



## Panel Member Guidance

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## 1 Quick Reference Guide – What you need to do as a Panel Member

- For each proposal, three panel members will have been nominated as “introducers”. Their role is to lead the discussion on the proposal. The Meeting Schedule document lists all the proposals and the nominated introducers. The introducer roles are defined in the ‘Your role as Introducer’ section.
- You are required to read these proposals, including; the reviewers’ reports and the PI response.
- Please complete your Meeting Notes form for the proposals you are introducing and assign scores for all of the criteria, some criteria may vary for different types of awards. You will need to decide on an overall score for each proposal. This overall score must be out of 10; please note the modified scoring definitions described in section 14.
- Please complete your advanced introducer pre-score form and return to the office ahead of the meeting by the required deadline.
- If you have been asked to introduce either a fellowship, Network grant or a New Investigator Award, further information can be found in section 11.
- All the information you will need as a panel member can be accessed through the Peer Review Extranet.

## 2 Terms of Reference

The panel members use the input provided by expert reviewers, the Principal Investigator (PI) response to those comments, and any technical assessments, to rank the proposals in order of priority for funding. This is based on how well each application meets the assessment criteria.

The panel may be asked to consider a variety of different proposals such as New Investigator Awards, Networks, Overseas Travel Grants and Fellowships.

Panel members should take a broad view, encompassing - as far as possible - the interests of the whole of the meeting’s remit. This may include multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research proposals which cut across the remit of more than one of ESRC’s Themes.

Note that Panel Member’s names & their organisation are published on the EPSRC website one month after a meeting.

## 3 Declarations of Interests

Everybody involved in UKRI decision-making and funding processes must comply with UKRI declaration of interest policy <https://www.ukri.org/publications/ukri-declarations-of-interest-policy-and-guidance/>.

Any panel member who thinks they might have a conflict of interest with any proposal considered by the meeting should inform the office as soon as possible if they think EPSRC missed a potential conflict of interest or if EPSRC asked them to lead the discussion on a conflicted item.

If you are part of a panel and a conflict of interest has been identified, this can impact your role in the process. It might mean that you have limited access to the application materials related to the conflict, and that you are asked to leave the room when the application is being discussed.

Further guidance for panel members regarding the declaration of interest policy can be found at the following page: [UKRI-220623-DeclarationsInterestsGuidanceGrantPeerReviewAssessment.pdf](#)

## 4 Peer Review before the Panel Meeting

Before a proposal is considered by the panel, it will have been subject to peer review. At least three independent expert reviewers will have provided detailed assessments for each proposal. Depending on reviewer usability and availability, at least one of these reviewers would have been selected from a list of three nominated by the applicant. The other reviewers will usually have been selected from the EPSRC Peer Review College, although non-College members may have been used where necessary.

Proposals that receive strong support from at least two reviewers are short-listed for prioritisation by the panel. Proposals with consistently unsupportive reviewers' comments are rejected prior to the meeting.

Principal Investigators (PIs) are sent copies of their reviewers' comments and invited to submit up to two-pages of response correcting any factual errors and/or addressing any concerns raised.

## 5 Your Role as Introducer

For each proposal, three panel members will have been nominated as “introducers”. Their role is to lead the discussion on the proposal. The first introducer will be a generalist, the second will know the area of research more intimately, and the third will have a contextual role. The meeting schedule lists all the proposals and the nominated introducers. As well as the proposals that have been allocated to you as introducer, you should read as many of the others as you are able. This allows you to set the proposals that you are an introducer on into context and allows a full discussion of each proposal at the meeting. The role of each introducer is as follows;

First Introducer (generalist) should:

- Identify discrepancies between reviewers’ comments, highlight important issues, and address whether the PI has responded well to these.
- Lead discussion on the proposal, basing this around the assessment criteria and the scores given to each criterion.
- Focus on quality as the primary criterion, giving due consideration to the other criteria.
- Comment on how the research fits with EPSRC’s published strategy as part of the discussion of the National Importance criterion.

Second Introducer (specialist\*) should:

- Add any additional comments to first introducer.
- Highlight reasons for differences in scores between introducers (where appropriate).
- Focus on quality as the primary criterion, giving due consideration to the other criteria.
- Comment on how the research fits with EPSRC’s published strategy as part of the discussion of the National Importance criterion.

Third Introducer (generalist, contextual) should:

- Identify any discrepancies, particularly where there’s disagreement between the first and second introducer.
- Focus on the secondary major criterion of National Importance, introducing any discussion that hasn’t taken place.
- Raise any strategic issues based on the batch of proposals they are introducing (the third introducer will be assigned proposals based on a grouping of research areas).

\* In this context, specialist refers to the Panel member with expertise closest to the subject area of the proposal (taking into account any conflicts of interest).

## 6 Meeting Preparation

Before the meeting you should review all the papers on the Extranet.

In some instances, the proposal and/or the PI Response may include links to a web site

containing further information on the research proposed. Panel members are not required to consider this additional information. If you do choose to look at this information, it is possible that your anonymity to the applicant will be compromised.

