Answering Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) Questions

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The score for ROPE usually contributes the largest portion of the final score of an ARC proposal (e.g., 40%) and its presentation and content is critical to your getting the best possible score and success in gaining the grant.

Answering ROPE well requires a strategy—not making the assessor guess if your work is any good as they are usually not knowledgeable, not making them find the evidence for the quality of your work, and not allowing them to interpret the worth of your work—and substantial work (you need to carefully provide the evidence). The assessor may also not have realised that you have not had the opportunity to produce a high quantity of research yet, and your answers will need to help them understand the opportunities that you have had.

The Five Questions that Measure Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence

Q1. Details on your career and opportunities for research over the last 5 years. Write a maximum of 500 words. Provide and explain:

(i) The number of years it has been since you graduated with your highest educational qualification;
(ii) The research opportunities that you have had in the context of your employment situation (e.g., Early Career Researcher), the research component of your employment conditions, and any unemployment or part-time employment you may have had;
(iii) Whether you are a research-only, teaching and research, teaching-only, teaching and administration, research and administration, or administration-only academic, giving any additional information (e.g., part-time status) needed to understand your situation. Give an indication of what percentage of time you have spent over the last five years in those roles;
(iv) Any career interruptions you have had for childbirth, carer’s responsibility, misadventure, or debilitating illness;
(v) The research mentoring and research facilities available to you; and
(vi) Any other aspects of your career or opportunities for research that are relevant to assessment and that have not been detailed elsewhere in this Proposal (e.g., any circumstances that may have slowed down your research and publications) or affected the time you have had to conduct and publish from research.

Q2. Recent significant publications (in the past five years)

Provide research publications published in the last five years split into the four categories of: (1) scholarly books, (2) scholarly book chapters, (3) refereed journal articles, and (4) refereed conference papers only when the paper was published in full in the proceedings. You must number your publications continuously. Asterisk the publications relevant to this Proposal.

Provide the details of ARC grants awarded in the last 10 years on which you have been a Chief Investigator. Give the ARC grant number, Chief Investigator names in the order that they appear on the grant, the amount funded, the years for which the grant was awarded, and the title of the grant. With respect to your numbered publications in the last 5 years given in Q2, next to each ARC grant provide the numbers of the publications above that arose from or were in part supported by your ARC grants. The numbers for the publications are their continuous numbering from the above section.

Q3. Ten career-best publications

Provide the full references of your 10 best publications. Next to each provide information on any
ARC grant scheme on which you were a Chief Investigator from which they originated, as described above. Add a statement of a maximum of 30 words explaining and justifying the impact or significance of each publication. Asterisk the publications relevant to this Proposal.

Q4. Further evidence in relation to research outputs and contributions to the field over the last 10 years. Write a maximum of 1000 words. In this section provide:

(1) Research outputs other than publications. Other research outputs might include consultancies, patents and policy advice, competitive grants and other research support, major exhibitions, compositions or performances, other professional activities, or other outputs; and

(2) Evidence for the quality of all your research outputs including those in Q2 to Q4. Assess the impact of your research for all of your outputs relative to opportunity and in the context of discipline expectations. Include a wide range of research evaluations (e.g., citations, evaluation of the publication—the journal, the book publishing house, the conference etc.—other measures of impact; honours and awards/prizes, other esteem measures, and any other evaluations of your outputs).

Q5. A statement on your most significant contributions to the research field of this Proposal. Write a maximum of 500 words.

Writing the Answers to ROPE

Q2 List of Publications in the “Last 5 Years” and Q3 the “Best 10” Publication List

Assessors are most likely to take most notice of the two sections of the list of recent publications and the Best 10 list of publications and most likely to read them. Other sections of ROPE are hard to read because the formatting that you type is removed and they each appear typed as one big paragraph. Answers to Qs 2 and 3 are the easiest to read and understand of ROPE. You need to make up the assessors’ minds about your ROPE score rather than have the assessors decide as they may not/will not know the publications.

The publication list is expected to have reasonably high quantity and an indication of quality.

To show the quality of publications, what is needed next to each publication in both the list of publications in the last 5 years and the best 10 publications list (though this is only asked for in the best 10 publications) is the following objective data typed. If the data are typed at the end of the publication on the same line it will not count as extra words but will just be part of the publication at the end of it:

- The ERA rankings for the journals (A*, A, B, C), their impact factors if they have them from the Web of Science (eg 2.4), and their impact factor ranks (eg 3/89). Ranks are very important to say as they help establish your international standing. The ERA rankings are found on this url: [http://arc.gov.au/era/era_journal_list.htm](http://arc.gov.au/era/era_journal_list.htm). The Web of Science impact factor ranks are found by going to the Library databases and from there to the Web of Science database. [http://library.flinders.edu.au/resources/databases/a-z/w.shtml](http://library.flinders.edu.au/resources/databases/a-z/w.shtml) [http://apps.isiknowledge.com.ezproxy.flinders.edu.au](http://apps.isiknowledge.com.ezproxy.flinders.edu.au)

- Your number of citations for each from Scopus, or the Web of Science, or Google Scholar (Harzing’s Publish or Perish is based on Google Scholar). State which citation
databases you are using to give citations from (eg Scopus 22, WoS 18, Google scholar 42).

