Question and Answer Session

Medical Research Council (MRC) responsive mode research boards - transition to the new Funding Service (TFS)

The webinar and the questions and answers below focus on the MRC's transition of responsive mode to the new Funding Service (TFS). It includes information and tips for applicants and research offices on the following MRC responsive mode research board opportunities, closing 19 September 2023:

- Neurosciences and Mental Health Board
- Molecular and Cellular Medicine Board
- Infections and Immunity Board
- Population and Systems Medicine Board

Appreciating the new funding service will continue to evolve and more functionality is expected, the questions and answers below are true and correct for the 19 September 2023 closing date. Please ensure for future MRC responsive mode research board opportunities, or for other types of opportunity, you check the guidance available at the time.

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Useful links and guidance

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Application timelines

Q: Are UKRI (UK Research and Innovation) planning on coordinating future deadlines so that all responsive mode deadlines across research councils don't fall within the same couple of weeks?

A: We co-ordinate our deadlines so responsive mode closing dates do not occur in the same week if possible. However, we are also working to avoid closing dates in holiday periods, this means we are limited in the number of weeks available in which to schedule our closing dates.

Q: Please can you confirm the opening date for the next round of applications? (I understood that the closing date is 19th Sep but I'm not sure of when we can access the form).

A: Our response mode opportunities are live now (opened on 22/23 June 2023) and information on opening, closing, shortlisting, and meeting dates can be found here: https://www.ukri.org/councils/mrc/guidance-for-applicants/application-timelines/.

Q: In the presentation, the "you must do this at least six weeks before the deadline." Does this apply to programme grants only or to research grants as well?"

A: This applies to programme and partnership grants only. Research grants do not require a pre-application. As the standard of applications for programme grants is very competitive and partnership grants are for a specific purpose you must contact us at support@funding-service.ukri.org before you apply to check if your application is suitable. You must do this at least six weeks before the deadline.

Q: You said the closing dates for the boards will be the same going forward (19th Sept), will the Better Methods, Better Research Panel still be only 2x/year?

A: The responsive mode research boards will now open and close on the same dates (although this may not always be 19 September exactly), previously they had closed over the course of a few weeks. For Better Methods, Better Research it will continue to run twice a year, the application opening, closing, shortlisting, and meeting dates can be found here: https://www.ukri.org/councils/mrc/guidance-for-applicants/application-timelines/.

Applying

Q: If we have Je-S (Joint Electronic Submissions) login details, do we need to create a new login detail with the new platform?

A: Yes, you will need to create a new account with The Funding Service (TFS), you can do this by going into the opportunity you would like to apply to and clicking ‘start application.’

Q: Do Co-I's need an account for the application to be submitted?

A: No, only the project lead and research office must have an account.

Q: Can the principal investigator continue to delegate admin access to support staff?

A: Currently, only the project lead (previously principal investigator) has editing rights and so editing cannot be delegated to other staff members. Further editing capabilities are currently under development and will be rolled out in due course.

Q: As an account is created at the point of starting an application, how do co-applicants get an account? Do they get invited to collaborate through the system?

A: Project co-leads are notified by the system when they are added to an application and can follow the emailed link to create an account (or sign in if they have a TFS account already). This link allows them to view some brief details of the application, they cannot currently edit the application or view it in full.

Q: Can two PIs (principal investigators) from two different universities in the UK jointly apply for a responsive mode research grant, or does it have to be a partnership grant?

A: If the aim of the application is to support research, the appropriate grant types are research or programme grants, with the applicants being project lead or co-lead. Applicants can come from multiple eligible research organisations but only one person can be project lead.

Partnership grants are a different grant type designed to establish collaborative activities or capabilities; they do not support research.

Q: If an application deadline is missed can the application be easily transferred to the next opportunity or will a new application need to be created? It seems not possible to delete applications, so TFS is likely to become quite cluttered.

A: You will need to create a new application for the new opportunity if you have not submitted to the previous one. You can download in progress applications to save offline. You can bring information over from the previous application you started in the funding service, by copying and pasting. Currently we will not be removing unfinished applications but will explore how we can support self-management for applicants in the future.

