

ARC Seminar 7/12/07

Prof. Stephanie Donald UTS (HCA Panel Chair 2008)

Application Process - General:

- When applications reach ARC, Executive Directors (ED) look at all of the 100 word summaries and keywords and decide which panel of the college the applications will go to (could be more than 1).
- Need to be careful with RFCSD/SEO, can't change them after the fact.
- ED of each panel splits applications between panel members (HCA -14 members)
- Panel member details are available on the ARC website, however it is not wise to be overly strategic on the basis of who these people are. Being on the college is like being on board of directors, one does not look for the things they like, they read and respond to wide variety of areas outside of their own)

- EAC1: Each grant is given a reader from the college who shepherds the application through the entire process (each panel members gets about 70)
- EAC2: Second reader for each application which helps EAC1. So each person has some they have primary responsibility for and a secondary

EACS look at 100 words and keywords and use GAMS to obtain a list of readers. If the area is one EAC is uncertain of, they spend a fair bit of time searching for senior experts in the field to read the application.

EAC1 allocates international readers (INTREADER – 4 per application)
ED allocates Australian readers (OZREADER – 2 per application)
Each OZREADER gets about 25 applications each, so they can provide meaningful rankings. Considers OZREADER as important as EAC1 in their advice. Although INT and OZ make comments, marks and ranks (ranks being the most important), the number of applications they receive means that OZREADERS are very important.

- End of June reports are given to applicants. Suggests taking a day after reading them before giving considered response. Use rejoinder page intelligently.
- If you have a comment which is a woeful misunderstanding of what you are doing, address the others first, then argue against it in a restrained scholarly way.
- Always take time for rejoinder, even if you have e.g. only 2 negative comments. You do not know how the application is ranked. Readers may be inclined to negative, and despite comments have ranked you well.
- EACS then called to Canberra for a week where they committee for 3-5 days, deciding on the line of which to fund, dependent on the budget available.
From there they cut budgets by certain amounts
(NB: different between panels e.g. teaching relief more important to HUMN research than to others)

Prof. Stephen Crane MQ (SBE panel)

- ALWAYS write with the guidelines in front of you. If the guidelines say that the benefit should be based on expected outcomes, state your expected outcomes (what could your research lead to? What are the possible implications if all goes well?)
- If it asks for "aims", then you say, "The first aim is ..."
- Write 1-2 months ahead (around December), then let it sit a while, and then polish it up and send it to the people who need to read it.
- Take criticism seriously. If somebody tells you something is unclear, then EAC/Readers may have similar issue.
- Make your grant accessible to the intelligent non-expert. As MC says -- the assessors should "read, not think". All readers want to feel smart, not stupid
- Describe the logic of your study. You won't have room for detail on every single aspect of it.
- Don't use acronyms. If you do, define them a couple of times.
- Organise your space according to what counts for reviewers - e.g Track record 40%. Background has no % value, so don't spend too much of your space discussing it at the expense of others which do such as national benefit and significance.
- National benefit is particularly important. If you don't have that 10% you are in trouble, so this should be done and refined.
- Writing clearly and logically is the main point which he would like to make to those seeking success.
- In view of the process, it is likely that the impressions of the two ARC assessors, on the first and second readings of your grant, will count most towards its probability of success.

What is likely to be read at least twice?

- A) 100 word summary. Have an experienced scholar read this.
- B) Significance and Innovation
- C) Approach and Methodology
- D) National Benefit
- E) Track Record

Rejoinders

- You have to handle the outliers/person who is different.
- All have the application and rejoinder next to each other when reading, so recommends not wasting space on quotes (even positive ones).
- If legitimate criticism, you should be willing to incorporate it.
- If the reviews are mixed, the assessors will probably look to see if your rejoinder addresses the concerns of the negative reviews NB: The reader who wrote the assessment does not see the rejoinder, so don't write it to/for them, write it for the satisfaction of an intelligent non-expert (EAC).

Discussion:

X HCA panel sometimes does not like senior research associates, as it can be viewed as a postdoc by any other name. If including senior RA, the justification is particularly important.

X Principle of budgets: ARC will sometimes change the year that it gives you something (based on how much funding they have to provide for particular years). Budget isn't one of the items which determines whether you get or don't get the grant, unless something is out of whack. If something appears suspicious, then it may effect your outcome. This year, college has been asked to look at budgets for the August meeting, so it could be a sign of it mattering more this time around.