

Assessment Criteria for African Research Leader Scheme

Referees and interview panel members are asked to assess four key areas:

- A. The candidate for Research Leader**
- B. The programme of research**
- C. The African Research Environment / Institution**
- D. The African-UK Institutional Partnership**

In assessing proposals, reviewers and panel members are asked to address the following assessment criteria for these areas.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA:

A. The candidate for African Research Leader

- Has the candidate demonstrated their potential as a high-calibre researcher - are they a rising star? What track record exists?
 - Is the candidate appropriately qualified to undertake the research proposed?
 - Has the candidate demonstrated their independence as a research scientist?
- Has the candidate presented a persuasive case that they can carry out and deliver the proposed programme of work?
- How well does the work fit with other relevant research pursued by the candidate?
- Has the candidate shown that they can effectively cultivate and lead a dynamic research team?
- Does the candidate show potential to be a good ambassador for the MRC?

B. The candidate's programme of research

The assessment of the programme of research will be the same as that of any research proposal. Comment on the importance and competitiveness of the proposed research, including:

- The strength of medical or scientific case
- How convincing and coherent the overall proposed approach is
- How well the proposed research addresses the priority health problems of people in Sub-Saharan Africa
- Has the work already been done or is it being done elsewhere?
- Is it important to pursue this topic now? Is the research timely?
- The level of innovation and whether that is likely to lead to significant new understanding
- The management strategy proposed, including equitable access to any shared resources
- Feasibility of experimental plans, including provision of preliminary data where appropriate
- Are the experimental plans realistic, given the aims of the research, timeframe and proposed resources?
- Have major scientific, technical or organisational challenges been identified, and will they be tackled well?
- Does the proposal realistically set out the ultimate potential benefits with respect to improving human health?

C. The African Environment / Institution: Demonstration of a research-conducive environment

- Does the sub-Saharan African country offer a stable and research conducive environment?
- Are the African Institution's mission, scientific objectives, strategy, management and governance policies clear?
- Is there clarity on the level of research funding currently received in the proposed research area by the African Institution – both national (government) and international funding?
 - What other significant relevant international funding is received by the African Institution?
- Is the African Institution's commitment to the mid to long-term career of the proposed Research Leader clear and appropriate?
 - Has the African Institution adequately described how it will increase its level of financial support of the proposed Research Leader?
- Has the African Institution demonstrated a strong commitment to supporting the research work proposed and the career goals of the candidate?
- Are there well established, relationships with the research relevant health services and Ministry of Health?
- What evidence is there that the institution has commitment to developing systems for translating research outputs towards health policies, practices and products?
- Is the institution a valued partner in South-South and/or North-South links, demonstrated through contribution to research networks, joint training and development of initiatives nationally and internationally?
- Has a clear and persuasive case been made for any institutional development needs, relating to the proposed candidate African Research Leader?
 - Is it appropriate, of good quality, feasible, value for money, and likely to be of benefit?

D. The African-UK Institutional Partnership

- Have the African and UK Institutions demonstrated the existence of a strong well developed equitable research partnership with a commitment to research excellence, capacity development and research to improve the health of disadvantaged populations?
- Does the existing partnership provide a clear platform for the future proposed African leader activities, both in scientific and developmental terms?
- Is it clear what the proposed major benefits of the partnership to the Research Leader candidate over the period of award and beyond are?
- Does this partnership provide an opportunity to catalyse both leadership and research activities for the candidate?
- How will the proposed African leader's activities generate added value /synergies for the African Institution?
- How will the learning from any proposed visits to the UK be used for the wider benefit of the African partner?

Additionally,

Justification for Resources

- Are the funds requested essential for the work and do the importance and scientific potential justify funding on the scale requested?
- Are the requested elements clear and appropriate, such as;
 - The contribution to the candidate research leader's personal salary
 - The costs relating to the research leader's development (including cost of any visit/placement)
 - The costs relating to the programme of research:

- Principal investigator and candidate - is the requested time, consistent with their proposed involvement; necessary or sufficient for the successful management of the research; and a realistic expectation of the time they could make available?
- Are the numbers of other research staff appropriate for the work described?
- *This scheme is not primarily intended to support PhD studentships in obtaining their degree. However, if the ARL candidate has involved PhD students on their research programme then are the proposed, supervisory arrangements, research and timeframe of the programme appropriate?*
- Costs relating to the African Institutional development in relation to the candidate
- Does the proposal represent good value for money in terms of the resources being requested?

Referees and Panel members make their assessment under these main criteria and also identify any ethical issues or risks to human participants that need further attention.

The full criteria are detailed in the [MRC Guidance for Peer Reviewers](#).