

UKRI Cross Research Council Responsive Mode (CRCRM) Pilot Scheme

Generalised feedback on CRCRM Outline Stage applications – Round 1

Due to the overwhelming number of applications submitted to the CRCRM Round 1 Outline Stage, UKRI is unable to provide specific feedback for each application. However, feedback has been collated from the Interdisciplinary Assessment College Chairs who were involved in assessment discussions at the Outline Stage, which is summarised below. A summary of key features of both strong and weaker applications has been provided, as well as recommendations for preparing future applications. The points outlined below will not all be relevant to individual applications but should provide support for developing full stage applications or submitting outline applications to Round 2. Some statistics on the Round 1 application stage have also been provided.

Key features of strong outline applications:

Interdisciplinarity and research team

- The mutual benefits, including reciprocity, to the various disciplines were very clear.
- The interdisciplinarity was built into the project framework.
- Applicants had a well-integrated team of researchers and clearly demonstrated how teams will work together, demonstrating effective dialogue.
- The research team had clear contributions/expertise.

General points

- The application articulated the challenge without dwelling on technical detail.
- The application was specific and focused; the problem was articulated to a high standard.
- The application had clear evidence of novelty, timeliness, and advancement.
- The application was very clear on the research methodology to be used and how it was innovative.

Key features of weaker outline applications:

Interdisciplinarity and research team

- In the application the reciprocal benefits were not obvious/not sufficiently explained.
- The application did not explain how the proposal was co-created by the disciplines involved, or the importance of co-creation/co-design in addressing the research challenge.
- There was often an absence of different disciplinary perspectives.
- A tool was transplanted/bolted on from one discipline to another – this was a particular issue in many applications using AI. The tool itself was not being developed as part of the application or applied to a new disciplinary area. The individual research council responsive mode schemes will support AI technologies applied to the research challenges within their discipline areas.
- The disciplinary approach was siloed when addressing parts of the research, there was not integration of disciplines or reciprocal benefits to the different disciplines and the blending of innovation was not clear. Therefore, proposals were considered multidisciplinary not interdisciplinary. The individual research council responsive mode schemes will support multidisciplinary proposals under the [Cross-Council Remit Agreement](#).
- The challenges to interdisciplinary working were not addressed.

- The proposal was multidisciplinary not interdisciplinary i.e., disciplines were siloed, there was not integration of disciplines or reciprocal benefits to the different disciplines.

General points

- There is a risk of overlap with existing work from teams with insufficient background knowledge or experience of previous research in the field due to missing expertise in the team - background research/studies were not sufficiently studied for expertise involved in the proposal.
- The outcomes and how they would be achieved were not clearly articulated.
- There was a lack of detail on methodologies and a lack of clarity around whether methods were being developed or applied and therefore the novelty was not clear.
- Applications were labelled as transformative without demonstrating their transformative nature.
- The impact was not explained well.
- Discipline specific jargon was used; too much technical language specific to a discipline was used and could therefore be difficult to understand by a panel with broader cross-disciplinary expertise.
- Some applications did not take into account the full call guidance and read as though they were prepared prior to the call being launched.

Recommendations for Round 1 Full Stage applications and Round 2 Outline applications:

Interdisciplinarity and research team

- Ensure there is reciprocity across disciplines and that it is clearly articulated in the application.
- Show that the disciplines are fully integrated across the application, not just the inclusion of different disciplines.
- Make co-creating and mutual benefits across disciplines clear.
- Advancement, novelty and timeliness need to demonstrate properly integrated interdisciplinarity.
- Demonstrate how using an interdisciplinary approach will answer questions and will lead to where the research can go that is different from a non-interdisciplinary approach.
- When AI is used, you should include sufficient detail to explain how that part of the application is novel/being developed and what reciprocal benefits there will be to that discipline as well as how, why and by whom it is being done.
- Show how clear communication will be maintained across disciplines.
- Ensure that the work and the expertise is clearly mapped back to the team proposing the application.
- Allow sufficient time to work with colleagues to ensure all co-applicants are fully involved in the creation of the application and be sure to include all relevant parties, with clear justifications for their involvement. Ensure you have the appropriate discussions with project partners in particular around rights to intellectual property arising from the research and the contributions to the project.
- If all of the applicants are in the same department, they should clearly articulate how the work is truly interdisciplinary.
- Where projects involve developing a tool that would be relevant for another field, these proposals should clearly demonstrate the interdisciplinarity requirements of the call and how that tool is being developed as part of the research and not just applied.
- Do not overcomplicate the project by unnecessarily involving disciplines from more research council remits. As long as the application covers the remits of at least 2 research councils it

