

**Reviewer Guidance notes:  
Research Chairs and Senior Research Fellowships 2025/26 – Round 21**

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## Introduction

The aim of this review stage is to provide expert peer review to the Panel to enable the selection of candidates for interview. Reviewers should give each application a score out of 7, and a Yes/No recommendation on whether they should proceed to the interview stage.

The reviews should be submitted online through the [Academy's Grant Management System](#).

## Confidentiality

Applications and reviews are submitted to the Academy in confidence and

- Reviewers should not discuss or share the application with any third party, without prior approval from the Academy.
- Reviewers should not discuss the application or have any contact with the applicant.
- Reviewers should not act upon any of the information they obtain through the applications and should not engage with applicants if approached about their review.
- Reviewers should not retain any copies of application documents once their role as reviewer has been completed.
- Any hard copies of application documents, or any electronic versions of application documents saved locally, must be destroyed/ deleted upon submission of the review.
- The identity of reviewers will not be made known to applicants but may be revealed to other 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.

## Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Reviewers are reminded that the Academy is committed to diversity and to increasing the participation of women and other minority and under-represented groups across science, engineering and technology. For more on Academy diversity activity and policy please visit <https://raeng.org.uk/diversity>

## Part-time and flexible working

The Academy wants to support applicants to achieve a balance between their personal and work demands and will consider individual requirements and part time and other flexible working arrangements. Research Chairs and Senior Research Fellowships can be held part time (at no less than 25% of the full-time equivalent) this must be clearly stated within 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 the research is published.

## Use of AI

The Academy has aligned with other UK funders around the use of generative AI tools in funding applications through the Research Funders Policy Group [joint statement](#).

1. **Exclusion of AI in Evaluation:** Reviewers must refrain from using generative AI tools to make judgments or write feedback on grant applications. The Academy's approach relies on the expertise of its Fellows (or other assessors identified by Fellows or Academy staff) in evaluating applications and passing on their knowledge to the next generation. Any reliance on machine intelligence is not in line with our established working methods.
2. **Confidentiality of Application Content:** Reviewers are explicitly prohibited from sharing the content of grant applications with any generative AI tool as this can lead to the submitted data being used for other purposes. Maintaining the confidentiality of the application materials ensures the integrity of the assessment process and upholds the trust placed in the Academy's evaluation procedures.
3. **Detection of improper use of AI:** At present the Academy has no formal tools for identifying whether AI has been used in generating content (although it may seek to acquire such tools in future, subject to strict data security requirements), and therefore is primarily relying on honesty and integrity from applicants. However, the use of current tools can generally be identified through close reading, particularly if the applicant has also been interviewed. Exceptionally, reviewers may request a short interview with applicants that they would otherwise not have interviewed prior to confirming funding, to build confidence that there has not been improper use of AI tools.

## Export Control

This programme has been flagged by the Academy as one where applicants may provide information that is subject to [export control law](#). If an applicant flags that the content of their submitted application is subject to export control law, the Academy will select UK based reviewers. Reviewers of those application will need to ensure they access that application only within the

UK. Please note that you will be notified directly if an application you have been assigned is subject to export control law.

## **National Security**

The Academy is the UK's National Academy for engineering and technology and seeks to increase the potential positive benefit that innovations can have for society, whilst reducing the risks of harm. Hence, in all our activities, we seek to minimise the risk that technology developed as part of work that we support could be misused by a foreign state to build a capacity to target UK interests in a hostile fashion or to control or repress their population. There is a risk that for some grant activities, failure to protect IP and a lack of due diligence into collaborators could result in sensitive technology being transferred to and misused by a hostile or repressive foreign state.

National security risks are managed in the first instance by the Academy's steering group and its National Security Research Group, and the Academy does not, therefore, require expert reviewers to focus on these issues. Any concerns raised by reviewers, however, will be directly passed on into our internal processes.

## **The scheme**

Over the last thirty years, the Academy's highly prestigious Research Chairs (RC)/Senior Fellowships (SRF) scheme has successfully supported numerous academic appointments and enhanced internationally renowned centres of excellence. The Academy's Research Chairs (RC)/Senior Research Fellowships (SRF) scheme aims to strengthen the links between industry and academia by supporting exceptional academics in UK universities to undertake use-inspired research that meets the needs of the industrial partners.

