

STFC : Projects Peer Review Panel (PPRP)

Question	Response
<p>1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed</p>	<p>Projects Peer Review Panel</p> <p>The Panel assess new large/complex novel projects (PPRP large projects) and smaller R&D projects (PRD - Project Research and Development).</p>
<p>2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event</p>	<p>The Projects Peer Review Panel (PPRP) is responsible for the assessment of projects that are considered to have significant scientific priority in particle physics, nuclear physics, astronomy and particle astrophysics.</p> <p>The specific aims of the PPRP scheme are to assess each proposal in a systematic and time constrained process; calls for proposals and PPRP meetings are scheduled in advance with deadlines set to allow efficient and effective due diligence.</p> <p>A PPRP meeting is held to assess the proposal and question the applicants. In its assessment of proposals the panel will look at each category referred to in the STFC Grants Handbook Assessment Criteria to ensure all requirements are met. Feedback questions from the meeting are sent to the applicant; the responses are assessed at the Visiting Panel Meeting.</p> <p>The Visiting Panel meeting carries out a detailed assessment of the proposal against the Assessment Framework containing six areas for consideration: excellence, economic impact, societal impact, leadership, synergies and project management. The Visiting Panel consists of external experts and members of PPRP. The final recommendation made to Science Board usually takes place at the end of this meeting during a closed session.</p>
<p>3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)</p>	<p>The PPRP process was last reviewed in 2010. The review was initiated by STFC management and concluded that the PPRP process was fit for purpose. On the whole, the review recommended clarifications or tighter control of the current guidelines together with methods for increased clarity or communication. These recommendations</p>

included:

PPRP

- Detailed guidance notes should be provided for the whole review process.
- PPAN should have strategic roadmaps for each thematic area of the STFC programme.
- The programme manager should provide a formal briefing document to PPAN and PPRP about each SOI or themed call.
- PPRP should be given funding guidance for each proposal or thematic area by the appropriate STFC programme manager.

As part of the review, STFC's scientific community and STFC staff were consulted.

STFC is dedicated to ensuring that our processes for funding are open and inclusive. Individuals engaged with our funding processes endeavour to conduct each stage in a fair and objective manner, without prejudice or bias. In line with this, STFC adheres to the seven principles of public life. In addition, we adopt the following principles for each PPRP Call:

For applicants

(a) The call is advertised clearly on the STFC website

(b) The call text and guidance clearly states the eligibility and assessment criteria

(c) The STFC website conforms to accessibility requirements for websites, including the ability to adjust the text size or use a text reader on the page

(d) STFC will offer hard copies of the call documentation to an applicant if requested

(e) STFC will provide all reasonable support to applicants before and after submission in order to assist them in the application and assessment process. This opportunity is highlighted in the call documentation

(f) STFC will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate the requirements of any applicant who are invited to present, considering issues of accessibility, travel restrictions and alternative working patterns. The STFC team

will request details of any such requirements when an applicant is invited to present their application to the committee.

For assessors: reviewers

(a) The PPRP reviewers are selected from the whole community, national and international, on their scientific expertise and also after considering anticipated or declared conflict of interest. A conscious effort will be made to ensure an appropriate balance of male and female reviewers is achieved.

(b) Our guidance clearly states our expectations of reviewers

(c) STFC will provide all reasonable support to our reviewers in order to ensure they understand the aims, objectives, and processes of PPRP.

For assessors: panel members

(a) All panel members involved in the process will receive training in unconscious bias to raise awareness of conditions that may impact upon their decision making

(b) By preparing an appropriate Chair's Brief and holding pre discussions, STFC staff will work with the Panel Chair to agree approaches that are designed to minimise opportunities for bias and improve the transparency of decision-making

(c) The membership of the interview panel will be a minimum of 30% female, or objectively justified if this is ever not the case. Panel Members of the PPRP are reviewed annually. In addition, PPRP is proactive in increasing the diversity of Reviewers and External Experts .

