University of Dundee

Procedure for Managing the Internal Selection of Applications for Major External Calls for Research or Knowledge Exchange Funding

Introduction

Some funders and individual funding schemes place a limit on the number of proposals that may be submitted by each institution and/or require a significant institutional commitment to the funding of proposals. The University, under the auspices of the University Research and Knowledge Committee, actively manages the submission of such proposals to ensure that the University does not exceed the limit on the number of bids that can be submitted and that any bids submitted are of the highest quality and consistent with the University’s research strategy. The following types of bid typically fall into this category:

- Major bids to external funders where institutions are limited to a very small (often one) number of applications;
- Major bids to external funders where the University has offered support through match-funding to encourage applications to a particular scheme.

Such applications require demonstrable institutional support; this may be through commitment of financial or other resources and will often require an institutional statement, usually from the Vice-Principal for Research, to be submitted with the application. All major bids that require a matched contribution will be reported to the University Executive Group (UEG) by the Vice-Principal for Research to ensure that there is strategic and fiscal oversight over the direction of research development and its sustainability.

Unless there is a compelling strategic reason for submitting a bid from one area of the University only (e.g. a funder has specifically indicated that such a submission would be viewed favourably), a University-wide (within the disciplinary areas eligible for the scheme) internal selection process will be used to identify the application(s) that will be submitted on behalf of the University. This process is summarised below.

Process

The internal process and timetable for each managed bid will be agreed by the Vice-Principal for Research in consultation with the Head of Research Business Development and will be reviewed, where possible, by the University Research and Knowledge Committee. The exact process will depend on the nature of the opportunity and the time frame within which the selection of the bid(s) to be submitted by the University must be made in order to allow sufficient time in advance of the funder’s deadline for the selected bid(s) to be developed and approved.

Generally, a single internal call for Expressions of Interest or outline applications will be made, requiring applicants to justify their application on the basis of the criteria that will be used by the funding body and any internal strategic considerations. Each call will make clear the basis on which the decision will be made. This will include:

- A clear indication of the decision-making process;
- The criteria of the funding body/scheme against which bids will be judged (fit to the call);
- Any additional internal criteria (e.g. interdisciplinarity; cross-School collaboration; fit with institutional research strategy/strategic priorities).
A review group, drawn from the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee, with additional expertise where relevant, and led by the Vice-Principal for Research, will assess the bids against the stated criteria; this evaluation will be coordinated by the Secretary to Research Committee and, in most cases, will initially be undertaken by e-mail. In the event that the majority of the review group clearly score one application higher than the others that application will be allowed to go forward (the same principle will apply where more than one bid is allowed per institution). In the event that several applications stand out from the rest, with no clear consensus on which should be submitted, the applicants who submitted these bids will be invited to either: 1) prepare a more detailed case for support for consideration by the review group; or 2) if time permits, present their case to a meeting of the review group.

Should the review group not reach consensus, the bid(s) selected will be decided by majority. Should it not be possible to reach a majority decision the casting vote will rest with the Vice-Principal for Research; in such cases the Vice-Principal for Research will discuss the matter with the Principal and UEG before reaching a final decision, to ensure that the University’s strategic priorities and the fiscal implications of proposals are considered.

Once the evaluation process is complete, the Head of Research Business Development will provide feedback on bids to both successful and unsuccessful applicants.

**Appointment of Review Group**

The composition of the review group for a particular call will be determined by the Vice-Principal for Research, in liaison with the Head of Research Business Development and the Research Policy Manager, after the deadline for receipt of Expressions of Interest or outline applications has passed. If the requirement to appoint a review group coincides with a meeting of the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee the composition of the review group will also be discussed at that meeting. The review group will include experienced researchers from a range of backgrounds, including members of the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee, who are not directly involved in any of the applications. Invitations to serve on the review group will be coordinated by the Secretary to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee on behalf of the Vice-Principal.

**Transparency**

As the membership of the review group is likely to vary by bid and availability of staff, and will not normally be known at the time that the internal call for outline applications is made, the names of members of the review group will not be routinely circulated when the call is made. However, to promote transparency, the names of the members of the review group for each managed bid will be available on request from the Vice-Principal for Research.

Lobbying members of the review group is not allowed; members of the review group will be advised to contact the Vice-Principal for Research if they believe that an applicant is exerting undue pressure on them during the review process.

**Conflict of Interest**

Staff who are applicants on any of the proposals submitted for internal review may not serve on the review group. The University trusts that staff who are invited to serve on the review group for a particular managed call will act professionally in reviewing any applications from their own School, and may be able to offer valuable disciplinary insight. However, any member of staff invited to serve on the review group who feels that they are conflicted by their personal relationships with
applicants, or any other secondary interests, should decline the invitation to review the application(s) from those applicants, stating conflict of interest as the reason for doing so. The University’s Conflict of Interest Policy contains guidelines and rules to help individuals assess whether or not proposed activities could cause a conflict of interest.

Submission of Bids Outwith the Internal Selection Process

The internal selection process is intended to ensure that the University does not exceed the limit on the number of bids that can be submitted and that all bids submitted are of the highest quality. However, where the internal process is selecting a bid to receive specific University support in the form of matched-funding for a scheme where there is no limit on the number of applications per institution, other internal applicants may still be able to submit a bid to the same scheme providing that:

- Matched funding has been confirmed from an external source;
- The bid does not compromise the bid supported internally.

In the event of more than one bid being submitted, the proposals must be discussed in advance with the Vice-Principal for Research to ensure that suitable arrangements can be established for support and that the bids are consistent with the University’s strategic plans.

Advice

Applicants will be informed that advice on the eligibility and potential fit of a proposal to the requirements of a specific funding scheme can be sought from the Head of Research Business Development or their local Business Development Manager in RIS and that advice on the alignment of a potential proposal with the University’s strategic priorities can be obtained from the Vice-Principal for Research.

Doctoral Training Programmes and Nomination of PhD Students

Bids for major doctoral training programmes will be covered by this process for schemes where the external funder restricts the number of applications that can be made by individual institutions (in such cases the names of the individual students who will participate in the training programme, if successful, are unknown). However, for studentship competitions where each institution is invited to nominate named individual students within a quota determined by the funder, the internal selection process will be performed under the auspices of the Research Degrees Sub-Committee.