ESRC Future Research Leaders Competition 2015/16
Frequently Asked Questions

This document will be regularly updated to reflect those questions most frequently raised with ESRC. Potential applicants, and their ROs, should review this document before contacting the ESRC for advice.

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Closing dates
When is the closing date for this competition?
The proposal must be submitted through Je-S before 16.00 on 29 September 2015 after which time no changes can be made.

Can I check that my proposal has been formally submitted?
Yes, by tracking it through the ‘View Submission Path’ and ‘Document History’ links via the Document Actions button on the toolbar at the top of the screen in Je-S.

Will there be another competition next year?
We are committed to continuing support for early career researchers but as we are reviewing our provision for this career stage we are not able to confirm this yet.

Eligibility
Which research organisations are eligible to apply?
All UK research organisations (ROs) approved by the ESRC to hold responsive mode grants. Please see http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/eligibilityforrcs/ for more information.

I am at an independent research organisation that is eligible for managed mode grants, can I apply?
No, only organisations eligible to hold responsive mode grants.

My RO has an office overseas, can I be based there?
No, you must be based in the UK within reasonable travelling distance of your host RO except when on fieldwork or overseas visits.

Do I need to be within four years of submission of my PhD at the time of applying (ie September 2015) or on commencement of the grant (ie October 2016)?
By the closing date for proposals, ie 29 September 2015.

Last year eligibility was four years and four months, why has it changed?
Last year’s call was issued on a slightly different timescale to the previous three years so eligibility was extended to ensure that no applicants were ineligible because of the delay. This call has reverted back to the original timetable as has the eligibility criteria.

By submission date, is the ESRC referring to the original submission date or the final submission date after corrections?
The original submission date which must be confirmed on your CV in the format of ‘DD-MMM-YY’.

Does academic research experience obtained prior to submitting my PhD affect my eligibility to the scheme?
For the purpose of calculating eligibility we are principally calculating academic research experience since PhD submission. Some potential applicants may have been in academic positions for some time prior to undertaking their PhD; whilst such applicants are technically eligible, they need to consider whether their circumstances are compatible with
the overall aims of the scheme. Proposals from such applicants would need to clearly demonstrate how their pre-PhD experience is effectively equivalent to a candidate who has less than four years’ post-PhD experience.

**Why measure eligibility from submission rather than completion or graduation?**
This is consistent with other ESRC activities such as the submission rate survey undertaken for all ESRC-funded students. It also reflects feedback from a previous ESRC Scheme (the First Grants Scheme) which used completion dates but concerns were raised about the sometimes considerable period between thesis submission and graduation, which was outside the control of the applicant.

**Can I apply if I’m studying for, but haven’t submitted, my PhD?**
Yes, as long as you submit your PhD prior to the grant start date of 1 October 2016 and can demonstrate your potential as a future research leader in your proposal.

**I have two PhDs. Do I need to be within four years of submission of my first or second PhD at the time of applying?**
The submission date of the first PhD would apply in this case.

**Since completing my PhD I have undertaken a master’s degree, can this be considered as a career break when calculating my eligibility?**
We would not disregard further full time study that would have contributed to your academic career progression.

**Can I apply if I have years of research experience in academia and outside but I do not have a PhD?**
Yes, if you can demonstrate ‘equivalent professional standing’ to someone with a PhD and up to a maximum of four years subsequent research experience.

**What is meant by ‘equivalent professional standing’?**
You may not have a PhD but have had experience of conducting research at postgraduate (and beyond) level and may hold a postgraduate qualification. For example, working at a non-governmental organisation, in government or the private sector.

**Can ESRC confirm my eligibility on these grounds before I submit my proposal?**
No, you must make the case within the proposal and the reviewers will judge this.

**I’m just outside of the eligibility criteria but I’ve heard that there’s no point applying for a Research Grant if I haven’t been a principal investigator on another grant before - is that true?**
No, the primary assessment criteria for all ESRC schemes, including Research Grants, are scientific excellence. If you have a good proposal and can demonstrate that you have the appropriate skills and experience to undertake it there is no reason why you could not be successful. If you are concerned about gaps in your experience, you should consider how best to reassure reviewers that there are appropriate mechanisms in place to support you - for example through having other experienced members of the research team.
The specification states that career breaks will be disregarded from the four year criteria - how is ESRC defining ‘career break’?

