

GUIDANCE NOTES ON EXTERNAL PEER REVIEW

BACKGROUND

Given the increasingly competitive funding environment nationally and internationally, it is important that Ulster is submitting high quality applications. As well as the new, more formalised internal peer review which is designed to provide a supportive environment for researchers and to ensure that only quality proposals are submitted, Research Development can provide a support service, by providing access to a range of 'external' expert reviewers. Please note that an internal review process also operates in the Department for Research and Impact and this process should be followed in the first instance for standard grant applications.

EXTERNAL PEER REVIEW SERVICE

This service, provided by research experts 'external' to Ulster University and coordinated by the Research Development team, aims to enhance quality standards for the development of strategic, significant research proposals to ensure they are competitive and tailored to specific calls' scientific and policy strategic priorities.

RESEARCH AND IMPACT SUPPORT

Each Research Development Manager will coordinate the 'external peer-review service' for their respective faculties. They will verify if the proposal meets Research Development eligibility criteria; set up for this service approval; identify a suitable expert among the Ulster University 'pool of external research reviewers'; and manage the payment for the service. A limited budget is available for external reviews and researchers should note that it is not possible to have every external review funded by Research and Impact.

ELIGIBILITY

In order to be eligible for this service, the research proposal must be:

- Costed at a minimum of £750,000 (80% FEC) to Ulster. (Exceptions per Faculty will apply).
- The funder and / or the scheme need to be of a strategic value to Ulster University Research and Impact Strategy and REF2021, including, but not restricted to, the Research Councils, the European Research Council, Horizon 2020 / Horizon Europe, Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund, Strength in Places, Future Leaders Fellowships, US-Ireland funding and the GCRF programme.
- Please note these funders and schemes are priority, however, given the changing nature of the funding environment, it will be possible to apply to this scheme for other funders, in agreement with ADRIs.

- Provided within a reasonable timeframe – minimum 2 months prior to deadline submission. Advance notice is critical in securing an external review service and for allowing the external reviewer to provide a quality service. In many instances, funders have a point of contact in NI. An external reviewer should only be hired if the funder's contact point for NI is not able to provide a detailed analysis of the proposal's strengths, weaknesses; identify opportunities to improve the scientific design; and assess the impact and overall significance of the proposal according to the funder's priorities for the specific call.
- Researchers availing of the External Review Service must agree to cooperate fully with the external reviewer, ensuring that time is made available to interact with the reviewer and that feedback will be acted upon accordingly.

APPROVAL

- Research Development Managers working with their respective Faculties will advise researchers on the eligibility of a proposal to receive this service.
- The Head of Research Development is responsible for budget approval of the External Peer-Review Service.
- Associate Deans for Research and Impact will be informed of the decision but are not required to participate in the decision making process.