Q: Once you start an application can you easily change the Board which it is being submitted to on TFS? Or would you need to start a new application?

A: It is not possible to transfer an application to a different funding opportunity in TFS once started. Each MRC Board has its own separate opportunities, so in the first instance please contact MRC if you are not sure which Board your application is best suited to avoid needing to start a new application. If MRC determines an application is better suited to a different Board after you submit, we will ensure the application is assessed by the correct Board and your application will not be rejected. After submission it is only possible to transfer applications between Boards. The different grant types (research, new investigator, programme, partnership) have different questions and assessment criteria, so your application can only be assessed as the type of grant indicated by the funding opportunity you have applied to.

Q: If someone makes a mistake on an application will you return it and give them a chance to rectify, or will it be rejected outright?

A: Applications will not be returned for amendment. The funding service application is much more intuitive and contains more guidance and checks which stop some of the more common mistakes.

It depends on what the mistakes are as to what would happen to your application. If the mistake is minor and gives you no advantage, your application will continue through peer review. If the mistake is major and it gives you an unfair advantage such as documents over the page limits or contains errors that make the application difficult to assess, then your application would be rejected. Applicants should very carefully check their application before submitting it to their research office for final checks.

Q: If there is something wrong with an application submission, is there the opportunity to withdraw the application rather than have it rejected? and if rejected does that count towards resubmission policies?

A: If you decide to withdraw this will not count against the resubmission policy. Applications rejected following peer review will count towards the resubmission policy.

Q: MRC identify something wrong with an application prior to peer review will it be a rejection, or will the applicant be informed and advised to withdraw rather than have it rejected?

A: If we need to reject because something is wrong with the application, or it falls out of remit it will not count towards the resubmission policy.

Q: So, an application will now be automatically rejected if an attachment is over the page limit, rather than returned for amendment as before?

A: All the information on page limits is clearly presented in the funding opportunity. To ensure that all applicants across UKRI are treated fairly and consistently, applications over the page limit will be rejected.

Application

Q: You mentioned only the Project lead can create and edit their application. Are there any plans to expand this functionality to allow additional users, e.g., professional support staff not in a research office, to be able to have user accounts to support inputting the data?

A: Yes, co-editing by the research organisations, research offices and by other collaborators in the application (that could be co-project leads or other members of the team), is on the roadmap for development for the new funding service. The functionality is planned first for the research offices. This will not be available for the responsive mode research boards closing in September 2023. We do not have definite confirmation of when this will be functional on the Funding Service, it is high on the priority list.

Q: I'm concerned that co-I cannot edit the submission for this September round, why do we need to transfer to the TFS system if the IT (Information Technology) is not ready yet?

A: There are benefits to moving to the new funding service that we want to take advantage of now, it should provide a better experience for applicants in many ways, even if co-editing is not yet possible. We have made all the information the project lead sees in the funding service application available on the funding finder, to help collaboration outside of the system in these early rounds. More information on the development of the funding service for applicants can be found here: https://www.ukri.org/apply-for-funding/improving-your-funding-experience/how-applicants-use-the-ukri-funding-service/.

Q: Could you expand on what you mean by co-editing functionality is being developed – will this apply to certain roles only (such as project co-leads) or also to staff such as department-based research support officers?

A: Co-editing will become possible for various roles. It is being prioritised, so co-editing will be available for research offices first, then co-project leads then other roles as appropriate.

Q: Is it possible to download or print a copy of the application to view (e.g., for internal review by peers prior to submission)

A: Yes, you can download your application as a PDF and print.

Q: If you print an application (for sharing) it does not include word counts. Please can this be changed so that co-I can see what is needed for each section?

A: Thank you for your feedback, we will share this with our Simpler and Better Funding colleagues. Word counts for all the sections are included in the funding opportunity on the UKRI funding finder.

Q: Can we create mock grant applications to see precisely what's needed within each call, and explore the new system, and can these then be deleted from our systems?

