

University of Nottingham

NERC Standard and New Investigator Grant Internal Bid Selection Process

January 2018

Since July 2015 NERC has been imposing demand management measures to restrict the number of applications to the Standard Grant and New Investigator schemes. The restriction of applications is achieved by the imposition of an institutional cap on the number of applications that can be submitted per round for institutions whose average success rate for the previous 6 rounds falls below 20% (Details of the NERC methodology for calculating success rates and caps can be found here: <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/available/researchgrants/demand/>).

The University of Nottingham has been subject to demand management since January 2016, with a limit of three applications per round. On 27th January 2017 NERC informed the University that our success rate remained below the 20% threshold and that we would continue to be limited to a maximum of 3 applications per round for the July 2017 and January 2018 rounds.

The University piloted a full panel review process for applications on a voluntary basis for the January 2016 round and successfully implemented this for applications in 2016/17. This same panel review process will be used to select those applications that will be submitted to the upcoming January 2018. Details of this process and timescales can be found below.

Process for January 2018 NERC closing date

Please note that as proposals with the lead Research Organisation (RO) outside the UoN, but with a separate Je-S submission led by a Nottingham member of staff, count in determining the university's success rates, such proposals will only be considered under exceptional circumstances. The normal route should be full submission through the lead RO (following their internal review processes), with the subsequent transfer of resources to Nottingham should the bid be successful. The resulting NERC income will still be fully credited to the Nottingham PI for REF and other purposes.

Presentation event

Following on from previous years, an initial presentation session will be held where prospective applicants can present their proposal to an academic panel and other colleagues. This presentation session will be mandatory for all applicants seeking to submit in January 2018. Presenters will be given clear guidance on what proposal presentations need to contain. On the basis of the presentations, the panel reserve the right to restrict the number of full applications accepted for panel review.

Submission of full bid for internal panel review and selection

Applicants should submit a full bid for internal review by Monday 4th December 2017. This bid should be considered in a **complete** state as if ready to submit within Je-S, including the Je-S proposal form sections, Pathways to Impact, Justification of Resources and other attachments, as well as the Case for Support (as outlined in the NERC Grants Handbook). It is important that **complete bids** are submitted at this stage to ensure that the Panel is considering the application as it

would be seen in the external peer review process and to ensure a fair comparison between all proposals.

Specialist Review

Applicants are also asked to obtain a specialist review from an appropriate reviewer within their Faculty, School or discipline (external reviewers are permitted). This review should be from someone who is a specialist in the field and who is able to comment in detail on the scientific quality of the proposal. The panel may not contain a subject specialist in your research area, as is often the case with RCUK panels, and it is therefore imperative and in your best interest as an applicant to obtain a good quality specialist review. **It is the applicant's responsibility to identify and contact at least one appropriate reviewer from within their Faculty/School/discipline and ensure that they are available to undertake the review in the short timescales permitted.**

For obvious reasons, reviews will not be anonymous and reviewers are free to forward their comments to the applicants directly as well as to the panel.

Panel review

The panel will be composed of senior academics with relevant NERC/RCUK panel experience and/or a NERC/RCUK funding track record and chaired by a senior academic with such a track record who does not have any conflicts of interest with the proposals under-consideration. Where conflicts of interest are identified for other panel members they will recuse themselves before consideration of that proposal (as for RCUK panels).

The panel will consider each application individually on its merits and likely competitiveness at NERC panel. Applications not approved through the internal process will not be signed off for submission.

New Investigator Grants

In order to encourage and support New Investigator (NI) applications, for rounds where NI proposals are invited by NERC, the panel will, subject to the quality of applications received, hold open one slot per round for a New Investigator proposal. This will not apply where no NI applications are deemed to meet the quality threshold or where an NI application has been ranked in the top 3 proposals directly. This will apply for the upcoming (January 2018) round.

Please note that NERC have recently changed their criteria for defining a new investigator to those applicants who are within **five years** of first becoming eligible for NERC funding as a Principal Investigator (account will be taken of any career breaks). Full details of eligibility criteria can be found at <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/application/eligibility/>.

Outcome of panel

The panel will produce a ranked list of proposals along with identifying those who have been selected to proceed to submission. The panel may also indicate a 'first reserve' if that is deemed appropriate. All applicants will receive feedback on their applications from the panel. Successful applicants will be asked to finalise their submissions (incorporating any feedback received) and go through institutional approval processes ahead of the submission deadline of 16th January 2018. The panel may also allocate a critical friend from among the panel or from elsewhere in the University to support the applicant in developing their proposal ahead of submission.

Unsuccessful applicants will be given feedback on where their proposal could be improved for future rounds.

Timeline for internal process

Proposal presentation event	Week commencing 30 th October 2017
Applicant submits full proposal for review	Monday 4 th December 2017
Specialist reviewers submit review	Friday 8 th December 2017
Internal selection panel	Week commencing 11 th December 2017
Announcement of selection and provision of feedback	As soon as possible following panel meeting
Internal deadline for School/Faculty checks	To be agreed with individual School/Faculty Research Offices
NERC submission deadline	Tuesday 16 th January 2018 at 16.00