

Research Governance Standard Operating Procedure 10 – Peer review

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1. Glossary

Terminology is explained in the Research Governance Glossary, the most recent version of which can be found on the [Research Governance webpages](#).

2. Background

This SOP explains the standards of peer review required for university Sponsored studies, as set out in the **UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research**. It explains where peer review fits within the Sponsorship process, what advice RGT members should provide to researchers who are arranging peer review, and how RGT members should assure themselves that appropriate peer review has been provided. It also provides guidance on the UK Policy Framework peer review requirements as they pertain to educational research, and guidance on the NIHR peer review requirements for adoption to the NIHR portfolio.

One role of the Sponsor, as defined in the [UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research](#), is “ensuring that research proposals and protocols:... - are scientifically sound (e.g. through independent expert review)”. Research Governance typically meet this requirement by ensuring that a peer review has been conducted which includes a favourable review of the proposed methodology.

3. Scope

This SOP applies to peer review as required in the conduct of University-Sponsored Health and Social care research. It does not apply to peer review more broadly. This SOP assumes familiarity with the UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care.

4. Responsibilities

This SOP explains how the **RGT member** reviewing a study for Sponsorship should advise researchers on how to secure appropriate peer review, and how to assess this review when it has been produced.

5. Procedure

5.1 Central process

The RGT member reviewing the study for Sponsorship should follow the below decision tree:

a) RGT member checks whether the study is funded by an organisation whose peer-review process are known to include review of research methodology (An up-to-date list of these funders can be found on the [RGT Sharepoint](#); RGT members can request additions to the list by discussion with the HoRG).

Yes: appropriate peer review is established and **RGT member** can progress to Sponsorship. **No:** proceed to **b**).

*b) Where study has been through another organisation’s peer review process, but the details of that process are unknown, the RGT member may either proceed directly to **c**) or choose to request information to determine the nature of that organisation’s process.*

Yes: appropriate peer review is established and **RGT member** can progress to Sponsorship. **No:** proceed to **c**).

c) RGT member requests evidence of peer review, including an assessment of methodology. If one is not available, provide [template](#), advise that the reviewer(s) should have an expertise in the relevant field and not be part of the same research team.

Yes: proceed to **c)**. **No:** repeat **b)** until peer review provided.

d) RGT member assesses whether the peer review includes an assessment of methodology.

Yes: proceed to **d)**. **No:** Request again per **b)**, do not progress to Sponsorship.

e) RGT member assesses whether the review (of methodology) is broadly favourable.

Yes: progress to Sponsorship. **No:** raise to **HoRG** for further consideration.

5.2 Educational research

Where the research is *educational*, i.e. it is being carried out by a student to satisfy conditions of a degree award, the student’s supervisor should attest to the “scientific validity and quality [...] at a level appropriate to the nature of the course” of the research.

5.3 NIHR portfolio adoption

Where the researcher intends to apply for NIHR portfolio adoption, the **RGT member** should advise that the NIHR will require peer review meeting their requirements ([NIHR Eligibility Criteria for CRN Support](#), note that CRNs are now called RDNs (Research Delivery Networks)), and that the study will not be adopted without this. This information will be provided for advice only, this does not impact our process.

6. Related documents

Internal documents

[Peer review template](#)

External documents

[UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research](#)

[DHSC Eligibility Criteria for NIHR Clinical Research Network Support](#)