



2026

**PAUL
BOURKE
AWARDS**
FOR EARLY CAREER
RESEARCH

APPLICATION
GUIDELINES

ABOUT THE AWARD

The Paul Bourke Awards for Early Career Research honour Australian citizens and Permanent Residents who are in the early part of their career and who have achieved excellence in scholarship in one or more fields of the social sciences. The awards are named in honour of the Academy's past president Paul Francis Bourke (1938–1999) who started his training at the University of Melbourne and went on to become one of the first Australian historians to obtain American style doctoral training.

Whilst at Flinders University, he served as Professor of American Studies and also as Pro-Vice Chancellor. From Flinders University, he went on to become the Director of the Research School of Social Sciences at ANU and also served as the President of the Academy from 1993 to 1997. The contribution Paul made to the field of performance measurement is considered to be invaluable by academic scholars.

Four Paul Bourke Award recipients are selected each year by members of the Academy's Panel Committees. The awards are presented to social science researchers who are within five years of receiving their doctorate (with allowances for career interruptions).

The Awards comprise a testamur and medallion presented to each recipient. As part of the Paul Bourke Award, and with agreement of the recipients' home universities, the Academy will assist with the coordination and promotion of a lecture delivered during the following year. The recipients are also asked to contribute to media and promotion of their Award and their research by the Academy.



2019 Paul Bourke Award winners with Academy President (L-R): Dr David Frazier; Professor Jane Hall (Academy President); Dr Rebecca Ananian-Welsh; Dr Elise Klein; Dr Melissa Day

APPLICATION GUIDELINES

ASSESSMENT OF NOMINATIONS

Each eligible nomination received will be assessed by the relevant Academy Panel Committee on the basis of excellence in the social sciences as demonstrated by:

- scholarly publication, especially in leading international journals and/or books published by leading publishers,
- academic prizes, research grants and Fellowships and scholarships,
- presentations at leading national and international conferences,
- contributions to the advancement of public policy in the social sciences

The disciplines covered by the Panels are aligned with the 2020 ANZSCR Field of Research codes as follows:

Panel A – People, Place, Culture, and Communication: Built Environment & Design, Human Society (including Anthropology, Criminology, Demography, Gender studies, Geography, Policy and administration, Political science, Social Work, Sociology), Indigenous Studies, Language, Communication and Culture

Panel B – Business & Economics: Accounting, Commerce, Economics, Human resources and industrial relations, Management, Marketing, Tourism, Statistics

Panel C – History, Law & Philosophy: History, Law and legal studies, Philosophy

Panel D – Education, Psychology & Public Health: Education, Health Sciences, Psychology

The Academy reserves the right not to select an award in any given Panel or year.

NOMINATION PROCESS

Nominations should be submitted via the Academy's Awards portal (available through [our website](#)).

Fellows can also submit a nomination via the [Fellows' Portal](#) on the Academy's website.

Each nomination must be supported by two Academy Fellows: one named as proposer and one as seconder. The nomination can be completed and submitted by the proposer or seconder, or by someone else, including the nominee. The Nomination also requires:

- A nomination form setting out the case for the nominated scholar
- The name, position, and email address of two referees who have agreed to provide a referee's report in support of the nomination by the due date.
- A full CV for the nominee

Upon receipt of a nomination, the Academy will contact the referees via email to request a referee report. The referee reports must be submitted by the referees via the nomination portal by 26 June to be considered by the Academy. If the referee reports are not received by this date, the nomination may not be able to be considered for the award. Please refer to the guidelines for referees below.

TIMELINE

- Nominations open in April and must be submitted no later than 12 June 2026.
- Referee's reports must be submitted via the portal by no later than 26 June 2026.
- Panel Committees review nominations in September.
- Nominees and nominators are advised of the nomination outcome in October.
- Each of the Award recipients are presented with a testamur and medallion at the Academy's Annual Dinner (typically November).

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Nominations will be checked by Academy staff for eligibility prior to assessment by Panel Committees. Eligibility criteria include:

- A PhD in the social sciences, awarded not more than five years* prior to the closing date for nominations, excluding any eligible periods of career interruption
- Australian citizenship or permanent resident status
- Endorsement by two Academy Fellows as Proposer and Seconder
- The nominated scholar must not have previously won the Paul Bourke Award for Early Career Research

** Scholars are eligible to be nominated within five years of the conferral date of their PhD (as certified by the Administering Organisation), plus any eligible career interruptions. If a nominee has more than one PhD, the earliest awarded PhD must fall within this timeframe.*

ELIGIBLE CAREER INTERRUPTIONS

The number of years between the conferral date of a PhD and the closing date for nominations is a key element of eligibility for the Paul Bourke Awards for Early Career Research. Scholars are eligible to be nominated within five years of the conferral date of their earliest PhD (as certified by the Administering organisation).

