



Science and
Technology
Facilities Council

Safeguarding Objective Decision making

STFC funding meetings

The purpose of today's meeting

- To generate a rank-ordered list of proposals/projects/posts, in priority order for funding.

The role of the Chair

- Facilitate the fair and evidence based assessment of each research grant proposal
- Ask questions of the panel and facilitate a discussion
- Summarise the discussions and ensure an agreed recommendation is made
- Ensure decisions are robust, credible and made in an evidence-based, objective manner

STFC Funding Meetings

The Role of the Panel

- The panel forms the rank-ordered list by weighing up the evidence in front of them – the written reviewer comments, the Principal Investigator's response, and, where relevant, an applicant's answers to interview questions.
- Weighing the evidence presented against the assessment criteria, without bias.
- Ensure use of the full scoring range, referring to the descriptors provided.
- Respectfully challenge each other especially where evidence for a score is not provided.
- Form a consensus opinion on each proposal/project/post.

STFC Funding Meetings

The role of STFC staff

- To advise on rules and regulations, record the panel's comments, and provide necessary context.
- Ensuring decisions made by the Panel are robust, credible and transparent this includes being able to question and challenge.
- Managing conflicts of interest
- Provide guidance and comments on STFC strategic/programme relevance
- Ensure that no panel member has undue influence on any recommendation

Our principles of peer review

- *Our peer review processes will be fair and unbiased: not influenced by gender, ethnicity, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief.*

