Welcome by the editor

Hello, and welcome to the latest edition of the EPSRC College Newsletter. There are two main strands to this issue. The first highlights some aspects of peer review where we are asking that you provide some more specific advice when acting as a reviewer or panel member. The second provides some further information on the revised arrangements being developed to more effectively manage operation of the College. Finally, congratulations to our members who have recently been elected to Fellowship of the Royal Society and also welcome to our newest College members, receiving this newsletter for the first time.

Pathways to Impact

Research Councils UK (RCUK) has recently undertaken, in consultation with representatives from the academic and user communities, a review of its policy concerning Pathways to Impact. This has reaffirmed the RCUK commitment to Pathways to Impact, although the primary criterion for all Research Councils remains research excellence. RCUK introduced Pathways to Impact to encourage applicants to think about what can be done to ensure their research makes a difference. Through Pathways to Impact we want to encourage applicants to explore, from the outset and throughout the life of their project and beyond, who could potentially benefit from their research and what they can do to help make this happen. Fuller guidance on this RCUK policy can be found at http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/innovation/impacts/.

Following this review RCUK has strengthened the way Pathways to Impact should be treated within the peer review process. A clearly thought through and acceptable Pathways to Impact is an essential component of a research proposal and a condition of funding. In consequence from 1 April 2015 grants will not be allowed to start until a clearly thought through and acceptable Pathways to Impact statement is received.

A clearly thought through and acceptable Pathways to Impact statement should:

- be project-specific and not generalised;
- be flexible and focus on potential outcomes;

Researchers should be encouraged to:

- identify and actively engage relevant users of research and stakeholders at appropriate stages;
- articulate a clear understanding of the context and needs of users and consider ways for the proposed research to meet these needs or impact upon understandings of these needs;
- outline the planning and management of associated activities including timing, personnel, skills, budget, deliverables and feasibility;
- include evidence of any existing engagement with relevant end users.
Guidance to applicants has been updated to make this new requirement clear. Panels will in future be required to explicitly indicate for each proposal whether or not the Pathway to Impact statement is acceptable. To help with this, when you review proposals in future we would ask that in addition to the normal assessment of its strengths and weaknesses you also offer a specific view on the acceptability of the Pathway to Impact statement. Clearly a deficient Pathway to Impact should reflect in the overall assessment of the proposal. However we recognise that a proposal that is in all other ways very strong could still rank very highly – to a level that would otherwise lead to the award of a grant. In such circumstances we would alert the applicant to the situation and invite the submission of an improved Pathway to Impact statement. Successful submission would lead to the grant being announced, but failure to do this would cause the proposal to be rejected.

Return for Amendments

In the last issue of the newsletter we explained that currently one in three proposals received has to be returned to the issuing organisation to correct errors or omissions in the paperwork under a process we call Return for Amendment. Different schemes require different documents to be attached and each different document type has specific requirements in terms of content and format. It is important that the applicant gets the paperwork right to ensure that you have all the paperwork that you need when we ask you to review a proposal, but that unnecessary information is not included, managing the amount of paperwork you have to process as a reviewer. Only once the paperwork is deemed acceptable do EPSRC staff check for adherence to EPSRC policy such as Repeatedly Unsuccessful applications and Resubmission before accepting the proposal to be within EPSRC’s remit and sending out to peer review.

Importantly however, EPSRC only checks that the correct documents are provided and does not check their content. Clearly it is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure the quality and completeness of the information provided. It is therefore important that when you comment on a proposal as a reviewer that you highlight if any information is missing or inadequate; for example, if costs are not justified in the Justification of Resources, a Pathways to Impact is unacceptable or the Project Partner Letter of Support needs strengthening. The PI will then have the opportunity to address this in the PI Response and it will be easier for the Panel to take proper account of such issues when prioritising proposals.

Peer Review Responsibilities Update

We’ve made some changes to the division of responsibilities for peer review support between UK SBS and all Research Councils in order to reflect further the importance of peer review to the Councils.

From an external perspective, the processes, timelines etc will not change but from 1 April contact points for the peer review process [reviewers, meetings, panels, colleges and decisions] will be within the individual Councils rather than UK SBS. For Je-S related issues with peer review, the Je-S Helpdesk will remain the first line of contact.

Contact details from 1 April for EPSRC can be found on our website: EPSRC www.epsrc.ac.uk/about/contactus/
Specifically funding and grant holder enquiries:

**Je-S Helpdesk**  
For all queries about electronic submission:  
- Telephone: 01793 444164  
- Email: Je-SHelp@rcuk.ac.uk

**EPSRC Pre-Award queries**  
For all queries and questions regarding both the processing of new proposals and submitted grants in peer review:  
- Email: grants@epsrc.ac.uk

**Post-Award queries**  
For all queries and questions regarding grants which are currently running:  
- Telephone: 01793 867019 for all Research Councils  
- Email: GrantsPostAward@UKSBS.co.uk

**Studentships queries**  
- Email: EPSRCstudentshipqueries@epsrc.ac.uk

Automated peer review emails will be sent from grants@rcuk.ac.uk and further correspondence from Grants@epsrc.ac.uk. It would be appreciated if measures could be put in place to prevent messages from this address being spammed at your organisation.