Introducers are asked to review, prior to the meeting, the reviewer reports and the Principal Investigator responses. You should complete the Meeting Notes Form on the extranet to use at the meeting for the proposals you will be introducing. The form requires you to assign scores for the subsections of the reviewer form based on the reviewer comments and the PI response. You must score against each of the assessment criteria using the scoring definition scales as described in [section 14](#). You also need to award an overall score based on the sub scores, as the weighting of assessment criteria are not equal, these should not be an average score.

Please complete these scores for the proposals you are introducing prior to the meeting. This advance notification of the scores helps us to highlight any issues or discrepancies relating to proposals which may need to be drawn to the panel participants' attention.

When reviewing the reviewers' comments, introducers are advised to use a 'compare and contrast' approach to identify consistencies and/or contradictions in the reviewers' reports. Instances where there is a divergence of opinion between reviewer and applicant should be highlighted. These and other important issues should be summarised within the Meeting Notes Form. You should identify any reviewers' comments that were of insufficient quality to help the panel to make its decision and/or any reviewers who were inappropriate for the proposal they commented on. This information is important to us in seeking to reinforce the quality of the peer review process we operate. Please identify the reviewer by using the reviewer reference/anonymity code found on the reviewer form and the meeting schedule.

## 7 At the Meeting

The running order of the meeting will be based on the collected pre-scores of the introducers, taking the average of the three introducers' overall scores. In the case of a large difference in scores, the highest of the three will be used as its indicative position. This initial running order is not the rank order list, panel members are encouraged to have a robust discussion on how each application meets the assessment criteria and therefore the agreed panel scores will change the order.

The panel should discuss all applications if possible and fair discussion should be given to all the proposals. Under conditions, such as virtually run panels, where there may be a higher cognitive load on panels EPSRC may advise setting a 'discussion break' point, below which, proposals will not be discussed in full. This point will vary from panel to panel and Introducers may still request that a discussion takes place on a proposal below the discussion break, should they present good reason to do so.

Introducers will be invited to lead the discussion by summarising the reviewer reports and referring to the Principal Investigator's response to the reviewers. Introducers are advised to focus on the written comments of reviewers, not just the reviewer scores.

Panel members are asked not to introduce information to the discussion that has not been previously raised by the reviewers. This is primarily because the applicant will not have had an opportunity to respond to the additional information and its introduction may raise serious risks of prejudicing the decision made by the panel. It also ensures that all proposals are treated on an equal basis - a core principle central to the management of the peer review process.

Having introduced a proposal, the introducers will be asked to suggest an overall score (taking their sub scores into account). The discussion will be opened up to the meeting by the chair and an overall score agreed.

The overall score agreed by the panel will then be used in determining that proposal's ranking. Introducers are free to update their notes during the meeting itself if points arise during the discussion. The Meeting Notes Form may be used in feedback to

applicants.

## **Safeguarding Peer Review**

EPSRC is committed to ensuring that those who participate in the peer review process recognise the factors that introduce bias into decision making. To do this, it is important to raise awareness of, and take steps to remove the opportunities for unconscious bias in all aspects of our decision-making processes.

All those involved in peer review must help us safeguard our decision making by taking the following steps:

- All applications must be assessed on equal terms and assessed using the published criteria.
- Question and challenge cultural stereotypes and bias in any EPSRC meetings and be prepared to be challenged.
- Be aware that working with a high cognitive load, with time pressures and the need to make quick decisions, creates conditions for bias which could have an impact on what we fund.

As part of your panel papers you will also receive a Panel Member guide to managing Unconscious Bias in Peer Review and the Panel Protocols which should be read in conjunction with the panel guidance as they provide further guidance to all panel members on their role as a panel member and the panel meeting process.

### **7.1 Flexible working**

It is important that researchers and their research teams are able to work flexibly and in a way that meets their personal circumstances. EPSRC therefore allows applicants for funding to tailor the support that they request in order to facilitate this. This might include, for example:

- Part-time or other flexible working patterns for the PI or team members
- Support for costs over and above standard care arrangements to allow e.g. conference attendance
- Support for adjustments/adaptations due to personal or health circumstances

You should also be mindful of the impact that flexible working, alternative career routes and career breaks might have had on the track record and career development of those individuals included in the proposal. Applicants are not required to explain the personal circumstances that resulted in the need for flexible working and/or a career break. Where reference has been made to a period of flexible working or a career break you should recognise that this is likely to affect productivity and career development (e.g. publication record, track record of securing funding, ability to build networks or to take up opportunities in a different geographical location) and that this impact may continue beyond a return to work.

### **7.2 COVID-19**

#### **Impact on track record**

We recognise that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused major interruptions and disruptions across our communities and are committed to ensuring that individual applicants and their wider team, including partners and networks, are not penalised for any disruption to their career(s) such as breaks and delays, disruptive working patterns and conditions, the loss of on-going work, and role changes that may have been caused by the pandemic.

