



EARLY CAREER FELLOWSHIPS SCHEME-SPECIFIC FUNDING RULES FOR FUNDING COMMENCING 2019

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
1 ABOUT THE SCHEME	4
1.1 Description	4
1.2 Objectives	4
1.3 Who should apply?	4
1.3.1 Computational Biology – Bioinformatics and Biostatistics	4
1.3.2 Industry Experience	4
2 KEY CHANGES	5
3 CRITICAL DATES	5
4 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	5
4.1 Additional Criteria for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health applications.....	5
4.2 Requirement to move research group	6
5 ELIGIBILITY	6
5.1 Qualifications	6
5.2 Citizenship	7
5.3 Other Requirements.....	7
5.4 Time Commitment.....	7
5.4.1 Full-time Early Career Fellowships	7
5.4.2 Professional Part-time Fellowship	8
5.4.3 Personal Part-time Fellowship option	8
6 CATEGORIES OF AWARD	8
6.1 Full-time Australian Based Early Career Fellowships Category.....	8
6.2 Full-time Overseas Based Early Career Fellowships Category	8

6.3	Health Professional Research Fellowship Category	9
6.4	Australia-China Exchange Early Career Fellowship Category	9
7	TYPES OF APPLICANT	9
7.1	Co-funded Early Career Fellowships	9
7.2	Electromagnetic Energy Research (EME)	10
7.3	Other Fellowships	10
7.3.1	Frank Fenner Early Career Fellowship	10
7.3.2	Bernie Banton Fellowship	10
8	FUNDING	10
8.1	Level and Duration of Funding	10
8.1.1	Duration of Award	10
8.1.2	Salary Packages	11
8.1.3	Use of Funds	11
8.1.4	Australian Allowances	11
8.1.5	Overseas Allowances	11
8.1.6	Salary Loadings	11
8.1.7	Other Salary or Research Funding Sources	12
8.1.8	Short Term Support to Facilitate International Indigenous Researcher Networks	12
8.2	Other Awards	12
9	ASSESSMENT PROCESS	13
10	GRANT ADMINISTRATION	13
10.1	General	13
10.2	Acceptance and commencement of a Fellowship	13
10.3	Suspension of Fellowships for Family or Personal Reasons	13
10.4	Parental leave	14
10.5	Request to Reduce time Commitment	14
10.6	Request to Increase time Commitment	14
10.7	Overseas based Early Career Fellowships	14
10.8	Reporting	15
11	ATTACHMENTS	15

Attachment A 16
Attachment B 19
Attachment C 21
Attachment D 22
Attachment E 24

INTRODUCTION

The following sections provide additional information about the Early Career Fellowships (ECFs) scheme including scheme-specific objectives, critical dates, assessment criteria, eligibility rules and funding details, and must be read in conjunction with the following supporting documents:

- the *2018 NHMRC Funding Rules*
- the *2018 Guide to NHMRC Peer Review*, incorporating the *Early Career Fellowships Scheme-Specific Peer Review Guidelines*
- the *2018 Advice and Instructions to Applicants*
- the *NHMRC Funding Agreement*.

This is the final year that the NHRMC ECF scheme will be offered. New grant funding opportunities will be available through NHMRC's new grant program for funding commencing from 2020.

It is recommended that you read the *2018 NHMRC Funding Rules* before reading these scheme-specific rules.

1 ABOUT THE SCHEME

1.1 Description

The ECF scheme provides four-year Fellowships to early career researchers to assist them in their health and medical research training within Australia or overseas (where applicable).

1.2 Objectives

The specific objectives of the scheme are to:

- Enable developing health and medical researchers of outstanding ability to undertake advanced training in health and medical research either in Australia or overseas.
- Provide opportunities for Australian researchers to undertake research that is both of major importance in its field and of benefit to Australian health.
- Foster career development at the postdoctoral level by encouraging the beneficial experience of a different research environment.

1.3 Who Should Apply?

ECFs are offered to a limited number of early career researchers of outstanding ability who wish to make research a significant component of their career.

1.3.1 Computational Biology – Bioinformatics and Biostatistics

NHMRC encourages researchers who wish to develop their health and medical research careers in the fields of Bioinformatics and Biostatistics to submit an application in the current round of ECFs.

Consideration will be given to applicants from a wide variety of disciplines (e.g. biological sciences, computational sciences and mathematics).

1.3.2 Industry Experience

NHMRC encourages researchers who have had past experience in industry and applicants who wish to develop their industry links in their health and medical research careers to submit an application in the current round of ECFs. Refer to the *2018 NHMRC Funding Rules*, section 6.1, for further information.

2 KEY CHANGES

Applicants should note the following change to the *ECF Scheme-Specific Funding Rules for funding commencing in 2019*:

- Section 7.2 Electromagnetic Energy Research
 - Wording has been updated to reflect current Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) policy.

3 CRITICAL DATES

10 January 2018	Applications open in Research Grants Management System (RGMS)
28 February 2018 5:00pm (AEDT)	Closing date for Supervisor Reports to be submitted
28 February 2018 5:00pm (AEDT)	Applications close in RGMS
May 2018*	Completion of peer review of applications
October 2018*	Notification of outcomes

*Dates are indicative and subject to change.

Completed applications must be submitted to NHMRC in RGMS by **5:00pm AEDT** on the specified closing date. Late applications will not be accepted.

Application outcomes are announced as peer review processes are finalised and Ministerial approvals are obtained. Refer to *sections 11.4 and 11.6* of the *2018 NHMRC Funding Rules* for further details.

4 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Applications will be assessed against the ECF assessment criteria listed below:

1. Research Output – Relative to Opportunity
2. Research Proposal and Environment
3. Professional Contribution – Relative to Opportunity

All applications are assessed relative to opportunity, taking into consideration any career disruptions (see *section 6* of the *2018 NHMRC Funding Rules*).

