

# **Peer Review Guidance 2020 Detailed Guide for Reviewers**

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## 1. Importance of Peer Review

Thank you for agreeing to complete a peer review process for Mesothelioma UK. Your expertise is necessary to help us invest our research funds in the highest quality research, to impact on the lives of people affected by mesothelioma.

We have two processes in place for how we review our grant applications. If a grant is below £27,000, we will internally, expert peer review our applications. We may seek external expert opinion if we require it.

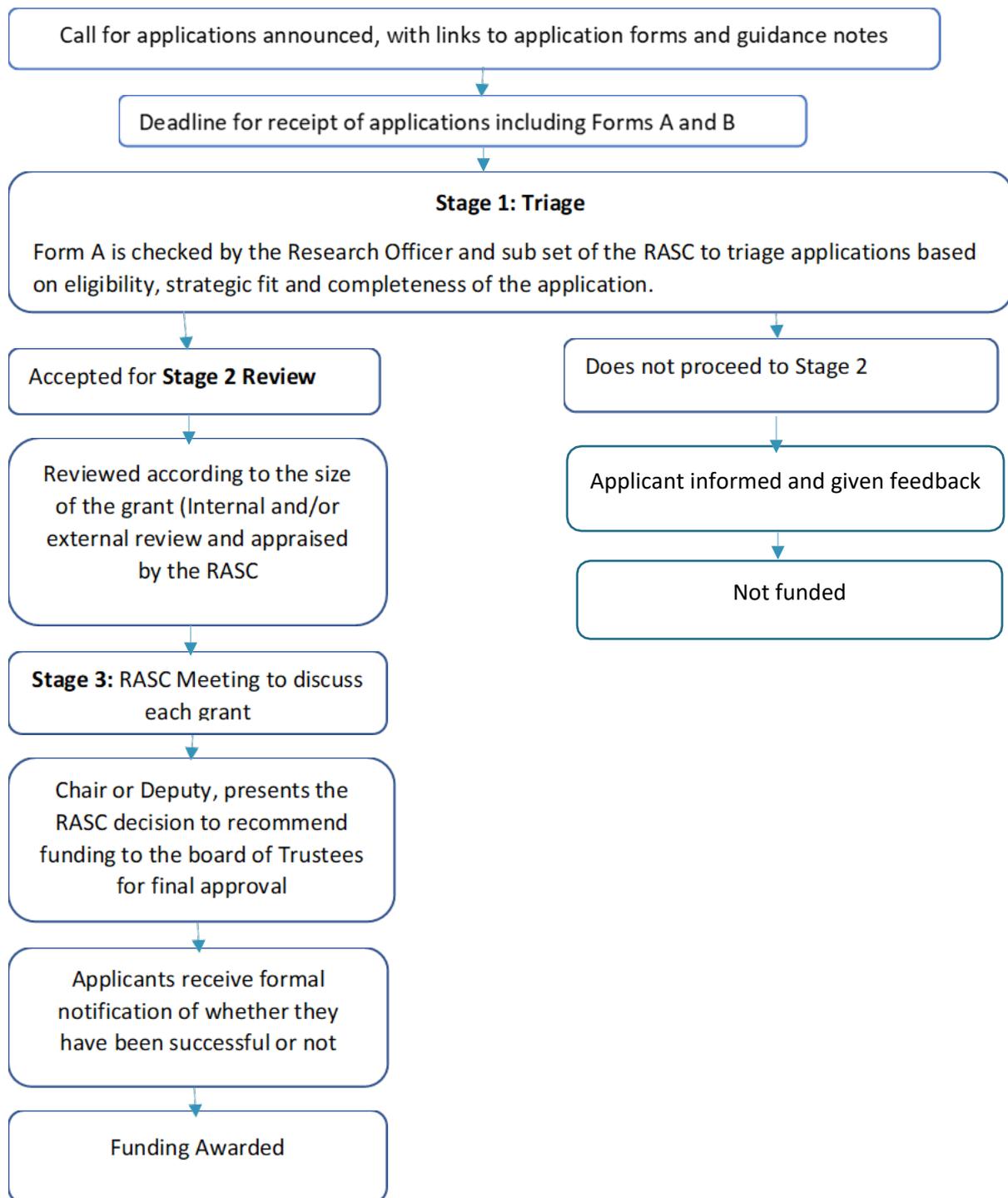
If grants are over £27,000, we will seek external expert advice and invite one or two reviewers to review an application. We will not ask you to review more than two applications as we know your time is precious. We will ask you to review based on the following criteria: the research

- fits within the remit of the grant
- the quality of the science, including a clear well thought out idea which is relevant and has some originality
- is relevant and important to patient, carer and families
- is achievable within the time remit and level of funding available
- is supported by a quality research team which may include interdisciplinary collaborations
- the potential impact of the research
- demonstrates value for money

If you agree to make public your comments, these may be shared with the applicant to help improve the scientific quality of applications in the future. Peer review private comments and scores will not be shared with the applicant. The Research and Audit Scientific Committee will draw on your comments and scores when making funding decisions in the Committee Meeting.