When undertaking your assessment of the research project, you should consider the unequal impacts of the impact that COVID-19 related disruption might have had on the track record and

career development of those individuals included in the proposal, and you should focus on the capability of the applicant and their wider team to deliver the research they are proposing. Any comments made by reviewers relating to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which negatively impact their assessment of the applicants should be disregarded.

### **Impact on the proposed research**

We acknowledge that it is a challenge for applicants to determine the future impacts of COVID-19 on their proposed research project, while the pandemic continues to evolve. Applicants have been advised that their proposal should be based on the information available at the point of submission and, if applicable, any known proposal-specific impacts of COVID-19 should be accounted for and highlighted within the proposal at the point of submission. Applicants are not required to include contingency plans for potential impacts of COVID-19. Requests for travel both domestically and internationally can still be included in accordance with the relevant scheme guidelines, noting the above advice.

When undertaking your assessment of the research project you should assess the project as written, noting that any changes that the project might require in the future, which arise from the COVID-19 pandemic, will be resolved as a post-award issue by UKRI if the project is successful. Potential complications related to COVID-19 should not affect your assessment or the score you give the project and you should disregard any comments made by reviewers that go against the guidance supplied by UKRI.

### **7.3 Matched Funding**

EPSRC does not assess the presence nor value of any matched funding provided by the University before making a funding decision. Unless specified in the call or scheme guidance documentation, EPSRC does not require matched funding, either cash or in-kind to secure funding.

- EPSRC assessment processes including expert reviewing and panels may acknowledge the impact of university contributions but will not consider the level of matched university funding as a factor on which to base funding decisions.
- Particularly with the increased pressures of Covid-19, EPSRC would like to stress to applicants that any cash or in kind support from the university for a grant is regarded as a benefit to building partnerships but is not expected to equate to cash or its equivalent (e.g. provision of studentships, secondments, training, access to equipment etc.).

## **8 Journal-based metrics**

We are committed to support the recommendations and principles set out by the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA; <https://sfdora.org/read/>). You should not use journal-based metrics, such as journal impact factors, as a surrogate measure of the quality of individual research articles, to assess an investigator's contributions, or to make funding decisions.

For the purpose of research assessment, please consider the value and impact of all research outputs (including datasets, software, inventions, patents, preprints, other commercial activities, etc.) in addition to research publications. You should consider a broad range of impact measures including qualitative indicators of research impact, such as influence on policy and practice.

The content of a paper is more important than publication metrics, or the identity of the journal, in which it was published, especially for early-stage investigators. Therefore, you should not use journal impact factor (or any hierarchy of journals), conference rankings and metrics such as the H-index or i10-index when assessing UKRI grants.



We encourage you to challenge research assessment practices that rely inappropriately on journal impact factors or conference rankings and promote and teach best practice that focuses on the value and influence of specific research outputs. If you are unsure about DORA, please speak to the panel convener or the panel chair.

## 9 Consideration of Resources Requested

The paragraphs below describe the approach the panel should take to the resources requested on the proposals.

All research proposals submitted for consideration are expected to present the full economic cost (FEC) of the project. Proposals must include the funds for the investigators' effort and the overheads supporting the research activity.

Proposals are composed of four summary fund headings, as follows:

**Directly Incurred Costs** – Costs that are explicitly identifiable as arising from the conduct of a project, are charged as the cash value actually spent and are supported by an auditable record.

**Directly Allocated** – The costs of resources used by a project that are shared by other activities (including the costs of estates). They are charged to projects based on estimates rather than actual costs and do not represent actual costs on a project-by-project basis.

**Indirect Costs** – non-specific costs charged across all projects, based on estimates that are not otherwise included as Directly Allocated costs.

**Exceptions** – Directly Incurred costs that are funded at 100% of FEC, subject to actual expenditure incurred, or items that are outside FEC.

**Equipment** – Individual items of equipment between £10,000 and £400,000 can be included on proposals for individual research projects if the equipment is essential to the proposed research and if no appropriate alternative provision can be accessed. Additional justification of the requirement for individual items of equipment between £10,000 and £400,000, and details of the proposed contribution to the cost of the equipment, must be provided in the Justification of Resources (JoR). For any items or combined assets with a value above £138,000 (including value added tax [VAT]) a two-page Equipment Business Case must also be included in the proposal documentation.

Reviewers will be asked to comment explicitly on the viability of the arrangements described to access equipment needed for this project, and particularly on any university or third party contribution and the reviewers and panel will be asked to consider the proposed contribution in relation to the value for money of the proposal and this may influence the final position of the proposal in the rank ordered list.

All costs that have been justified as reasonable requirements for the research proposed are allowable and should be accepted. Following a funding decision EPSRC will remove costs that are ineligible under the terms and conditions of our support. It is not for the panel to adjust resources requested. Any panel recommendations on resources requested should be constrained to those cases where the reviewers have specifically commented on the inappropriateness or excessiveness of requests, and where the PI has not responded satisfactorily to these comments. The panel may consider it appropriate to invite a resubmission with the suggested changes if the science is clearly internationally leading.

