National Computational Merit Allocation Scheme

2026 Call for Applications

NCMAS guidelines and eligibility

Followed by open Q&A

NCMAS Secretariat

We acknowledge and celebrate the First Australians on whose traditional lands we meet, and pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

Artist: Lynnice Letty Church – Tribes: Ngunnawal, Wiradjuri & Kamilaroi (ACT and NSW)
Gadi - "to search for" in Ngunnawal language - January 2020 for NCI Gadi Supercomputer

National Computational Merit Allocation Scheme

1. **NCMAS – General Overview**
2. NCMAS 2026 Call for Applications
3. Recommendations for Applicants

NCMAS 2026 Call for Applications

Timeline

1. SAC EOI: August-September, outcomes 3 October

2. Applications open: 8 October

3. Application deadline: 31 October

4. Technical and merit assessment: November

5. SAC allocation meeting: 11-12 December

6. Allocations announced: January 2026

National Computational Merit Allocation Scheme (NCMAS)

"…provides access, *based on research and computational merit*, for researchers at Australian universities and publicly funded research agencies, to resources at the major national HPC facilities."

Supported by Commonwealth Government via NCRIS.

"NCMAS Terms of Reference" document defines the scope and processes for the scheme.

National Computational Merit Allocation Scheme (NCMAS)

Calls for applications are made on a yearly basis, in the second half of the year.

Allocations of resources are determined through a competitive merit-based peer review process.

Allocations are awarded for the following calendar year, starting in January, with allocations managed and installed on a quarterly basis.

NCMAS Roles

The following roles are defined in the *NCMAS Terms of Reference*

1. Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC)

   An independent expert committee that assesses the relative scientific merit of applications and determines NCMAS allocations.

2. Facilities: NCI (Gadi), Pawsey (Setonix)

   The host organisations offering compute resources available under the scheme.

3. Custodians: NCI, Pawsey

   The national Tier 1 HPC facilities are responsible for the governance.

4. Secretariat: NCI

   The Secretariat provides logistical and administrative support to the SAC and host the application portal.

NCMAS Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC)

The Committee includes representation across:

- scientific research fields

- institutions: academia and government

- geography: states and territories

- gender and ethnicity

Committee members are experienced computational scientists.

Assessment Stages

1. Administrative assessment
   Focus: eligibility
   Agent: Secretariat

2. Facility Technical assessment
   Focus: facility suitability => advice to SAC
   Agent: Facilities

3. Merit assessment and allocation
   Agent: SAC

Technical Assessment

Technical reviews are performed by facilities to assess the viability and efficiency of a proposed computational workflow - i.e. its overall suitability at a specific facility

Results of a technical assessment are provided to the Committee as advice, and do not constitute an assessment of a project's scientific merit.

A technical assessment may include information about a project's history at a facility.

Merit Assessment

The Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) assesses all applications on merit and determine final allocations.

All Open/Unrestricted applications are assessed by at least two Committee members having experience in the appropriate field of research. The number of assessors is proportional to the level of resources requested.

All allocations determined by the SAC are final.

National Computational Merit Allocation Scheme

1. NCMAS – General Overview
2. **NCMAS Call for Applications**
3. Recommendations for Applicants

NCMAS 2026 HPC Resources

Resources listed represent the resources allocated to NCMAS and are expressed in Millions of Service Units (SU), awarded for the calendar year 2026.

NCI/Gadi	350 MSU	https://nci.org.au
Pawsey/Setonix CPU Request	325 MSU	https://pawsey.org.au
Pawsey/Setonix GPU Request	160 MSU	
Pawsey/Setonix Q Pilot Request	15 MSU	

NCMAS 2024 Summary

188 compliant applications were submitted in total.

152 applications received allocations at one or more facilities.
   Overall success rate ~81%

812 million service units of computing time were awarded to applicants on the Gadi and Setonix supercomputers.

NCMAS is highly competitive!

NCMAS 2025 Summary

211 compliant applications were submitted in total.

151 applications received allocations at one or more facilities.
    Overall success rate ~72%

879.7 million service units of computing time were awarded to applicants on the Gadi and Setonix supercomputers.

NCMAS is highly competitive!

NCMAS Eligibility – 1

An applicant (Lead CI) must be based in Australia and hold a substantive position at an Australian university, research institute, or Government science agency, with appointment at 0.2 FTE or greater.

The primary applicant (Lead CI) must have a track record of research funding via ARC, NHMRC, or industry funding scheme.

NCMAS Eligibility – 2

The Lead Chief Investigator (Lead CI) on an NCMAS application must be a Chief Investigator on any research grants listed in the application.

Any Chief Investigators (CIs) on an NCMAS application must be named as a Chief Investigator (CI) or Primary Investigator(PI) on any grants listed in the application.

NCMAS Eligibility – 3

A person can be a Lead CI or CI on **one NCMAS application only.**

Postdocs are eligible to apply and are encouraged to apply as ECRs. Postdocs and ECRs are expected to provide evidence of an ARC DECRA Fellowship or institutional Vice Chancellor Fellowship, or similar independent support.