The Category Descriptors at [Attachment A](#) are used as a guide by the peer review panels (PRPs) to assist with scoring an application against each of the assessment criteria.

4.1 Additional Criteria for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Applications

All applications that are accepted to relate to the improvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health must also address the *Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria* (see *section 6.3* of the *2018 NHMRC Funding Rules*).

Any applications that have applied to be considered for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and are not confirmed to have at least 20% of their research effort and/or capacity building focused on Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health will be assessed as a standard ECF application.

Further information on how the Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria is provided in *section 4.5* of the *Early Career Fellowship scheme-specific Peer Review Guidelines*.

4.2 Requirement to move research group

An important and fundamental intent of the ECF scheme is to foster the career development of researchers at the postdoctoral level through the beneficial experience of working in a different research environment to that in which they obtained their PhD. NHMRC nevertheless recognises that in some cases, it may not be possible for an applicant to relocate, for such reasons as:

- family circumstances;
- unique facilities available only in an applicant's PhD institution geographic location.

Applicants who are not changing either their PhD Research Team or Department or Medical Research Institute during years one and two of their proposed Fellowship must provide a statement to explain why this career path is more beneficial for their advanced health and medical research training. This statement should be prepared by the applicant in consultation with their proposed supervisor, signed by the supervisor and include details of the program intended to develop the breadth of their research career, in the absence of spending a period of time elsewhere.

This requirement applies to all categories of ECFs except the Health Professional Research Fellowship category (see [Attachment C](#) for details).

5 ELIGIBILITY

NHMRC staff will **not** make eligibility rulings prior to an application being submitted. It is up to the applicant, in consultation with their RAO, to judge whether or not their application will be suitable.

ECFs have eligibility criteria additional to those identified in *section 7* of the *2018 NHMRC Funding Rules*. Applications will be excluded from consideration if eligibility requirements are not met or if NHMRC requirements have not been followed (see *section 10.7* of the *2018 NHMRC Funding Rules*).

5.1 Qualifications

Applicants must:

- Hold a Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD) in either:
 - a health related field of research, or must submit their thesis by 31 December in the year of application (evidence of PhD submission must be provided as soon as the applicant's PhD is submitted).
 - a non-health related field, or must submit their thesis by 31 December in the year of application but are proposing to undertake health related research (evidence of PhD submission must be provided as soon as the applicant's PhD is submitted).
- At 30 June in the year of application, have held their PhD for no more than two years (from the date their PhD thesis was passed (not date of degree conferral)) unless career disruptions exist (see *section 6.2.1* of the *2018 NHMRC Funding Rules*).

Applicants must include evidence of the PhD thesis pass date in their application. Evidence must be an official document from the relevant institution clearly stating the date the PhD was passed. PhD submission date and date of degree conferral will not be accepted.

For ECF eligibility the career disruption must involve one or both of the following:

- continuous absence from work for 28 calendar days or more;
- continuous long-term part-time employment (with defined % full-time equivalent (FTE)) due to circumstances classified as career disruption, with the absence amounting to a total of 28 calendar days or more. For example, an applicant who is employed at 0.8 FTE due to childcare responsibilities would need to continue this for at least 140 calendar days to achieve a career disruption of 28 calendar days.

The only documents that will be accepted as evidence for career disruption are medical certificates and letters from an applicant's employer clearly stating the relevant details of the disruptions. The evidence

submitted must include the duration (including start date, end date, %FTE) and type of leave taken and/or part-time employment (e.g. maternity leave, sick leave).

Please note career disruptions cannot exceed the date of application close.

An example of acceptable career disruption evidence is provided on the NHMRC [website](#).

Applications will only be accepted from applicants who have held their PhD for no more than four years (from the date their PhD thesis was passed (not date of degree conferral)) as at 30 June in the year of application, unless career disruptions exist, (see *section 6.2.1* of the *2018 NHMRC Funding Rules*) if they are either:

- Applicants who hold a medical qualification (MBBS), and complete a PhD which is then immediately followed by additional clinical training (such applicants must provide evidence of undertaking further clinical training immediately following their PhD), or
- applying for a Health Professional ECF (refer to Attachment C).

The above applicants must also include evidence of the PhD thesis pass date in their application. Evidence must be an official document from the relevant institution clearly stating the date the PhD was passed. PhD submission date and date of degree conferral will not be accepted.

Note: Applicants who do not hold a PhD but can demonstrate an equivalent research intensive qualification may also be eligible to apply. This is a qualification equivalent to the Level 10 criteria of the *Australian Qualifications Framework Second Edition January 2013*. Eligibility restrictions in terms of time elapsed since the qualification was obtained as stated in the section above still apply.

5.2 Citizenship

Exceptions to the rules stipulated in *section 7.4* of the *2018 NHMRC Funding Rules*, for the Overseas based and Australia-China Exchange Fellowships, are outlined in *sections 6.2 and 6.4* of this document, respectively.

Note: Applicants who are not Australian citizens (as indicated in Part Pro-PD Personal Details of their CV in RGMS) must indicate their Permanent Resident of Australia status in the same section, otherwise the application will be ineligible.

5.3 Other Requirements

Applicants must:

- only apply for one ECF per application round (regardless of the category in which they are applying). If more than one application is submitted, all applications will be ineligible
- ensure they submit a complete application (including referee reports). Incomplete applications will be ineligible and removed from further peer review
- not have previously received funding for an NHMRC ECF
- have fulfilled all obligations from previous NHMRC Grants or Funding Agreements (including reporting requirements).

5.4 Time Commitment

5.4.1 Full-time Early Career Fellowships

These Fellowships are intended to provide support for fellows who are employed at 1.0 (FTE) to engage in research. Full-time fellows are expected to devote a minimum of 80% of this time (i.e. 0.8 FTE) to achieving the outcomes of the Fellowship.

