National Institute for Health Research

V1.18 March 2017

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR COMPLETING HTA EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

These guidance notes apply to:
Commissioned calls (advertised research briefs)
Researcher-led calls (Clinical Evaluation and Trials)

Text which only applies to certain calls is highlighted in the colours above.

About these guidance notes

This document contains information and guidance to applicants submitting a **First stage or HTA EoI** application and is applicable for primary research and two stage evidence synthesis applications.

Applications for funding are made online through the NETSCC Management Information System (NETSCC MIS). You must register or log-in to the NETSCC MIS to complete and submit your application.

It is important that you read these guidance notes fully before starting to complete the application form to ensure that you provide the correct information.

We have endeavoured to cover all necessary information relating to the application form through these resources. Incorrectly completed applications may be rejected.

Extract from the HTA programme's scope (www.nihr.ac.uk/funding-and-support/funding-for-research-studies/funding-programmes/health-technology-assessment/):

The NIHR HTA Programme supports research that is immediately useful to patients, clinical practice, and policy or decision makers.

HTA research is undertaken when evidence exists to show that a technology can be effective. The purpose of an HTA study is to establish the clinical and cost-effectiveness for the NHS in comparison with the current best alternative(s). A study may also investigate uncertainty around a technology's place in the existing care pathway.

"Technologies" in this context mean any method used to promote health; prevent and treat disease; and improve rehabilitation or long-term care. They are not confined to new drugs and include any intervention used in the treatment, prevention or diagnosis of disease.

The NIHR Evaluation, Trials and Studies Coordinating Centre (NETSCC), based at the University of Southampton, manages evaluation research programmes and activities for the NIHR

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www.nihr.ac.uk/funding-and-support/funding-for-research-studies/funding-programmes/health-technology-assessment/

Contents **Page**

PART 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Introduction

The Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Programme is part of the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The secretariat function of the programme is managed by the NIHR Evaluation, Trials and Studies Coordinating Centre (NETSCC) based at the University of Southampton under a contract with the Department of Health (DH).

Anyone who considers that they can carry out high-quality health-related research is likely to be eligible. If you have any concerns regarding your eligibility to apply we advise that you contact us before completing an application. The HTA programme welcomes applications which are within the programmes' remits from all sectors. Applicants from non-clinical or non-academic sectors are strongly advised to consider collaborating with the relevant sectors or organisations to demonstrate they have the full breadth of expertise required to carry out their proposed research within their applications to the HTA programme. Applicants should always check individual call specification documents, or commissioning brief, for any additional eligibility requirements. Applicants, and their employing organisations, should be aware that to host research the organisation concerned must be capable of fulfilling the role of research sponsor as set out in the Research Governance Framework for Health & Care.

The NIHR Health Technology Assessment programme is funded by the NIHR, with contributions from the CSO in Scotland, Health Care and Research Wales and the HSC R&D Division, Public Health Agency in Northern Ireland. Researchers from Northern Ireland and Scotland for certain NICE related calls, as indicated in the commissioning brief, should contact NETSCC Commissioning Team to discuss their eligibility to apply.

The programme operates three funding streams; Commissioned calls for research where important questions for the NHS have been agreed by our prioritisation panels, Clinical Evaluation and Trials (CET) which is our researcher-led funding stream and also welcomes applications that may span other NETSCC Programmes, and annual / bi-annual NIHR Themed Calls.

The programme obtains topic suggestions from a wide range of sources and on occasion proposals may be submitted to the researcher–led (CET) streams which are on a similar topic area as one in development via our commissioned stream. Please note that **commissioning briefs take priority over applications to researcher led funding calls.** If an Expression of Interest (EoI) is submitted on a similar topic to a commissioning brief or any proposed future research areas for HTA commissioned calls, it will not be considered and either:

- once the commissioning brief is advertised, the applicant can tailor their application to the commissioning brief and submit it in response to this

or,

- if a decision is made not to advertise a commissioning brief, applicants can apply through the researcher-led work-stream in the usual way.

1.1 Background to the new Expression of Interest form

In response to feedback from our stakeholders, including applicants, board members and Clinical Trials Units, we are pleased to be piloting this new application form. This new form is set out as an Expression of Interest (EoI) and will replace the current outline proposal form for the duration of the pilot.

