Peer Review Policy
Introduction

- Exploration of internal barriers/challenges that Research Office and Applicants face when responding to funding opportunities?
- Exploration of the restrictions imposed by EPSRC and how they affect applicants?
- Areas where equality & diversity is being affected

To explain the changes in how EPSRC operates, the greater need for applications to be correct first time, consequences of fewer returns for amendment, pathways to impact

- Provide tips and advice around common mistakes/queries
- Addressing your questions
EPSRC Peer Review College

- Peer Review is at the heart of EPSRC business
- EPSRC has a College of experts who provide independent peer review to inform its decisions
- The College is broadly designed to represent the community it serves
- Populated with enough expertise to provide Peer Review needs in each discipline
- Balanced pool of members in terms of breadth of knowledge, gender, experience, ethnic origin and geographic location
Refreshing EPSRC Peer Review College

- New delivery plan period
- Need to rebalanced pool of members in terms addressing equality and diversity

Call for Expression of Interest to join the Associate Peer Reviewer pool – out next week, closing date 3rd May

- Encourage your academics to apply
- Application through the call and a smart survey
- Pass on the opportunity to project and research business partners
Hint’s and Tip’s
EPSRC is no longer returning proposals for minor amendments

The costs requested need to be right first time as Research Organisations will not be able to add funds at a later stage if items are under costed.

Greater chance of proposals being rejected by the office if they do not meet call or scheme requirements.

Keep in mind that errors/mistakes/omissions in the proposal and documentation will be seen (or not, if missing) by peer review.
A Project Partner cannot contribute to and receive funds from the same grant.

- This includes funds for attending meetings
- It is unusual for HEI to be a Project Partner (they are usually involved by having a Co-I, or VF)
- Project Partner statements of support are required (signed and dated within 6 months of submission date)
- **In kind** and **cash** support is recorded and used as a strong measure to show how Government investments leverage additional funds
- In Kind support should be reasonably quantified, **not shown as £1**
Grant maintenance requests can either be specific to a grant or be a generic grant policy question.

All grant maintenance requests, specific to a grant, must be submitted through Je-S, these can be from either the Principal Investigator or the Research Organisation.

*Keep to the facts, keep it simple*

If a standard extension request is submitted but it has a supplementary question colleagues have to assign the activity to the RC even if the request is within the rules – this will delay response times.
GC 7 Extensions Research Grants: After a research grant has started, the duration may be extended at no additional cost by an overall total of up to 12 months, subject to prior written approval.

Extensions will be allowed where they are necessary to enable work to be completed following delays due

In the case of other, exceptional, circumstances, the duration may be extended, at the discretion of the Research Council.

Always check the T&Cs on the offer letter - answers can mostly be answered here

Requests for extensions should be made via the Grant Maintenance facility on the Je-S system before the end date of the grant – *keep it simple*
Funds cannot be transferred between Directly Incurred and Directly Allocated.

Directly Allocated funds are ring-fenced on the grant and they cannot be transferred elsewhere, or between headings within DA.

Transfer of funds rules are explained in the T&Cs and on EPSRC website under ‘funding’.
Starting Grants

Grants must start within 3 months of the announced start date (unless the grant has a fixed start date)

- Delays in appointing staff members is not sufficient reason for requesting delay in start date

A grant can be started once there is expenditure on:

- Directly Allocated costs (Investigators);
- Directly Incurred Other; or
- Directly Incurred Equipment (it can be ordered after the date of the grant offer letter, but payment can only be made once the grant has started)

An extension can be requested if there is a delay in appointing staff (normally towards the end of the grant duration)
No expenditure can occur after the end date of the grant

This includes buying tickets or paying conference fees that will occur after the grant has finished
Where Can I Find The Answer

- Check the Grant offer letter - the first place to look.
  Rarely is there a retrospective change to grant conditions (e.g. equipment rules for early grant do allow transfer of funds, later ones do not)

