



International Common Application Process: Guidelines for applicants

In order to facilitate international collaborative research in the social sciences, a number of research funding agencies have agreed upon an explicit common set of submission guidelines, peer review criteria, and processing arrangements for international collaborative research proposals. Participating agencies include: the ESRC (United Kingdom), NWO (Netherlands), DFG (Germany), FWF (Austria) and IRCHSS (Ireland). This International Common Application Process (ICAP) applies to all research proposals submitted for bilateral joint funding between the ESRC and one of the other agencies. The ICAP does not currently allow for collaborative submissions including more than two countries, or which do not include the ESRC, but this may become possible in the near future.

In addition to ICAP, ESRC and some of the partner agencies listed above – i.e., NWO (Netherlands), FWF (Austria) and IRCHSS (Ireland) – have set up Lead Agency Agreements, which stipulate that joint applications are submitted only to one of the two partner agencies (the 'lead agency'). Applications are processed according to the normal procedures of the lead agency, with input into the peer review and assessment process provided by the partner agency. The decision of the lead agency, with input from the partner agency, will determine funding for both national elements of the joint research proposal. Each partner agency will fund their national element of the joint proposal. Both agencies reserve the right to amend the final costs awarded in accordance with their normal procedures.

Proposals may be submitted in any area of the social sciences within the remit of both agencies concerned. Applicants who are uncertain of whether their proposal would be eligible should contact both relevant agencies for clarification.

Guidelines for submission of an International Collaborative Project

Applicants from both countries should produce jointly a single collaborative research proposal document, of no more than **5,000 words** in length, which explains and justifies the research to be conducted. In most cases this document is to be submitted to both agencies from which funding is requested, in accordance with normal national submission guidelines. In cases where ESRC and the partner funding agency have agreed to follow a 'Lead Agency' procedure, only one application will be submitted to one of the two partner agencies. Please see below for more specific information for each participating country.

Proposed projects should have the same start and end dates in both countries.

The collaborative research proposal will be assessed on the following eight criteria, which should be explicitly addressed in the joint proposal document.

1. Theoretical and Methodological Context

The application must be well-founded on appropriate theory and methodology, and this underpinning should be clear in the introduction to the application.

2. Research Outcomes

The research should be capable of and designed to make a clear and significant contribution to new knowledge. Interdisciplinary proposals are welcomed, though it is acknowledged that significant innovative research may also be conducted within the framework of a single discipline. Proposals that may be considered high-risk, in terms of advancing highly innovative theories or methods that may be unproven, and/or exploiting new types of evidence, are welcome. Risky proposals should clearly justify the risk by highlighting the potential outcomes.

3. Research Design

The research design should be clear and capable of delivering the outcomes sought. The framework for collecting the research data and materials, the analytical framework of the research, and the reasons for proposing these should be clear and sound in the application. Proposed analytical methods should be reasonably fully set out.

4. Qualifications of the Applicants

The qualifications and competencies of the participating researchers to conduct the research should be clear. Relevant preliminary work and related previous publications should be of high quality.

5. Feasibility of the Research

The research should be clearly demonstrated as logistically feasible in terms of both reasonable access being assured to any necessary data, research materials and infrastructure, and the resource plan and funding request for these, including the staffing requirement proposed, being reasonable to meet them.

6. Outcomes and Impact

The potential outcomes and impact of the research should be clearly set out and appropriate, including planned publications. Where appropriate, the proposal should include clear plans for knowledge transfer and ongoing engagement with relevant policy and professional communities in the research area.

7. Value for Money

The research should be good value for money. The potential outcomes in new knowledge and contribution to policy and practice, as appropriate, should be clearly identifiable and well worth the necessary resources required to carry out the research.

8. Value of the Collaboration

The proposal should clearly explain why the proposed international collaboration is required in order to produce the research outputs. Mechanisms for communication and networking among collaborators should be clear and appropriate.

The Review Process

- Proposals submitted under the International Common Application Process are peer-reviewed by two or three independent reviewers. The identification and contacting of reviewers is conducted jointly by both agencies to which a bilateral project is submitted, except in cases where a 'Lead Agency' agreement is in operation (see specific country information below). All participating agencies request that reviewers assess proposals according to the criteria listed above, and a common review form and grading system is used.
- Once peer reviews are completed, proposals are submitted to the decision-making bodies of both agencies for the final funding decision. For a collaborative proposal to be funded, both agencies must agree to support the proposal. The first agency to reach a decision will provide a formal notification to the second agency, including a statement providing reasons for its decision. Thereby, the decision of one agency will be given appropriate weight in the decision-making process of the second agency.
- In cases where a 'Lead Agency' agreement is in operation, once peer reviews are completed, proposals are submitted to the decision-making body of the lead agency only (please see specific country information below).
- Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their proposal only after both agencies have reached a decision, or, in the case of 'Lead Agency' agreements, only after both agencies have verified a decision. The Principal Investigator from each country will be notified separately by their national agency, in accordance with the normal procedures of each agency. Both agencies reserve the right to amend the final costs awarded in accordance with their normal procedures.

