

**The Knapp Foundation**  
**Registered Charity Number: 1200294**

**The Peer Review Process**

**Introduction**

- 1 The purpose of the peer review process is to assist the Foundation in arriving at clear, intelligent and fair decisions in undertaking its work. Ultimate responsibility for the policies pertaining to decisions on the appointment of paid staff, and on the funding of research, lies with the Trustees of the Foundation. The Trustees devolve responsibility for individual decisions to the Director and/or members of the Academic Advisory Board, subject to the policy set out below and to regular reporting to the Trustees.

**The role of the Director**

2. The Director reports to the Foundation's Trustees and takes the leading academic, scholarly and managerial role in the Foundation's organisational structure. He or she provides strategic leadership for the development of the Foundation's research portfolio and is responsible for providing a coherent vision and direction for the Foundation's work on behalf of the Trustees. The Director is accountable to the Trustees and is responsible for determining and successfully delivering the Foundation's research programme within the broad parameters set out in the Foundation's Strategic Plan:

[https://d.docs.live.net/40aacbb3b172178d/Desktop/Knapp%20Foundation/Strategic%20Plan%20March%202023%20Draft%20\(1\).docx](https://d.docs.live.net/40aacbb3b172178d/Desktop/Knapp%20Foundation/Strategic%20Plan%20March%202023%20Draft%20(1).docx)

3. The Director's role is set out in more detail here:

<https://d.docs.live.net/40aacbb3b172178d/Desktop/Knapp%20Foundation/Director%20of%20Research%20Job%20Description.docx>

**The role of the Academic Advisory Board**

4. The Academic Advisory Board consists of independent, internationally-recognised scholars in the areas of research supported by the Foundation. Their role is to support the Director in the assessment of applications for support from the Foundation via a process of impartial peer-review.

## **The peer-review process**

5. The Director, working with members of the Academic Advisory Board, provides the ordinary means by which expert advice on academic matters is made available to the Foundation. Where advice is required, the Director, consulting with one or more members of the Academic Advisory Board, will normally seek to approach at least two individuals with a direct background and expertise (at international level) in a given field or area of study or research, to gain their opinion.
6. Peer-review must always be “blind” to the individual(s) being reviewed (but need not necessarily be “double-blind”). It should be as transparent as possible, and only in exceptional circumstances should review opinions (or aspects of them) be withheld from those being reviewed.<sup>1</sup> In the case of competitive review, questions should be standard across the process unless there are very clear and specific academic reasons for raising questions specific to any individual application.
7. Where opinions or conclusions differ among members of the Advisory Board or between members and the Director, or further information is required, the Director will consult further with the reviewers prior to reaching a conclusion. While the recommendations of reviewers cannot be binding on the Foundation, they will be accorded due and grave weight in the course of decisions being made.
8. The Director is expected to maintain good and regular contact with the members of the Academic Advisory Board in order to ensure the processes outlined in this policy operate to the benefit of the Foundation and in the service of the decisions we make.

## **Occasions where peer-review must be sought**

9. Peer Review must always be sought in the following cases:

### **Appointments**

- (a) Appointments to stipendiary research fellowships (i.e. Knapp Fellows).
- (b) Competitive appointments to any other kind of fellowship (but see para 13 below).

### **Project Evaluation**

- (c) Competitive evaluation of research projects seeking funding.

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<sup>1</sup> Reviewers must understand that in some circumstances, especially where appointments are concerned, opinions cannot legally be withheld from those reviewed, unless there has been explicit notice in advance that this may happen, with the clear statement that participation in the review process means acceptance of this condition by those being reviewed.

- (d) The evaluation of individuals or projects whose support has been proposed to (rather than invited by) the Foundation.<sup>2</sup>

### **Other**

- (e) The evaluation of any individual or project for which support is sought, where the Foundation does not have the necessary expertise to make an appropriate academic evaluation at the required level.

### **Salaried appointments**

10. Appointments to salaried staff positions are subject to approval by the Trustees in conformity with UK employment law, consistent with the applicable Foundation policies, and in light of a satisfactory agreed contract and references. Recommendations for such appointments will be made following interview by a panel consisting of the Director, at least one Trustee, and at least one other member of the Executive Board. Interviews will be conducted according to a standard set of criteria, agreed in advance and applied equally to all candidates. Those criteria will always include a satisfactory peer-review report following the process set out in paras 5 – 8 above.

### **Other support for research**

11. Decisions to support other research proposals will be taken by the Director, on the basis of a written peer-review report following the process described in paras 5 – 8 above.

### **When Peer-review is not necessary**

12. Peer review is not necessary when appointing Senior Research Fellows or Associate Research Fellows for a project already established by the Foundation (unless in either case the appointment is competitive or no “in-house” expertise to evaluate the individual exists). Where such appointments involve salaried staff, the interview process outlined in para 10 above should be followed, with a report from the Director substituting for a report from a peer-review panel.
13. In cases where support for an individual does not involve a salaried post (and hence a formal interview), and where peer review is not required, the Director will nonetheless wish to satisfy him or herself that the individual concerned is an appropriate recipient of such support, including where necessary by taking up references (both academic and personal) from suitably-qualified individuals.

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<sup>2</sup> Here it is assumed that a process of review and deliberation will have been followed in advance of the Foundation inviting an individual or project to work with us.