

Code of Practice for Membership of the Research Awards Pool (RAP)

1. Scope

This Code of Practice sets out the role, responsibility and integrity that is required of all members of the Research Awards Pool (RAP) by the Stroke Association, and is applicable to every RAP meeting, interview panel and any other process set out for research funding adjudication.

The Stroke Association requires all research funding recommendations to be reached with rigour and with the impartiality of all the Committee members, and Committee members must ensure they and their fellow members are acting responsibly and in the best interest of the Stroke Association and its beneficiaries at all times.

If members of the RAP do not adhere to this Code of Practice throughout their membership, their membership of the RAP will be terminated with immediate effect.

2. Responsibilities of RAP Members:

2.1 General

It is the responsibility of each RAP member to:

- Act within research governance and research management best practice and be familiar with the AMRC's Principles of Peer Review.
- Act in the best interests of the Stroke Association, stroke survivors and their families and carers. At all times RAP members must act with impartiality of their own research interests, consider what is best for the organisation and its beneficiaries and avoid bringing it into disrepute.
- Manage Conflicts of Interest responsibly and effectively by self- declaration of any Conflicts of Interest, or potential Conflicts of Interest, throughout the research adjudication process and at the earliest time this becomes known to them.
- Have a sound and up-to-date knowledge of the Stroke Association Research Strategy and any additional priorities, policies or restrictions around the research that the organisation will and will not fund.
- Commit to attending at least one funding meeting or interview panel per year, as requested by Stroke Association research staff. Attendance comprises of submitting scores and written review comments in advance of the meeting and attending in person for the entire meeting duration.
- Book travel to attend meetings at least one month in advance of the meeting to ensure travel claims made to the Stroke Association are reasonable, and at the best rate possible. No reimbursement of Open Return rail tickets purchased on the day of travel will be made by the Stroke Association. Domestic flight costs will only be paid where the RAP has booked one month in advance and where the RAP member can demonstrate (excepting travel from Northern Ireland) that the cost is equivalent or cheaper compared with other forms of travel.
- Ensure when attending meetings that you are available to commit to the day in full, allowing for full participation right from the start time until the finish time of the meeting, as per the agenda.

2.2 Confidentiality and Conflicts of Interest

All RAP members will be required to sign the Stroke Association's Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Policy for RAP members and must commit to take responsibility for their own impartiality and integrity. Self-declaration of any Conflict of Interest or potential Conflict of Interest is a key requirement, as soon as it becomes known within the adjudication process. The definition of a Conflict of Interest can be found in the Stroke Association's Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Policy.

- The Stroke Association research staff will endeavour to identify all potential Conflicts of Interest prior to RAP review of applications.
- RAP members must self-declare any known Conflicts of Interest in advance, and must review the Conflicts of Interest identified by members of the Stroke Association research staff.
- RAP members may wish to dispute any Conflicts of Interest proposed within good reason. The final decision will be agreed by the Chair of the RAP.
- RAP members who have submitted an application for an award, as either the main or co-applicant, will not normally attend the adjudication meeting, except under specific circumstances. For example, an RAP member who has submitted a grant application for consideration may be requested to attend in order to bring specific expertise that cannot be provided by another RAP member. The same shall apply to RAP members for meetings at which a grant application is to be considered upon which they are considered to have any other type of Conflict of Interest (as outlined below in 'Definition of a Conflict of Interest').
- An RAP member may attend a meeting when they have a Conflict of Interest on a grant application other than as Applicant or Co-Applicant. In this circumstance they will be required to leave the meeting during the consideration of any grant application on which they have a Conflict of Interest and will not be permitted to score or comment on the final outcome of the application.
- Once the discussion is complete and the Chair of the RAP has dismissed all RAP members, no further discussion of any of the applications considered should take place, either within or outside of the meeting room.
- The Stroke Association research staff and the Chair of the RAP will not enter into any further discussion or debate about any particular application following the close of a meeting, and RAP members shall not attempt to enter into any such discussion.
- RAP members must abide by the Stroke Association's Confidentiality and Conflicts of Interest Policy, and as such, should not disclose any of the meeting content and discussion, scores or the final outcome with any other party following the meeting.

2.3 Adjudication of Applications

Members of the RAP shall be invited to review and score grant applications assigned to them, usually with two RAP members taking the role of Lead RAP reviewers for each application. This may vary for Fellowship or Lectureship applications which are awarded via interview, whereby RAP members will be asked to review each application and lead on certain aspects of the interview. More detail is provided in 2.3.2 below.