Awardees are expected to:

- Establish or enhance a world leading engineering research group.
- Deliver 'use-inspired' research that meets the needs of their industrial sponsors.
- Disseminate the outcomes of their research for appropriate academic use.
- Become a self-sustaining research group by the end of the award (by securing substantial external grant income).

Host institutions are expected to:

- Adopt appropriate mechanisms to ensure only the highest calibre of candidates are submitted to this scheme.
- Adopt a proactive approach in encouraging researchers from unrepresented groups, especially women, to apply.
- Evidence of their commitment to equality and diversity if requested by the academy. They must be able to demonstrate that their selection criteria do not unlawfully discriminate or disadvantage candidates because of their personal characteristics or background.

## **Online grant system**

Applications have been submitted through the online grants system at <https://grants.raeng.org.uk> and reviews must also be undertaken on the system.

You may already have an account with the Academy, for example from being a Fellow or when you

applied for events or grants, and the same login details should be used.

Once logged into the system, you will be presented with the application you have been allocated to review. Clicking on the application reference number (in the format RCSR-2526-21-xxx) will take you through to the application summary page, where you 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.

When completing your review through the system, it is recommended that you save your work regularly by clicking the 'Save' button located beneath each scoring criterion. Avoid opening multiple Flexi-Grant windows or tabs at the same time, as this can interfere with saving your progress. Please note: progress should be saved at least once every 120 minutes otherwise the system will automatically timeout, and any unsaved work may be lost.

Once the 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 – if you wish to amend your review, please get in touch with your Academy contact for support.

## Feedback

Where possible the Academy will provide feedback to candidates. Please ensure that any comments provided are gender-neutral and are both complete enough and specific enough to allow the Academy to derive useful feedback. Unsuccessful Applicants may well go on to be successful in other activities with the right guidance.

## The review forms

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

Each application will be peer-reviewed by at least **three experts** in the subject area (usually Fellows of the Academy).

Following peer-review a selection panel (comprising of Academy Fellows) will be convened to evaluate all applications and select candidates for interview.

### 1 Quality of the applicant

- Quality of the applicant's research track record and the academic quality of the underpinning basic research.
- Quality of the applicant's research vision and their potential to establish or enhance a world leading research group at the host university in their chosen field of engineering.

### 2 Quality of the collaborative research programme

- Quality and significance of the proposed 'use-inspired' collaborative research programme (including timeliness, novelty, vision and ambition).

- Quality and effectiveness of the proposed planning and management, and whether the requested resources are appropriate and have been fully justified.
- Consideration given to equity, diversity and inclusion in research and team development, such as how the applicant's understanding of EDI affects Team composition and collaboration.
- Quality and appropriateness of research methods and ethical and inclusive experimental design (including, if relevant, alignment with the Academy's Animal Use and Human Participants in Research, Innovation and Development Policies).

### 3 Strength of the strategic partnership

- Strength and long-term sustainability of the strategic partnership between the company and the host institution.
- Commitment and level of support from both the host university and the industry sponsor.

### 4 Beneficiaries and impact

- Extent to which the industrial sponsor and other beneficiaries will benefit from the proposed collaborative research programme.
- Potential to translate research outcomes into societal and economic impact.

### 5 Financial costing of the proposal

- Quality and level of the financial contribution from the industrial partner and host institution. Please be reminded the industrial contributions are proportionate to the size of the industrial partner.

## SCORE

Reviewers must also give an overall score out of seven as defined below. Reviewers are encouraged to refer to these indicators in their comments and where possible to provide evidence from the application itself as this will greatly assist the Panel in the decision making and selection process. Please be reminded that applicants who apply for part-time awards or under other flexible arrangements should be evaluated as the same with other applicants.

