

BREAST CANCER UK POLICY ON PEER REVIEW

1. General

1.1 This policy relates to all science panels (also known as the 'Independent Scientific Review Panel', termed 'science panel', individuals within the science panel may be termed 'panel members') and other funding panels of the charity, any chairs and other members, including trustees of the charity.

1.2 The purpose of this document is to demonstrate how Breast Cancer UK performs peer review of both grant applications and science reviews produced by the charity, a summary infographic of the former is noted in Fig 1.

1.3 This document outlines guidelines on how Breast Cancer UK undergoes peer review assessment of its information and grants. Grants undergo a process involving peer review by at least 2 science panel experts, followed by a formal Grant Committee in which at least 5 science panel members sit to discuss all applications within the funding round. Formal recommendations are made by the Grant Committee to the Science and Health Education Committee, who make the final approvals before ratification at the board.

2. Proportionality

2.1 At least two scientific research panel members must assess every grant application received for a value of over £1000. Below this the Science and Health Education team in conjunction and with approval from the Science and Health Education Committee assess applications.

2.2 At least two scientific research panel members must assess each science review produced by the charity. Where only a new or significantly updated key fact sheet is reviewed it is permitted for this to be reviewed by a single member under extenuating circumstances.

2.3 The charity ensures that where an individual grant application is assessed markedly differently between reviewer 1 and reviewer 2 (normally more than 10 points apart), a third reviewer will be asked to review the application. Any averaged marks that are more than 5 points different between reviewer 1 and 2 will be given additional time for discussion at the Grant Committee.

3. Independence

3.1 Internal staff at Breast Cancer UK are not permitted to review scientific applications for funding over £1000 or be members of research review committees. Applications may be triaged by staff, however any review of the research quality must be obtained by a member of the science panel.

3.2 Science panel members or any other external review authority must be independent of the Breast Cancer UK staff body.

3.3 Collated reviews and correspondence may be presented at regular intervals to trustees, as part of the charity's Science and Health Education Committee Meetings.

4. Rotation and Membership

4.1 A science panel member will have a fixed initial term of office of 3 years, this can be extended by up to another 3 years if the panel member and Science and Health Education Committee agrees. Panel members who have served 6 years on the panel must step down for at least 3 years.

4.2 Panel members are expected to make every effort to complete reviews according to the timeline described in correspondence from Breast Cancer UK. Members should effectively communicate to Breast Cancer UK staff if they are unable to complete within timeframes given.

4.3 Failure to respond to multiple requests for reviews and feedback from Breast Cancer UK may result in removal of the member from the science panel with one week's written notice.

4.4 If a panel member resigns from the science panel, this should be directed to the Director of Research and Engagement with at least one month's written notice.

4.5 Breast Cancer UK may appoint a chair of the science panel, this should not be a trustee of the charity.

4.6 Trustees are not permitted to sit on the science panel.

5. Diversity

5.1 Breast Cancer UK strives for diversity within our science panel, we look across a range of expertise that are relevant to breast cancer prevention.

5.2 Breast Cancer UK has a Public and Engagement Panel (PEP) which is formulated of volunteer members of the public with an interest in breast cancer prevention. The Public and Engagement Panel supports the reviewing of internally authored science reviews from a lay perspective.

5.3 The charity aims to develop the diversity of the science panel, and actively seeks representation on the panel from different backgrounds, experiences, cultures as well as expertise.

5.4 New science panel members will be inducted into the charity by the Science team.

5.5 A terms of reference covers membership of the science panel, this is circulated and signed by the panel member upon joining as part of HR processes.

6. Impartiality

6.1 Members of the science panel are expected to declare any potential conflicts of interest relating to individual funding decisions to the Director of Research and Engagement before reviews wherein they will be discussed, or during the process as soon as the existence of a conflict becomes apparent, in line with the policy on Conflicts of Interest on Science Panels.

6.2 All science panel members will sign a copy of the terms of reference which includes details of the conflicts of interest that must be declared, alongside the 'Conflicts of Interest on a Science Panel' policy.

6.3 All science panel members will make a written declaration of interest at least every two years during their committee term.

6.4 Science panel members should not share or discuss any material relating to an application or review outside of Breast Cancer UK and the science panel.

6.5 Members of the science panel who are applying as a PI, Co-PI or mentor on a grant application must not review any applications within that round of funding.

6.6 Where a conflict exists, the science panel member must absent themselves from any discussion relating to that application or review.

7. Transparency

7.1 Breast Cancer UK will update our website with any successful grant applications upon funding being awarded.

7.2 The charity publishes the process of peer review and science strategy for clarity on our website.

7.3 The charity publishes grant funding opportunities across multiple platforms and as widely as possible.

7.4 Timely feedback is given to all grant applicants if requested.

8. Updates to policy

8.1 The charity will endeavour to review this policy, if necessary, every two years, in consultation with the board of Trustees.

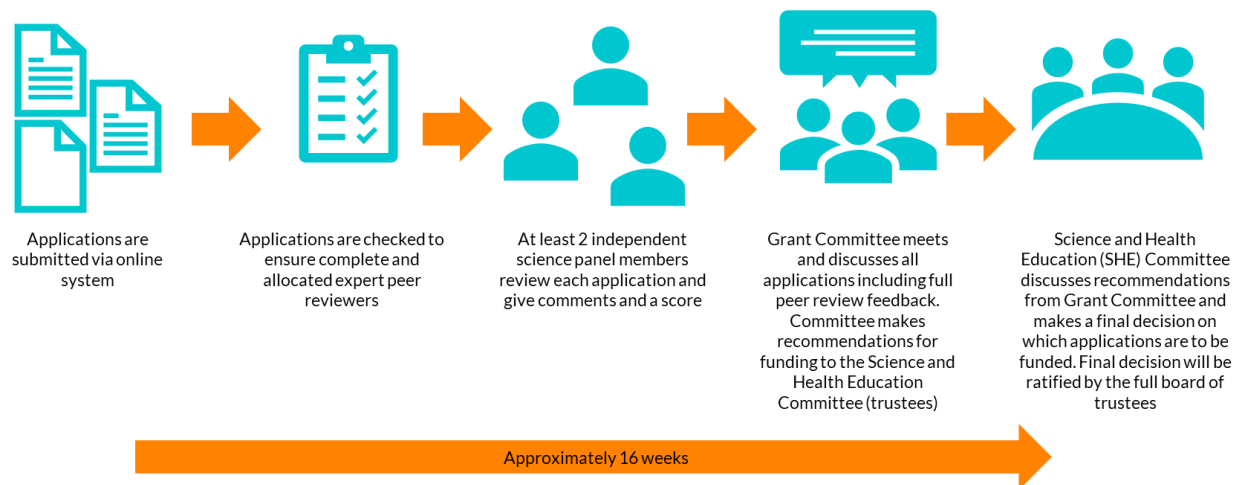


Figure 1. Peer review processing for Breast Cancer UK grant applications.