

Operation of the Time Allocation Panel (TAP): Advice from the FE

1. The FE's role is to specify the principles of the time allocation procedure (the TAP document) as well as provide specific additional guidance to the TAP (this document).

2. The TAP is independent of the FE (although the TAP chair is a member of the FE). The FE receives a report from the TAP (the TAP chair is responsible for its drafting, but its content is to be agreed with all TAP members) after each meeting and also considers an analysis of the allocation (prepared by the facility management team, FMT) in order to inform its decisions concerning the procedure and guidelines (item 1).

3. The TAP is responsible for allocation of a minimum of 80% of the available spectrometer time minus the number of grant-funded days.

4. Item 4.2 of the TAP document states:

*During the meeting, the TAP will categorise the proposals: "approved in full", "approved with a reduced allocation" and "not approved at this time". Where appropriate, this process will incorporate factors such as the quality of publications arising from previous allocations of time and whether the research is supported by peer reviewed grants or industry or involves students funded by UKRI. However, these factors will be subordinate to overall scientific merit.*

Specifically, the primary consideration in categorising projects is scientific merit.

Secondary factors to consider are:

- (i) reports by PIs from previous TAP allocations
- (ii) outputs (publications and talks) relating to previous TAP allocations
- (iii) peer-reviewed (from a research council or charitable organisation) or industrial funding

Note that the amount of time allocated to a particular PI in a previous TAP round is NOT a factor that is to be considered (though the PI report(s) and outputs that demonstrate how any allocated time was used is a factor, as noted above).

5. The TAP should determine if each proposal is worthy of facility time, i.e., of high quality, describing good science and having sensible justification for use of the facility.

6. The TAP should carefully evaluate the time requested for an individual project in relation to its objectives. Whilst in general a recommended proposal should normally be granted the time requested, it may be necessary in some instances to reduce the time on the grounds

that the proposed amount seems excessive or that a reduction in the aims of the project is suggested. On rare occasions it may be advisable to grant more time than requested. In this case, the TAP chair would contact the applicant after the TAP meeting and before the official announcements to clarify.

7. Brief feedback information should be supplied to all applicants, in particular those whose projects are rejected or significantly reduced in time allocation. The FMT will draft such information, guided by the comments from the TAP. Reasons for rejecting a project may include (a) lack of sufficient information to make a judgement, (b) insufficient justification for high-field work or need to use other specialised facility probe capabilities, (c) experimental work not feasible with the facility equipment, (d) science not of appropriately high quality.

8. In some cases, applicants whose proposals are rejected may be informed that they can re-apply for time in the next allocation period for the same project but with better justification, or that they are recommended to make a fast-track application to support a revised future application.

9. For applications by TAP members, the applicant must not be present during the discussion of their application(s). It is at the discretion of the TAP chair as to whether a TAP member should not be present for discussions of applications by scientists at the same institution as that TAP member: for example, an exception would be where the TAP chair deems that that TAP member's scientific expertise is necessary for the TAP to adequately consider the application.

10. Appeals procedure: Applicants whose proposals are rejected or significantly reduced in time allocation may appeal directly to the FE via the Director (who does not serve on the TAP). The Oversight Committee (OC) may be consulted if the FE deems this to be appropriate. This is the only case where the FE may alter a time allocation made by the TAP.

11. The TAP will be kept informed by the FMT about fast-track applications (which may be preliminaries to a full application) and about industrial use of the facility.

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