

College of Engineering, Mathematics and Physical Sciences

EMPS Peer Review College policy (PRC)

The EMPS Peer Review College will continue to:

- Provide objective independent reviews of proposals from successful UoE academics and Early Career Researchers.
- Develop a positive culture of sharing and discussing research proposals with colleagues in the early stage of development where peer review can have the highest impact.
- Bring in experts in proposal writing or mock panels as appropriate.

Peer review, if actioned early in the proposal development process, will enhance the quality of the proposal and should lead to an increased probability of the proposal being funded. Good peer review takes time: it is an iterative and collaborative process involving an exchange of ideas and expertise. Academics should be aiming to submit an early version of their proposal for peer review **4-6 weeks** prior to the submission deadline.

The Research Development Managers / Advisors (RDM/As) within Research Services will provide support on all elements of bid development, including peer review, and the process will be enhanced by working closely with the RDM/A assigned to support a bid.

Peer Review is compulsory for UKRI responsive mode and all fellowship grant submissions (including UKRI and ERC) >£100k. It will also include UKRI and NiHR calls where peer review is possible within the timescales. Applications **justifiably** added to the pipeline at the last minute (e.g. for short notice opportunities) will be supported on a case by case basis, in consultation with the RDM/A.

Where appropriate, the RDM/A will discuss with the discipline DoR / College BP to determine whether a grant is classified as 'strategically important'. If so, a decision will be made whether review by a member of the respective Funder Advisory Network should be requested, in addition to standard review from within the EMPS PRC.

Fellowships – Fellowship peer review follows the same process as other UKRI grant applications >£100k. They will be conducted by PRC members with at least one reviewer having fellowship panel experience, whenever possible. If the applicant is invited to interview then they need to inform their RDM/A who will arrange mock interview panel(s), and organise coaching and training as appropriate.

The PRC membership consists of: Academic Leads, DoRs, ADR, DADRs, experienced academics and selected early stage career academics. It will be important to ensure that some PRC members have relevant experience of being part of a UKRI Peer Review College or UKRI Panels; RDM/As will approach members of staff who have panel experience, to request their input where appropriate.

a. Membership and reviewer recruiting process

Peer review will be conducted by two academics; ideally an experienced academic with an ECR, who can bring invaluable insight to the peer review process.

Membership is for 3 years. When the membership cycle comes to an end DoRs will review the list and make amendments as appropriate for their discipline. Additionally, on an annual basis the DoRs should check the number of reviews carried out by members of the PRC, to ensure sufficient activity is being undertaken.

b. Incentives - The benefit of being part of the Peer Review College

Being part of the PRC will mean additional time commitments for the reviewers. It is extremely important that our academics see that being part of the Peer Review College is not only a good collegiate activity but also individually worth their time and effort.

Therefore, peer reviewers will receive:

1. Hours in the workload planning model

Reviewers will receive an allocation of hours within the workload planning system (SWARM). These hours will be allocated to the S&S category 'Additional Research Allowance'. At the start of a new membership cycle reviewers will be allocated 20 hours in the following SWARM year. Allocation for subsequent years will be based on reviews conducted in the previous year. Academics who join the PRC part-way through an academic year will be granted a pro-rata amount of the first year's allocation, based on the date they join.

Reviewers will be credited with

- 3 hours for a standard peer review,
- 1 hour for advice in addressing funder peer review comments.
- 2 hours for mock interview panels.

c. Reviewer briefing

Briefings on the peer review policy and process will be provided within the College periodically throughout the year.

The Peer Review Process

Stage 1 - Proposal submission to the pipeline initiates reviewer identification

When an application is added to the pipeline the applicant will be informed of their allocated Research Services support (RDM/A). This notification will include details about the peer review requirements.

Stage 2 - Initiation of the review process

i. The applicant and RDM/A will agree timing to send the preliminary draft to peer review; this should be an early version of the proposal and should be ~4-6 weeks prior to the submission deadline. A minimum of two reviewers will be selected by joint agreement and contacted by the RDM/A to establish reviewer availability.

ii. The RDM/A will provide the reviewers with the draft application, scheme notes and funding body reviewer forms, if available.

Stage 3 - The actual review process

i. On receipt of a draft bid, the reviewers will be informed by the RDM/A of the timelines required to conduct the peer review (ideally 2-4 weeks but exact review timelines will be determined on a case by case basis).

In addition to using the funding body reviewer forms reviewers may also comment within the application document and feedback may be given verbally to the applicant.

iii. Upon receiving the feedback the applicant will liaise with the reviewers as appropriate, to discuss the feedback and implement changes. If appropriate, the senior academic reviewer will need to confirm that suitable amendments have been made following feedback.

iv. If the reviewer feels that the quality threshold has not been reached, they will inform the discipline DoR (or designated deputy) and the RDM/A.

If the quality of a research application is deemed insufficient by the PRC the application will not be approved for submission. In such circumstances the applicant may appeal to a panel comprising the ADR and the discipline DoR.

The applicant may opt to meet their Peer Reviewers in person and go through their application in a review meeting rather than via a written review process. Should this be the preference it must be discussed with the RDM/A as soon as possible and be dependent upon reviewer availability.

Stage 4 – Addressing funder peer review comments

A critical element in the funding process is the applicant's response to funder peer review.

Research Services play an active part in conjunction with the applicant and PRC reviewers in answering funder peer review comments.

i. The RDM/A should be notified as soon as funder peer review comments are received. They will then liaise with PRC reviewers regarding an appropriate response and co-ordinate the process.

ii. The RDM/A and PRC reviewers will help the applicant to identify areas where feedback is required and to respond as efficiently as possible.

Review of the EMPS Peer Review College Membership and Policy

The Peer Review College membership will be reviewed annually by the discipline DoR. The policy will be periodically reviewed by the DADR (Quality).

Revised July 2020

EMPS Peer Review College flowchart

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