

Leuka's Peer Review Policy

Overview

Leuka is committed to an open and transparent process of Peer Review, which aims to ensure that the research it funds is assessed impartially and objectively. An external independent panel of scientific experts appointed by Leuka's Board of Trustees reviews applications for research funding and then makes recommendations for funding to the charity's Board of Trustees. This independent review of applications is an integral part of the decision making process. As part of its commitment to the impartiality and integrity of the review process Leuka has set down a Code of Conduct, how panel members should behave, including declaring vested interests. Leuka's Code of Conduct is detailed in our Conflicts of Interest Policy.

Independent Scientific Panel

Leuka's peer review of funding applications is carried out by members of Leuka's Independent Scientific Panel in accordance with approved terms of reference and Conflicts of Interest Policy. Members of the Scientific Panel are volunteers and have a three-year fixed term of office that is extendable by a further 2 years. The charity endeavours to ensure a balanced panel that reflects a fair balance of experience and scientific disciplines.

Details of the members of Leuka's Scientific Panel are published online. (<http://www.leuka.org.uk/independent-scientific-panel/>).

Peer Review Process

All research funding proposals, over £25,000 per annum, are reviewed by a committee (including the Chair) of independent reviewers comprised of at least three members of Leuka's Scientific Panel. Applications are reviewed and scored for relevance, quality and feasibility of the proposed research together with an assessment of the applicant and the host institution. Recommendations for funding are decided at a meeting, where all committee members are present, including members of Leuka secretariat as observers.

External Reviewers

We will seek the expert opinions of at least two further external reviewers for funding applications in excess of £25,000 per annum, as appropriate.

Leuka's Scientific Panel members may suggest suitable external reviewers and/or applicants will be invited to suggest two/three possible external reviewers for their application (N.B: Leuka is not bound to select applicant's suggestions and will use best endeavours to screen suggested external reviewers for relevant conflicts of interest at this stage). Applicants may also indicate reviewers they do not wish to review their application but this must be accompanied by the reason.

Leuka's secretariat will be responsible for inviting external reviewers to undertake a written review of an application using a standard form (provided by Leuka) and within a reasonable timeframe. A reviewer will be asked to declare any conflict of interest. External reviewer's assessments will be made available to members of the Scientific Panel as part of the decision making process for each funding round.

An external reviewer's comments may be shared with an applicant on request, but will be anonymous.

Conflict of Interest

Leuka's commitment to the impartiality and transparency of the peer review process is detailed in our Conflicts of Interest Policy. All members of the Scientific Panel who review funding applications must declare any issues (whether academic, scientific, financial, business, personal or otherwise) that might give rise to any conflict of interest. Should a reviewer have a vested interest in a funding application they must declare it. The reviewer must not assess the application or take part in any discussions with regard to a funding decision.

Animal Research

Leuka will fund proposals that include research with animals only where there is no alternative and where they fully comply with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

The Scientific Panel will give careful consideration, during peer review, only to proposals that support the guiding principles of the 3Rs (refine, reduce and replace) for more ethical use of animals in research.

Approval by the Board of Trustees

The Scientific Panel members independently review all funding applications; a decision meeting at which all panel members are present follows this process. Recommendations for funding are then presented to the Board of Trustees for approval. The Board of Trustees has ultimate responsibility for all funding-making decisions and reserve the right to accept or reject recommendations. Following approval by the Board the successful and unsuccessful applicants are informed.

Updating the policy

Leuka will endeavour to review this policy, if necessary, at least every two years in consultation with the Board of Trustees that approves the policy.

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