Note that considerations of whether the resources are justified or not should focus only on:

- 'Directly Incurred' costs
- The level of Investigators' effort
- 'Other Directly Allocated' costs (except charge-out costs for departmental technical & administrative services)
- 'Exceptions' costs

- All other Estates and Indirect Costs elements, which are fixed by the research organisation, should NOT be considered.

## 10 Invited Resubmissions

EPSRC does not accept uninvited resubmissions, but panel members can still advise the resubmission of a proposal. However, this is only for exceptional cases, where a simple change can substantially improve the proposal in order to make it very competitive for funding in its revised form. The resubmission will be treated as a unique proposal, although normal practice for reviewing resubmissions is to approach a mixture of reviewers used on the previous proposal and some new reviewers.

The final decision on inviting resubmissions lies with the Theme Lead.

Please note:

- The panel should raise the issue of a proposal being invited to resubmit as they work through the running order of the meeting;
- If a proposal is invited for resubmission then it should be clear from the comments made by the reviewers;
- It is not acceptable if at the end of the meeting the panel review the agreed rank ordered list and then ask if any proposals should be invited to resubmit – this is not in the spirit of invited resubmissions;
- The invited resubmission decision should be based on the reviewers' comments and the panel's moderation of those comments, and not where the proposal falls in the rank ordered list.

## 11 Assessing different types of Proposals

The panel may be asked to consider a variety of different types of proposals such as New Investigator Awards, Networks, Overseas Travel Grants and Fellowships. The prioritisation panel will assess all above schemes against the Standard Research Grants criteria described below and defined at:

<https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/assessmentprocess/review/formsandguidancenotes/> .

Please note that these assessment criteria are not equally weighted.

### 11.1 Standard Research Grants

Standard research grants are very flexible, with the scale of projects supported ranging from small value, short term grants to multi-million-pound research programmes. A wide variety of activities are supported, including feasibility studies, instrument development, equipment to support several research projects, and long-term proposals to develop or maintain critical mass. High risk/high return research proposals, embracing new concepts or techniques, are particularly encouraged.

The assessment criteria are defined below. Please note that these are not equally weighted:

**Quality** (Primary). The degree of research excellence of the proposal, making reference to:

- (1) The novelty, relationship to the context, timeliness and relevance to identified stakeholders;
- (2) The ambition, adventure, transformative aspects or potential outcomes;
- (3) The suitability of the proposed methodology and the appropriateness of the approach to achieving impact.

**Importance** (Secondary Major). How the research:

- (1) Contributes to, or helps maintain the health of other disciplines, contributes to addressing

key UK societal challenges and/or contributes to future UK economic success and development of emerging industry(s);

(2) Meets national needs by establishing/maintaining a unique world leading activity;

(3) Complements other UK research funded in the area, including any relationship to the EPSRC portfolio.

**Applicant(s) and Partnerships** (Secondary). The applicant's ability to deliver the proposed project, making reference to:

(1) Appropriateness of the track record of the applicant(s);

(2) Balance of skills of the project team, including collaborators.

**Resources and Management** (Secondary). The effectiveness of the proposed planning and management and on whether the requested resources are appropriate and have been fully justified, making reference to:

(1) Any equipment requested, or the viability of the arrangements described to access equipment needed for this project, and particularly on any university or third-party contribution;

(2) Any resources requested for activities to either increase impact, for public engagement or to support responsible innovation.

## 11.2 Fellowships

In December 2020 EPSRC launched a new fellowship scheme (Post-doctoral, Open and Open Plus opportunities) and closed the EPSRC 2011 fellowship scheme (Postdoctoral, Early and Established career stages). The launch of the new scheme means we will be asking panels to assess applications to both the 2011 scheme and the 2020 scheme at the same panel; this section will provide the details of and differences between the two schemes.

### 2011 Fellowship Scheme:

The EPSRC Fellowship scheme is a framework for supporting individuals that provides support to researchers with the greatest potential across the Postdoctoral, Early and Established career stages. Applicants are encouraged to be ambitious, where appropriate move across disciplines, build research collaborations and engage with stakeholders. This scheme aims to broaden the traditional view of a fellowship to allow fellows to build teams and work collaboratively. Full details of the scheme can be found here: <https://www.epsrc.ac.uk/skills/fellows/>

Applicants are expected to hold a PhD or have equivalent research experience, however there are no eligibility rules based on years of post-doctoral experience or whether applicants hold or do not hold a permanent academic position. EPSRC has defined three career stages (postdoctoral, early career and established career) and the attributes expected at each stage (Appendix 1). Applicants should evaluate their track record and assess which career stage they should apply against (if open to applications) and ensure they can demonstrate how each of the expected attributes is fulfilled.

We are flexible on the amount of investigator time a fellow dedicates to their fellowship (in the past we expected fellows to devote 100% of their time to the fellowship) thus allowing the fellow to apply for a level of support that suits them and gives them the option of staying active within their department or undertaking some consultancy as a route to impact.