A: Applicants can see what TFS looks like from the videos https://www.ukri.org/apply-for-funding/improving-your-funding-experience/how-applicants-use-the-ukri-funding-service/. The application questions are detailed on the funding finder, and if you want to see what this looks like on the service then currently, we will not be removing unfinished applications but will explore how we can support self-management for applicants in the future.

Q: At present in the RSO (Research Office) we are unable to search for an application in the TFS portal by the Application Reference (APP?) - is this a feature that will be developed in due course?

A: Yes, filtering and searching is being further developed. You can also change the application reference included in a TFS web browser link to navigate directly to an application.

Q: I am CoI (Co Investigator) on an application to the early-stage development of new healthcare interventions. As CoI I cannot see the application. Also, I believe when submitted it does not go the head of departments. This could create problems for universities by over committing department.

A: Applications through the funding service and previously through Je-S have not gone through a head of department step. In both systems, applications are created by the project lead and are approved through the research office before finally being submitted to MRC.

Q: Should the research environment description be included in R2RI or Vision and Approach?

A: Within the vision and approach you should describe how your, and if applicable your team's, research environment (in terms of the place, its location, and relevance to the project) will contribute to the success of the work. Within your R4RI you can also provide evidence of how you or relevant team members have contributed to developing a positive research environment and wider community.

Q: Can the research focus on SSA?

A: This answer is assuming that SSA means Sub-Saharan Africa. Yes, if the research is within the remit of one of the research boards (IIB, MCMB, PSMB and NMHB) then you can apply with research of relevance to SSA. The project lead must be based at an eligible UKRI research organisation. Costs can be requested for work undertaken overseas. Please note that we have an Applied Global Health Research Board (https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/applied-global-health-research/), supporting research within MRC's that will address global health challenges and inequities.

Q: Should the summary section that is sent to reviewers be written for a non-specialist scientist or for a lay audience?

A: Summaries should be written in plain English, so that it can be sent to potential reviewers to determine if your application is within their field of expertise. The summary may be made publicly available on external facing websites, so please ensure it can be understood by a variety of readers, for example: opinion-formers, policymakers, the general public and the wider research community.

Research Office

Q: The lack of editing capabilities for research office staff is a real burden, especially when it comes to finance sections. This has been fed back at all TFS webinars I have attended - when will this functionality be enabled? It seems TFS is being rolled out prematurely.

A: This functionality is coming and is being prioritised.

Q: Will the research office have editing rights to the application to be able to upload costings information directly? (I believe this was previously possible through Je-S)

A: This functionality is coming.

Q: Will all research office administrators need to register on TFS?

A: Research offices need to set up their own accounts to access the Funding Service.

To get an account, email the Funding Service helpdesk at support@funding-service.ukri.org with the following details:

- first name
- last name
- organisation name
- email address (only individual addresses, not group or 'mailbox' addresses)
- phone number

Following a brief verification process, you will be sent an invitation to create an account. Please visit https://www.ukri.org/apply-for-funding/improving-your-funding-experience/how-research-offices-use-the-ukri-funding-service/ for more information.

Vision and Approach

Q: Can figures be included in the Vision and Approach sections - whether text box or PDF?

A: Figures and text should all be included in one PDF within the specified page limit for the grant type you are applying for (see below table), as TFS does not currently have the functionality to embed images in text boxes. This is something that will change as TFS develops.

Type	Vision and Approach	Project plan (optional)	Reproducibility & statistical design (optional)	Max if optional pages used

Research	6 pages	1 page	1 page	8 pages
New Investigator	6 pages	1 page	1 page	8 Pages
Programme	12 Pages	1 page	1 page	14 Pages
Partnership	12 Pages	1 page	n/a	13 pages

Q: Sorry to request further clarification - for the page-length defined Vision and Approach, we had planned to upload a single PDF document within this limit - is this OK, or do we need to split out text to insert in the box and only put non-accepted formats (figures etc.) in the PDF? We would be very concerned about inadvertently going over the limit using a mixed format.

A: For the vision and approach we are expecting a single PDF. This should include all the text, images, figures, and tables you wish to use to respond to the vision and approach question. Please follow the instructions in the funding service on how to upload.