Transparency

Appropriateness

Managing
interests

Confidentiality

Expert assessment

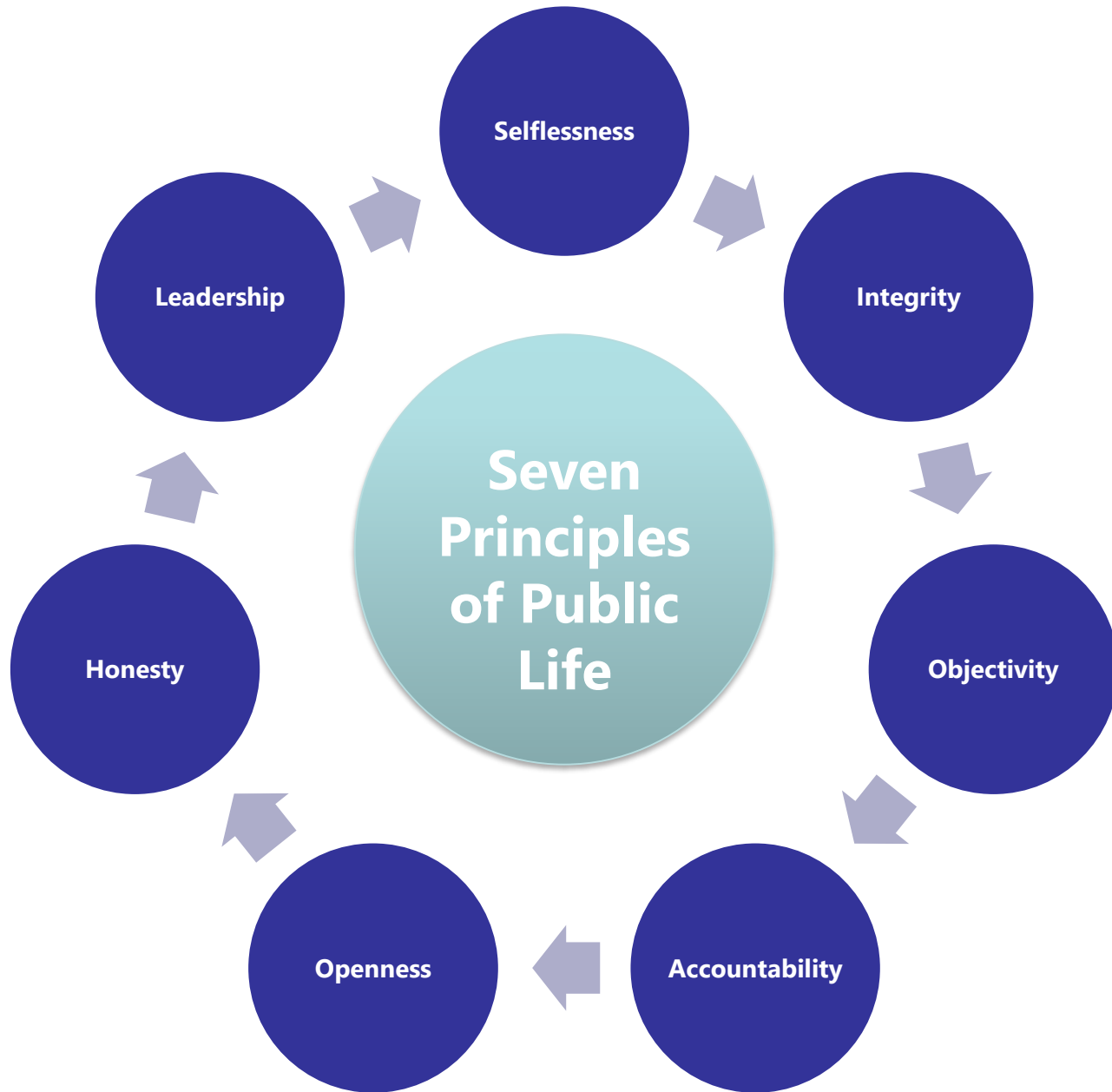
Prioritisation

Right to reply

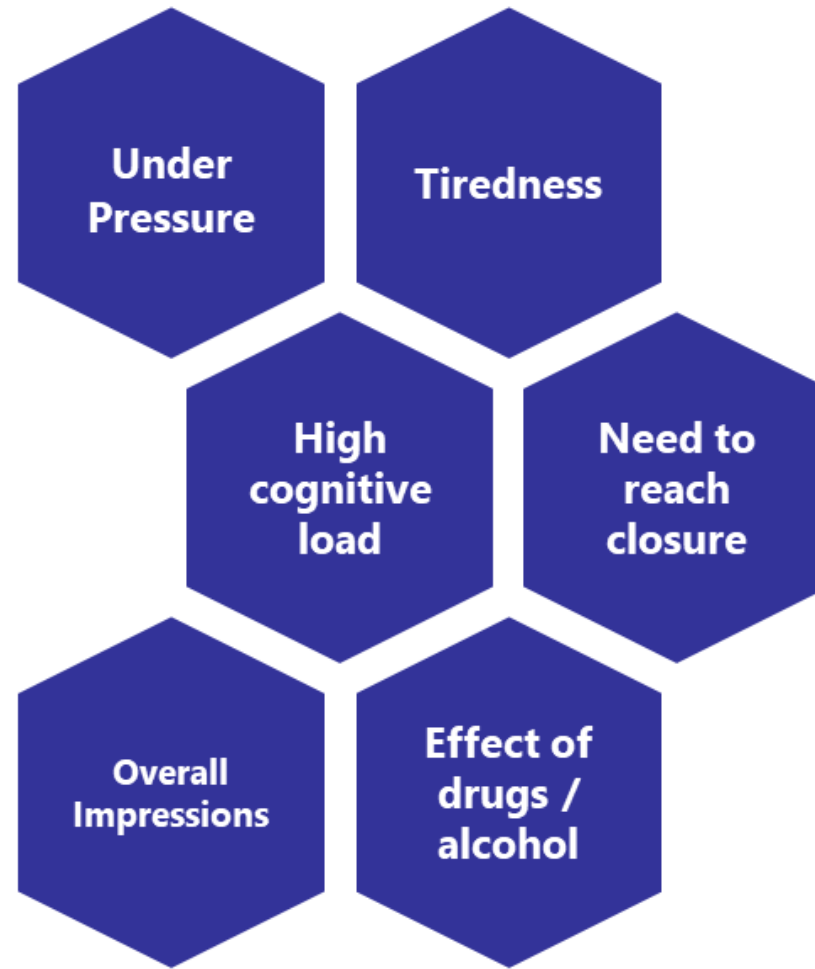
Separation of
duties

No parallel
assessment

Code of Conduct



Conditions for Unconscious Bias



Safeguarding our funding decisions

Taking positive steps to support good decision making

- STFC is committed to ensuring that everyone who participates in the peer review process recognises the factors that can introduce bias into decision making.
- We ask everyone involved to safeguard the integrity of the process by:
 - ❖ Assessing all proposals on equal terms, in line with the published criteria and focussing on the facts that are presented in the proposal and related documents.
 - ❖ Questioning and challenging perceived stereotypes that arise in the peer review process.
 - ❖ Questioning and challenging comments and opinions that are not demonstrably based on evidence.
 - ❖ Recognising that high cognitive loads and time pressures create conditions that make us susceptible to bias.
 - ❖ Do not use emotive language such as “gut feel”

Safeguarding our Decision Making

Proposals should be assessed:

- Fairly
- Objectively
- Using evidence based criteria
- Consistently

To do this the panel needs to:

- Reflect
- Question
- Maintain consistency
- Challenge
- Call out bias in others
- Minimise risk factors for bias
- Ensure recommendations are by consensus

Declaration on Research Assessment

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

Meeting protocol

Panel members must:

- Not modify programmes of work and associated resources unless guided by STFC staff.
- Agree an overall score for the proposal/project/posts based on the evidence presented which will inform the rank of the proposal/project etc relative to others
- Where two or more proposals receive the same overall score, determine which is ranked higher by discussing scores for individual criterion
- Not introduce new criteria into the process.

Conflicts of interest

- Panel members and STFC staff should raise perceived conflicts of interest and leave the room, if required, during discussions when conflicted.

Confidentiality

- Peer review and Panel comments and/or results must not be discussed outside of this meeting.

Equality, Inclusion and Diversity

STFC recognises that excellence in science requires diversity and equality to promote innovation and creativity. STFC seeks to ensure that equality principles are applied to all funding activities, and considers that no one should be excluded or hindered in from a career in science because of their sex, ethnic background, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership (protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010).