



## Guidelines for Writing a Statement of Interest (SOI)

### Summary

1. The consideration of a Statement of Interest is the first step in the STFC review of any major, new proposal. An SOI may be submitted to signify the intention to submit a full proposal.
2. SOIs may include:
  - Participation in new experiments or missions
  - The further development of existing high priority experiments or missions
  - The development of new instruments
  - New detectors or accelerator technologies
  - Upgrades to existing detectors
  - The purchase of new, or upgrades to, existing major high performance computing facilities
  - New initiatives in the field of e-science, modelling and data management
3. SOIs are considered by the [Science Board](#) and can be submitted at any time. Where appropriate, the [Accelerator Strategy Board](#) will also consider the Statement of Interest.
4. If Science Board recommends that a full proposal should be invited following the consideration of the SOI, this will be reviewed by the [STFC's Projects Peer Review Panel \(PPRP\)](#)

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### How to make an application

#### Prior to submission

5. In order to assist STFC in financial planning, applicants are asked to inform STFC of any future research projects for which they may be considering making future funding applications. This is most important for large projects which are likely to request substantial funding from STFC. Applicants should do this by contacting the appropriate [Programme Manager](#) who will advise on the next steps.
6. When looking to submit an SOI with the intention of developing a full proposal shortly afterwards, applicants should contact the relevant Programme Manager. The Programme Manager will discuss the submission process and will ensure

that applicants are aware of all components of the SOI and the stages of the review, and how the project fits into the STFC strategic context.

7. The SOI comprises two components - a [dedicated template](#) (pro-forma), consisting of specific questions which is available to download, and a two-page Scientific Justification. If there are queries about the questions or the Scientific Justification, please contact the relevant [Programme Manager](#).
8. The Scientific Justification should include the following information:
  - A **strong science case** should form the majority of the Scientific Justification as scientific excellence is the main criterion on which Science Board will base their decision. The Justification should focus on the science that would be delivered by the project and what the impact of that science would be (or, conversely, what the impact would be should the UK not invest).
  - The **scientific competitiveness and track record** of the group;
  - How the project relates to [STFC priorities](#);
  - **Economic and societal impact**: who might benefit from this project and how; and how will the potential impacts of the project be realised;
  - An estimate of the **total full economic cost** of the project. This must include the capital construction phase, and where possible, the exploitation phase. In all cases, costs should be broken down by heading (e.g. staff effort (university and STFC laboratory staff), equipment, travel and consumables) and must be sufficiently detailed to show that estimates are reasonable.
9. The Scientific Justification may be used to provide more detailed information relating to any of the questions on the dedicated template, although the principle focus of the Scientific Justification is the science case and this should form the majority of the content. You should ensure that Science Board have sufficient evidence to make an informed recommendation.
10. The Scientific Justification must be no longer than **two pages** in length. In line with the standard RCUK specification for JeS documents, the Scientific Justification should be written in Arial (or equivalent) 11 point font with a minimum of 2 cm margins around each page. Additional supporting information, such as letters of support, is not required and will not form part of the Science Board consideration.
11. SOIs can be submitted at any time. If you would like the SOI to be considered at a particular Science Board meeting, the dates for these meetings and the respective dates for submission of proposals to these meetings can be found [here](#). Proposals received after the submission deadline for a particular Science Board meeting will be carried over for consideration at the following meeting.
12. Once the template and Scientific Justification are complete, please submit the documentation electronically to the relevant Programme Manager, in word or pdf format, copied to [Jenny Hiscock](#) , Science Board secretariat.

## Consideration by Science Board

13. Once submitted to STFC and prior to consideration by Science Board, the SOI will be reviewed by the appropriate Programme Manager to ensure that the data required for its consideration is complete.

14. In exceptional cases, Programme Managers may reject proposals where there are clear cases for doing so, for example, where SOIs do not meet the submission criteria, the SOI is out of the scope of a particular call or the science is outside the remit of STFC.
15. Where the Programme Manager has not been consulted prior to submission, the SOI may be delayed until the Programme Manager has had an opportunity to discuss and review the proposal with the applicant. In this case, the result may be that the SOI will not meet the deadline for a particular Science Board meeting. It is therefore particularly important that applicants consult with STFC *prior* to submission.
16. Any committee member with a personal conflict of interest will withdraw from the meeting for the duration of the consideration of the proposal. The assessment framework utilised by Science Board can be found in Annex 1. Science Board will form a consensus opinion and recommend whether a full proposal should be invited and will agree specific feedback. Where a full proposal is to be invited, Science Board will also agree any issues that they may require PPRP to resolve or explore during the consideration of the full proposal.
17. Following the Science Board meeting, applicants will receive feedback relating to the SOI and STFC will make every effort to ensure that this is sent within twenty working days.