Within the TFS application section, there is also a text box associated with the vision and approach question. The only thing you should put in that text box is a few words confirming that you have uploaded your document (limited to a maximum of 10 words).

Q: Are "Vision and Approach" the same across councils? I am reviewing an application now (for another council) and this information has been entered into the text boxes and only the images are available as separate pdf.

A: The vision and approach are similar across council. Once images can be embedded in the new funding service, the vision and approach question will be completed in the TFS application, rather than as an uploaded document. Until it is embedded, there have been some variations on how you complete this section by council, but this will be stated within the opportunity. For MRC responsive mode all the information needs to be completed within the single PDF document upload (including text and images).

Q: Does the 6-page vision and approach include references?

A: References should be included in the references section (1000 words).

Q: The information for the Vision/Approach states “Please do not include any personal data within the vision and approach file” - does that mean that none of the team (PI/Co-I industrial project partners should be named in that document?)

A: The Résumé for Research and Innovation is where you should explain why your team is best placed to be able to address the research question that you’ve asked, you can name the team. We are asking you not to include sensitive personal data such as date of birth, age, personal contact details

Q: Will the background of the project be included in the Vision and Approach?

A: Yes, you can include background information in the vision and approach document.

Q: Could you tell me what are "personal data" in the Vision/Approach file. Can we still introduce our previous publications to explain the background of the proposed project?

A: We are asking you not to include sensitive personal data such as date of birth, age, personal contact details. Names are not personal information, and you can include publications, but note there is also a references section.

Staff roles

Q: In the new role descriptions, admin staff/grant managers etc. are all eligible for estate and indirect costs - this is a big change - is it correct?

UKRI has reviewed the guidance on the roles and their relationship to estate and indirect costs and has published some updates at https://www.ukri.org/publications/roles-in-funding-applications/roles-in-funding-applications-eligibility-responsibilities-and-costings-guidance/#section-role-costings

Q: Does the category "researcher" means postdocs and juniors?

A: The role type research and innovation associate are equivalent to researcher' or postdoctoral research assistant' in Je-S.

Q: Am I right in thinking that a co-investigator is a project co-lead? What does a researcher project lead mean?

A: Yes, that is correct. Researcher co-lead was previously 'researcher co-investigator' in Je-S. Please see https://www.ukri.org/publications/roles-in-funding-applications/roles-in-funding-applications-eligibility-responsibilities-and-costings-guidance/ for more information on role types.

Q: In which section should an international team be added? the team will be able to contribute to different parts of the project. Will it be as international co-lead or project partner?

A: Co-lead (international), formerly co-investigators, will assist the project lead in the management and leadership of the research. Project partners (also known as collaborators) are third party organisations or individuals who provide specific contributions to the delivery of the project; project partners will not normally seek to claim funds from the project.

Q: How should collaborators be listed? If they are not team project partners, should we use specialist/research associate even if they are PIs?

A: If collaborators do not have a formal role, they should not be listed in the core team but simply named in the vision and approach.

Q: If you have a project partner who will be facilitating PPI (Patient and Public Involvement) should they be listed as a project partner and have costs with this beyond travel and subsistence? Or would they fall under another role?

A: At this stage project partner is the best role to use and you can justify why they need additional costs beyond the minimum for their activities.

Q: What is the difference between 'project partner' and the 'industrial collaborators'?

A: Project partners can be from other research organisations, charities/third sector, or industry. Complete the project partner section for all your project partners, and for some project partners from industry you will also need to complete the industry collaboration section.

Q: For Admin staff who complete the records, which role would we be?

A: Research office staff do not generally have a role in an application, they have access to applications through the research office account functionality of the funding service.

Q: Collaborators (with no stake in funds)- what is their new designation now in TFS (in that list of 12 examples)?

A: To see a list and definitions of the new staff roles please visit: https://www.ukri.org/publications/roles-in-funding-applications/roles-in-funding-applications-eligibility-responsibilities-and-costings-guidance/.