(d)STFC is committed to taking all reasonable steps to enable participation for individuals with alternative working patterns, including reduced working hours

(e)Panel members are asked to inform STFC if they have any additional needs to enable attendance or participation

(f)STFC will schedule appropriate breaks and provide appropriate refreshments for panel members

(g)Panel members are made aware of STFC's Code of Practice.

For STFC staff

(a) All STFC staff involved in the process will receive training in unconscious bias to raise awareness of conditions that may impact upon their decision making

Venue arrangements

(a) Will be selected for ease of accessibility

(b) Will not conflict with different cultures, religions or beliefs

(c) Will offer a full range of sensory accessibility relating to visual and hearing impairments

(d) Catering will be arranged with clear labelling and be appropriate to those who have specific cultural, religious, health or disability needs

<p>4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?</p>	<p>Anyone who is applying for an STFC PPRP grant, panel members , external and internal stakeholders involved in the assessment process.</p>
<p>5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?</p>	<p>Panel Members of the PPRP are reviewed annually. STFC holds an annual nominations exercise for Panel membership and when published provides guidance on diversity targets. In addition, PPRP is proactive in increasing the diversity of Reviewers and External Experts. For each proposal, Reviewers and External Experts are selected primarily based on science expertise. A conscious effort is made to ensure an appropriate balance of male and female reviewers and experts is achieved.</p> <p>Currently 14% of PPRP members are female. While 2015/16 HESA data for the UK physics community indicates that 14% of the staff population is female, we are committed to a minimum balance of 20% of female members. Therefore, we will be making a conscious effort to increase the percentage of females on PPRP.</p> <p>STFC has received 401 applications to PPRP call since April 2010, there is a total of 724 successful applicants (Principal Investigators and Co-Investigators), out of which 599 (83%) were male applicants, 88 (12%) Female applicants, 32 (4%) not disclosed and 5 (1%) unknown. Actual success rates for Male applicants is 75% and for Female applicants is 38%. Applications with an 'RO withdrawn' status are not included in the statistics as these did not complete the peer review process. To improve the gender balance of applicants, STFC will review this equality and impact assessment annually to identify any actions or interventions that are required to improve diversity and inclusion. In addition STFC monitors, analyses and publishes data to better understand the diversity of our applicant and assessor community.</p> <p>We will continue to monitor our application and award rates, and consider appropriate steps to better tailor and publicise the opportunity to female members of the community.</p>

Protected	Is there a potential	Please explain and give examples of any	Action to address negative impact (e.g.
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Characteristic Group	for positive or negative impact?	evidence/data used	adjustment to the policy)
Disability	Negative	<p>Applicants and/or reviewers with visual disabilities or impairments may find it difficult to access and review electronic documentation.</p> <p>Applicants or panel members with mobility disabilities may face difficulties in attending the panel meetings.</p> <p>Panel members with hearing difficulties may find it hard to engage in discussions.</p> <p>Attendees with neuro-disabilities may experience</p>	<p>STFC will take all reasonable steps to make adjustments to the assessment process in order to enable participation. As examples, this may include the use of video conferencing or equivalent tools, tailored timing of the meeting schedule, or provision of specific facilities to enable an applicant or panel member to be comfortable in the meeting environment.</p> <p>Electronic information is accessible and STFC will investigate the ability for the potential use of screen readers for personnel who are visually impaired.</p> <p>STFC will respond to individual support needs on a case by case basis.</p> <p>STFC will ensure the meeting venue is compatible with the use of hearing aid loops and will work with individuals to understand what other help can be provided.</p> <p>STFC will select a room that is light and airy, ensure</p>

		difficulties with concentration during panel assessments.	that plenty of breaks are built in to the agenda and ensure that colours chosen don't trigger migraines, different colours may assist in this if personnel don't bring their own laptops. STFC consult with all Panel members to understand any specific requirements for participation and will accommodate where required.
Gender reassignment	Negative	Information regarding gender reassignment is not made available throughout the peer review process. However, this may become apparent during the meeting stage or it may be possible that panel members already know this information or could endeavour to seek it out.	Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may lead to unconscious bias during each meeting. STFC staff presence during interview acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review
Marriage or civil partnership	Yes - Negative Impact	Bias may be voiced in relation to new partners starting a family therefore not given as a high a priority	Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may lead to unconscious bias during each meeting. STFC staff presence during interview acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review
Pregnancy and	Yes - Negative	Information regarding pregnancy or family arrangements is not made available throughout	Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding

