

## What Makes a Successful NiPhD Application?

### Key Themes from Past Submissions

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#### 1. Research Framing, Justification, and Impact

- The research problem requires clearer definition and a stronger evidence base. Applications should articulate the **unmet need** the project addresses and its relevance to both the academic and industry context.
- **Project viability** is often not well demonstrated. Proposals should outline how the research builds on existing models, technologies, or methods—and what advancement or innovation it delivers.
- **Social and commercial impacts** are described in vague terms, without metrics or clear pathways. Applications should quantify impact and outline how the project may lead to real-world outcomes (e.g. improved services, products, or processes).
- Where projects **claim broad benefits**, these must be directly linked to the PhD research activities and outputs.
- Clear articulation is needed on how the project could seed **new areas of business or innovation** for the industry partner.

#### 2. Collaboration and Partnership

- The nature of the collaboration is often **unclear or inadequately described**. It should be clear whether this is a new or existing collaboration. If existing, the application should include concrete examples (e.g. prior joint projects, co-authored papers, commercial outcomes).
- Statements around **long-term collaboration** are too generic. Applicants must demonstrate how the project contributes to a sustained partnership, including any shared strategic goals.
- The **Letter of Intent** must directly reference the potential for long-term collaboration and shared benefits.
- **Industry engagement appears limited** in some cases. Proposals should describe specific contributions from the industry partner (e.g. technical input, access to data, mentoring), and justify whether interaction (e.g. monthly meetings) is adequate.

#### 3. Methodology and Project Design

- Applications often lack a **clearly structured and technically grounded research plan**. More detailed information is required on project scope, objectives, methodology, and research stages.

- **Risks** are discussed in general terms, with key risks (e.g. TGA and regulatory constraints) often omitted. Risk management strategies must be specific and relevant.
- Where projects appear **misaligned with the industry partner's domain**, applicants must demonstrate relevance or reframe the proposal to match the partner's core business and research interests.

#### 4. Strategic Alignment and National Priorities

- **Alignment with Monash and industry partner goals** is often weak or not articulated. Applications should show how the research sits at the intersection of shared interests and addresses mutually identified problems.
- **National Research Priorities (NRF)** may be listed but not justified. Applications must explain how the project contributes to specific NRF outcomes and why it is nationally significant.

#### 5. Resourcing and Institutional Support

- The **resource section lacks detail** in many cases. Proposals must outline what is required to deliver the project successfully—this includes infrastructure, data access, funding arrangements, and any in-kind support from partners.
- Important financial items, such as top-up stipends, must be clearly captured in the **Financials Overview** to ensure transparency.

#### 6. Supervision and Professional Development

- There tends to be insufficient detail about the **supervisory team**, including relevant expertise and experience in industry-engaged research.
- **Professional development opportunities** are often underdeveloped or generic. Proposals should outline tailored support for the graduate researcher—including mentoring, access to networks, project management skills, exposure to industry environments, and training in commercialisation or innovation.

PD should be explicitly outlined—both through Monash and through the industry partner. These should go beyond standard offerings. On the Monash side, faculties can assist in framing development activities that align with the **new [Graduate Research Key Competencies](#)**. Even if Faculty-specific programs are still under development, identifying the core competencies the student will focus on will be a valuable inclusion.