Grade	Rating	Indicators	Recommendation to interview stage
<b>7</b>	Outstanding	<p>Applicant is a very strong fit for the award, a leading academic in their field, head of a world leading research group, excellent choice of host institution and strong support from host including additional funding.</p> <p>Excellent choice of industrial sponsor, based on a strong existing relationship and strong support from industry including additional funding. Proposal is novel, ambitious, achievable, and shows great potential for significant wide-reaching impact.</p>	<b>YES</b>

<b>6</b>	Excellent	<p>Applicant is a strong fit for the award, a proven academic in their field, head of a potentially world leading research group, excellent choice of host university, strong support from host.</p> <p>Excellent choice of industry partner and strong support from industry. Proposal is novel, ambitious, achievable, and shows potential for significant wide-reaching impact.</p>	<b>YES</b>
<b>5</b>	Very Good	<p>Applicant is a good fit for the award, a proven academic in their field, head of a potentially world leading research group, good choice of host university, strong support from host, good choice of industry partner and strong support from industry.</p> <p>Proposal is novel, ambitious, achievable, and shows potential for wide reaching impact.</p>	<b>YES</b>
<b>4</b>	Good (Worthy, but uncompetitive for this scheme)	<p>Applicant is a reasonable fit for the award, a proven academic in their field, demonstrated leadership and team building qualities, good choice of host institution, good support from host, good choice of industry partner and good support from industry.</p> <p>Proposal is novel, ambitious, achievable, and shows some potential for impact.</p>	<b>NO</b>
<b>3</b>	Average	<p>Applicant is not a good fit for the award, lacks evidence of proven track record and leadership ability, reasonable choice of host university, standard support from host, reasonable choice of industry partner and standard support from industry.</p> <p>Proposal is somewhat novel, ambitious, achievable, and shows some potential for impact.</p>	<b>NO</b>
<b>2</b>	Below average	<p>Applicant is a poor fit for the award, lacks evidence of proven track record and leadership ability, poor choice of host university, little support from host, poor choice of industry partner and little support from industry.</p> <p>Proposal is not novel, ambitious, achievable, and shows little potential for impact.</p>	<b>NO</b>
<b>1</b>	Poor	<p>Applicant is a poor fit for the award, lacks evidence of proven track record, poor choice of host university, little support from host, poor choice of industry partner and little support from industry.</p> <p>Proposal is fundamentally incorrect and unachievable and shows no potential for impact.</p>	<b>NO</b>

## OVERALL COMMENT

Please provide a brief summary on the overall quality of the application and your recommendation (YES/NO) on whether the applicant should proceed to interview.

The commentary provided should justify the mark given and should enable the Academy to provide constructive feedback to applicants. This information will be used to inform the decision as to which applications will proceed to the interview stage. Reviewers may be asked to provide additional information if their submitted comments do not contain sufficient information to validate the score given or for all panel members to assess and make an informed judgement.

## Optional – Additional comments

Please add any other comments you wish to make, for Academy use only. For example, any perceived conflicts of interest, or questions to ask at interview.

Once a reviewer has completed a review form, the 'submit review' button will become available at the bottom left corner of the form. Please bear in mind that once submitted a review cannot be altered. Once complete, all reviews will be accessible by the Panel.

## **Sift panel meeting**

The Academy staff 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 sift panel for a final decision on which applications should proceed to interview stage.

Where there is a disagreement between 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.

Panel Members:

- Panel Members should not act upon any of the information they obtain through the applications and should not engage with applicants if approached.
- Any hard copies of application documents, or any electronic versions of application documents saved locally, must be destroyed/ deleted upon completion of the selection process.

## **Academy's commitment to the DORA (Declaration on Research Assessment) principles**

The Academy's research programmes are aligned with the principles of 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.

For applicants and reviewers 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 that you have generated.

With regard to research articles published in peer-reviewed journals, we ask applicants to use a range of article metrics and indicators on personal/supporting statements as evidence of the impact of individual published articles and other research outputs. The Journal Impact Factor in particular is unacceptable for inclusion in any part of an application, and applicants may be asked to resubmit if anything is found to contradict this as part of the eligibility checks. Reviewers who utilise the Journal Impact Factor or who rely too heavily on metrics and do not show evidence of having understood and evaluated the content of research may be asked to resubmit reviews.

## **Contact**

If you have any further queries on the review process or on using the grants system, please contact the Research team at [research@raeng.org.uk](mailto:research@raeng.org.uk)