<p>maternity</p>	<p>Impact</p>	<p>the peer review process. However, this may become apparent during the meeting stage or it may be possible that panel members already know this information or could endeavour to seek it out.</p> <p>Panel members who are pregnant or on maternity/paternity leave may be unable to participate in the peer review process, or require changes to be made to enable their participation.</p> <p>An applicant's career path and track record may be criticised due to the existence of a number of career breaks due to maternity.</p> <p>Nursing mothers may need additional support in terms of suitable accommodation or childcare</p> <p>Panel members may face additional childcare costs if having to work outside of their normal hours.</p>	<p>decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may lead to unconscious bias during each meeting. STFC staff presence during meetings acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review.</p> <p>STFC will liaise with the panel members on a meeting-by-meeting basis to identify and address barriers that may prevent their participation in the process. In the event that a panel member cannot participate, STFC will seek a replacement panel member from the membership of other STFC PPRP.</p> <p>STFC recognise this issue and the potential impact and will consider as part of the review. The Chair will appropriately moderate discussions and ensure the objective application of the assessment criteria.</p> <p>Meetings are timetabled to allow for adequate breaks. Ensure suitable accommodation provided for nursing mothers and additional childcare.</p> <p>STFC will reimburse additional childcare costs, above any beyond that required during normal working hours.</p>
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Race	Negative	Information regarding race is not made available throughout the peer review process. However, it may be possible that panel members already know this information or could endeavour to seek it out.	Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may lead to unconscious bias during each meeting. STFC staff presence during the meetings acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review.
Religion or belief	Negative	Information regarding religious belief is not made available throughout the peer review process. However, this may become apparent during the meeting stage. Panel members may be unable to attend panel meetings due to religious observances.	Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may lead to unconscious bias during each meeting. STFC staff presence during meeting acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review. STFC will liaise with the panel members on a meeting-by-meeting basis to identify and address barriers that may prevent their participation in the process. In the event that a panel member cannot participate, STFC will seek a replacement panel member from the membership of STFC PPRP, and ensure that any replacement panel member is provided with the same level of information as all

		Panel members or attendees may have specific dietary requirements due to religious belief	<p>other panel members.</p> <p>The criteria for selection of panel meeting venues includes a consideration of catering and dietary requirements.</p>
Sexual orientation	Negative	Information regarding sexual orientation is not made available throughout the peer review process. However, it may be possible that panel members already know this information or could endeavour to seek it out	<p>All assessment criteria are applied objectively, as reinforced by the panel briefing at the start of the peer review meeting. Panel Chairs are provided with specific briefings on assessment criteria and panel processes ahead of all peer review meetings and, alongside STFC staff, play a key role in moderating discussions and ensuring objective application of assessment criteria.</p> <p>Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may lead to unconscious bias during each meeting. STFC staff presence during meeting acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review.</p>
Sex (gender)	Negative	Applicants or panel members with caring responsibilities may face difficulties in attending the panel interviews.	STFC will take all reasonable steps to make adjustments to the assessment process in order to enable participation. As examples, this may include the use of video conferencing or equivalent tools,

		<p>Negative perceptions of an applicant's gender may be expressed by a peer reviewer or a panel member.</p>	<p>tailored timing of the meeting schedule, or provision of specific facilities to enable an applicant or panel member to be comfortable in the meeting environment.</p> <p>Whenever possible, panel meetings will be scheduled to avoid school holidays.</p> <p>Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may lead to unconscious bias during each meeting. STFC staff presence during meeting acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review.</p>
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<p>Age</p>	<p>Negative</p>	<p>Panel members, reviewers may cite age in terms of lack of experience or in terms of near retirement</p>	<p>Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may lead to unconscious bias during each meeting. STFC staff presence during meeting acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review.</p> <p>The Assessment criteria for PPRP are not linked to age</p>
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