



EDCTP

European & Developing Countries
Clinical Trials Partnership

EDCTP2 - Guidance for Expert Reviewers attending Scientific Review Committee Meetings

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Document history		
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1	01-04-2017	First version
2	31-07-2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Additional guidance added for rapporteurs• Reorganisation of some paragraphs to improve on clarity• Minor text edits to improve on clarity & fixing of typos

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List of Acronyms

CoI	Conflict of Interest
DoI	Declaration of Interest
EDCTP	European & Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership
PO	Project Officer
SEC	Secretariat
SRC	Scientific Review Committee

1 Introduction

This guide aims to inform Expert Reviewers attending EDCTP’s Scientific Review Committee (SRC) about their roles and responsibilities before, during and after the meeting. This guide should be used alongside the [Guidance for Expert Reviewers](#) that details the EDCTP evaluation procedures and outlines the responsibilities and code of conduct to which reviewers participating in an evaluation should adhere. The goal of the SRC meeting is to agree on a consensus score and consensus evaluation summary for each proposal and to rank all proposals.

2 SRC meeting in EDCTP’s evaluation procedure

The SRC meeting is the last step of the technical evaluation procedure which leads to a ranked list of proposals sent to the EDCTP Board for approval and funding recommendation (Figure 1). Prior to the SRC meeting, applications (full proposals) have been reviewed externally by a number of Expert Reviewers, most of whom will be present at the SRC meeting. Applicants have submitted a rebuttal in response to the reviewers’ comments before the SRC meeting.

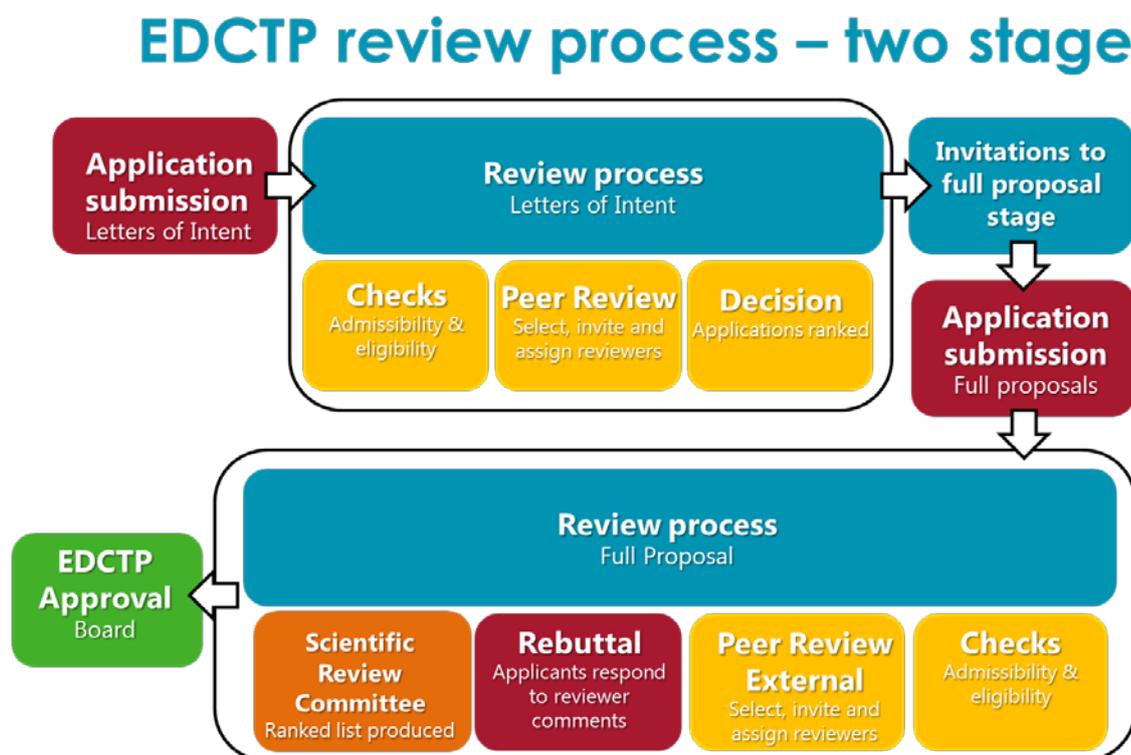


Figure 1. Steps of the review process

3 The Scientific Review Committee (SRC)

The composition of the SRC is contingent on a number of factors including:

- The diversity of the Committee in the areas of expertise
- The spread of applications under consideration
- Gender balance
- Geographical representation
- Institutional diversity
- Availability of reviewers
- Avoidance of potential conflicts of interest.