Or if the collaborators are formally contributing to the project, they may be project partners, or some collaborators may not need to have a formal application role.

Résumé for Research and Innovation (R4RI)/ Applicant and team capability to deliver

Q: Will the R4RI template be saved for future applications, or will it need to be completed afresh each time?

A: It will need to be completed for each opportunity and should be tailored based on your application, team, and the funding opportunity you are applying to. Applications can be downloaded from TFS to save offline.

Q: Should you include references to publications in this resume?

A: You may include publications in the R4RI, or these can be included in response to the references question.

Q: Can we add links to our publications in the R4RI section?

A: When referring to outputs such as publications, please provide these as a digital object identifier (DOI) which can be hyperlinked to the publication where possible. This will also help you to save space in the R4RI template. More information on this can be found here: https://www.ukri.org/apply-for-funding/before-you-apply/resume-for-research-and-innovation-r4ri-guidance/.

Q: We are finding it very tricky to write team narrative CVs as we have to squeeze in so much detail for larger team applications. Will there be any guidance on how to approach this as most of the guidance published so far seems to focus on narrative CVs for individuals?

A: With large teams we are not expecting every detail of everyone's experience or skills to be included. Applicants should select the most appropriate, pertinent examples from across the team and use those in your Résumé for Research and Innovation.

Q: Back to the narrative CVs - in team situations we often find that one or two senior staff have achievements which eclipse the rest of the team and use up a disproportionate amount of the word count but are too important to leave out. How do we manage this without appearing imbalanced?

A: It is up to each team to choose what to highlight in their R4RI, remember we are looking for a wider range of achievements than the traditional achievements that more senior staff may have. The applicants need to consider the specific activities required to complete the project that is being applied for. Use the narrative format to highlight the range of relevant skills you, and if relevant your team (project lead and project co-leads, researchers, other (technical) staff for example research software engineers, data scientists and so on, and partners), have and how this will help to deliver the proposed work.

Q: Can you discuss the new resume format more please? I'm not sure when individual vs single resumes are required, or who to include when there may be large numbers of co-investigators at different sites, and project partners.

A: Teams should submit a single R4RI (not individual R4RIs for each team member) when applying to a funding opportunity. Only one R4RI should be submitted even for large teams across multiple organisations. The team R4RI should describe only a selection of past contributions that best evidence team members' abilities to carry out the proposed project.

An individual's specific achievements can be fore fronted where appropriate, but the contributions described across the modules should demonstrate the appropriateness of the overall team. Different team members may be able to demonstrate complementary skills.

As a rule, we would expect that anyone who would have previously been required to submit a traditional CV should be included in the team R4RI.

You can refer to guidance here: https://www.ukri.org/apply-for-funding/before-you-apply/resume-for-research-and-innovation-r4ri-guidance/ and on the specific opportunity you are applying to (under the how to apply section).

Q: Can you provide some exemplars for team R4RI?

A: If examples are made available they will be published here: https://www.ukri.org/what-we-do/supporting-healthy-research-and-innovation-culture/research-and-innovation-culture/supporting-the-community-adoption-of-r4r-like-narrative-cvs/funding-uses-resume-resources-library/

Q: How should we approach the team narrative CV if the team haven't worked together previously?

A: It would be a discussion between team members on why you are the right team to successfully deliver the proposed work. The assessors are interested in if your team have:

- the relevant experience (appropriate to career stage) to deliver the proposed work
- the right balance of skills and expertise to cover the proposed work
- the appropriate leadership and management skills to deliver the work and your approach to develop others
- contributed to developing a positive research environment and wider community

Q: Is there any part of the form that allows you to detail your education/professional qualifications - or does this all have to be included in the narrative CV?

A: Traditional CVs tend to focus on a narrow range of outputs, such as publications and successful funding. In your Résumé for Research and Innovation, we encourage you to share a wider range of skills and experience. Primarily, your R4RI should focus on evidencing your ability and potential to carry out the application. This could mean using examples of previous outputs to demonstrate how you have been successful before or that you have expertise in a critical methodology. Only include your education and professional qualifications if you consider these relevant to your ability to deliver the proposed project, or if there are eligibility criteria for the funding that require a qualification level.