The remaining 0.2 FTE must be spent on activities directly related to research under the Fellowship, including commercial activities, policy development or public health activities. Fellows cannot use this time to engage in financial, administrative, or managerial activity beyond that which directly relates to their own research.

5.4.2 Professional Part-time Fellowship

The Health Professional Research Fellowship is available for applicants who wish to share their time between research and their other clinical responsibilities (see *section 6.3*).

5.4.3 Personal Part-time Fellowship Option

There are occasions when researchers who wish to maintain a research career are unable to do so because their capacity to engage in full-time employment is limited due to pregnancy, major illness, or carer responsibilities including parental leave.

In these circumstances, researchers in all categories, including those whose Fellowships are already taken on a professional part-time basis (under *section 5.4.2*), are able to receive part-time support to allow them to divide their time between their personal situations and part-time research. Researchers may select this option at the time of application or convert to it during the course of a Fellowship. If converted, they would be able to do so temporarily (see *section 10.5*).

Under this part-time option, a brief justification must be provided. The non-Fellowship time is intended to be dedicated to serving the needs of a fellow's personal circumstances, and cannot be spent on other paid employment, research, teaching or administrative roles, or clinical or practitioner responsibilities. The only exception is for fellows who already hold a Fellowship on a part-time basis as described in *section 5.4.2*.

Fellows must devote at least 80% of their part-time commitment to achieving the outcomes of the Fellowship and the remaining Fellowship time must be spent on activities directly related to research under the Fellowship, including commercial activities, policy development or public health activities, e.g. if a part-time Fellowship is held at 0.5 FTE, at least 80% (i.e. 0.4 FTE) of that time should be devoted to research.

This option is available for 0.5 - 0.9% of a full-time position.

6 CATEGORIES OF AWARD

There are several categories of award for ECFs. In addition, applicants may also indicate they wish to be considered for a co-funded award (see *Section 7.1*). A brief description of each category is provided below. For full details of the categories and objectives of awards, refer to [Attachment B](#).

6.1 Full-time Australian Based Early Career Fellowships Category

These Fellowships are intended to provide support for fellows who are employed at 1.0 FTE to engage in research that is based entirely in Australia. The full-time Australian based ECFs include the following:

- Peter Doherty Biomedical Fellowship
- Clinical Research Fellowship
- Public Health and Health Services Research Fellowship
- Fellowship for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Health Research.

6.2 Full-time Overseas Based Early Career Fellowships Category

These Fellowships are intended to provide support for fellows who are employed at 1.0 FTE to engage in research where the initial two years is undertaken at an overseas institution followed by two years in Australia. They include:

- CJ Martin Biomedical Fellowship

- Neil Hamilton Fairley Clinical Fellowship
- Sidney Sax Public Health and Health Services Research Fellowship.

The overseas portion of the Fellowship may only be undertaken full-time unless exceptional personal circumstances apply (refer to *section 10.5*).

6.3 Health Professional Research Fellowship Category

The Health Professional Research Fellowship is a part-time Fellowship that allows currently practicing health professionals to share their time between research and their other clinical responsibilities. Refer to Attachment B for additional information.

These Fellowships are intended to be held part-time (0.5 – 0.9 FTE) for the duration of the Fellowship. Fellows must also be based in Australia for the duration of the Fellowship – refer to *section 7.4* of the *2018 NHMRC Funding Rules*.

For this Fellowship, the combined time spent on research and on the associated professional activity must equate to at least 1.0 FTE. For the research component, at least 80% of that time must be devoted to achieving the outcomes of the Fellowship and the remaining Fellowship time must be spent on activities directly related to research under the Fellowship, including commercial activities, policy development or public health activities, e.g. if the research component is 50% (i.e. 0.5 FTE), then at least 0.4 FTE must be directed towards research.

6.4 Australia-China Exchange Early Career Fellowship Category

- Australian applicants: Full-time Fellowships are offered for Australian researchers to undertake research training for two years at a Chinese institution followed by two years in Australia.
- Chinese applicants (Chinese nationals): Full-time Fellowships are offered to Chinese researchers to undertake research training for two years at an Australian Institution.

Refer to Attachment D for additional information.

Note: Chinese nationals applying for the Australia-China Exchange ECF are eligible to apply only for that particular Fellowship.

7 TYPES OF APPLICANT

7.1 Co-funded Early Career Fellowships

NHMRC will offer ECF co-funding opportunities with several organisations. The most current information is available on the NHMRC [website](#).

These Fellowships are offered through co-funding partnerships established between NHMRC and each partner organisation. They offer additional opportunities to researchers whose work is particularly relevant to the concerns and research interests of the partner organisations.

The evaluation and ranking of an application by NHMRC is entirely independent of any assessment made by co-funding partners. These are not alternative awards but may have additional financial value compared to other ECFs.

For the purposes of the *Privacy Act 1988* (refer to *section 9.5* of the *2018 NHMRC Funding Rules* for more detail), applicants (and other persons whose details appear in grant applications, e.g. other investigators) should be aware that if they indicate they wish to be considered for co-funding, NHMRC will provide their personal information, including all pertinent application documentation and peer review outcomes, to the co-funding body or bodies nominated by the applicant. The purpose of providing this information to the co-funder(s) is to enable them to assess the application's eligibility for funding under the relevant co-funding arrangement.

Further information on partners' research interests and priorities may be found on the NHMRC [website](#).

In the event that a co-funder is unable to fulfil its obligation, NHMRC will continue to support the Fellowship at the normal salary package rate for the category of the Fellowship originally awarded by NHMRC. Any additional benefits that may have been provided by the co-funding partner, including Fellowships fully funded by the co-funder, will not be supported by NHMRC.

Note: Some co-funding organisations may require a separate application in addition to the one provided to NHMRC, and therefore it may be beneficial for applicants to contact the co-funding organisation to identify any additional requirements that might apply.