The rationale for the change is to aim to provide a less burdensome form and reduce duplication, whilst still providing sufficient space for the information required by the programme to make informed decisions. It is hoped that the form will enable applicants and committees to concentrate on items of greatest relevance for the first stage of assessment. The new form contains a single field to describe the rationale for the research, which in the outline form appears in different places. Where the form now only requests an estimate of costs, the HTA programme accepts that some variance is likely to occur

between EoI and the full application, though significant changes will be carefully scrutinised (as already happens under current process).

Review and evaluation will be ongoing throughout. At the end of the pilot we will assess whether to continue with its use, whether to modify, or whether to revert to the outline application form.

Appendix 1 details the differences between the outline application for and the HTA Expression of interest.

1.2 Data Protection

We have an obligation to keep data secure and to use it appropriately. To fulfil our obligations under law and as a result of our contract with the Department of Health, we adopt various procedures to use and protect data. This will impact on how we deal with you and your joint applicants.

The Department of Health, National Institute for Health Research (DH NIHR) is the Data Controller under the Data Protection Act 1998 ('the Act'). Under the Data Protection Act, we have a legal duty to protect any information we collect from you. You should be aware that information given to us might be shared with other DH NIHR bodies for the purposes of statistical analysis and other DH NIHR research management purposes. NETSCC also reserves the right to share, in confidence, details of your application with other approved research funding organisations outside NIHR in order to coordinate research activity in the UK.

Information collected from you will not be passed to any third party outside the NIHR, except specifically as detailed above, without your consent except where we are under a statutory obligation or entitled to do so by law.

Applicants may be assured that DH NIHR is committed to protecting privacy and to processing all personal information in a manner that meets the requirements of the Act.

1.3 Data Security - data about you

Personal information will be held on a database in the NETSCC password-protected network that is available only to NETSCC staff. Your details and those of your joint applicants will be retained by NETSCC on behalf of the Department of Health to facilitate the running of the HTA Programme. If your application is successful at any stage of our process, your name and the details of the sponsoring organisation, will appear on the NETSCC website. In addition, once funding has been agreed and the contract signed, your details will appear in other literature as a grant holder and will be passed to the Department of Health for inclusion in their publicly available databases of research projects. Your name and those of your joint applicants will be added to our mailing list. This means that you will be sent updates on all the programmes. We may also send you separate literature about the HTA Programme and related events in medical/health research. If you have any questions, or if you would prefer not to receive routine and/or general communications, please contact us at:
hta.funding@nihr.ac.uk

1.4 NIHR Carbon Reduction Guidelines

Researchers applying for NIHR funding are asked to consider the carbon footprint of their research and take steps to reduce carbon emissions where appropriate. Advice on how to do this can be obtained from the NIHR Carbon Reduction Guidelines: www.nihr.ac.uk/research-and-impact/research-priorities/

1.5 Applications involving tissue collection and bio-banks

UK Biobank is a major national health resource with the aim of improving the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of a wide range of serious and life-threatening illnesses. As such, applicants are encouraged to consider whether Biobank may be able to provide suitable data for their study, rather than request funding for unnecessary new data collection. We do not want to discourage establishment of new

cohorts of participants and their data where this is necessary to address the research questions under consideration, our aim is to avoid applications for funding to set up Biobank-like cohorts where the use of Biobank would prevent wasteful duplication of Biobank-like activities.

UK Biobank has recruited 500,000 people aged between 40-69 years in 2006-2010 from across the country to take part in this project. They have undergone measures, provided blood, urine and saliva samples for future analysis as well as detailed information about themselves. The health of members of this large cohort will be followed over the coming years and the participants have consented to be approached about health research. www.ukbiobank.ac.uk/

Please note: Some of the NIHR programmes, including the HTA Programme, are unlikely to fund work which focuses on collection of physiological, biochemical or other information unless there is a clearly defined way in which this will be used for the benefit of patients (either directly or in terms of improving outcomes of other patients). For these reasons we generally do not fund bio-banks or disease registers. If you would like to include this as an element of your research proposal, please contact us.

2. Getting started and using the form

Applications for funding are made online through the NETSCC Management Information System (NETSCC MIS). netscc-mis.nihr.ac.uk/

You must register or log-in to the NETSCC MIS to complete and submit your application.