is eligible for this scheme. Adding more research council disciplines does not automatically lead to a higher score.

General points

- Keep the proposal grounded and focused but be careful not to make it too technical (non-specialists will also be reviewing applications at the Outline stage).
- Ensure any sustainability claims are evidenced with data.
- Clearly distinguish the outputs, outcomes, and impact.
- Explain terminology in your application where appropriate as linguistic differences in terminologies may exist across disciplines.
- When research uses human participants, you should ensure that the sample size is appropriate and articulate this clearly: differences in sample sizes required for research projects can exist across disciplines.
- Make sure prior research is well researched and understood.
- Explain why the research matters; how it will make a difference in the world or who it will benefit – or how it will advance knowledge.
- Consider whether this is an appropriate scheme to suit your funding application, or whether existing research council responsive mode schemes or UKRI strategic opportunities would be more appropriate. Opportunities are advised on the [Funding Finder](#) section of the UKRI website.

Statistics on Round 1 outline application stage:

- 979 outline applications were submitted:
 - 77 applications were considered as out of scope i.e. did not cover disciplines from more than 1 research council
 - 3 applications were withdrawn
- 899 applications were assessed by the Interdisciplinary Assessment College

Outline applications were scored against the following criteria:

1	Advancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • application shows a high potential for delivering ground-breaking and transformative outcomes that could only be achieved through interdisciplinary research
	Novelty & Timeliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the proposed work has the potential to advance current understanding and generate new knowledge, thinking, concepts, techniques, methods or technologies or discoveries through interdisciplinary collaborations and disruptive ideas • the proposed work is timely given current trends, context and needs
2	Interdisciplinarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • application clearly demonstrates that the research involves disciplines from more than 1 research council [checked by UKRI] and explores new types of, and approaches to, interdisciplinary research not routinely funded through existing UKRI responsive mode schemes • application includes a project team with the expertise in the disciplines required for the delivery of the project • application demonstrates the potential for reciprocal research benefits through the integration of distinct disciplinary perspectives and spheres of knowledge • application demonstrates how potential challenges will be addressed in conducting interdisciplinary research and outline how these will be overcome • application shows co-creation and design involving all disciplines required for successful delivery of the project

Applications had to meet a quality threshold on both assessment criteria.

The IAC Chairs reviewed the assessments by the IAC members and banded applications A to D with the following definitions:

Band	Definition
A	These applications are judged to have addressed all of the assessment criteria and show evidence of the highest standards and obvious added value from a CRCRM award. They are a priority to invite to the full application stage.
B	These applications are judged to have addressed all of the assessment criteria and are of a high standard, with no or very minor weaknesses/limitations. They show good evidence of added value from a CRCRM award. They should be considered to invite to the full application stage but are not prioritised.
C	These applications adequately address all of the assessment criteria but are not of the highest quality across the criteria and have a number of minor to clear weaknesses/limitations. They are the lowest priority to invite to the full application stage.
D	These applications failed to adequately address one or more of the assessment criteria and/or have significant weaknesses/limitations and are not recommended to be invited to the full application stage.

Assessment outcomes

- 175 applications (19%) were assigned as Band A and have been invited to submit full applications.
- 79 applications were assigned as Band B.
- 188 applications were assigned as Band C.
- 457 (51%) applications were assigned as Band D.
 - Of these 98 were assigned as Band D based on just the interdisciplinarity criteria and 336 were assigned as Band D based on both interdisciplinarity and advancement, novelty and timeliness criteria.

Please note applicants have been provided with their final band but we will not be providing the separate scores for the two assessment criteria.