Productivity Institute Full Stage (Invitation Only)
Reviewer Guidance

Background
The ESRC, as part of UK Research and Innovation, is making a major investment to support a world-leading interdisciplinary research Institute that will directly inform government policy to improve UK productivity. Up to £32.4 million (at 100% fEC), funded through UKRI’s Strategic Priorities Fund is available to support the Institute over five years.

The Institute is intended to bring together world-leading experts from a range of disciplines and backgrounds to both enhance knowledge and work directly with stakeholders (such as policymakers and businesses) to help them improve regional, sectoral and firm-level productivity in the UK.

Please refer to the full call specification for full details.

Review process
Proposals are being reviewed by a pool of international experts covering a range of disciplinary areas. Reviewers are invited to assess the merits of each proposal based on their individual attributes and provide a comparative assessment of all the proposals they have reviewed.

Applicants will also be given the opportunity to respond to the reviewers’ comments (see transparency of the review process below).

Proposals will then be assessed by the Productivity Research Advisory Group, who will take into consideration the reviewers’ scores and comments. The applicants will also be interviewed by members of the Advisory Group, as part of the assessment process. Once the interviews have taken place, the Advisory Group will make a final funding recommendation to the ESRC.

Conflict and confidentiality
Conflicts of interest can be due to a direct or indirect financial, non-financial or personal interest, links to the Research Organisation (RO) and/or some other person or entity at the RO. If you have any concern that there is a potential conflict of interest with any proposal that we have assigned to you and have not taken account of, you should contact productivity@esrc.ukri.org for advice.

As a reviewer, you are not allowed to disclose to outsiders any information concerning application documents or assessments, nor are you allowed to use this confidential information to your own benefit or anyone else’s benefit or disadvantage. In addition, you must not reveal to outsiders that you are reviewing the proposal of particular Research Organisations.

Please refer to the full conflict of interest guidance for further information.
Transparency of the review process
Please note that your comments, along with the scores assigned to each of the assessment headings, and your overall grading of the proposal, will be fed back to applicants. Given this element of feedback, it is important that your scores reflect your textual comments. Your comments should clarify your assessment of the different elements of the proposal. Please be assured that all the reviews seen by the applicants will be anonymous. All the personal details and the self-assessment sections on the form will automatically be removed from the version seen by applicants.

Comments are passed to the applicant as they are received and are not edited by the ESRC in any way. This provides greater transparency and is also in accord with data handling standards. You are therefore reminded of the need to ensure that you provide professional and constructive comments and that you do not reveal your identity through your comments.

We will of course read all comments that are received. If a comment is considered unusable in its current form it will be referred back to the reviewer for revision. Reasons why a comment might be considered unusable include:

- the reviewer's identity is disclosed
- discriminatory or gratuitously offensive remarks
- inadequate justification of the scores assigned to the proposal
- text does not match the scores
- text suggests a misunderstanding of ESRC policy, such as the remit of a call.

Completion of the form
You have been invited to complete a review using the Joint Electronic Submissions (JeS) system. Guidance on completing the form can be found below.

If you have not used JeS before, an account will be created for you and you will be able to activate this account by following the link in the email notifying you of the review request. When your account has been activated, you will be taken to the 'Assigned Document' summary screen in the system where you should select the 'Peer Review' option.

Knowledge of applicant
Please indicate in what capacity you know the applicant(s) and their work. Please record any potential conflicts of interest relating to your assessment of the proposal which need to be brought to the attention of the ESRC Office.

Self-Assessment
Please indicate, using High, Medium or Low, what level you judge your competence to be in each of the following areas:
- Academic Merit
- Value for Money

Please also clarify your self-assessment, or comment on your competence to assess the proposal.

Application assessment
The academic peer review form has the following four core criteria.

- Originality; potential contribution to knowledge
- Design and methods
- Value for money
- Outputs, dissemination and impact

The scores on the form for each criterion are on a scale from 1 to 6, where 6 is ‘Outstanding’ (see scoring scales for peer reviewers below). If you feel unable to assess a proposal against a particular criterion, you can also indicate this by ticking ‘Unable to assess.’ Detailed comments in support of these grades should be provided in the free text overall assessment section.

Full proposals should clearly demonstrate how they satisfy all of the criteria below.

