Competency Framework for Research Funding

A User's Guide

growing your
idea together

What is the competency framework for research funding?

The competency framework for research funding sets out and defines the skills, knowledge and behaviours that researchers need to win research funding.

Who is it for?

The competency framework for research funding is designed for:

- **Researchers** – as a tool to help you evaluate and plan your route to research funding success
- **Managers of researchers** – as a resource to help you in your role supporting the career development of researchers
- **Research management professionals** – as a resource to help you in your planning and provision of research funding development opportunities

The Competency Framework Model

The framework comprises **ten competencies** and spans the range of academic career levels. It is underpinned by two core principles: **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion** and **Research Integrity**.
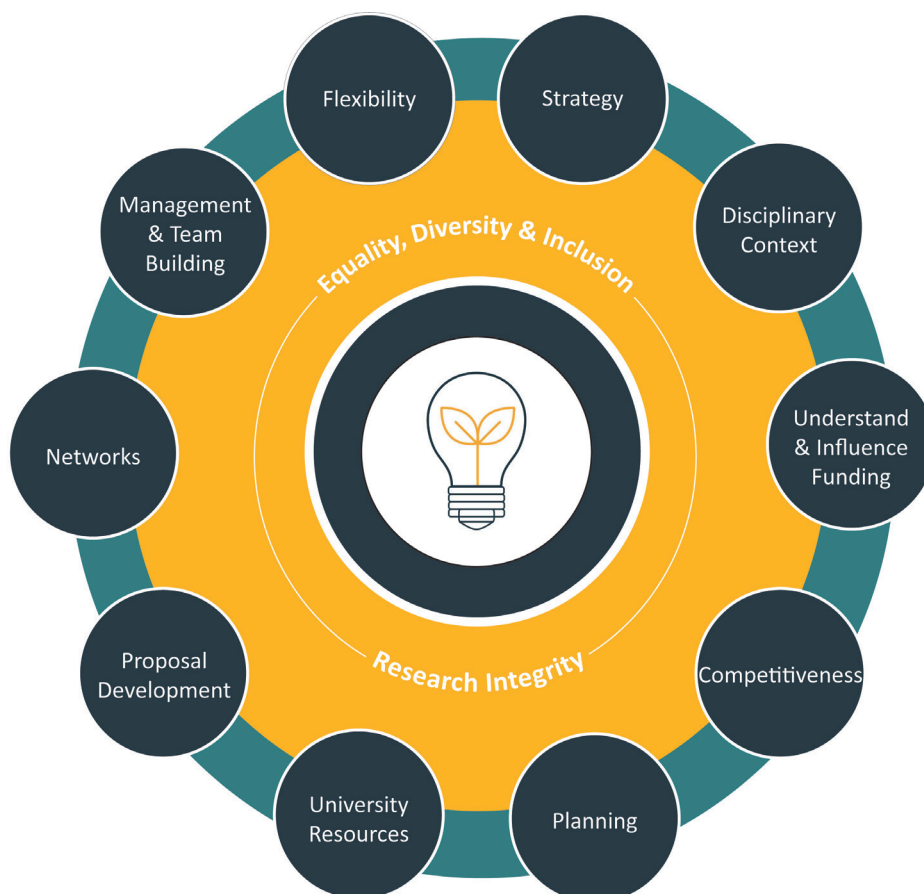
Academic career levels

To avoid ambiguity associated with variable definitions of academic career-levels, we developed the following set of researcher profiles.

Career-Level	Researcher Profile
Aspiring Investigator	High potential researchers who aim to drive their own research but have yet to do so.
New Investigator	Newly independent Principal Investigators beginning to manage and lead research projects and teams. Builds track record of research achievements appropriate to discipline.
Experienced Investigator	Experienced in securing research grant income appropriate to discipline. Consolidates and grows research profile.
Research Leader	Excellent research active academics who could or do run major grants, centres or networks. Demonstrates leadership in research cluster, centre, school or discipline.
Senior Research Leader	Major influencers internally/externally who are also research active. Sit on key boards/committees at national/international level.

