



Mechanism for Access to the STFC Large Scale Research Facilities ISIS Pulsed Neutron and Muon Source, Synchrotron Radiation Source (SRS) and Central Laser Facility (CLF)

Revision 20 February 2007

PREPARING APPLICATIONS

1. Researchers are strongly advised to discuss ideas and technical feasibility for proposals for facility access with the facility staff prior to submission of an application.

Eligibility

2. The following categories of users are identified:
 - **UK academics** – all UK academics, including those from Research Council institutes (including STFC staff) and those with Research Council senior or advanced research fellowships (or their equivalent) and Royal Society and Royal Academy of Engineering fellowships, will be eligible for access to the STFC facilities.
 - **UK Postdoctoral Researchers** – see Postdoctoral researchers from UK universities are eligible for access.
 - **EU Transnational Access** – the STFC facilities will be available to those applying via EU transnational access arrangements. The level of access will be in accordance with agreed EU funding levels.
 - **International Agreements** – access will remain unchanged for those overseas organisations that have contractual access agreements with the STFC facilities.
 - **Other International Users** – applications from overseas (non-EU or without prior contractual access arrangement) will be accepted for the time to be reserved for other world class science programmes at the STFC facilities at the discretion of the Facility Director.
 - **Commercial and Contractual Users** – access to the STFC facility will be in accordance with the terms of the agreed contract with the STFC.
 - **UK Private Sector Access** – the UK private sector in collaboration with an academic partner is eligible for access. The academic partner has to be from a UK university or a public research organisation. Standard peer review of the proposal through the FAPs applies. Results must be published in the open literature.

SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Modes of Access to the STFC Facilities – CLF, ISIS and SRS

3. Procedures for access to the STFC facilities have been revised in accordance with best practice across the three facilities and also following extensive feedback received from the user community and discussions with other Research Council representatives. Facility Access Panels (FAPs) have been established to peer review proposals and to ensure a balanced programme on the instruments. The access scheme seeks to take into account the needs of those researchers with well-established facility research programmes as well as new users and those having novel applications. The facility access mechanisms are defined below:

- **Direct Access** – calls for applications requesting access to the STFC facilities are issued for a 6-month allocation period. All proposals are subjected to peer review by the FAPs. Successful proposals are scheduled in accordance with instrument availability.
- **Programme Access** – Programme access can be awarded to UK academics in support of a research grant which has clearly demonstrated the need for a connected series of experiments. Grant applicants must discuss their beamtime requirement with the Facility Director prior to submission of their grant. The appropriate FAP will assess the scientific merit of the Programme Access proposal and propose a level of access, taking into account the need for a balanced programme on the instrument. The final decision is with the Facility Director.
- **Strategic Programme Access** – on occasions STFC may wish to contribute to UK strategic programme initiatives through earmarked beamtime at its facilities. Grant applicant must discuss their requirements for beamtime prior to their grant submission with the facility management.
- **Rapid Access** – for those applications which are urgent (e.g. sample dependent, ‘hot topic’ science) Rapid Access is made available. Applications are received by the facility, independent of normal closing dates, and considered by appropriate members of the FAP for peer review via e-mail. If the proposal is deemed appropriate for Rapid Access by the peer reviewers, it will be scheduled as soon as feasible by the facility involved.
- **Service Access** – a number of techniques lend themselves to a Service Access mode on the STFC facilities – measurement by courier. The ISIS Facility currently offers this type of access on three instruments: GEM Xpress (for powder diffraction measurements), SANS Xpress (for small angle scattering measurements) and TOSCA Xpress (for molecular spectroscopy studies). For details and conditions see <http://www.isis.rl.ac.uk/applying/index.htm>. Service Access is ideal for those users who perhaps envisage only a minor use of the facility for a measurement to support a wider research programme

PEER REVIEW OF PROPOSALS

Assessment Criteria

4. Research proposals requesting access to the STFC facilities are assessed by peer review panels called “**Facility Access Panels**”. These panels are advisory to the Facility Director.
5. Applications are judged against the criteria of scientific excellence and timeliness, taking into account technical feasibility and safety issues. In addition, for each scheduling period, the Facility Access Panel are invited to advise on the balance to be struck between the various modes of facility access.

