



Writing research proposals

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Writing research proposals

- Is hugely time-consuming
- Is largely a waste of time
- Is a lottery (when it's not biased)
- Is the worst possible way to fund research...
- ...apart from all the alternatives

When to start

- Hofstadter's law

- ⌘ Everything takes longer than you think, even when you've taken account of Hofstadter's law

- Start work at least 18 months before you need the money...

Who to apply to?

- Research councils
- Charities
- Government (EU, central and local)
- Commercial organisations

Differences between funders

- Scope
- Focus
- Rules on grant-holding
- Rules on employability
- Rules on direct costs
- Indirect costs
 - ⌘ direct (overheads)
 - ⌘ indirect (HEFCE QR)

Why people run out of time

- Writing time
- Institutional processes
- Funding cycle
- Refereering
- Re-submission
- Funding lag

Writing

- Conceptualisation and design
- Relevant literature
- Budgets
- Add-ons
 - ⌘ workplans
 - ⌘ CVs
 - ⌘ application history
- Thinking things through

Thinking things through

- Involves being clear about
 - ⌘ why this work should be done
 - ⌘ why it involves what you say it involves
 - ⌘ why you will collect the data you will collect
 - ⌘ what you will do with the data
 - ⌘ how doing that will help you do what you want to
 - ⌘ how the findings will be disseminated

Institutional processes

- Peer review
- Financial approval
- Job evaluation/grading
- Academic approval

Funding cycles

- Articulation of funding cycles
 - ⌘ termly
 - ⌘ quarterly
 - ⌘ unpublished
 - ☑ and then find out what you can

Refereeing

- You can't choose all your referees, but
 - ⌘ you can sometimes choose some
 - ▣ and ask/tell them what you're doing
 - ⌘ you can influence the choice of others
 - ▣ through the way the proposal is presented
- Funders' responses to missing referees reports are different
 - ⌘ deal with it

Re-submission

- To the same funder
 - ⌘ check the rules
- To different funders
 - ⌘ no-one likes to be the funder of last resort
 - ⌘ be aware that the same referees may be involved

It all comes down to

- RTFM
- Thinking things through

For your proposal

- ⌘ why this work should be done
- ⌘ why it involves what you say it involves
- ⌘ why you will collect the data you will collect
- ⌘ what you will do with the data
- ⌘ how doing that will help you do what you want to
- ⌘ how the findings will be disseminated