For the purpose of this call we will disregard periods of employment that would not have aided your academic career progression (ie employment outside of academia), along with periods of maternity, sick leave or unemployment. Relevant information must be clearly presented on your CVs as failure to do so may result in your proposal being rejected.

**What about applicants who have been employed in a research post outside of academia following their PhD?**

They would be eligible if they could demonstrate that they had no more than four years postdoctoral experience in a post that would not have aided their academic career progression. There would need to be a clear statement within their CV to justify this.

**I have been working in academia since I submitted my PhD but on a part-time basis. Can the four year period be calculated on a pro-rata basis ie can my five-year 0.5 post be considered as equivalent to 2.5 years?**

Yes, period of part-time academic employment can be calculated on a pro-rata basis. Applicants will need to demonstrate their eligibility clearly in their CV and we will undertake eligibility assurance checks on proposals once they have been submitted.

**I submitted my thesis in January 2011. However, since then I have taken a total of ten months maternity leave. Does my maternity leave mean that I am still eligible to apply to the Future Research Leaders call in September 2015?**

Yes. The length of your maternity leave can be deducted from the length of time since you submitted your PhD.

**I submitted my PhD in July 2009. However, since then I have taken periods of long term sick leave or have been unemployed. Does this mean that I am still eligible to apply for the Future Research Leaders Scheme in September 2015?**

The length of your periods of sick leave or unemployment can be deducted from the length of time since you submitted your PhD, as long as this period including deductions does not exceed four years. We may require documentary evidence of illness to support this.

**I submitted my PhD in 2002. However, I continued to work in the local education authority until 2013 when I first started my academic career as a research organisation employee. Am I still eligible to apply?**

Yes, as you were employed outside academia in a role which would not have aided your academic career progression. There will need to be a clear statement in your CV explaining why you should be considered to have equivalent experience to someone within four years of their PhD.

**I know the call is open to researchers who have not previously been principal investigators on Research Council grants, but is an individual who has been named as a co-investigator on a previous grant still eligible to apply?**

Yes, previous co-investigators are eligible to apply to the Future Research Leaders call.

**I don't have a PhD but have spent five years in a succession of research posts since completing a masters' programme. Am I eligible?**

Yes, if you can demonstrate ‘equivalent professional experience’. 
Can I check this with ESRC before submitting my proposal?
No, this will be assessed as part of your proposal.

Can I apply for a Future Research Leaders Grant if I meet the criteria eligibility but have gained a Professorship?
No, the scheme is aimed at researchers who need to improve their research leadership and management skills, rather than those who technically satisfy the criteria.

What if I submit my proposal but am subsequently promoted to a professorial post before my grant starts?
If you gain a professorship before the award starts then you are no longer eligible for this scheme but if your promotion occurs after the grant has started (and was not known about at the grant start date) then the grant can continue if the requirements of your new post are compatible with the programme of work.

Is the competition open to non-British nationals?
It’s open to all nationalities, but to apply the applicant must have the support of a UK research organisation where they will be based for the duration of the grant.

I read in the guidelines that applicants must be staff at a research organisation. Does the word ‘staff’ refer to individuals with permanent posts?
You do not need a permanent post to be eligible to apply. As long as your research organisation is willing to provide the necessary support for your proposal and the portion of your salary not covered by the ESRC contribution for the duration of the grant, you would be eligible to apply. Please refer to the ESRC Research Funding Guide (http://www.esrc.ac.uk/RFG) for further information on eligibility of applicants.

I would like to apply for a Future Research Leaders grant but I have been awarded funding from a non-Research Council body (eg Leverhulme, National Science Foundation). Does this mean I’m ineligible for the Future Research Leaders Scheme?
No. Any funding received from outside of the seven UK Research Councils will not affect your eligibility for this call, eg Wellcome Trust, Rowntree Trust, Nuffield etc. However, if you were a principal investigator on a research grant administered by one of the seven UK Research Councils (AHRC, BBSRC, EPSRC, ESRC, MRC, NERC or STFC) you would not qualify for the Future Research Leaders Scheme.