Remit of Facility Access Panels

6. The “**Facility Access Panels**” and their scientific remits at ISIS, SRS and CLF are outlined below.

ISIS	SRS	CLF
Crystallography	Biology and Medicine	High Power Lasers
Disordered Materials	Physics and Materials	Lasers For Science, Laser Loan Pool and Astra Target Area1
Large Scale Structures	Structural and Environmental Chemistry	
Excitations		
Molecular Science		
Muons		
Engineering		

7. The common terms of reference for the Facility Access Panels are:
 - to recommend to STFC Facility Directors a science programme based upon the criteria outlined in paragraph 5 above;
 - to assess the appropriateness of the number of beam days requested for the experiments proposed;
 - to comment on the overall balance between the various modes of facility access;
 - to identify facility development issues (including software development) which are of relevance to the STFC facilities;
 - to identify emerging scientific themes.

Facility Access Panel Membership

8. Each Facility Access Panel has 9 – 10 members and has a Chairman. Members are appointed for three years. The appointment of the Panel Members is delegated to the facilities. Each panel will aim to comprise the following:

Experts from the UK research community (at least 2) - including Research Council College members or nominees and relevant STFC staff.

International experts (up to 3) - taking into account appropriate representation of overseas partners.

A Facility Access Panel member who is also a member of a FAP at one of the other facilities.

A non-facility research scientist

In addition, the following representatives are in attendance:

Panel Secretariat (STFC, non-voting)

STFC senior facility managers (non-voting)

9. Voting panel members are paid a fee plus travel and subsistence in-line with other Research Council rates.

Peer Review of Applications

10. The Facility Access Panels apply a common scoring system. Briefing and guidance notes on the scoring system are provided to panel members.
11. An application for beam time is assigned 'lead' and 'second' panel members to introduce the proposal to the panel.
12. The Facility Access Panel peer review all proposals from UK HEI, EU and overseas applicants. It will not consider commercial or contractual bids submitted under existing contractual arrangements.
13. In the unlikely event of a Facility Access Panel not having appropriate expertise, the panel will seek additional advice from external referees.
14. Treatment of EU applications is consistent across the facilities and the applications are peer reviewed by the Facility Access Panels. No separate panel are convened to consider EU applications.
15. For those areas of science where the facility research community is relatively small, it might be necessary to convene special advisory panels from time to time

to assist the FAPs in assessing the proposals involved effectively.

Outcomes and Feedback

16. All proposals (successful and unsuccessful) receive feedback from the Facility Access Panel Secretariat.

SCHEDULING

17. The scheduling and allocation of beam time recommended by the Facility Access Panels is the responsibility of the Facility Director. Where necessary, the Facility Director will seek further advice from the appropriate chair of a Facility Access Panel.
18. The scheduling of facility time is conducted on a six-monthly basis. For the benefit of the user community, and ease of administration, closing dates for proposals for the different STFC facilities are out of phase, and take into account the phasing of ESRF and ILL.
19. Every effort will be made to reschedule lost beam time within a scheduling period. Where this is not possible, the Facility Access Panel may be asked to conduct a timeliness assessment for reallocation of beam time for those who have been unable to complete their experiments in the previous allocation period, because of scheduling reasons out of their control.

USER SUPPORT

20. Responsibility for management of user access to the STFC facilities is with the RAL User Office (for ISIS and CLF) and the DL User Office (for SRD).
21. The level of support that a successful user can expect to receive is given in the associated document "Service Levels for Free At The Point of Access".

REPORTING AND EVALUATION

22. STFC require a report on previous STFC facility usage from proposers before any new facility time is allocated. User reports should be structured so as to add value to the STFC evaluation of facilities.
23. A common user feedback questionnaire relating to service levels at the facilities has been developed. This will enables facilities to be evaluated on a similar basis.

24. The Facility Access Panels review their activities after every meeting and provide a written report on scientific programmes and emerging themes. They also comment on the need for future facility development requirements.
25. The access arrangements will be kept under regular review following their implementation to make sure that they remain 'fit for purpose'.
26. STFC will ensure that credit for facility access will be made available for input to the Funding Council new Research Assessment Exercise (or equivalent) as required.