



**UK Research
and Innovation**

Future Leaders Fellowships: Reviewers' Guidance

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1.	Major changes to Future Leaders Fellowships Peer Review section added.
4.1.5.	Covid-19 Section updated.
4.2.1.	Principles of Assessment and Decision-Making section added.
4.2.4.	AI section added.
5.	Completing the Review Form section updated to reflect move to TFS.
7.	Review Recognition section updated to reflect move to TFS and UKRI Talent Peer Review College recruitment.
8.	Queries section updated to reflect move to TFS.
Misc.	Numerous changes to reflect move to TFS.
Ver. 12.1	Details
4.2.4.	AI section updated to reflect UKRI policy

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1 Major changes to Future Leaders Fellowships Peer Review

1.1 Changes to UKRI Peer Review Platform

As of Round 9 of the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Future Leaders Fellowships (FLF) scheme, The Funding Service (TFS) for academic-hosted applicants will replace the Joint Electronic System (Je-S) as the platform through which you will provide your review.

This new platform aims to address many of the issues of unnecessary complexity and bureaucracy which have been identified in various reviews of research funding. However, there are also some limitations which make reading and following the below guidance even more important. These include:

- **Reviews are now a single text box for the whole review** – Instead of individual text boxes under each question, your review will now be provided within a single text box. This means you must insert the relevant headers for each section yourself.
- **Reviews can no longer be returned for amendment** – If you identify yourself within a review, do not provide enough detail or do anything else that makes your review unusable, we will not be able to amend your review and it will not be used.

In-depth guidance for reviewers new to the TFS system can be found on the [UKRI website](#).

1.2 Other significant changes

Below are the other major changes to the peer review process for the FLF scheme since Round 8

- **The scheme now uses the Résumé for Research and Innovation (R4RI) CV format** – Previously we have provided an in-house 'UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships CV Template and List of Outputs' document, but going forward applicants will use the R4RI format to showcase the range of relevant skills they have and how this will help them to deliver the proposed work. Guidance on the R4RI CV format can be found on the [UKRI website](#).
- **Applicants will now be allowed up to one side of A4 in their PI response for each review received** – Previously applicants had a fixed 3 sides of A4 regardless of the number of reviews received. This change should not affect how you write your review and is just for information.

2 The Future Leaders Fellowships Scheme

2.1 Overview

The [FLF scheme](#) will support early career researchers and innovators with outstanding potential in universities, businesses, and other research and innovation environments including recognised Independent Research Organisations (IROs), and Research Councils' institutes and laboratories.

The objectives of the scheme are:

- To develop, retain, attract and sustain research and innovation talent in the UK.
- To foster new research and innovation career paths including those at the academic/business and interdisciplinary boundaries and facilitate movement of people between sectors.
- To provide sustained funding and resources for the best early career researchers and innovators.
- To provide long-term, flexible funding to tackle difficult and novel challenges, and support adventurous, ambitious programmes.

Fellowships are not restricted to work that would be seen as formal research in their area but can also lead and develop innovation. Innovation is defined as the practical translation of disruptive ideas into novel, relevant and valued products, services, processes, systems or business models, making them readily available to markets, government and society.

Innovation means creating economic and/or social value from ideas. Within the FLF scheme, innovation projects will be those that aim to move research through the development pathway towards commercialisation and/or application.

2.2 How the scheme differs from existing fellowship schemes

The FLF scheme provides long-term support in order to enable fellows to tackle ambitious programmes or multidisciplinary questions, and new or emerging research and innovation areas and partnerships.

It is the first UKRI-wide investment and will provide assessment and support across UKRI's remit, with no barriers to multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research or innovation.

In order to support excellent research and innovation wherever it arises and to facilitate movement of people and projects between sectors, FLF fellows can be based in universities, businesses or other eligible IROs.

To ensure the successful development of the fellow, FLF come with a requirement for the host organisation to commit significant support. For academic-hosted fellows, this includes the commitment to providing an open-ended UK based independent research or innovation position, to be taken up during or upon the completion of the fellowship (in line with organisational employment policies and practices).

3 Before you review

3.1 New Reviewers

Those new to review writing either generally or for UKRI should consider completing our short [online training course](#). The training course is made up of two modules, the first covering the FLF scheme and the second providing guidance on good review writing. The course should take around 30 minutes to complete. Guidance on how to register for the training is on the [UKRI website](#).

3.2 Conflict of Interest

Before you complete a review, please ensure that you do not have a conflict of interest with the proposal. The number one reason for a received review being considered unusable is because of a conflict of interest, so we request that you make yourself familiar with the policy available at [Annex A](#) and inform us before writing the review if you have or suspect any conflicts of interest with the proposal you have been asked to review by email to fellowspeerreview@ukri.org.

UKRI is a publicly funded organisation and is accountable to government and the public for its actions and for the way it conducts its business, which must be undertaken in a way that is transparent and guards against potential conflicts of interest influencing the outcome of decisions.

3.3 Timescales

You will have 15 working days to provide your review. If you cannot comment within this timescale, please confirm by reply or by emailing fellowspeerreview@ukri.org immediately, so we can discuss extending the deadline or, if you are still not able to provide a review with an extension, so that we can invite another reviewer in your place as quickly as possible.

If you are able to suggest possible alternative reviewers we could approach when you decline, this would be much appreciated.

4 Considerations when completing a review

Your review must be evidence-based and the evidence used should be stated clearly in your comments. In order to ensure that your review is as useful as possible to both the applicant and panel please:

- Familiarise yourself with the [assessment criteria](#) and [scoring matrix](#) before you begin.
- Provide clear comments and recommendations that justify, and are consistent with, your scores.
- Ensure that your comments are comprehensive and concise, clearly identify the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal in a constructive manner and raise any concerns in the form of questions for the applicant.