2.1 Electronic Application form - Learning Guide

To assist you with completing the application form various support documents are available to download here: www.nihr.ac.uk/about-us/how-we-are-managed/managing-centres/nihr-evaluation-trials-and-studies-coordinating-centre/management-information-system/

There is also an '**FAQ**' section available to the left hand side of the application form screen.

2.2 To Access the Application form

For Commissioned and researcher led calls follow the link:
www.nihr.ac.uk/funding-and-support/current-funding-opportunities/

From here you can use the filters to select the programme or type of research you wish to apply for.

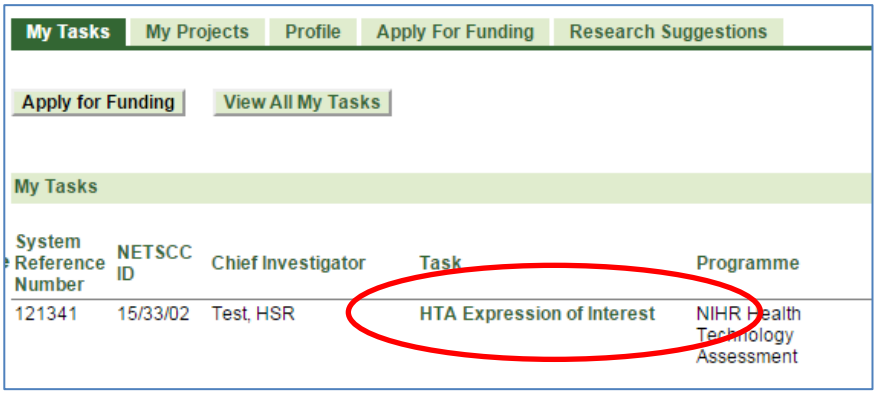
To apply for a specific call, click on the relevant 'Click here to apply' button where you will be taken directly to the NETSCC MIS log in screen. You will need to either register (one off process) or log-in using your registered email address (your user ID) and password. Once logged in you will able to apply directly for the call or commissioning brief and will be presented with additional relevant information such as the commissioning brief to aid your submission.

You will then be directed to the confirmation page for the specific call. Clicking Cancel will return you to your MIS 'home page'. If this is the correct call, click on the 'Apply' button and this will start the application process. Applying for a funding opportunity creates a task on your home page titled **'HTA Expression of interest'**. This task will be available on your home page for you to complete until **1:00pm on the closing date**, as indicated on the research call and on your task.

The '**HTA Expression of interest'** task can be accessed at any time until you either submit the application (using the Submit button in the application process which will appear once all the validation is complete) or the call closes.

The NETSCC MIS can always be accessed directly at netscc-mis.nihr.ac.uk for you to go to your homepage where all your applications will be listed.

See the screenshot example below:



Clicking on the **'HTA Expression of Interest'** link takes you to the application's main page where you can complete your application information (clicking on this link **will not submit** an incomplete application).

This task will be available for you to complete until **1pm on the closing date** as indicated on the research call and on your My Tasks folder.

Seven days prior to the closing date you will receive an email reminder that you have an open application (i.e. not submitted).

2.3 To submit an application

In order to submit an **HTA Expression of Interest** to the programme you must:

- Complete all mandatory fields as indicated with a red asterisk *. The final review and submit page of the application provides a final check of the completed mandatory fields as well as providing reminders about optional entries.
- Upload a flow diagram (single-side of A4), as a separate PDF for submission with your application form (Primary Research only). This should illustrate the study design and the flow of participants.
- Applicants should also describe complex interventions and controls as accurately and fully as possible within their diagram. If proposing an RCT, we advise you refer to the CONSORT statement and website for guidance (www.consort-statement.org). Alternatively, you may find the EQUATOR Network website useful (www.equator-network.org) or the recently published ACCEPT paper (Charlesworth et al. BMC Medical Research Methodology 2013, 13:78 www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2288/13/78).
- Upload a research CV (one side of A4) of the lead applicant.

2.4 Saving your form and system time-out

As you work through the application form, you are asked to save each page. This will save all the information you have entered so far. You can save the form at any point and leave the application prior to submission. The save button is always located at the bottom of each page of the application form. Large text areas on the form also have their own save button beside them. The application task will remain on your home page until complete and submitted or the deadline for the application has passed.

