

Additional Information: Distributed Peer Review

Applicant and reviewer guidance

Overview

This document sets out guidance to support the assessment of applications, including instructions for using the AIRRPortal to record scores and feedback, definitions of star ratings and further detail on the assessment criteria and the use of distributed peer review.

Rules and guidelines for reviewers

By submitting an application, you agree to review up to five applications from your peers. You are expected to complete these evaluations and provide constructive comments by the stated deadline (see the opportunity timeline). You will have three to four weeks to complete your reviews (depending on the individual route timeline). Please note that failure to submit your allocated reviews on time will result in the automatic rejection of the proposal for which you are the applicant.

Throughout the review process, you are required to uphold high ethical standards. This includes maintaining confidentiality and providing fair, well-reasoned feedback on each application assigned to you. Any attempt to misuse the system – such as giving consistently poor or unsubstantiated scores – will lead to your own application being rejected.

We will consider obvious conflicts of interest when matching proposals to reviewers. You will have the possibility of declaring conflicts of interest when reviewing proposals. Note that you should restrict yourself to those where you feel you are not able to express an objective opinion. Conflict flagging must not be used to reduce the number of reviews you have to deliver by the given deadline. In instances where a conflict has been identified, it is likely you will be reassigned other applications to review.

To protect confidentiality, the use of generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT or Copilot) to prepare reviews is not permitted. Review documents are confidential and must not be provided as input to any AI model. For more information, please refer to the [UKRI Policy on the use of generative AI in applications](#).

You may also encounter information protected by intellectual property rights. Such information must not be shared, copied, or used in any way outside the review process. If you download or print proposals, please ensure they are securely deleted or destroyed once your review work is complete. For further guidance, see the [UKRI Peer review service standards and code of practice](#).

What makes a good review

Your review comments should be helpful, factual, and respectful, as they will be shared directly with applicants without editing. Please ensure your feedback is clear, constructive, and written in a neutral tone that does not reveal your identity in any way.

It is recommended that you organise your review comments with the assessment criteria as subheadings.

We advise drafting at least 250 words of feedback in total (with more encouraged for the largest proposals) covering specific, comprehensive commentary on each of the criteria.

Remember that your feedback will be passed on to the candidates unedited and that you are solely responsible for the content and integrity of your comments.

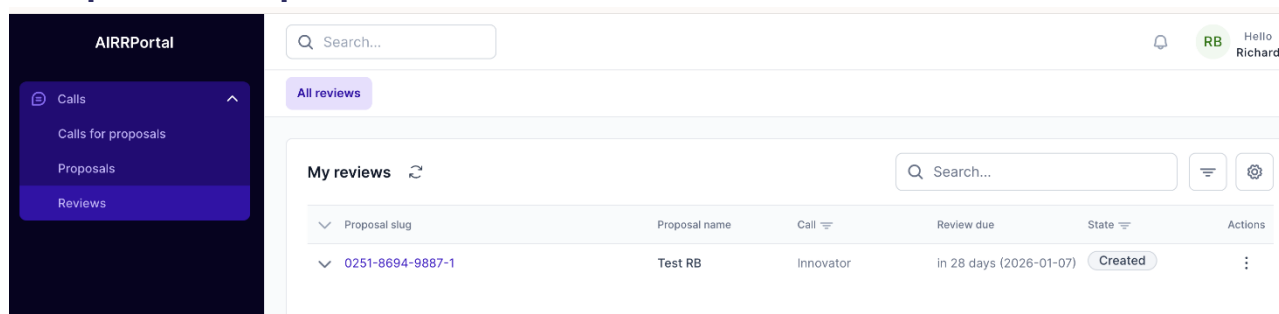
Providing your review

Reviews are performed using the AIRRPortal, the online AIRR application and reviewing system.

Assigned reviews

You will receive an email notification when you are assigned a review. Once you have logged in to AIRRPortal, to see the reviews assigned to you, navigate to the 'My reviews' page, under 'Calls' > 'Reviews'

Accept review request



The screenshot shows the AIRRPortal interface. On the left, a dark sidebar menu is open to 'Reviews'. The main content area has a search bar and a 'My reviews' section with a refresh icon. Below this is a table with the following data:

Proposal slug	Proposal name	Call	Review due	State	Actions
0251-8694-9887-1	Test RB	Innovator	in 28 days (2026-01-07)	Created	⋮

To start the process for providing a review, in the Actions column, click on the ellipsis or more options icon against the proposal to be reviewed.

- To **accept** the review request, click 'Start review' and click 'Yes' in the pop-up window that appears.
- To **reject** the review request, click 'Decline to review' and provide your reason for declining in the pop-up window that appears. UKRI will be notified that you have declined the review request.

Create review

The 'Create review' page (see example screenshot in the appendix) is where you are asked to provide your review. Here you can:

- read the application online in your browser

- open and download the attachment(s) uploaded by the applicant (these can be seen by clicking the download icon next to the attached file name).

If, having read the proposal, you identify a conflict of interest, then you may send the review back using the 'Decline to review' option.

Your assessment of the proposal should be provided in the 'Summary' section through both:

- the star rating option, using the whole range of 1 to 5 stars
- the 'Comments' free-text box.

Do not use the 'Notes (not visible to user)' box or the 'Add comment' function for each proposal section, as any information in these boxes will not be used.

'Comments' free-text box.

You can save your unfinished review to come back to later. We recommend using an alternative writing tool, such as Word, to write your review and then copy it into the text box.