Reviews are welcome from experts with all levels of experience of review writing, providing they are confident in their ability to assess the proposal. Advice on writing a good review can be found in the [Reviewers' Quick guide](#).

We also ask reviewers to consider other aspects of the research and/or innovation, including the potential impact and the pathways to achieving this impact, ethical issues, appropriate use of animals and/or human tissue, methodology and experimental design and [data management plans](#). Guidance on animal usage can be found in [Annex B](#).

4.1 Proposal considerations

4.1.1 Fellow eligibility

The FLF scheme welcomes proposals from fellows with a diverse variety of backgrounds including those on a job share, working part-time, who have taken career breaks or are working flexibly, and all should be assessed equally.

More information on reviewing Job Share proposals can be found in [Annex C](#) and more information on career breaks and flexible working can be found in [Annex D](#).

Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the FLF scheme, applications are received from a diverse range of applicants from across UKRI's remit and therefore a definitive definition of 'early career researcher' is not applicable. The FLF Team cannot provide any clarification on what career stage an applicant is at, instead it is up to the applicant to make the case that they are appropriately positioned for the scheme as part of their application and for reviewers and panel members to decide the strength of this case.

4.1.2 Good Research Practice

UKRI is committed to maintaining a research and innovation system where diverse and dynamic people and ideas can thrive, therefore applicants are expected to demonstrate an ability to identify and implement good practice in matters relating to the modern research environment such as:

4.1.2.1 Research Integrity and Responsible Innovation

The high integrity of research supported by UKRI is part of what makes it trustworthy and trusted. High integrity is the product of responsible research practices and a culture and environment that promotes and supports it.

High integrity in research is the result of upholding the values of honesty, rigour, transparency and open communication, care and respect for those involved in research. It supports accountability for a positive research environment.

A process that takes the wider impacts of research and innovation into account. It aims to ensure that unintended negative impacts are avoided, that barriers to dissemination, adoption and diffusion of research and innovation are reduced, and that the positive societal and economic benefits of research and innovation are fully realised.

For researchers, responsible innovation is a process that seeks to promote creativity and opportunities for science and innovation that are socially desirable and undertaken in the public interest. Research has the ability to not only produce understanding, knowledge and value, but also unintended consequences, questions, ethical dilemmas and/or social transformations.

More details on [Research Integrity](#) and [Responsible Innovation](#) can be found on the UKRI website.

4.1.2.2 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Equality, diversity and inclusion is a critical aspect of a healthy research culture – from how it's designed, how it's carried out and who is involved.

Research and innovation should be 'by everyone, for everyone' – a dynamic, diverse and inclusive research and innovation system in the UK is an integral part of society and should give everyone the opportunity to participate and to benefit.

Applicants are expected to demonstrate an understanding that a diversity of ideas, opinions, knowledge and people enriches our work and enlarges our knowledge economy.

More information on our principles for promoting equality, diversity and inclusion can be found on the [UKRI website](#).

4.1.3 Impact

During your review, you are asked to assess whether applicants have demonstrated a robust thought process around the potential economic and societal impacts of their research and proposed a way to move towards, accelerate or implement these impacts.

Applicants are encouraged to:

- Identify and actively engage relevant users of research and stakeholders at appropriate stages.
- Articulate a clear understanding of the context and needs of users and consider ways for the proposed research to meet these needs or impact upon understandings of these needs.
- Outline the planning and management of associated activities, including timing, personnel, skills, budget, deliverables and feasibility.
- Include evidence of any existing engagement with relevant users.

4.1.4 Hyperlinks

Applications should be self-contained, and hyperlinks should only be used to provide links directly to reference information. To ensure the information's integrity is maintained, where possible, persistent identifiers such as digital object identifiers should be used.

Reviewers are not required to access links to carry out assessment and are not expected to consider anything outside of the documents provided by the applicant. If the applicant has included any non-reference hyperlinks, we advise reviewers do not click these as it could compromise reviewer anonymity.

4.1.5 Covid-19

UKRI recognises that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused major interruptions and disruptions across our communities. We are committed to ensuring that individual applicants and their wider team, including partners and networks, are not penalised for any disruption to their career, such as:

- Breaks and delays.
- Disruptive working patterns and conditions.
- The loss of ongoing work.
- Role changes that may have been caused by the pandemic.

Where disruptions have occurred, the applicant can highlight this within their application if they wish, but there is no requirement to detail the specific circumstances that caused the disruption as our concern is not the details of what happened, but the impact it has had on the applicant.

In your review, you should consider the unequal impacts that COVID-19 related disruptions might have had on the capability to deliver and career development of the individuals included in the application. You must consider the capability of the applicant and their wider team to deliver the research they are proposing.

4.2 Reviewer considerations

4.2.1 Principles of Assessment and Decision Making

Expert review is governed by several underlying principles, including those of integrity, confidentiality and anonymity. A summary of points relevant to reviewers are listed in [Annex E](#). Full information on UKRI's Principles of Assessment and Decision-Making can be found on the [UKRI website](#).

4.2.2 Language

Please use plain English wherever possible and avoid using idioms or slang when writing your review. This is to help ensure inclusivity, recognising that English will not always be the first language of the candidate.

Avoid the use of jargon, bearing in mind that the panellists who rely on your review for their decisions may not be specialists in your field.