The Academy recognises career interruptions can have a significant impact on the period between conferral of a researcher's PhD and the submission of a nomination. The Academy allows the eligibility periods for the Paul Bourke Awards to be extended where specified career interruptions have occurred.

Only the following significant and **non-overlapping** career interruptions will be eligible:

ELIGIBLE CAREER INTERRUPTIONS (CONT.)

Reason for career interruption	Time which can be claimed (minimum period of one month)
International relocation	Time commensurate with the interruption, not exceeding three months per international relocation.
Child-care as primary carer (including parental leave and part-time work while caring for one or more children)	Up to two years per dependent child
Other caring responsibilities (including leave and part-time employment for care of a dependent family member)	Time commensurate with the interruption.
Medical condition or disability	Time commensurate with the interruption.
Non-research employment (if not concurrent with research employment) or unemployment	Time commensurate with the interruption.

Evidence of any career interruptions must be provided at the time of nomination. If claiming interruptions for childcare, evidence such as a letter from the nominee's employer confirming time taken for parental leave or part time employment will be required. Nominees claiming a career interruption on the basis of 'non-research employment' must provide certification from their employer that there was no allowance for the conduct of research during the period of employment.

Nominees should provide a percentage or total full time equivalent (FTE) for interruptions for maternity or parental leave, carer's responsibilities, illness or disability. Please note, the FTE of the career interruption should be listed, not the FTE of working hours. For example:

1. If a nominee took parental leave on a full-time basis, then the FTE% for that career interruption would be 100%
2. If a nominee returned to work part time for 12 months following parental leave, and worked 3 full days per week in that 12-month period, the career interruption is an FTE of 40% with a total time claimed of 4.8 months
3. If a nominee returned to work part time for 12 months following parental leave, and worked 2 full days per week in that 12 month period, the career interruption is an FTE of 60% with a total time claimed of 7.2 months

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY AND PERFORMANCE EVIDENCE (ROPE) STATEMENT

Nominees are invited to include a ROPE statement of up to 300 words within their nomination, in order to account for other factors that may have affected their research progress outside of the above listed career interruptions. The statement enables the research achievements of the nominees to be evaluated in the context of their career and life experiences that may have affected their research capacity, productivity or contribution.

Examples include but are not limited to:

- Limited or no access to facilities and resources – such as through workplace interruptions
- Disaster management recovery
- Misadventure
- Medical conditions
- Disability
- Community obligations, including Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultural practices and protocols



2023 Paul Bourke Award winners with Academy President (L-R): Dr Denise Angelo; Dr Arjuna Dibley, Professor Richard Holden (Academy President); Dr Ruben Loaiza-Maya; Dr Lise Lafferty

GUIDELINES FOR REFEREES

Upon receipt of a nomination, the Academy will contact the referees listed in the nomination form via email to request a referee report. Nominators should ensure that the referees have agreed to provide a report in support of the nomination by the due date before listing them as referees in the nomination form.

Referees should be scholars in the nominee's field of study. Referees need not be Fellows of the Academy.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A DETAILED REPORT

Please note that the selection of the Paul Bourke Award recipients is a highly competitive process. Unfortunately, brief referee reports that simply express the referee's support without providing much information about the merits of a candidate are generally not helpful to the assessing committees. In some cases, very brief referee reports may disadvantage a nominee in the selection process.

To ensure each nominee is considered fairly, we ask that you please provide a detailed rationale for your support. This should include information on whether, and how, the nominee's achievements have made a scholarly impact or contribution to the field and if so, why you feel they are worthy of recognition by the Academy. As a guide, the report should be no more than two A4 pages in length.

Referees are asked to comment on the candidate's:

Impact on research discipline(s):

Describe the impact of the candidate's research achievements on their discipline(s). You should be explicit about the original, innovative, and significant qualities of the candidate's work and the way in which it has influenced thinking or direction within the field(s). Indicators of impact may include but are not limited to: scholarly publications; development of new methods, concepts and theory that have advanced research practice; changes in the way bodies of knowledge are understood, organised and used (e.g. as a result of challenging previous conventional wisdom).