Embedding Diversity in Research Design Policy

Q: What training are you giving to boards and panels for judging the new diversity part of the applications?

A: The new policy was developed based on recommendations of the expert working group that included MRC boards and panel members. Boards and panels have been updated on policy development and will be briefed ahead of the funding meetings on how to assess the diversity of aspects of the application. We are also developing case studies to help both applicants and assessors.

Industry Collaboration

Q: Collaboration with industry on project - do we need to attach an ICF (Industry Collaboration Framework) form?

No. Applicants submitted as MRC Industry Collaboration Framework (ICF) no longer need to attach an ICF form, instead there is a specific ICF question within TFS. Details on what you can expect in this section can be found within the funding opportunity.

Letters of support/ supporting statements

Q: Is it correct that letters of support from collaborators (not Co-investigators) are no longer required?

A: Letters of support are only permitted for project partners.

Q: Re letters of support from Co-PIs especially from external institutions, we really don't need to prepare anymore in the new application portal?

A: Letters of support are only permitted for project partners.

Q: Host support statements in applications are difficult to address if the project lead is the only person who can edit. How will the funder know these statements are approved by an institution?

A: The application is finally submitted to UKRI by the research office, who will have visibility of the statements included in the application.

Q: If the project leads are the only roles with the ability to edit, how will the funder know that the host support statements have been approved by the host organisation? For funders such as NIHR (National Institute for Health Research), the head of dept would be required to complete this section of an application directly, not the PI (Principal Investigator).

A: The application is finally submitted to UKRI by the research office, who will have visibility of the statements included in the application. In future it may be possible for the head of department to be invited into the funding service application to provide their statement and authorisation.

Q: Being able to upload HoD (head of department) letters of support was previously a helpful route for applicants to obtain timely and specific confirmation of matched host funds: will UKRI review ability to upload letters from investigator sites or is this not up for discussion?

A: Head of department letters of support have only been part of new investigator and fellowship applications in recent years, which have been replaced by equivalents in the funding service. We will review the opportunities that have a text box statement and not a letter upload (MRC responsive mode new investigator) and those that do have a letter upload (MRC fellowship). In future it may be possible for the head of department to be invited into the funding service application to provide their statement and authorisation.

Q: With the institutional support statement (1000 words), how does the relevant person (Research director/HoD etc.) sign off without uploading a headed letter of support?

A: Note: a research organisation support statement is only required for new investigator research grant applications. We are expecting the head of department or similar, to prepare their statement and provide it to the new investigator project lead. The project lead is then responsible for entering that content into the funding service and naming the person that's provided that statement. We are trusting applicants, that the statement is genuine, and we do not require a signature. The research office can also check the statement and verify if necessary. In future it may be possible for the head of department to be invited into the funding service application to provide their statement and authorisation.

Costs

Q: If with the new roles we can claim estates and indirect costs for staff such as grants managers, professional enabling staff, certain technicians etc., that will mean projects are potentially more expensive. Is there more funding available within the MRC's budget to cover the increased costs of the project?

A: No MRC’s budgets and costs remain the same.

Q: For research grant, the website indicates that "The budget for research grant awards will not typically exceed £1 million." Is it the full economic cost or MRC contribution?

A: This is an indicative request to MRC (80% FEC (Full Economic Costs)). Research grants can exceed this value - for any application to MRC the applicants must clearly articulate why the request is required to perform the research.

Q: Some universities offer match funding - how do you validate this and ensure they fulfil their pledges post-award?

A: Every UK research organisation must match fund 20% of the FEC in addition to the 80% FEC funded by UKRI. This is enforced by the UKRI terms and conditions of funding and our funding assurance programme. Other types of match funding are voluntary, such contributions are not a formal part of the assessment (unless specifically requested) and they are not monitored by MRC.

Q: Why is TFS asking us to complete a word form for the FEC costings? This is a massive step backwards from JES (Joint Electronic Submission) rather than online form that auto calculates as we input the costs.