4.2.3 Bias

You must avoid bias in your assessment including on the grounds of a protected characteristic such as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy, maternity, race, religion/belief, sex or sexual orientation.

Before writing a review, you should familiarise yourself with UKRI's [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy](#).

4.2.4 AI

Our expert assessors are selected for their expertise and experience in their field. We seek their knowledge and judgement of an application in relation to the assessment criteria, and value their unique perspectives.

As a reviewer, you must:

- not use generative AI tools as part of your assessment activities
- comply with relevant intellectual property and data protection legislation
- not take into account or speculate within your assessment whether generative AI has been used to develop the application

The release of confidential material into generative AI tools constitutes a breach of confidentiality and integrity as set out in our [policy on the governance of good research practice](#) and [our principles of assessment and decision making policy](#).

If you inform UKRI that you have used generative AI to develop your assessment, the review you have provided will not be used.

For more information, please see [UKRI's Use of generative artificial intelligence in application preparation and assessment policy](#).

4.2.5 Multidisciplinary Proposals

The FLF scheme supports fellowships in all areas of UKRI's remit, including multi- and interdisciplinary projects.

You therefore may wish to comment on the value of taking a multidisciplinary approach to the proposal in question and the likely impact on these (and other) fields.

You might also feel that you can only comment with confidence on a specific part of a proposal. In this situation you should provide a review on only the aspects that you are able to comment. Different reviewers will be asked to review the aspects you are not best placed to assess, and the assessment panel will then have the job of integrating these different comments.

When you receive a request to review an FLF proposal that seems a little outside of your area of expertise please remember that we may not be expecting you to comment on every aspect of the proposal and, if in doubt, please contact the FLF team before declining.

4.2.6 Information Rights Legislation

All information we hold, including information around expert review, is subject to the Data Protection Act and the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). All requests are considered on a case-by-case basis and in some cases, it might be necessary to seek your view on releasing information relating to the review you have provided.

4.2.7 Journal Impact Factors

We are committed to support the recommendations and principles set out by the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#). You should not use journal-based metrics, such as journal impact factors, as a surrogate measure of the quality of individual research articles, to assess an investigator's contributions, or to make funding decisions.

For the purpose of research assessment, please consider the value and impact of all research outputs (including datasets, software, inventions, patents, preprints, other commercial activities, etc.) in addition to research publications. You should consider a broad range of impact measures including qualitative indicators of research impact, such as influence on policy and practice.

The content of a paper is more important than publication metrics, or the identity of the journal, in which it was published, especially for early-career applicants. Therefore, you should not use journal impact factor (or any hierarchy of journals), conference rankings and metrics such as the H-index or i10-index when assessing UKRI grants. Reviews that do not adhere to this may be returned for amendment and both the applicant and Panel will be asked to disregard these comments.

5 Completing the Review Form

Proposals will be assessed according to the scheme's Assessment Criteria:

- Vision and Approach
- Applicant capability to deliver
- Career development
- Host organisation support
- Ethics and responsible research and innovation (RRI)
- Resources and cost justification

Format your review using the assessment areas as subheadings.

Across all four criteria throughout the review, a key issue will be whether the added value of the fellowship mechanism of support– for example the scale, flexibility and duration offered – is well demonstrated, as opposed to more standard project grant support.

Where possible, reviews must be based on evidence, which you should clearly show in your comments. You should provide comments and recommendations that are consistent with, justify, and explain your score. Make sure to raise any concerns in the form of questions for the applicant.

When writing your review, consider other aspects of the proposed research or innovation, like its methodology, experimental design and data management plan, as well as its potential impact (and the pathways to achieving it) including any ethical and social issues (for example, the appropriate use of animals and/or human tissue).

Before you complete a review, please ensure that you do not have a conflict of interest with the proposal. Please refer to [Annex A](#) for full details on what is considered a conflict of interest.

UKRI peer review is anonymous. **Please ensure you do not provide any information in your review that would identify you.**

5.1 Vision and Approach

To what extent has the applicant explained how their proposed work:

5.1.1 Vision

- **Is of excellent quality and importance within or beyond the field(s) or area(s)** – The importance, novelty and feasibility of the proposed programme of work and whether long-term fellowship support is needed to enable this.
- **Has the potential to advance current understanding, generates new knowledge, thinking or discovery within or beyond the field or area** – Whether the potential short and/or long-term impacts, and how significant they are, are well articulated and whether the fellowship has the potential to establish or maintain a distinctive and outstanding research and/or innovation activity.
- **Is timely given current trends, context, and needs** – Whether the proposal aligns with a specific priority area identified by UKRI and how strongly the proposal fits within the aims for the area and what it will contribute alongside other proposals and activities in the same priority area.

- **Impacts world-leading research, society, the economy, or the environment** – Whether the importance and potential impact of the research and/or innovation for the field, society, the economy and/or the environment are well-described.

5.1.2 Approach

- **Is effective and appropriate to achieve their objectives** – Whether the methodology is robust enough to deliver on all of the proposed aims of the project.
- **Is feasible, and comprehensively identifies any risks to delivery and how they will be managed** – How likely the proposal is to deliver on its objectives. Whether there is appropriate consideration of factors that might affect their ability to deliver, including research and/or innovation governance and ethical/social responsibility issues and how these risks will be mitigated.
- **Uses a clear and transparent methodology (if applicable)** – Whether the research methods and procedures that will be used in the project have been described comprehensively and plans for disseminating research findings are defined, where applicable.
- **Summarises the previous work and describes how this will be built upon and progressed (if applicable)** – What pre-existing research and/or innovation in the area exists and how the proposed project will provide a ‘next step’ in this area and not just reiterate it, where applicable.
- **Will maximise translation of outputs into outcomes and impacts** – Whether the plans for maximising impact (from the applicant and host organisation) are proportionate, timely and credible.

