

# Research Incentive Grants

## Guidance for Peer Reviewers

### Introduction

The aim of the peer review process is to identify those proposals that are of sufficient quality to be considered for funding against the criteria listed below. A proposal does not need to be perfect and correctable flaws should not be considered an obstacle to the successful completion of the proposed project or undermine the scientific/academic/intellectual or scholarly relevance of the proposal.

### Key aims of the RIG scheme

Research Incentive Grants support researchers in the early stages of their postdoctoral career and projects are expected to be new in either their aims, topic or methodology and provide an opportunity for the applicant to develop new skills or extend existing ones. Key points to remember as you review an application are:

- **Novelty and risk:** The Trust is open to novel research and accepts that some projects may be risky- such projects should not be rejected outright unless there is evidence that the approach taken, methodology or aims are flawed from the outset. In some cases, demonstrating that a specific methodology or process that is, as yet, untested but might be shown not to be feasible is a result that could be useful for the wider academic field of the applicant.
- **Research areas and outcomes:** The Scheme funds projects in any area and there is no restriction on the type of research conducted or the methodologies employed. Therefore, each application should be assessed on its own merit. Details of how the research objectives will be achieved and what outcomes will result from the proposed activities should be assessed only in relation to each individual application.
- **Principal Investigator's career stage:** In their assessments, reviewers are invited to consider the career stage of the Principal Investigator (=Applicant) who should have explained how the skills and knowledge they have acquired to date fit with the proposed project. These skills and knowledge will be commensurate to the length of the Principal Investigator's postdoctoral career but be nonetheless suitable for the proposed project. In some cases, the applicant's own expertise will be complemented by that of collaborators.
- **Benefit to the applicant's personal development:** The RIG Scheme also aims to provide Early Career Researchers with an opportunity to learn or develop new skills, expand their network, find new collaborators etc. The wider personal development benefits for the applicant that will arise from conducting the project are therefore equally important to the assessment of the application.

### Applying the assessment criteria

The assessment criteria below are based on different parts of the application to which you should refer to make your assessment. Please note that each application is reviewed by a single assessor.

Assessment questions should be answered by either **YES** or **NO**. As stated above, the aim of the peer review is to identify the proposals that are of a **fundable quality**. This means that some applications may have some minor flaws or may not fully meet a specific criterion but, these will not hinder the successful completion of the project. NO should therefore be selected where the proposed project is deeply flawed, repetitious of other work, or when the applicant has not fully or clearly answered a question.

The following table lists the assessment questions and their descriptors, indicating in which section of the application form the information has been entered by the applicant. The application form is structured in such a way that any details relating to the identity of the applicant is located at the end of the form and is **not considered in the assessment**. We have done this to enable reviewers to focus from the outset on the content of the proposed research. We have deliberately decided not to anonymise applications since it may still be possible to discover the identity of an applicant from their proposal and we therefore cannot guarantee the anonymity of all applicants. We believe that moving information about an applicant's name and affiliation to the end of the application form is a good compromise. We invite you as a reviewer not to check this section of the form until you are done with your assessment.

After the initial peer review, applications judged to be of a fundable quality (e.g. the proposal meets all the assessment criteria and the reviewer answers YES to each of the questions in bold below) will be entered into a **randomised selection process** to determine which will receive funding.

## Assessment criteria

Criteria	Section on application form
<b>Are the research aims/hypothesis or questions clearly defined?</b> Are the goals of the research clearly stated? These can take the form of a hypothesis to be tested, research question(s) to be answered or a list of aims/objectives to be achieved.	Section 3
<b>Is the justification/background for the proposed research clear?</b> Has adequate background information been provided to allow you to understand the problem/question being addressed and rationale for the proposed research?	Section 3
<b>Is the research focus new or does it fill a gap in existing knowledge?</b> Using your experience and knowledge of the subject area, is the focus of the proposed research new or novel? Novelty may arise for example, from the topic, or aims of the research, methodology applied etc.	Section 3
<b>Is there a clear management plan for the project?</b> Is the proposed research feasible in the timescale of the project? Where a project includes collaborators, research assistants or technical support, is there a clear description of how much time each will contribute to the overall project?	Section 4
<b>Is the research methodology appropriate to meet the research aims?</b> Is there a good fit between the research aims and the methodology described by the applicant(s)? Have potential risks and challenges been identified and where applicable suitable mitigation plans been presented?	Section 4
<b>Have ethical considerations been adequately addressed?</b> Any ethical considerations will be dictated by the type of research proposed. In many cases, ethical approval can only be sought once funding has been confirmed but the applicant(s) should identify in their application any ethical issues that may arise from their research plans and clarify how these will be addressed.	Section 4