4 SRC meeting approach

4.1 Before the SRC meeting

Reviewers are provided with the meeting agenda containing a list of all proposals including assigned **Rapporteur** (R) and **Confirmer** (C) roles for each proposal. Normally, one Rapporteur and two Confirmers are assigned to each proposal.

SRC members have the following tasks to complete before the SRC meeting:

Role	Tasks to be completed before SRC meeting
SCR Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Familiarise themselves with all unconflicted proposals (see section 5 for conflicts of interest)Have a briefing meeting with EDCTP staff prior to the SRC meeting
Rapporteur	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Read and review all assigned proposalsPrepare a draft consensus evaluation summary (a word template will be provided- please refer to Annex 1 for an example with guidance notes) for each assigned proposal ahead of the meeting and send it to the project officer (PO) by email. The consensus evaluation summary is a consolidated summary of the Excellence, Impact and Implementation aspects of the proposal. This summary should take into account the comments from the External Reviewers and the rebuttal from the applicant. Please pay special attention to any outlying opinions or scores, they may be as valid as others. The consensus evaluation summary should not simply be a cut and paste of all the reviewers' individual comments as these have already been shared with the applicant. The summary should provide a concise sum-up of the committee consensus deliberations that justifies the final consensus score (see section 4.4 for further guidance). The consensus evaluation summary will be finalised during the SRC meeting.
Confirmer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Read and review all assigned proposalsPrepare any comments that should be raised during the meeting discussion, and be incorporated into the consensus evaluation summary for the assigned proposal.
All SRC members	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Familiarise themselves with all proposals where they do not have a conflict, in order to contribute to the discussion at the SRC meeting.

The following documents will be available to all SRC members via the reviewer's accounts on EDCTPgrants:

- Access to all proposals (excluding those for which a conflict of interest (CoI) has been declared)
- External Reviewer evaluations and scores
- Applicants' rebuttal

4.2 During the SRC meeting

The SRC meeting is led by the SRC Chair (one of the SRC members selected by the EDCTP Secretariat) and moderated by the PO. The SRC meeting may be conducted via face-to-face meeting, remotely (tele- or video-conference) or a combination of modalities. The primary tool that is used during the SRC meeting is EDCTPgrants. Reviewers can access all meeting documents through their EDCTPgrants account and should bring their laptops to the meeting as paper copies are not provided. In the event that this is not possible, reviewers should let EDCTP know in advance so a laptop can be provided.

SRC members have the following tasks to complete during the course of the meeting:

Role	Tasks to be completed during SRC meeting
SCR Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invites the Rapporteur to present the proposal to the Committee and outline the draft consensus evaluation summary which he/she has prepared in advance and which will be finalised at the meeting • Invites the Confirmers to raise any additional points for consideration and inclusion in the Rapporteur's consensus evaluation summary • Invites other SRC members to contribute to the discussion and asks the Rapporteur to annotate any additional comments to be included in the consensus evaluation summary • Seeks a consensus from the SRC members on the proposed scores. The consensus scores should reflect the outcome of the SRC deliberations. The final scores may differ from the mean scores calculated from the External Reviews • Ensures that the meeting runs to schedule.
Rapporteur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presents a brief summary of the assigned proposal, highlighting strengths and weaknesses, and presents the draft consensus evaluation summary to SRC members • Proposes a score for Excellence, Impact and Implementation based on the SRC's deliberations • Annotates any additional comments raised during the discussion which need to be incorporated in the consensus evaluation summary.
Confirmer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepares any salient comments to add during the discussion of the assigned proposals.
All SRC members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarise themselves with all unconflicted proposals. These will be available in the reviewers' accounts in EDCTPgrants • Contribute to the discussion of proposals and raise points for consideration and addition to the consensus evaluation summary.
EDCTP SEC member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures equal and consistent treatment of proposals through the entire review process • Addresses any issues or questions on EDCTP2 policies and procedures.

