

# Code of Practice

This Code of Practice describes the standards of transparency by which the Urban Studies Foundation (USF) abides in administering applications for research awards and other proposals for support, and embodies the principles of equity, integrity and confidentiality for all who are involved in the assessment of proposals. The Code is intended to act as guidance to (a) applicants to USF Funding Schemes and (b) assessors in discharging the responsibilities placed on them in assessing such applications, and sets out the proper conduct expected of them.

## 1. Information for applicants

### (1.1) Application procedures

For each of its schemes for research awards, the USF issues guidelines on the information to be supplied by applicants in support of bids for funds, details of the criteria against which the application will be assessed, and the process and timescale for assessment of the application. These are referred to as 'Further Particulars' or 'Notes for Applicants'.

### (1.2) General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

Applicants to USF grant funding schemes are required to submit the application formally online or via email to indicate that the information provided therein is, to the best of their knowledge, complete and accurate. Applicants should be aware that information they provide will be stored and circulated as necessary for the assessment procedures to be followed, including the necessary sharing relevant information with USF assessors and Trustees who may be based outside of the European Economic Area (EEA) (including in jurisdictions where personal data may not have the same protection as within the EEA). Successful applicants should be aware that the information they provide on the application form may be copied to the relevant authorised officer in their employing or host institution as necessary for the award procedures to be followed, and information on the status of their award may be made available to the relevant authorised officer in their employing institution by the USF as necessary for the conditions of award to be fulfilled.

Application forms will be retained for ten years in the case of successful applications, and seven years in the case of unsuccessful applications, and may be consulted by the USF in the event of future applications being submitted. Details of award holders (including name, institution, project details and amount of award) will be used to compile published lists of award-holders which will be made available on the USF website and associated social media channels, and to produce statistical and historical information on USF awards. Queries submitted under the terms of GDPR about the processing of personal data should be addressed to the USF's Director of Operations (acting as data processor, controller and protection officer). Submitting the USF's online application forms constitutes the applicant's agreement to all terms, conditions, and notices contained in the relevant

Further Particulars. A full privacy notice is available on the USF website, and should be consulted for more detail on these matters: <https://urbanstudiesfoundation.org/home/privacy-notice/>

### (1.3) Data monitoring

Any personal information provided by applicants will be used for communication, monitoring and statistical purposes only, and at no stage will it form any part of the assessment process unless it explicitly forms part of the eligibility criteria for award. For example, some awards may only be for nationals of certain countries.

### (1.4) Equal opportunities

The USF is committed to a policy of equal opportunities which recognises that we live in a society where discrimination still operates to the disadvantage of many groups in society. The USF also believes that all persons should have equal rights to recognition of their human dignity, and to have equal opportunities to be educated, to work, receive services and to participate in society. The USF is therefore committed to the promotion of equal opportunities through the way we manage the organisation, pursue our charitable aims and objectives, and provide services to the urban studies community. In order to express this commitment, we develop, promote and maintain policies that will be conducive to the principles of fairness and equality in both the workplace and administration of our funding awards. The objective of these policies is that no person should suffer or experience less favourable treatment, discrimination or lack of opportunities on the grounds of gender, gender re-assignment, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religious or philosophical beliefs, disability, health status, HIV status, age, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, parental status, sexual orientation, political beliefs or trade union membership, class, responsibility for dependents, physical attributes, ex-offender status, lack of formal qualifications where such qualifications are not formally required, or any other grounds which cannot be shown to be justifiable within the context of an equal opportunities policy. This policy will therefore influence and affect every aspect of activities carried out by the USF, such as: funding and award schemes, promotional work, educational services, recruitment and other functions linked to the USF as determined by the USF Board. All applicants to USF award schemes and funding will therefore receive equal treatment, regardless of race, colour, religion, gender, age, disability or other factors identified above.

### (1.5) Ethics policy

The USF requires the research it funds to be conducted in an ethical manner. The following considerations apply to all proposals: accurate reporting of findings and a commitment to enabling others to replicate results where possible; fair dealing in respect of other researchers and their intellectual property; honesty to research staff and students about the purpose, methods and intended and possible use of the research and any risks involved; confidentiality of information

supplied by research subjects and anonymity of respondents (unless otherwise agreed with research subjects and respondents); and independence and impartiality of researchers to the subject of the research. Additionally, proposals may raise one or more of the following considerations: the involvement of human participants; the involvement of human remains (e.g. traceable to living descendants); the use of non-human animals; destructive analysis of historic artefacts; research that may result in damage to the natural or historic environment; and the use of sensitive social, economic or political data. Wherever necessary, appropriate consent should be obtained from or on behalf of participants or others affected by the research. Applicants should indicate whether their proposed research raises any special ethical issues, and whether their application has been approved by the institution's Research Ethics Committee or other relevant authority. Independent researchers without access to formal ethical scrutiny and approval should briefly describe any special ethical issues, and explain how they will be addressed.