How to use the competency framework

Self-evaluation:
- Review the academic career-levels. Which one best fits your current funding track record?
- For each competency, read the associated skills, knowledge and behaviours and make an assessment of where you are
- In which areas do you excel? Where do you need to develop your competence?

Planning your professional development:
- Reflect on your research funding goals. Do you aspire to win your first grant, consolidate your funding portfolio, or win a large grant?
- Identify the competencies you need to develop in order to reach your funding goals
- Use the framework to look for learning opportunities and to structure career development conversations with your line manager

Competencies

For each competency there is a description of what it means in practice together with examples of the skills, knowledge and behaviours expected at each academic career-level. The competencies are intended to be discrete and cumulative, with each career-level building on the ones before.

Strategy

Develops research vision with the bigger picture in mind; has a well-crafted strategy for achieving the vision

Aspiring Investigator	New Investigator	Experienced Investigator	Research Leader	Senior Research Leader
Understands and conveys personal capabilities and vision		Understands and conveys group capabilities and vision	Understands and conveys institutional capabilities and vision	
Aware of how own research aligns with the research strategy of the institution and strategic focus of the department		Develops a collective vision, bringing coherence to their portfolio	Has a well established long-term vision	Shapes and delivers institutional vision

Disciplinary Context

Understands disciplinary context of own research area, values working across disciplines and seeks opportunities to do so

Aspiring Investigator	New Investigator	Experienced Investigator	Research Leader	Senior Research Leader
Aware of the various approaches to working across disciplines		Actively seeks collaborators from other disciplines		
Understands context of own research outside of immediate disciplinary area		Understands how to communicate group research to multiple disciplinary audiences	Shapes development of new research areas	

Understand & Influence Funding

Understands the various types of funding opportunities; seeks opportunities to engage and influence funders

Aspiring Investigator	New Investigator	Experienced Investigator	Research Leader	Senior Research Leader
Seeks to engage with internal peer review opportunities	Peer reviews external funding applications	Sits on funding panels, contributes to funder calls for evidence	Sits on advisory panels, engages with funder-level policy makers	Engages with influential regional and national-level policy makers
Awareness of funders and types of schemes relevant to research area and career-stage	Understands funder priorities and how these relate to own research	Understands different types of large complex grants including diverse development and funding pathways		Understands how to leverage funding from regional and national investments

Competitiveness

Seeks opportunities to enhance competitiveness

Aspiring Investigator	New Investigator	Experienced Investigator	Research Leader	Senior Research Leader
Reflects on track-record of peers successful in applying for funding appropriate to research area and career stage				
Seeks opportunities to enhance personal competitiveness, actively pursuing cycle of self-improvement			Seeks opportunities to enhance competitiveness of department	Seeks opportunities to enhance competitiveness of institution

Planning

Cultivates a pipeline of research proposals, ensuring continuity in delivery of research vision

Aspiring Investigator	New Investigator	Experienced Investigator	Research Leader	Senior Research Leader
Understands how to plan and submit a funding application		Draws up long-term plans to ensure sustainability of portfolio	Aligns individual/group plans to those at institution-level	
Awareness of institutional policies, procedures and processes		Engages in continuity planning		

University Resources

Is aware of university resources available and understands how to access them

Aspiring Investigator	New Investigator	Experienced Investigator	Research Leader	Senior Research Leader
Aware of institutional research support available		Negotiates access to College-level resources		Unlocks institution-level resources
Knows immediate academic environment and resources available				

Proposal Development

Is able to craft high-quality research proposals, designing budgets which optimise recovery of all eligible research costs, allowing the planned activities to be completed

