



Peer Review Policy

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Author of the change (Initials)	What's changed	Approved by (Initials)	Approved date	Version
BC	Amendments made 6.1 – 10.1.2 Inserted policy statement on animal research			V1.1

This document sets out the Peer Review Policy for Mesothelioma UK.

1 Principles of Peer Review

- 1.1 The Peer Review Process (PRP) adheres to the Association of Medical Research Charities Five Principles of
- **Accountability** Transparent and openly accessible peer review processes
 - **Balance** the Committee has a balance of experience and expertise
 - **Independence** The research review committee is independent of the charity's administrative staff and trustees
 - **Rotation** Members of the Committee have a fixed term in office
 - **Impartiality** No one on the Committee is in receipt of charity research funding and has no conflict of interest

2 External Peer Review

- 2.1 The charity will seek to have a wide pool of External Peer Reviewers to call upon. Reviewers may come from different disciplines, including scientists and healthcare professionals. Reviewers should be experts in their field and come from an academic or healthcare institution and ideally, have published in their field of expertise.
- 2.1.1 Depending on the size of the grant award we may ask applicants to nominate an External Reviewer. There will be no commitment on behalf of the charity to use the nominated External Reviewer.
- 2.1.2 If External Reviewers are used, we will limit the number of applications we invite them to review in a 12-month period to two or three.
- 2.1.3 If External Reviewers are approached from overseas, they will not be expected to comment on the costs of the grant application as there may be wide variations in terms of what is acceptable.
- 2.1.4 The RASC will assist the Chair in approaching External Reviewers when appropriate to do so. Mesothelioma UK will work with the Chair to contact and approach External Reviewers.
- 2.1.5 Forms, including a scoring sheet and research application form will be sent via email to each External Reviewer. If the reviewer has a conflict of interest, they must declare this to the designated person and return all documentation.
- 2.1.6 The External Reviewers will be asked to return their completed reviews and forms to the charity.

- 2.1.7 External Reviewers will not be paid for their time, but we will thank them formally in a report or annual review to demonstrate their contribution.
- 2.1.8 A three week turn around period will be given for External Reviewers to comment on any research applications. If they find this difficult to achieve, due to other competing demands we will ask if they can recommend approaching a colleague with similar expertise.
- 2.1.9 We will encourage external reviewers to involve junior peers to get involved in the review process. Should a reviewer wish to ask a research fellow or similar to undertake the review, we will require the reviewer to sign off on the score before submitting.

3 Animal Research

- 3.1 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.
- 3.1.1 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.
- 3.1.2 We appreciate that no charity decides to support the use of animals in research lightly.

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

4 Scoring of Applications

- 4.1 A scoring system will be agreed upon by the RASC and will be used by all reviewers and a guidance sheet will be provided to ensure everyone is scoring applications based on a clear methodology.
- 4.1.1 Lay members will be asked to 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.
- 4.1.2 Academic reviewers will be asked to score on the originality of the research, scientific quality, expertise of the research team and access to the relevant infrastructure.
- 4.1.3 The process will be based on, whether the research application:
- 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

5 Conflict of Interests

- 5.1 All RASC members must sign a copy of the Conflict-of-Interest disclosure when they join the Committee and either re-sign or be reminded of the disclosure yearly, whilst active members.
- 5.1.1 If a RASC committee member has a conflict of interest with a research application, they must disclose this and must not be present in the discussion or scoring of an application. Conflict of interest must be ascertained by Mesothelioma UK when initial review processes commence.
- 5.1.2 Conflict of interest for external reviewers will follow the same Conflict of Interest Disclosure and be managed by seeking to find an alternative reviewer. In exceptional circumstances where it is not possible to find a reviewer without a conflict, RASC may increase the number of reviewers to ensure a balanced overall view.

6 Communicating the Outcome to Applicants and others

- 6.1 Applicants will be informed of the likely date when they will receive notification of the grant award when applying for the grant.