It is important to remember to 'Save' each section as you go through the form before navigating away from the page.

There is a security time out set on the MIS so that after 60 minutes of inactivity, the user will be logged out of the MIS. It is advisable therefore to save your work at regular intervals using the save button on any page. The NETSCC MIS will give you a warning that you are due to be timed out 10 minutes before this happens. If this message is displayed, you should close the pop-up screen and save the task that you are carrying out.

There is a left hand navigation menu in the application form so that you can select specific parts of the form to complete, however you should always ensure that you save any information entered on your form before using this left hand menu.

2.5 Browsers that best support the NETSCC MIS

The NETSCC MIS will operate successfully across a wide range of browsers and operating systems. However, we recommend that you use the following:

- Windows users – Internet Explorer (version 7 onwards), Firefox and Google Chrome
- Apple users – Safari
- Linux – Opera

2.6 Spell-checking

The system does not have a spell-checker. We would advise you to complete large amounts of text in Word first and then cut and paste them into the relevant screens in the NETSCC MIS. **If you paste content that is longer than the character limit it will be cut off, so please check the content after you have pasted it.**

Spell checking and text box entry resizing is available in the MIS for users of Chrome, Firefox, Safari and Opera web browsers. **This functionality is provided by the browser not the MIS application.**

2.7 Giving others access to the form

- **Co-applicants**: Access to your application is through your user login to the NETSCC MIS. **This should not be shared.** The HTA Expression of Interest application does not require co-applicants to complete this form. If you want to share your form with your co-applicants, please create a PDF of the form and send it to them. Options to create a PDF are available on the Home page and the Review and Submit page.
- **Signatories:** You are not required to have signatories for HTA Expression of Interest applications.

Please note: A Word version of the application form is available through the HTA funding opportunities webpage.

This document can be used to share information with your co-applicants but will not be accepted as an application form.

2.8 Leaving the application task

You can leave your application task at any time. As long as you have saved any new information you have entered for the application, you can navigate to your home page or log out of the NETSCC MIS system.

2.9 Printing your form

The HTA Expression of Interest form can be found as a Word document in the 'Support Documentation for Applicants' section of the Programme's funding opportunities web page. This is intended to help you work offline and will not be accepted as a submission.

2.10 Technical Support

If you encounter any problems with the NETSCC MIS system, you should contact the programme funding support team either via email or by phone.

2.11 Space restrictions when entering text

You should be aware that there are character limits set for each text box within the application form. For larger text areas these are indicated with 'Limit' and 'Remaining' at the bottom of the text entry box.

Carriage returns and spaces are counted as characters. The character count will be slightly less than that of an MS Word character count.

The form counts all blank space as a part of the content of each box, so if you are short of space it will help if you delete extra carriage returns and place any bulleted lists into paragraph format.

2.12 Use of non-standard characters

You are advised not to use any non-standard characters in your text; in particular, you may experience a technical difficulty that affects the use of these characters '<' '>' '≥' and '≤'. The system will currently strip these characters out of the content of the text without warning. If you need to use these symbols, then please replace them with text. It is advisable that you should either type text directly into the form or ensure these characters are not included in any text that you copy and paste from other documents.

2.13 URL links

You may wish to include URL links to your application or refer to URL links in a body of your text. You are advised not to use any URL shortening service such as '*tiny.cc'* when completing your application. These types of shortening services are associated with hacking and spamming (as it promotes the sending of links that are unclear where they are pointing).

PART 2: Guidance for completing your electronic application form

3. Research Details

Whether you are applying to an advertised Commissioning Brief or a Specification Document for a researcher-led call, please ensure that you read the relevant document thoroughly before starting your application.

If you are unsure about any aspect of a commissioning brief, please contact the team at htacommissioning@nihr.ac.uk

If you are a researcher-led applicant and have a query about whether your research idea is within the HTA Programme's remit or have a question about the Specification Document, please e-mail your question to htacet@nihr.ac.uk

3.1 Host Organisation

Please give details of the organisation that will be the host or contractor if the project is funded using the selection from the drop down menu. If your host institution is not shown you should contact the relevant team above to add your institution. This can take 24 hours to take effect so please leave plenty of time for any requests.

