National Centre
for the Replacement
Refinement & Reduction
of Animals in Research

Studentship Assessment Panel: Scoring criteria

This document is intended as a guide for Panel members to score applications. It is essential that Panel members consider a range of factors when deciding on the overall score for a proposal.

1. Science/training and 3Rs potential

Panel members should consider the scientific excellence of the proposed project and its suitability for a PhD studentship, and the likely 3Rs impact should the proposed research be successful. In order to help Panel members determine a combined score for the scientific/training and 3Rs potential of an application, the NC3Rs uses the scoring system shown below.

2. Overall score

Panel members are asked to score the application from a range of 1 – 10, where one is the lowest score and ten is the highest. Scores should be whole numbers (0.5 integers are not accepted). Proposals with an average score of between seven and ten are considered fundable.

The scoring system should be used to determine the overall science/training and 3Rs score to give an application. Panel members should refer to Annex 1 for guidance when determining descriptors. The science/training and 3Rs descriptors should be used to form the basis of the overall score but Panel members should also judge whether the additional considerations listed below increase or lower the score.

SCIENCE AND TRAINING	**POTENTIAL 3Rs IMPACT**				
	Exceptional	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Not competitive
Exceptional	10	9	8	7	5
Excellent	9	8	7	6	4
Very Good	8	7	6	5	3
Good	7	6	5	4	2
Not competitive	5	4	3	2	1

When assessing Studentship applications, Panel members should also comment on:

3. The supervisory team

- The track record and expertise of the supervisors and ability to carry out the proposed work
- Previous PhD student supervisory experience and ability to provide appropriate support for the student
- Suitability of collaborators listed and the value they will add to the project and the development of the student

Annex 1 Guidance on Scoring Criteria

The following table should be used as guidance when determining the appropriate science and 3Rs descriptors. It is not necessary to meet all of the individual criteria as this is not intended to be prescriptive but rather to provide a general framework.

Science/Training	3Rs
Exceptional ▪ Highly original and innovative ▪ Novel methodology and design ▪ Crucial scientific question or knowledge gap ▪ Additional potential for high health and/or socioeconomic impact ▪ Potential for high return on investment And ▪ Exceptional scientific training, development of transferable skills and knowledge base ▪ Exceptional research environment and team in this area ▪ Scope for student development of project	**Exceptional** Potential to have a very high impact on the 3Rs e.g.: ▪ Replacing/reducing a large number of animals ▪ Refining a severe procedure (even if numbers affected are low) ▪ Applicable to other models or disciplines ▪ Will have a local impact on animal use with a very high likelihood of adoption by other groups nationally/internationally* ▪ Exceptional 3Rs specific training and plans to establish a 3Rs legacy ▪ Strategically important area as identified by the NC3Rs
Excellent ▪ Original and innovative ▪ Robust methodology and design (innovative in parts) ▪ Key scientific question/knowledge gap or area of strategic importance to the UK ▪ Additional potential for significant health and/or socioeconomic impact ▪ Valuable scientific resource ▪ High likelihood of successful delivery And ▪ Excellent scientific training, development of transferable skills and knowledge base ▪ Excellent research environment and team in this area ▪ Scope for student development of project	**Excellent** Potential to have a high impact on the 3Rs e.g.: ▪ Replacing/reducing a significant number of animals ▪ Refining a severe/moderate procedure (even if the number of animals affected is low) ▪ Could be applicable to other models or disciplines ▪ Will have a local impact on animal use with a high likelihood of adoption by other groups nationally/internationally* ▪ Excellent 3Rs specific training and plans to establish a 3Rs legacy ▪ Strategically important 3Rs area as identified by the NC3Rs
Very Good ▪ Robust methodology and design ▪ Worthwhile scientific question and/or addresses a strategically important knowledge gap ▪ High likelihood of contributing to new knowledge generation ▪ Resources appropriate to deliver the proposal ▪ High likelihood of successful delivery And ▪ Very good scientific training, development of transferable skills and knowledge base ▪ Very good research environment and team in this area ▪ Scope for student development of project	**Very Good** Potential to have a medium impact on the 3Rs e.g.: ▪ Replacing/reducing a significant number of animals ▪ Refining a moderate procedure (even if numbers affected are low) OR refining a mild procedure where numbers are high ▪ Could be applicable to other models or disciplines ▪ Will have a local impact on animal use with the likelihood of adoption by other groups nationally/internationally* ▪ Very good 3Rs specific training and plans to establish a 3Rs legacy ▪ Addresses an important 3Rs concern as identified by the NC3Rs

Good ▪ Methodologically sound study ▪ Worthwhile scientific question with potentially useful outcomes ▪ Resources broadly appropriate to deliver the proposal ▪ Moderate likelihood of contributing to new knowledge generation ▪ Good likelihood of successful delivery And ▪ Good scientific training, development of transferable skills and knowledge base ▪ Satisfactory research environment and team in this area ▪ Some scope for student development of project	**Good** Potential to have a medium to low impact on the 3Rs e.g.: ▪ Replacing/reducing a modest number of animals ▪ Refining a mild/unclassified procedure ▪ Not directly applicable to other models or disciplines ▪ Will have a local impact on animal use but unlikely to be adopted more widely* ▪ Good 3Rs specific training and plans to establish a 3Rs legacy ▪ Addresses a 3Rs concern
Not competitive ▪ Poor quality science (may also include ethical concerns) ▪ Question poorly defined ▪ Methodologically weak study ▪ Unlikely to contribute to new knowledge generation ▪ Resources inappropriate to deliver the proposal And ▪ Insufficient scientific training, development of transferable skills and knowledge base ▪ Research environment and team inadequate for this project ▪ No scope for student development of project	**Not competitive** Will have no (or a very low) impact on the 3Rs e.g.: ▪ Will not replace/reduce any animal use ▪ Does not refine a classified procedure ▪ Not applicable to other models or disciplines ▪ Will not have a local impact on animal use or be adopted more widely* ▪ Insufficient 3Rs specific training and plans to establish a 3Rs legacy ▪ Does not address a 3Rs concern

* Local impact refers to: within an applicant's own laboratory and/or institution