The duration of the fellowship and the proportion of time that can be supported are flexible. The maximum duration for early stage and established stage awards is 5 years (60 months at 100% Full Time Equivalent) and the maximum duration for post-doctoral stage awards is 3 years (36 months at 100% Full Time Equivalent). While there is a maximum duration, shorter fellowships that allow fellows the freedom to explore new research avenues are welcome.

The Postdoctoral award provides funding for basic salary and provides for the employers' contribution towards National Insurance and superannuation. It can also provide additional funding for reasonable consumables and small items of equipment including non-standard computers or software, travel and subsistence expenses and 'pooled' technical effort.

For Early Career and Established Career fellowships applicants may request related costs for the programme of research throughout the fellowship. These may include research staff, technicians, visiting researchers, co-applicants, travel and subsistence, equipment (within the current guidelines) consumables, access to facilities and technical support costs.

Early career and established career fellowships may include an academic as a co-investigator, but only if they are from a different discipline to the applicant and are important for establishing a multidisciplinary link. Postdoctoral fellowships may not include co-investigators.

Each application should be accompanied by a Host Organisation Statement from the university describing how the candidate was selected to be put forward and the level of support the institution will be providing.

### **Role of the Prioritisation Panel**

The purpose of EPSRC fellowships is to help the best developing research talents in the UK to achieve their potential in becoming international leaders in research.

The panel is asked to assess and rank fellowship applications using the same assessment criteria as for standard mode applications (Research Quality, Importance, Applicant (Track Record), Resources and Management) but with reference to the aims and outcomes (see table in appendix 1) of the career stage the applicant has applied against.

Full details of these assessment criteria can be found at:

<https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/assessmentprocess/review/formsandguidancenotes/fellowships/> At the prioritisation stage, Research Quality is the primary criterion and Importance is secondary major, therefore they should be given the greatest weighting.

Then, after ranking the proposal, the panel make a recommendation of the applicants at each career stage which should be considered for invitation to interview.

If the applicant is successful and invited to the interview stage the interview panel will assess: Fellowship Vision, Research Leadership, Communication and Ambassadorship, and Personal Development. Therefore, these criteria should not be assessed at the prioritisation stage. If required to help finalise the rank ordered list at interview stage, the interview panel will be supplied with the overall score from prioritisation panel for those applicants who score the same at interview.

The commitment and support that the host organisation offers to the career of the applicant (as evidenced through the Host Organisation Statement) will be reviewed by postal peer review and only considered further at interview. However, where resources are provided by the host that impact the "Resources and Management" assessment criteria, it is appropriate for the prioritisation panel to comment.

### **2020 Fellowship Scheme:**

The 2020 Fellowship is a framework for supporting individuals that provides support to researchers with the greatest potential. For applicants that have achieved research independence, the scheme is open across the EPSRC remit. For those that have yet to achieve research independence, the scheme is only open in specified themes or research areas themes. Fellowships can focus on either discovery science, innovation, instrument/technique development and software engineering, or a combination of these. Full details of the scheme can be found here:

<https://epsrc.ukri.org/files/funding/calls/2020/epsrc-postdoctoral-and-open-fellowships-guidance/>

Applicants can apply if they have a PhD or have worked in a relevant field, including industrial experience, for at least 4 years by the start date of the fellowship. There are no eligibility rules about how many years of postdoctoral experience applicants need or whether applicants need to currently have an academic contract, although applicants must have the support of an eligible host

organisation. We encourage applicants who have taken a non-standard career path after their first degree. We also welcome applications from candidates who want to move back into research after a career break or any other type of break from active research.

### **Post-doctoral fellowships**

These are intended for applicants that have recently started formulating their own research ideas for programmes of work up to three years in duration (pro-rata for part-time fellows). Applicants must demonstrate they have acquired the skills and expertise to successfully deliver their proposal. Post-doctoral fellowship applicants are not expected to have previously held a significant grant and they should identify training and development needs to enable them to prepare for an enhanced career in research and innovation. EPSRC have made every effort to ensure only applications from eligible applicants that have not already achieved research independence are assessed at the prioritisation panel, however where there is a discrepancy between reviews we may ask the panel to decide on the eligibility of the applicant.

The Post-doctoral award provides funding for basic salary and provides for the employers' contribution towards National Insurance and superannuation. It can also provide additional funding for reasonable consumables and small items of equipment including non-standard computers or software, travel and subsistence expenses, impact costs and 'pooled' technical effort.

### **Open fellowships**

These can be up to 5 years in duration (pro-rata for part-time applicants) and applicants are expected to have demonstrable experience of research independence suitable to carry out their proposed programme of research. In addition to demonstrating that they have the skills and expertise to successfully deliver the research proposal, applicants will also be committed to implementing good practice in creating a modern and inclusive research environment, including considerations of Research Integrity, Responsible Research and Innovation and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. They are also expected to have identified areas for continued research and professional development suitable for their stage in their career that will enable them to expand or enhance their role and career; this is not limited to formal training courses.

