



Future Leaders Fellowships (FLF) Scheme – Quick guide for peer reviewers

The FLF: Reviewers' Guidance is a comprehensive guide for reviewers, which can be found on the [UKRI website](#). We recommend all reviewers take the time to read the document, alongside this quick guide which highlights some key areas that will be helpful when writing a review. Referrals to the sections in the reviewer guidance can be found below each heading where applicable.

Conflict of interest

(Annex A, page 17)

Please check our conflicts of interest policy before reviewing. If you are conflicted or are in doubt, please inform the FLF team ASAP so they can approach an alternative reviewer. If conflicted, you must decline to review.

Confidentiality and anonymity

(Page 4)

Our assessment process is confidential in order to protect the innovative research ideas proposed by applicants and anonymous to support the free and frank exchange of views. Reviews are seen by the applicant and panel members, so please do not identify yourself as your review will be returned for amendment.

How to write a good Review

(Please see overleaf)

Common reasons for a review being unusable: The review is too brief; discriminatory or gratuitously offensive remarks; comments which bring in information not included in the application; no comments made in Ethics and Data Management section.

Non-academic-hosted applications

If reviewing a non-academic-hosted proposal for the first time, there are some differences to consider to that of an academic. For example, non-academic applicants without a PhD are eligible to apply to the scheme if they can demonstrate equivalent experience and it is acceptable for non-academic organisations to withhold information from applications if it is particularly confidential or sensitive.

Journal Impact Factors

(See 4.2.4, page 9)

You must 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. Any reference to impact factors will be disregarded by the panel.

Assessment criteria

(Annex E, page 26)

Reviewers must refer to the 'Assessment criteria' when writing their review. All proposals are to be assessed against these criteria:

- Research & Innovation Excellence
- Impact & strategic relevance
- Applicant & their development
- Research & innovation Environment & costs

How to write a good review

Good reviews are invaluable in helping the panel make funding decisions for the FLF scheme. They also provide constructive feedback to applicants in order to help them improve their research, and you should bear in mind how your review will be used. Your review will be fed back anonymously to the fellow, who will have an opportunity to respond to the questions you raise. Panel members will also use your comments and score to help them in their assessment.

Do:

- Read and address all the of the FLF scheme's Assessment Criteria.
- Reflect on the final written review and assign an appropriate overall assessment score based on the score descriptors.
- Be objective and professional – comments should be evidence-based.
- Provide clear and concise comments.
- Clearly identify strengths and weaknesses.
- Provide justification for your comments and grade, whether you are supportive of the proposal or not.
- Be aware that not everyone reading the comment will be a specialist in that field.
- Be aware of the impact of unconscious bias.
- Consider the added value of the FLF award to the candidate's career trajectory.
- Keep a back-up of your comments in case of a system timeout or error.

Don't:

- Make it personal.
- Use an emotive or confrontational tone or language.
- Reiterate the proposal or re-state the assessment questions.
- Include anything in the assessment that will identify you, such as references to your own work, where you have worked or who you have worked with.
- Be too brief, even if you deem the proposal very strong.
- Use Journal-based metrics to measure quality.
- Allow your review to be influenced by bias for your own field of research.
- Exceed the space restriction in Je-S (which is 4000 characters per section) or the rest of your review will be lost.

Questions to ask yourself

- How important are the research questions, or gaps in knowledge, that would be addressed?

- Are the researchers up to the job? Do they have the right team, experience and infrastructure?
- Have you appropriately considered any unequal impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic described by the applicant?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses?
- Is the methodology and experimental design clearly set out and justified? Are the methods appropriate? What could they do better? Are there alternative approaches?
- Are there major flaws or weaknesses?
- Are there any ethical issues?
- Does this proposal represent good value for money?

Helpful and unhelpful comments

“Excellent application – must be funded” – Sparse comment offering no context. Comments of this quality are of little assistance to the moderation panel.

“This is a very important and timely application. However, I am concerned that the project may not see success as it depends critically upon one technique, with which the applicant has little expertise and requires a resolution level never previously reported. Can they demonstrate they can actually obtain these measurements?” – A strong comment that makes a compelling point. It raises and explains a concern so that its nature and importance are both clear to the panel and also to the applicant in terms of how they need to respond.

“This is a strong applicant, however multiple career breaks have affected their publication output and the few publications they do have are all in low-impact journals” – The FLF scheme allows applicants from a variety of backgrounds including those who have taken career breaks and this should not be held against them. Additionally, UKRI has signed DORA and do comments relating to journal impact factors cannot be accepted either.

“This is an excellent proposal in an important area and the combination of experimental and theoretical methods is a key strength. However, the work plan lacks detail leaving me unclear if work package three is needed. I also doubt whether work package four can be fully completed, but I do not think that is a big issue. The impact has been well-described and excellent collaborators identified. A minor point is that the travel costs sought seem to be based on a higher level of visits than required for the meetings scheduled.” – Proposals will have both strengths and weaknesses. This comment highlights both, indicates their relative importance and, where appropriate, balances them one against another. This gives the panel a lot of information to help them in coming to a decision.

“Proposal is studying the economic situation in coastal areas, however I don’t think this is a worthy area of research or that they should be receiving any funding” – This is a clear example of personal bias unrelated to the proposal and would not only be disregarded as a comment, but the entire review would also be marked as unusable as there would be no guarantee the rest of the review is unbiased.

Contact the FLF team: fellowsppeerreview@ukri.org

For queries about a review request, extending a review date or conflict query.

Contact the Je-S helpdesk: jeSHelp@rcuk.ac.uk or via telephone: +44 (0) 1793 444164. For queries about using the Je-S system to provide your review.