

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. It also contains some general policies and conditions relating to USF funding.

The Code of Practice is intended to act as guidance to (1) applicants to USF funding schemes, (2) recipients of USF funding, and (3) assessors of USF funding applications (in terms of discharging the responsibilities placed on them in assessing applications to USF funding, and setting out the proper conduct expected of them).

The Code of Practice may be updated from time to time, and interested parties should ensure they have downloaded the most recent version from the USF website.

Questions regarding the Code of Practice should be addressed to the USF Executive Director, Joe Shaw, via email: joe.shaw@urbanstudiesfoundation.org

1. Information for applicants

(1.1) Application procedures and terms

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) 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 Executive Director; 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, nor may they be named as supporting mentors/supervisors for candidates. Nor may managing editors of the Urban Studies Journal Limited. 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. Applications and

proposals must typically be completed in English language, even if publications and outputs may be permitted in any language.

(1.3) 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, referees 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. 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 Executive Director (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/>

(1.4) 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.

(1.5) Equality, diversity and inclusion

The USF is actively committed to values of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). The USF continually works towards embedding and enacting these values throughout its aims, objectives, and management as a charitable research foundation. This includes direct considerations around the design, assessment, and evaluation of USF grant-making schemes and activities, as well as operational considerations around management systems, processes, behaviours, cultures, and recruitment (including through a commitment to equal opportunities within the context of the UK

Equality Act 2010). This Code of Practice outlines the broad definitions and strategies that currently comprise the USF's commitment to EDI.

The USF recognises that discrimination operates to the disadvantage of many groups in society. A commitment to values of equality must therefore include strategies to uphold equal rights to recognition of human dignity, and equal opportunities to be educated, work, receive services and to participate in the urban studies community. The USF will therefore actively work towards the removal of systemic barriers and biases in the design and assessment of USF grant funding awards, providing more equal opportunities for individuals to access and benefit from USF grants and activities. The USF will also continue to develop, promote and maintain policies that will be conducive to the principles of fairness and equality in the wider management of its workplace. 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 race, colour, place of origin, religion, immigrant status, ethnic origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability status, age, or any other grounds which can demonstrated to be justifiable within the context of an equal opportunities policy. Diversity is defined here as individual differences along these same grounds, or any other grounds which can demonstrated to be justifiable within the context of USF activities. Values of diversity are upheld through USF management policies, grant design and grant assessment criteria, based on the principle that a diversity of perspectives and lived experiences is also fundamental to achieving research and training excellence. Or, that prioritising factors of EDI in research environments can enhance excellence, including via innovation and creativity. The USF also commits to values of inclusion through the practice of ensuring that all individuals are valued and respected for their contributions to USF activities, and are equally supported in making such contributions.

The USF has pursued these commitments and values through a number of actions and initiatives to date, including the following examples. First, the USF routinely conducts EDI surveys and analyses on the characteristics of applicants and awardees to USF grant schemes, identifying and describing valid comparator analysis that may inform ongoing evaluation of EDI considerations. This action is crucial to the ongoing development of the USF's understanding of the systemic barriers faced by individuals from under-represented groups, in order to put in place impactful measures to address these barriers. This has resulted in several evidence-based EDI interventions to date, not least: the initiation of additional grant funding for extra-ordinary care or disability support costs through a dedicated awardee support fund; structural and regional considerations in the design and assessment of USF grant awards, specifically in terms of support for scholars and initiatives in the Global South; and the application of the UK's Equality Act (2010) in the short-listing of award candidates or recruitment of Trustees. Second, all USF award schemes and initiatives are routinely evaluated in EDI terms by their respective awarding panels, as well as the USF Board of Trustees as a whole. This has resulted, along with the use of EDI survey data and analysis, in the re-design of scheme

purposes, terms, and designated funding levels. In this respect, EDI directly informs USF funding strategies, alongside other foundational needs and practical considerations such as income levels and operational possibilities. Third, the USF is committed to the evaluation of its own Board of Trustees in EDI terms, which has led to a review of recruitment processes and the increased diversification of the Board across characteristics such as regional and institutional representation, gender, and race. USF Board members must also commit to a code of conduct that requires respect of EDI values as part of the governance and behavioural culture of the organisation. The USF will continue to place EDI considerations at the forefront of its aims and objectives, including through the ongoing development, promotion, and maintenance of programmes and policies that uphold EDI values.

(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 regrettably unable to enter into correspondence concerning the decision of the awarding committee.

(1.9) 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 Executive Director 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 Executive Director 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 Executive Director 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 recipients of USF funding

(2.1) 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.). All recipients of USF funding must publicly and appropriately acknowledge this funding in any associated outputs from the funded activities (e.g. journal papers, books, events, etc.), and further guidance for this will be issued along with any offer of funding.

(2.2) 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.

(2.3) Intellectual assets

The USF defines intellectual assets as both intellectual property rights (e.g. patents, trademarks, copyright and design rights) and also broader 'know-how', processes, trade secrets, methodologies, and other forms of knowledge that may be developed during a research project. Unless agreed otherwise, the USF makes no claim to the intellectual assets arising from the research, training, knowledge mobilisation and other activities that it supports. The management of intellectual assets is therefore delegated to the individual awardees, host institutions, and other recipients of USF funding. This flexible approach expects that USF-funded research partners should reflect upon the circumstances of their case, and put in place an agreement that suits all parties. Unless prior discussion and explicit arrangements have been made in advance, the USF's general policy is that ownership of intellectual assets should reside with its generator(s), and that there should be no restrictions on the concerned USF-funded researchers' future research activities. Therefore, unless alternative arrangements are explicitly agreed between the researcher(s), host institution(s) and/or any collaborator(s), intellectual property rights arising from USF-funded research activities will belong to the individual(s) who generate(s) them. The USF is not able to offer any detailed advice or negotiation surrounding intellectual assets beyond this policy, and does not accept any form of liability for intellectual assets arising from issues related to USF-funded research.

(2.4) Budget restrictions

Unless stated otherwise in the relevant award terms (for example, see: 'Further Particulars', 'Notes for Applicants', etc.) the USF will not normally fund institutional management fees, 'full economic costs' (FECs), or other such overheads. Applicants to USF funding should consult the award terms to fully understand what sort of budget evidence and justification is required for applying to each scheme.

3. Information for assessors

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

(3.1) 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.

(3.2) 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 Executive Director 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 Executive Director 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.