7.2 Electromagnetic Energy Research (EME)

Applicants who select EME funding in an ECF application should be aware that NHMRC, in conjunction with the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA), will determine if an application meets the criteria for EME research and is eligible to be funded through the Australian Government's levy on radio communication license fees. NHMRC will consider EME research applications in the Clinical or Public Health streams only.

Applicants are advised to review the 2017 ARPANSA Technical Report '*Radiofrequency Electromagnetic Energy and Health: Research Needs*' and ensure their application aligns with the research agenda into radiofrequency EME and health outlined in the Technical Report. Applications that are not in scope will be considered for NHMRC ECF funding only.

7.3 Other Fellowships

7.3.1 Frank Fenner Early Career Fellowship

This award is named to honour the achievements of Professor Frank Fenner (1914-2010). The Frank Fenner ECF will be awarded to the highest ranked applicant from the Biomedical or Public Health ECF category whose research focus is in an area of international public health application, and best reflects the qualities exemplified in Professor Fenner's career.

Note: This Fellowship does not provide any additional funding to the ECF package.

7.3.2 Bernie Banton Fellowship

The Bernie Banton Fellowship is an annual Fellowship that was established to commemorate the life of Bernie Banton through supporting health and medical research that has the greatest potential to make an impact on the treatment of mesothelioma. To be eligible to apply for this Fellowship, an applicant must be working in the field of mesothelioma and asbestosis. The Fellowship will be awarded to the highest ranked, funded applicant, who is undertaking research in this field.

Note: This Fellowship does not provide any additional funding to the ECF package.

8 FUNDING

For information on the number of ECF grants awarded in previous funding rounds, refer to the NHMRC [website](#).

8.1 Level and Duration of Funding

8.1.1 Duration of Award

All ECFs, with the exception of the Australia-China Exchange, are provided for four years.

8.1.2 Salary Packages

- i.) ECF packages are awarded at the Training Support Package Level 1. Refer to the NHMRC [website](#).
- ii.) All salary package payments will be in Australian currency.

8.1.3 Use of Funds

The salary package includes salary and all salary on-costs (including payroll tax, workers compensation, superannuation, long service leave etc.). With the exception of annual indexation to the salary, no additional funds will be provided.

8.1.4 Australian Allowances

For Australian based ECFs and the Australian component of Overseas ECFs, maintenance allowance of \$5,000 per annum, in addition to the salary package, is automatically included in the funding package and can be used for consumables that relate directly to the Fellow's research project, research related conference attendance or purchase of relevant computer equipment provided that the computer is above what the Administering Institution would normally supply and that it is necessary for the research. This is based on full-time research; pro-rata will apply for part-time ECFs.

8.1.5 Overseas Allowances

For Overseas based ECFs, the following allowances may be provided depending on the location to which the applicant is going:

Tier	Centres Covered	Annual Overseas Allowance Provided*
1	UK, Scandinavia and Europe (Western and Central regions), Japan, Korea, Russia, Middle East, USA	\$50,000
2	Canada, Central America, New Zealand, Eastern Europe	\$38,000
3	Africa, South East Asia, South America	\$26,000

* The annual allowance provided is a flat rate for the duration of the Fellowship.

Refer to [Attachment E](#) for the full list of countries covered within each tier. The allowances provided under each tier contribute to accommodation, airfares and other related costs for the Fellow and any dependents accompanying them.

Allowances paid by NHMRC are a contribution to a Fellow's overseas living costs. Incidentals that are covered under the overseas allowance should be agreed between the Administering Institution and the Fellow.

No additional funds will be provided for the duration of the Fellowship.

Note: NHMRC funds are not to be used to pay for any Fringe Benefit Tax incurred.

In the event that an ECF has to change their overseas location due to unforeseen circumstances (such as the movement of their supervisor), then the allowance provided by NHMRC may be adjusted accordingly, indicative of the new location, if it falls within a different tier. Refer to *section 10.1*.

8.1.6 Salary Loadings

Salary loadings are applicable to all Early Career Fellows with registered medical or dental qualifications, whether or not they perform any clinical duties. NHMRC will supply all funds per annum (pro rata) for these loadings on the following basis:

- Registration must be current at the time of application (salary loadings will not be provided if registration is obtained after submission of the application or during the duration of the Fellowship).

- The level of loading payable to medically qualified Early Career Fellows who do not engage in clinical duties (i.e. are employed to conduct full-time research) will be \$7,500. This level of loading will be paid irrespective of the department or discipline in which an individual works, or the nature of his or her duties. Pro-rata rates apply for part-time research.
- Where NHMRC Health Professional Research Fellows with medical qualifications are responsible for patient care within the institution where the research is to be conducted, NHMRC will pay up to \$15,000. Pro-rata rates apply for part-time research.
- In the case of staff with dental qualifications, dental loadings, equivalent to half the medical loading, will be payable on the same basis.

8.1.7 Other Salary or Research Funding Sources

NHMRC Early Career Fellows are not able to personally receive a salary from another comparable Government funded grant, full-time salaried academic position, or other full-time position in conjunction with their NHMRC ECF. NHMRC Early Career Fellows must inform the NHMRC if such situations arise. However, NHMRC Early Career Fellows are permitted to receive additional 'top-up' funding from their employing institution.

When applying for an ECF, applicants must declare the source, duration and levels of all research funding held, including all NHMRC funding, in order to ensure funding is not duplicated by the Commonwealth.

8.1.8 Short Term Support to Facilitate International Indigenous Researcher Networks

Funding to 'Facilitate International Indigenous Researcher Networks' (FIIRN) is available to ECF award holders who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. The purpose of this funding is to:

- facilitate appropriate international mentoring linkages for early career Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, building further on the intentions of the former Tripartite Agreement and current '[Letter of Intent](#)'
- support NHMRC's strategic objectives in relation to building capacity aimed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers.