#### (1.6) Assessment process

All applications are judged on their academic merit through a stringent process of committee peer review by appropriate experts normally drawn from the USF board of Trustees. In some circumstances, external Assessors might be sought. Each application is evaluated by at least two Assessors and scored according to criteria set out in the relevant Further Particulars. A final decision is reached by consensus of all awarding committee members.

#### (1.7) Disclosure

Following the assessment of applications, the USF publishes the terms of reference and membership of awards committees in relevant publications and on the USF's web site.

#### (1.8) Outcome of applications

Applicants are informed by email of the outcome of their application. Applicants are informed in the Further Particulars / Notes for Applicants whether feedback can be expected as a feature of the scheme, but it is not typically provided. The USF is regretfully unable to enter into correspondence concerning the decision of the awarding committee.

#### (1.9) Conditions of awards

Recipients of awards are made aware of the regulations governing the scheme in which they have been successful and are required to adhere to those regulations. This includes the completion of annual and/or end of award reports; which may also require input from the appropriate institution representatives (e.g. mentors, senior faculty, financial administration departments, etc.).

#### (1.10) Eligibility and conflicts of interest

Applicants may not list referees who are current Trustees of the USF, unless all of the following three conditions are met: written permission is sought in advance from the USF Director of

Operations; the Trustee in question is not acting as an assessor for the application; and there is a particular and extra-ordinary context that presents a need to list a Trustee as referee (e.g. in the case where a Trustee acted as a candidate's sole PhD supervisor). Trustees of the USF also may not apply to USF Funding Schemes. Applications in either case will not be accepted, and may lead to an internal investigation. Applicants who have previously received an award from the USF are normally not permitted to apply for a second equivalent award, unless explicitly stated otherwise on the award advertisement. Applicants may only submit one application per award scheme unless explicitly stated otherwise on the award advertisement.

#### (1.11) Appeals

The competition for research awards is intense and many high quality applications may not receive support. All applications receive careful scrutiny by the assessors, in the context of competing claims on available funding. Appeals may therefore not be made against the academic judgement of the USF's assessors, panels, or Committees. The sole ground on which an appeal may be made is one of improper procedure. Anyone wishing to make an appeal against a decision should write to the Director of Operations of the USF no later than two months after the result of the competition is announced, citing the specific decision and setting out clearly the substantive basis of the appeal. Only applicants themselves may appeal, though they may include supporting letters as relevant. The Director of Operations will respond in writing within 30 days, or such other period as is reasonably necessary in the circumstances. There are two possible grounds for one further stage of appeal: either improper procedure in the investigation of the original appeal; or the availability of substantial relevant information which for good reason was not made known to the Director of Operations at the time of the investigation. Any such further appeals should be directed to the Chair of the USF setting out the substantive basis for the further appeal with all and any supporting documentation if applicable. The Chair will normally respond within 30 days, or such period as is reasonably necessary in the circumstances.

## **2. Information for assessors (awarding panel members)**

This section applies to assessors that may be either internal (e.g. Trustees) or external assessors.

#### (2.1) Confidentiality

Those who undertake the assessment of applications are required to give an undertaking that all information which they acquire in the discharge of their duties be kept confidential and not be transmitted to any persons other than in accordance with the prescribed procedures for the selection process. All reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that such information is kept in a secure place and in due course disposed of in a secure fashion (or returned to the USF). Information provided to assessors in an application for funding may only be used for the purposes of evaluating the proposal in accordance with the USF's guidelines.

## (2.2) Conflict of interest

Those who undertake the responsibility of assessing applications for funds, either in writing or through membership of awards committees, are required to declare actual or potential conflicts of interest and observe the following guidelines:

- *References:* Assessors shall not participate in the evaluation of any particular application for which they have acted as a referee.
- *Institutional affiliation:* Assessors shall not participate in the evaluation of any proposal emanating from their own institution.
- *Other connections:* Where an application involves a former pupil, close colleague or co-researcher, a family member, or a person with whom there is or has been a current or prior relationship, assessors are required to declare any conflict of interest to the USF Director of Operations and awarding committee Chair. Assessors will then abstain from participating in the evaluation of that particular application.
- *Assessors as applicants:* Assessors who wish to apply for USF support during the period in which they are serving in any capacity as an assessor must abstain from any involvement in the competition to which they are applying, that is, they may not assess or comment or vote on any application in that round of the competition. As stated in section (1.10), Trustees may not apply to USF Funding Schemes.

If assessors are unsure whether their ability to assess a proposal is compromised in any way, they should inform both the Director of Operations and awarding committee Chair of the relevant circumstances so that guidance can be sought on individual cases. A log of such incidents shall be retained for the regular scrutiny of the USF board of trustees.