5.2 Applicant capability to deliver

To what extent has the applicant demonstrated they have:

- **The relevant experience (appropriate to career stage) to deliver the proposed work** – Whether they have a track record of producing challenging, original and productive research and/or innovation outputs that stand out in their field and whether they have the necessary level of skills, knowledge and experience to take forward the proposed project/programme.
- **The right balance of skills and expertise to cover the proposed work** – Whether they have identified opportunities to access career development support, mentorship and relevant training courses that will underpin their future career ambitions and learning, supporting not only the programme but also their broader professional development.
- **The appropriate leadership and management skills to deliver the work and their approach to develop others** – Whether they have demonstrated their ability to be, or become, a clear communicator and disseminator of knowledge and innovation, able to inspire and lead others; and their ability to develop new relationships and influence across multiple disciplines and sectors. Whether they have a clear plan to support the development of their team and others, in both the delivery of the project and with broader professional/development opportunities, considering the appropriateness of training, access to facilities and level of support.

- **Contributed to developing a positive research environment and wider community** – Whether they have demonstrated the ability to choose and develop appropriate collaborations and networks nationally, internationally or across disciplines to maximise collaboration, partnership and knowledge exchange within and beyond the length of the fellowship.

5.3 Career development

To what extent has the applicant demonstrated:

- **Career development goals appropriate to the fellowship funding opportunity** – Whether the proposed programme of work will position the applicant as a leader within their research/innovation field by the end of the fellowship and provide added value, over standard grant support.
- **How the fellowship will provide a feasible and appropriate trajectory for their personal development and stated career development goals (as appropriate to their career stage and field)** – Whether their current research and/or innovation standing relative to their career stage puts them on a trajectory to become world-class. whether they have the potential to progress to a long-term research and/or innovation career path and that they understand the research and/or innovation landscape at both the national and international level.
- **How they will instigate positive change in the wider research and innovation community, for example through Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), advocacy or advisory roles, stakeholder engagement, participation in peer review, influencing policy, public engagement, or outreach** – Whether they have identified and implemented good practice to ensure their research/innovation will have a high level of integrity and is trustworthy, has taken the wider impacts of research and innovation into account to ensure that unintended negative impacts are avoided, and that equality, diversity and inclusion have been promoted.

5.4 Host organisation support

To what extent has the applicant demonstrated:

- **Evidence detailing how the host will support the fellow, as appropriate for their personalised career development and the vision and approach of the fellowship** - Whether the applicant has secured the backing of an institution that is prepared to host them, and whether the level of commitment to realising the potential of the fellow and establishing them as a research and/or innovation leader has been demonstrated by their supervisor(s), host institution(s) and, where applicable, mentor(s).
- **How the research environment will contribute to the success of the work, in terms of suitability of the host organisation and strategic relevance to the project** – Whether plans for supporting the fellow’s programme of work enable the applicant to maximise the social/economic impact of their work.
- **How the host organisation will ensure their time commitment to the fellowship is protected** – Whether a plans for enabling the time commitment needed have been sufficiently detailed and consideration has been given to equality, diversity and inclusion aims of UKRI in support for the fellow and (where applicable) their wider team and in using the fellowship’s provision for flexible working.

- **What development and training opportunities will be provided and how they form a cohesive career development package tailored to their aims and aspirations** – Whether supported opportunities for development offered by the host organisation(s) (for example, time for work in other environments, developing international links, development of new skills, mentoring and professional training and development, and relevant training courses that will underpin their future career ambitions and learning) will develop the applicant into an impactful and influential research and/or innovation leader, and commensurate with the development aims of the applicant.
- **What financial or practical support, such as access to the appropriate services, facilities, infrastructure, or equipment, is being provided and how this strengthens their application** – Whether the host organisation(s) has detailed plans to ensure access to resources and other relevant programmes and whether these sufficiently support the aims of the project.

5.5 Ethics and responsible research and innovation (RRI)

To what extent has the applicant demonstrated that they have identified and evaluated:

- **The relevant ethical or responsible research and innovation considerations** – Whether the applicant has recognised and evaluated the ethical implications of their research and/or innovation, including potential impacts on society, the environment, and individual rights.
- **How they will manage these considerations** – Whether the strategies and measures the applicant has proposed to address the identified ethical and responsible research considerations are sufficient.
- **The replacement, refinement or reduction of the animals in their experiments (if applicable)** – Whether any animal use is fully justified in terms of need, species, number and conformance to guidelines – Refer to [Annex B](#)
- **Is the proposed work ethically acceptable?** – Whether the proposed research aligns with research ethical standards and principles and is overall morally acceptable, considering the benefits and potential harms.
- **Are there any ethical issues that need further consideration, such as dual use or misuse of research?** – Whether any additional ethical issues may arise from the research, such as the potential for the findings to be used for harmful purposes.
- **Are the proposed ethical review and research governance approaches appropriate?** – Whether the mechanisms for ethical review and research governance are suitable and robust (for example, the use of review boards, the transparency of the review process, and the governance structures in place).
- **Will there be any potential adverse consequences for humans, animals or the environment and have these risks been appropriately considered?** – Whether there are any ethical considerations for humans, animals, or the environment that have not been adequately addressed and mitigated including (where applicable): the need to use animals and lack of realistic alternatives; evaluation of the scientific strengths and weaknesses of proposed animal use and plans to obtain ethical approval from the relevant bodies.