Impact on public policy, professional practice, or public understanding of social sciences in Australia:

Describe the impact that the candidate has had on public policy, professional practice, and/or public understanding of social sciences in Australia. Evidence or indicators of impact may include but are not limited to: social science informed changes in relevant public policy and/or government investment or operational strategy; changes to professional community practice; cultural or social change within communities; successful promulgation or uptake of new products, processes, IP, or services based on an innovation/new knowledge; publications and major reports; the championing of ideas, public discussion and policy based on social science research.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A DETAILED REPORT (CONT.)

National/international profile and peer recognition: Describe the candidate's national and/or international reputation including how the wider community has recognised the candidate's collective achievements and expertise. Evidence or indicators of profile and recognition include but are not limited to: invitations to speak at major conferences; research honours, awards and prizes; membership of prestigious organisations or committees; grants and Fellowships; translations of work into foreign languages; journal editorships; service on advisory panels of leading national/international agencies and government/non-government organisations.

HOW TO SUBMIT A REFEREE REPORT

Referees will be provided with a link to the nomination portal and will be asked to enter the text of their report into the referee report field.

The referee reports are confidential and viewed only by the assessing committee. The candidate and nominators will not be able to see the reports.

The referee reports must be submitted by the referees via the nomination portal by **26 June** to be considered by the Academy. If the referee reports are not received by this date, the nomination may not be able to be considered for the award.



2025 Paul Bourke Award Winner, Dr Erin O'Donnell

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who can submit a nomination for the Paul Bourke Award?

Anyone can submit a nomination for the Paul Bourke Award via the online nomination form, however the nomination must be endorsed by two Fellows of the Academy. The two Fellows who endorse the nomination are recognised by the Academy as being the nominators (proposer and seconder) of the nominee. Agreement to endorse the nomination should be obtained from Fellows prior to the submission of the online nomination form, if being submitted by someone else.

How do Fellows of the Academy endorse a nomination?

The names of the two Fellows who have agreed to support the nomination must be entered on the nomination form. On submission, the Academy will contact the two Fellows to confirm their endorsement. A nomination that is not endorsed by two Fellows will be considered incomplete and will not be eligible for the award.

Will the person who submits a nomination receive confirmation of its receipt?

Yes, the person who submits the online nomination will receive an automated confirmation of receipt. They will also receive confirmation once the nomination has been officially endorsed by two Fellows and the referee reports have been received by the Academy.

Do the referees have to be a Fellow of the Academy?

No, referees do not have to be a Fellow of the Academy, however the nomination must be endorsed by two Fellows of the Academy. The two Fellows who endorse the nomination are recognised by the Academy as being the nominators of the candidate.

Can a nominator also act as a referee?

Yes, a nominator can also act as a referee.

When and how do referees submit their reports?

The name and email address of two referees who have agreed to provide a referee's report in support of the nomination must be included in the nomination form. Upon receipt of a nomination, the Academy will contact the referees via email to request a referee report. The referee reports must be submitted by the referees via the nomination portal by 14 August to be considered by the Academy. If the referee reports are not received by this date, the nomination may not be able to be considered for the award.

The referee reports are confidential and viewed only by the assessing committee. The candidate will not be able to see the reports.

FAQ

Can a Fellow endorse more than one candidate for the Paul Bourke Awards?

Yes, there is no limit on the number of nominations a Fellow can endorse in any given year.

Do nominators have to be in the same discipline as the nominee?

No, nominators (or Fellows endorsing a nomination), do not have to be in the same discipline as the nominee.

My nominee works across several disciplines. Can they be nominated in more than one discipline or panel?

Nominees can only be nominated under one discipline in any given year. The discipline selected will determine the Panel Committee they are assessed by. For nominees whose work is interdisciplinary, the citation and referees' reports may make a case for the nominee's overall research achievements, not just those in a specific discipline. Each Panel Committee assesses candidates from several different disciplines and will select the candidate that has made the most significant achievement/impact on the social sciences (regardless of discipline), to be the winner.

Is part-time employment counted pro-rata as a career interruption?

Yes, provided the part-time work was due to parental/caring responsibilities, a medical condition or disability. The percentage or total full time equivalent (FTE) of each career interruption should be specified in the nomination form, not the FTE of working hours.

Does evidence of career interruptions need to be submitted with the nomination?

Yes. Evidence in the form of contracts, leave records or formal letters from an employer are required for all career interruptions claimed. These must be submitted as attachments with the online nomination.

When will I be notified of the outcome of my nomination?

Nominees and nominators will be notified of the nomination outcome in October.

When will the awards be presented?

The awards are presented to the winners at the Academy's Annual Dinner, usually held in November each year. The Annual Dinner is held in a different location and city each year. The 2026 Annual Dinner will be held in Melbourne on Wednesday 11 November.