EPSRC application writing – Guidance

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1) Format
   • Font size 11 point (minimum)
   • Margins size 2cm (minimum)
   • Sans-serif font style such as Arial or Helvetica
   • Left hand justified text

2) Overview

2a) Mandatory Sections for all applications
   • **Case for support** (max 8 sides of A4) and must include:
     o Previous Track Record *(2 sides of A4)*
     o Project Description *(6 sides of A4)*
       ▪ Background
       ▪ Research Hypothesis and objectives
       ▪ Programme and methodology
       ▪ National Importance
       ▪ Academic Impact
       ▪ Equipment (if applicable)

   • **Pathways to Impact** *(max 2 pages of A4)*
   • **Diagrammatic workplan** *(max 1 page of A4)*
   • **Justification of resources** *(max 2 pages of A4)*
   • **JeS application form covering**
     o Project and applicants details
2b) Additional sections for First Grants

Head of School statement (Up to 2 pages of A4)

2c) Additional sections for Fellowships

- Head of School statement (up to 2 pages of A4)
- Proposal cover letter outlining which fellowship priority research area you believe your application is relevant. This letter will only be seen by EPSRC and will not be sent to peer review (up to 2 sides of A4)
- Applicant’s CV (up to 2 sides of A4)
- List of publications (no page limit)

2d) Optional sections

- Project partner letter of support (project partners are generally non-academic), no page limit
- CV’s of named or visiting researchers (max 2 pages each).
- Quotes for equipment (if over £10K)
- A technical assessment for the use of a major facility. If the technical assessment is not required you still have to upload a blank document if using a major facility.
- Letters of support in exceptional circumstances

3) Detailed advice

3a) Case for support: Previous track record

This section gives you the opportunity to demonstrate that the team involved in the proposed project has the appropriate mix of skills, expertise and experience to carry out the research. This is particularly important for multi-disciplinary proposals. You should include:

- A summary of the results and conclusions of the applicants’ recent work in the technological/scientific area which is covered by the research proposal.
- Include reference to both EPSRC funded work and non-EPSRC funded work.
- The specific expertise available for the research at the host organisation and that of any associated organisations and beneficiaries.
- Details of relevant past collaborative work with industry and/or with other beneficiaries.
- Details of where the applicants’ previous work has contributed to the UK’s competitiveness or to improving the quality of life.
3b) Case for support - Description of the Proposed Research

**Background**
- Introduce the topic of research and explain its academic and industrial context.
- Demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of past and current work in the subject area both in the UK and abroad, including relevant references.

**Research Hypothesis and Objectives**
- Explain why the proposed research is of sufficient timeliness and novelty to warrant consideration for funding.
- Identify the overall aims of the project and the individual measurable objectives against which you would wish the outcome of the work to be assessed.

**Programme and Methodology**
- Detail the methodology to be used in pursuit of the research and justify this choice.
- Describe the programme of work, indicating the research to be undertaken and the milestones that can be used to measure its progress. The detail should be sufficient to indicate the programme of work for each member of the research team. Explain how the project will be managed.

**Academic Impact**
- Describe how the research will benefit other researchers in the field and in related disciplines, both within the UK and elsewhere. What will be done to ensure that they can benefit? Explain any collaboration with other researchers and their role in the project.

**National Importance**
- Justify why this proposal warrants support in terms of the importance to the UK of the identified potential benefits, showing where these align with identified national priorities (see EPSRC website – your research area). This section should also explain how the proposed research sits in context with other related research underway in the UK or overseas. It is anticipated that this section should not require more than one or two paragraphs for most proposals.
- contributes to, or helps maintain the health of other research disciplines contributes to addressing key UK societal challenges, contributes to current or future UK economic success and/or enables future development of key emerging industry(s)
- meets national strategic needs by establishing or maintaining a unique world leading research activity (including areas of niche capability)
- fits with and complements other UK research already funded in the area or related areas, including the relationship to the EPSRC portfolio and our stated strategy set out in “Our Portfolio”

**NB:** Lists of references and illustrations should be included in the 6 page limit and should not be submitted as additional attachments or as an annex.

**Equipment (if applicable)**
- From the 1st May 2011, changes in Equipment requests on Research Council grants came into effect, for further information see the following
3c) Pathways to Impact

In the Impact Summary (JeS form), you will have described who potential beneficiaries might be, and how the research might impact them. This document is your opportunity to describe what you will actually do to facilitate this. Ideally the Pathways to Impact attachment is specific to users and beneficiaries of the research outside the academic research community, but plans for academic impact may be included where this forms part of the critical pathway towards economic and societal impact.