Awardees who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander are able to request an additional total \$11,000 as part of their grant funding for travel to appropriate international conferences and/or short term collaborative activities. Travel within New Zealand or Canada is particularly encouraged. Eligible applicants that wish to be considered for this funding supplement must tick the relevant check box as part of their application in RGMS, otherwise they will not be able to request the funding supplement at a later date. Where there is an oversubscription from eligible applicants for this funding which exceeds NHMRC's allocated funds to this supplement (\$100,000), NHMRC will contribute a pro rata share of the available funding to each applicant.

In order to receive the funding supplement, applicants must be able to demonstrate all of the following at the time of application:

- They are of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent (see information on [AIATSIS website](#)),
- They intend to use the funds for travel to relevant international conferences and/or for collaborative purposes,
- The supplement was requested (via the relevant "tick box") as part of their application.

Fellows that choose to utilise the FIIRN supplement are required to report on the following as part of their Final Report in RGMS:

- what the funding supplement was used for
- the mentoring linkages established as a result of utilising the funding supplement.

8.2 Other Awards

Holding non-NHMRC awards in conjunction with an ECF

Fellows may accept other awards in conjunction with an ECF (e.g. Fulbright Scholarship) provided that NHMRC is notified in writing and achievement of the ECF objectives are not compromised by accepting the other award.

Deferral of an ECF in order to take up a non-NHMRC award

If a Fellowship holder is able to provide good scientific justification, supported by their supervisor, for acceptance of an overseas award from another source, permission may be granted by NHMRC to interrupt the Fellowship for a period of up to two years. Following the deferral period, support for the Fellowship will be provided under the normal Fellowship conditions.

9 ASSESSMENT PROCESS

For information about the peer review process, refer to the *2018 NHMRC Guide to Peer Review* and the *Early Career Fellowship scheme-specific Peer Review Guidelines for funding commencing in 2019*.

10 GRANT ADMINISTRATION

Administrative obligations and processes specific to ECF awardees are outlined below. Unless otherwise stated, these are in addition to the general requirements set out in the *NHMRC Funding Agreement* and *section 12* of the *2018 NHMRC Funding Rules*.

10.1 General

If an applicant's employment circumstances and/or Administering Institution change following submission of an application for an ECF or during the course of a current Fellowship, e.g. change of employer or additional employment responsibilities being undertaken, NHMRC is to be notified immediately.

Requests to vary the terms of an ECF should be made to NHMRC via the RGMS Grantee Variation portal. Fellows should consult the NHMRC [website](#) and contact the RAO at their Administering Institution if they require additional information. In general, ECF variation requests require a letter of support from their Supervisor.

10.2 Acceptance and Commencement of a Fellowship

Successful applicants must accept an offer of award of an ECF by the nominated acceptance date. Additionally, successful applicants that submit their PhD thesis by 31 December in the year of application must provide evidence of their PhD being passed before grant payments can commence. Applicants who do not submit their PhD thesis by 31 December in the year of application will have the offer of a Fellowship withdrawn.

Early Career Fellows are expected to commence their Fellowship on 1 January of the first year of award. Where a Fellow is unable to meet this requirement (e.g. they are still waiting on approval of their thesis), then they must submit a variation to defer their commencement date (refer to the NHMRC [website](#)).

NHMRC may, at its discretion, for what it considers sufficient cause, suspend the tenure of an ECF for such time as is thought fit, or withdraw the ECF and all payments.

10.3 Suspension of Fellowships for Family or Personal Reasons

Early Career Fellows may apply for suspension of their Fellowship for family-related or personal reasons, including pregnancy, major illness and carer responsibilities including parental leave, but not for vocational reasons or pursuits such as wishing to work part-time as a lecturer, or as a medical or health professional practitioner. An exception is provided for overseas based ECFs, refer to *section 10.7*. Requests to suspend the Fellowship will be considered by NHMRC on a case-by-case basis and must have the support of the Fellow's Administering Institution. The Fellowship will be extended by a period of time equal to the duration of the suspension. Remuneration will not be provided by NHMRC during the period of the suspension.

10.4 Parental Leave

Parental leave is paid in accordance with the arrangements applicable at the fellow's Administering Institution, up to a limit of 12 weeks per instance of parental leave. Leave taken beyond the 12 weeks is permitted, but is not paid by NHMRC. The institution may, however, continue payments under its Enterprise Bargaining Agreement. If the fellow wishes to take parental leave, they will need to suspend their fellowship (see *section 10.3*).

Parental leave required under State and Territory legislation will be managed separately by the Administering Institution.

10.5 Request to Reduce Time Commitment

NHMRC recognises that the personal circumstances of Fellows can change over time and that the need for a Fellow to continue in a full-time arrangement may no longer apply to their situation.

Full-time Fellows may apply to undertake a period of their award on a part-time basis for such personal reasons as providing parental or family support, but not for vocational reasons such as wishing to work part-time as a lecturer, or as a medical or health professional practitioner.

Requests to convert to part-time will be considered by NHMRC case by case and must have the written support of both the Fellow's Administering Institution and Supervisor. In all cases where part-time status is approved, the duration of the Fellowship will be extended to compensate for the part-time period with salary paid pro-rata in accordance with the part-time rate requested.

10.6 Request to Increase Time Commitment

NHMRC recognises that the personal circumstances of Fellows can change over time and that the need for a Fellow to continue in a part-time arrangement may no longer apply to their situation.

Fellows who hold a part-time Fellowship may apply to convert to full-time status. This applies to those who have previously converted all or part of their Fellowship into a part-time arrangement.

Requests to convert to full-time will be considered by NHMRC case by case and must have the written support of both the Fellow's Administering Institution and Supervisor. In all cases where full-time status is approved, the duration of the Fellowship will be adjusted to the full-time equivalent of the part-time period that remained.

These provisions do not apply to holders of the Health Professional Fellowship, as this is a part-time award designed to fulfil a vocational requirement.

