

## **SUMMARY OF RESPONSES FROM OTHER UNIVERSITIES<sup>1</sup>**

### **Internal Peer Review Processes for Research Grant Applications**

Responses were received from nearly twenty institutions, all of which either have a peer review system in place or are hoping to introduce one. A variety of systems emerged and a number of key models are detailed below. Many of the institutions who have introduced peer review commented upon how it had resulted in a noticeable improvement in the quality of applications submitted.

#### **System A: Application Mentor System (Russell Group university, Faculty based system)**

##### **Applications subject to review**

All applicants submitting proposals over £25,000 are requested to go through an 'application mentor system'.

##### **Criteria and selection of reviewers**

The applicant nominates a mentor to assist with and comment on the drafting of the application. The mentor can be a colleague from within or outside the Faculty.

##### **Format of review**

The mentoring takes place either face to face or by email. The mentor writes a report which is submitted to the Chair of the Faculty for their consideration. The Chair will then pass on any final comments and advice to the applicant.

##### **Timing of review**

The system takes place alongside the formulation of the application.

#### **System B: Grants Panel Scheme (Post-1992 university, School based system)**

All Schools are required to have a grants panel which has a remit to increase both the quantity and quality of research grant applications. The university has put up £10,000 per School over two years to support the running of the panels, after which time it is expected they will be generating sufficient income to cover their costs. Every School must provide a detailed plan of how they will spend this money.

##### **Applications subject to review**

Each School sets its own criteria on which applications are reviewed but every type of proposal should go through the process except for low level travel grants.

##### **Criteria and selection of reviewers**

The grants panel consists of experts from the School but must also include an outsider; the external reviewer is usually from another School but in theory could be from outside the university. The reviewers are drawn from experienced staff, such as grant holders and those who act as reviewers for funding bodies. The applicant approaches the Chair of the panel who assigns a reviewer or a number of reviewers to them.

##### **Format of review**

The applicant is assigned a reviewer who works with them to develop the bid and advise them on best practice. The applicant is also required to speak to other members of the panel for their advice such as the Research Administrator, Deputy Head and grants panel Chair.

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<sup>1</sup> Via ARMA (Association of Research Managers and Administrators)

### **Timing of review**

Applicants need to approach the Chair of the grants panel as soon as they are ready to start an application. The application cannot be sent to the central research office until it has been approved by the grants panel and been checked for other issues such as finance and ethics.

## **System C: Departmental Grant Application Review System (Russell Group university, School based system)**

### **Applications subject to review**

It is compulsory for all grant applications above £10,000 to be reviewed, unless they are travel grants or are of a non competitive nature.

### **Criteria and selection of reviewers**

Peer reviewers are selected both by request from the applicant and identification by the relevant research administrator. All academics and some senior postdocs are involved in the peer review process.

### **Format of review**

The applicant completes an internal review request form and emails it to the relevant grant review email account. All requests for review are logged on a secure database which is kept confidential to those involved in the process. The application is sent out to suitable reviewers by the appropriate grant review coordinator. The reviewers check the application and complete a grant review processing form where they comment upon the quality of the application in terms of track record, fit to funding scheme, presentation and scientific quality. The reviewer returns the form to the coordinator indicating the action they recommend. One to one feedback is also encouraged, especially in the case of early career researchers.

### **Timing of review**

The review can take place at any time of the process but is usually just before the application is ready for submission. If the reviewer feels that the proposal requires major amendments they can suggest that it is reviewed for a second time.

## **System D: Directed Review System (Irish university, centralised system)**

### **Applications subject to review**

This is a central system which may become faculty based in the future. The scheme targets programmes which the institution wishes to increase its success rate in – mainly large scale bids to major funding bodies such as research councils. It is compulsory for all applications to the targeted schemes to go through the system.

### **Criteria and selection of reviewers**

The institution monitors which committees and panels academics are on and approaches award holders and panel members to act as reviewers. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research contacts potential reviewers to request their participation in the panel.

### **Format of review**

Applications are sent to up to ten people to review – six to seven academics and three members of research office staff. The reviewers are given a checklist which is an amalgam of the university's and the funding body's criteria. The reviewers are given three to four weeks to check the applications and then attend a two to three hour meeting to review them. The research office writes up the notes from the meeting and emails them back to the applicant.

### **Timing of review**

Given the length of the process, applicants need to ensure their proposals are completed and ready for review at least six weeks before submission.

### **System E: Research Review Committee System (Russell Group university, School based system)**

#### **Applications subject to review**

All proposals are reviewed regardless of funding body.

#### **Criteria and selection of reviewers**

It is compulsory for all applications to be assessed by a Research Review and Ethics Committee made up of professorial staff who act as lead reviewers and other senior academics.

#### **Format of review**

The reviews are carried out by three members of the Research Committee, one lead reviewer and two others. The process is completed electronically and the reviewers remain anonymous.

#### **Timing of review**

The review is undertaken when the application is almost ready for submission, although applicants do not have to submit the final version of the proposal. There is a five day turnaround for the work.

### **System F: Devolved Peer Review System (Post-1992 university/Russell group university)**

#### **Applications subject to review**

It is compulsory for all applications to be reviewed regardless of the applicant, funding body or value of the grant. Before the Research Funding Officer submits an application they must receive an internal form signed by the applicant's Head of Department confirming that the proposal has been through the internal peer review system.

#### **Criteria and selection of reviewers**

The institutional requirement is for all applications to be peer reviewed but it is left to individual Schools to organise and operate this policy. The criteria and selection of reviewers therefore varies from School to School, in some Schools applications are reviewed by the Head of School or Research Leader and in others they may be aided by or pass this over to other senior academics, especially where the field of research is significantly different.

#### **Format of review**

The reviews are paper based and are not conducted anonymously.

#### **Timing of review**

The review takes place once the grant-writing process and costing is complete, although in practice many applicants seek advice from senior colleagues at an earlier stage.