By accepting our invitation to review our research grant applications, you agree to abide by our reviewer code of conduct (Appendix I).

## 2. Funding Process



### 3. Conflicts of Interest

It is important that all reviewers are completely impartial at all stages of the review process.

Mesothelioma UK endeavours to identify conflicts of interest. We will not select reviewers if there is a clear conflict of interest. It is your responsibility to notify us if you feel there is a conflict of interest when we first contact you, as this may not be apparent to us. This conflict will be considered relevant if any of the following circumstances arise for any member of the research team, including the lead and co-applicants.

A conflict of interest occurs in the following circumstances:

- A reviewer is a friend, relative or colleague of the applicant.
- A reviewer is directly involved in the work that the researcher and their team hope to undertake and seek funding for. Additionally, you may have been asked to assist the applicant or member of the research team in the research design and production of the research application.
- The reviewer has collaborated with the applicant in the previous 5 years.
- The reviewer is employed in the same host institution or organisation as the applicant.
- A reviewer is a Supervisor or Examiner of a PhD student.
- A reviewer has also submitted a grant application in the same application round as the applicant.
- The reviewer has a commercial or financial interest and will directly or indirectly benefit from the research award.

Please complete the conflict of interest declaration form which will be sent to you when we first approach you with a protocol to be reviewed. If you have any concerns or questions, then please do contact us at [research@mesothelioma.uk.com](mailto:research@mesothelioma.uk.com)

Please can we alert you to the Code of Conduct in (Appendix I).

#### 4. Completing your Review

We will email you documents to enable you to complete your reviews. You will be asked to score the application out of 10 and provide supportive feedback. The documents will be password protected and you will be provided with a password to protect your documents.

#### Scoring

Further guidance about scoring is provided in Appendix II. Following that criteria, you are required to provide a score between 0-10 to grade your assessment of each grant application. Please be as honest and accurate as you can. Your score will be used to help the Research and Audit Scientific Committee at Mesothelioma UK, debate each grant application and make final recommendations to the board of Trustees.

|      |  |                      |
|------|--|----------------------|
| 10 - | Exceptional                                | Highly Fundable      |
| 9 -  | Excellent                                  |                      |
| 8 -  | High quality                               |                      |
| 7 -  | Good                                       |                      |
| 6 -  | Above Average                              | Potentially Fundable |
| 5 -  | Acceptable                                 |                      |
| 4 -  | Borderline Acceptable                      |                      |
| 3 -  | Below Acceptable                           | Not Fundable         |
| 2 -  | Many Identified Flaws                      |                      |
| 1 -  | Serious Scientific Weakness/Major Concerns |                      |
| 0 -  | Definitely not fundable                    |                      |

#### Reviewer Comments

At Mesothelioma UK, we aim to be transparent and will share reviewer comments with the applicants. Please consider this when writing your review. You might want to focus on strengths and weaknesses of the application.

When you review the grant application, please also consider the following:

**Relevance:** Is the research relevant to the needs of people with Mesothelioma? **Importance:** Does the research question(s) address an unmet need?

How original is the research proposal?

How likely is it to lead to a change in practice or new understanding?

#### Project Design and Methodology:

Are the aims and objectives clearly stated and realistic? Does the application fully address the research question?

Does the application fully outline the project design, methodology, analysis, ethics, dissemination, and Impact?

Is the project influenced by patient and public involvement in the design of the study? and will they continue to be involved during the duration of the project (this is probably more relevant in larger grant applications)

**Deliverable:** Does the research team have the relevant expertise to conduct the study?

Is the timescale of the project and budget reasonable within the desired time frame?

### Value for

**Money:** Are the requested costs and support adequately justified?

**Ethics:** Are there clear guidelines for how the safety of research participants will be met in this project, this may include consent procedures, and additional support if the patient were to become distressed during their participation in the study?

### Animal Research:

The charity does not expect to be supporting research which involves the involvement of animals, but should this change in due course, please consider whether:

- Animals are needed for the proposed research
- The potential benefit of the study findings justifies the adverse effects on animals
- The numbers of animals are appropriate
- The species of animal is justified

(Please see Appendix III for Mesothelioma UK policy on animal research)

**Duplication:** To the best of your knowledge, please consider whether this specific research is being conducted elsewhere.

