

PRC Note on Value for Money Assessment

We have received quite a few requests for further guidance to help in the completion of the Value for Money section of the Peer Review form. The following is intended to complement the existing guidance.

In considering the Value for Money section, you are essentially being asked two connected questions which should help you decide whether the resources requested are justified and therefore whether the project offers value for money:

- 1) Will the proposed project be undertaken in an efficient and effective way and is the applicant requesting only resources that are essential to the completion of the project?
- 2) Do the importance and the quality of the proposed research (and associated outcomes) justify the amount of resource required?

In the first question you should consider whether the proposal has demonstrated an understanding of the amount of work to be done. Has the applicant identified the level of staffing (both the amount in FTE and the experience/skills), travel and subsistence and other costs that will be needed in order to achieve successfully the aims of the project? For example, in terms of the work planned for the research assistant, is the amount of work achievable within the timescale, for someone with that level of expertise, and with the level of support and resource described? You should also consider whether the applicant has clearly linked how each resource (RA, visit to archive, use of materials) will be used in undertaking the project. This information should be provided within the Case for Support and Justification of Resources.

In the second question, if you have established that the project looks as though it will be run efficiently and effectively, you are asked to consider whether the importance and significance of the research is appropriate for the amount of resource requested. For example, if the proposed project requires a large number of research assistants, but the output is going to be limited (either in scope or potential audience), then this might not provide good value for money.

Finally, we would like to offer some illustrative examples of the sort of questions reviewers may be asked to consider under the Value for Money section, in the hope to further clarify the way in which reviewers should be approaching this part of a review:

- We are not expecting reviewers to say whether £200 is the correct price for a flight, but we would like them to consider whether all the trips that have been requested on a proposal are justified as being needed in order to conduct the research.
- We are not expecting reviewers to comment on whether the researcher should receive a certain salary, rather we would ask reviewers to assess whether there is sufficient work, of the appropriate level, to warrant a researcher being employed for the period which the proposal requests.

- We are not expecting reviewers to comment on whether a project should cost £300,000 rather than £350,000, but we would like them to consider whether the total amount of resources (staff, trips, equipment) is warranted by the amount of outputs that will come out of the project. Is the project going to be completed in an effective way?
- We are not expecting reviewers to comment on whether a particular piece of equipment (e.g. a scanner) should cost £1,000, but we would ask them to consider whether a piece of equipment offers the most efficient way to do that piece of work (e.g. is scanning the best way to do that piece of work?).