I have an RCUK Fellowship but have never been a PI on any other RCUK grant, am I eligible?
Yes, as long as you meet the eligibility criteria.

Am I eligible to apply to ESRC if a proposal based around the same research stream is under review with a different funding organisation?
Yes, you can apply to different funding bodies (except other Research Councils) with the same project but not be funded for the same project from two different funders. If you were successful with both you would have to decide which one of the two to accept.
Can I apply for a Future Research Leaders if I have had funding for an ESRC Studentship or Placement Fellowship?

Yes.

Can I apply to another ESRC call at the same time as applying to the Future Research Leaders scheme?

Yes, as long as the two applications are different in scope and content, as we do not allow the same proposal to be submitted to more than one scheme. If successful in both schemes, you would have to choose which grant you wanted to hold.

The call guidance says that grants are expected to start on 1 October 2016 - is there any scope for flexibility?

We anticipate that there will only be limited scope for flexibility, grants cannot start prior to 1 October 2016 but the latest permissible start date is 1 January 2017.

Is the scheme open to part-time applicants?

Yes, part-time applicants (on a minimum 0.5 FTE contract) are eligible to apply for this scheme but can still only claim either 80 or 40 per cent of their salary costs depending on whether they’re within or beyond 24 months of submitting their PhD.

Commitment of the host RO

Why have the ESRC stipulated that the proposal must be accompanied by a letter of support from the Pro-Vice Chancellor of Research (or equivalent)?

This is partly to demonstrate the RO’s commitment to working in partnership with the ESRC in identifying and supporting future research leaders, but also to encourage ROs to think holistically about the number and quality of proposals it submits to this call.

The guidance states that the ESRC expects to see a limited number of proposals from a single research organisation – is there actually a limit?

No but research organisations should adhere to the ESRC policy on demand management as we will be looking closely at both the volume and quality of proposals ROs submit. For further information please visit the ESRC website http://www.esrc.ac.uk/about-esrc/mission-strategy-priorities/demand-management/index.aspx

The specification states that the ESRC expects Future Research Leader grant holders to move into permanent academic positions at the end of the grant. Does the ESRC expect the research organisation at which the grant is held to take them on?

We can’t require ROs to employ grant holders once their funding has come to an end; however we would hope that the candidates submitted to this call would be of a calibre to be successful in applying for a post should such an opportunity arise.

As my host research organisation is funding my time beyond that which a Future Research Leaders call grant will cover, what developmental links between my grant activities and this other work might be considered appropriate?
Your host organisation is responsible for the tasks you undertake in that portion of your time that a Future Research Leaders grant does not cover, and also for supporting your wider development as a researcher. Depending on what these tasks are, synergies might be possible that would benefit your development as a researcher.

I note that the call specification encourages mobility but I am planning to submit my proposal via the same RO at which I undertook my PhD – will that be a problem?

We recognise that it’s not always feasible for applicants to move, those wishing to remain at the same RO at which they undertook their PhD need to take particular care to articulate how an grant will impact on their career trajectory; ie assessors will need to be assured that the grant won’t simply be a continuation of the PhD at the same RO and working with the same people.

Nature of proposals

How can I check if my proposal is suitable for ESRC funding?

If you are unsure, please contact esrcremit@esrc.ac.uk in the first instance with a short outline of your proposal. Your enquiry will be passed to a relevant member of staff, who will contact you directly. Please note remit queries must be submitted in writing. We strongly advise you to contact us prior to submission if your work encompasses the remit of more than one Research Council.

Would it be possible to transfer the grant to another host organisation if I were to apply, and obtain a similar role elsewhere?

We will only consider requests to transfer grants in very exceptional circumstances and on a case-by-case basis.

Activities and funding

If the ESRC are only funding a portion of the applicant’s time, are applicants expected to work full time on their programme of activities with their RO providing the remainder of their salary?

We expect the RO to support the remainder of the grant holder’s normal salary and would hope that this would be on relevant and parallel activities.

Can this include teaching?

Yes.

Are there any restrictions on where this money comes from? For example, can I be employed on other grants at my RO?

Yes, funds could come from other grants if the grant was in an area that was complementary and relevant to the work being undertaken on the Future Research Leaders grant and did not result in the grant holder receiving funding in excess of a full time post.