3.2 Research Title

(Limit: 300 characters)

The project title should clearly and concisely state the proposed research. Any abbreviations should be spelt out.

3.3 Research type

Please select the appropriate research type. If your proposed project includes any element of primary research, please select 'Primary Research'. If you are carrying out new analysis of existing data, please select 'Evidence Synthesis' or 'Secondary Research'. If you are not sure which category to select, please choose the closest match to your project as this can be adjusted later.

3.4 Proposed Start Date

Please note that projects are expected to start within **eight months** of issue of the funding outcome letter. Start dates must be on the 1st of the month, regardless of whether this is a working day or not. It is important to be realistic about your proposed start date, taking account of the time required for contracting and any other activities that need to be undertaken before the contract start date.

Shortlisted HTA Expressions of Interest applications that are invited to go forward as full proposals will usually be considered at the following HTA funding board meeting and given eight weeks to complete the full application form. The timelines for each call are available on our website.

3.5 Research Duration (months)

Please ensure you include sufficient time to complete all aspects of the research including applications for regulatory approvals (where required) and writing of the final report.

3.6 End Date

This field will automatically populate once you have saved the research duration information.

3.7 Estimated research costs

The NIHR HTA programme is piloting an 'Expression of Interest' (EoI) approach to allow submission of substantially shortened research proposals with financial estimates of cost, and no requirement on the part of the HTA programme for financial sign off. This is designed to save time and to reduce the burden on researchers and institutions in preparing detailed outline applications with full costings which may not progress. The EoI facilitates a proportionate and timely assessment of the eligibility, importance, feasibility and value for money of proposals to identify those to be invited to submit final full applications for consideration by a funding board.

The initial EoI stage requires a 'financial estimate' of the research costs. The HTA programme does not require formal financial sign off before proposals are shortlisted. Successful EoIs will be invited to submit full proposals and will then be given at least eight weeks to develop full applications, including development of strategic partnerships and undertaking full study cost assessments with financial approvals.

Please enter estimated values for the research costs and the NHS costs. The HTA programme accepts that some variance in costs is likely to occur between EoI and the full application. The HTA programme will carefully scrutinise all full application costs and any variance from the EoI. All costs need to be fully justified by the applicants to reassure that the study offers good value for money for the NHS.

It is important that consideration is given to all costs in relation to NHS support and treatment costs and the estimated values for these in are input. It should be noted that applicants are expected to have contacted the appropriate Trust/s regarding the NHS support and treatment costs that will be required if their research is funded. If the costs are felt to be material, a letter of support may be asked for from the Trust/s concerned as part of the full proposal.

The total cost on the EoI form should include the figures at the appropriate rate, so the total should reflect HEI figures at 80% and non-HEI figures at 100%. When completing the second stage, full application the figure submitted should be 100%, any reductions to FEC are automatically calculated by the system prior to submission.

Where a CTU is expected to be engaged, a letter of support will be required at the full proposal stage.

You may find it helpful to share this information with your Finance Directors to clarify the distinction between the 'estimated financial costing' details required for EoI/outlines compared with full detailed costings required for final full proposals and financial/ CTU approvals.

4. Contact Information

Please complete your contact details and ensure each section has information identified as primary.

Organisation Affiliations
Please select the appropriate affiliation provided in the drop-down box.

Address
Please provide a postal address

Web Address
Please give your personal university/NHS webpage if you have

5. Co- Applicants

5.1 Co-applicants

All co-applicants cited in this section **must have** agreed to be part of this proposal.

Please add each co-applicant and enter their name and job title, a brief description of their role within the project *(100 characters per co-applicant)*, and their department and organisation. Please ensure that the email address used for each co-applicant is correct. Once a co-applicant has been added you will not be able to edit their details. Please ensure you have the correct contact details for the co-applicant especially the email address which will also be their MIS username. Errors at this stage can only be corrected by removing the entry and re-adding the co-applicant again.

5.2 Conflicts of interest

Please declare any conflicts or potential conflicts of interest that you or your co-applicants may have in undertaking this research, including any relevant, non-personal and commercial interest that could be perceived as a conflict of interest.

