Observer guidance

Thank you for becoming an Equality Charter observer. This document outlines your role and the role of the panel.

The role of an observer

Observers can witness the panel process. This role can be especially helpful for those working towards a Race Equality Charter (REC) or Athena SWAN application. Observers do not take part in the decision-making process and do not vote, though may be asked for their opinions on submissions after decisions have been made.

The role of a panel

REC and Athena SWAN award submissions are assessed by peer review panels. Assessment panels are convened in order to reach decisions on award submissions, which the panel recommends to Advance HE.

Before the panel

- **Book your travel as soon as possible**, and ideally no later than one month before your panel date. This is to ensure the costs are kept down as much as possible for Advance HE. We will reimburse up to £50 for observers. Full details and an expenses claim form can be found in the travel and expenses section of this document. Please read this section carefully to ensure you do not incur expenses that we will not be able to reimburse.

- Email the team at RaceCharter@advance-he.ac.uk or Athena.SWAN@advance-he.ac.uk with any access and/or dietary requirements.

- The team will email you copies of the submissions prior to the panel.

The panel meeting

You will be able to charge your laptop/tablet in the meeting room if required. Refreshments, including lunch, will be provided.

The panels consist of: between three and five panellists, including the chair, with a range of different experience; up to two observers; an Advance HE moderator; and an Advance HE note taker. The moderator, note taker and observers are non-voting roles.

During the panel meeting, the panellists will:

- Discuss the application content openly and honestly.

- Remain impartial and fair in decision making, only considering information within the submission and any further information provided.

- Work with other panel members to reach a decision about the awards given.
During the panel meeting, when coming to a decision, the panel should:

- Refer to the awards handbook, guidance, and the moderator for clarification on what submissions are required to demonstrate.
- Assess submissions critically, independently and on their own merits.
- Disagree with other panel members where they feel it appropriate, while remaining respectful of their opinions.

There are four possible outcomes that the panel may recommend to Advance HE:

- Award conferred
- Award conferred at lower level for Gold (Athena SWAN only) and Silver submissions
- No award conferred
- Further information requested

Where possible, panel decisions should be reached by consensus (though majority decisions are accepted).

**After the panel**

At the conclusion of the awards panel process, the note taker or moderator will collect any hard copies of submissions and feedback forms.

Once the final recommendation on the outcome of each application has been made, panellists and observers must delete or destroy any electronic and hard copy material relating to the applications which has not already been returned to Advance HE.

Following the panel, please submit all travel expense claims by email to finance@advance-he.ac.uk within 5 working days of attendance at the panel. This should include your completed expense claim form and all receipts/scanned tickets/journey histories. Please see the travel information section for the conditions that must be adhered to.

**Travel information**

These conditions must be adhered to for expenses to be reimbursed.

- Advance HE are willing to cover the cost of reasonable travel expenses up to the sum of £50. For journeys of 2 hours or more each way, this includes £5 food and drink expenses each way. Alcohol will not be covered.
- Travel should be booked as soon as tickets for the required journey become available. To help keep costs down please aim to book travel in advance and no later than one month before attendance at the panel meeting.
- Please book travel in standard class. Travel in first class will not be reimbursed. In the event that first class tickets are cheaper, please contact Advance HE to confirm these tickets can be reimbursed.
Please avoid using the express trains from airports where possible (Gatwick Express, Heathrow Express, and Stansted Express) to reduce costs.

If traveling on Transport for London (TfL) services, please ensure that you only buy a ticket that covers the zones that you need to get to the panel location. The Advance HE offices, OfS and the Medical Research Council are all in Zone 1, as are all the major train stations in London (Waterloo, Euston, Liverpool Street, King’s Cross, Victoria). Where possible use an Oyster or contactless credit/ debit card. Single tickets may be more economical than travel cards.

Taxis should not be taken unless absolutely necessary. Depending on your mobility, you may find that several stations are within walking distance. If you will need to use a taxi service please let the Charters team know prior to the journey.

Advance HE will only pay for accommodation in exceptional circumstances and this must be agreed in writing prior to the panel taking place. Please check with the team before booking any accommodation. Please be aware that any agreement to cover the cost of accommodation is specific to each round and does not constitute continuous agreement. The written agreement (email) will need to be included with the expense claim form.

Bookings should not be made via a travel agent as this increases costs. Where panellist’s host institutions require this, they should instead use their personal resources.

