EPSRC New Investigator Awards

Statement of Expectations

This document sets out expectations for the New Investigator Award. As the award is designed to be appropriate for a wide range of research areas and types of project, we expect some variation in grants, but the general principles described below are intended to support applicants as they consider whether to apply.

Overview

The scheme is to establish an individual's research independence and support the development of their career. Therefore, in addition, to a program of high quality research, the application should provide a framework to support career progression and the development of new skills (e.g. leading a group, building a network of international collaborators, working with industry). The proposal should outline how the proposed research program and associated activities contribute to career development both in terms of the resources requested and support from the host organisation (mentoring provision, training and development courses etc).

Eligibility

Guidance on eligibility is available on the New Investigator Award webpages.

The project

Projects should be **self-contained** with clearly defined objectives and outcomes. The duration of the project (typically 1-3 years) should be suitably matched to these objectives. Complex, multi-facetted research projects with many objectives are not appropriate for this scheme.

Scale of award

As with all EPSRC grants, applicants should request the appropriate suite of resources to carry out the proposed research. Resources should be clearly articulated in the justification of resources part of the grant application.

The following guidelines are intended to support applicants in their initial thinking about their project and so should be seen as a starting point rather than a list of constraints:

- Under the New Investigator Award scheme, funding is typically sought for 10-20% of the Principal Investigator's time. Those who are seeking to substantially exceed this should consider other funding mechanisms. The time allocation stated above is to be used as a guide only and the Principal Investigator should ensure they allocate time to a level appropriate for:

    -undertaking their contribution to the research,

-the management of the research team and project,
-carrying out career development and taking into account other activities expected of, and beneficial to, an early career academic that are appropriate to include on the New Investigator grant.

- The scheme is to establish an individual's research independence so Co-Investigators should only be involved where they bring complementary and different skills to the project. Co-Investigators are likely to be from a different discipline to the PI.

- With regards to PDRAs, funding for a suitable length of time (1-3 years of total PDRA time) to meet the project objectives should be requested and applicants should have appropriate plans for recruitment. If the university is providing additional PhD students/PDRA time to input into the project objectives, appropriate management time should be requested (but not supervision time for doctoral students).

- We expect reasonable attendance at conferences (for both PI & PDRA) to be included in the grant where appropriate to keep track of related work published in the field, establish and maintain collaborations and disseminate results of the project. We would expect suitable conferences to be identified and named and attendance to be within the duration of the grant in line with our standard grant conditions. Additional costs may be available for those with caring responsibilities as detailed on our website.

- NIAs are subject to the same guidance on equipment funding as responsive mode (Equipment on research grants – UKRI). EPSRC will contribute 80% of the final purchase price and will expect the research organisation or project partner to contribute the remainder from non-EPSRC funding. For any items or combined assets with a value above £138,000 (including VAT) a two-page equipment business case must also be included in the proposal documentation.

Applicants are encouraged to request an appropriate level of resource to fulfil the aims of the proposed research. These resources should be fully justified as part of your proposal.

Career Development and the Host Organisation

We expect the applicant to have had a conversation with their head of department (or similarly appropriate person) about their career development and training needs over the duration of the grant. This conversation should be reflected in the Host Organisation Statement.

As preparation for this conversation, the applicant might like to draw on existing professional development toolkits and consider the following questions:

- Thinking about the future:
  - What are your career goals?
  - Where do you want to be in 5-10 years?
  - Do you have skill-gaps that need filling in order to achieve this?
  - Reflecting on the above, is the New Investigator Award an appropriate funding scheme to support you in achieving these goals?

➢ What courses are there available at your Host Organisation (these may be at a departmental/faculty/school level or centralised across a university) to enhance your skills?

This includes a wide range of skills from technical skills to aid your research, to teaching, communication, proposal writing, time management, leadership skills, recruiting to build your team, people management, networking, etc. *The Host Organisation statement should not list all courses which are available, but should articulate candidate development needs and identify routes to gaining that experience, so that the EPSRC award is placed in the context of wider career development.*

➢ If you have identified training and development needs that can't be provided by your University, do you have a plan for how you can ensure these needs are met?

Examples might include finding a mentor from industry, taking a role in a network you would like to become more involved in or attending training courses that can't be provided at your institution.

➢ What do you need from a mentor and who in your institution or more widely in the landscape can provide this?

We expect the Host Organisation statement to include details of who your mentor will be and what the expectations of the mentor/mentee relationship are.

➢ Previous recipients of similar schemes have found it beneficial to be active in various types of networking groups, both to share experiences with other researchers at the same career stage and to open up possible avenues for future collaborations. Are there any networks at an institutional/ regional/national/international level which you could benefit from becoming involved with?

➢ Are there opportunities for you outside academia to develop broader/different skills e.g. engagement with industry, public sector, working with government representatives, pre-university education?
   o How could you develop your relationships to enable access to these opportunities?
   o Could your institution do anything to help facilitate these relationships?