6. Patient and Public Involvement (PPI)

6.1 Please briefly describe how patient and public involvement has informed and/or influenced the development of the application.
(Limit: 1200 characters)

Please note that whilst only a brief summary is required for this form, **any invited full proposal will be required to demonstrate substantial, convincing engagement with patients and the public** at every stage of the research project, from early design through to publication.

The NIHR expects the active involvement of patients and the public in the research it supports. NIHR recognise that the nature and extent of active patient and public involvement is likely to vary depending on the context of each study or award. The term involvement refers to an active partnership between patients, members of the public and researchers in the research process. This can include, for example, involvement in the choice of research topics, assisting in the design, advising on the research project or in carrying out the research.

The INVOLVE website (see below) provides a detailed definition of 'patient and public involvement in research' as well as further information on involvement in research, listing resources and advice available. In this section it is important that you describe in as much detail as possible how patients and the public have been involved in the development of the proposal as well as plans for involvement in the proposed research. Please note that this section does not refer to the recruitment of patients or members of the public as participants in the research.

'Putting it into Practice' database www.invo.org.uk/resource-centre/putting-it-into-practice-database and;
INVOLVE's Exploring Impact report:
www.invo.org.uk/posttypepublication/exploring-impact-public-involvement-in-nhs-public-health-and-social-care-research

Further information and resources can be found at the INVOLVE website www.invo.org.uk

The NIHR Research Design Service (RDS) www.rds.nihr.ac.uk supports research teams to develop and submit high quality applied health and social care grant applications to NIHR and other national peer-reviewed funding programmes.

The RDS can provide advice on, and support in, developing your application including the involvement of patients and the public in your research.

7. History of Application

Please note that none of the NETSCC programmes will accept applications that are currently pending with other research funding organisations (unless under shared funding arrangements).

7.1 Previous Submission

Please select 'Yes' or 'No' from the drop down box to indicate whether this or a similar application has previously been submitted to this or any other funding body.

Where a proposal like this, or with similar content, has been submitted to this organisation or elsewhere and is not listed; please click the 'Add' button and complete the necessary information.

Please answer all questions as fully as possible. We are keen to know if the application has been submitted elsewhere and you must be as open about this as possible. This includes, but is not limited to, any facts that, should they come to light at a future date, would embarrass either the programme or the individual who withheld the fact (e.g. if a member of the team holds a patent or has a financial interest within the research area).

Failure to disclose accurately or fully will be considered by the programme as academic misconduct and as such treated seriously. If you provide incorrect or out of date information, do not declare in full, or fail to disclose any relevant information, your application may be rejected without further consideration. You should also include in this section information on whether this or a similar application has been submitted to any programme previously, or to any other funder including other NIHR programmes. You should name, and provide dates and outcomes of these. Please indicate whether you hold or have ever held an NIHR programme contract which has been terminated prior to completion, extended in time or in terms of funding.

7.2 Application Submitted to NETS Programmes

Any previous application submissions as a lead or co-applicant to NETS programmes will be listed on this page, please select 'Yes' or 'No' for each application submission to indicate whether it is relevant to this application. Where 'Yes' is selected click the 'Edit' button and complete the information to indicate how your current research application differs from this previous application, if unsuccessful, please indicate why. Occasionally the list will need to be re-sorted by NETSCC ID to identify all relevant applications.

IMPORTANT NOTE - NETSCC RESUBMISSION POLICY:

A previously unsuccessful application cannot be resubmitted to the HTA Programme or any other NETS programme within one year of the original decision letter, unless the Board has specifically informed the applicant that this is acceptable. For researcher-led work streams resubmissions will be accepted if applicants can demonstrate it has been changed significantly and is essentially a new proposal.

N.B. The list will only include applications submitted to NETSCC in the previous three years only. Should a relevant application (regardless of funder) not be listed in this section it can be manually added in the 'Other Funders' section at the base of the page.

7.3 Other Funders / Applications in Progress

Where a proposal like this, or with similar content, has been submitted to this organisation or elsewhere and is not listed; please click the 'Add' button and complete the requested information.

8. Summary of the Research Proposal

8.1 Rationale for Research

(Limit: 10,000 characters)

For researcher-led applicants, this section comprises four questions listed below to be addressed by the applicants.