The assessment criteria as provided in the call specification can be mapped against the following core criteria as follows:

### Originality; potential contribution to knowledge; Design and methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic fit</th>
<th>Overall fit of the proposal with the Institute’s scope and objectives. This will include explaining how the Institute’s strategy, programmes of work, supporting activities and any investment from partners and host institutions are aligned with the requirements of the call.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Research excellence and scientific impact | Compelling plans for new research across the entire economy that aims to be internationally excellent and break new ground in understanding and addressing productivity.  
- Track record of academic excellence, incorporating expertise from a wide range of disciplines and methodologies.  
- Clearly described and justified research methods.  
- Clearly described and justified data management and access plans that identify the risks to, and mitigations for, accessing, managing and sharing data.  
- Proposals for multi-disciplinary research engagement across and beyond the social sciences.  
- Exceptional knowledge of the current productivity research landscape across a range of disciplines, approaches and methods. |

Specific requirement to be assessed (see page 5 of the call specification for details of the requirements):  
- Capabilities and plans for delivering a research agenda for productivity research within the required timeframe.  
- Proposals for managing the allocation of the Institute’s research capacity across long, medium and nearer term. This will include the mechanisms for attracting and selecting new research projects.

| Leadership, management and governance | A leadership team:  
- covering diverse disciplines and areas of professional expertise.  
- experience of building effective teams.  
- a track record of high quality leadership and management practices. |

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- Capacity to design, manage and communicate ambitious programmes of research, knowledge exchange and innovation activities. This should include explaining how the Institute will attract, convene and leverage world-leading expertise.
- Appropriate governance structures.
- Ability and appetite to rapidly establish the Institute and meet funder requirements.
- A capability and willingness to develop and deploy appropriate mechanisms to identify, manage and communicate risks.
- Commitment to project management, reporting and participation in external evaluation.

## Value for money

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Justification of programme resources</th>
<th>Sufficient detail and justification of the costs of the programmes of work in the Justification of Resources attachment.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clear allocation of duties and responsibilities. This should include explaining the time contribution for the leadership team.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sufficient justification that the programmes of work are all necessary and that they add up to a coherent whole.</td>
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</table>

## Outputs, dissemination and impact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-academic impact</th>
<th>Clear proposals for generating impact underpinned by a thorough understanding of the principles and practices of effective knowledge exchange and impact generation.</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How the Institute will work with research users, and conduct activities and produce outputs that are highly relevant to their needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How research and other activities addresses the diverse needs of different parts of the UK and will build with key actors within the policy and practice systems across the UK. This should include devolved administrations, regions, and city and regional partnerships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge of key business support and innovation agencies.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commitment from within the leadership team to drive non-academic impact.</td>
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*Specific requirement to be assessed* (see page 5 of the call specification for details)

- Feasibility of plans to distribute and use the dedicated budget for business innovation programmes to enable substantial engagement and impact with business.
- Feasibility of plans to distribute and use the dedicated budget for fellowship programmes to enable substantial engagement and impact with policy makers, practitioners and researchers.

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<tr>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Demonstrable ability in the leadership team to communicate clearly, succinctly and persuasively with a range of audiences.</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commitment to work constructively and proactively with Programme funders and supporters.</td>
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</table>
Overall Assessment

Feedback for Applicant: please provide detailed comments in support of the grades you have given and on any other aspects of the proposal that you consider relevant. These comments will be passed on, unattributed, to the applicant(s) and also with notification of the outcome of the application, to other external reviewers if applicable.

Overall Grade: please indicate your overall assessment of the proposal, using the 1 to 6 scale, as set out below.

**Scoring scales for peer reviewers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 (Outstanding)</td>
<td>The proposal is outstanding in terms of its potential scientific merit, is of consistently high quality and has high potential for impact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (Excellent)</td>
<td>The proposal is excellent in terms of its potential scientific merit, is of high quality and has potential for impact.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 (Good)</td>
<td>The proposal good in terms of its potential scientific merit, is of good quality and has some potential for impact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (Satisfactory)</td>
<td>The proposal has potential scientific merit but is not of a consistently high quality or potential for impact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (Fair/Some weaknesses)</td>
<td>The proposal will add to understanding, but is of lesser quality or urgency than more highly rated proposals. Such proposals are unlikely to have a significant influence on the development of the research area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 (Poor)</td>
<td>The proposal is flawed in its scientific approach, or is repetitious of other work, or otherwise judged not worth pursuing; or which, through possibly having sound objectives, appears seriously defective in its methodology.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comparative assessment**

As a member of the reviewer pool, we would like to invite you to provide a brief comparative analysis of the proposals you have reviewed. Once you have finished assessing all the proposals, please include a paragraph in the ‘Knowledge of Applicant’ section of each reviewer form which details how all the proposals compare against each other. This section of the form is confidential and will not be shared with applicants. Please write one comparative paragraph and add this same paragraph to each reviewer form.

**Further information**

You may also find the [JeS electronic peer review FAQs](#) and [FAQs for peer reviewers](#) helpful.

Enquiries about reviewing proposals under this call should be addressed to Claire Feary productivity@esrc.ukri.org.