- The citations for any published reviews of a book or book chapters (it is necessary to establish the prestige and quality of book chapters as well as books as book chapters are often invited and not refereed). For reviews of books, what is needed is the full citation: author, year, title of publication, volume (maybe issue) and page numbers (eg Gere, 2010, *J. Applied Psychology*, 5, 1-2). Book reviews are very important and may be published in top journals, whose quality you can show.

- An establishment of the quality of the books or book chapters through the quality of the book publishers they were published in. Mention the quality of the book publishers of your books where they are high.

- Any award or prize that can be briefly given at the end of a publication.

- Put in whether any of the publications come from ARC grants; if possible, give the number of the grant.

*Other issues*

- The authors’ names for a publication need to be in the order that they appear on the publication and at the front of each publication. Where the publication is sole author, the author’s name still needs to be given at the front of the publication before its title and year.

- The publications need to be in chronological order from the latest year to the earliest. In press or forthcoming publications go first to show that the author is currently producing.

- Do not include writing of reviews of books as they are not publications.

- All volume numbers and page numbers must be given for journal articles. If they are not given, the assessor may not believe the publication. A publication should not have a single page number.

- All page numbers must be given for book chapters.

- Conference proceedings need to give whether they are CD ROMs, their volume numbers and page numbers if they have them, or their urls, or if they have any other method of being publicly accessible or else they are not taken seriously or considered as publications.

- For accepted or forthcoming publications, when they were accepted by the Editor needs to be given (the date the editor accepted the publication).

- The number of publications including books produced from a 3-year grant, when you give the numbered publications from each of your ARC grants of the last 10 years, needs to be realistic and possible from the time of that grant taking into account the lead times for publishing books, book chapters, and journal articles. When publications could not have come from that ARC grant, it counts against you.
• Split the publications into the 4 categories asked for: scholarly books, scholarly book chapters, refereed journal articles, and refereed conference proceedings when the paper was fully published in the proceedings.

It is particularly important to put as much objective publicly available information next to each of the best 10 publications as possible to establish their quality and to give you a top score.

**Q3 The 10 Best Publications**

When selecting the 10 Best Publications over your career, avoid selecting if you can:

- Textbooks
- Working papers
- Reports, government publications
- Conference presentations or papers unless you can show that they are a top outlet for your field’s publications
- Books in lesser presses
- Chapters in your own edited book
- Lowly ranked journals by ERA, Impact Factor rank
- Australian journals unless highly ranked by ERA or impact factor
- Book chapters unless you can show they are high quality
- Publications “in press” or “forthcoming”

Chapters in books are not as good to select in the best 10 as are scholarly books or refereed journal articles because they are invitations without heavy peer review. If any refereed journal articles have an A* or A rating in ERA, they should be selected for the best 10. Conference proceedings are not normally good in the best 10 as they have lower standards of acceptance than journals unless you are in a discipline where the top work in your field internationally is published in conference proceedings (eg in information technical, some disciplines in engineering).

It is difficult to say an accepted journal article or a forthcoming book chapters is a best 10 as that recognition comes after publication, unless the unpublished paper is in an A* or A journal or the journal is a very top journal as given by its impact factor rank. Even then it is difficult to say these publications are best 10 when they have not been published yet.

For each of the Best 10 Publications, you are asked to add a maximum of 30 words explaining and justifying the impact or significance of each publication. You need to provide both:

(a) objective evidence for impact as previously described above (eg number of citations, references for book reviews, awards/prizes, ERA ranks, impact factor ranks, IF ranks, citations etc.) typed on the last line of the publication at the end. You will have given as much objective information as in the public domain typed at the end of the publication. That typing if it is continuously typed with the publication and is mostly numbers will not count as the 30 words., and

(b) a substantive argument for how the publication has become recognized by others as having advanced knowledge and other qualitative evidence (eg book reviews). The justifications need careful information. Write sufficient text to justify high appraisals of the work. It is the actual text justifying your appraisal that will count as the 30 words.
In the text written, give full information when stating achievements that give recognition of your work, eg names of associations that awarded you prizes/awards. Provide evidence for claims made or provide information to back up a statement.