For researcher-led/Clinical Evaluation and Trials applications this section is used in the first stage of proposal assessment and is therefore the most important part of your application in terms of demonstrating competitiveness against others received. It allows you to demonstrate why your chosen research area is needed by the NHS and how it fits in with the programme's scope www.nihr.ac.uk/funding-and-support/funding-for-research-studies/funding-programmes/health-technology-assessment/

Important note for Commissioned applicants (i.e. responding to an advertised brief):

For applicants responding to advertised (Commissioned) calls, **please treat this section as a single field** and use it to describe how your proposal meets the specification set out in the commissioning brief. Applicants are encouraged to follow the brief where possible. The brief outlines the methods expected by the programme, but in exceptional circumstances the board may consider alternative designs if well justified. Deviations will be accepted, but they must stick to the spirit of the brief, be clearly explained and justified with supporting evidence. Applicants do this at their own risk and it is the team's responsibility to demonstrate sufficient numbers of patients are available for any alternative design proposed.

8.1.1 What is the problem being addressed?

Please provide a clear explanation of the health problems to be addressed and the impact on patients and healthcare. Please explain why this trial is needed now.

8.1.2 Why is this research important in terms of improving the health of the public and/or to patients and the NHS?

For researcher-led/Clinical Evaluation and Trials applications, this **section must include the following:**

Please justify the clinical importance of your proposed study and outline the anticipated value or contribution the study will provide to clinical practice. Classification of need for research is set out below:

- Health need: These will be expected benefits in terms of substantial health gain with the ultimate aim of improving patient health or care. This covers the potential for preventing avoidable mortality and morbidity, improving quality of life and considerations of disease prevention and should be justified in terms of burden of disease;
- Sustained interest and intent: Evidence that the issue or area is one in which there will be sustained interest in the future, such that the results of research once commissioned and undertaken will remain highly relevant and important to the needs of the NHS in the future;
- Capacity to generate new knowledge: Please explain how the proposed research will contribute to development of the research area;
- Scientific knowledge: Please explain how the study will make a substantial advance in scientific understanding and knowledge and the potential substantial health gain.

8.1.3 How does the existing literature support this proposal?

It is a requirement of NIHR and the HTA Programme that all primary research is informed by a review of the existing literature.

As a consequence we will only fund primary research* where the proposed research is informed by a review of the existing evidence.

*Primary Research defined as: Original research conducted to collect new data to answer a research problem. Source: Health Technology Assessment Programme A-Z of useful terms. www.nihr.ac.uk/glossary.htm

Where the request for research to address a specific research question is via a commissioning brief advertised through a commissioned call, the review of the existing evidence will have already been undertaken by the funding NIHR Programme to inform the commissioning brief. Applications in response to commissioned calls will need to address the commissioning brief requirements specific to the NIHR HTA Programme.

For researcher-led/Clinical Evaluation and Trials applications, please describe the existing evidence base for this research and demonstrate why this means your research is important now, both in terms of time and relevance.

Where a relevant published systematic review (or reviews) exists they should be presented.

Where no such published systematic review exists it is expected that the applicants will undertake an appropriate review of the currently available evidence (using a predetermined and described methodology that systematically identifies, critically appraises and then synthesises the available evidence and then present a summary of the findings of this in their proposal. You should give reference to any relevant systematic reviews and discuss the need for your study in light of these. References should be provided in the Vancouver format (Author(s). Title. Journal. Year; Volume: Start page - End page). All applicants must also include reference to relevant on-going studies, e.g. from trial registries.

The proposed standard for what constitutes a satisfactory review of the existing evidence to inform new primary research is as follows:

I. Citing a relevant Cochrane Review (or)
II. If no Cochrane Review exists then citing another systematic review that is published in a peer reviewed journal (or)
III. If no published systematic review is identified then the research applicants should present the findings of a systematic review that they have undertaken for the purposes of the application, where the definition of systematic review for audit purposes is taken from the HTA Monograph series as “when the account of the search, appraisal and synthesis methods (to minimise biases and random errors) would, in theory, permit the replication of the review by others.”

Importantly, if the applicants undertake and present the findings of their own review of the existing evidence undertaken systematically then they have to provide sufficient details of the methodologies employed to allow the review to be replicated.

8.1.4 What is the research question?

Please summarise the key aims and objectives of your project and provide a concise statement of the proposed research.

