

# University Defence Research Collaboration in Signal Processing, Phase 3 Application Theme: “Acoustic Signal and Information Processing in the Underwater Environment”

## Frequently asked questions

This document is intended to provide potential applicants with guidance on matters not fully explicit in the call document. It also ensures that relevant information is distributed as widely as possible.

Updated: 14<sup>th</sup> August 2019

Q1. Is hardware development within scope of the project?

A1. As indicated in the call, proposals are solicited that carry out cutting-edge research, and this will carry most weight in the evaluation stage. Those which include a large proportion of time or budget on data collection or equipment procurement will therefore not score as highly in the evaluation.

Q2. Are all institutions that would normally be eligible to receive research funding from UKRI (including, but not only, universities) eligible to receive funding from this call?

A2. This is a MOD-funded call. Dstl’s intent is to operate within the spirit of the UKRI definitions of eligibility (see <https://www.ukri.org/funding/how-to-apply/eligibility/>), given the previous work has been undertaken in this way. Eligibility will also be a conditional on the successful completion of a state aid and due diligence assessment.

Q3. Is the ‘Pathway to impact’ requested in Assessment Criteria equivalent to that requested in EPSRC calls (i.e. a separate 2 page document)?

A3. No, there is no requirement for a separate document. Any narrative and evidence which allows us to understand, for the purposes of assessment, how the proposers see the potential impact of the research will suffice.

Q4. Is it necessary that all research themes are addressed equally? Or is it permissible, rather, to focus on a subset of the topics in greater depth?

A4. This is a judgement to be made by applicants, and we will not be overly prescriptive in order to allow applicants to play to their strengths. We draw applicants’ attention to the preamble in section 4 of the call document.

Q5. How will this award be administered?

A5. Dstl is soon to pilot a general grant scheme. It is hoped that this call will therefore be awarded as a general grant. There is however still a possibility that a contract will be used if the grant scheme is not available by the time we move to award. Whilst the conditions associated with the grant may deviate from those used by UKRI (given the grant is from a different UK government department and will be based on the most recent Cabinet Office grant agreement template) the principle in using a grant as the funding mechanism to undertake scientific research will remain unchanged.

Q6. Are full economic costs reimbursed at 100%

A6. Yes. The Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC: <https://www.trac.ac.uk/about/>) methodology should be employed by any institution submitting a proposal.

Q7. In the guidance it states the awards are offered on a Full Economic Costing basis, but that “the funding does not cover PhD students or Industry partners.” Does this mean that requesting consultancy costs would be ineligible? Would it also rule out travel costs for partners to attend project meetings?

A7. Consultancy costs would not be ineligible, but would require strong justification. As the prime purpose of this call is to solicit pure and applied research, we expect proposals which expend significant resource on consultancy, data gathering, travel, etc., will likely not score as highly in evaluation.

Q8. Is Monday, October 14th 2019 the expected date for the project start, or is it just the date for the announcement of the application outcome?

A8. This is the date on which we expect the project to commence. Applicants will have been notified of the outcome of their application in advance of this date and the legally binding agreement (be that general grant or contract) with the successful applicant(s) is expected to be in place in order to enable this start date to be achieved. This will, however, be subject to any due diligence requirements being completed successfully.

Q9. Can Dstl provide more detail on the required content of the proposal?

A9. The four items; approach, costed plan, risks and expertise, are the minimum required content items you should describe in your proposals. In your Approach section you should outline your research ideas as well as describe how you will address the idea. Applicants are free to add additional information if they feel it would strengthen their proposal.

Q10. How many, how closely and how deeply, should the topics described in the Themes and Research Challenges section be addressed?

A10. The Research Themes section describes what the research proposal should deliver. The Technical Challenges (in Annexe 1) are provided as guidance to applicants. While these represent areas of real and current interest to MOD, we are not expecting each and every challenge to be addressed, nor are we expecting any to necessarily be fully solved by this Call.

Q11. Do you require the proposal to be submitted to a defined format or template?

A11. No there is no template or tightly stipulated layout. It would be extremely advantageous if the proposal was neatly formatted, easy to read, and at least one soft-copy was submitted in a readable standard format (e.g. PDF, MS Word, etc.).

Q12. Can non-UK based institutions be involved?

A12. The research is intended to enhance UK understanding and capability within the signal processing domain in line with the vision for UDRC. There is, however, no bar to non-UK institutions being involved as collaborators and supporters. The applicants are referred to the assessment criteria for the Research Group/Centre in Section 7 of the call document.

Q13. Should the proposal include letters of support from potential industrial supporters?

A13. Letters of support (from any relevant project partner) will be assessed in conjunction with the proposal. Applicants should ensure that the letter describes why the partner is supporting the project, what they hope to gain from the collaboration, and their specific contribution (e.g. staff time, data, materials or other resource) in a way that is readily assessable (i.e. cash equivalent).

Q14. Should collaborating institutions need to identify one as the lead?

A14. Yes. One UK based institution must be nominated as the lead institution, for all collaborative proposals.