

Senate Committee: Education and Employment

**QUESTION ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates 2017 - 2018**

Outcome: Agency: ARC

Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ17-000718

Senator Carr, Kim provided in writing

ARC: Interdisciplinary projects

Question

In 2016 scholars at the ANU published a study that suggested that interdisciplinary projects face an uphill battle to get funded

(a) Then ARC chief executive Aidan Byrne said “that his agency is taking a serious look at the results” Did this happen?

(b) Have you subsequently made changes to the selection process?

(c) Do you have any sense how the ARC is tracking in funding quality interdisciplinary proposals, versus other proposals?

(d) Are there challenges remaining in assessing and promoting interdisciplinary research?

(Bromham L, Dinnage R, Hua X (2016) Interdisciplinary research has consistently lower funding success. Nature 534: 684–687)

Answer

The Australian Research Council (ARC) has provided the following response.

(a) Yes. The ARC reviewed its approach to interdisciplinary research and released the [ARC Statement of Support for Interdisciplinary Research](#) (Statement) in October 2016.

(b) Yes. The ARC has introduced an option on the proposal form enabling researchers to identify their proposal as interdisciplinary. The ARC now identifies and recruits a number of College of Expert members and assessors with interdisciplinary expertise.

(c) In 2017, 59 per cent of research projects funded under the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP) identified as involving interdisciplinary research. The success rate of interdisciplinary research proposals across all NCGP funding schemes was 18.5 per cent compared to 18.7 per cent for all proposals.

(d) Yes. The nature of research is continually changing. The ARC will continue to monitor and review its support for interdisciplinary research. It will monitor its application and assessment processes to ensure fair treatment of interdisciplinary research proposals, provide interdisciplinary data in selection reports, review funding scheme documentation, and engage with stakeholders to convey the value of interdisciplinary research.