A: That was the case for some early funding service opportunities. For these MRC research board responsive mode opportunities, you do not need to complete and upload an FEC template. You now enter the requested costs directly into the funding service and will do for all future opportunities.

New Investigator Research Grants (NIRGs)

Q: With regards to the host support questions in the NIRG application, is there a word limit?

A: Yes, it is 1000 words.

Q: If collaborators (for a NIRG) are not being costed does it mean they are not Project Partners and so letters of support are not needed? How do you decide who is a Project Partner vs Collaborator (in an academic context, not industrial as per one of the previous questions)?

A: Collaborators based in different organisations to the investigators or in industry can be formally recognised in applications as named project partners. Project partners will usually make some sort of formal contribution to the proposed project, whether in cash or in kind (data, samples, access etc.).

Q: Will institutional letters of support still be needed for NIRGs? How will these be uploaded to TFS?

A: In the new investigator application there is a question to answer about research organisation support. The answer to this question should be prepared by the head of department or equivalent who should be named in the response.

Q: Previously, signed PDF statements of support from the HoD were uploaded for NIRGs. If the applicant is now adding this statement themselves, this could cause issues with commitment being amended and not being approved by the HoD. How will this be avoided?

A: This is something for you to discuss with your research organisation.

Q: If a host institution wishes to make a match funding contribution towards an application (such as a PhD studentship for a new investigator application) how would this be evidenced in the application if letters of support are no longer allowed?

A: Note: a research organisation support statement is only required for new investigator research grant applications. There is a specific question in that funding opportunity about the research organisation support and that replaces the letters of support that were previously provided on these applications. The research organisation provides a statement from a named official, such as head of department, to confirm the support that they will be providing to the new investigator. Whatever that might be, financial, training, mentorship, etc. There are details in the funding opportunity about the sorts of things we like to see in that statement. The other place you can evidence such contributions is in the resources and costs section. That includes a narrative section where you justify the costs that you are requesting for your project. But equally, if there are contributions to the project that increase the value for money of your project, you can state those, should you choose to do so.

Q: In the vision and approach page limits, can the length of the 3 sections be different within the overall page limit e.g., for NIRG (New Investigator Research Grant), can the methods part be more than 1 page as long as the total is still within 8 pages?

A: You can decide how to complete the six pages (for a NIRG) of the vision and approach. The approach may include some methods. There are also optional but recommended additional pages for:

- one-page diagrammatic workplan, such as a Gantt chart
- one additional page for additional reproducibility information and statistical design

The additional pages can only be used for these purposes and must be clearly identified.

Fellowships

Q: For clinical fellowships, the website says that clinical research training fellowships (CRTF) will be limited to 4 pages for vision and approach, is this correct or will it be 6 pages?

A: CRTF vision and approach page limit will be four pages. Similar to other opportunities you may add one page for a visual project plan and one page for reproducibility information, increasing the maximum length to 6 pages. Although please note that this webinar was on the MRC responsive mode research boards and there is another webinar for MRC fellowship applications on the 26 July 2023 3pm – 4pm, you can register to attend here: https://ukri.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_cjyivVsKScywmKNTRKO3DQ

Q: Are we able to apply for MRC fellowship funding if we have registered our PHD a few months prior?

A: Please look at the following webpage for further information on fellowships at different career stages https://www.ukri.org/what-we-offer/developing-people-and-skills/mrc/fellowships/fellowship-opportunities-and-expectations/#contents-list. You can also contact the fellow's inbox for further advice fellows@mrc.ukri.org

Q: I would like to apply for an MRC CSF. I can't see that this funding round has opened yet. It says 21st July on your website?

A: Clinician Scientist Fellowship (CSF) will launch on 20 July 2023. Please do keep an eye on the funding finder.

