**Introduction**

This guide is aimed at helping you to write a good research proposal for your conference, with a few suggestions on what to include and what to avoid. It is intended to help you to think about your proposed research conference in a clear, structured and meaningful way.

**What is a research conference proposal?**

A research proposal is an outline of your conference project, which is used to establish the quality, suitability, and originality of your project, as well as to gauge how realistic and well-informed you are in your plans for turning it into a real conference.

**What should it contain?**

The following suggestions are based on the standard expected of research conference proposals:

* **Title** – a working title of your proposed interdisciplinary conference project; this may not be the finalised title of your conference, but must show that you have thought through what you are hoping to achieve.
* **Proposal and rationale (about 500 words)** – in this section you are expected to:
	+ set out the research problem/question/theme/methodology that you want to address through the conference; outline the further key research or methodological questions to be answered by the conference;
	+ provide a brief overview of the existing research and similar conferences, if they have happened (if rare or unique or the first of its kind, make sure you mention it, too!);
	+ indicate and comment on the cross-faculty collaboration; remember that the condition of the award is to have PGR researchers from \*at least two different faculties\* and \*at least three different departments\* on the organising board/committee;
	+ provide a justification why interdisciplinary framework is necessary/most helpful for your inquiry;
	+ explain the working model of conference (open to PGR researchers at Essex only, open to all PGR researchers, open to PG researchers and members of staff, no fees or some charges, how many panels, special sessions, or workshops, etc.);
	+ indicate any invited speakers or keynote speakers, if applicable;
	+ suggest the tentative venue and time.
* **Amount requested and budget outline** – the maximum amount you can request is £5000. Please provide a tentative but detailed budget outline, paying specific attention to items such as, travel and subsistence costs for conference speakers; catering costs; room hire (where applicable); printing and consumables; marketing and promotional materials; any anticipated post-conference costs [please note that this list is not exhaustive].
* **Timeline** – outline a timescale of the conference preparation, indicating how long different tasks are envisaged to take, and the sequence of the project in the time available. Specify target dates for key organisational milestones in view of the proposed date of the conference. It is really important that your expectations are realistic and fit within the length of available time so that the conference has taken place and all follow up costs have been processed by 31st July 2019.
* **Expected outputs and the impact of the conference** – in this section you are expected to:
	+ indicate any possible research outputs as a result of the conference (working papers/presentations/datasets/conference proceedings);
	+ explain the benefits of the conference for the University of Essex research community and PGR researchers in particular.

**Useful practical hints**

* This is a unique fund insofar as it covers the interdisciplinary areas that may not be covered by other sources of funding. Be bold and creative in thinking out what you’d like to do; think about inter-disciplinarity not only in terms of your own research but also in terms of research encounters between disciplines; make sure you consult your peers across faculties to come up with the “best match”.
* Consider and weigh up collectively the different models of conference and its budget, e.g., how many participants and panels you envisage; what will be your selection process; do you envision round tables, workshops, the use of labs or computer labs, performances; do you wish to spend more on the invited external speaker(s) or to rely on internal experts who may agree to serve as key note speakers; do you want to set aside a budget for an edited publication of conference papers?

**How to *write* a strong research conference proposal**

* Clearly outline your research idea for the conference from the start;
* Explain how the proposed research conference theme is relevant and significant;
* Outline a clear and practical plan of conference;
* Discuss the impact your research may have in opening new areas of work and thinking;
* Describe any relevant prior experience which may help you organise a successful conference;
* Ensure the proposal is clear, concise and grammatically correct;
* Ensure you write for an audience of informed reviewers who may not necessarily be familiar with the theme/subject you are proposing;
* You \*do not have to\* include references but signaling your familiarity with the field of research through the use of references is often helpful. If you do include those as a Bibliography, the Bibliography will not count towards your 500 word limit.

**How to submit an application**

* Send your application to Postgraduate Research Education Team: pgresearch@essex.ac.uk , with the subject heading “Application for PGR Interdisciplinary Conference”, by the deadline of Monday 21 January 2019.