

Reviewer Guidance for Research Fellowships 2022/23

Introduction

The Royal Academy of Engineering offers [Research Fellowships](#) each year to outstanding early-career researchers to support them to become future research leaders in engineering. The 2022/23 round accepts applications for the following Research Fellowship schemes:

- Research Fellowship
- Engineering for Development Research Fellowship

The scheme has a three-stage assessment process:

- Stage 1 General Review
- Stage 2 Expert Review
- Stage 3 Interview

The aim of each stage review is to provide comments and scores to help the selection panel decide the most competitive applications to proceed to next stage. Each application will be assessed by three reviewers. The reviews should be submitted online through the Academy's Grants Management System (<https://grants.raeng.org.uk/>).

Confidentiality

Applications and reviews are submitted to the Academy in confidence.

- Reviewers should not discuss and share the application and assessment information with any third party
- Reviewers should not discuss the application and have any contact with the applicant
- Reviewers should not retain any hard copies and electronic versions of application documents once their role as reviewer has been completed
- The identity of reviewers will not be made known to applicants, but may be revealed to the panel members of the assessment process

Conflict of Interest

Reviewers should inform the Academy if they believe they have any conflict of interest, or could be perceived by others to have a conflict of interest, which may affect their ability to provide a fair and independent review of an application. The Academy will then decide on the appropriate course of action. Conflicts include, but are not limited to, knowing the applicant outside of or through work, having a working relationship with their organisation or having a commercial interest relevant to the application.

Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)

The Academy's research programmes are aligned with the Declaration on Research Assessment ([DORA](#)), which is a set of principles aiming to improve the ways in which the output of research is evaluated by funding agencies, academic institutions, and other parties. The outputs from research are many and varied, and as a funder of engineering research the Academy needs to assess the quality and impact of these outputs in order to make awards - it is thus imperative that research output is measured accurately and evaluated wisely.

In the assessment of research output, we would like to emphasise that all outputs are welcome and considered valuable to the Academy. Outputs can include open data sets, software, publications, commercial, entrepreneurial or industrial products, clinical practice developments, educational products, policy publications, evidence synthesis pieces and conference publications. With regard to research articles published in peer-reviewed journals, the scientific content of a paper is much more important than publication metrics or the identity of the journal in which it was published.

We value and appreciate the time and effort that reviewers give to support our research programmes. A good, helpful review for the Academy is one which assesses research on its own merits rather than by surrogate measures, such as on the basis of the journal in which research is published.

The Scheme

Applicants are early-career researchers who have been awarded their PhD in the last four years. The scheme provides funding for five years and Research Fellowships must be held at a UK higher education institution/university or a UK research organisation that is eligible to receive UKRI funding. Each host institution can only submit up to 4 applications for 2022/23 round, and had an internal selection process for the submission. Each application for Research Fellowships is capped at a maximum contribution from the Academy of **£625,000 over the 5-year period**.

Engineering for Development Research Fellowships (EDRF) support research that will contribute to the sustainable development of low or lower-middle income countries. Applications for EDRFs must address and meet the following points in relevant sections of the application form:

- How the research aims to positively impact or contribute to the sustainable economic or social development and/or welfare of a low or lower-middle income country/countries
- How the research is designed to tackle a specific development need of a low or lower-middle income country/countries
- How the research outcomes will be applied in a low or lower-middle income country/countries, and will contribute to the sustainable development of that country/countries.

Applicants should use standard international evidence about income and development status (e.g. the [World Bank data](#), [DAC List of ODA Recipients](#) or other evidence) to justify their research proposals. The scheme offers the same benefits as Research Fellowships and the application and assessment process is the same.

Online Grants Management System

Applications have been submitted through the Academy's Grants Management System (GMS) at <https://grants.raeng.org.uk> and reviews must also be undertaken on the system.

Reviewers may already have an account with the Academy, e.g., from being the Academy Fellow, previous reviewers, or grant applicants. The same login details should be used. Once logged into the system, reviewers will be presented with the applications that have been allocated to review. Clicking on the application reference number (in the format RF2223-22-xxx) will take reviewers through to the application summary page, where reviewers can view the application and access the review form. A visual step-by-step guide on using the system has been sent to you along with this document.

Please save your reviews as often as you can, making use of the Save buttons beneath each scoring criterion. Furthermore, please avoid having multiple Flexi-Grant windows opened at the same time. **If you do not click the 'Save' buttons at least once within 120 minutes, the system will timeout and you will lose your work.**

Once a review form is completed, the 'submit review' button will become available at the bottom right corner of the form. Please note that the submitted review form cannot be altered and will be read by the selection panel members only.