**Responses to Questions 4 and 5**

Answering Question 4 (b) provides evidence for the quality of research outputs within your discipline’s expectations and can be done, for example, by providing

- Citations (e.g., number of citations)
- H factors (or another summary citation assessment) which represent an overall measure of the recognition of your work. Each of Scopus (under Author search: view citation overview), Web of Science (under Search for author, create citation report) and Harzing’s Publish or Perish (available by searching Google) provides H factors. If your H factor is 12, you have had 12 articles cited at least 12 times

- Evaluation of quality of publications

- Invitations, Honours and awards/prizes, and other esteem measures eg
  - Keynote addresses especially at international conferences
  - Evidence for quality of conference presentations (eg rejection rate, top international conference, prize/award)
  - Editorial roles & reviewing, giving quality (eg ranking of the journals)
  - Fellowships in learned societies or elected to prestigious bodies
  - External competitive grants
  - International research collaborations
  - Number of PhD completions & where employed now
  - Other measures eg other invitations, prizes/awards

Answering Q5, “most significant contributions to the research field of the Proposal”, involves

- Showing your high accomplishments in preceding areas to this proposal
- Linking your past research and achievements to the specific field and topic of the project to show your expertise to be able to carry out the research program and to advance the field
- Giving any publicly obtainable measure of quality for these achievements to show you have done past research well eg
  - Reputation of book publishers
  - Complete reference for a published book review
  - Quality of a conference (eg rejection rates)

In answering questions 4 and 5, give the detail and specifics and do not give very general statements. If there are books in print mentioned, give full information on them (authors, when accepted, Titles, book publishers and cities). If they are forthcoming and the date of their acceptance can be given, they need to go in the recent publications list for the last five years (but not the Best 10 as they are not out yet).

Statements should not be broad and not backed up with the detail or evidence. That includes
the mentioning of prizes/awards, keynote speeches, editorships, invitations, grants, consulting etc. Give the years for everything mentioned and other detailed information, for example, where the event happened, who were the invitters if the author was invited, all dates/years, the amount of money gained in a grant, names of associations or granting bodies, the names of other investigators or authors.

In the textual sections, give journal impact factors, or era rankings or citations by Web of Science or Scopus or Google Scholar, or put in book reviews to back up claims. Give references for the book reviews mentioned. State the quality of journals of which you are a reviewer or editor or associate editor (eg era rankings, impact factor).

Hence, the text in the answers to questions 4 and 5 in ROPE needs to be specific eg give

- Impact factors or ranks of journals on which you are on the editorial board or an editor,
- Dates/years for claims mentioned (years are important to show your contemporary achievements), including for being on editorial boards,
- Names of all authors on a publication,
- Names of conferences especially the international conferences,
- Names of PhD students,
- Names of leading academic journals you mention,
- First authorships,
- Citations or urls when evidence is claimed,
- Names of which committees or panels you are on,
- Which citation databases you are using for citations or h factors (eg Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar).

It is advisable in answering Q5 to put first the achievements you are most well known or famous for in this field and for which specific objective evidence can be given for, especially when you show top academic performance in this broad field.

**Typing**
The answers to Questions 2 and 3 (Publications in last 5 years, Best 10) are likely to be those that assessors most read and take notice of as they are the most objective and easiest to read because they are typed in publication format. However, the better typed the answers to questions 4 and 5 are, the most likely they are be read.

The sections in ROPE that are all text (Questions 1, 4 and 5) need to be sectionalised because the typing in RMS (the Research Management System) usually comes out as one big single unreadable paragraph no matter how much white space or indents you type in. Where there are large sections, put (A), (B), (C) etc in front of each and separate them with a colon. Sectionalise your answer to a question into themes with headings in capitals and place like things together to form themes/categories/subsections. So each theme/category would have capitalised headings and (A), (B), (C) etc. to make the new sections or themes or changes of thought stand out in the continuous typing.

**Conclusion**
There are several features that may happen in your writing up of ROPE that will harm your score. Here is a sample:
• Choosing weak publications for the Best 10 (choosing a publication is however better than not having 10 publications if you have a substantial quantity of publications unless you are an ECR)
• Journals or books of low rank or reputation being included in the Best 10 (eg published as urls, having low impact factors, having low era ranks, being mostly local)
• Conference proceedings (or CD Rom, URL) given in Best 10 unless this is the norm for publishing top papers in your field.
• Book chapters also may harm the best 10 unless shown to be of high quality
• Too few publications (low quantity) over last 5 years
• Few journal articles or no scholarly books and many text-books or conference presentations or reports or urls
• Having a weak member of the Chief Investigator team subject to opportunity (ECRs are usually fine)
• Omitted or wrong information for any publication (a sin) eg
  o Missing page numbers (or a single page number indicating this is not a paper or chapter) or volume numbers
• Authors’ names not given in the order appear on publication
• The assessor having to look up objective information that you could have found and given eg era ranks, impact factor ranks, citations for book reviews and book chapters.

The response to question 1 is important to show that you have had the opportunity to produce a quantity of research output and that your research career has not been interrupted due to breaks for example caused by family issues.