Is the Future Research Leaders call an opportunity to lead a research project, an early career training scheme, or a chance to build up my network of contacts?
This scheme offers an integral opportunity for you to enhance your expertise as a researcher, while building up your potential to take the lead on larger-scale research involving knowledge exchange in the future. It combines directing your own research project with related training and development and network-building.

It is intended to help you accelerate the development of your specialist expertise as a researcher through an in-depth opportunity to ‘learn by doing’: through designing and taking overall responsibility as the principal investigator (PI) for carrying out a research project of larger scope than your past PhD investigation. You will also be able to learn through a complementary programme of research skills and knowledge exchange skills training and development.

**I am an early career researcher but only seeking funds for a research proposal, not skill development or knowledge exchange activities. Can I apply to this call?**

No, proposals for research projects alone should be submitted to the ESRCs responsive mode grant call.

**Can my research activities follow on directly from my PhD?**

We expect that in the process of completing your PhD you may have identified new, but related, avenues for further enquiry, so your Future Research Leaders grant proposal may be related to your PhD. However, you will need to demonstrate very clearly within your proposal how this would have a more demonstrable impact on your career trajectory than simply receiving funding to continue the same programme of work.

**Should I justify why I have chosen my planned programme of training and development, and my networking activities?**

Yes, your proposal should clearly demonstrate how the programme of activities all contribute to your development and will have a demonstrable effect on your career trajectory.

In preparing your proposal, you may first identify your priority learning needs that arise from the research and related tasks that you will have to carry out effectively if your research is to be successful and also make a positive impact on key beneficiaries. Then you could creatively consider what programme of activities could meet these needs effectively, within the resource parameters of the call.

Some learning needs may be met directly through your experience of conducting the research and related tasks, coupled with reflecting on what you are learning from your experience in discussion with your mentor. Other learning needs may be met through carefully targeted training and development activities.

**What range of activities might be considered appropriate to meet my priority learning needs?**

Reviewers will need convincing that any activities you identify are appropriate, are likely to prove effective in meeting identified priority learning needs, and offer sound value for money. There is plenty of potential for you to be innovative and creative in putting together, with the support of your host research organisation, a set of learning opportunities which will meet your learning needs effectively.
One of the aims of the scheme is for applicants to develop skills in knowledge exchange – what kind of activities did you have in mind?

We are not being too prescriptive about the type of activities and would welcome innovative proposals from applicants. Please see a range of potential knowledge exchange activities above, alternatively additional guidance is available on the ESRCs website: www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/tools-and-resources/impact-toolkit/what-how-and-why/knowledge-exchange/index.aspx

What is the difference between a timetable and a workplan in terms of what would be acceptable?

There is no difference, the attachment should include details of all activities that are to be undertaken as part of the project, when within the time period the activities will happen and the project time span. Applicants are free to use their preferred format.

In previous years applicants could apply for 36 months, why has that been reduced to 24 months this year?

The Government will shortly be instigating a Spending Review across the whole of government. This will not be completed until later in the year. Given the current uncertainty over our future budget allocation and the new government commitment to reduce expenditure across the public sector we have taken the decision to reduce the length of the future research leaders grants from 36 to 24 months to in order to protect the number of grants available. All decisions will be subject to quality and funding available at the time the panel meets

Is there a minimum length of time for the grant?

No, we do not indicate a minimum length of grants for this call.

Is there a minimum time commitment for the principal investigator?

No, although reviewers will be looking to be assured that the proposal is compatible with the aims of the scheme and the expectation that grant holders will be working on a complementary programme of activities. Please note that part-time applicants must be employed on at least a 0.5 FTE basis.

Will the ESRC be able to advise on costings?

No, applicants need to talk their research organisation’s finance office; there is usually a specific person who deals with ESRC grants who will be able to advise on costings.

Why are there two different scheme limits?

We were concerned that this scheme was not attracting as many applicants at the earliest career stage that we would have hoped and are therefore encouraging more applications from those candidates.

If the call limit is £280,000 at 100 per cent full Economics Cost (fEC), does that mean that the full cost of the activities (including the host RO contribution) cannot exceed £280,000?