**College Working Group**

In 2013, the Review of Peer Review commented that:

"**EPSRC should consider the status of the College. The panel cannot see justification for its existence when so many reviewers are not chosen from the College.**"

From the Council Sub-Group, the following action was agreed:

"**College Working Group: EPSRC will establish a working group to address the issues identified with the current College model including the nomination process, performance and use of College members and diversity of membership.**"

EPSRC has been working hard to address the recommendations of the 2013 independent Review of Peer Review. With particular reference to the College, EPSRC has been looking into:

- The composition of the College in terms of diversity of gender, career stage, expertise and background.
- Recruitment to the College nomination process, provision of expertise and training.
- Enhancing engagement of EPSRC with College members.
- Recognition of College member's efforts by EPSRC.
In response to this, EPSRC set up a College Working Group to review the College and whether it was ‘Fit for Purpose’. The working group put forward initial recommendations to the EPSRC Executive Leadership Team and they agreed the working group should explore the following:

- A College with an Associate Members status
- A Fixed-Term membership which can be renewed every delivery plan period (5 years)
- EPSRC to prioritise the type of nominations they are seeking (with considerations to research representation, multi-disciplinarily, industrial representation, career stage, location, ethnicity, gender etc).
- EPSRC to provide more mechanisms to recognise top performing College members.

The working group subsequently sent a survey to all College members to seek their views and identify how we could deliver some of these changes. The results showed the following:

- The majority of responders have been on the College for over 5 years.
- Of those who responded, they were mainly UK based and within academia.
- The majority felt that their profile in Je-S reflected their current research interests and expertise. Of those who did not, a large proportion felt they did not understand its importance. From this, EPSRC are to engage further with college members to explain the importance of ‘Research Topics’ and ‘Expertise’ on their research profile in Je-S.
- There was a clear agreement that EPSRC should adopt the following:
  - A fixed term membership which gives members the option to opt out or renew (subject to satisfactory performance) on a regular basis;
  - Training for new members with tailored updates for those renewing membership.

The following shows additional information gathered from the survey:
From June 2015, EPSRC will begin to implement some initial changes:

- An Associate Members status. Prior to being made full College members nominees will need to have fulfilled certain criteria such as having completed usable reviews that have been validated by panel; completing College training; and providing EPSRC with relevant areas of expertise.

- Short term growth of the College will be targeted to ensure EPSRC’s capability, capacity and diversity requirements are met.

- EPSRC will recognise top performing College members and take action to address under performance.

- The standards of service for College members will be amended from a maximum of 12 requests in a 12 month period to 8 requests for UK academics and 4 for international and user members.

- We will look to develop ways of enhancing engagement between College Members and EPSRCs Portfolio Managers.

- From 2016 EPSRC will move towards a fixed-term membership which can be renewed on a regular basis subject to satisfactory performance. Renewing members will be expected to have fulfilled the same requirements as new College members coming through the Associate Members route in terms of usable reviews, providing expertise and training.

- Review training provision for Associate members and renewing members.
Further work is being undertaken by the working group to understand how to increase College member usage; review the current and future needs of EPSRC with respect to the College; and improve the College diversity e.g. Industrial Representation, Gender, Ethnicity, Multi-disciplinarily, Career Stage etc. Together with this, an internal campaign has begun to increase the knowledge of the College across EPSRC e.g. via new tools.

EPSRC have started its push to increase our engagement with College Members (typically via our Portfolio Managers and Business Relation Managers) and the routes to the Associate Members College (with further details) will be published Summer 2015 on the EPSRC website.

**Introducer scores**

We would like to remind College members who attend panel meetings of the importance of fully completing the introducers form, including the section that relates to the quality of the reviewers. The introducers’ role is a vital part of the assessment process and the introducers form is part of the audit trail of the grant, all of which is one of the ways that EPSRC ensures transparency of its processes. At the end of the meeting it is part of the introducers’ role to ensure that EPSRC has a copy [electronically or otherwise] of all your introducer forms.

**Unavailability**

EPSRC value the continued contribution of its College members to making a success of its peer review process.

To ensure it carries on in this way, we would like to remind Je-S account holders to update their availability within their accounts on a regular basis.

Please see the Je-S helptext page for further guidance: [https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/Handbook/pages/UpdatingAccountPersonalandExpe/Unavailability.htm](https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/Handbook/pages/UpdatingAccountPersonalandExpe/Unavailability.htm)
Membership Matters

Congratulations
EPSRC extends its warmest congratulations to our College members who have recently been elected to Fellowship of the Royal Society.