- RAP members will be sent a link to their allocated review files, and should review their files and notify Stroke Association research staff immediately of any potential Conflicts of Interest or any other problems affecting their ability to impartially complete a review of each of their assigned applications. Suggestions of suitable peer reviewers will also be requested by Stroke Association staff at this early stage.
- A triage prior to external peer review may take place; in this instance RAP members are requested to complete the review forms as quickly as possible, and within the two week period specified by Stroke Association research staff in order to remove uncompetitive applications. Stroke Association research staff will notify RAP members of any of their assigned applications that are due to be removed, and RAP members will have the opportunity to dispute this and ask for an application to be peer reviewed.
- RAP members should ensure they read and score their reviews within the allocated time frame and supply an adequate written summary of their review, as requested in the review forms supplied.
- RAP members should endeavour to read as many applications as possible in addition to the ones they have been assigned. This allows for a richer and more balanced discussion to take place of each application, and is essential if the RAP member is invited to join a Fellowship or Lectureship/Reader Awards panel.
- All RAP members who have been allocated applications for a funding meeting should ensure they attend the meeting. Attendance comprises of submitting scores and written review comments in advance of the meeting and attending in person for the entire meeting duration.

2.3.1. Adjudication of Project Grants and Priority Programme Awards

- At the RAP meeting, the two Lead RAP reviewers will be invited by the Chair of the RAP to summarise their review of an application as well as a summary of the external reviewer comments and scores. This should be a short summary of no more than 5 minutes (or a time specified by the Chair), indicating the overall opinion as a summary of the written comments previously provided.
- The Chair will also invite service user members to comment on each application as outlined in 3 below.
- Other RAP members will then be invited to add any further comments if they have read the application.
- RAP members may not comment upon, or score any application which they have not read in advance of the meeting.

- Lead RAP reviewers and other RAP members who have read the application shall provide a view on whether or not each application should be funded during the discussion of each application.
- In the event that an application is potentially fundable pending amendments, the RAP may advise that the applicant take on board recommendations and re-submit the application in future. In this instance, the Lead RAP members must agree on the feedback in the meeting, or approve comments from Stroke Association research staff via email after the meeting. Where re-submitted applications by invitation occur in a meeting, the RAP must consider previous feedback and recommendations provided to the applicant.
- In the event that the RAP requests small changes or the clarification/provision of further information, the applicant may be offered a Conditional Award. Where a Conditional Award is recommended by RAP members, the response or resubmission from the applicants must be approved by two or more RAP members who took this decision in the meeting. The award cannot be made until the resubmission or response to the RAP's request has been received and approved.
- RAP members may be asked by the Chair or Stroke Association research staff to clarify or repeat a point during, or sometimes after, the meeting in order to ensure adequate records of decision-making processes and feedback for applicants. The meeting may be recorded to assist with this, and in this instance the permission of all RAP members present will always be sought at the start of the meeting.
- The final agreed score of the RAP members for each grant application shall be duly recorded for each meeting, and will be used to rank applications and select awards for funding at the end of the meeting.
- The applications will be ranked in order and compared to the available budget. Where it is not possible to fund all applications scoring in the fundable range, and there are a number of applications that are judged to be of equally high quality and worthy of funding, the applications will again be ranked using the SURP Priority ranking. This will allow the final decisions to be made on which projects to fund, taking into account those that are of the highest priority to stroke survivors, their families and carers.
- The Chair will ensure that all opinions are considered whilst keeping the meeting to time. At the end of the discussion of each application, the Chair will ask the RAP Lead reviewers to provide an indication of whether they would support funding this application. The Chair will seek to reach an agreed score from the two lead speakers on each application before moving on.

2.3.2. Adjudication of Fellowship and Lectureship/Reader Awards

- Following submission of scores and reviews for assigned applications as normal, RAP members will be requested to participate in shortlisting of interview candidates and to participate and lead during the interviews of short-listed candidates.
- No SURP scores will be used for these meetings.

- RAP members must ensure they have read all applications and are available to fully participate in the short-listing and selection process of suitable candidates for an award.
- RAP members must submit review comments and scores in advance, in the timeframe as requested by Stroke Association research staff and participate in a teleconference to discuss their scores and agree on short-list with other members of the interview panel.
- RAP members must agree to follow any protocol laid out for the interview by the Chair or the Stroke Association research staff, and will agree the areas they will lead questions upon.
- After the interviews the RAP member must further score and discuss candidates interviewed, and agree with the rest of the panel the candidates appropriate for funding. Where limited funds are available, this will involve agreeing the highest scoring and highest performing candidates with other panel members before leaving the meeting.

2.3.3 Role and Responsibilities of the RAP Chair

An independent Chair of the RAP will be appointed with the same Terms of Office as other RAP members as set out in the Terms of Reference.

The Chair must be impartial, independent and must not be actively in receipt of awards from the Stroke Association. The Chair must sign and abide by the Stroke Association Confidentiality and Conflicts of Interest Policy, and as such, is not permitted to submit a grant application for consideration by the RAP, nor have an interest in any such grant application (e.g. as a co-applicant, collaborator or Head of Department).

The Chair of the RAP shall not score grant applications. If the Chair is to be absent for all or part of a meeting of the RAP, a Vice or Acting Chair will be appointed in advance of the meeting.