➢ What steps will you take to actively manage the careers of PDRAs on your grant or doctoral students associated with your grant? How will you create a culture of supportive team working and inclusivity?

For example: are you helping them find an appropriate mentor? What opportunities are there for your staff to develop their skills; e.g. presenting at conferences, working in other labs, training courses, teaching, experience outside of academia, etc. Do you need to attend any training in order to prepare for recruitment, line management and team leadership responsibilities?

Host Organisation Statement

Applicants are encouraged to have early discussions with their institutions to identify what training and development opportunities are available to meet their aspirations over the duration of the proposal.

The Host Organisation Statement is an important feature of this award which should draw on the discussions between the applicant and head of department and answer the questions below:

- What university appraisal process has the proposal been through before submission?
- What support has been provided during the development of this proposal?
- How do the applicant's expertise and interests fit current and future departmental research strategies?
- How will this proposal help the applicant to develop their research with the potential to be internationally leading?
- How has the applicant demonstrated their ability to manage the resources requested?
- How will the university support the applicant to ensure that all students/research associates supervised by the applicant have a good quality experience?
- What mentoring arrangements are in place?
- What development and training opportunities will be provided and how do they form a cohesive career development package tailored to the aims and aspirations of the applicant?
- How will the applicant be supported to develop their research interests and career if this proposal is successful?

Where possible, generic statements should be avoided and should clearly articulate what support will be available/received and how it integrates with the proposed research to deliver a comprehensive training package.

Applicants should take a broad view of what host organisation support is required, not limited to financial or personnel contributions whilst ensuring that the package is tailored to their individual aspirations.

Level of support expected from the Host Organisation
- Full access to labs and other university facilities with associated administrative/technical support
- Dedicated mentor(s) identified and roles of each mentor including frequency of meeting/extent of support set out
- Professional development activities identified which have been tailored to the needs of the applicant (see section on career development above)
- Reduction in teaching/administrative load (Note that having teaching/admin duties can often be a useful part of academic life/becoming part of the university so if the current level of teaching/admin is already reduced to support the early career academic to establish their research career including time to lead the research grant, no additional

reduction is required.) In both cases, the Host Organisation should explain in the covering letter how the individual will be supported in terms of appropriate workload.

- Sufficient support to ensure that all students/research associates supervised by the applicant have a good quality experience.
- As per the standard EPSRC funding guidance, if the project requires the purchase of equipment with a value greater than £10,000, we would expect the Host Organisation to contribute a minimum of 50% of the capital cost.

How much funding to request?

The New Investigator Award is designed to support both theoretical and experimental research projects across the breadth of EPSRC's remit and therefore we expect the level of funding applied for to vary, but be appropriate for the proposed research programme. The scale may also vary significantly, depending on the focus of the award.

The guidelines provided in this document are to support the initial development of the project. It may also be useful to explore our current New Investigator Award portfolio. The range of projects already funded under the New Investigator Award scheme can be found at https://epsrc.ukri.org/research/ourportfolio/vop/

You can either use the search function or click "browse our portfolio", "scheme" and select "New Investigator Awards". This facility gives you the option to review active awards by Research Organisation, Themes, Research Areas or Sector. You can click through into each grant to read further details and a summary of the grant application and export the list of grants into other document formats.

Different Types of Award
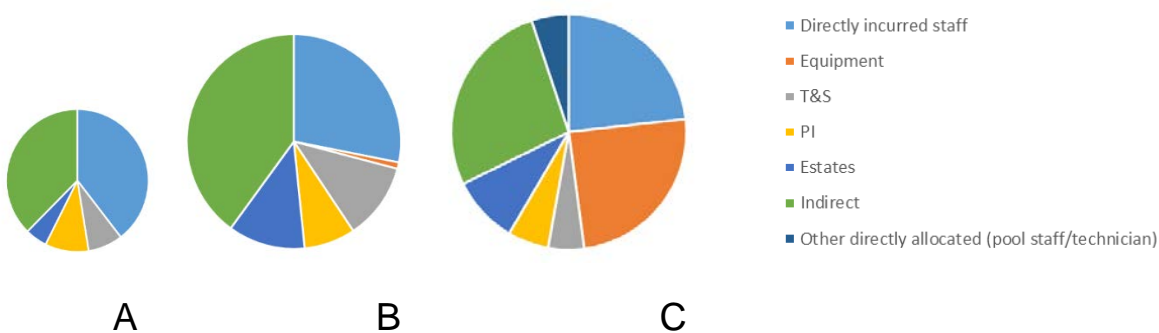
The pie charts above indicate how the New Investigator Award has been used to fund different types of proposals. Grant 'A' was used to work on a theoretical problem, Grant 'B' involved a significant number of research visits and Grant 'C' was an experimental project requiring large items of equipment.

Further Information

If you are thinking about preparing a New Investigator Award, **please discuss your idea first with the research support staff or administration office at your institution**. Then if you have a question about the scheme itself, please contact researchcareers@epsrc.ukri.org.