Assessment criteria

- alignment to the call's priority area(s) and highly credible research outcomes
- the project has a high degree of ambition, novelty and/or there is a significant opportunity that would not be possible without access to the AIRR
- previous use of GPU compute and demonstration that progress of research is contingent on scaling up access to compute resource
- ethical or responsible research and innovation considerations, including how to manage these considerations.

Star ratings definition

You also need to rate each application from one star (poor) to five stars (exceptional). The scoring range definitions are as follows:

- Five stars:** **Excellent.** The application is outstanding. It addresses all the assessment criteria and meets them to an exceptional level with no weaknesses.
- Four stars:** **Very good.** The application is very high quality. It addresses the assessment criteria and meets them to a high level. There are some very minor weaknesses.
- Three stars:** **Good.** The application is of good quality. It meets most of the assessment criteria to an acceptable level, but not across all aspects of the proposed activities. There are weaknesses.
- Two stars:** **Weak:** The application is not sufficiently competitive. It meets some of the assessment criteria to an adequate level. There are, however, significant weaknesses.

One star: **Poor.** The application is flawed or of unsuitable quality for awarding resource. It does not meet any assessment criteria to an adequate level.

Submit review

When you have finished your assessment, click 'Submit review', and click 'Yes' to submit your review.

Further guidance regarding feedback to applicants

Since your review will be shared directly with the applicant, we encourage you to provide clear, constructive, and comprehensive comments. Aim to offer feedback of the same quality you would expect from your peers. Remember, your comments will be passed on unedited, and you are responsible for their accuracy and tone. The goal is to help applicants understand the strengths and weaknesses of their proposals in a supportive way.

Here are some helpful tips for writing effective reviews:

- **Understand the criteria:** Familiarise yourself with the assessment guidelines and scoring system before you begin.
- **Be mindful of diversity:** You may review applications from disciplines different from your own.
- **Align comments with scores:** Ensure your feedback explains and justifies the score you assign.
- **Keep it clear and concise:** Provide comprehensive comments without unnecessary detail.
- **Be objective and specific:** Avoid vague or generic statements that could apply to any proposal.
- **No need to summarise:** Applicants know their proposals well. If helpful, start with a brief outline instead.
- **Highlight strengths and weaknesses:** Clearly identify what works well and what could be improved, in a constructive tone.
- **Stay consistent:** Make sure your strengths and weaknesses do not contradict each other.
- **Avoid questions:** This is not an iterative process. If something is unclear, state it as a weakness.
- **Focus on the proposal, not the person:** For example, write "The proposal did not..." rather than "The applicant did not..."
- **Use plain English:** Avoid jargon and write in clear, accessible language.
- **Write in full sentences:** Check grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

- **Maintain professionalism:** Do not use inappropriate, offensive, sarcastic, or insulting language.
- **Review your review:** Read your comments as if you were the applicant. If they don't feel constructive, revise them.
- **Ensure consistency with grades:** If you give a low score, explain the weaknesses. Avoid mismatches between comments and grades.

Distributed peer review

The [Independent Review of Research Bureaucracy](#) (2022) recommended that funders explore innovative approaches to application assessment to streamline and improve their processes. Building on this, the [Review of Peer Review](#) (2023) examined the use and effectiveness of peer review within grant-making and advised funders to adopt a range of review methods. In particular, they suggested that application, review, and decision-making processes should be tailored to the needs of each funding scheme.

Distributed Peer Review (DPR) is one such approach. Under DPR, applicants also act as assessors, reviewing other proposals submitted to the same funding opportunity. By applying, applicants agree both to provide reviews and to have their own proposals evaluated by their peers.

DPR has the potential to make peer review more democratic by increasing the speed, quality, and consistency of feedback. DPR also reduces the administrative workload associated with recruiting external reviewers and convening panels, helping to streamline and accelerate the overall review process.

Appendix: 'Create review' page

Test RB In review
ID: 0251-8694-9887-1

Please review the application below. If you want to add a comment to a specific field, click on the comment action in the corresponding field.

Details overview

[More details](#)

Call name:	Innovator	Round deadline:	January 17, 2026 (in 1 month)
Round reference:	Round 06.11.2025-17.01.2026	Created by:	Richard Bailey
Created:	Nov 19, 2025, 9:18 AM	Last edited:	Dec 9, 2025, 12:03 PM

Award details

Name: Test RB

Summary: test rb

Description:

Is the project non-commercial or research only?

Does the project involve confidential, sensitive or GDPR-protected information?

Project duration in days: 183

Supporting documentation

Access supporting documents here

- AIRR_DPR_Rules_and.pdf (79.9 KB - Dec 9, 2025, 11:39 AM)
- AIRR_DPR_Rules_and.docx (74.4 KB - Dec 9, 2025, 11:39 AM)

Resource requests

Offering	Provider	Category	Actions
Isambard-AI Innovator	UKRI	UKRI Allocatable Offerings	

Project team

Users | Invitations | Permissions

Member	Email	Role	Role expiration	Actions
RB Richard Bailey	richard.bailey@ukri.org	Proposal Lead	—	

Summary

Rate: ★★★★★ 0 stars

Comments: Add your comment here

Notes (not visible to user): Add your notes here

Progress

- Details overview
- Award details
- Resource requests
- Project team
- Summary

Save as draft

Submit review

Send back

By ordering, you agree to the platform [terms of service](#) and [privacy policy](#).