4.2.1 Guidance on consensus building

Consensus is reached through a discussion on the basis of the individual evaluations. It is not a simple averaging exercise. The aim is to reach agreement on comments and scores – first agree the comments before the scores. "Outlying" opinions need to be explored as they might be as valid as others – be open-minded. It is normal for individual views to change during the consensus discussion and from the individual reviewers' evaluations.

4.2.2 Ranking list

Once all proposals have been discussed, a draft ranking of the proposals is drawn up by the EDCTP Secretariat based on the consensus scores proposed at the SRC meeting. Proposals with scores above the funding threshold will be discussed further to finalise the consensus score and ranking order. Please note that consensus scores may change during the discussion. The final ranking order of proposals will be put forward to the EDCTP Board for approval and funding recommendations.

In the case where proposals have identical consensus scores, they will be ranked based on the following priority criteria:

1. Proposals that address topics, or sub-topics, not otherwise covered by more highly-ranked proposals will be considered to have the highest priority

2. These proposals identified under (1), if any, will themselves be prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for the criterion **Excellence**. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on scores for the criterion **Impact**
3. If necessary, any further prioritisation will be based on the following factors, in order: relative number of sub-Saharan African countries involved; gender balance among the personnel named in the proposal who will be primarily responsible for carrying out the action; leverage of funding from third parties; quality of the networking activities.
If a distinction still cannot be made, the panel may decide to further prioritise by considering the potential for synergies between proposals, or other factors related to the objectives of the call or the EDCTP2 Programme in general. These factors will be documented in the report of the review committee.
4. For prizes, the award criteria, scoring and weighting will be set out in the Rules of Contest.

4.3 Before the end of the SRC meeting

SRC members have the following tasks to complete before the end of the meeting:

Role	Task to be completed before the end of SRC meeting
SCR Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on how many proposals are being reviewed during the SRC meeting, the Chair may be assigned as Rapporteur or Confirmer for a limited number of proposals. In this case, he/she will need to fulfil the responsibilities for these roles • The final ranking sheet containing the final scores is signed by the SRC Chair.
Rapporteurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalise the draft consensus evaluation summary and consensus score for each assigned proposal, taking into consideration the external evaluations, the rebuttal and the discussion at the SRC meeting • Share the draft consensus evaluation summary with the Confirmers • Complete and submit the consensus evaluation summary in EDCTPgrants for validation by EDCTP staff. <u>Please note that the consensus evaluation summary will be sent to the applicants as feedback. It is therefore important that the summary provides constructive feedback for the applicants and comments that justify the score received.</u>
Confirmers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in the finalisation of the consensus evaluation summary • Review the consensus evaluation summary and approve of its content in EDCTPgrants.
EDCTP SEC member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validates the consensus evaluation summary before it is released to the Confirmers.

4.4 Finalising the consensus evaluation report (rapporteur summary)

The aim of the consensus evaluation report is to give:

- An objective and clear assessment of the proposal based on its merit, with justification
- Clear feedback on the proposal's strengths and weaknesses

Avoid:

- Comments not related to the criterion in question
- Comments that are too short or too long or use inappropriate language, you should explain what you mean in an adequate length and clear manner
- Categorical statements that have not been properly verified, e.g. "The proposal doesn't mention user requirements" – when there is a short reference. Please note that applicants can challenge those through evaluation review procedures

- Scores that do not match the comments
- Making recommendations
- Marking down a proposal for the same critical aspect under two different evaluation criteria.

The consensus report is the final feedback received by applicants and represents the 'public face' of the evaluation (and EDCTP) and it must reflect the quality of the evaluation. Proofreading is important and the Rapporteur and Confirmers must check for potential factual errors.

