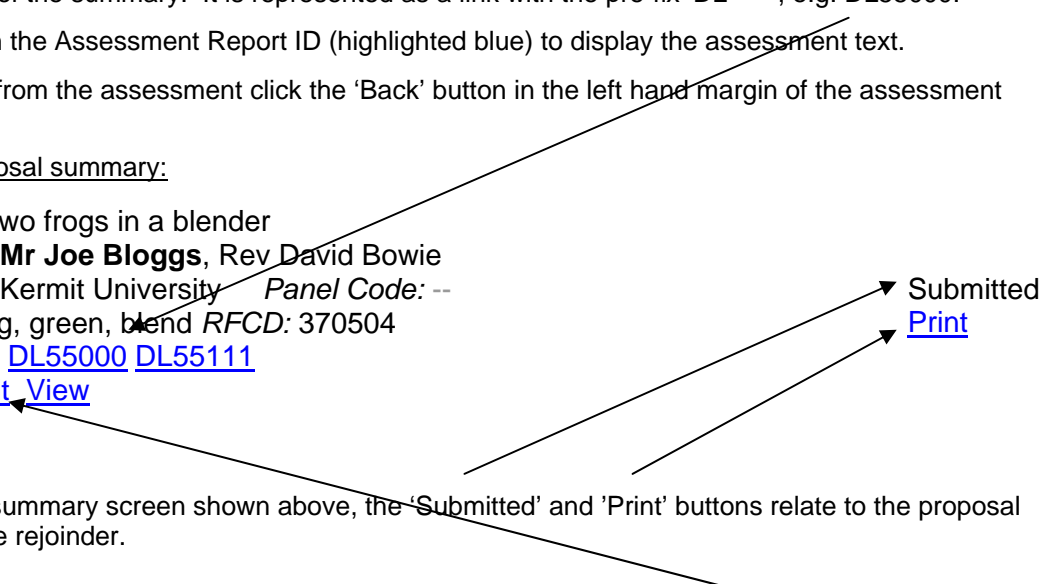
Note:

- If you have forgotten your GAMS User ID or password please contact your Administering Organisation Research Office or equivalent unit.
- If you have dual roles in GAMS, e.g. OZREADER as well as APPLICANT, check that the drop-down menu at the top left hand margin displays "APPLICANT".

2. View assessments

- A list of your previous and current proposal(s) will be displayed. For each proposal a summary is displayed including the Project ID, Title, Investigators, Organisation, Keywords, Assessments (if available) and Rejoinder (see diagram below).
- Where present, each Assessment Report submitted for a particular proposal will appear at the bottom of the summary. It is represented as a link with the pre-fix 'DL-----', e.g. DL55000.
- Click on the Assessment Report ID (highlighted blue) to display the assessment text.
- To exit from the assessment click the 'Back' button in the left hand margin of the assessment screen.

An example proposal summary:

- [DP0989803](#) Two frogs in a blender
Investigators: **Mr Joe Bloggs**, Rev David Bowie
Organisation: Kermit University *Panel Code:* --
Keywords: frog, green, blend *RFCD:* 370504
Assessments: [DL55000](#) [DL55111](#)
Rejoinder: [Edit](#) [View](#)
- 

Note: In the summary screen shown above, the 'Submitted' and 'Print' buttons relate to the proposal status, not the rejoinder.

3. Edit and save rejoinder

- To 'Edit' the rejoinder, the originator of the proposal should click on the 'Edit' link in the Proposal summary (located beside the word "Rejoinder" above).
- Key or paste text in to the rejoinder text box.

Note: Rejoinder text is limited to 5,000 characters, including spaces. Paragraph returns and other special characters may equate to two characters.

- Click the 'Save' button in the left hand margin of the rejoinder screen to save rejoinder text.
- Once saved you will need to click the 'Back' button in the left hand margin of the rejoinder screen to return to the list of proposal summaries.

4. Submit rejoinder to the Administering Organisation Research Office

- Click the 'Local Submit' link to submit the rejoinder to the Administering Organisation's Research Office or equivalent unit. Please note that once you have clicked 'Local Submit' the 'Edit' button disappears as confirmation the rejoinder has been submitted.

Note: Local Submit status precludes further editing of rejoinder text by the lead researcher, however, the Administering Organisation's Research Office may 'unsubmit' the rejoinder if necessary.

Administering Organisation Research Office staff please note: if you 'unsubmit' a rejoinder for a lead researcher the rejoinder will revert back to a draft status. The lead researcher will need to enter into the rejoinder form and save the rejoinder again before the 'Local Submit' link will reappear.

5. Administering Organisation Research Office submit rejoinder to the ARC

- When the rejoinder is ready to be submitted to the ARC, the staff of the Administering Organisation's Research Office should click the 'ARC Submit' link, on or before the due date, 6:00pm (AEST) Monday 14 July 2008.

