

## Edinburgh Napier University Grant application and Peer-Review Process

### Introduction

Peer review is an effective mechanism for improving the quality of grants, which in turn should improve the success rates. A requirement for many research funders that there is some form of internal quality review before submission. Ensuring a higher success rate for funding is in everyone's interest and ***peer review should therefore be seen as a process to help research investigators, not a hurdle to be surmounted prior to submitting*** the application.

It does of course extend the time required to prepare an application for approval staff need to plan ahead when considering applying for funding. For an average grant with focussed time spent in development, staff should allow **at least 2 months from start to approval**. In some exceptional cases, such as tender for contract research, the timeline could be considerably tighter; however it will be even more important to involve RIE early in the bid development process.

This document details the guidelines for the peer review process to be followed by Schools in conjunction with RIE. We will continually improve the process and assess the impact of peer review on success rates.

### Peer Reviewers

Peer reviewers with grant reviewing expertise and/or successful bids with key research funders will be selected for each school. Where required reviewers will be encouraged to undertake training and to gain expertise in external grant reviewing. The list of reviewers in Worktribe will be managed by RIE with the School Heads of Research (HoR).

The peer reviewers will be named and should be available to the investigator to discuss the review if assistance is required. Knowing the identity of a reviewer will encourage constructive feedback and dialogue and an open environment for research. Peer reviewers with grant reviewing expertise will be selected and where required encouraged to undertake training and to gain expertise in external grant reviewing.

### The Process

The timelines outlined below are ideal to provide comprehensive support to PIs, including time for Research Funding Managers (RFM) and peer-reviewers to advise and provide feedback.

- Early Notification of Intention to Submit a Grant Application

It is important for academics to create an outline project in Worktribe as soon as they are considering applying for funding. When an outline project is created in Worktribe this alerts the School Research Funding Managers (RFM) to the fact that an academic is intending to apply and they can then arrange to meet to discuss the proposal and the timeline and support required.

- Liaison with RIE Research Funding Manager – 3 weeks

The RFM will advise on the criteria for the funding call and any template or sections to be completed as part of the case for support for the particular funder. They can ensure the application is addressing the funders' criteria which is often the first reason a project is rejected. They will also check if the costs and resources are appropriate and in discussion with the academic what the potential risks and

benefits are. Once this has been done and the investigator is satisfied with the scientific quality of their case for support (the primary criteria for reviewers of grants), the document should be uploaded to Worktribe. This will signal to the RFM that the investigator is happy with the proposal and it is ready for peer review where appropriate.

Investigators should allow at least **THREE WEEKS** for the liaison process during bid development but must ensure the RFM can schedule the time

- Bid Development – 4 weeks

The investigator's main responsibility is to ensure the application is of high scientific quality and is convincing. The time required to do this will depend on the investigator's experience, the size and complexity of the grant and the funder requirements. Staff should not underestimate the time required to write a convincing application and should leave adequate time based on the amount of time they have available. If you have 1 day a week for research it could take a couple of months, if you have a block of time free it could be drafted in a week. If the project requires negotiating with partners, then the required time could be considerably longer.

Plan a minimum of **FOUR WEEKS**.

- Mandatory Peer Review process – 1 week

For small grant such as travel grants or innovation vouchers review will be limited to that by the RFM. For grants to the major funding bodies such as UKRI, EC and major charities above £75K (Price to Funder excluding partners) in which Edinburgh Napier is the lead investigator a compulsory peer review will be undertaken. For other grants it will be highly recommended that peer-review occurs, but this will be considered on a case-by-case basis in discussion between the RFM and the School HoR. Peer review will be mandatory for all Early Career academic/researcher applications to ensure appropriate development, create a strong research track record and engender good research practice.

The RFM will appoint a minimum of one reviewer and potentially a second review for projects above £75K and or any ECR project on Worktribe to provide constructive feedback on the application. The investigator is free to seek additional advice from colleagues if they feel this would be helpful to ensure a high-quality application.

**ONE WEEK** should be built in for allocating peer reviewers.

- The Review & Feedback 3 weeks

Where available, funder reviewer templates or funding call criteria will be provided to the peer reviewer for assessing the application and providing feedback. If the funder does not have a readily available peer reviewer template, then the university internal peer review template should be used. The peer reviewer will also be encouraged to annotate the case for support documents accordingly.

The peer-reviewer sets the appropriate traffic light status in Worktribe and provides a summary of the review. The completed reviewer template and any annotated documents should be returned to the PI/research team and uploaded to the Worktribe record by the PI (or RFM).

The PI should revise their application as appropriate seeking further feedback on revisions as required. Please allow for up to **THREE WEEKS** for the review and to address the feedback

- Approval by Schools/ULT - 2 weeks

Following completion of the peer review process please submit for school approval on WT. The HoR will consider the risk and benefits of the application, the fit with School strategy, the resources

required by the project and the peer reviewer feedback in coming to their decisions to approve. For high-risk projects, determined by the associated risks of the project and the value of funding, approval by the Principal or Vice Principal will be required which make take longer to be actioned. Therefore, projects must be submitted for approval by the RFM a minimum of **TWO WEEKS** before the application is due to be submitted.

### **Document Information**

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