**Internal Review of Research Funding Applications – Guidance**

Overview

As part of its commitment to increasing and diversifying research income, the University is implementing a formal process for the internal review of research proposals. This is focused on improving the quality of research proposals and will ensure consistency of approach at an institutional level. The internal review process does not replace the checks undertaken by the Research and Enterprise Office (REO) specialists around ethics, costings, and impact, which should be carried out in line with usual practice and timelines.

The applicant will be responsible for identifying the academics to be approached to review their application.

The internal review process will be carried out in conjunction with REO Research Development Managers (RDMs), who will provide support for the development of proposals in the usual way and record reviewers’ names on the application’s RCP record and note on RCP when the review process is complete.

The responsibility for approving an application for submission remains with the HoD, who will be able to view in RCP whether an internal review process has been completed.

Criteria

The internal review process requires applicants to seek feedback from academic colleagues on their grant applications where the University of Essex is the lead institution for a research application and any of the following criteria apply:

1. Any application over £100k[[1]](#footnote-2) in value to one of the following funders:

i. UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Research Councils[[2]](#footnote-3);

ii. Nuffield Foundation;

iii. Leverhulme Trust;

iv. Wellcome Trust;

v. National Institute of Health Research (NIHR)

vi. Cancer Research UK (CRUK)

vii. British Academy

viii. Horizon Europe

2. The scheme has been identified to be strategically important by the PVC (Research).

3. The Funder allows only a limited number of applications – sifting and selection is a requirement.

4. There is a financial or resource implication for the University (match-funding, Host Institution Commitment (HIC, or other).

Note: Where the scheme has a multi-stage application process, the initial outline may also require internal academic review; the REO RDM can advise on this.

Stages in the Process

* 1. The REO RDMs will confirm with applicants by email if internal review is required, attaching a copy of this guidance for ease of reference.
	2. The applicant should identify and approaching **at least two academics to review their application**, one of whom should be specialist or close to the same discipline, and the other someone able to offer a different perspective.
	3. Reviewers’ comments should consider all sections of the applications that are assessed, including EDI (where applicable)
	4. The applicant should forward the full proposal (including all elements that will be assessed by the funder) to their selected reviewers. Reviewers should be asked to comment on the proposal’s suitability for the scheme, and:
	5. clarity and accessibility of proposal;
	6. importance and potential contribution to the field;
	7. urgency and timeliness of the research;
	8. plans for engagement and impact;
	9. need for equipment to be included;
	10. understanding of ethics, health & safety, and other risks.
	11. Completed Internal Review forms and any supplementary documents, such as annotated proposal drafts, should be returned to the PI and relevant RDM for consideration no later than 15 working days before the scheme deadline.
	12. The PI will update the proposal considering the reviewer’s feedback as relevant, and return the updated, final-draft proposal to the relevant RDM for final review no later than eight working days before the Funder’s deadline (i.e. five working days before the internal deadline for institutional authorisation, which is a minimum of three working days before the deadline for submission). The RDM will then mark the review as complete, and upload the reviews on RCP (or its replacement).
	13. If the PI is not able to meet the timescale, they should contact their FDR and Head of Research Development and Impact to make a case for the timescale to be varied.
	14. If the RDM identifies serious concerns about the readiness of the application to be submitted at this stage, they will advise the REO Head of Research Development and Impact, who will provide a summary of the issues to the applicant, HoD and FDR for consideration.

Exceptions

It is recognised that there may be instances, for example, when the funder announces a call with a short deadline; or where aspects of the REO Service Level Agreement can’t be met due to high demand, where truncating or omitting the process may be necessary. Exceptions are subject to agreement by REO Head of Research Development & Impact, who will consult with FDR and HoD, and will be noted on the RCP record.

1. Total value of the funders contribution not the FEC value of the work [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Excluding Innovate UK [↑](#footnote-ref-3)