How to claim travel expenses

To claim for travel expenses you will need to complete the travel expense claim form and return it to Advance HE with all accompanying receipts/ tickets/ journey summaries (scanned copies are acceptable). Advance HE will only be able to reimburse expenses for which receipts/tickets have been provided. Please see below for a table of evidence you can provide with your claim form.

Travel expense forms and accompanying documents should be emailed to the Finance team (finance@advance-he.ac.uk) within 5 working days of attendance at the panel. Travel expenses will be reimbursed after attendance at the panel meeting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of expense</th>
<th>Evidence required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Car parking</td>
<td>Receipt detailing the location, date and price; OR Photo of the pricing information/ sign clearly showing the price and location of the car park (only if receipts are not provided)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train / flight / bus tickets</td>
<td>Tickets detailing the price, date of travel, start and end locations; OR Booking confirmation email detailing the price, date of travel, start and end locations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oyster/contactless card payment (tube/London bus)</td>
<td>Journey summary obtained from <a href="https://contactless.tfl.gov.uk">https://contactless.tfl.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and drink</td>
<td>Itemised receipt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mileage Claims</td>
<td>Claims for mileage will be reimbursed at 0.45p per mile. You will need to include the start and end post codes for your journey on your travel expense claim form and the total number of miles using the AA website.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Location information

Please check your panel location as occasionally we use other locations.

Advance HE Westminster Tower office location and facilities
First Floor
Westminster Tower 9
3 Albert Embankment
LONDON SE1 7SP

Location

Westminster Tower is situated at the junction of Albert Embankment and Lambeth Bridge. Waterloo station (mainline, underground) Vauxhall station (mainline, underground) and St James Park and Westminster stations (mainline, underground) are all situated within walking distance.

Advance HE Westminster Tower office is located on the first floor of the building, accessible by lift or stairs, and are fully accessible. When you leave the lift on the first floor turn left and you will be at the front door of Advance HE’s office. We are the only office situated on the first floor.

Please be aware that in the immediate vicinity of Westminster Tower there are limited places to eat and drink. However, there are numerous outlets around the closest tube stations i.e. Lambeth North, Vauxhall, Westminster and Waterloo.
Access

Pedestrian access

Pedestrians can enter the building directly from the public footpath, then via a gentle slope. The initial approach is formed on non-slip rubber matting. The entry to reception is via the revolving door, alternatively there is a fully accessible, automatically operated side door. The security officer on reception will provide assistance to any persons requiring it.

Visitor access

Upon arrival reception will advise Advance HE of any visitor to the building by telephone. All visitors will be held in reception until collected by a member of staff from Advance HE. Please note that we will collect visitors to the office 15 minutes before the panel meeting begins so please do arrive to the office no more than 15 minutes before the start of the meeting you are attending. All visitors are required to sign in and display a visitor’s pass which will be issued at the main reception. The pass must be displayed at all times.

Lifts

Three lifts are available, all of which are DDA compliant and operate at a speed of 2m / second.

Toilets inside Westminster Tower

Women’s toilets are located on floor 1. Men’s toilets are on floor 2. A unisex accessible toilet is located on the ground floor

Car parking

No visitor parking is available at Westminster Tower. The only available parking is local on street Pay & Display parking in and around the area. The nearest location to our offices is in Lambeth High Street which is located behind Albert Embankment.

Smoking

Smoking is not permitted anywhere within the building. Smoking is also banned from the entire front area of the building and can only be undertaken on the designated smoker’s terrace. This can be accessed via the ground floor reception area behind the green wall.

Medical Research Council (MRC) Location and facilities

MRC Conference Centre, 13th Floor
One Kemble Street
London
WC2B 4AN
The MRC conference centre is located on the 13th floor of One Kemble Street. It is easily assessable from several tube stations including Holborn (Piccadilly and Central lines), Covent Garden (Piccadilly line), Temple (Circle and District lines) and Leicester Square (Piccadilly and Northern lines) which are all under 10 minutes’ walk away.

**Access**

Upon arrival at One Kemble Street please proceed to reception on the ground floor and inform reception that you are attending a meeting at the MRC conference centre, they will then provide you with a temporary pass.

The centre is accessible by lifts or stairs. When you leave the lift on the 13th floor, turn right and proceed through both set of double doors to the MRC conference centre reception. Show the receptionist your pass and they will indicate which room the panel will be taking place in.

**Car parking**

No visitor parking is available at the MRC conference centre.