### **Open Plus fellowships**

These can also be applied for with an optional "Plus" component, which has all the expectations outlined above alongside the opportunity to design a fellowship that enables them to allocate 20-50% of their time spent on the fellowship to focus on creating a positive change in the research community. The fellow will be expected to champion a topic aligned to EPSRC aspirations to deliver improvements in research culture; this includes but is not limited to: equality, diversity and inclusion, responsible research and innovation or public engagement.

Open fellowship applicants (including open plus) may request related costs for the programme of research throughout the fellowship. These may include research staff, technicians, visiting researchers, co-applicants, travel and subsistence, equipment (within the current guidelines), consumables, impact costs, access to facilities and technical support costs. Where an applicant is undertaking a Plus component, they may also request costs related to these activities.

Each application should be accompanied by a Host Organisation Statement from the university describing how the candidate was selected to be put forward and the level of support the institution will be providing.

In place of a traditional 2-page CV, applicants have been asked to complete a 4-page narrative CV to further detail their experience and the appropriateness of their track record. **Additionally, we no longer require a list of publications for fellow applications, the system still requires a document to be attached so applicants have been asked to attach a blank list of publications.**

## Role of the Prioritisation Panel

The panel is asked to assess and rank fellowship applications using the following assessment criteria: research quality (primary criterion), applicant and partnerships (secondary major criterion), national importance (secondary criterion), resources and management (secondary criterion).

Full details of these assessment criteria can be found below:

Post-doctoral: [Fellowship Post-doctoral - EPSRC website \(ukri.org\)](#)

Open: [Fellowship Open - EPSRC website \(ukri.org\)](#)

Open Plus: [Fellowship Open Plus - EPSRC website \(ukri.org\)](#)

Then, after ranking the proposal, the panel make a recommendation for each fellowship opportunity of which applicants should be considered for invitation to interview.

If the applicant is successful and invited to the interview stage, the interview panel will assess against the following criteria:

- Post-doctoral fellowships will be assessed against: Fellowship Vision, Continual Professional Development, and Project Delivery.
- Open fellowships will be assessed against: Fellowship Vision, Community Leadership, Team Leadership, and Continual Professional Development
- Open Plus fellowships will have the same criteria as the Open fellowships with the additional criteria of Community Champion.

Therefore, these criteria **should not be assessed at the prioritisation stage**. If required to help finalise the rank ordered list at interview stage, the interview panel will be supplied with the overall score from prioritisation panel for those applicants who score the same at interview.

## 11.3 New Investigator Awards

The New Investigator Award scheme is to support individuals who have recently acquired their first academic lectureship position, have not previously led an academic research group or been the recipient of a significant grant (usually defined as those which included PDRA time, capital equipment or were in excess of £100,000 (FEC)).

New Investigator Awards should provide foundational funds to initiate a research group, coupled with enough provision from their host institution to ensure a boost to career development and the underpinning support to establish the applicant within their research field.

Acceptance to the scheme will be judged by EPSRC before the application is sent to expert peer review and is made based on the content of the cover letter and the level of resources requested in the application.

The Applicant criterion is broken down in 2 sections:

- **The applicants' ability** to deliver the proposed project referring to: Appropriateness of the track record of the applicant(s); Balance of skills of the project team, including academic partners
- **Research Independence:** Based on the proposal comment on the applicant's ability to lead original and independent research.

The reviewer form also has a section on Proposal Assessment (Secondary): How appropriate is the level of support from the university in underpinning the New Investigator Award?

## 11.4 Network grants

EPSRC Network grants aim to provide funding to bring together researchers, industry and

other groups to develop collaborations through workshops, visits and part-time coordinators.

In addition to the standard grant assessment criterion, peer review is also asked to assess the following under **Proposal Assessments**:

- What is the added value that this network will enable that would not be possible otherwise?
- If appropriate, has the proposal addressed plans for achieving self-sufficiency beyond the EPSRC support? This is a Secondary Criterion.

## 11.5 Overseas Travel Grants

Overseas Travel Grants (OTGs) provide funding for international travel and subsistence to study new techniques at recognised centres outside the UK, and for travel to start or develop international collaborations. Centre visits may be to overseas universities or industrial organisations. OTGs are assessed using the standard grant assessment criteria.

## 12 Collaboration with Users

EPSRC is keen to promote links between the science base and users, in order to enhance the commercial and social impact of its research. Users are defined broadly as organisations that can benefit from the outputs of research, in both the private and public sectors.

Research proposals are considered in competition, primarily on the quality of the proposed research the secondary criteria (from the reviewer reports) should also be considered. The input from named/un-named project partners (financial, resource and/or intellectual) should enhance the progress and impact of research projects. We expect the level of user involvement to be appropriate to the research, for example greater collaboration is anticipated from more applied research projects.

Project partners can be large or small organisations, and do not need to be UK based; we specifically wish to enhance the attractiveness of UK research with global research-intensive organisations. Collaborations with both single organisations and consortia are also equally valid, providing the collaboration(s) add value to the proposed research. Project partners are still expected to contribute to the project, either with cash or in-kind contributions. However, they may now also claim small costs from the project, mostly around T&S to attend project related meetings. These should be fully justified and requested as DA costs at 80%.

