

Senate Standing Committee on Economics
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Innovation, Industry, Science and Research Portfolio
Additional Estimates Hearing
26 February 2009

AGENCY: AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH COUNCIL

TOPIC: Replacement Researchers

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard 26 February 2009, E134)

QUESTION No.: AI-68

Senator ABETZ—...Can you tell me against what criteria is the internationalisation objective to be assessed?

Mr Marsden—That is to be assessed obviously by the College of Experts, but it is being assessed by the level of collaboration that is in the proposal between the Australian based researchers and the international based researches, and that can take many forms.

Senator ABETZ—Referring to clause 8.4, which prevents, I understand, replacement personnel, is that a change?

Mr Marsden—I will take that on notice. Unfortunately I do not have the rules with me, but normally, when there is replacement personnel, the administering organisation, and that is usually the university, writes to the Australian Research Council to notify us of the proposed change, to seek agreement.

Senator ABETZ—It has been put to me—and I confess I do not have the rules in front of me either—that clause 8.4 now prevents replacement personnel who were not included on the original application, and that that is a change. If you cannot answer it straight away, take it on notice.

Mr Marsden—I will have to take it on notice.

Senator ABETZ—If it is simply a requirement that notification be provided or permission needs to be provided, if you can provide that in a more extensive answer, that would be very helpful, and as to the reason it was introduced, if it was introduced.

Mr Marsden—Yes.

Senator ABETZ—Thanks for that. And also: why was it introduced, and what was the reason for the ARC deciding it was no longer an option to allow replacement persons to step in and finalise research?.

ANSWER

Section 8.4 of the *Discovery Projects Funding Rules for funding commencing in 2010* (the Funding Rules) provides the eligibility criteria for chief investigators (CIs). Sections 8.4.4 and 8.4.5 do not prevent replacement personnel, but places restrictions on the circumstances under which replacement personnel are permitted, as follows:

Section 8.4.4 of the Funding Rules provides:

“If a Proposal has been approved for funding and a CI is at any time during the project no longer able to work as proposed on the project, the project may be continued under a replacement CI provided that:

- a. where the CI was the Project Leader, another investigator who was an original CI on the Proposal may become the Project Leader;
- b. the project still includes at least one other investigator who was an original CI on the Proposal and the replacement CI is first approved by the ARC.”

Section 8.4.5 of the Funding Rules provides:

“The project must be terminated where there are no other investigators who were original CIs remaining on the Proposal. Sole-CI projects cannot be continued under replacement CIs.”

Under the *Discovery Projects* scheme investigator track record is the most heavily weighted selection criterion and accounts for 40 per cent of the assessment process. The amendment to the circumstances under which replacement personnel may be allowed was introduced into the current round of the Funding Rules owing to the highly competitive nature of the *Discovery Projects* scheme (with a success rate a little over 20%) and sensitivity regarding the issue of researchers, who were not subjected to the Australian Research Council’s (ARC) rigorous assessment process, being permitted to participate in projects after they have been awarded funding. This amendment is to ensure the original policy intent of the *Discovery Projects* scheme is carried out.

The investigator’s track record also provides the ARC a means of assessing the feasibility of the project being completed successfully by the applicant which is critical for accountability for the responsible allocation of Commonwealth funds.