5.6 Resources and cost justification

To what extent has the applicant demonstrated that the resources needed for the proposed work:

Are comprehensive, appropriate, and justified – Whether all funds have been addressed in the Justification of Resources and whether the justification for these funds is clearly described and appropriate, highlighting any costs that you feel may be lacking in detail, inappropriate or insufficiently justified. Whether the proposal has demonstrated an understanding of the amount of work to be done. Has the applicant identified the level of staffing (both the amount in full time equivalent and the experience and skills), travel and subsistence and other costs that will be needed in order to achieve the aims of the project? For example, in terms of the work planned for the research assistant, is the amount of work achievable within the timescale for someone with that level of expertise, and with the level of support and resource described?

Represent the optimal use of resources to achieve the intended outcomes – Whether funds requested are excessive or insufficient considering the scale and complexity of the activity to be undertaken.

Maximise potential outcomes and impacts – Whether funds requested for the first four years for the project plan and management arrangements are proportionate to its potential outcomes and provide the best possible opportunity to maximise the impact.

Here are some illustrative examples of the sort of issues reviewers may be asked to consider under the ‘Resources and cost justification’ section, in the hope of further clarifying the way in which reviewers should be approaching this part of a review:

- We are not expecting reviewers to say whether £200 is the correct price for a flight but we would like them to consider whether all the trips that have been requested on a proposal are justified as being needed to conduct the research.
- We are not expecting reviewers to comment on whether the researcher should receive a certain salary, rather, we ask reviewers to assess whether there is sufficient work, of the appropriate level, to warrant a researcher being employed for the period which the proposal requests.
- We are not expecting reviewers to comment on whether a project should cost £300,000 rather than £350,000, but we would like them to consider whether the total amount of resources (staff, trips or equipment) is warranted by the amount of project outputs and if the project is going to be completed in an effective way.
- We are not expecting reviewers to comment on whether a particular piece of equipment should cost £1,000, but we would ask them to consider whether a piece of equipment offers the most efficient way to do that piece of work.

Please add any further comments, including how this proposal meets the scheme specific criteria.

5.7 Overall Assessment

Having provided comments against each of the above headings, please also provide a score, using the description best matches your overall comments for the proposal as detailed in **Table 1** below.

Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the scheme, there are no specific guidelines or examples for how a proposal demonstrates each score and instead you should score a proposal based on which assessment description best matches your overall comments.

Table 1: Overall Assessment Score descriptions

Score	Overall Assessment
1	Poor: the application is flawed or of unsuitable quality for funding. It does not meet the assessment criteria to an adequate level.
2	Weak: the application is not sufficiently competitive. It meets some of the assessment criteria to an adequate level. There are, however, significant weaknesses.
3	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.
4	Very good: the application demonstrates considerable quality. It meets most of the assessment criteria to a high level. There are minor weaknesses.
5	Excellent: the application is very high quality. It addresses most of the assessment criteria and meets them to an excellent level. There are very minor weaknesses.
6	Exceptional: the application is outstanding. It addresses all of the assessment criteria and meets them to an exceptional level.

6 What Happens Next

Applicants will receive anonymised copies of their received reviews and will have 10 working days to prepare PI response to address any questions or concerns raised by reviewers. This response is not seen by reviewers.

All proposals are moderated at the Sift Panel. During the Moderating Sift Panel stage, the panel will form conclusions based on their interpretation of the specialist peer review reports, the applicants' responses to these reports and their own broad sectoral expertise.

During the Interview Panel stage applicants are asked a series of both set and variable questions. As part of this process the panel members will consult your referee reports to identify any key questions that should be addressed by the applicant.

7 Reviewer Recognition

7.1 UKRI Talent Peer Review College

Applications to join the UKRI Talent Peer Review College (PRC) are currently open.

Members of the PRC will support the FLF scheme, Innovation Scholars and future UKRI collective talent initiatives. Applications are welcome from those with both academic and non-academic backgrounds. Applications are also welcome based internationally, as well as the specific areas outlined in this advert. Membership of the PRC is published on the UKRI website.

Find out more: [UKRI Talent Peer Review College: member vacancies](#)

7.2 ORCID Review Credits

Previously, reviewers that provided a usable review via Je-S, received 'review credits' to their Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORCID) account.

The new TFS platform does not currently have ORCID functionality but is aiming to implement the same functionality that Je-S had previously, including the ability to receive review credits.

8 Queries

If you have any queries about the review process or concerns regarding your written review, please contact the FLF team at fellowsppeerreview@ukri.org

For further guidance on using TFS, please contact the TFS team directly:

Email: support@funding-service.ukri.org UKRI Funding Service Helpline: +44 (0)1793 547 490

Annex A Conflicts of Interest

Introduction

UKRI is a publicly funded organisation and is accountable to government and the public for its actions and for the way it conducts its business, which must be undertaken in a way that is transparent and guards against potential conflicts of interest influencing the outcome of decisions.

UKRI defines a conflict of interest as a situation in which an individual's ability to exercise judgement or act in one role is, could be, or is seen to be impaired or otherwise influenced by their involvement in another role or relationship. Even a perception of competing interests, impaired judgement or undue influence may be damaging to UKRI's reputation.

The existence of an actual, perceived or potential conflict of interest does not imply wrongdoing or that the assessor is not well-placed to make an impartial assessment. However, as an assessor, it is vital that they are seen to be impartial at all stages of the decision-making process. Any private, personal or commercial interests which might give rise to such a conflict of interest must be recognised, disclosed appropriately and either eliminated or properly managed.

