

Frequently Asked Questions - ERC Advanced Grants

Principal Investigator (PI)

1. Is there a set style for the CV?

There is not a separate template for the CV, the maximum length is two pages and it must contain the PIs academic record, research record and a succinct 'funding ID' which must specify any current research grants and their subject as well as any on-going application for work related to the project.

2. What if I have more than 10 years experience, can I include details of this?

The 10 year track record will contain only details of achievements in the last 10 years. However, experience prior to this can be described in the 'CV' and the 'leadership profile'.

3. What if I have changed research fields?

The evaluators will be examining the information to the PI to see if they "demonstrate that they are able to confront major research challenges in the field, and to initiate new productive lines of thinking" It you have shown that you are successful at working in a new research area or have experience in developing interdisciplinary approaches, then you should include details of this in the 'leadership profile' section of the application.

4. I've taken a career break for three years in the last 10 years what should I do?

There will be no extensions to the 10 year period. In your application you should demonstrate that in the seven years you have been an active researcher and give details of any career breaks so these can be taken into account.

5. I've mainly been teaching for the last 5 years, but before then I was an active researcher – can I still apply?

It is expected that Principal Investigators will be active researchers at the time of application. If you have not spent all your time in research then you are still able to apply, but you will need to demonstrate that your experiences matches the profile of the PI and that your research knowledge is up to date.

6. Which publications are considered to be high quality?

There is no list of publications considered of high quality. You will need to decide which publications are considered to be high quality, based on your understanding of your research field(s).

7. What do I do if my experience does not match the profile of the PI?

The evaluators will consider your complete track record, publications, alternative benchmarks and your research record and experience. The benchmarks given in the profile of the PI are subject to 'intelligent interpretation'. If you decide that the scheme is not suited to you at this stage you could consider whether you might prefer to apply to a later call, or consider an alternative funding source. Further information on EU funding

opportunities is available to subscribing organisations from UKRO. A list of UKRO's subscribers is available at: http://www.ukro.ac.uk/about/our_subscribers.htm

Research Project

8. Does it have to be a totally new project?

It does not need to be a totally new project. However, it should be clear that you are applying for funding to tackle an important new challenge(s), which could build on existing research activities.

9. Should I include a bibliography as an annex to my proposal?

Additional annexes are not allowed. All references should be included in the main body of the text.

10. What level of knowledge should I expect from the evaluators?

At step 1 of the evaluation only panel members will be used, typically there will be 10-15 panel members per panel to cover the full scope of the panel. Details on the areas covered by each panel are listed in the Guide for Applicants. Therefore the panel members may not necessarily be experts in your specific field. In step 2 of the review process remote expert evaluators will also be used to assist the panel members. The evaluators will be experts; however you should also consider the overall expertise of the panel in your application.

11. Why do I need to provide a synopsis as well as the full proposal?

Without the synopsis your proposal would be ineligible, this is used in the evaluation at step 1.

12. Should I name my team members in my application?

It depends on your application; you can either provide the profiles of the members of your team who you plan to recruit. Or if you have already identified team members you can provide their names and their profiles and details why they should part of your team. It is important that the evaluators can see how your team will be structured, including the roles and profiles of each of the team members.

13. Should I include a Plan B?

You need to demonstrate that you have faith in your research and that what you are hoping to achieve is feasible. However, if there is a high element of risk involved in your proposal and you already have a Plan B for a particularly risky part of the project then it would be beneficial to include this.

14. How much time am I expected to spend on the project?

There is no set minimum or maximum amount of time that the PI is expected to spend on the proposal, however applicants should be mindful that the PI is expected to have a significant involvement in the project and clearly lead the team and the research.

Research Environment

15. Would an additional team member based in another organisation strengthen my proposal?

This will depend on the proposal, the ERC expect most applications will come from a PI whose whole team will be based at a single institution. However, if the PI can justify team members based at another institution, anywhere in the world, on the basis of scientific added value then it is possible to include them as a team member. This would need to be justified in the research environment section of the form.

16. Should I describe my team members if they are at the same institution, and where should I include this information?

The structure of the team should be described fully in the research proposal section of the application. The term "research environment" covers the immediate setting of the research team, such as Department (rather than the institution as a whole), and when appropriate, the environment in a wider sense, for example, collaborating laboratories, groups, departments etc

17. What do I need to include about the equipment and resources available at my host institutions?

You should provide details about the equipment and resources that are relevant to the proposal.

18. Where can I find some standard text I can use to describe my institution or do I need to tailor it to my application?

It might be wise to start from scratch with the text; however, we would encourage applicants to seek advice from your research office and from their departments.

