



## SFI REVIEWER CODE OF CONDUCT

Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) offers a range of funding schemes which support scientists and engineers to deliver both research excellence and impact. The use of international independent reviewers is an integral part of SFI's decision making process. The purpose of external review is to gather expert evaluations from appropriate field experts so that SFI can make an informed decision regarding a proposal.

Review panels comprise of reviewers with complementary knowledge who also possess broad knowledge of the science and engineering sub-fields relevant to the proposals to be reviewed. For the specific evaluation of potential impact, reviewers will be identified with expertise in research translation, commercialisation and with industry experience and/or experience in collaboration with industry.

Reviewers assist in the process and make funding recommendations but do not make funding decisions. The final responsibility for evaluation and award decision lies with SFI.

Reviewers engaged by SFI are required to abide by the following code of conduct:

1. Reviewers appointed by SFI are required to operate in a confidential, fair, independent and equitable manner according to the procedures described in this code of conduct, in any programme-related documentation and by any other instruction(s) communicated by SFI.
2. Reviewers are appointed as independent experts and are deemed to work in a personal capacity and, in performing the work, do not represent any organisation.
3. An essential part of ensuring research integrity is managing **conflicts of interest** that may bias the review of an application. SFI scientific staff are charged with identifying appropriate reviewers and managing reviewer conflicts of interest. Reviewers must agree to certify to a declaration of absence of conflict of interest before conducting a review. If a reviewer is in some way connected with a proposal, or has any other allegiance which impairs or threatens to impair their impartiality with respect to a proposal, they must declare such facts to the responsible SFI staff member(s) as soon as they become aware of this. If a reviewer is unsure as to whether or not a conflict of interest exists, they should consult with the appropriate SFI staff member(s). If a potential conflict of interest arises during the course of a review process, a reviewer must alert the relevant SFI scientific staff member to this and the situation will be managed appropriately.
4. Reviewers must agree to certify to a declaration of **confidentiality** prior to conducting a review. Reviewers must not copy, quote, or otherwise use or disclose to anyone, including their own graduate students or post-doctoral or research associates, any unpublished material from any programme they are asked to review. If reviewing proposals they must keep confidential the name of the applicant and the evaluation conducted. Reviewers must not disclose their identities, the relative assessments or rankings of proposals by a peer review panel, or other details about the peer review of proposals.
5. Reviewers are required to perform all activities undertaken for SFI with reasonable skill and care and to the best of their ability.

6. Reviewers must undertake all activities in a personal capacity and must not delegate or sub-contract the performance of any activities or part thereof to graduate students, post-doctoral or research associates or any other third parties.
7. Reviewers are required at all times to comply with generally accepted rules of good scientific practice in carrying out their review, including any specific scientific code of practice notified by SFI to reviewers from time to time.
8. Reviewers may not communicate with proposal applicants at any stage unless they are required to do so as part of the evaluation process (for example, if an interview or site visit forms part of the evaluation process). In cases where reviewers are required to communicate with applicants as part of the evaluation process, communication must only happen in the presence of SFI staff members.
9. Reviewers are required to respect the intellectual property of applicants and may not appropriate and use as their own, or disclose to any third party, ideas, concepts or data contained in any proposals. The intellectual property rights in all materials provided by an applicant shall remain vested in and shall be the absolute property of the applicant or its third party licensors.
10. In cases where proposals are to be made available to reviewers, who then work from their own or other suitable premises, the reviewers will be held personally responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of any documents or electronic files sent and returning, erasing or destroying all confidential documents or files upon completing the evaluation. In such instances, reviewers may seek further information (for example through the internet, specialised databases etc.) in order to allow them to complete their examination of the proposals, provided that obtaining such information respects the overall rules for confidentiality and impartiality. Reviewers may not show the contents of proposals or disclose information contained therein to third parties without the express written approval of SFI.
11. Where the evaluation takes place in an office or building controlled by SFI, reviewers are not permitted to take outside the evaluation building any parts of proposals, copies or notes relating to the evaluation of proposals.
12. Reviewers are required at all times to comply with any rules defined by SFI for ensuring the confidentiality of the evaluation process and its outcomes, including as set out in this SFI Reviewer Code of Conduct and SFI's Reviewer Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Statement. Failure to comply with these rules may result in exclusion from the immediate and future evaluation processes, without prejudice to penalties that may derive from other applicable regulations.
13. Reviewers must agree that SFI may use SFI's online Grants and Awards Management System (SESAME, or any other online grants and awards management system as adopted by SFI from time to time) as a means of communication between reviewers and SFI or to deliver materials for review by reviewers. In such case, reviewers will be able to access SFI's online Grants and Awards Management System from any computer with their email address and password.
14. To the extent that membership of a Review panel or the performance of activities as a Reviewer involves the processing of personal data on behalf of SFI, reviewers must agree to process the personal data solely in connection with the review, or as otherwise instructed by SFI, and to comply with data security obligations in respect of the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003.
15. Reviewers must agree to act justly in conducting a review for SFI. A review must be conducted with integrity, impartiality and confidentiality and without bias on the basis of gender, race, colour, age, disability, national origin, sexual orientation, political or religious affiliation or marital status. Reviewers are requested to review and consider the guidance provided to aid reviewers in the understanding of unconscious bias [Reproduced by kind permission of The Royal Society]. <https://goo.gl/JzGiWS>

**16.** In order to participate in a review for SFI, individuals are required to agree to SFI's Reviewer Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Statement.