No, the call limit relates to the amount you can apply for from ESRC and does not include the host RO contribution.
If I’m expected to be working on a programme of activities for 100 per cent of my time, do I cost 100 per cent of my salary in my proposal?

No, you should only include costs in your proposal that you are applying for from ESRC, a maximum of 80 per cent of your salary if you submitted your PhD less than 24 months prior to the call closing date or 40 per cent if you’re beyond 24 months. Indirect and estate costs should be costed in proportion to the salary being claimed. Proposals submitted over the call limit will be rejected.

I’m part time and my post is 0.8 FTE - does that mean I can claim my whole salary?

No, you can claim up to 80 or 40 per cent of your 0.8 post depending on whether you’re within or beyond 24 months from submitting your PhD.

I note that the scheme limit is £280,000 at 100 per cent fEC and that I can claim up to 80 or 40 per cent of my salary, but there is also reference to an 80 per cent contribution - what does this mean?

ESRC always states its call limits at their 100 per cent fEC value, but under the fEC model Research Councils make a standard 80 per cent contribution to the amount applied for. The host RO is expected to support the other 20 per cent. Your finance office should be fully aware of the 80 per cent Research Council contribution.

Will ESRC fund the 80 or 40 per cent of the applicant’s time in full?

No, up to either 80 or 40 per cent of the applicant’s salary should be costed in to the proposal so, for example, if you’re only eligible to apply for 40 per cent of your salary this is the figure that you input to Je-S. ESRC will pay the standard 80 per cent contribution to all costs.

So should I put the 80 per cent research council contribution in to Je-S?

No, Je-S will automatically calculate the 80 per cent fEC contribution of the amount applied for.

When applying for the funding, will the staff element for the investigator be categorised Directly Incurred or Directly Allocated?

Principal investigator’s time should be added under directly allocated costs if they are working directly on a project but their time charged to the grant will be based on estimates rather than actual costs. Where costs are actual, auditable and verifiable, they should be included under the Directly Incurred heading.

Can I include a consultant on the project?

Yes, as long as it is within the overall limit for the call. The role and contribution to the overall project must be fully justified in the Justification of Resources and should be included under Other Directly Incurred costs.

I note that grant holders are expected to attend an annual meeting, should I cost that in to my proposal?

Yes. Please note all grant holders are expected to attend.
If successful, will my grant be funded at the level I’ve applied for?

No, not necessarily. In assessing your application reviewers will need to be assured that it offers good value for money and that costs requested are appropriate for the proposed programme of activities. Costs will be checked to ensure that they are eligible under our research funding rules and that they have been clearly and adequately justified. Cost that are ineligible or unjustified will be removed from the amount awarded.

When you say that costs should be justified, what do you mean?

We need to be clear about how you’ve arrived at the costs you’re requesting and why they are necessary for the successful completion of the project.

The specification suggests that costs associated with conference attendance are only permitted for PIs, is that correct?

Yes.

Mentors

Why must I have a mentor?

As an early career researcher, your learning stands to be enhanced by drawing on the expertise and contacts of an academic mentor, who will be internationally acknowledged as an expert in your field of enquiry. You can turn to your mentor regularly for advice on aspects of your research project, for an introduction to other academic experts and senior practitioners or policymakers in your mentor’s network, and for advice on your research and knowledge exchange skills training and development programme.

What is expected of a mentor?

The role of the mentor is to supervise and support the work of the PI (both scientific and non-scientific), answer any queries and help with any problems that may arise during your research. They will not be directly involved in running the project, their role is advisory. It is expected that regular contact will be maintained between the PI and mentor that the mentor will review progress against agreed milestones (including the implementation of the training and development programme).

How much time will mentoring take?

We anticipate mentoring time will be around one and three hours per week but the exact commitment will depend on the understanding between mentor and grant holder and should be confirmed within the mentor’s statement.

Can mentors be costed into the proposal?

No.

Should my mentor be from the same research organisation as me?

Yes. Ideally applicants should have a single mentor based at the same research organisation as the PI. If it is not possible to find a mentor with all the suitable knowledge within the PI’s organisation a second mentor may be appointed for this purpose from another organisation.
Can I have more than one mentor?
Yes, this is particularly encouraged for proposals that are on the borderline between social sciences and other disciplinary areas or where an extended period at an overseas RO is planned. The need for more than one mentor should be clearly articulated in the proposal.

