**SALC Peer Review College guidance**

The aim of the SALC Peer Review College (PRC) is to replicate the process by which large grant applications are evaluated by external funders.

You may be approached to do a review for several reasons. For instance: subject expertise; experience with a particular scheme; or to offer a viewpoint from a different subject area, as happens at a final moderating panel.

Please keep in mind the following **general principles** and use the **template** provided on page 3 when undertaking a SALC PRC review.

* Prompt feedback gives applicants sufficient time to make changes. Reviewers usually have a **maximum of** **4 weeks** to return their comments to the SALC Research Office. This timeframe is occasionally condensed to accommodate short-notice calls.
* **Reviews are** **anonymous** by default, but reviewers may choose to waive this. Do not include any identifying information if you want to remain anonymous.
* Familiarise yourself with the **scheme guidance** and judge the project accordingly. A link to or copy of the relevant documentation will be provided by the Research Office.
* Reviews should be **evaluative, not descriptive**. Highlight the **strengths and weaknesses** of the proposal and whether these are major or minor.
* **Be specific** about what needs to be improved and, if possible, **offer suggestions** to remedy the faults identified.
* Criticism should be **honest and constructive** in tone. Avoid personal comments.
* **Academic quality, originality** **and significance** (box **a.** below) are the primary criteria for evaluating all proposals. An excellent idea can be salvaged from a flawed application.
* Consider **all relevant elements** of the proposal. Alongside the ideas presented, this *may* include: the structure of the application; the proposed methodology; the feasibility of the work plan; the budget (if provided); the skills and experience of the applicant(s); development plans; and the plans for outputs, dissemination and impact, as appropriate.
* Consider also the **wider potential of the project**. A successful application will need to persuade reviewers and panellists from a broad range of subject areas.
* There are **no word limits** for individual sections of the template, or overall.

**Scoring**

Assign an **overall score** using the AHRC scale of **1 to 6**.[[1]](#footnote-1)

A score of 4 or above is considered fundable, though anything less than a 5 is unlikely to be competitive. See the table below for further details.

**Scoring should be justified by and consistent with the comments you have made**.

Scores given by SALC PRC members are not a definitive judgement on the merits of a project or whether or not a submission can go ahead. Rather, they are used to help the School determine the current state of the application. It is therefore important that scoring is done in a frank and honest way. Where serious concerns are raised about the readiness of a proposal, the Research Office will bring this to the attention of the departmental Research Co-ordinator in the first instance.

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| **Peer Reviewer grading scale** | | |
| **Score** | **Description** | **Definition** |
| 6 | Exceptional | At the leading edge internationally, in all the assessment criteria.  Likely to have a significant impact on the field.  Should be funded as a matter of the very highest priority. |
| 5 | Excellent | Internationally excellent in all of the assessment criteria.  Will answer important questions in the field.  Should be funded but does not merit the very highest priority. |
| 4 | Very Good | Demonstrates high international standards of scholarship, originality, quality and significance.  Will advance the field of research.  Worthy of consideration for funding. |
| 3 | Satisfactory | Satisfactory in terms of scholarship and quality but limited in terms of originality, innovation, significance and contribution.  Not considered of sufficient priority to recommend for funding |
| 2 | Not Competitive | Some strengths, innovative ideas and good components, but has significant weaknesses/flaws in its conceptualisation, design, methodology and management.  Not recommended for funding. |
| 1 | Unfundable | Unsatisfactory level of originality, quality and significance. Has limited potential to advance research and unconvincing in terms of its plans and/or capacity to deliver.  Not suitable for funding. |

**SALC PRC peer review template**

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| **Name of Applicant(s)**: |  |
| **Department(s)**: |  |
| **Title of Proposal**: |  |
| **Funding Scheme**: |  |

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| **a. Academic quality, originality and significance**  The intellectual quality and coherence of the project’s ideas. The salience of the objectives and research questions, and the suitability of the proposed methods.  The innovation and ambition of the project, and its potential influence in its field and beyond. |
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| **b. Work Plan**  The feasibility of the project timetable, both in terms of time and requested resources. |
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| **c. Management & Risk Management**  The clarity and suitability of roles and responsibilities, and the management structure.  Plans for managing and developing any ECRs on the project.  Whether the project team has the requisite skills and experience to complete the project. |
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| **d. Outputs and Dissemination**  The appropriateness of the written outputs: number, format, authorship, publication plans.  Whether dissemination activities are appropriate to engage targeted academic audiences. |
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| **e. Impact and Knowledge Exchange**  The potential impact of the project for non-academic user groups. Whether appropriate user groups have been identified and if plans for impact/KE are sufficiently convincing  **[If not relevant for the scheme in question, put N/A in the box]** |
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| **f. Budget and Value for Money**  Any discrepancies in the budget, e.g., the cost or quantity of a particular item, and/or its eligibility under the scheme rules.  Whether the project represents value for the amount of money requested. |
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| **g. Conclusions and Score**  Concluding remarks on the project. Points that you wish to reinforce or did not make elsewhere. | |
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| **Overall Score**  **(1-6)** |  |

1. Although it may not be used by the funder of the particular scheme you are reviewing for in this instance, it is helpful to applicants, PRC members and the Research Office to use a single, well-known scoring system for our internal purposes. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)