



ACADEMY OF
THE SOCIAL SCIENCES
IN AUSTRALIA

Professor Sue Thomas
Chief Executive Officer
Australian Research Council

Dear Sue

The Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia has noted the quite low outcomes for the Social Sciences (and also the Humanities) in the recent round of ARC announcements this month regarding Laureate Fellowships and Future Fellowships.

This is of particular concern for development of high level academic skilling in the social sciences, and hence for insight into so many of the issues that challenge our nation (and beyond).

We would be grateful for the opportunity to discuss this with the ARC to determine if there are structural issues in the award process that could be improved upon for assessing the contribution of social scientists in research.

We look forward to your guidance on this matter.

With regards

Glenn

Professor Glenn Withers AO
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Professor Glenn Withers AO
President
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Dear Glenn

Thank you for your letter of 27 August 2018 about the outcomes for Social Sciences and Humanities applications in the 2018 selection rounds for Australian Laureate Fellowships and Future Fellowships.

The outcomes for an individual discipline within a selection round are dependent on a range of variables including the total funding available, the number of applications, and the quality of applications. It is common for discipline success rates to vary from year to year, particularly in schemes where relatively small numbers of grants are awarded as is the case with the ARC's fellowship schemes. This fluctuation is evident in the reporting of outcomes by primary 4-digit Field of Research (FoR) code published on the ARC website (<https://www.arc.gov.au/grants-and-funding/apply-funding/grants-dataset>).

The ARC monitors the outcomes of its selection rounds to determine whether changes in policy or processes may have resulted in unintended consequences. In 2018, the application eligibility limits were extended under the Future Fellowships scheme to allow candidates to apply under the scheme for a third time. Previously the limit on the number of applications that could be submitted was two. As a result, the ARC received 509 applications for funding compared to 294 received in the previous round and competition for the fellowships was very strong.

In all ARC selection rounds excellence determines the outcomes that the ARC recommends to the Minister. The Selection Advisory Committee's (SAC) deliberations are informed by assessments undertaken by discipline experts who are closely matched with each application and in schemes with relatively fewer applications (for example, Australian Laureate Fellowships and ARC Centres of Excellence) the SAC is composed of highly respected academics from beyond the ARC College of Experts. In all instances, SAC membership includes representatives from all disciplines including the social sciences and humanities. All SAC members are required to make their decisions based on the selection criteria stated in funding rules and there are no quotas for individual disciplines.

Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) research typically receives approximately 20 per cent of ARC funding across all schemes (except for the Industrial Research Transformation Program which is focused on research in industrial transformation priority areas). This has been a relatively stable pattern in recent years which largely reflects the number of applications that come from these disciplines.

It should be noted that researchers often select several Field of Research (FoR) codes as being relevant to their research, some from the HASS range and some from the Science, Mathematics, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) range. Data based on primary FoRs, by its nature, can hide the multidisciplinary nature of some applications which cut across disciplines, including HASS areas, in important and innovative ways.

I hope this information is useful.

Yours sincerely



Professor Sue Thomas
Chief Executive Officer