Not eligible: adjunct faculty, research students.

NCMAS Application Categories

1. Standard (Unrestricted)

2. Early Career Researcher (ECR)

3. Special Consideration (SC)

ECR and SC allocations are the minimum allocation of the requested facility. Compute requests for ECR or SC applications must be on **one** HPC facility only.

Facility-System	Minimum Allocation (KSU/year)
NCI - Gadi	1000
Pawsey - Setonix CPU	1000 (combined CPU + GPU)
Pawsey - Setonix GPU	1000 (combined CPU + GPU)
Paswey – Setonix Q Pilot	1000

The Special Consideration category is intended to accommodate career interruptions or specific individual circumstances.

Early Career Researchers

ECR Eligibility

1. PhD conferred within the previous five (5) years, relative to opportunity.

2. Expectation of independent funding support, such as an ARC DECRA Fellowship, institutional Vice-Chancellor Fellowship, or similar award.

An ECR application requires a less detailed proposal than Standard/Unrestricted.

ECR allocations are FIXED at the minimum allocation of the requested facility.

ECR requests must only be made on one HPC facility.

National Computational Merit Allocation Scheme

1. NCMAS – General Overview
2. NCMAS Call for Applications
3. **Recommendations for Applicants**

Recommendations for Applicants – Basics

Read all NCMAS background information and follow the application guidelines.

Respect the application deadline. Submission is final. Addenda can only be provided to update information e.g. grants, publications.

Administrative Assessment provides an opportunity to correct completeness or eligibility errors.

Extended groups of collaborating researchers should submit a single, combined application. Cross-linked applications (Lead CI or CI) will be rejected outright.

Recommendations for Applicants – Grants

Remember - Research grants listed in an application must be directly attributable to a Lead CI or a CI of the project group. *Listing a grant that is not attributable to a project Lead CI or CI is a breach of NCMAS rules.*

An NCMAS application must list at least one grant attributable to the Lead CI, i.e. the NCMAS Lead CI must be named in at least one of the listed grants.

Include grants and publications from the previous five (5) years only.

Recommendations for Applicants – Requests

Applications requesting >= ~5-10 MSU/year are assessed by a larger number of assessors in the applicant's field or research and receive a higher level of scrutiny. Competition for allocations at >= 5-10 MSU/year scale is extremely strong.

New applications to NCMAS at the ~10+ MSU-scale are especially challenging. A new project must provide a compelling proposal and a thorough justification for the resources requested and demonstrate an ability to use HPC effectively.

Recommendations for Applicants – New Applicants

If you do not have demonstrated experience using Pawsey or NCI, you can:

- Describe your HPC experience at other facilities (worldwide)
- Obtain a facility start-up grant *as soon as possible*, and use it to demonstrate experience and obtain performance data for your application
- Add a CI to the application who has experience using the facility and workflows and include relevant performance data.
  - Ensure this CI is not part of another NCMAS application or **BOTH** applications will be ineligible

Recommendations for Applicants – Scalability

Demonstrate the ability to use the HPC facilities at scale in your application. You should also provide evidence of an ability to run applications which efficiently utilise the compute and data interconnect fabric at a facility.

Projects using single-cpu, serial workflows should demonstrate a requirement for embarrassingly parallel workflows *at scale*, and/or dependencies on large-scale datasets or national research data collections.

Recommendations for Applicants

Ambit claims for large requests will not be supported. Increased requests must be backed by a thorough justification.

The primary criterion for NCMAS allocations is scientific merit. Applicants seeking resources to support ongoing operational service workloads are advised to frame their applications in terms of scientific merit.

Due to the competitive nature of the NCMAS, partner schemes may be a better option to support service workloads.

Recommendations for Applicants

Consider partner schemes or a start-up grant if your NCMAS competitiveness is uncertain or needs development.

Projects which have received previous NCMAS allocations should demonstrate progress in the Proposal.

Success in previous NCMAS calls does not guarantee continuing support.

Key Takeaways for Applicants

- Respect the NCMAS rules and process.

- NCMAS is competitive. Allocations are based on merit.

- Demonstrate your ability to use HPC facilities effectively *at scale*.

- Consider using collaborator or facility HPC schemes if you need to develop capabilities and gain experience.

- IMPORTANT: The applicant (*Lead CI*) is responsible for ensuring an application complies with all NCMAS rules. Always review your application before submission.

How to Apply

NCMAS information and online application forms are available at:

https://ncmas.nci.org.au

All applicants are advised to read the Information for Applicants document and all supporting documentation in full *before* starting an application.

Getting Help

ncmas@nci.org.au – NCMAS Secretariat

help@nci.org.au – NCI User Support

help@pawsey.org.au – Pawsey User Support

Thank you!

NCMAS Secretariat

ncmas@nci.org.au