Everybody involved in UKRI decision-making and funding processes must comply with [UKRI declaration of interest policy](#). UKRI will support all individuals to ensure compliance of the policy.

How and why do we collect conflict of interest information

Applicants may declare potential conflicts of interest in their application, related to individuals or organisations. UKRI will endeavour to avoid asking these potentially conflicted individuals/organisations to assess that application when feasible and if the request meets UKRI definitions of a conflict as defined in the UKRI Declaration of Interest Policy

Reporting, recording and managing potential conflicts effectively protects assessors (reviewers and panellists) and helps ensuring a transparent decision-making process.

UKRI acknowledges that individuals working in the same research and innovation field may know each other, and therefore, this does not prevent them from assessing an application. However, as assessors, they must declare any interest which they feel would prevent them giving an unbiased assessment, for UKRI awareness and evaluation.

Once an assessor declares interests, UKRI evaluates the declaration of interests and deem them as actual, perceived or no conflict. If the assessor's knowledge/ relationship with the application/applicants is such that they feel it would be difficult to be impartial when commenting on the application, then we ask them to decline the invitation to be part of the assessment by selecting "conflict of interest" as the reason why.

FLF Peer Review

When you are invited to review an application for the Future Leaders Fellowships (FLF) scheme, you will receive a summary of the application and the name(s) of the applicant(s). You must declare any known conflict of interest at this stage and select 'conflict of interest' as a reason when declining the invitation as a result of a known conflict of interest.

If you are unsure as to whether you have a conflict of interest, you should contact the FLF Team by emailing fellowsppeerreview@ukri.org.

If you accept an invitation to review and then identify a conflict of interest, you must let UKRI know as soon as possible so that the nature of the conflict can be assessed, and appropriate measures can be taken.

If a conflict becomes apparent, either to you or to UKRI, after the submission of a review, UKRI will classify your review as 'unusable' and not use it in the decision-making process.

Examples of conflicts of interest for assessors

The list below shows examples of conflicts of interest, including but not limited to review and panel stages. The list is not exhaustive; therefore, you must declare any actual or perceived conflict of interest, reflecting on the perception of both you and others.

Personal conflict

- You are named on the application.
- You have assisted the applicants in preparing the application.
- You are named as a project partner, subcontractor, visiting researcher or have any type of relationship with the application.
- You have written a letter of support for the application.
- You have been approached and agreed to be a member of a committee or board connected with the proposed project, for example an advisory group or steering committee/board.
- You are in close regular collaboration with any individuals named in the application, including investigators, research staff, collaborators, subcontractors and project partners, to an extent where you feel uncomfortable being involved in the discussion or you feel unable to give an unbiased opinion.
- You have a personal, financial or professional relationship with any individuals named in the application.
- You have been any of the applicants' PhD supervisor, line manager or group leader in the last three years, or the other way around.
- You stand to gain a financial or professional advantage from a particular outcome for an application which you are asked to review.

Organisational conflicts

- You are a current/Emeritus/secondment/visiting member at the same/proposed organisation as any individuals named on the application. This includes holding a position on the governance body or an honorary position within the applicants' current/proposed organisation.
- You belong to an organisation that is a project partner, subcontractor, are a visiting researcher from or to the Organisation.
- You have any type of recognised significant organisational collaboration with the application which would mean that your participation in the assessment would be seen as a conflict.
- You are in receipt of personal remuneration in excess of £5,000 per annum from the applicant's current or proposed organisation.
- Fellowships only: you are at an organisation chosen by the candidate to be the hosting organisation for their fellowship.

Commercial or financial conflicts

- You have any commercial or financial/pecuniary interest, for example where you are a member of an organisation that may benefit financially, directly or indirectly, from any decision made.
- You have stocks or shares in a company named in an application.

Annex B Animal use

Use of animals

The elaboration of a compelling research or innovation case is an essential prerequisite for justifying the use of animals. Over the past few years there have been a number of important initiatives that have been aimed at raising the sometimes-inadequate standard of reporting of animal experiments in scientific literature. The NC3Rs' ARRIVE guidelines, for example, lay out criteria that should be met in reporting animal studies in order that their results and conclusions can be appropriately evaluated by readers. These criteria address a range of issues relating to transparency and validity of experimental design, the avoidance or minimisation of bias and the adequacy of statistical aspects of the study including statistical power and appropriate statistical analysis.

In light of these initiatives UKRI has revised and updated its guidelines on what information needs to be provided to allow appropriate and thorough evaluation of the scientific strengths and weaknesses of proposals for funding involving animal use. In some cases, adherence to the principles defined in this section will require additional resources for example, for animal identification such as 'microchipping', increased maintenance charges resulting from the randomisation procedure, or salary costs associated with obtaining statistical support. We recognise this and will support such costs where fully justified in the appropriate sections.

The NC3Rs has developed [guidance](#) for applicants when choosing contractors for animal research and the expectations of UK public funders, including a [presentation](#) detailing the information that applicants should provide.

All proposals involving the use of non-human primates, cats, dogs, pigs and equines will be referred to the NC3Rs via their expert review service. In some circumstances, proposals involving the use of other species may also be referred at the discretion of UKRI.

Home Office licences and ethical and welfare standards

Experiments using animals must comply with the [Animals \(Scientific Procedures\) Act 1986 \(ASPA\)](#), amended 2012 and any further embodiments. Institutions and grant holders are responsible for ensuring that all appropriate establishment, personal and project licences required under the Act have been granted by the Home Office, including gaining approval via their institution's local ethical review process. All awards are made on the absolute condition that no work that is controlled by the Act will begin until the necessary licences have been obtained.