Professor Ali Alavi  University of Cambridge
Professor Andrew Cooper  University of Liverpool
Professor Alison Etheridge  University of Oxford
Professor Zoubin Ghahramani  University of Cambridge
Professor David Phillips   Imperial College
Professor John Rarity  University of Bristol
Professor John Robertson University of Cambridge

Keeping in Touch
We include a list of College members we have lost contact with in the ‘Gone Away’ section of the newsletter. This may be for a variety of reasons, so to avoid this we would remind you:

· If your circumstances change please update your record, particularly your contact details on Je-S
· If you no longer wish to remain a College member then please let us know, at college@epsrc.ac.uk so we don’t continue to send you reviews you may not wish to consider.
· If you move organisations please do not create a new record on Je-S, but update your existing one. A new record will not include your College membership and reviewing history.
· Some people are shown as ‘Gone Away’, even when they clearly haven’t moved. This is usually due to problems with e-mail delivery, where our attempts to contact you fail, often by being blocked by your organisation’s firewall. As College members you can try to prevent this by identifying EPSRC as a recognised safe organisation, and also doing the same for the UK SBS who now issue many e-mails on our behalf.

Gone Away
If you are still in contact with anyone listed below please could you ask them to check that their contact details on Je-S are correct and up to date. If they believe their details are correct so that we should be able to contact them, or if they no longer wish to remain a College member, they should contact us at college@epsrc.ac.uk

Dr Frank Ball  Bournemouth University
Professor Christos Grecos University of the West of Scotland
Dr Jim Grundy  Apple
Professor Andrew Hamnett  University of Strathclyde
Professor Ron Hughes University of Salford
Professor Paul Lewis University of Southampton
Professor Wolfram Meier-Augenstein  The James Hatton Institute
Professor Ronald Pethig University of Edinburgh
Professor David Stephenson Cranfield University
Dr Sonia Waharte University of Bedfordshire
Professor Wenbin Wang University of Salford
Professor David Wimpenny  De Montford University
New Starters
We wish to welcome the following new members to the College:

Dr Andrew Crabtree University of Nottingham
Dr Pietro Oliveto University of Sheffield
Dr Alberto Pirrera University of Bristol
Dr Ashkay Rao University of Cambridge
Dr Alison Turnbull University of Nottingham
Dr Jon Willmott University of Sheffield

Stepping down
The following long-standing members have chosen to stand down from the College:

Dr A Tsvelik Brookhaven National Laboratory
Professor Ian Wilson AstraZeneca plc
Professor Ian Broyd Halcrow Group plc
Dr Aleksey Kolmgorov University of Oxford
Dr Oliver Grau BBC
Dr Iain James Cranfield University
Professor Michael Gordon University of Cambridge
Professor John Rawnsley University of Warwick
Professor Victor Hanby De Montfort University
Professor Joel Ouaknine University of Oxford
Professor Thomas Ward Durham University
Professor Lionel Tarassenko University of Oxford
Lord Julian Hunt of Chesterton University College London
Professor Richard De La Rue University of Glasgow
Professor Eric Sampson Department of Transport
Professor Fabio Panzieri University of Bologna
Mr Roger Critchley Alstom Grid Ltd
Dr John McCarthy University College Cork
Professor Peter Blood Cardiff University
Professor Andrea Winter Autonomous University of Barcelona
Dr Nic Ward Montana State University
Professor Peter Houston University of Sheffield
Professor David Cole-Hamilton University of St Andrews
Ms Judith Torrington University of Sheffield
Professor Christopher Mellish University of Aberdeen
Professor Erwin Bolthausen University of Zurich
Professor Paul Worsfold University of Plymouth
Mr Richard Hicks QinetiQ Ltd
Professor George Irwin Queen’s University Belfast
Dr Mike Rodd Private address
Professor Joseph Sventek University of Glasgow
Dr Barry Maunders Private Address
Professor Mark Weller University of Bath
Mr Edward Lambourne Delcam International plc
Professor David Bacon University of Liverpool
Professor John McDermid University of York
Professor Alan Greenaway Heriot-Watt University
Professor John Eilbeck Heriot-Watt University
Professor Malcolm Cresser University of York
Professor Constantine Stephanidis FORTH
Professor Adrian Saul University of Sheffield

We wish to record our grateful thanks for the important contribution they have made as members of the College and wish them well for the future.
Editor's End-Piece

We continue to operate in a world of change and challenge, and we will try to continue to keep you informed of how this impinges on our peer review activity. We always try to include articles which you will find interesting and useful as College members. As ever, your suggestions for the content of the newsletter are welcome, so please do not hesitate to contact us (by e-mail to college@epsrc.ac.uk) with your suggestions and we will see if we can include them in a future newsletter.

Editor: Paul Tomsen: 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