

## **DMP FAQ**

**Information about the implementation of the Data Management Plan in March 2018 can be found on our [Peer Review News and updates](#) page.**

### **Why change now?**

1. The Technical College has become unsustainable – AHRC cannot recruit necessary technical reviewers to join the college, both to increase Technical College numbers and to replace those whose terms came to an end in December 2017. Recruitments in 2016 and 2015 have failed to enhance the numbers to a sustainable level to receive reviews
2. The digital world is changing. The majority of the technical plans are now not discussing digital methodologies but are covering all bases of the computerised world in which we live, a situation which was not the case 10 years ago when the technical plan was created. Only a few technical plans per year discuss proposals which are inherently technical in nature
3. AHRC cannot get enough technical reviewers to carry out reviews. This is extending processing times considerably – over the last three years only 36% of technical reviews are received within the given time period and 64% are received late. Anecdotally these delays are occurring due to the burden technical reviewers are under. Reviews completed within timescales are also dropping, from 44% in 2014 to 33% in the most recent financial year. 19% of proposals now require multiple requests for technical reviews compared to 13% in 2014. In addition over 50% of technical reviews were completed by non-technical reviewers in order to gain the review

### **What happens if a proposal is digital in its nature?**

Instead of just seeking a technical reviewer, AHRC will ensure that there are reviewers on the proposal who will be appropriate to carry out the review. This will aim to ensure that those proposals that have digital methodologies and approaches are assessed by reviewers with digital experience

### **What will academic reviewers be expected to assess that will be different?**

The Academic College will be expected to assess the proposal as previously but with the addition of the data management plan. Assessing the plan demands an approach of whether the plan seems feasible, sensible, appropriate and valid, and reviewers will be expected to note the guidance to make a judgement on this

### **What do other Councils do?**

Other Research Councils do not use a technical plan but 5 others do already use a Data Management Plan. This move will harmonise our approach with the other Councils. Other Councils ask their Academic College equivalent to assess the data management plan – i.e. the plan is not looked at by data experts

### **Will there be any training for this change?**

There will be no specific training but all guidance will be updated and AHRC will respond to individual queries from College members

### **What will be expected of the applicant's own institution?**

The institution will be expected to comply with points in the 'Notes for institutions' document, and applications should not be submitted unless these points are checked. As part of our assurance processes AHRC will, from time to time, ask institutions to provide evidence that they have complied with the requirements in this document. If the institution is found not to have complied the AHRC may invoke sanctions

**Isn't this just a dumbed down version of the technical plan?**

No. The information being requested is different. The previous technical plan put more of an emphasis on explaining file types and technical data. The Data Management Plan focuses more on data storage, data sharing and the methodologies that will be used to create the data. It also asks questions of the ethical and legal considerations of collecting and releasing the data. It requires reviewers to look at this from a standpoint of is this feasible, sensible, appropriate and valid. It also aims to be appropriate to the proposal – if the proposal is inherently technical and digital, AHRC will select reviewers who are appropriate to review such proposals

**Why are you making such a drastic change? Couldn't we make smaller changes?**

This change has not been taken lightly; AHRC has considered smaller changes but none of these completely solve the problems listed in 'Why change now?'. AHRC has been continually trying to raise the numbers of technical reviewers for a number of years which has been unsuccessful; increases in technical reviewers have often not covered the numbers of reviewers leaving the College

**When will the Data Management Plan be submitted?**

Data management plans will be required on all proposals. It is for the applicants to decide how detailed the proposal will need to be

**What level of consultation has there been?**

AHRC have consulted with a group of technical reviewers to aim to get the most appropriate data management plan approach. The question of technical reviews has risen time and again over recent years and AHRC has run a number of surveys and questions to gain views and ideas, along with discussing with other Councils and how their processes work

**Is this a permanent change or may this change again?**

We plan for this to be a permanent change. The process will go through a period of assessment and we will aim to continually improve the process where and when needed

**Why are you implementing the changes on this date given the attachment type on Je-S may not be ready? Why did you pick 29<sup>th</sup> March?**

We have actually discussed further slipping the implementation date until we can be absolutely sure of the attachment being ready, but one of the main reasons for making this change is to remove the workload from the current Technical College, and the longer we slip the date the longer this workload remains unmanageable. Given the Technical Plan attachment can be used to submit

anything on (and as such does not present a system challenge) we have decided to press ahead with the change to ensure we can provide a definite date of implementation.

We had originally picked late February as the date of change but following feedback around the timescales we decided to go for late March instead.

### **You say you will move to a Data Management Plan attachment, when will that be?**

The Data Management Plan attachment will be ready for 3<sup>rd</sup> April when organisations reopen following the Easter break

### **How will you make sure all stakeholders know about the changes and what to do?**

The Research Funding Guide will be updated as and when needed, and as part of other changes we will start putting exact dates of changes on the Guide for reference. We will contact stakeholders such as College members and Research Offices to ensure they are aware of the changes and update our website on the Peer Review section to ensure information is freely available. Finally we will also communicate and train our staff members on the change internally to ensure a high level of service is maintained.

### **What are the benefits of these changes?**

There are a number of benefits:

1. All reviewers will be able to assess the entire proposal, as opposed to the small part of just a technical plan. This will allow a more holistic analysis of the proposal, taking into account all the areas.
2. The approach will be less burdensome for one group of reviewers, meaning the assessment process should move forward more quickly and efficiently
3. Move AHRC into line with other Research Councils who currently use this approach and ask for proposals to be reviewed by their Academic College
4. Those proposals with truly digital methodologies will be assessed by appropriate digital reviewers. The AHRC will select the reviewers required in order to make sure the review process is robust and successful.
5. All proposals will contain a data management plan, meaning that all proposals will be reviewed on this basis. This will ensure peer reviewers will be able to advise on appropriateness and not rely on applicants to advise us whether they think the proposal is technical. All grants' data management plans will come under scrutiny, which should increase the robustness of the process.

### **What about Digital schemes?**

As with other AHRC Strategic schemes, those schemes which attract specific applications, in this case digital-focused applications will have their own bespoke attachment types as determined by the requirements of the scheme