HOW TO DRAFT YOUR REJOINER

Rejoinders are decisive. They can make the difference between success and failure. A bad rejoinder (one that is aggressive, defensive and/or not fact-based) could see your application move further towards the bottom of the pile. Approach the task with your full commitment and remember your enthusiasm for your project at all times.

You will get between one and six assessments of your proposal. The average is three or four. If you only get one, be assured that the panel will compensate by reading your application more closely.

Remember that rejoinders have three players. You and the Panel see what the assessors have to say about your work. The Panel (and not the readers) see your response. Your rejoinder is therefore to be drafted as a conversation with the Panel, and not with the readers themselves.

Your job over the next week or so is to nudge the Panel towards a particular (and positive) reading of the assessments.

The first steps

Don't panic! This is not 'life or death'. Even if you are not funded in the round, your ideas are valuable and can be put to use in bidding to other funding sources. Do the rejoinder even if there are a lot of criticisms. Do it well even if the commentary is generally positive. Use this task as a learning experience for your future grant pitches as well as an opportunity to improve your current position.

Take a break. Once you have read the rejoinder, take some time to digest it before starting to draft your response.

Then be proactive not reactive. Look upon the rejoinder as your last opportunity in this round to showcase your research to the Panel.

Make sure you understand the criticism. Beware mediocre praise. Anything short of 'excellent' needs to be addressed because you want your work to be not only 'good' but in the top 20% of research put forward for funding.

Find helpers/collaborators. Don't get isolated. Talk to your peers. Share and gain experience on reports. Find others who can read your rejoinder so that you can take on board their suggestions for improvement.

Writing your first draft

Don't become defensive by attacking the assessors or saying they are wrong. Approach the task in a professional, intellectual (not emotional) and composed manner. Play the ball, not the person.

Keep it factual. Identify and point out factual errors. Use the opportunity to update the Panel on recent achievements, new data you've located and that you will use, or new work you have done that will inform your project. Cite authoritative texts, particularly those that have been recently published, at every opportunity to either counter criticism and/or to demonstrate you are on top of your topic.

Don't waste words repeating the words of the assessors. Assume the Panel has read and understood the assessments. Don't repeat the praise or the criticism. When referring to a particular Assessor, quote their correct Assessor Number.

Use positive language. For example, not "Assessor A criticised/condemned X" . Instead say: Assessor A argued/suggested that Y...". Speak clearly and directly to the criticisms and don't use too much jargon, even if your assessors have done so. Not everyone on the Panel will be necessarily familiar with your topic and those that aren't will appreciate plain language.

Decide on and use a clear structure for your rejoinder. Draw out the themes that emerge across the assessments. Refer back to the assessment criteria. From these things, create a clear structure and deal with all relevant assessor comments under each heading. For example, one possible structure might be:

- Content-related issues raised across the reports – your response on these might turn the various comments made into legitimate debate about the topic you will be investigating. Negative comments can be neutralised by using this strategy.
- Comments on method, phases, budget
- Track record

Comprehensively deal with the criticisms, turning assessor comments to your benefit whenever you can. Ensure you've demonstrated you have carefully considered what the assessment actually says. Take every opportunity to rejustify the original case. You have a number of options when addressing criticisms, for example:

1. Acknowledge the different approach or idea, but say you are sticking with your original proposal. In this instance, state why you have decided not to do what the assessor proposes. "We considered Assessor A's Option X, but chose Y instead because it will deliver better results (because of PQR)...."
2. Acknowledge they have raised a good point and say you will take this into account in X way...Say how the criticisms will be overcome.
3. Reject the comment. Do this calmly and intellectually, proving if possible by use of citation from respected journals or the like that the assessor might not have taken into account latest thinking etc....
4. Play assessors off against each other, **but** be careful if doing so. Make sure you also demonstrate an understanding of why they made these comments and why Assessor A is to be believed over Assessor X.

Make sure you demonstrate you have thought through the issues raised and incorporated any new information offered up by the assessors.

In the extreme, you can ask for an assessment to be discounted providing that you justify this by reference to authoritative sources. Make sure this cannot be perceived as an emotional reaction to what has been said about your work.

Refer people back to your original proposal whenever you can, being sure to reference the proposal accurately (Section X, Paragraph Y – or download your final application as submitted by the Research Office from GAMs and use the page numbers on it). Countering criticism by pointing out that a reader has not carefully read the application provides for a powerful rebuttal.

On National Benefit.... If you have overstretched the national benefit case in your original application, this is your opportunity to be more realistic. Address any assessor scepticism in this way.

Finalising your rejoinder

When you have a first draft, share it with your colleagues and take account of their feedback. Provide a copy to your Divisional (or Centre's) research administrator and take into account their feedback as well.

Reread the above points. Take a final opportunity to review your rejoinder and then locally submit it in GAMs by the deadline.