- 6.1.1 The RASC Committee meeting will be held shortly before the next Trustee Board meeting when the research can be signed off. A formal letter will be sent out to all applicants following this decision-making process. The RASC will not enter a formal discussion or provide detail of the decision-making process.
- 6.1.2 When awarding the Grant, the host institution must confirm that they agree to support this research and the research team and are willing to comply with our Grant Terms and Conditions (which will have been included with the grant application documents and available on the website). Additional signatures may be required at this stage and formal contracts agreed.
- 6.1.3 Constructive feedback will be shared with unsuccessful applications, to help them improve on future applications or understand why their research has not been funded on this occasion.
- 6.1.4 A summary of the RASC meeting and External Reviewer (if applicable) comments will be provided in a letter. The reviewers will not be identifiable in any correspondence with the applicant.
- 6.1.5 The RASC will determine with External Reviewers if they would like to be notified of the outcome of the review process. This may help cement good working relationships.
- 6.1.6 The outcome of research grants will be communicated via the research pages on Mesothelioma UK's research pages and updates provided in any charity communications/newsletters. Charity staff will also receive notifications of new studies along with a brief lay summary of the research.

7 Initial Assessment

- 7.1 A validity check, based on eligibility, strategic fit and completeness of the outline applications will be undertaken by Mesothelioma UK.
 - 7.1.1 All valid applications will be submitted to RASC for Stage 1 of the peer review process.

8 Stage 1 - Outline Application Assessed

- 8.1 All outline applications will be assessed by the RASC members as follows: -
 - A pdf of each outline application will be sent out to members who will review and score according to the stage 1 scoring matrix.
 - Scores will be sent into Mesothelioma UK and combined, and the applications will be ranked. Any application that scores 3 or below will not be put forward for discussion.

- RASC will then meet to discuss each application ranked from highest to lowest and will decide (based on the rankings) which applications they want to put through to Stage 2.
- Unsuccessful applicants will be advised, and successful applicants will be asked to submit a full application

9 Stage 2 – Full Application Assessed

- 9.1 Each full application received will be assigned to 3 reviewers as follows:
- Under £27,000: 1 lay reviewer, 1 clinical reviewer from RASC (lead reviewer) and either 1 further clinical reviewer from RASC or an external reviewer. Whether to include an external reviewer for grants under £27,000 is at the discretion of RASC.
 - Over £27,000: 1 lay reviewer, 1 clinical reviewer from RASC (lead reviewer) and 1 external reviewer.
- 9.1.1 If the number of applications exceeds the number of lay reviewers on RASC, then Mesothelioma UK will seek additional lay reviewers specifically for the purpose of reviewing the applications.
- 9.1.2 All reviewers will review and score, using the Stage 2 Scoring Matrix.
- 9.1.3 All review scores will be combined, and the grants ranked from highest to lowest. This will be circulated to RASC prior to the meeting.
- 9.1.4 Applications scoring 3 or below will not be discussed at the meeting and will not be included on the list of fundable projects.
- 9.1.5 Applications which are potentially fundable, i.e., those scoring 4-6, will be presented by the Lead Reviewer and discussed by RASC to decide whether to include them on the list of fundable projects. Mesothelioma UK will ensure that the lead reviewer has all comments relating to their allocated grant in advance of the meeting.
- 9.1.6 The applications, which will be put forward for funding to the Mesothelioma UK trustees, will be briefly presented by each Lead Reviewer, specifically to consider any modifications to funding or research design proposed by the reviewers.
- 9.1.7 A final list of fundable projects will be drawn up to be presented to the Mesothelioma UK Board of Trustees.

10 Stage 3 – Decisions

- 10.1 The Chair of the RASC, or Deputy, will attend the Trustee meeting to report on any recommendations or at least provide a written summary outlining their funding recommendations.

10.1.1 The Board of Trustees will make the final decision on whether funding will be awarded. The decision taken by the Board of Trustees is final.

10.1.2 Applications will not be redacted, to enable the RASC to assess the expertise of the researchers and the appropriateness and quality of the departmental and institutional environment

Appendix I Code of Conduct

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
- 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.
- 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.

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.

Appendix 2 Flow chart of Peer Review Process