19. What is the difference between a team and a consortium?

A team operates under the close leadership of the PI; each team member is working specifically for the PI. A consortium usually involves the collaboration of a number of groups, bringing together their skills and research results, normally under the direction of a Co-ordinator. The ERC will not fund collaborative research. It is interesting to note 87% of proposals submitted to the ERC Starting Grant call involved only 1 institution with 7% involving 2 institutions and only 2% involving 3 institutions.

ERC Finances

Important: Your project budget must be discussed and agreed with the Research Office/Finance Office in your host institution.

20. Do I need to show how my budget is distributed across the project?

Yes, this will need to be described in the 'research project' section of the application form. The budget should be justified by clearly relating it to the activities in your project. These figures are an estimate, and the distribution can be changed at a later stage if needed.

21. What rules apply to subcontracting?

It is not possible to subcontract research activities; subcontracts may only be used for a limited part of the project. If you plan to have a subcontract then you will need to justify

why this is necessary in your proposal and why the task can not be completed in your team. You need to include details of the task(s) to be subcontracted and an estimation of the costs. Subcontracts must be awarded according to the principles of best value for money (best price-quality ratio), transparency and equal treatment.

22. Is there a list of standard costs published anywhere?

No, all costs must be calculated according to your usual institutional accounting practices. There is no such thing as a list of standard costs for FP7.

23. Should I include patent costs?

Yes, if applicable to your project you should include patent costs, and also publication costs.

24. Can the evaluators cut my budget?

Yes, it is possible for the evaluators to recommend a budget cut if your budget is not fully justified and does not match the activities you are proposing in your application.

25. Can I claim PI's/Co-I's/team members time on the grant, and what % time is reasonable?

Yes, you can claim PI's/Co-I's/team members time, there is no fixed maximum or minimum percentage, however, you will need to have a system (timesheets) to show the amount of time each team member has spent on the ERC Grant and preferably on other activities.

26. How does the flat rate work for indirect costs in the ERC?

This is charged and allocated as a flat rate of 20% of the total direct costs, without the need to prove how it is spent.

27. What information is required in the Administrative Form?

- *Total costs according to the following categories: personnel costs, other direct costs (not subcontracts), indirect costs, subcontracts, eligible costs, requested grant.*

Research Project ?

- *You should work with your research office/finance office to determine your budget. In your application you should describe the amount of funding needed to complete duration of the project. (Including the 20% indirect costs) You should give a breakdown of the budget subdivided in personnel costs, equipment and infrastructure, consumables, travel, publication costs, and any subcontracts. You will also need to state how the costs will be distributed over the duration of the project.*

Research Environment Section?

- *Unlike the first call for the Starting Grants, it is not necessary to include any budget details in the research environment section.*

Commitment of Host Letter

28. Where do you find the Commitment of the Host letter?

The template for the Commitment of the Host letter is given in the Guide for Applicants; the template can also be downloaded from the UK ERC NCP webpage.

www.ukro.ac.uk/erc

29. Who should sign the Commitment of the Host letter?

An authorised legal signatory in your institution, otherwise your proposal will be ineligible. Your research office will be able to provide the name of the signatory for your institution.

30. Can we/should we make any changes to the Commitment of the Host letter?

No, you should not make any changes to the letter as it is based on the legal text in the ERC Grant Agreement.

31. Is the ERC looking an explicit financial commitment from the host institution?

No, the ERC is not looking for an explicit financial commitment from the host institution.

32. What will happen if I do not attach the letter of Commitment from the Host Institution?

Your proposal will be ineligible. Please note: the Commitment of Host letter must be submitted before the deadline on EPSS.

Ethical Information

33. Does everyone need to complete the Ethical Issues Table?

Yes, even if your proposal does not raise any ethical issues you must state this on the form. All applicants must attach the ethical issues table.

34. What happens if I forget to include the ethical table in my application?

Your proposal will be ineligible.

35. Where do I describe the ethically sensitive issues?

If your proposal does include ethically sensitive issues (or if you have ticked yes to any of the questions in the ethical issues table) then you should submit an additional annex to describe these. In particular, this additional annex should outline the benefit and burden of such research, the effects it may have and how the ethical issues will be managed. In addition, if you are working in an area where you need to obtain licenses in order to carry out your research, you should give details of this in your application. It is not necessary to have the licenses in place at the time of application, but you should state how long it would take to apply for the license.

36. Do I need to attach national legislation documents?

No, you should focus on your chosen methodology, if you will need to apply for a licence to carry out work on the project then you should state how long this process will take.

37. Are there any resources available to help with this section?

Yes the European Commission have a page dedicated to helping applicants address the ethical issues in their applications. This is available at:

http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ethics_en.html

If you have any further questions please contact us at: erc-uk@bbsrc.ac.uk

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