<p><b>Are the outcomes and outputs well suited to the aims and scale of the project?</b></p> <p>Outcomes will be specific to the type of research proposed and scale of the project.</p> <p>Outcomes may include outputs such as publications, but outcomes such as new methodologies, data sets that may lead to further grant applications, new networks or collaborations are also welcome depending on the type of project.</p> <p>Where relevant, dissemination plans are clearly detailed.</p>	Section 5
<p><b>Are the costs justified and do they demonstrate value for money?</b></p> <p>Are costs itemised in the budget and given a clear explanation of the need for each of the items requested? It should be clear from the information provided that the project would not be viable without the requested budget.</p>	Section 6
<p><b>Does the Principal Investigator/Project team have the relevant skills and knowledge to undertake the proposed project?</b></p> <p>Assessment against this criterion should take into account the career stage of the lead applicant and that of collaborators (if applicable).</p> <p>If a proposal includes collaborators, the application should clearly explain each collaborator's contribution to the project. The skills and knowledge of the project team should then be viewed collectively: it is not a requirement for the lead ECR applicant to possess all of the skills/knowledge required to conduct the proposed research, provided it is demonstrated that another member of the team possesses the necessary expertise.</p>	Section 7
<p><b>Has the lead ECR applicant clearly explained how undertaking the project will benefit their personal development and career as a researcher?</b></p> <p>Benefits will depend on the type of project and activity proposed but could include the development of new skills, project management and line management experience, extending their professional network, forging partnerships with new collaborators etc.</p>	Section 7

## Advice and suggestions for the applicant(s)

The Trust is keen to share advice and suggestions from peer reviewers to applicants, whether their application is selected for funding or not. You can enter your advice and comments for the applicants on the assessment form.

Comments and suggestions are sent to applicants **un-edited** but the identity of the peer reviewer will be withheld. Please ensure that none of your comments could accidentally reveal your identity. Comments should not be limited to suggestions that can add value to the proposed work, and you may of course highlight the specific strengths or qualities of the proposal you are reviewing.

## Appendix:

# Carnegie Research Incentive Grants

## Eligibility Criteria

### Aims of the scheme

1. The purpose of the Research Incentive Grants (RIG) scheme is to make it possible for an Early Career Researcher to undertake, as the Principal Investigator, their own project or line of research, either of a stand-alone nature or in the form of an initial study that could be expected to lead to a more extensive project.
2. The planned research must be original and address a new idea/research question/hypothesis or extend existing knowledge, or develop new methodologies. There should be a clearly defined, discrete piece of research, which will have an identifiable outcome on completion of the Carnegie funded component of the research. The proposed project should be of benefit to the Principal Investigator's personal development and enable them to acquire new skills or extend existing ones, build their network, collaborate with other researchers, practitioners or industry partner as well as disseminate their research through publications, conferences, workshops, knowledge exchange or public engagement activities.
3. The RIG scheme is open to applications in any field of research and there is no restriction as to the type of research methodology applied. Proposed projects will vary considerably in their approach to conceptualisation, methodology and/or outputs, depending on the discipline. Where relevant, creative and professional practice may play a significant role in shaping the methods and/or outcomes of research. In all proposals, a clear intellectual, scientific or scholarly rationale is required for the choice of research methods, processes and outputs.
4. The RIG Scheme does not support projects that are mainly aimed at the formation and operation of networks or similar discussion groupings; directed at digitising, cataloguing or archiving existing data; centred on running conferences, workshops, seminars, summer schools or similar symposia, knowledge exchange projects; or aiming to confirm and disseminate previously acquired research results. The scheme is not intended to support exchanges between Scottish based researchers and RUK or international researchers where there is no planned joint research activity.