Q: Can you please also confirm the closing date for the next round CSF application - it was listed as 6th Sep, now listed as 13th Sep and in your talk you said all application deadlines would be aligned to 19th Sep. I am a little confused and need to confirm to time my clinical commitments accordingly

A: The CSF deadline is 13 September 2023. The 19 September 2023 deadline is for our responsive mode applications submitted to our four boards (MCMB, IIB, NMHB, PSMB). A webinar for fellowships will take place on 26 July, you may register here: https://ukri.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_cjyivVsKScywmKNTRKO3DQ#/registration

Q: Will pdf letters of support still be required for Fellowship applications? One rule with regards to host support would be good across all applications.

A: The guidance for MRC fellowships differs from MRC responsive mode. In the MRC fellowship opportunities head of department statements must be provided as uploaded letters of support, up to two pages for each letter.

Q: Are you able to tell us what the word limit for the statement from the head of department expressing institution support is? (I can't currently access the form to determine this as CSF application doesn't open until 20th July and I am trying to organise this ahead of time due to annual leave in August)

A: CSF is an MRC fellowship scheme, the guidance for MRC fellowships differs from MRC responsive mode. In the MRC fellowship opportunities head of department statements must be provided as uploaded letters of support, up to two pages for each letter.

Peer Review

Q: If we cannot nominate reviewers, how will they be selected? Can we exclude reviewers who have conflict of interest?

A: We will continue to identify reviewers using our expert reviewer selectors, for more information on this process please see: https://www.ukri.org/councils/mrc/guidance-for-reviewers/peer-reviews/external-peer-review/. You can identify reviewers you would like to be excluded via an email to the TFS helpdesk.

Q: Will reviewers be given detailed information of the requirements in Vision & Approach? I am concerned that international reviewers may not be familiar with this system.

A: Peer reviewers will be able to see the application in the same way that applicants can, which means they can see the guidance on how vison and approach should be completed, and the information/requirements requested in 'what assessors are looking for.'

Q: Where will we be able to view peer review feedback to support PI responses?

A: Project leads will be able to view and respond to peer reviews in the new funding service.

Q: Will peer reviewers receive new guidance & training about assessing the new core questions?

A: Yes, new guidance will be in place for the peer reviewers in the funding service, they will also be able to see all the information requested from the applicants. More training and guidance will also follow as the new system develops.

Guidance

Q: When will the MRC Guidance for Applicant document be updated to reflect these changes? This is very useful but currently displays info for the old format even though some panels e.g., BMBR (Better Methods Better Research) have already transitioned to TFS

A: We are currently working on getting this updated as soon as possible. We still have several opportunities running through Je-S where this guidance is still required. Guidance for each opportunity in TFS can be found in the application form and on the opportunities funding page, under the how to apply section.

Q: Can you add the link to the newsletter in here please (can't access from slides)

A: The link to subscribe to the newsletter for the Funding Service can be found here: https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKRI/subscriber/new?topic_id=Simpler_and_Better

Post Award

Q: What's the state of play on TFS with post-award matters please? For example, the issuing of grants, acceptance of grants, grant transfers, expenditure statements, grant maintenance requests, etc. Many thanks!

A: Post-award features covering all these aspects have been built in TFS and are currently being tested by BBSRC (Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council). For these MRC responsive mode opportunities, we expect to be using the TFS award and post-award features from March 2024.

Joint electronic submission system (JeS)

Q: Will we still be able to access the archive of previous applications made in Je-S?

A: Currently yes, but when we completely migrate to TFS the Je-S system will close down and you may no longer have access to these applications. We would suggest downloading these applications from the Je-S system.

Q: Will existing applications on JES be migrated across to TFS?

A: No - the old application you either submitted or started on Je-S will not be migrated to TFS. Your active grants will be migrated to TFS to continue to be paid and you will be able to manage them through TFS e.g., request an extension.

Q: We are still waiting for feedback on a rejected proposal submitted by JE-S (Joint Electronic Submissions). Will the feedback still be published there?

A: Please contact ResearchFundingPolicyandDelivery@mrc.ukri.org and we will investigate this for you.

Other

Q: Will there be a new format for mid-range equipment grant applications

A: All MRC opportunities are now transitioning onto the new funding service. Information on specific opportunities, including the format and guidance will be available on the relevant opportunities funding finder page.