In addition, applicants must ensure that they are following best practice in relation to animal husbandry and welfare. Where proposed work is not covered under an existing ASPA project license, applicants should make certain that their proposals are received by their local Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB), prior to submission and ensure that any ethical or welfare implications raised are addressed.

Replacement, reduction and refinement of animal experiments

Applicants are expected to have developed their proposals in accordance with the cross funder guidance for the use of animals in research: [Responsibility in the Use of Animals in Bioscience Research](#) and [NC3Rs Guidelines: Primate Accommodation, Care and Use](#).

Experiments using animals funded by UKRI must comply with ASPA in:

- Using the simplest possible, or least sentient, species of animal appropriate.
- Ensuring that distress and pain are avoided wherever possible.
- Employing an appropriate design and using the minimum number of animals consistent with ensuring that objectives of the proposal will be met.

Advice on opportunities and techniques for implementing these principles can be found on the [NC3Rs website](#). This includes the [Experimental Design Assistant \(EDA\)](#), a free online tool from the NC3Rs to help optimise experimental design and ensure that the number of animals used is consistent with the objectives of the proposal.

Proposals involving animal use

Applicants are strongly advised to read the following section carefully before preparing a proposal to ensure all the relevant information required is included in the appropriate sections of their proposal. Applicants should ensure their proposal clearly sets out and justifies the following:

- Research objectives and how the knowledge generated will advance the field.
- The need to use animals and lack of realistic alternatives.
- Choice of species of animals to be used.
- Type of animal(s), for example, strain, pathogen free, genetically modified or mutant.
- Planned experimental design and its justification.
- Numbers of animals and frequency of measurements/interventions to be used.
- Primary outcomes to be assessed.
- Planned statistical analyses.

Applicants proposing to use animals must provide the following information:

Animal Costs

Detailing the costs associated with the purchase, breeding and maintenance of each species of animal.

Animal Research

Detailing any procedures categorised as moderate or severe (in accordance with the maximum prospective severity rating in the Home Office licence under which the work will be carried out) in order that the assessment of the proposal can balance the importance of the potential scientific advancement to the welfare of the animals.

Animal Species

Detailing scientific reasons for the use of animals and an explanation as to why there are no realistic alternatives must be given, with an explanation of how the choice of species complies with ASPA.

Use of animals overseas

If the proposal involves the use of animals overseas, applicants must submit a signed statement (uploaded as an attachment) from both UK and overseas partners confirming that:

- They will adhere to all relevant national and local regulatory systems in the UK and overseas.
- They will follow the guidelines laid out in the NC3Rs' [Responsibility in the use of animals in bioscience research](#) document and ensure work is carried out to UK standards.
- Before initiation of the proposed work, appropriate approvals from Organisational and/or central animal ethics committees will be obtained for experimental protocols to be adopted in their projects. Successful applicants may be expected to provide copies of these permissions before funding is released.
- Details on where the animal research will take place (UK or overseas) and through which funder the resources are being sought.

Annex C Applying for a Fellowship on Job-Share Basis

Proposals from those wishing to hold a Future Leaders Fellowship on a job-share basis are encouraged as one of the mechanisms through which UKRI supports proposals from those wishing to combine the fellowship with personal responsibilities.

There may be times when a proposal for a fellowship as a job-share might be right for potential candidates.

Reasons include, but are not limited to:

- Timeliness, in other words, where a full-time equivalent fellow is required to ensure that time-critical research and innovation can be completed within a shorter timescale than a part-time fellowship would allow.
- An existing job-share, in other words, where researchers and/or innovators are already working within a job-share that they wish to maintain.

Applicants must be able to demonstrate why they and the proposed programme of research and/or innovation would not be better served by two part-time fellowships.

A job-share fellowship should not be considered because an applicant does not currently have the full skill set to undertake the fellowship. In these instances, a Co-Investigator who brings complementary and different skills to the project can be included as part of the fellowship award for a time limited period while the fellow develops their skills in the areas covered.

1) Is the expectation that the two individuals job sharing a fellowship have very similar skills and experiences, or is the expectation that their experience and skills should be complementary?

Most job-shares are between individuals with similar skills and experience. Job-shares should not be used to upskill an applicant who requires complementary and different skills in order to complete the project. Such upskilling should be achieved through the fellowship and is supported through the ability to include a time-limited Co-Investigator.

The applicants should make clear in their proposal the skills and experience of both applicants, and why they are applying via a job-share arrangement and not two separate part-time proposals.

Joint applicants should be able to demonstrate a clear plan to support their own (and if applicable, their team) training and development needs. A plan should be in place for each of the joint applicants as part of the proposal.

This does not mean that the joint applicants both have to have involvement in every aspect of the programme of research and/or innovation. For example, in terms of publications or other outcomes that result from the fellowship it may be that one applicant has more involvement in particular aspects than the other so we would not mandate that both joint applicants have to have identical credit for these.

2) How do applicants apply as a job-share fellowship?

Applicants are recommended to contact the FLF team before applying on a job-share basis.

Only one application is required. One applicant should be listed as 'Co-Lead' and the proposal must make it clear that this is a job-share fellowship.

Please state this where relevant in your application and set out your proposed arrangements in the Applicant Capability to Deliver and Career Development sections. The team should choose one of the fellow's organisations to be responsible for submitting the grant application and administering the grant should the application be successful.

3) What guidance do reviewers get when considering job-share proposals?

Noting that job-share fellowships are non-standard, and that members of the research and innovation community may not have reviewed such proposals before, additional feedback is provided to those carrying out the external peer review of proposals and for those sitting on the Sift and Interview Assessment Panels.

