Review Process
- how to ensure your review is effective
AHRC Schemes

• Responsive Mode – 4 main schemes
  – Research Grants – general, large scale grants
  – Leadership Fellows – transformational, leadership potential
  – Research Networking – networks, networking events
  – Follow-on Funding – non-academic impact from another AHRC or UKRI grant

• Highlight Notices
  – Often based on Responsive Mode criteria with some exceptions to criteria
  – Generally based on a particular theme

• Thematic (sometimes known as Direct/Hypothecated/Strategic) Calls
  – Newton Fund
  – Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF)
  – Industrial Strategy Research Fund (ISCF)
  – Other strategic areas of focus
Reviewing applications

• 2018 figures
  – Number of review requests – 2796 invitations
  – Average of 3.2 invitations per member
  – 46% decline rate
    • 34% outside area of expertise
    • 38% too busy
    • 10% conflict of interest
    • 12% other
    • 6% did not respond

• Unusable reviews
  – Unusable – conflicts after review; returned for amendment with no response

• Only 48% of reviews are usable from initial invitation

• 15 working days target; average – 20 working days
Reviewer Matching

- Tool compares classification of application with PRC members’ classifications
- Higher the number of classifications matched, higher up the list of potential reviewers
- Can further drill down to an individual’s qualifiers and keywords
- Cross matched with description in proposal summary document
- Other checks
  - Unavailability
  - Number of current review invitations
  - Max 8 in last 12 months
  - Conflicts of interest
Research Expertise

• Up to date and comprehensive – regularly review, think about how your expertise/areas in which you work might change

• Used in generating your review requests

• Low/High number of requests – raise with AHRC
Expertise screen – AHRC view

Classifications

- Drama and theatre studies
  - Theatre & History *
  - Theatre & Society
- Languages and Literature
  - Post-colonial studies

[Asterisk signifies primary research area in a Je-S account]

Bold - Application’s primary research area

Keywords

- creolisation
- race
- translating cultures
- connected communities
- transnationalism
- diaspora
- black British theatre
- African American theatre
- African theatre
- Caribbean theatre
- postcolonial literature

College Membership

Expertise

My primary research area is contemporary theatre, particularly dramas by black African, American, British and Caribbean
Review process - initial action required

• Prompt response to invitation
  – accept/decline/extend as soon as possible after invitation receipt
  – AHRC can then manage finding alternative reviewers
• Extensions
  – depends on meeting dates, but may be possible
  – could be a possible alternative to declining
• Chase emails
  – system automated
  – follow up by AHRC staff
• Check conflicts of interest
  – On receipt of invitation and prior to starting a review
  – If in doubt, ask AHRC

• PLEASE DON’T – request an extension and then decline as the extension date is reached
Review process – What makes a good review?

- Comment on the match of the application to aims of the call/scheme
- Use of grading descriptors for the relevant scheme - is the project worthy of the score you suggest for each section and overall?
- Evaluate rather than reiterate the application content
- Provide evidence to support observations
- Ensure detail relates to headings of each section
- Pick out strengths and weaknesses of the application
- Contextualise application content within current work in the field
- Comment on interdisciplinary coherence
- Provide comprehensive comments for comparison at panel
- Be open to new ideas and approaches/methodology proposed
- Highlight issues requiring PI clarification
- For non-expert panel members – ensure they can understand comments and grading
- Avoid unconscious bias relating to any aspect of the application: Note: it can be useful to read the Case for Support first to understand the aims of the project, before being fully aware of the applicants and their institution
Review process – returned reviews

- Contradictory comments and grades
  - E.g. Comments indicating unfundable quality but fundable grade
  - Grading Descriptors should be used for specific scheme
- Appearing to advise the applicant in how to run the project more effectively
- Questioning remit of proposal – will have passed AHRC checks
- A reviewer’s comments are too brief
  - Insufficient detail for PI response
  - Not enough for panel to use
- Confrontational, emotive tone and language or overly personal comments
- Specific comments regarding AHRC processes and policies
- Comments made are speculative or don’t relate to the content or context of the proposal
- Inconsistent Confidence levels and comments
  - Expert understanding of the proposal but mark as low level of confidence.
- Online training: https://ahrc.ukri.org/peerreview/peer-review-resources/ - detailed information by form category
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All proposals must be assessed on equal terms. Applications must be assessed on their merits, in accordance with the specified assessment criteria and the aims and objectives set for the scheme or funding call.
Summary

- Accept/decline on receipt of invitation
- Make use of extension requests
- Check for conflicts on receipt of invitation, before starting review
- Be aware of the specifics of scheme/call
  - Responsive Mode (Open calls) & Thematic calls
- Utilise your own expertise and knowledge
- Raise questions for PI where applicable
- Comprehensive comments, match grading
- Use of Funding Guide, Online training, Peer Review Handbook, AHRC staff
- **PUT YOURSELF IN THE APPLICANTS’ SHOES**