10.7 Overseas Based Early Career Fellowships

For overseas based ECFs it is a requirement that the first two years are spent overseas with the remaining two years in Australia. Any request to vary the sequence of an overseas ECF will need to be submitted to NHMRC via RGMS Grantee Variation, using the 'Change in Research Plan' variation type. It should be noted that any changes must be made in one year blocks, for example, years one and four based in Australia, and years two and three based overseas. Each request will be assessed case by case and will be approved only where the Fellow has demonstrated that sufficient personal or scientific circumstances exist.

Fellows may apply to suspend their Fellowship while overseas for up to two years to complete their research, but not for vocational reasons or pursuits. Fellowship holders applying to suspend their award to extend the duration of the overseas portion must demonstrate that they have the support of both their overseas and Australian supervisors and have established an independent means of financial support for the duration of the additional overseas time.

Note: NHMRC financial support is not available for any additional periods of overseas time taken by a Fellow.

10.8 Reporting

Refer to *sections 9.20 – 9.23* of the *Funding Agreement* on the NHMRC website for information regarding reporting requirements.

11 ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - ECF Category Descriptors.

Attachment B - Categories of Award – Objectives.

Attachment C - Additional Information – Health Professional Research Fellowship.

Attachment D - Additional Information – Australia-China Exchange Fellowship.

Attachment E - Centres Allocated to Each Tier.

ATTACHMENT A

ECF Category Descriptors

The following scoring descriptors are to be used as a guide to score an application against each of the assessment criteria. The category descriptors are indicative, rather than definitive or exhaustive. Evaluation of performance will take into account opportunity, research discipline and overall summation of research contribution.

Assessing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Contributions

It is recognised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants often make additional valuable contributions to policy development, clinical/public health leadership and/or service delivery, community activities and linkages, and are often representatives on key committees. If applicable, these contributions should be considered when assessing, research output and track record.

Score	Criterion 1	Criterion 2	Criterion 3
	Research Output – Relative to Opportunity 50%	Research Proposal and Environment 30%	Professional Contribution – Relative to Opportunity 20%
<p>7 Exceptional <i>An application which clearly and strongly supports the aims of the scheme and meets all the assessment criteria with no weaknesses.</i></p> <p><i>It is expected that the top 2% of applications would be ranked in this category.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has an exceptional record of research output relative to their discipline as assessed in terms of (for example): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ quantity and quality of research publications in their field ○ grant funding ○ conference presentations ○ influence on policy or practice (including relevant industry experience) ○ patents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ has objectives that are extremely well-defined ○ is near flawless by design ○ will be achieved ○ addresses an issue of utmost importance to human health. • The research environment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ is extremely appropriate for the proposed research ○ provides exceptional mentoring and training arrangements. • Justification for remaining in the same research group is sound (if applicable). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is an exceptional contributor to research as assessed in terms of (for example): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ recognition through prizes and awards ○ supervisory experience ○ broader community engagement as well as contribution to the research community ○ peer review experience.
<p>6 Outstanding <i>An application which clearly and strongly supports the aims of the scheme and meets all the assessment criteria with negligible weaknesses.</i></p> <p><i>It is expected that the top 15% of applications would be ranked in this category or higher.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has an outstanding record of research output relative to their discipline as assessed in terms of (for example): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ quantity and quality of research publications in their field ○ grant funding ○ conference presentations ○ influence on policy or practice (including relevant industry experience) ○ patents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ has objectives that are very well-defined ○ is near flawless by design ○ is highly feasible ○ addresses an issue of significant importance to human health. • The research environment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ is highly appropriate for the proposed research ○ provides outstanding mentoring and training arrangements. • Justification for remaining in the same research group is sound (if applicable). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is an outstanding contributor to research as assessed in terms of (for example): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ recognition through prizes and awards ○ supervisory experience ○ broader community engagement as well as contribution to the research community ○ peer review experience.

Score	Criterion 1	Criterion 2	Criterion 3
	Research Output – Relative to Opportunity 50%	Research Proposal and Environment 30%	Professional Contribution – Relative to Opportunity 20%
<p>5 Excellent An application which supports the aims of the scheme and meets the assessment criteria with only some minor weaknesses.</p> <p><i>It is expected that the top 35% of applications would be ranked in this category or higher.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has an excellent record of research output relative to their discipline as assessed in terms of (for example): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ quantity and quality of research publications in their field ○ grant funding ○ conference presentations ○ influence on policy or practice (including relevant industry experience) ○ patents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ has objectives that are well-defined ○ is very well designed ○ is highly feasible ○ addresses an issue of great importance to human health. • The research environment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ is highly appropriate for the proposed research ○ provides excellent mentoring and training arrangements. • Justification for remaining in the same research group is sound (if applicable). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is an excellent contributor to research as assessed in terms of (for example): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ recognition through prizes and awards ○ supervisory experience ○ broader community engagement as well as contribution to the research community ○ peer review experience.
<p>4 Very good An application which supports the aims of the scheme and meets the assessment criteria, but with numerous minor weaknesses</p> <p><i>It is expected that the top 65% of applications would be ranked in this category or higher.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a very good record of research output relative to their discipline as assessed in terms of (for example): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ quantity and quality of research publications in their field ○ grant funding ○ conference presentations ○ influence on policy or practice (including any relevant industry experience) ○ patents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ has objectives that are clear ○ is well designed ○ is feasible ○ addresses an issue of importance to human health. • The research environment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ is highly suitable for the proposed research ○ provides very good mentoring and training arrangements. • Justification for remaining in the same research group is sound (if applicable). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is a very good contributor to research as assessed in terms of (for example): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ recognition through prizes and awards ○ supervisory experience ○ broader community engagement as well as contribution to the research community ○ peer review experience.
<p>3 Good An application which supports the aims of the scheme and meets the assessment criteria, but with at least one moderate weakness</p> <p><i>It is expected that the bottom 35% of applications would be ranked in this category or lower.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a good record of research output relative to their discipline as assessed in terms of (for example): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ quantity and quality of research publications in their field ○ grant funding ○ conference presentations ○ influence on policy or practice (including any relevant industry experience) ○ patents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ has objectives that are adequately-defined ○ is overall clear in respects to design ○ is likely to be successfully achieved ○ addresses an issue of some importance to human health. • The research environment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ is appropriate for the proposed research ○ provides sound mentoring and training arrangements. • Justification for remaining in the same research group is poor (if applicable). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is a good contributor to research as assessed in terms of (for example): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ recognition through prizes and awards ○ supervisory experience ○ broader community engagement as well as contribution to the research community ○ peer review experience.