Can my PhD supervisor be my mentor?
The proposed mentor should be of high academic standing and have a strong interest in the applicant’s field of research. Applicants are encouraged to consider how they might link to and be influenced/challenged by a wider networks of academics working in the area and therefore how the grant would be a step forward from their PhD. Therefore we would not normally expect the mentor to be your principal supervisor, although we do recognise that this is not always practical. Ultimately it’s down to you to justify your choice but you must be able to demonstrate that the grant will have a demonstrable impact on your career trajectory.

Can a current Future Research Leader be my mentor?
We would suggest that whilst a current Future Research Leader grant holder might be part of a mentoring team, it would not be appropriate for them to be the sole mentor given that they are also being mentored as part of their own grant.

Do I need to include a CV for my mentor?
Yes, a CV will be required for each mentor.

Co-investigators and staff resources
I would like to apply for a Future Research Leaders Grant as the principal investigator and have a co-investigator from another RO. Is this allowed?
No, co-investigators are not allowed and your proposal will be rejected if it includes one.

Can I include research staff on the proposal?
Yes. All costs, including staff ones, must be clearly and adequately justified in the proposal.

Can I include a linked studentship in my proposal?
No, studentships cannot be included in this call.

Where my research project includes employing a Research Assistant (RA), is funding available to support the RA’s development and training?
Yes, if relevant to their duties on the grant. Where your proposed research project entails employing someone as an RA, your responsibility as PI extends to supporting their development as a researcher. You will be to identify whether the RA has any learning needs related to fulfilling their project duties effectively, and to arrange appropriate opportunities to meet those learning needs.
Impact requirements

I can see from the proposal form that the ESRC require an impact summary. What should I cover in this section?

We expect that the researchers we fund will have identified the potential scientific, societal and economic impacts of their research, and will actively consider how these can be maximised and developed. As a result we require that all applicants submit an impact summary which addresses who will benefit from the proposed research, how they will benefit, and what will be done to ensure that they have the opportunity to benefit. For more information, please refer to the Je-S Guidance for this call and the following page on the website:


I can see that ESRC requires a Pathways to Impact document as a mandatory attachment to the proposal form. What do I need to include in this document?

This document is your opportunity to describe how the potential impacts of this research will be realised. It is specific to users and beneficiaries of the research who are outside of the academic research community, ie the public-, private-, or civil society sectors, or the wider public.

Applicants should consider what is achievable and expected for research of this nature. If your work is oriented towards academic beneficiaries only, then you should state that an Impact Plan is ‘not applicable’ and set out the reasoning behind this. Where this is the case, applicants should note that while ESRC recognises the value of this type of research, reviewers may comment on the applicant’s assessment during consideration of the proposal. A statement about ESRCs expectations of the research it funds is at


Applicants can include resources to support the knowledge exchange activities described in the Pathways to Impact in their proposal, these must be justified within the Justification of Resources attachment.

Resubmissions

I have previously applied to the Future Research Leaders Scheme and was unsuccessful. Can I reapply this year?

We have an invited resubmission-only policy so you cannot resubmit an amended proposal (this applies for all previous unsuccessful proposals). You can submit a new proposal with a significant change of focus with fresh or significantly modified objectives and/or an entirely revised methodological/analytical approach to a research question. Please see our website for further information: www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/guidance/applicants/resubmissions.aspx and the guidance on what constitutes a new proposal: http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/applicants/new-proposal.aspx.
Joint Electronic Submission

I don’t seem to be able to select myself as the principal investigator - does this mean that my mentor should be named as the principal investigator?

No, the applicant (i.e. candidate for a Future Research Leader) is the principal investigator, not the mentor. You need to check that you have the correct Je-S account type for this call, i.e. a Je-S registered account that is verified by the research organisation. We will not accept proposals where the mentor has been input as the principal investigator.

How I can set my account in Je-S?
The Future Research Leaders call requires a Je-S registered account. For further information on how to set up your account please contact:

- Je-S Helpdesk
  Email: jeshelp@rcuk.ac.uk
  Telephone: 01793 444164

If you experience difficulties using Je-S or have questions regarding its use, Helpdesk staff can be contacted Monday to Friday 09.00 to 17.00 (excluding public and other holidays).