COUNTRY-SPECIFIC GUIDANCE

Specific Guidance for submission to the ESRC

1. Proposals should be submitted via Je-S into the call for bilateral grants (small grants) or bilateral grants (research grants), depending on the level of funding requested. The title field of the proposal must begin with the words 'Bilateral (*name of country of partner project*):'. In completing the Je-S form, applicants should also consult the [Je-S guidance on submitting a bilateral proposal](#).
2. The 5,000 word proposal document described above should be included as the 'case for support' in the Je-S application. This 5,000 word limit supersedes the normal 6 page limit for a case for support. A word count should be included at the end of this document.
3. All other relevant sections of the Je-S application (Objectives, Summary, Beneficiaries, etc.) should also be completed in accordance with the normal guidelines for small or standard grants. These should not, however, contain significant information crucial to the scientific assessment of the proposal, which is not also contained in the 5,000 word proposal document. They may, however, provide further elaboration in the specific relevant areas.

4. In order to facilitate the identification of all members of the research team in different national application formats, the 5,000 word research proposal document should begin by listing the names, roles (Principal Investigator, Co-investigator, etc.), and institutions of all named researchers from both participating countries who are included in the proposal. This list of names is not included in the word count of the proposal document.
5. CVs of all named researchers in the proposal should be included, both UK and overseas. In all cases, these should not exceed the normal ESRC limit of 2 pages per CV.
6. The Justification of Resources should include a very brief (2 or 3 sentences) description of the costs requested from the partner agency by the overseas collaborators. A detailed justification of these costs is not required.

Specific guidance for submission to the NWO

The ESRC and NWO have adopted a Lead Agency agreement. For 2009, bilateral proposals should be submitted only to the ESRC. They will be processed according to normal ESRC procedures for standard grants with input into the peer review and assessment process provided by the NWO. The decision of the ESRC Research Grants Board, with input from the NWO, will determine funding for both the UK and Dutch components of the collaborative project, although both agencies reserve the right to amend the final costs awarded in accordance with their normal procedures.

In addition to the guidance above for submitting a proposal to the ESRC, applicants should be sure to include the following:

1. The Dutch applicants should complete NWO's 'Financial Details and Additional Requirements Form 2009', which should be included as an additional attachment in Je-S. (Please consult [Je-S guidance on submitting a bilateral proposal](#), paragraph 2.19.7 'Other Attachments'). The Dutch applicants will also need to submit this form only (not the entire application) to NWO through IRIS. The form may be downloaded from the [ESRC Society Today - ESRC-Netherlands bilateral](#) page on the ESRC Society Today website.

ESRC-NWO Collaborative Proposals- note on responses to referees

For the NWO, it is standard practice to allow applicants to provide a response to the comments of reviewers. In order to ensure a comparable assessment by the NWO and ESRC, an amended procedure will be applied to proposals submitted under this bilateral call. Principal investigators will be invited by the ESRC to respond to reviewers' comments only when the combined budget of the collaborative project equals or exceeds £ 500,000. In cases where a proposal is referee rejected, the comments will not be sent to the principal investigators for a response.

Specific guidance for submission to the DFG

Please follow the [DFG Research Grant Guidelines](#). Please make sure that the joint research proposal document replaces adequately section 2 to 3.2 of the DFG Proposal Format.

Specific guidance for submission to the IRCHSS

There will be no call for proposals in 2008-09 on this scheme.

Specific guidance for submission to the FWF

The ESRC and FWF have adopted a Lead Agency agreement. Beginning from 3rd November 2008, proposals may be submitted at any time to the ESRC via the Je-S system. They will be processed according to the normal ESRC procedures for standard or small grants, as appropriate, with input from the FWF into the peer review and assessment process. The decision of the ESRC Research Grants Board will determine funding for both the UK and Austrian components of the collaborative project, although both agencies reserve the right to amend the final costs awarded in accordance with their normal procedures.

In addition to the guidance above for submitting a proposal to the ESRC, applicants should ensure that the Austrian collaborators complete the following:

1. The FWF Application Form
2. the FWF International Cooperation Form
3. The FWF Equipment Form (if appropriate)

These forms should be completed and uploaded as additional attachments to the Je-S application. They may be downloaded from the FWF website (link to <http://www.fwf.ac.at/de/applications/einzelprojekte.html>).