5 Avoiding conflicts of interest

Potential CoI with any of the applications discussed at the SRC meeting are screened prior to the meeting by the EDCTP Secretariat. Reviewers are sent a list of all applications under consideration, including the names of lead applicants and co-applicants with their affiliations, in order to declare any additional or recent conflicts. Applications for which a CoI is declared or identified are not accessible to the reviewers in the EDCTPgrants system. Reviewers are asked to step outside of the meeting room during the discussion of the conflicted applications. If at any point during the meeting, a reviewer considers that he/she may have a potential CoI, the reviewer should indicate this to the SRC Chair and EDCTP moderator immediately and step out of the meeting room.

6 Confidentiality

Reviewers are bound by the Expert Reviewer contract and the [EDCTP Code of Conduct and Declarations of Interest policy](#) to keep all matters discussed at the meeting strictly confidential.

7 Financial and operational aspects

EDCTP will assist with travel and accommodation arrangements to attend the SRC meeting. Please refer to your expert reviewer's contract and EDCTP's travel policy for details on reimbursement. When the review process is completed, a payment request form will be sent to SRC members for completion. Once the EDCTP Secretariat receives the completed payment request form and our finance department verifies the bank account information, then payment will be disbursed. Please note that errors in the bank account information will lead to delays in the payment transfer.

Annex 1: Consensus Evaluation Summary template with guidance

EDCTP Call Title:	
Reference number:	
Project Coordinator:	
Project Title:	

Excellence (1000 word max)	
<p>A clear assessment of the proposal based on its merit, with justification.</p> <p>Clear feedback on the proposal's strengths and weaknesses.</p> <p>A succinct summary of the consensus view of the committee on how the proposal met or did not meet the criteria under Excellence and that gives the rationale for the final score (0-5).</p> <p>If the proposal is only marginally relevant in terms of its scientific content relating to the call or topic addressed, this must be reflected in a lower score for the Excellence criterion – no matter how excellent the science.</p> <p>Do not simply cut and paste the individual reviewers' comments (the applicants have seen these already). Do not comment on factors covered under other criteria.</p>	
Excellence score	
Impact (1000 word max)	
<p>A clear assessment of the proposal based on its merit, with justification.</p> <p>Clear feedback on the proposal's strengths and weaknesses.</p> <p>A succinct summary of the consensus view of the committee on how the proposal met or did not meet the criteria under Impact and that gives the rationale for the final score (0-5).</p> <p>If the proposal does not significantly contribute to the expected impacts as specified for the call or topic, this must be reflected in a lower score for the Impact criterion.</p> <p>Do not simply cut and paste the individual reviewers' comments (the applicants have seen these already). Do not comment on factors covered under other criteria.</p>	
Impact - Score	
Implementation (1000 word max)	
<p>A clear assessment of the proposal based on its merit, with justification.</p> <p>Clear feedback on the proposal's strengths and weaknesses.</p> <p>A succinct summary of the consensus view of the committee on how the proposal met or did not meet the criteria under Implementation and that gives the rationale for the final score (0-5).</p> <p>If the proposal would require substantial modifications in terms of implementation (i.e. change of partners, additional work packages, cut of work packages, significant budget or resources cut), then this must be reflected in a low score for the Quality and efficiency of the implementation criterion.</p> <p>Do not simply cut and paste the individual reviewers' comments (the applicants have seen these already). Do not comment on factors covered under other criteria.</p>	
Implementation score	
Total score	

Scores

The scores range from **0 to 5** and can be interpreted as follows:

0= Fails to address the criterion (or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information).

1= Poor, the criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.

2= Fair, the proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.

3= Good, the proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.

4= Very Good, the proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.

5= Excellent, the proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

Please note that half marks may be given.

Only applications with the required score threshold will be considered for further evaluation. The threshold for individual criteria is 3 (out of a maximum score of 5). The overall threshold, applying to the sum of the three individual scores is 10 (out of a maximum total of 15).