**Lay Review:** We would particularly like you to review and score on the importance of the research project, the practicalities of doing the research, patient and public involvement in the planning of the research and whether the research is likely to make a positive difference or change.

### Additional Comments:

Please add additional comments if needed.

## 5. Contact Information

If you require any additional information or support in regard to your review, please contact us via email on [research@mesothelioma.uk.com](mailto:research@mesothelioma.uk.com)

## Appendix I – Code of Conduct

Mesothelioma UK aim to ensure that research proposals are assessed following a robust criterion. Research applications which progress to Stage 2, may be reviewed by experienced external reviewers and a Research and Audit Scientific Committee (RASC). The Board of Trustees recognises that external reviewers and members of the RASC volunteer to do so willingly and often in their own time.

External reviewers provide reviews which are considered advisory to the RASC.

If the RASC believe that an external reviewer has breached our Code of Conduct, they may be asked to step down as a reviewer, panel member or advisor.

### Code of Conduct

As a requirement of the review process at Mesothelioma UK, reviewers agree that documents and correspondence relating to grant applications are confidential and therefore:

- Should not be discussed with anyone during the review process and until such a time as the Board of Trustees approve the final grant award.
- No discussion will take place with members of the RASC directly, any concerns or queries can be directed to [research@mesothelioma.uk.com](mailto:research@mesothelioma.uk.com)
- All feedback and correspondence will only be communicated to grant applicants/teams by the Chair of the RASC only (or designated Research Officer). External reviewers and individual members of the RASC will not enter any discussion with grant applicants/teams.
- Any printed materials should be kept secure and disposed of securely after the grant decision has been made. Please attempt to lock any documents away securely until this time.
- If the reviewer has a conflict of interest (collaborative, personal, organisational, or other) this should be communicated to the Research Officer at the outset of this process.
- Grant applicants will receive anonymised feedback from the reviewers.
- Membership of the RASC will be publicly available, but the identity of external reviewers will be kept confidential.

## Appendix II – Scoring Criteria

| Criteria  | Rating                                       | Score |
|---|--|-------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very important research questions: likely to result in significant benefit for people affected by Mesothelioma, or advancement in the understanding of Mesothelioma</li> <li>• Very strong research team with relevant expertise and experience</li> <li>• Very good value for money</li> <li>• Clear and well written proposal</li> <li>• Strong patient and public involvement</li> <li>• Impact is potentially high or has a clear pathway to Impact</li> </ul>   | Exceptional                                  | 10    |
|   | Excellent                                    | 9     |
|   | High Quality                                 | 8     |
|   | Good   | 7     |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Important research questions, likely to be beneficial to people with Mesothelioma or in advancement in the understanding of Mesothelioma</li> <li>• Team has relevant expertise and experience</li> <li>• Acceptable value for money</li> <li>• Some elements of the proposal are unclear</li> <li>• Some patient and public involvement is evidenced but could have been stronger</li> <li>• Project may be fundable with some changes</li> <li>• Potential impact for this grant type with a reasonable pathway to impact</li> </ul> | Above average                                | 6     |
|   | Acceptable                                   | 5     |
|   | Borderline Acceptable                        | 4     |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Irrelevant research questions</li> <li>• Inexperienced research team with key expertise missing.</li> <li>• Poor value for money</li> <li>• Unclear application</li> <li>• Patient and Public Involvement is lacking</li> <li>• Little or no potential for impact or has an unrealistic pathway to impact</li> </ul>   | Below Acceptable                             | 3     |
|   | Many Identified Flaws                        | 2     |
|   | Serious Scientific Weakness / Major Concerns | 1     |
|   | Definitely not Fundable                      | 0     |

## Appendix III

### Mesothelioma Policy Position Statement on Animal Research

Mesothelioma UK is mostly concerned with enhancing patient experiences through research and do not expect to conduct research which involves the use of animals in research.

Mesothelioma UK, policy, and stance on animal use in research is in accordance with UK law and best practice standards set by the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC).

The Scientific Community should look for ways to reduce the use of animals in research. Alongside other charities, the government and pharmaceutical companies should support the 3R's:

- **Replace** the use of animals with alternative techniques or avoid the use of animals altogether.
- **Refine** the way experiments are carried out, to make sure animals suffer as little as possible and this includes better housing and improvements to procedures which minimise pain and suffering and/or improve animal welfare.
- **Reduce** the number of animals used to a minimum by seeking ways to find out information from fewer animals or more information from the same number of animals.<sup>1</sup>

We appreciate that no charity decides to support the use of animals in research lightly.

1. <https://www.amrc.org.uk/guidance-on-implementing-amrc-policies-on-animal-research>