



Protocols governing research grant applications

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1. Introduction

The Pre-award procedures are overseen and supported by the University’s Research Services (RS) team at research@london.ac.uk.

Putting a grant application together is time consuming and potential applicants should ensure that they take the necessary time to prepare a bid.

External funders require submitting institutions to assure them that they have procedures in place to ensure that applications are quality controlled internally before submission. This is part of their policy of ‘demand management’ and enables applicants to submit strong, competitive applications.

A set of research protocols has been established for those making grant applications under the aegis of the University of London and they apply to all departments within the central University of London. These protocols are part of the University’s financial regulations in particular the [financial protocols FP12](#).

Non-Adherence to current protocols exposes the University to reputational risk and the risk of blacklisting by funders. These protocols are therefore **mandatory** for all schemes, and approval of grant applications must be secured through Research Services before submission.

2. Protocols for proposals under £15K

Even for a small grant, we would strongly recommend allowing two months to review the details of the scheme, secure line manager approval, draft the proposal (and discuss it with peers) and confirm any collaboration where appropriate.

1. **Deadline minus three weeks**: an Expression of Interest (EOI) Form and a Resources Requirement Form (which informs costing) must be sent to RS. Confirmation of Director’s approval will be sought before proceeding.
2. **Deadline minus two weeks**:
Draft proposals should be sent to Research Services to ensure that enough time is given to:
 - i. Undertake a light-touch review if needed (advisable if proposal is close to £15K and additional staffing will be required);

- ii Assess ethical issues and their implications;
- iii Cost the proposal (undertaken with the finance team's support);
- iv A risk assessment may be needed if the application includes recruitment.

3. **Deadline minus five working days:**

The final paperwork must be submitted to Research Services either by email or via the relevant portal to ensure that all checks can be undertaken, and approval (usually online) can be provided in a timely fashion.

Formal institutional approval will be provided by the Research Services on behalf the PVC (or his nominee) unless a risk assessment is required, which will need Director's and PVC or his nominee's approval. Institutional approval (online) is undertaken by RS on behalf of the Institution.

3. [Protocols for proposals of more than £15K](#)

We strongly recommend allowing three-five months to review details of schemes (EU, schemes take longer), discuss with directors and peers all the aspects of the proposal such as the effects on workload, any University resources required to support the proposed work, etc., and confirm collaborations where appropriate.

NB: For a **fixed-term member of staff** who wishes to submit a grant application under the University's aegis beyond the period of their actual employment contract, it is absolutely vital that the applicant discuss and review **as early as possible** all the implications of making a grant application **with their Director**, who holds the ultimate responsibility and authority on the matter. This avoids developing proposals that the University ultimately *cannot* support. If applicants cannot apply under the University's aegis but wish to apply as independent scholars, they should take advice either from the funder and/or from Research Services, who would still provide full support.

1. **Deadline minus three months:**

- an Expression of Interest Form and a Resources Requirement Form (which informs costing), must be sent to RS.
- Confirmation of Director's approval.
- RS will review the request and provide the relevant documentation, advise of any amendments which are advisable give the timetable and template required to support and coordinate the application process and submission.

2. **Deadline minus five weeks:**

- Confirmation with Research Services of definite intention to apply, confirmation of details EoI, and creation of the application on the funder's portal.
- Confirmation of collaborators and their contact details
RS will review the scheme and clarify any issues with PI and the Director if needed.

3. **Deadline minus five-four weeks:**

- **A final draft proposal** must be submitted to RS for peer review (which takes five working days);
- The **Resource Requirement Form** must be submitted to RS –costing will be provided within five working days- it may take several costing scenarios before finalising the project finances;

- **Financial viability** will be undertaken. Any other implications will be reviewed and discussed with the PI, Directors or Dean or Director of Finance as needed.
- Submission of an ethical assessment form to **review ethical implications**
- Submission of the **digital requirements form** (DRF) for review;
- Contact with **collaborators** made.

4. **Deadline minus three weeks:**

- Provide **RS access to the online application (via funder's portal) and/or relevant template** to ensure that support can be given and checks of funder's process requirements are made;
- **Finalise** all requirements, issues and implications of the proposal and ensure any unclear matters are resolved;

5. **Deadline minus two weeks:**

- **Approval of costing**
- **Ethical approval secured**
- Proposal Finalised and all appendices almost complete
- **Collaborators'** approval and information secured
- **Risk Assessment Form** ready for approval - resolve any queries, and acquire final sign off by the Director and then the Dean/PCV and Head of Finance (Academic) on behalf of the University.

Submission cannot be approved if a risk assessment has not been conducted and approved.

6. **Deadline minus five working days:**

Final paperwork must be submitted to Research Services either by email or via the relevant portal to ensure all checks can be undertaken and final approval (online) can be given. Formal institutional approval (online) is provided by Research Services on behalf of the Institution

4. **Things to consider well in advance of sending the EOI form to RS:**

- These protocols **apply to all colleagues (staff, students and fellows)** who wish to submit a **research proposal**, whether in the form of a fellowship scheme, a knowledge exchange scheme, a standard research grant scheme, a professorship scheme, a small grant scheme, a mobility scheme, etc.
- These protocols **apply to all funders** which require institutional approval before submissions are accepted. They do not apply to bids for **philanthropic funds/donations**, for which the Development Office manage the process.
- **Internal deadlines** apply to all grants whether we are the **lead** or **collaborating**. If our collaborators have an internal deadline in addition to the funders' deadline, the applicant should discuss the timeline with RS to ensure our own part of the proposal (in particular costing) is approved appropriately before it is sent to the collaborator. (Only RS can circulate the agreed costing which is done on institutional-formatted letter and via RS email).
- Some calls do have a **short turn-around that cannot be avoided**. Protocols still apply and the timetable should be clarified for each with the applicant.
- **Due Diligence on Partnerships:** due diligence on international partners will need to be undertaken. It is therefore important to clarify all partners and their responsibilities as

soon as possible to the RS.

- **Due Diligence on Funders:** due diligence on unknown funding bodies is required. It is therefore important to clarify funding sources as soon as possible to the RS.

- **Risk assessment** covers **staffing, student, space, procurement, ICT, due diligence results, legal and other contractual assessments and commitments before, during and after** the grant has finished as described in the Financial Regulations FP12. They all need to be cleared, and **ethical approval** must be secured, before **institutional approval** can be provided.

- **Outline applications** do not require a risk assessment (unless new staff are to be recruited or the project includes international partnerships) or ethical assessment (unless the funder insists upon it), though we do recommend that peer review is conducted. Costing policies apply as most funders do not want to see significant change between the outline and the full proposal.

Note: Once the proposal has been submitted, the Principal Investigator (PI) may be requested to respond to funders' evaluators/reviewers. In this case, all communication needs to be forwarded to the Research Services in a timely manner to ensure that support can be provided.

5. Summary

Research Services will not submit applications which do not abide by these protocols.

This has the inevitable consequence that your application cannot be submitted until the next deadline, or, *in extremis*, will miss being submitted entirely if it is responding to a one-off call. That would be incredibly unfortunate but an eventuality that can be easily avoided by following the protocols, which are designed to support all applicants.

The research services team will endeavour to be as flexible as possible but managing the grant application process in this way will ensure that as many applications as possible are given the best chance to be successful.

October 2023
Research Services