Aspiring Investigator	New Investigator	Experienced Investigator	Research Leader	Senior Research Leader
Understands basic architecture and component elements of proposals		Understands specialist elements associated with non-standard proposals		
Designs simple budgets	Designs standard budgets	Designs complex budgets		
Recognises common characteristics of high quality proposals				

Networks

Leverages networks to enhance the quality of research proposals

Aspiring Investigator	New Investigator	Experienced Investigator	Research Leader	Senior Research Leader
Leverages personal networks to gain feedback and advice on proposals		Leverages group networks to gain feedback and advice on proposals		Leverages national/international networks to identify collaborators beyond group network and optimise application strategy
Refines ideas though participating in external group meetings				

Management & Team Building

Is responsible for managing own grants and research group; actively seeks to develop self and team

Aspiring Investigator	New Investigator	Experienced Investigator	Research Leader	Senior Research Leader
Manages own grant in line with funder requirements and institutional policies and procedures		Manages an increasingly complex portfolio of research projects and teams, utilising delegation and professional management support where appropriate		
Embeds Equality, Diversity and Inclusion good practice into recruitment			Takes on additional management responsibilities within institution or externally	
Seeks to identify and engage appropriate mentors	Builds team career development opportunities into proposals	Acts as a mentor and proactively nurtures talent within group and amongst peers	Engages in succession planning at department level	Engages in succession planning at institutional level

Flexibility

Is able to adapt to feedback and funding decisions to sustain research vision

Aspiring Investigator	New Investigator	Experienced Investigator	Research Leader	Senior Research Leader
Understands how to effectively respond to reviewers comments				
Repurposes rejected proposals and identifies alternative funding sources				

Underpinning Principles

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion: are values that must underpin the practice of applying for research funding. Everyone should have equal access and opportunity to a successful career in academia. Special attention should be made when employing this framework to elements of equality, diversity and inclusion to ensure researchers do not experience barriers to opportunities for research funding which may relate to any one of the protected characteristics stipulated in the 2010 Equality Act. Furthermore, applicants for research funding must also demonstrate their commitment to considering protected characteristics and intersectionality when designing research, recruiting participants, and considering the potential impacts of their work.

Research Integrity: means conducting research in such a way that allows others to have confidence and trust in the methods and the findings of the research. It relates both to the scientific integrity of conducted research and to the professional integrity of researchers. Key elements of research integrity include: honesty, rigour, transparency and open communication, the care and respect of all participants, and accountability. These elements should be present at all stages of research.

How was the framework developed?

The competency framework for research funding was developed during workshops held with experienced research managers. It reflects input from funders, researchers and experts in researcher development. The framework was developed by Edinburgh Research Office and the Institute for Academic Development.

About us

Edinburgh Research Office: We work alongside researchers to grow ideas into fundable proposals. We provide expertise at all stages, from developing your idea and identifying funding to crafting your application and managing your award. We work with research leaders to develop research strategies based on sound funder insights and intelligence. We offer expertise across UK, European and international funders. We are enablers and connectors, networked across the University, able to provide the best advice to researchers and research leaders in all disciplines.

Institute for Academic Development: Our remit is to provide University level support for researcher development, teaching and learning; through leadership, innovation, collaboration and direct provision that benefits students, staff and the University's international reputation. This includes a mixture of direct support for students and staff (e.g. workshops, online resources, networks and advice), much of it delivered in partnership with Schools and other Services, alongside support for research culture.

Get in touch

THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH
Edinburgh Research Office

Website: www.ed.ac.uk/research-office
Email: See our website for individual contacts
Twitter: @GrowingYourIdea
Blog: blogs.ed.ac.uk/research-office

IAD INSTITUTE FOR
ACADEMIC
DEVELOPMENT

Website: www.ed.ac.uk/iad/researchers
Email: ad.researchers@ed.ac.uk
Twitter: @researchersated
Blog: iad4researchers.wordpress.com

Date Published: 2nd February 2021 (kirsty.collinge@ed.ac.uk)