



## **Peer Review College – Standards of Service**

The AHRC relies on the provision of reviews from members of its Peer Review College to provide valuable information which forms part of the review process. It is imperative that we maintain a high standard in all areas of the process, in order to ensure the efficient processing of proposals. There may also be other *ad hoc* requests, for example in relation to cross-Council proposals. College members may also be asked to review final reports. Reviews are requested and must be submitted through the Research Councils' Joint electronic Submission (Je-S) System<sup>1</sup>.

College members are therefore asked to agree to abide by certain standards of service.

### **As a College member you are expected to:**

- attend an AHRC induction event for college members
- agree to basic contact details being placed on the Research Councils' Je-S System and agree to abide by the Research Councils' Reviewer Protocols (attached)
- where requested, provide AHRC with a review which accords with the reviewer guidance contained within the Je-S Helptext by the due date specified
- where you are unable to meet a review request, notify AHRC by declining via the Je-S system within 5 working days of the request, so that an alternative reviewer can be sought without delay
- notify AHRC of any prolonged period of absence (in excess of 4 weeks) in order that review requests can be suspended for an agreed period of time or provide an alternative email and postal address to which requests can be sent
- notify AHRC via the Je-S system of any change in your contact details
- keep up to date with developments that may affect your role as a member of the College, for example, by referring to the College Handbook and reading College related emails. You are also encouraged to attend AHRC

<sup>1</sup> Je-S is the Research Councils' Joint Electronic Submission system. This is currently used for completion and submission of research proposals to six Research Councils, including AHRC, and we have recently extended our use of the system to include academic and financial reporting on grants. All Research Councils intend to move to using Je-S for Peer Review of proposals.

organised events and to review the AHRC website regularly for new content that may impact on your role

- agree to membership for a period of four years. Continuation beyond this period, or earlier withdrawal of membership, is at the AHRC's discretion. You may of course resign your College membership at any time.

**The AHRC will:**

- aim to ask you to review up to 8 proposals to its funding schemes or programmes, although exceptionally you may be asked to review more during each 12-month period (normally no more than 4 per quarter)
- reimburse your travel and subsistence expenses in accordance with guidelines provided
- ensure that you are updated when necessary with developments which affect your role and responsibilities as a Peer Review College member
- on occasion, invite its Peer Review College members to sit on Peer Review Panels which make grading and ranking decisions on proposals to the AHRC. You will normally be invited to sit on a panel no more than once a year
- on occasion, forward your contact and subject expertise details to bodies with which the AHRC has a formal funding agreement or collaborative arrangement so that they may contact you to request a review. For example, UK Research Councils or those formal agreements that have been drawn up as part of our international strategy
- publish your name, research/other organisation (where appropriate) and broad subject expertise details on the AHRC website
- monitor the performance of all of its Peer Review College members, and reserves the right to discontinue the membership of individuals who fail to observe these standards of service.

The AHRC reserves the right to make reasonable changes to these standards of service. Any changes will be effected by a general notice to members of the Peer Review College.

Please tick if you consent to the following:

I agree to AHRC contacting me for my views on developments in the Arts and Humanities community and/or to supply me with information which may be of benefit to me. This may relate to either AHRC or third party activities.

I agree to AHRC passing my contact details to any third parties with whom AHRC has a strategic partnership where opportunities to share research interests are identified.

I accept appointment on the terms set out here and/or referred to in the appointment letter and the AHRC's Code of Practice.

**Name:** .....

**Signed:** .....

**Date:** .....

## Reviewer Protocols

### Introduction / Context Setting

The Research Councils have adopted a code of practice for all those who assist in the work of the Council which embraces the "Seven Principles of Public Life" drawn up by the Nolan Committee and endorsed by Parliament. These Principles refer to selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. The impact of this code is described in more detail below.

### Confidentiality

The Research Councils operate an open peer review process, while at the same time preserving reviewer anonymity. Reviewers are required to treat proposals in confidence and keep any personally retained documentation (paper or electronic) secure. Reviewers should review all proposals or final reports in accordance with instructions given in the Je-S Helptext and should refer any questions relating to reviewing the application to the Council, and must not contact applicants. Applicants may be given the opportunity to respond to any completed reviews. The Councils expect all parties to respect the roles of all involved in the peer review process. **If you feel unable to comment on any occasion, please let the Council know as soon as possible so that alternative reviewers can be sought.** (Your suggestions for possible alternatives would be welcomed.)

### Conflicts of Interest

An important aspect of this code is the avoidance of any conflicts between personal interests and the interests of the Research Councils. In the context of peer review of research proposals and final reports, a conflict of interest might arise as a result of direct, or indirect, personal, academic, financial or working relationships. The acid test is whether a member of the public, knowing the facts of the situation, might reasonably think the judgement could be influenced by the potential conflict of interest. The selection of academic reviewers is subject to certain constraints within some Councils, who may not wish to approach anyone with a current application under consideration in direct competition with the proposal under review, or from the same institution as any of the applicants. If you think that your involvement in assessing a particular research proposal or final report might be perceived as a conflict of interest, you should decline the invitation to act as a reviewer as soon as possible, or contact the Council for further advice about this matter.

On occasion, applicants ask that certain individuals are not asked to review their proposals or final reports. Given this and the constraints on reviewer selection outlined above please do not show the proposal to others or ask someone to review the proposal or final report in your place.

### Equal Opportunities

The Research Councils are committed to equal opportunities in all their activities. Reviewers should ensure that they avoid any bias in the assessment of proposals and final reports due to gender, disability, age, racial or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, or religious belief. Comments by the reviewers must not contravene this policy. Defamatory or otherwise actionable comments should also be avoided.

### Protection of Ideas

The integrity of peer review is dependent on the selflessness of reviewers. All papers relating to the consideration of proposals and final reports must be treated as strictly confidential and seen for the purpose of review only. After assessment any personally retained documentation relating to the review should be destroyed. Reviewers must not take advantage of any information obtained as a result of their role.

### Research Misconduct

Progress in research depends on honesty in the presentation of genuine results. The Research Councils take research misconduct, including misrepresentation in research proposals or final reports, very seriously and we would expect you to draw to our attention any instances which are observed as a matter of urgency. Further advice is given on the Councils' websites, and questions about this issue arising from the review of proposals or final reports should be raised with the Council.