Score	Criterion 1	Criterion 2	Criterion 3
	Research Output – Relative to Opportunity 50%	Research Proposal and Environment 30%	Professional Contribution – Relative to Opportunity 20%
<p>2 Satisfactory <i>An application which partly meets the aims of the scheme or assessment criteria with noticeable deficiencies or shortcomings evident by some moderate weaknesses</i></p> <p><i>It is expected that the bottom 15% of applications would be ranked in this category or lower.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a fair record of research output relative to their discipline as assessed in terms of (for example): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ quantity and quality of research publications in their field ○ grant funding ○ conference presentations ○ influence on policy or practice (including any relevant industry experience) ○ patents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ has objectives that are somewhat unclearly-defined ○ raises some concerns with respect to research design ○ raises some concerns in regards to the feasibility of the research proposal ○ addresses an issue of some concern to human health. • The research environment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ is adequate for the proposed research ○ provides adequate mentoring and training arrangement. • Justification for remaining in the same research group is poor (if applicable). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is a satisfactory contributor to research as assessed in terms of (for example): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ recognition through prizes and awards ○ supervisory experience ○ broader community engagement as well as contribution to the research community ○ peer review experience.
<p>1 Weak <i>An application which marginally meets the aims of the scheme or assessment criteria. Shortcomings or deficiencies against most criteria or aims predominate</i></p> <p><i>It is expected that the bottom 5% of applications would be ranked in this category or lower.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a limited record of research output relative to their discipline as assessed in terms of (for example): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ quantity and quality of research publications in their field ○ grant funding ○ conference presentations ○ influence on policy or practice (including any relevant industry experience) ○ patents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ has objectives that are unclear ○ raises major concerns with respect to the research design ○ raises major concerns in regards to the feasibility of the research proposal ○ does not address an issue of more than marginal concern to human health. • The research environment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ is not ideal for the proposed research ○ provides limited mentoring and training arrangements. • Justification for remaining in the same research group is unsatisfactory (if applicable). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is a minimal contributor to research as assessed in terms of (for example): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ recognition through prizes and awards ○ supervisory experience ○ broader community engagement as well as contribution to the research community ○ peer review experience.

Categories of Award – Objectives

Category of Award	Objective
Full-time Australian Based Fellowships	
Peter Doherty Biomedical Fellowship	Biomedical Fellowships aim to provide full-time training in basic biomedical science research in Australia and to encourage persons of outstanding ability to make biomedical research a career.
Clinical Research Fellowship	Australian Clinical Research Fellowships aim to provide training, in Australia, in the field of clinical research, including the social and behavioural sciences, and to encourage persons of outstanding ability to make clinical research a significant component of their career.
Public Health and Health Services Research Fellowship	Public Health and Health Services Research Fellowships aim to provide full-time training, in Australia, in the field of public health research and are offered to persons of outstanding ability who wish to make public health and health services research a significant component of their career.
Fellowship for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research	The purpose of this Fellowship is to provide research training in Australia for Fellows in health areas of particular relevance and significance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The researcher must address the <i>Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria</i> (see section 6.3 of the 2018 NHMRC Funding Rules).
Full-time Overseas Based Fellowships	
CJ Martin Biomedical Fellowship	To provide full-time training in basic research within the biomedical sciences, both overseas and in Australia. Fellowships are offered to a limited number of persons of outstanding ability who wish to make biomedical research a significant component of their career.
Neil Hamilton Fairley Clinical Fellowship	To provide full-time training overseas and in Australia in the areas of clinical research, including the social and behavioural sciences. In considering these applications NHMRC will place emphasis on the applied value of the proposed research.
Sidney Sax Public Health and Health Services Research Fellowship	This Fellowship aims to provide full-time training in public health and health services research overseas and in Australia.
Fellowship for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research	The purpose of this Fellowship is to provide research training for Fellows in health areas of particular relevance and significance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The researcher must address the <i>Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria</i> (see section 6.3 of the 2018 NHMRC Funding Rules).
Australia–China Exchange Fellowship	The aim of the Australia–China Exchange Fellowship scheme is to increase collaboration between Australia and Chinese health and medical researchers through the support of advanced research training. (See Attachment D for further details)

Part-time Australian Based Fellowships

Health Professional Research Fellowship

Health Professional Research Fellowships aim to provide part-time (0.5-0.9 FTE) training for awardees (currently practicing health professionals) who wish to **combine their professional career development** with an ECF in Australia.

Health Professional Research Fellowships support persons who wish to follow a clinical, public, allied health, or hospital research career in Australia, but who do not wish to fully relinquish their professional career in favour of a full-time research ECF.

(See [Attachment C](#) for further details)

Additional Information – Health Professional Research Fellowships

1. Objectives

Health Professional Research Fellowships aim to provide part-time (0.5 to 0.9 FTE) training for practicing health professionals who wish to share their time between research and their clinical responsibilities.

2. Description

Health Professional Research Fellowships aim to encourage persons who wish to follow a clinical, public and allied health or hospital scientist career in Australia but who do not wish to fully relinquish their professional clinical career in favour of a full-time research Fellowship.

Note: the combination of Fellowship and professional career working time must equate to at least 1.0 FTE.