What font should the Je-S proposal be completed in?
Point 11 Times New Roman.

On the proposal form there is a character limit; does this include or exclude spaces?
Character limits include spaces, tabs and character returns. Please see the Je-S guidance at http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/funding-opportunities/15938/future-research-leaders.aspx.

I'm having trouble accessing or using the Je-S system. What shall I do?
You can find guidance at the Je-S website (https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/jes2webloginsite/login.aspx) or you can contact the Je-S Helpdesk.

I am not sure how to fill out a particular section of the Je-S proposal form. Can you help?
Please refer to the ‘Guidance Notes for Applicants’ document which is listed under the ‘Supporting Documents’ heading on the ESRC Future Research Leaders webpage (www.esrc.ac.uk/futureleaders).

Attachments

The call’s guidance suggests that details of the mentor should be included in the letter from the Pro-Vice Chancellor however the Je-S guidance notes for applicants say this should be in the case for support. Presumably the ESRC don’t want this twice?

With the case for support the applicant should justify their choice of mentor(s) whereas the statement from the Pro-Vice Chancellor should address how the applicant will be supported during the grant which we would expect to include mentoring arrangements.
As the CV is limited to two sides of A4 can I include my publications as a separate attachment (ie as a ‘list of publications’ attachment)?

No. CVs are limited to two sides of A4 for most of ESRCs schemes and this should only include those publications you consider most relevant to the proposal.

So what’s the ‘list of publications’ attachment for?

It’s an optional attachment to be used, if appropriate, as the bibliography for publications cited in the case for support only.

Since I submitted my application I’ve received confirmation that I am going to have a paper published, can the panel be made aware of this?

Unfortunately not, the panel have to consider the application as it was submitted. The only additional information the applicant can provide is a response to the peer review comments if they progress to that stage of the competition.

Can I include letters of support with my proposal?

Any additional supporting documentation should be kept to a minimum. Only letters of support that confirm access to an organisation that’s essential for the successful completion of the research should be submitted with a proposal. For example, general letters of support confirming an interest rather than direct participation in a project should not be submitted.

I am setting up an Advisory Group as part of my project, can I submit letters of support from them?

No, you can include the names of your proposed Advisory Group in your case for support but do not include letters from them confirming their willingness to be on the group.

To whom should the letter of support being addressed?

This doesn’t need to be to a specific person, ESRC will do.

I'm finding it difficult to stick within the six page limit for the case for support - can I add additional information as an ‘other attachment’ type?

No. Proposals must adhere to the page limits confirmed in the specification. Where a proposal is submitted with a case for support that exceeds the six page limit it will be rejected and not be accepted for processing.

Where proposals are submitted with attachments (other than the case for support) that either exceed the page limits or are not permitted under the call guidance, these will be returned to the applicant to update or remove as appropriate.

Assessment process

How will my proposal be assessed?

Proposals will initially be assessed by a panel, comprising members of the ESRC Peer Review College in January 2016. Successful proposals will be peer reviewed and then assessed by a specially convened Commissioning Panel. Final decisions will be made in May 2016 with grants commencing 1 October 2016.
**Will I be informed if I've been shortlisted, if so, when?**

We will aim to inform candidates if they have been shortlisted or not by the end of January.

**Should I contact prospective reviewers in advance to obtain their permission, with a short explanation of the project idea?**

We strongly advise that agreement is sought from nominated reviewers before their details are submitted; however, once submitted we will contact reviewers to assist in the peer review of your proposal.

**Will I get the opportunity to respond to reviewers comments?**

Following the initial sift panel, shortlisted proposals will then be peer reviewed and these applicants will have the opportunity to respond to comments. We anticipate this will occur in March 2016 and you will be contacted when this is required.

**Why have weightings been assigned to different areas of the application?**

The aim of including weightings is both to assist reviewers and reviewers in how they view the application, but also to reinforce to applicants that the aim of this scheme is to fund more than just a research project. Applicants who are only interested in submitting a proposal for a research project should be directing their application to our research grants scheme.