Detailed guidance is available at http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/kei/impacts/Pages/home.aspx

Describe specific activities that will connect the research to “impact partners”. Impact partners may be academic, commercial, focus groups, charities, government, networks etc. However, impact partners have an interest in using your research findings to help produce real-world impact, however far into the future that impact may or may not occur.

In summary, the plan should describe the kinds of impact envisaged, how the proposed research project will be managed to engage users and beneficiaries and increase the likelihood of impacts, including (wherever appropriate):

- Methods for communications and engagement
- Collaboration and exploitation in the most effective and appropriate manner
- The project team’s track record in this area
- The resources required for these activities. Please ensure these are also captured in the financial summary and the Justification of Resources.

3d) Diagrammatic Work plan

The project’s programme of work should be illustrated with a simple diagrammatic work plan e.g. a PERT or Gantt chart.

3e) Justification of resources

The role of the Justification of Resources (JoR) is to aid reviewers when assessing proposals so that they can make an informed judgement on whether the resources requested are appropriate for the research posed.

The JoR should be no more than 2 sides of A4 which is an attachment to the proposal. This statement should be used to justify the resources required to undertake the research project and is mandatory. The JoR should explain why the resources requested are appropriate for the research proposed taking into account the nature and complexity of the research proposal. It should not be simply a list of the resources required as this is already given in the JeS form. Whether the grant is a large programme grant or a small travel grant, all items requested in the Je-S form must be justified in the JoR.

The JoR is a free text document. So that you don’t miss any costings from the Je-S form or any justifications for the items requested, we recommend that you match the costs to the proposal headings in the table below (where appropriate).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost to the proposal</th>
<th>Justification needed</th>
<th>Questions to consider and answer in the justification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff – directly incurred posts Researcher / Technician</td>
<td>Need to justify why a researcher / technician is needed for the proposed work and why the proposed time input is appropriate.</td>
<td>Is the work of appropriate scientific technical difficulty to warrant employing a Research Assistant (RA)? Why has the level requested for the RA been asked for?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff directly allocated posts Principal Investigator (PI), Co-Investigator (CoI) and Research Co-Investigator time</td>
<td>The time that the PI and CoI spends on the grant has to be justified.</td>
<td>How much time do you intend to dedicate to the project? Will you be doing all the research yourself? What work packages are the PI and CoIs involved with and why? Have you factored in enough time to work with project partners or visiting researchers and collaborators? Are you only managing the staff on the project?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel and Subsistence</td>
<td>Provide a full break down of the costs in the JeS form for example how many people are travelling and where are they going and</td>
<td>If you are planning to visit people to discuss your research, you should explain why those are the right people to talk to and how they can contribute to you meeting your objectives. If you plan to attend conferences, you should comment on the advantages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Directly Incurred Costs</td>
<td>Every item requested must be justified, however small.</td>
<td>You must justify the need for any equipment requested. You need to explain what computers will be needed for and also justify the cost. If you are asking for a desktop and a laptop, then justify why both are needed. It is expected that the University will provide computers and laptops for the PIs and CoIs and other research staff on continuing contracts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>Need to justify any resources requested to support the impact plan. For example: including staff time travel and subsistence consultancy fees publication costs public communication training</td>
<td>Full justification (what it is and why you need it) of each item requested. Please note: patent costs and other IP costs are NOT eligible; Universities already receive funding for these from HEIF. Also estate and indirect costs should NOT be requested for Technology Transfer Officers (TTOs). These are project specific resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Directly Allocated Costs</strong></td>
<td>In some cases, such as use of internal facilities and shared staff costs, the basis of the costing doesn’t need to be justified, but the need for the resources does.</td>
<td>All costs under £10,000 count as consumables. You need to explain what these are and why you need to use them.</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pooled Technicians</strong></td>
<td>For example workshop or laboratory technicians based at the University. Usually not named.</td>
<td>You need to explain why you are using a pooled technician and justify the amount of resource requested.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Infrastructure Technicians</strong></td>
<td>For example Health and Safety Officer at University. Cost should be displayed separately to Estate and Indirect costs in the other Directly Allocated costs box. This cost does not need to be justified.</td>
<td>You must justify the need for any equipment requested. Between £10,000 and the current OJEU threshold, EPSRC expects a contribution to the equipment from your institution or project partner. Please note a statement of support detailing the contribution must be attached to your grant application. If equipment for a research proposal is needed which will cost more than the current OJEU threshold then a case for this needs to be submitted as a separate business case. This does not need to be justified in your JoR on a research proposal but reference to the equipment needed, and contingency plans for if it does not get supported, should be articulated in your case for support. If you are asking for a desktop or a laptop, then justify why they are needed over and above a standard computer that should be being provided by your university. It is expected that the University will provide computers and laptops for the PIs and Cols and other research staff on continuing contracts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exceptions Equipment between £10,000 and the current OJEU threshold</strong></td>
<td>Need to justify all Equipment between £10,000 and the current OJEU threshold. If successful, EPSRC will fund the percentage of the total cost of the equipment requested from us at 100 %.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The main reasons for returning JoRs to PIs for amendments are:**