### **Following consideration by Science Board**

18. If the SOI application is successful, Science Board will invite a full proposal and the applicant will be notified of this by the Science Board secretary. The applicant is asked to contact the [secretary of PPRP](#) to agree a submission date for the full proposal. This deadline will relate to the dates of future PPRP meetings and will not normally exceed six months from the date of SOI consideration. This upper time limit is to help prevent the costs and scope of the project varying significantly between the SOI approved by Science Board and the proposal reviewed by PPRP. If the full proposal is not submitted within the agreed deadline, applicants may be asked to submit a new SOI for review by Science Board.
19. If more than six months have elapsed, it is generally expected that a second SOI will need to be submitted to ensure that Science Board has the most appropriate and up to date information. Please discuss with the relevant Programme Manager whether or not a second SOI needs to be submitted.
20. The cost of the project must not exceed that given in the SOI by more than 15%. Should project costs increase by more than this, Science Board may need to reconsider the SOI taking into account the amended costs. If the scope of the project has changed significantly from that in the SOI, STFC will request that a new SOI is considered by Science Board. In the light of this, it is essential that applicants seek advice from Programme Managers about any changes to the scope and cost of the project that might affect consideration of the proposal.
21. Further information relating to the submission of a full proposal to PPRP can be found [here](#).

## Proposals Relating to Space

22. Statements of Interest for proposals within the remit of the UK Space Agency (UKSA) should be sent directly to UKSA. These should be emailed to [the UK Space Agency](#) who can also provide further information about the expected content of the SOI. The UKSA Science Programme Advisory Committee (SPAC) will review the SOI and UKSA will provide feedback to applicants on whether or not a full proposal is invited. STFC Science Board will also provide strategic scientific advice to UKSA if appropriate.
23. The peer review of full proposals for space science and exploration projects will be carried out by a UKSA peer review panel. The peer review panel will report to UKSA Science Programme Advisory Committee / Aurora Advisory Committee as appropriate on the outcome of the review. The UKSA Executive will make a final decision on funding a project drawing together all advice received..
24. The UK Space Agency will inform applicants directly about any funding decisions.

## Further Information

25. [Further information](#) on arrangements for sharing responsibility for the science programme between the STFC and the UK Space Agency.
26. For any other queries please contact either:
  - The Science Board Secretary, [Jenny Hiscock](#), or
  - The relevant [Programme Manager](#).

## **Annex 1 – Science Board and PPRP Assessment Framework**

The framework contains six areas for consideration: excellence, economic impact, societal impact, leadership, synergies and project management; and these are described below. Although each area is considered during the assessment process; scientific excellence is considered to be the most important.

### *Excellence*

- The scientific merit of the project and its potential to make a significant contribution to advancing or providing insight into our fundamental understanding
- The scientific importance of the project including the current state of the area and a longer term view of the future.
- The timeliness of the project.
- The key stakeholders, the strategic importance of the project to them and the benefits to them.
- The benefits of the project compared to past, current and future planned experiments worldwide.
- The technical importance of the project.
- The international relevance of the research, in both European and global arenas.

### *Economic Impact*

- The project contribution to new businesses, product processes or services.
- The impact in the development of people with transferable skills
- The match to public policy and/or cross Research Council priorities.
- The potential to lever further funding to STFC and/or the UK.
- Engagement with UK industry including procurement relationships.

### *Societal Impact*

- The wider societal benefits including information on public outreach plans and activities, impact on young people, education in schools or on the wider publics.
- The potential media impact and its relation to the STFC mission.
- Increasing the effectiveness of public services and policy
- Enhancing quality of life, health and creative output.

### *Leadership*

- The level of UK leadership and track record in this area.
- The extent to which STFC/UK involvement will result in greater research output or a higher level of external funding to the project.
- The extent to which involvement in this project will provide STFC with an opportunity to influence policy and funding in the future.

### *Synergies*

- The alignment of the project/facility to STFC strategic objectives and core business activities.
- The extent to which the project/facility benefits from or contributes to coherence and synergies with other programmes, including international subscriptions.
- The relevance (if appropriate) to the strategies of the Daresbury and Harwell Science Innovation Campuses.

### *Project Management*

- The quality of the project management plan including the project schedule.
- Clear, detailed and justified costs including any resource implications associated with Impact activities
- Evaluation of the risks (including technical) associated with implementation of the project and the risks associated with the economic impact, societal impact and leadership objectives.