Common Cases of Unconscious Bias

Before review and assessment, reviewers and the selection panel members are reminded of the following common cases of unconscious bias that should be avoided during the review and assessment process:

- **Recent PhD graduates:** applicants' research profiles should be assessed by their research track record that is adequate for delivering the research proposal, rather than by the year they have obtained PhD
- **Applicant's PhD awarded more than 4 years ago:** all applications assigned for review and assessment have been checked and meet the eligibility criteria. For the applicants, whose PhD were awarded more than 4 years ago, extenuating circumstances (e.g., maternity/paternity, extended sick leave or national service) have been considered.
- **Staying in the same institution:** applicants' research independency should NOT be assessed purely by the change of the institution. Reviewers and the panel members

should assess the support provided by the host institution and its appropriateness for the research programme proposed.

All applications are assessed on equal terms regardless of the sex, age and/or ethnicity of the applicant.

Please note in previous rounds applicants must not hold a permanent academic position. This eligibility criterion is no longer applicable for 2022/23 round.

Review Form

For each application, reviewers should provide:

- **commentary against each assessment criteria** (see below)
- **an overall score out of 7 and comment on the overall quality of the application**
- **a YES or NO recommendation on whether the applicant should proceed to next stage**

The assessment criteria include:

1. Candidate

- quality of the applicant's research track record
- potential of the applicant to become a future leader in their chosen field
- potential to act as an ambassador and advocate for engineering research.

2. Research quality and vision

- quality of the applicant's research vision and their potential to establish an independent research career in their chosen field
- quality of the proposed research project including timeliness, novelty, vision, and ambition that are achievable within the five-year research timeline
- consideration of diversity and inclusion in research and team development.

3. Research environment

- quality of the research environment and resources provided by the host institution
- host institution's quality and level of support and commitment to the Research Fellow's career development
- quality and level of support and commitment from collaborators.

4. Resource and management

- quality and effectiveness of the proposed planning and management and on whether the requested resources are appropriate and have been fully justified.

5. Beneficiaries and impact

- extent to which beneficiaries will benefit from the proposed research and the potential to translate research outcomes into societal and economic impact.

In addition to the assessment criteria above, the following assessment criteria will be considered for EDRF applications:

- seek to investigate a specific problem or seek a specific outcome that will have an impact on a low or lower-middle income country/countries
- provide evidence as to why this is a problem for the country/countries
- address the issue identified effectively and efficiently
- use the UK's strengths to address the issue, working in collaboration with others as appropriate
- identify appropriate pathways to impact to ensure that the country/countries benefits from the research.

Overall comment, score (out of 7), and YES or NO recommendation to next stage

The overall score is out of seven and is defined below. **If a YES recommendation is given, the overall score must be above 5:**

Rating	Definitions	Recommendation to next stage
7	Outstanding (worthy of a Fellowship)	YES
6	Excellent (worthy of a Fellowship)	
5	Very good (potential for a Fellowship/reserve)	
4	Good (worthy, but uncompetitive for this scheme)	NO
3	Average	
2	Below average	
1	Poor	

At Stage 1 General Review, reviewers will be asked to recommend 3-4 expert reviewers for Stage 2 Expert Review if the applications are within their broad discipline area.

At Stage 2 Expert Review, reviewers will be asked to provide up to three key technical questions (if any) that the applicant should clarify. The technical questions will be forwarded to the applicant for their responses, and the responses will be sent to the selection panel members for the panel members' consideration when they shortlist candidates for Stage 3 Interview.

Please note these technical questions will not be asked by the interview panel.

Feedback

Where possible the Academy will provide feedback to applicants. Please ensure that comments provided are both complete and specific enough to allow the Academy to derive useful and constructive feedback for applicants.

Selection Panel

For each stage review, the Programme Manager will collate all reviewers' comments and scores into a summary table, and rank the applications by overall score and the Yes/No recommendations. These are presented to the selection panel for a final decision on which applications should proceed to next stage.

The aim of all selection panel meetings is to agree which applicants should proceed to the next stage of selection and ultimately, who should be awarded funding. Where there is disagreement between selection panel members on an application, the following process should be followed:

- Each member of the panel should be offered the opportunity to give reasons why they agree or disagree with the decision and raise any concerns;
- Following this discussion, the members of the panel will be asked to indicate clearly whether they wish for the application to proceed or not. The consensus will carry the decision;
- If there is no majority, the Chair will make the final decision.

All decisions made at the meeting are final and binding.

Stage 1: Sift Panel Meeting

Only applications which have received 2xYES, 1xNO or have not received the required number of reviews will be moderated and discussed by the selection panel.

Recommendation:	Next steps:
3xYES	Go through to next stage
2xYES and 1xNO	These will be ranked by overall score and require moderation reviews by the selection panel members based on the reviewers' comments. The selection panel then decide which of these applications would be competitive to proceed to next stage.
2 or more NO	These do not go through to next stage

Stage 2: Shortlist Panel Meeting

All applications selected for Expert Review will be moderated and discussed by the panel to ensure integrity in the interview shortlisting process.

Contact

If you have any further queries on the review process or on using the GMS, please contact Senior Programme Manager Dr Chung-Chin Kao on chung-chin.kao@raeng.org.uk