- Costs stated in the Je-S form are not fully justified in the JoR e.g. the investigator time that has been asked for has not been justified (please note: the investigator salary cost does not need to be justified, only the time asked for).
- Costs / descriptions stated in the Je-S form do not match those in the JoR.
• Costs in the JoR which are not in the Je-S form and vice versa.
• Justifications of why an item is needed are not clear or are poor e.g. listing the items from the Je-S form without any description of why its needed.
• If the PI time includes supervision of PhD students - this is not allowed.

3f) Host Organisation statement

FIRST GRANTS (no page limit)

Host statements are typically from the applicant’s head of department. This statement should be signed, dated and on headed paper. The statement should:

• Describe the commitment the university is making to the development of the applicant’s research career
• Confirm the applicants and appointment details and, if relevant, their period of probation.
• The career development commitments made by the university to the new academic should be over and above the usual salary and premises costs provided.

Please aim to answer the following questions in the statement:

• How do the applicant’s expertise and interests fit current and future departmental research strategies?
• How will this proposal help the applicant to develop their research with a distinctive focus in the UK and the potential to be internationally leading?
• What mentoring arrangements are in place?
• What development and training opportunities will be provided?
• What, if any, support will be provided to allow the applicant to develop their research interests and career if this proposal is successful?
• What university appraisal process has the proposal been through before submission?
• What, if any, support has been provided during the development of this proposal?
• How has the applicant already demonstrated their ability to manage the resources requested?

The host organisation statement forms an important part of the assessment of the proposal. Proposals without a supporting statement, or with a statement that does not give enough evidence of support from the host university, will be rejected.

FELLOWSHIPS ONLY (max of 2 sides of A4)

The Head of Department (through consultation with colleagues as appropriate) at the host organisation must complete a statement (two sides A4) in support of the application. The statement should be on Departmental or University headed paper, should be dated, and should clearly state the position held by the author (e.g. Head of Department of Electrical Engineering etc). The statement must include details of the following considerations:

• The process that the host institution has used in order to identify which candidates it would be entering into the competition, why the candidate in particular has been chosen and why the career space for that candidate has been selected
• The statement should identify the key characteristics and skills that the candidate has, which the institution feels highlights the candidate’s ability to succeed as an EPSRC fellow

• How the institution feels that the candidate fits to the various aspects of the person specification

• The level of support that the host institution will be giving the candidate both as a standard career development package that is open to all staff and additional support as part of the institution’s backing of their candidate to be successful in the competition

3g) Project partner letters

The statement of support will form part of the case for support for the proposal, which we send to reviewers for assessment. As part of this assessment the reviewers will be asked whether the collaboration is appropriate, and whether appropriate routes and resources have been identified for dissemination and knowledge exchange. If reviewers are sufficiently supportive, the proposal is usually assessed by a prioritisation panel. Panels rank proposals to prioritise them for funding based on the reviewers’ comments, and panel members are given copies of the full proposal including any statements of support to help them in their task.

Statements of support should be written by the Project Partner as part of the grant application. The statement should be provided on headed paper with a date and the signature of the named contact in the collaborating organisation.

There are a number of questions that the statement should address:

• Why are you a partner on this project?
• What do you and your organisation hope to get out of this collaboration?
• How have you and your organisation contributed to the preparation of the proposal and the Pathways to Impact included in the application?
• What will you and your organisation be contributing towards the project?
• Include any cash and in-kind contributions. In-kind contributions can include staff time, access to equipment in your organisation, provision of data, software or materials.

3h) CV’s of named or visiting researchers

CV’s should be submitted as a separate attachment for named research staff or visiting researchers (including details of previous visits or collaborations with overseas scientists/engineers).

3i) Equipment Quotes

• This information is for all equipment costing more than £10,000 (including VAT).
• Equipment costs are now only mandatory for equipment costing the OJEU threshold (including VAT) or more. For equipment costing over £25,000 and below the OJEU threshold, it is optional to provide up to three equipment quotes.
• If you are applying for equipment costing the OJEU threshold (including VAT) or more, you need to use EPSRC’s Strategic Equipment Process. For all items of this value three equipment quotations must be uploaded. Equipment quotations are added within the equipment item screen, not within the attachments section. Having added the details for your item press “Save” which will then provide...
a link to add the attachments. Where you believe that there are less than three potential suppliers for an item you should explain this in the Justification of Resources attachment.