The Chair has responsibility for the operation and output of the Committee. The role of Chair is to ensure the following practices are followed:

- RAP members act appropriately and impartially throughout the meeting.
- Adherence to and active implementation of the Stroke Association's Confidentiality and Conflicts of Interest Policy.
- RAP members abide by this Code of Practice for the duration of any adjudication of awards process.
- The full range of scientific opinion is taken into account.
- Sufficient explanation is provided from RAP members for applications not selected for funding, in order to provide adequate feedback to the applicant(s).
- Every member of the RAP has the opportunity to be heard and no opinion is ignored.
- The views of the SURP are appropriately taken into account and any queries or concerns raised are suitably acknowledged and addressed.
- Any significant diversity of opinion is fully explored and discussed, and even in cases where it cannot be resolved, it should be accurately recorded.
- The proceedings of the RAP meeting are accurately minuted to provide a clear and detailed record of the meeting and the decisions made.

3. Role of the Service User Review Panel (SURP)

SURP are only involved in review and adjudication of Project Grants and Priority Programme Awards.

SURP are currently asked to review each application that has scored above threshold by the Lead RAP members and external peer reviewers, before an RAP meeting, and are asked to provide comments and score each application in order of priority as follows:

A = Should be funded

B = Should be funded if money is available

C = Should not be funded

The average rank from SURP for each application is calculated, and key comments are summarised to put forward for the meeting.

Up to four members of the SURP will be invited to attend the RAP meeting to present scores and views from the rest of SURP.

During the discussion of each application at the RAP meeting, the Chair will invite the SURP members to provide comments and ranking results, and they will also have the opportunity to pose questions to the RAP members for the purpose of clarity and further understanding.

The SURP rank will be used at the end of the meeting where insufficient funds are available to fund all the 'fundable' applications as outlined in 2.3.1 above.

This helps the Stroke Association to ensure its funded research is of priority to stroke survivors, their carers and families.

Confidentiality and Conflicts of Interest Policy for the Research Awards Committee (RAP)

All members of the RAP must sign and adhere to this Confidentiality and Conflicts of Interest Policy. We expect RAP members to act with honesty and professional integrity to support our rigorous and impartial peer review process.

- All application forms, peer reviews, RAP member comments and other documents, materials and associated information and scores made available to RAP members during the awards adjudication process must be treated as strictly confidential and shall not be shared, disclosed to or discussed with any other parties.
- The names of any applicants and external referees are strictly confidential and should not be discussed with persons outside of the adjudication process.
- RAP members shall declare any known Conflicts of Interest (definition below) to Stroke Association research staff in advance of the grant application deadline by emailing research@stroke.org.uk.
- Once in receipt of applications and RAP review documents, RAP members must take responsibility to disclose any additional Conflicts of Interest or potential Conflicts of Interest (not identified by Stroke Association research staff) as soon as such conflict of interest becomes known.
- Any declaration of interest in a grant application by an RAP member shall be duly recorded in the minutes and records of the relevant Committee meeting.
- Discussions of an application between members of the RAP which occur outside of the meeting should be declared to the Chair.
- Discussion of applications with other RAP members may only take place during the designated meeting time as permitted by the Chair of the RAP, until the close of such meeting.
- No further discussion or debate of individual applications shall be entered into with other RAP members, Stroke Association research staff or any other external party once the Chair of the RAP has closed the meeting.
- All comments provided during the RAP meeting shall be verified with Stroke Association research staff upon request for the purpose of providing feedback to the applicants.

- Under no circumstances should any personal use be made of any information, documents and other materials made available as part of the award adjudication process.

Definition of a Conflict of Interest:

The Stroke Association considers an RAP member to have a Conflict of Interest under the following circumstances:

- The RAP member is a named party on the grant application, either as applicant, co-applicant, collaborator, reference or named on a support letter, nominating manager, supervisor or the Head of Department.
- The RAP member has a recent collaboration with any of the grant applicants. This includes the following: a grant application, a jointly funded grant, publication in the same field as the proposal or any other active working collaboration in stroke research or the subject of the application in question during the last five years.
- The RAP member has a personal relationship with any of the named parties on a grant application, such as partner, family member or close friendship.
- The RAP member is at the same Research Institute as the lead applicant or, co-applicant of the grant application.
- The RAP member is in the same research department as a named collaborator or referee on an application.
- The Chair of the RAP shall be independent, but in the event of any of the above circumstances applying to the Chair, the same definition of a Conflict of Interest will apply.

A declaration of a Conflict of Interest will be verified by the Research team at the Stroke Association, and if confirmed, the appropriate management of this Conflict of Interest will follow. Further details of this are available in the RAP Code of Practice.

The Chair of the RAP will resolve and make the final decision over any disagreement or dispute related to the definition and presence of a Conflict of Interest, except in the case of the Chair of the RAP, where the final decision will rest with the Director of Research and Information at the Stroke Association.

Acceptance

I confirm I agree to abide by this Code of Practice and Confidentiality and Conflicts of Interest Policy for the Research Awards Pool.

Position and Research Institute.....

Print Name.....

Signed.....

Date.....