

International Science Partnerships Fund

Role of the Reviewer

June 2024

1. Role of the Reviewer

Each Reviewer will be sent up to 10 applications. The British Council will have removed any ineligible applications before allocating them to reviewers.

Reviewers are asked to review and score each application they have been allocated, against the published criteria.

For each application, Reviewers are asked to:

- Carefully read each application assigned to them including any supporting documents, being mindful of their biases.
- Score the application against each criterion.
- Add comments to explain their scores. **These comments will be used by the panel to help rank applications. Reviews must provide adequate comments (at least 2-3 sentences) to provide confidence in the score given.**
- Indicate strong and weak areas for each application.
- Review the budget section of the applications, considering whether the budget is good value for money and requested costs are justified. (Information about the derivation or justification of Indirect and Estates costs will not be required.) The British Council team will have done a full budget check for eligibility of all items.

Each Reviewer gives the application a score of up to 60 points for proposal quality, and separately assesses the relevance to gender equality and ODA-eligibility (where applicable). As part of the ODA requirements projects must show the relevance of the proposed research to the economic development and social welfare of low- and middle-income countries¹, benefitting low income and/or vulnerable populations in these countries. For gender equality, applicants are asked to demonstrate that they have considered gender in the context of the proposal and any intended impact and identified appropriate mitigations against inequality where appropriate.

Reviewers are asked to use the full range of scores so that there is clear differentiation between proposals. If there is serious doubt about the capacity of the applicants to deliver the proposed project, or serious doubt that the project would achieve its stated outcomes, Reviewers should indicate this by scoring the application below 30 (should not be funded) .If Reviewers have any questions about the assessment, they should contact the ISPF Research Collaborations team UK-ISPF@britishcouncil.org.

Reviewers are reminded that they are acting as an individual, independent reviewer, not a representative of their organisation. Scores should therefore reflect their personal expert views against the criteria laid down in the guidance for applicants.

Reviewers should not search for named applicants on LinkedIn, other social media platforms or follow any links provided within the applications as you may identify yourself as a reviewer.

2. Main points to note while reviewing

2.1. Conflicts of interest

It is the Reviewer's responsibility to inform the British Council of any conflicting interests they have. Please inform the British Council immediately if you believe you may have a conflict of interest, so that alternative arrangements can be made.

Reviewers must not review applications for calls to which they have themselves applied. They may review applications to other calls running concurrently, for example if a researcher has applied for an Amazonia +10 Workshops grant, they may review applications for other ISPF grants.

Reviewers must not review applications where they have a personal interest. A conflict of interest might arise, for example, if a reviewer has, or has in the past 3 years had, a close working relationship or personal connections with any individual(s) in the academic department(s) or organisation from which an application originates. Such interests may be direct or indirect and may relate to immediate family members, close friends, or any other persons living in the same household as the reviewer. The test is whether a member of the public, knowing the facts of the situation, might reasonably think the assessment could be influenced by the possibility of private or commercial gain.

Reviewers should not review applications from their current home institution, any institution where they are a visiting professor, or any applications submitted by people they published with or collaborated on a grant with in the last three years.

Please contact UK-ISPF@britishcouncil.org if you feel that you need further advice about this matter.

2.2. Confidentiality

Sensitive data such as names and contact details of the applicants will be shared with Reviewers. Reviewers must not disclose to outsiders any information concerning application documents or evaluations, nor should they use this confidential information to their own benefit or anyone else's benefit or disadvantage. In addition, Reviewers must not reveal to outsiders that they are assessing the proposals of researchers. If you are contacted by anyone who has questions about the application documents or evaluation statements, please refer them to the British Council.

Please contact UK-ISPF@britishcouncil.org if you have any questions regarding confidentiality.

Once the review has been completed, you are required to destroy all application documents and any copies made of them. Confidentiality must also be maintained after the assessment process has been completed.

2.3. ODA requirements

ISPF activities in countries and territories on the OECD's list of DAC ¹recipients¹ must be eligible for Official Development Assistance (ODA). These rules do not apply to ISPF activities in Japan.

For the ISPF Research Collaborations, we define activities leading to impact with development relevance as activities that have the potential to contribute to the economic development and

¹ <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/DAC-List-of-ODA-Recipients-for-reporting-2024-25-flows.pdf>

social welfare of low and middle-income countries, benefitting low income and/or vulnerable populations in these countries. To be considered for funding under the ISPF Research Collaborations all proposals must clearly articulate a plausible route to this positive impact within a short to medium term timeframe (within 10 years). **Applications which do not meet this criterion cannot receive support under the UK ISPF Research Collaborations even if they are based in an ODA-eligible country.**

In some disciplines, development relevance can be longer term and less direct than in other areas. In all cases, it is the responsibility of the applicant to articulate within the application how the proposed activities will meet these criteria.

Reviewers must assess relevance to ODA objectives based on the understanding shown in the route to impact articulated throughout each proposal. Reviewers are asked not to make assumptions of development relevance solely based on the research topic, the list of country priorities or prior knowledge.

2.4. Gender Equality

Research projects funded through the ISPF Research Collaborations Programme must demonstrate that they have taken into consideration the impact of the research project on people of different genders. At a minimum standard, projects should demonstrate that gender is considered in the research project's rationale, project design and methodology. Data is disaggregated by gender, and gender is also considered in the composition of the research team.

As the social contexts surrounding research proposals are key to ensuring robust outcomes and clear routes to positive development impact- Reviewers should consider the strength of the Gender Equality Statement into consideration when scoring the proposal. The intention is not that every proposal should primarily aim to address gender inequality, but that all applicants consider gender in the context of their proposal and intended impacts and have identified appropriate mitigations where appropriate.

3. Equal Opportunities

The British Council is committed to equal opportunities and diversity in all our activities. This includes avoidance of bias due to gender, disability, racial or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, or religious belief in the assessment of all applications. **Reviewers should challenge themselves when reading applications to ensure that there is a clear rationale for their decisions.** Reviewers are asked to contact the British Council if they require extra support to enable them to review applications.
