

NERC Life Sciences review panel (Bio led sift)

In 2015 NERC instigated a tougher policy on demand management procedure.

<http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/available/researchgrants/demand/>

From July 2015, institutes whose success rate (by *number* of standard grant applications) falls below 20% will have future applications capped. I.e. the number of applications it can make in each successive standard grant round will be restricted until it meets the threshold. The data will be re-calculated annually using the most recent six rounds – to be known as the 'six round 20% number'. Any grant in which UEA submits its own JeS form will count as an application, even if you are actually a secondary partner on a larger grant lead by another institute (see below).

The **NERC life sciences** panel (BIO led) covers all responsive mode (standard and NI) grant proposals in the areas of evolution, ecology and conservation. There is also a **physical sciences panel** (ENV led) covering climate, marine science, atmospheric science and earth science etc. If you do not know which one to submit to please contact the panel chairs, currently Prof David S Richardson and Prof Andy Jordan (david.richardson@uea.ac.uk A.jordan@uea.ac.uk) respectively.

To try to avoid the introduction of an UEA cap on standard grants we need to work to maintain our high success rate (currently our panel success is above 30% but with falling funding levels we cannot be complacent). This means we have to focusing on submitting only high quality grant proposals, while still taking into consideration other important goals (supporting early career researchers, promoting gender equality etc.).

Finally, REN and the SCI Faculty Office would like 12 weeks notice before any proposal is submitted in order to facilitate planning and effective support.

The reformed review process for the life sciences sift (standard and new investigator proposals)

- - 12 weeks before final NERC deadline - **confirm intention to submit** (with title) to REN (Emma.L.King@uea.ac.uk) and the panel chair. **Use the 'intention to submit' form attached below.**
- -11 weeks - **submit outline proposal** – summary and objectives based on the JES form. Include names of 2 potential reviewers. Use the 'outline proposal' form below and email to REN (Emma.L.King@uea.ac.uk).
 - **Written feedback** (focused on conceptual worth and pitch) will be sent to you by email. You can discuss with reviewers if you wish. You decide whether to take the proposal forward.
- -3 weeks - **Full and Complete** proposal submitted to REN (incomplete proposal not accepted)
- -2 weeks **Sift meeting**
 - Reviewers will grade all aspects of proposals according to formal NERC criteria, using a **modified NERC peer review form** (attached below)
 - Post sift ranking and decision (submit/defer) by chairs and panel reviewers without conflict of interest. Consideration given to ECR's, strategic requirements and timeliness
 - Anything more than minor revisions, or incomplete – **always deferred**
 - **Post sift decision given to REN** – so they can then fully check and authorise
- -3 days **Final submission to REN** - The HoS /chair will **only** sign-off on proposals that has been approved by the panel.

Other Information

Initial pitching of ideas - if people want to hold a pitch meeting they can request that...and ECRs will be encouraged to do so, but this does not need to be within the formalised sift process

Priority proposals – if for some reason there are reasons why a grant MUST be submitted in a round these can be raised with the panel, but really the onus is on the PI to engage with reviewers earlier and arrange an extra session of feedback prior to the official meeting so that no problems will arise.

Where possible the review panel will be co-chaired by representatives from the other NERC review panel (i.e. the ENV physical sciences panel). Decisions (including written feedback) will be given after (rather than at) meetings.

The formal process outlined above is for all standard and New investigator grant proposals. However all grant application from BIO (worth > £50k) must pass through some type of review process. Applicants for other types of grants must contact REN and the NERC panel Chair (currently DS Richardson) to arrange submission and review.

Applicants will benefit from receiving additional feedback on their proposals, which will hopefully increase success rates and avoid the introduction of a cap. But the extra reviewing will feed through to higher workloads. Every effort will be made to ensure that the increase is minimised where possible and the work is spread around all members submitting to the panel

Important - Proposals that are not led by UEA

Any grant in which UEA submits its own JeS form will count as an application to NERC. Consequently, unless there are special circumstances which will need to be assessed by the ADR and NERC internal panel chairs, **then all NERC standard grants where UEA staff act as Co-Is, are to be submitted on ONE JeS form through the PI's Lead Institution.** Thus not counting as a submission. For successful applications resource transfers will then have to be set up between institutes. Note that this will require extra REN time to negotiate and organise, so timelines must be adhered to'.

In these cases (where UEA is not submitting a JES form) we **will not require a formal internal review.** But applicants are strongly advised to organise their own informal reviews to improve the quality of their proposals. NB Please contact REN (cc DoR), so it is aware of what is happening.

