

Instructions to assessors

For RV *Southern Surveyor* Voyages in 2011-2012



20091120

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INSTRUCTIONS TO ASSESSORS

BACKGROUND

The RV *Southern Surveyor* is Australia's Marine National Facility research vessel and is equipped to support research in the following general areas of research:

- Physical, chemical and biological oceanography;
- Marine geosciences;
- Environmental sciences; and
- Fisheries research.

RV *Southern Surveyor's* operation as a Marine National Facility is the responsibility of an independent Steering Committee appointed by the Australian Federal Minister for Science. The vessel is currently funded to operate for 180 days each year as a Marine National Facility. The vessel operates on a financial year schedule – the current round of applications is for 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012.

Use of the RV *Southern Surveyor* is open to all scientists employed by Australian research organizations based in Australia and their international collaborators.

Applications for National Facility time on RV *Southern Surveyor* are considered using three assessment criteria:

1. the scientific and/or technical excellence of the project;
2. the potential of the project to contribute to Australia's national benefit; and,
3. the ability of investigators (demonstrated or potential, relative to opportunity) to successfully undertake the project.

A minimum of three independent assessors are sought for each application for use of the Marine National Facility.

GUIDELINES

Assessors are asked to complete the *Assessment of Proposal* form, which will be forwarded with the proposal. Assessments comprise both written comments and numerical scores. The form can also be found at www.marine.csiro.au/nationalfacility/application

Written comments

Written comments should be made against each of the three assessment criteria and should take into account aspects of each of the criteria outlined below (See Selection Criteria). In general, good reports provide evidence to support each key element of the assessor's critique and also weight individual criticisms to make it clear to the applicant which of the criticisms are most important and should be addressed in the applicant's response to the assessor's report.

In making comments, assessors are asked to use their knowledge of the field involved to:

- place the application in the context of other similar research projects being undertaken either in Australian regional waters or internationally;
- draw the Committee's attention to other relevant references or research, not necessarily drawn on by the applicant;
- provide an opinion as to whether the amount of time requested is adequate to successfully undertake the research outlined in the proposal; and
- record any other matters which could help the Committee in reaching an equitable assessment of the application in comparison to other applications that it is assessing.

Assessors are also invited to make further comments they consider would assist in the assessment of the application.

Very broad, generalised comments, either supportive or critical of the application, are not particularly helpful to the Committee in competitive assessment of proposals for allocation of time on RV *Southern Surveyor*.

Numerical scores

Assessors are asked to provide a score for the project, between one and one hundred, against each of the three criteria. So as to assist in this process, descriptions of the expected characteristics of projects falling into various score categories are provided below. Assessors should be careful to match the scores they give the application with these descriptions and with the tenor of comments they make. For example, a highly supportive assessment, accompanied by a relatively low score is not helpful.

Assessment Criteria

Criterion 1: the scientific and/or technical excellence of the project.

This criterion is used to measure any or all of the following:

- the scientific originality or innovation of the project, including the methods it proposes to employ;
- the likelihood that it will produce meaningful results – please differentiate between the feasibility of producing results if the program is successfully completed and the significance of the results in advancing the store of knowledge of international and Australian marine science;
- the degree to which it tests fundamental hypotheses;
- the extent to which the project represents a development of new methods and techniques with potentially wide applications to the growth of Australian and international marine research.

The National Facility Steering Committee expects that all users of RV *Southern Surveyor* will publish the results of any research undertaken in refereed journals.

The following is a guide to scoring against this criterion:

Score range: 81-100

Characteristics: Highly innovative research of very high quality likely to produce scientific results of international significance or lead to the development of new and important methods and techniques for studying the marine environment.

Score range: 61-80

Characteristics: High quality research likely to produce significant results of interest to the international scientific community

Score range: 41-60

Characteristics: Sound research likely to produce useful results of particular interest to the local scientific community.

Score range: 21-40

Characteristics: Research likely to produce results of minor interest/value or a repetition of the results of previous studies; with some minor flaws apparent in the research objectives, research design and/or preparation.

Score range: 1-20

Characteristics: Poor quality research unlikely to produce useful/interesting results; major scientific and/or planning flaws.

Criterion 2: the potential of the project to contribute to Australia's national benefit.

This criterion is used as a measure of the degree to which the results or outcomes of the proposal are likely to:

- contribute to a better understanding of Australia's marine environment and its living, mineral and energy resources, and/or the processes that impact on it, including those of adjacent or regional oceanic regions;
- contribute significantly to Australia's national ability to sustainably manage and/or develop its ocean resources;

- contribute significantly to the international national knowledge base and capacity and/or to science and technology transfer to Australia;
- enhance Australia's standing as a major contributor to the scientific understanding of the ocean, its resources and processes;
- provide other benefits, enhancing Australia's environmental, social and economic well-being; and
- provide significant training and/or development opportunities for young Australian scientists to assist them in developing their careers as marine researchers.

Applicants have also been asked to explain how their proposal contributes to Australia's National Research Priorities, which can be found at www.innovation.gov.au/Section/AboutDIISR/FactSheets/Pages/NationalResearchPrioritiesFactSheet.aspx

The following is a guide to scoring against this criterion:

Score range: 81-100

Characteristics: an outstanding proposal which will significantly advance the understanding of Australia's oceans environment and/or provide significant other flow-on benefits and have international impact.

Score range: 61-80

Characteristics: a proposal of high quality which will advance the understanding of Australia's marine jurisdiction or its regional oceanic environment, have some flow-on benefits and be noted internationally.

Score range: 41-60

Characteristics: a good proposal which will make a major contribution to advancing the understanding of Australia's oceans environment.

Score range: 21-40

Characteristics: routine project with moderate impact on the understanding of Australia's oceans environment.

Score range: 1-20

Characteristics: a poor proposal likely to produce results which will go essentially unnoticed in Australia and internationally.

Criterion 3: the ability of investigators (demonstrated or potential, relative to opportunity) to successfully undertake the project.

This criterion requires an assessment of the likely ability of the Principal Investigators (PI) to undertake the project and achieve the stated scientific objectives. Assessment can be based on: a personal knowledge of the PIs and

their contribution to the development of marine research; their publishing record relevant to the application; and their CVs. Copies of the last two are included in the assessment papers.

In order to not discriminate against applicants who are relatively new to ocean research, or are commencing their research career, it is important that assessors frame their remarks in light of the opportunities the applicant has had to both conduct relevant research and publish the results.

The following is a guide to scoring against this criterion:

Score range: 81-100

Characteristics: highly experienced investigator/s of international standing with excellent relevant research and publication record, or new researchers showing outstanding promise relative to opportunities.

Score range: 61-80

Characteristics: experienced investigator/s with good research and publication record or very promising post-graduate researchers.

Score range: 41-60

Characteristics: experienced investigator/s with moderate research and publication record or highly promising recently graduated researcher.

Score range: 21-40

Characteristics: investigator/s with poor research and/or publication record.

Score range: 1-20

Characteristics: investigator/s not considered capable of undertaking the research and/or of producing the required results.