UKRI Cross Research Council Responsive Mode (CRCRM) Pilot Scheme

Generalised Feedback on CRCRM full stage applications – Round 1

The following feedback was collected from the Interdisciplinary Assessment College Chairs of the Round 1 full stage panels held in May 2024. A summary of key features of both strong and weaker full stage applications has been provided, as well as recommendations for preparing future applications.

Key features of strong full stage applications:

Interdisciplinarity & Research team

- Interdisciplinarity was deeply embedded, and integration of disciplines was evident throughout the application
- Interdisciplinarity management and integration of teams was clearly outlined in the application
- Interdisciplinarity training for PDRAs/ ECRs was considered and planned for
- The impact of the application was clear and only achievable through interdisciplinary working
- Applicants had a compelling consortium and clear variety of partners to deliver the project
- Clear examples of co-creation between disciplines and partners were outlined
- The reciprocal benefits of the application to all disciplines involved were made clear
- Evidence of teams working together was provided
- Applicants articulated the challenges of interdisciplinary working and how they would address these

General points

- The highest scoring applications had a clear vision, and generation of ideas. The research was exciting and genuinely disruptive
- Project Lead (PL) responses were well articulated, and any questions were answered fully
- Applicants took care to write for all audiences using easy, understandable language
- Resources were well justified
- Applicants displayed a realistic understanding of what could be achieved in 24 months and made it clear how the 2 year project fitted in with a longer term vision
- Risks were clearly identified and had good mitigation plans in place
- Research was really exciting with genuine innovation

Key features of weaker full stage applications:

Interdisciplinarity & Research team

- Interdisciplinarity was poorly articulated, resulting in it being considered multidisciplinary where integration of disciplines was not evident

- There was a lack of evidence of how the interdisciplinarity would be managed and delivered and in some applications the disciplines could easily be decoupled and different aspects of the planned work could be done in isolation from the other disciplines involved
- There was a lack of a strategy on how to manage new collaborations across different disciplines. Where there was no clear management plan, disciplines seemed "bolted-on" rather than integrated
  There was a lack of evidence of how the project had been co-designed.
- Some projects were over ambitious in terms of the number of disciplines to "boost" interdisciplinarity, but failed to connect them
- Complicated, discipline-specific language and jargon was used and assumed that assessors would be able to understand it.
- Some STEM projects would have benefitted from including Social Sciences.

General points

- Little or no evidence of thought given to project / team management with Research assistants (RAs) sometimes siloed
- Projects were over ambitious in terms of timeframe without suitable mitigations in place
- Technology was applied without related social considerations and some proposals lacked the full consideration of the ethical issues
- Methodologies were not always clearly detailed
- Some ideas were not fully worked through
- The allocation of Project Leads (PL) and Project Co-Leads (P CoL) time was not sufficient to deliver projects
- PL responses did not fully address the concerns or questions raised by the assessors and instead repeated what was already in the application

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

Interdisciplinarity & Research team

- Read the scheme guidance fully
- Work up research ideas across different disciplinaries ahead of the funding call, to co-create innovative proposals. Allow sufficient time to do this.
- Include long term and strong management plans that outline how IDR will be delivered
- Think carefully about interdisciplinary research in terms of integration, co-creation and the reciprocal benefits to all disciplines involved
- Detail precisely how collaborators and disciplines will talk to each other in a way that overcomes differences in disciplinary language
- Provide clear methodologies and a robust team including a variety of partners
- Think carefully about appropriate collaborators, considering both academic and external project partners to deliver the research
- Outline clearly how research organisations (ROs) will provide additional support

General points

- Look at assessment criteria and use them as questions for your proposal
- Set out a clear vision, and fully consider the social context of your research

- Consider if the research is feasible for a 24-month project and set out how it fits within a longer term vision if necessary
- Consider equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and Responsible Research & Innovation (RRI) from the outset
- PL responses should be clear with all questions answered fully. Provide further information in response to questions, don't just repeat what is already in the proposal or refer assessors to particular sections
- Balance the participation of leads, co-leads and post-doctoral research assistants (PDRAs), considering FTEs; include details of support and time allowed for PDRA career development.
- Cost the project realistically