

## Written Rebuttal of Discipline Panel Assessors' Reports

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### Summary of the Presentation

1. Overview of the Project Grant Application Cycle – Role of Discipline Panels
2. Overview of the Project Grant Application Cycle – A step by step view of the cycle
3. Comments on Steps 6-9 (Relevant to the Assessment/Review Process, and Response/Rebuttal)
4. "Advice for written rebuttal of Discipline Panel Assessors' Reports"

1 and 2 are from the NHMRC Website (access via <http://www.health.gov.au/nhmrc/research/2001/projects/overview.htm>)

### 1. Overview of the Project Grant Application Cycle – Role of Discipline Panels

*(Applications for funding for projects commencing in 2001)*

Applications for Project Grant funding will be considered by members of Discipline Panels.

The Discipline Panels will:

- arrange review of applications by independent assessors;
- seek applicants' comments on assessors' reports;
- rank each application relative to the others on the basis of the application, the assessors' reports, and applicants' responses to these assessments;
- assess budgets.

It is expected that applicants will be notified of the outcome of their applications in October/November 2000 following Ministerial approval.

Interviews will not be held for project grant applications.

### 2. Overview of the Project Grant Application Cycle - A step by step view of the application cycle.

#### Step 1 Registration of Administering Institutions (November 1999)

Institutions intending to support researchers in applying for NHMRC Project Grants must be registered with the Office of NHMRC prior to commencement of the grant round. Institutions are responsible for assigning Application ID numbers (which are provided by the ONHMRC), lodging applications by the due date and providing infrastructure to funded researchers.

#### Step 2 Call for Applications for NHMRC Project Grants (December 1999)

Advertisements are placed in all major newspapers advising the commencement of the grant round and instructing applicants to go to the NHMRC Web Site to download an application form. The form is also available upon request from Research Officers on CD ROM and diskette.

### Step 3 Applications Close (March 2000)

Applications close at the NHMRC on 3 March 2000. Late applications will not be accepted. Research Administration Officers in Administering Institutions may set earlier deadlines.

### Step 4 Access Committee (March 2000)

Access Committee is comprised of members of the Research Committee. This group considers the eligibility of applications against the NHMRC Access Policy Guidelines

### Step 5 Allocation to Discipline Panels (March 2000)

Applications are allocated to appropriate Discipline Panels.

### Step 6 Selection of Assessors (April – May 2000)

Discipline Panel Members assign a minimum of three independent assessors to each application for peer review.

### Step 7 Independent Assessment (May - June 2000)

Applications are sent to assessors for review. Assessors complete a report and forward it to the Office of NHMRC on or before the due date.

Discipline Panel members examine the assessments and provide comment on the assessments and applications.

### Step 8 Assessments sent to Applicants (June – July 2000)

Applicants receive assessments of their applications, and Discipline Panel comments.

Applicants have 2 weeks to submit an electronic text response to the ONHMRC.

### Step 9 Discipline Panel Consideration (July – August 2000)

Discipline Panels meet to consider the applications, assessments and responses from applicants. Applications are ranked by the Discipline Panels and the Discipline Panel prepares a report on each application.

The Discipline Panels may be enhanced by the inclusion of 3 international or community members.

### Step 10 Review of findings of the Discipline Panels (August – September 2000)

The Project Grants Committee considers the findings of the Discipline Panels and makes recommendations to the Research Committee. The Research Committee makes final recommendations on which applications should receive funding.

### Step 11 Minister for Health and Aged Care considers grants and expenditure and applicants are advised of the results (October – November 2000)

A Minute is sent to the Minister for his/her consideration. The Minister determines which applications will be offered funding.

The Office of NHMRC advises successful and unsuccessful applicants of the outcomes of the grant round.

Applicants receive a copy of the report from the Discipline Panel, and assessor scores.

#### Step 12 Project Grants commence (January 2001)

Provided all the necessary certificates and approvals have been obtained, funding for new Project Grants commences in January.

### **3. Comments on Steps 6-9 (Relevant to the Assessment/Review Process, and Response/Rebuttal)**

#### Step 6 Selection of Assessors (April – May 2000)

Discipline Panel Members assign a minimum of three independent assessors to each application for peer review.

- *Most DP's have identified 4 assessors for each grant.*

#### Step 7 Independent Assessment (May - June 2000)

Applications are sent to assessors for review. Assessors complete a report and forward it to the Office of NHMRC on or before the due date.

Discipline Panel members examine the assessments and provide comment on the assessments and applications.

- *Starts this week!*
- *Assessments due 2 June 2000*
- *Assessments to be screened by primary spokesperson for inappropriate comments*
- *Additional comments and questions to DP secretary by 15/6/00*

#### Step 8 Assessments sent to Applicants (June – July 2000)

Applicants receive assessments of their applications, and Discipline Panel comments.

Applicants have 2 weeks to submit an electronic text response to the ONHMRC.

- *? start by week of 19 June 2000*
- *text response by 7 July*
- *10 – 14 July: all information to DP members*
- *17 – 28 July – analysis by DP members*

### Step 9 Discipline Panel Consideration (July – August 2000)

Discipline Panels meet to consider the applications, assessments and responses from applicants. Applications are ranked by the Discipline Panels and the Discipline Panel prepares a report on each application.

The Discipline Panels may be enhanced by the inclusion of 3 international or community members.

- *31/7 – 4/8: first lot of DP's meet*
- *7/8 – 11/8: second lot DP's meet*
- *primary spokesperson presents the grant to the DP*
- *secondary spokesperson presents the assessors' issues, the DP (primary spokesperson's) questions and comments, and the applicants responses to all*

## **4. "Advice for written rebuttal of Discipline Panel Assessors' Reports"**

### **(a) Personal Views**

- stay cool
- if the spokesperson's summary hasn't identified the major issues, do so and deal with them
- aggregate issues across reports using relevant headers (significance, approach, feasibility, track record, budget, specific questions, general comments)
- prioritize issues within headers
- stay focussed
- keep comments balanced
- have a colleague read the criticisms and your rebuttal
- minimize sarcasm (see first dot point)

Do not attempt to contact spokespersons or chairpersons directly!

### **(b) Informal Advice from the NHMRC Secretariat**

- Applicants will get detailed instructions from NHMRC
- Rebuttal will be on 2 A4 pages sent to applicants electronically and sent back as a word document (font size no smaller than Times 10)
- An additional A4 page with a maximum of 2 illustrations may be submitted (by mail – 2 copies) – this is not meant for additional text-based rebuttal
- Don't try to answer all issues – concentrate on those identified by the spokesperson as important, or on those common to more than one assessor

Do not attempt to contact spokespersons or chairpersons directly!