- Check the ‘funding area’ on the website

- If you still cannot find an answer talk to us:
  - Portfolio Managers - grant and theme specific enquiries (e.g. extensions, delays in starting the grant, use of funds etc.) and general policy questions. [https://www.epsrc.ac.uk/research/ourportfolio/themes/](https://www.epsrc.ac.uk/research/ourportfolio/themes/)
  - Peer Review Team – complex policy queries, sanction appeals, reconciliations, final expenditure statement (FES), supplementary expenditure statements (SES) and FES due date extensions.
  - Building Leadership Team – General fellowship, training grant, studentship enquiries and the disabled students allowance (DSA)
Common Questions Raised

- **Interdisciplinary proposals, reviewing and responding**
  - Reviewers are picked to cover all scientific areas, and in guidance are asked to comment only on the area they know about. The panel is charged to assess reviewer comments and will normally identify which part of the review is most appropriate overall (they know reviewer names).
  - It is the duty of the chair and EPSRC officers to flag and stop re-reviewing.

- **Reviews and multiple requests for PI response – why this occurs**
  - Reviews are initially requested together but reviews are not received together. Once we receive sufficient reviews (usually 3) they are fed back to the applicant for a response before panel. However, we have a policy that PI should be allowed to response to all reviews, if these are received late this triggers a further request.

- **Feedback for un-funded proposals, what can you expect**
  - *Remit Reject – if a proposal has not been submitted properly, or is out of remit*
  - *Reviewer Reject - if the reviewer comments are insufficiently supportive*
  - *EoI and Outline stages are used to handle submission demand.*
  - We process thousands of proposals each year, so prioritisation panels simply rank based on reviewers' comments you will have already seen. EPSRC do not normally provide further feedback after panel stage unless the panel has requested specific points are passed on.
Are there any plans to offer any training on either writing successful grants and/or reviewing grants?

There is a lot of information available on our website:

- Preparing a proposal [https://www.epsrc.ac.uk/funding/howtoapply/preparing/](https://www.epsrc.ac.uk/funding/howtoapply/preparing/)
- Assessment process [https://www.epsrc.ac.uk/funding/assessmentprocess/](https://www.epsrc.ac.uk/funding/assessmentprocess/)
- Reviewing proposals [https://www.epsrc.ac.uk/funding/assessmentprocess/review/](https://www.epsrc.ac.uk/funding/assessmentprocess/review/)
EPSRC has increasingly been introducing an EoI stage to assess demand for calls for proposals. However, this doesn't seem to work well where demand is much higher than expected. What is EPSRC's rationale for using the EoI stage, and does EPSRC feel that this approach is fulfilling its intended purpose?

EOIs are used for a variety of reasons, which could include being used to gauge how much research is being done in a particular area, or for Sandpits. EOIs are also useful to identify suitable reviewers/meeting participants.

Outlines can reduce effort (RC, Academic & RO), also useful when we can expect a large number of applications, or proposals that span EPSRC remit or promote international collaboration.

We are monitoring the use of these in peer review.
If the feedback is sent directly to the PI, could the Research Offices also receive a copy of the feedback? This will assist with our research training, quality control and demand management practices.

Reviewer reports are made available to the RO for a limited period, but our policy is that specific feedback is only made available to the PI. Additional feedback is more common on interviews and strategic awards, if an RO wants this information they will need to discuss with the PI.
Your Questions

Please could EPSRC notify Research Offices directly when changing scheme rules (e.g. Programme Grants, Strategic Equipment), rather than just changing rules posted on its web site without making any announcement?

- EPSRC does keep scheme changes to a minimum, but sometimes updates and changes are required.
- Big changes are usually clearly identified as a new item on our front page
- RO workshop updates
Does EPSRC have any plans to introduce a demand management system like the institutional cap system that NERC have introduced?

EPSRC has developed and reviewed its own Repeatedly Unsuccessful Applicants Policy and the Resubmissions Policy, both of which have helped us to meet our submission and success rate targets. We have no current plans to introduce new measures.
Top Tips

- No expenditure after the end of the grant, even buying tickets. We cannot grant extensions to simply use up unspent funds.

- Keep JeS requests simple, give dates and justify the reason. If there is a supplementary question it’ll get reassigned and delayed.

- Check call document and speak to the call lead for clarification

- Getting it right first time
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