3. Eligibility

See *section 5* before considering the following criteria, specific to Health Professional Research Early Career Fellowships (ECF):

- Applicants must be currently practicing health professionals, such as doctors, dentists or allied health professionals. The applicant's current supervisor must sign an agreement that the applicant will be released if offered a Health Professional Research ECF and
- At 30 June in the year of application, have held their PhD for no more than four years (from the date their PhD thesis was passed (not date of degree conferral)) unless career disruptions exist (see *section 6.2.1* of the *2018 NHMRC Funding Rules*).

For ECF eligibility the career disruption must involve:

- a continuous absence from work for 28 calendar days or more; and/or
- continuous long-term part-time employment (with defined % full-time equivalent (FTE)) due to circumstances classified as career disruption, with the absence amounting to a total of 28 calendar days or more. For example, an applicant who is employed at 0.8 FTE due to childcare responsibilities would need to continue this for at least 140 calendar days to achieve a career disruption of 28 calendar days.

The only documents that will be accepted as evidence for career disruption are medical certificates and letters from an applicant's employer summarising the duration (including start date, end date, %FTE) and type of leave taken and/or part-time employment (e.g. maternity leave, sick leave).

An example of acceptable career disruption evidence is provided on the NHMRC [website](#).

Additional Information – Australia-China Exchange Fellowship

1. Objectives

The aim of this Exchange Fellowship scheme is to increase collaboration between researchers in Australia and China in the area of health and medical research by supporting research exchange between the two countries.

The Exchange Fellowship is provided to allow:

- Australian health and medical researchers to undertake postdoctoral research training in China, and
- Chinese health and medical researchers to undertake postdoctoral research training in Australia.

2. Description

Awards are available for full-time research in the biomedical, clinical, public health and health services or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research fields.

All applicants, whether from Australia or China, must apply through an approved Australian Administering Institution. A list of approved Australian Administering Institutions can be found on the NHMRC [website](#).

Note: This is a program in which NHMRC arranges for an exchange of researchers between Australia and China, and intending applicants themselves do not have to identify individuals in the other country with whom they wish to exchange.

3. Eligibility

Australian Applicants

The requirements for Australia-China Exchange Fellowship applicants are identical to those for Australian applicants in all other Early Career Fellowship Overseas Based sub-categories (see *section 6*).

Chinese Applicants (Chinese nationals)

To be eligible to apply for an NHMRC Australia China Exchange Fellowship, the applicant must meet the following general criteria. Applicants must be citizens of the People's Republic of China and have applied for the relevant passport and if they are currently a resident in Australia, have been a resident for less than one year as at 31 December of the year of application.

4. Information Applicable to Chinese Applicants (Chinese nationals only)

4.1 Additional information

In addition to meeting the eligibility requirements of NHMRC, applicants from China will need to ensure that their visa application has commenced.

It will generally take at least six months to secure a visa to conduct research in Australia.

For further information contact the Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection.

4.2 Translated copies of documents

The documents listed below will need to be submitted to NHMRC in RGMS as part of an application.

- One signed original letter from the Head of a research institution in China on letterhead recommending the applicant for the Fellowship and translated into English.

- One certified copy of all academic qualifications (including PhD award) translated into English.
- One Curriculum Vitae documenting post-doctoral research experience translated into English.

4.3 Funding Details

Refer to *section 8.1* of this document.

Allowances and Costs

A Fellowship holder is entitled to the following:

- Allowance for the two year stay in Australia (see *section 8.1.5* for the allowance provided within Tier 2). This allowance is intended to contribute to the cost of minimum cost return airfares for the Fellow and dependents to Australia on one occasion only as well as airport and related travel taxes.
- No additional funds will be provided by NHMRC.

ATTACHMENT E

Centres Allocated to Each Tier

Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 2 (Continued)	Tier 3
Angola	Algeria	Lithuania	Albania
Austria	Antigua and Barbuda	Malaysia	Argentina
Bahamas	Azerbaijan	Mali	Bolivia
Barbados	Bahrain	Malta	Bosnia
Belgium	Bangladesh	Mauritius	Brunei
Bermuda	Belarus	Mexico	Cambodia
China	Brazil	Morocco	Chile
Denmark	Bulgaria	Mozambique	Costa Rica
Finland	Burkina Faso	Myanmar	East Timor
France	Cameroon	New Zealand	El Salvador
Gabon	Canada	Papua New Guinea	Eritrea
Germany	Colombia	Peru	Ethiopia
Iceland	Congo Democratic Republic	Philippines	Fiji
Ireland	Cook Islands	Poland	Gambia
Israel	Cote D'Ivoire	Portugal	Iran
Italy	Croatia	Puerto Rico	Kosovo
Japan	Cuba	Romania	Kyrgyzstan
Jordan	Cyprus	Rwanda	Laos
Korea Republic	Czech Republic	Saint Lucia	Macedonia
Luxembourg	Dominican Republic	Saint Vincent	Malawi
Monaco	Ecuador	Samoa	Namibia
Netherlands	Egypt	Saudi Arabia	Nepal
New Caledonia	Estonia	Senegal	Nicaragua
Nigeria	Georgia	Sierra Leone	Pakistan
Norway	Ghana	Slovakia	Panama
Oman	Gibraltar	Slovenia	Paraguay
Qatar	Greece	Solomon Islands	Serbia
Russia	Guatemala	Spain	South Africa
Singapore	Guyana	Surinam	Sri Lanka
Sweden	Hungary	Taiwan	Sudan
Switzerland	India	Tanzania	Tunisia
Trinidad and Tobago	Indonesia	Thailand	Uganda
United Arab Emirates	Jamaica	Tonga	Vietnam
United Kingdom	Kazakhstan	Turkey	
United States of America	Kenya	Ukraine	
Venezuela	Kuwait	Uruguay	
	Latvia	Vanuatu	
	Lebanon	Zambia	
	Libya		

Chinese applicants conducting research in Australia for two years (as part of the Australia-China Exchange) will receive a Tier 2 allowance.