## 13 Multi-disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Proposals

EPSRC is placing increasing emphasis on facilitating multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research projects. Some proposals therefore cut across the remit of Theme's or Research Council's. Such a proposal may typically include some or all the following attributes:

- Novelty in the combination of its parts (not necessarily each individual part)
- Novelty in the application of tools from one field in another
- An investigator moving from their usual research discipline
- Greater than average resource requirements for the subject

For these proposals, some reviewers may not have been able to assess the proposal as a whole. In such cases they are asked to restrict their comments and conclusions to the specific part of the proposal that is within their own area of expertise and to explain what their expertise is. Overall the scientific quality of the proposal is the primary criteria for ranking, as with any other proposal.

## 14 Panel Scoring

Each application must be scored against the assessment criteria using the scoring indicator scale as defined below.

### 14.1 Individual Assessment Criteria Scoring

The following individual score indicator range has been developed to help you to determine the score of each of the assessment criteria. The score should be based on the evidence, using your judgement and interpretation of the reviewer comments and PI response to these.

<b>Individual Assessment Criteria Score Indicators</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>Exceptional</b> – World leading or of exceptional strategic importance	<b>10</b>
<b>Excellent</b> – Leading edge and internationally competitive	<b>9</b>
<b>Very High Quality</b> – Leading edge and internationally competitive	<b>8</b>
<b>High Quality</b> – Leading edge nationally and internationally competitive in parts	<b>7</b>
<b>High Quality</b> – Leading edge nationally, potentially internationally competitive	<b>6</b>
<b>Good Quality</b> – Nationally competitive	<b>5</b>
<b>Potentially Useful</b> – Requires significant improvement	<b>4</b>
<b>Potentially Useful</b> – Requires major improvements	<b>3</b>
<b>Not competitive</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Not suitable</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Not ranked</b> – Defer or invite resubmission	<b>0</b>

### 14.2 Overall Score Indicators

The following overall scoring indicator range has been developed to help you to determine the overall score for each application. The overall score should be based on the evidence, using your judgement and interpretation of the reviewer comments and PI response to these. Please consider the different weighting of individual criteria, the overall score should not be an average of all the individual scores, you should consider which indicator is the most appropriate.

<b>Overall Score Indicators</b>	
<b>Exceptional – World leading or of exceptional strategic importance</b>	<b>10</b>



<p>World leading proposals which are of internationally excellent levels of scholarly merit, originality, innovation, novelty and/or timeliness, with an outstanding approach to management and leadership.</p> <p>Leading edge research that is transformative and/or creating new improvements to technologies/techniques/methodologies/tools.</p> <p>Highly likely to make an exceptional contribution to advance the field and wider research endeavour. Will produce invaluable and exciting outcomes, driving the answers to important questions and new knowledge generation.</p> <p>Effectively meets all assessment criteria.</p> <p>Highest priority for funding.</p>	
<p><b>Excellent – Leading edge and internationally competitive</b></p>	<b>9</b>
<p>Outstanding proposals which are of internationally excellent levels of scholarly merit, originality, innovation, novelty and/or timeliness, with an excellent approach to management and leadership.</p> <p>Leading edge research that is transformative and/or creating new improvements to technologies/techniques/methodologies/tools.</p> <p>Highly likely to make significant contribution to advance the field and wider research endeavour. Will produce valuable outcomes, addressing important questions and new knowledge generation.</p> <p>Effectively meets all assessment criteria.</p> <p>Very high priority for funding.</p>	
<p><b>Very High Quality – Leading edge and internationally competitive</b></p>	<b>8</b>
<p>Work that demonstrates very high levels of scholarly merit, originality, innovation, novelty and timeliness, with an excellent approach to management and/or leadership.</p> <p>Leading edge research that is transformative and/or creating new improvements to technologies/techniques/methodologies/tools.</p> <p>Highly likely to advance the field and wider research endeavour. Will produce valuable outcomes, addressing important questions and new knowledge generation.</p> <p>Effectively meets all assessment criteria.</p> <p>High priority for funding.</p>	