### Applicant eligibility

5. The Principal Investigator (= Applicant) must be an Early Career Researcher, employed by a Scottish university (Aberdeen, Abertay, Dundee, Edinburgh, Edinburgh Napier, Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian, Heriot-Watt, Highlands & Islands, Queen Margaret, Robert Gordon, St Andrews, Stirling, Strathclyde, West of Scotland), the Glasgow School of Art, or the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, on a contract consistent with their having the time and resources to undertake the proposed research.
6. For the purpose of the Trust, an Early Career Researcher is defined as a researcher who, at the time of applying (e.g. the closing date for applications) is either:
  - a. Within 7 years of successfully completing their PhD (measured from the date of submission), **OR**

- b. Within 7 years of starting their independent research career (e.g. from gaining their first lectureship, personal research fellowship or any other academic post that includes time for research etc.)

**Note:** When determining eligibility, allowances are made for part-time staff, breaks such as parental leave, extended sick leave, secondments out with academia or periods of unemployment. If you are unsure of your eligibility, do contact the Trust to check.

- 7. Researchers on a fixed term contract are eligible to apply if their contract extends for at least two months beyond the end date of the proposed research project.
- 8. Researchers whose post is funded by another Principal Investigator's grant may apply but will be required to forward written confirmation from their PI/funder stating that the applicant can undertake the proposed project under their terms of employment. Such confirmation must be sent to the Carnegie Trust prior to the closing date for application. Failure to do so will result in the applicant's proposal not being progressed to peer review.

### Collaborators

- 9. The above eligibility criteria only apply to the Principal Investigator (= Applicant) and a proposal may include Collaborators who are not Early Career Researchers. Collaborators may be academics, working in industry or in a sector relevant to the proposal. Collaborators can be based in countries other than Scotland.

### Project length and eligible costs

- 10. Research Incentive Grants are tenable between 2 and 12 months. The maximum award that can be applied for is £15,000 and the minimum is £1,500.
- 11. Funds may be requested to support the direct costs of the research activities described in the proposal which will be incurred by the applicant and/or collaborators.
- 12. The applicant must demonstrate that the funds are required to enable the advancement of their research, and that without the support of the Trust, the planned research would not take place or would be significantly delayed.
- 13. Retrospective applications will not be considered. Funds awarded by the Trust may only be applied to the research activities described in the proposal undertaken after the Award has been formally notified to the applicant and accepted by the applicant and their university.
- 14. Eligible costs include, but are not limited to, payments for:
  - i. travel, accommodation, and subsistence
  - ii. research support staff, technical or administrative staff
  - iv. surveys, experiments, including compensation to participants such as gift vouchers
  - v. laboratory consumables
  - vi. equipment essential to the project
  - vii. costs associated with disseminating results arising from the project – through publication, Open Access charges, or presentation at a specialist conference, knowledge exchange or public engagement activities (up to a maximum of **10%** of the requested budget).

- ix. childcare costs while the PI or Co-I is conducting research away from home and it is not possible to make alternative arrangements. The costs of normal regular childcare whilst at home are not eligible for support.
- x. other research costs, as deemed appropriate by the Trust.

**Note on inflation:** applicants may include contingency in their budget to allow for cost variations due to inflation between the writing of the proposal and the actual start date of the research project, as long as the total costs remain within the £15,000 limit. No top-up funding is available to mitigate the impact of inflation.

15. The following costs are not eligible:

- i. the applicant's (and collaborators', if applicable) own time or that of dependants, or buy-out of their time;
- ii. stipends or scholarships for students;
- iii. indirect overhead costs and bench/desk fees;
- iv. insurance cover.

16. Submissions will not be accepted from applicants when a report on a previous grant is overdue.

Applicants can only submit one application as a Principal Investigator in any round of funding.

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