This guidance:

1. Makes it clear that applicants are joint fellows.
2. States that the:
 - a. consideration of the Vision and Approach assessment criteria needs to include assessment of how the proposed project forms a single coherent programme rather than separate activities.
 - b. consideration of the Applicants' capability to deliver and their career development criteria needs to consider both applicants jointly.
 - c. consideration of the Host organisation support and Resources and cost justification assessment criteria needs to consider the commitment of the host organisation to the development and establishment of both applicants, and how the host will support the proposed programme of work as a whole.

Additional guidance for those sitting on Interview Panels will also be available. This will make clear that both applicants will be attending the interview and that questions should be addressed to both applicants. Furthermore, it will be stated that that the applicant's joint Full Time Equivalent (FTE) spent on the Fellowship will be between the 0.5 and 1 required of a standard Fellowship.

Annex D Career Breaks and Flexible Working

The assessment of fellowship proposals frequently involves appraisal of the applicant's track record. In making this appraisal, review panels take into account time spent outside the active research / innovation environment, whether through career breaks or flexible working.

Definitions

Career breaks are defined as a substantive period of time spent outside research/innovation. Reasons may include* the following:

- Personal reasons
- Trying out a new career
- Parental leave
- Ill health, injury or disability
- Caring/domestic responsibilities
- Study/training/further education

Flexible working describes any working arrangement where the number of hours worked, or the time that work is undertaken, vary from standard practice and could include* the following:

- Reduction in full time hours
- Long-term partial return to work
- Job sharing
- Compressed working hours
- Term-time only working
- Annualised hours

Guidance for review panels

In assessing the effects of career breaks or flexible working, panels will note the applicant's career trajectory and potential at the beginning of a break, relative to the stage of the applicant's career. In assessing applicants, panels will recognise that the effects on productivity of a career break, or a period of flexible working, may continue beyond the return to work.

The following areas may be affected*:

- Presentation and publication record
- Patents filed
- Track record of securing funding, including time to obtain preliminary data
- Maintaining networks of research / innovation contacts and collaborations
- Recruitment of staff
- Time required for training
- The ability to take up opportunities in different geographical locations
- The ability to take up courses, sabbaticals, 'visits', placements and secondments

Guidance for applicants

Applicants should make clear any substantive periods of absence from research/innovation within their proposal. Further details on the nature of the absence and how it has affected track record, productivity and career progression may be provided if desired¹. Information provided will be used only to make appropriate adjustments when assessing an individual's track record, productivity and career progression.

¹ The information provided in response to this question helps UKRI in assessing how effective our policies and procedures are in promoting equal opportunities. This information may be used anonymously for statistical purposes and any publication would be on aggregate level. The information is treated in confidence and in line with the UKRI's data protection procedures.

*Lists are not exhaustive

Annex E Principles of Assessment and Decision Making

Expert review is governed by several underlying principles, including those of integrity, confidentiality and anonymity. A summary of points relevant to reviewers are below. Full information on UKRI's Principles of Assessment and Decision-Making can be found on the [UKRI website](#).

Expert Assessment

- Tailored guidance provided to reviewers before they undertake review of applications.
- Reviewers are expected to have peer recognition or established expertise in the field to review the application.
- Continuous review of the assessment processes to ensure that our assessors have the appropriate range of expertise and knowledge to carry out assessments, which is especially important for the assessment of cross-disciplinary applications.

Transparency

- Funding guides, assessment criteria and details of the assessment process are published online.
- Review comments are made available to applicants in advance of the panel meeting, so that the applicants can respond to comments by reviewers.
- After the funding decisions are made, we inform applicants on the outcomes of the funding decision.

Impartiality

- Reviewers with an actual or perceived conflict of interest are instructed to decline our request to review applications.
- UKRI takes steps to mitigate against implicit biases that can be present in individuals, which can impact fairness and objectivity in funding decisions.

Appropriateness

- We aim to ensure that our assessment processes are appropriate to the proposed research and innovation with respect to its scale and complexity.
- We are committed to continually evolving funding assessment and design our assessment processes to reduce biases, which includes our commitment to responsible use of metrics in research evaluation.

Confidentiality

- Applications to UKRI, including related data, intellectual property and application documents, must be treated in confidence by any individuals or organisations involved in the assessment process. When you agree to review for UKRI you are bound by a confidentiality agreement, either through the TFS terms and conditions and reviewer protocol or a standalone agreement.
- Reviewers are instructed to not inadvertently identify themselves in the text of the assessment.

Integrity and Ethics

- Responsible research conduct is intrinsic to society's trust in research and innovation. We aim to promote and safeguard the public value of research and innovation and

- ensure that funding decisions are based on evidence and rigorous analysis.
- UKRI refers to the core values of honesty, rigour, care and respect, openness and transparency, and accountability.
 - We expect assessors to take ethics and integrity into account when undertaking their assessments. This means exhibiting impeccable integrity and following the principles of good research practice detailed in the [UKRI Research Integrity Guidance](#) considering the principals of [Responsible Innovation](#).

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- Our evolving processes are designed to reduce biases against gender, ethnicity or other protected characteristics, demonstrating our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- We will take steps to improve the assessment process by utilising the talent and resources offered by assessors from underrepresented groups such as women, early career researchers, and members of all ethnicities.

Separation of Duties

- Decisions on individual funding applications are taken following an independent assessment of their quality and likely impact and adhere to the Haldane Principle.
- Those who are assessing applications will not also be responsible for authorising the funding decision, which is made by our senior staff with the relevant delegated authority.