<p><b>High Quality – Leading edge nationally and internationally competitive in parts</b></p> <p>Work that demonstrates high levels of scholarly merit, originality, innovation, novelty and timeliness, with a high-quality approach to management and/or leadership.</p> <p>At the forefront of UK research with potential for transformative research and/or creating new improvements to technologies techniques/methodologies/tools.</p> <p>Likely to advance the field and wider research endeavour. Likely to produce valuable outcomes, addressing important questions and new knowledge generation.</p> <p>Effectively meets all assessment criteria.</p> <p>Priority for funding.</p>	<b>7</b>
<p><b>High Quality – Leading edge nationally, potentially internationally competitive</b></p> <p>Work that is of high quality, effective levels of scholarly merit, originality, innovation, novelty and timeliness, with a high-quality approach to management and/or leadership.</p> <p>Competitive research, potentially transformative and/or creating new improvements to technologies techniques/methodologies/tools.</p> <p>Likely to contribute to the field with valuable outcomes, addressing important questions and new knowledge generation.</p> <p>Effectively meets assessment criteria.</p> <p>Fundable</p>	<b>6</b>
<p><b>Good Quality – Nationally competitive</b></p> <p>Work that is of adequate quality with some strengths, good levels of scholarly merit. Limited originality, innovation, novelty. With a good quality approach to management and/or leadership.</p> <p>Potentially transformative and/or creating new improvements to technologies techniques/methodologies/tools.</p> <p>Moderate likelihood of contributing to the field.</p> <p>Does not fully meet all assessment criteria.</p> <p>Not a funding priority in its current form.</p>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>Potentially Useful – Requires significant improvement</b></p> <p>Work that will add to understanding but is of inconsistent quality. Has some scholarly merit, innovative ideas and good components, but has significant gaps. Unlikely to advance the field significantly.</p> <p>Does not meet all assessment criteria.</p> <p>Not a funding priority in its current form.</p>	<b>4</b>

<b>Potentially Useful – Requires major improvements</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>Work that will add to understanding, but is of inconsistent quality, innovative ideas and/or components, and has major gaps. Unlikely to advance the field significantly.</p> <p>It does not meet all assessment criteria.</p> <p>Not recommended for funding in its current form.</p>	
<b>Not competitive</b>	<b>2</b>
<p>Work which will add to understanding, but to a low or inconsistent quality and has major gaps. Unlikely to advance the field.</p> <p>It does not meet assessment criteria.</p> <p>Not recommended for funding.</p>	
<b>Not suitable for funding</b>	<b>1</b>
<p>Work that is unlikely to advance the field. A proposal that has an unsatisfactory level of originality, quality and significance.</p> <p>Flawed in their scientific approach or are repetitious of other work.</p> <p>Not suitable for funding.</p>	
<b>Not ranked – Defer or invite resubmission</b>	<b>0</b>
<p>Defer: usually because there is insufficient information to make a decision, e.g. additional reviews are required.</p> <p>Invite resubmission: for exceptional cases, where a simple change can substantially improve the proposal in order to make it very competitive for funding in its revised form.</p>	

## 15 Change Log

<b>Name</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Version</b>	<b>Change</b>
Peer Review Policy		1	Original guidance
Peer Review Policy	25/03/2019	2	Updated guidance, including funding scale indicators
Business Improvement	22/05/2019	3	New section on Journal-based metrics
Business Improvement	14/02/2020	4	Reference to pathway to impact and impact criterion edited
Business Improvement	10/11/2020	5	Added information on flexible working and COVID-19
Business Improvement	26/11/2020	6	Removed references to Impact criterion and Pathways to Impact changes
Business Improvement	29/07/2021	7	Fellowship guidance updated to include new fellowship scheme guidance
Business Improvement	14/12/22	8	Change from using introducer forms to using the Extranet Meeting Notes. Removal of the contextual briefing document
Business Improvement	08/06/23	9	Removal of transformative research scores
Business Improvement	10/08/23	10	Addition of Declaration of Interest information

## 16 Appendix 1

### EPSRC Fellowship – Aims and outcomes

Key aims and outcomes of our fellowship by career stage		
Post-doctoral aims	Early career aims	Established career aims
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To deliver high quality research in an area of current strategic importance</li> <li>• To achieve transition to research independence</li> <li>• To undertake training and development to prepare for a career in research &amp; innovation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To deliver high quality research in an area of current strategic importance which fits with other responsibilities held by the applicant</li> <li>• To achieve transition into a recognised research leader who advocates for STEM and EPSRC</li> <li>• To undertake training and development for continued professional development (e.g. public engagement, media, line management, leadership, grant writing etc)</li> <li>• To develop networks and establish a position in the community which could include building and/or expanding a research group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To deliver high quality research in an area of current strategic importance which is uniquely shaped by the knowledge, experience and community standing of the applicant</li> <li>• To utilise influence to shape the broader policy, research &amp; innovation landscape</li> <li>• To support development and mentoring of other researchers and act as a role model for group and/or community</li> </ul>
Post-doctoral outcomes	Early career outcomes	Established career outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has delivered high quality research in an area of strategic importance which has enhanced the track record of the fellow</li> <li>• Has achieved research independence</li> <li>• Has undertaken appropriate professional development activities in line with their forward career aspirations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has delivered high quality research in an area of strategic importance which has established the fellow as a recognised leader</li> <li>• Has experience/understanding of advocacy</li> <li>• Has established new connections in the community and demonstrated ability to train and/or mentor others and contributed to the career development of others.</li> <li>• Has undertaken appropriate professional development activities in line with their forward career aspirations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has delivered high quality research in an area of strategic importance which is shaping the research agenda</li> <li>• Has engaged in broader advocacy roles across the research and innovation landscape</li> <li>• Has acted as a role model and provided mentoring of others beyond immediate responsibilities</li> </ul>