Welcome by the editor

Welcome to the Spring 2018 edition of the College Newsletter. 2017 saw the implementation of several new schemes and initiatives such as the New Investigator Award scheme which was officially launched replacing the long term First Grant Scheme. The new scheme should allow more flexibility and better support for newer academics.

EPSRC has been active with 3 Grand Challenge Research Fund (GCRF) and Official Development Assistance (ODA) calls. More details of these can be found further on in the newsletter.

Several changes have been made to the Repeatedly Unsuccessful Applicants policy to ensure that it is still the right way to manage demand in the current funding landscape.

Our unconscious bias training has been rolled out to staff involved with convening panels. Key areas of the training has been to enable convenors to recognise bias in processes and conversations and to empower them to challenge this.

EPSRC needs your help

EPSRC are currently running two major calls; the 2018 Centres for Doctoral Training (CDT) and the Innovation Fellowship call. These calls take a large amount of resource at every stage of the process. This will mean a higher than usual amount of review requests to our College Members. We expect the highest impact of the Innovation Fellowships to be February and March and for the CDT call to be over the summer from July to September.

To help EPSRC colleagues, should you be unable to complete a review, we ask that you inform us as soon as possible so that we can seek an alternative reviewer. At the point of declining you have the option to suggest an alternative reviewer. We would greatly appreciate it if you could recommend another person that we can approach. Due to the high number of organisations that submit proposals we will have an increased issue with conflicts so we would particularly appreciate recommendations for reviewers who are internationally based or are from industry.

Thank you in advance for your support at this very busy time.
How do we connect our Peer Reviewers to our proposals?

Our main process is through a match of research topics. These are picked out of the proposal and then matched to our Peer Reviewers to decide who to ask to review the proposal.

We still have more than 15% of our College Members (over 25% of the Associate College) who have no Research Topics in their Je-S accounts. Although you may be receiving requests to review this could be based on longer term knowledge within the theme. When people move on this knowledge is lost and you ‘disappear’ from the reviewing list.

You don’t need to add loads of topics - too many can be as difficult to match as too few!

You can log into Je-S here: https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/JeS2WebLoginSite/Login.aspx
Please complete the Research Expertise pages - classification and expertise.

Reviewing proposals for a managed call

EPSRC has limited information on its reviewer forms and these need to be completed with close reference to scheme guidance and/or the call document. Please could I ask anyone completing a review for a managed call to refer to the call document and particularly the reviewer guidance section. This will ensure that all reviews are consistent and fair to the applicant who will use this guidance at the time of applying.

Repeatedly Unsuccessful Applicants (RUA) Policy Changes

EPSRC’s Repeatedly Unsuccessful Applicants (RUA) policy helps alleviate pressure on all involved in EPSRC’s Peer Review process. We recently looked at the policy and have undertaken some changes, these include:

1. Removal of Consecutive Constrained Periods
2. Successful outlines will be considered as first Stage Peer Review.
3. Constrained applicants who had a successful outline prior to the restricted period commencing would be able to submit the full proposal without it counting as their ‘one submission’.

All changes took effect from 1st February 2018.

We have updated the RUA area on the EPSRC website which includes a short video that summarises the key features of the policy.

For further information please contact epsrcpeerreviewpolicy@epsrc.ac.uk
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion update

As part of the Research Councils UK Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan that was launched in 2016, the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) established a new Mixed Gender Peer Review Policy.

The policy set out objectives to achieve mixed gender membership for all EPSRC prioritisation and interview panels, and at least 30 per cent membership by female panel members for all panels by April 2017.

Since then we are pleased to report that female panel membership has increased from 17 per cent in 2012/13 to 30 per cent in 2016/17 and have as a by-product of this policy seen a significant increase in the number of female panel chairs over the last five years.

We continue to work hard to achieve mixed gender panels, with less than six per cent of panels being single gender in 2016/17. This figure has been affected by factors such as unexpected panel member illness and attempts to find appropriate female panel members being unsuccessful.

We would like to thank all our panel members who have helped us to achieve this objective, particularly those that have helped on short notice and those who have particularly high pressures on their time.

Furthering equality, diversity and inclusion is a priority for EPSRC, fellow Research Councils and UK Research and Innovation, and the UK’s Research Councils will continue to work alongside organisations and researchers across the sector to make further progress across all areas of equality, diversity and inclusion.

New Investigator Award

2017 saw the launch of a new EPSRC scheme to support individuals who have recently acquired their first academic lectureship position, have not previously led an academic research group or been the recipient of a significant grant (usually defined as those which included PDRA time, capital equipment or were in excess of £100,000 (FEC)).

More information about the scheme can be found here: https://www.epsrc.ac.uk/funding/applicationprocess/routes/newac/new-investigator-award/
Have you heard of ORBIT – the Observatory for Responsible Research and Innovation in ICT?

ORBIT is an EPSRC-funded organisation that aims to promote Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) across ICT research communities. RRI is an approach that seeks to promote creativity and opportunities for science and innovation that are socially desirable and undertaken in the public interest.

The service provides training to research groups. ORBIT can also provide bespoke support for designing research proposals to help scientists engage with RRI at the genesis of a programme.

A well-attended launch event was held in January in the Palace of Westminster. Talks from speakers including Baroness Kidron OBE and Professor Tom Rodden were followed by a fascinating question and answer session. Topics ranged from the structure of regulation in the tech sector to the responsibility of scientists to contribute solutions to global grand challenges such as world hunger and climate change.

For more information, please see the ORBIT website at: https://www.orbit-rrri.org/

Konfer

UKRI Chief Executive Sir Mark Walport officially launched the beta release of Konfer. Created by the National Centre for Universities and Business (NCUB) with the Research Councils (RCUK) and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) konfer will make it easier to find collaboration opportunities and partners.

Sir Mark Walport said: “Konfer is a unique innovation tool opening up research, researchers and services in UK universities to businesses and other organisations looking for new ideas and collaborations. It will be helpful in translating the brilliant research within our universities into jobs, growth and innovation to support the economy.”

For businesses, charities and individuals Konfer opens the treasury of research, researchers and services in UK universities and research institutions. For academics, it is a way to search for impact and funding partners, or just to share knowledge.

Konfer gives direct access to:

- 119,000+ academics
- 15,000+ facility and equipment listings
- 1.5m web pages
- 62,000+ YouTube videos from university channels
- 200,000+ news, funding and events opportunities from curated feeds
- 50,000+ publicly funded research projects

For more information: http://konfer.online

Promotions to Full College Membership

Congratulations to those members who have moved from the Associate to Full College.

119 members have been promoted to the Full College.
Notes from the Editor

During 2017 EPSRC processed over 3,000 proposals within many different schemes and calls. Thanks to all who contributed during the year. This could not have been achieved without a huge effort from our College members. Some members have been personally thanked by the EPSRC CEO, Philip Nelson for their significant contribution during the last academic year.

We always welcome feedback on our Newsletters and suggestions for future content.

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Please email us at College@epsrc.ac.uk

Further Information

Details about EPSRC and the peer review process may be found at http://www.epsrc.ac.uk. EPSRC’s current support may be found through the easily searchable “Grants on the Web” facility at http://gow.epsrc.ac.uk