Please explain how your proposed research is within the remit of the HTA Programme. You should include a clear explanation of the main (single) research question phrased in PICO terms where applicable to your study type:

Population: NHS target population i.e. real patients
Intervention: A technology that is or could be used now in the NHS
Comparator: Usually next best treatment, but could be placebo
Outcome: Patient centred, leading to effectiveness and cost-effectiveness

Give a brief explanation of how or in what ways the design constitutes a clinical trial or evaluation study. You are welcome to highlight any other aspects of the design that you would like to bring particular attention to, in order to explain how it is within remit or meets the commissioning brief. Please remember that HTA research looks at patients or people seeking healthcare; studies using healthy volunteers and animals are not within the remit of the programme.

8.2 Scientific Abstract

(Limit: 3500 characters)

Please provide an expert summary of the project plan of investigation plus any additional points required to support statements made in the above sections, and include any key references required to justify the points made (e.g. in the use of particular outcome measures or methods of analysis).

Be aware that this is a competitive process and that scientific content will be scrutinised at the same level as for the outline proposal, with only the strongest short-listed.

Basic information on the headings required is provided on the form; however more detailed guidance concerning content follows:

- **Design:** Give a brief statement on the type of study design to be used.
- **Setting:** (Primary Research only) State the health service setting(s) in which the study will occur (e.g. general practice, hospital outpatients, ambulance service users).
- **Strategy for reviewing literature (Secondary or Modelling):** Explain the criteria applied to assess the quality and relevance of studies identified by the search strategy. Provide an explanation of how these will be decided if these are not yet known.
- **Target population:** Define the population from which the study sample receives the health technology concerned (or the control intervention where appropriate) e.g. women over 60, people with learning disability, people with advanced cancer.
- **Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria:** Please provide a detailed explanation of the inclusion/exclusion criteria.
- **Health technologies being assessed:** Give a clear definition of the health technology to be assessed. The purpose of HTA is to assess the value of a health technology compared to best alternatives or where none exists, against no intervention. Where there are established alternative technologies, these should also be defined carefully. Where the technology is subject to rapid change, details of how this will be dealt with in the project should be included.
- **Measurement of costs and outcomes:** Not all HTA studies require full economic evaluations. When considering inclusion of a cost effectiveness analysis, applicants should carefully describe what this will add to the study. Where an economic component is proposed, applicants should endeavour to use the simplest approach, or fully justify where more complex methodologies are needed. Details should include justification of the use of outcome measures where a legitimate

choice exists between alternatives. If the study includes a health economic component, state from what perspective costs and benefits will be considered, and (briefly) how these will be collected.

  - Where established Core Outcomes exist they should be included amongst the list of outcomes unless there is good reason to do otherwise. Please see The COMET Initiative website at www.comet-initiative.org to identify whether Core Outcomes have been established.
  - The programme is interested in taking advantage of the growing utility of routine data (such as HES, GP records etc.), and would like investigators, where appropriate, to ask study participants to consent to long-term follow-up (e.g. beyond the outcomes to be collected in the funded trial) using routinely collected data, and appropriate linkage to allow this data to be best used.

- **Sample size:** State the required sample size, giving details of the estimated effect size, power and/or precision employed in the calculation.
- **Difference between current and planned care pathways:** What is the current standard patient care pathway and how does this differ from the trial arms
- **Project timetables including recruitment rate:** Indicate the anticipated duration of the study, paying particular attention to the expected recruitment rate and a justification for your estimate. Outline the main stages of the proposed project and the expected duration of each.
- **Expertise in team:** The team should be multidisciplinary and include relevant expertise in the clinical area concerned, in performing systematic reviews, and (where appropriate) others e.g. operational research, health economics, service user.

8.3 Summary (in Plain English)

(Limit: 3500 characters)

The importance of a plain English summary

A plain English summary is a clear explanation of your research.

Many reviewers use this summary to inform their review of your funding application. They include clinicians and researchers who do not have specialist knowledge of your field as well as members of the public. If your application for funding is successful, the summary will be used on National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and other websites.

A good quality plain English summary providing an easy to read overview of your whole study will help:

- Those carrying out the review (reviewers and board and panel members) to have a better understanding of your research proposal;
- Inform others about your research such as members of the public, health professionals, policy makers and the media;
- The research funders to publicise the research that they fund.

If we feel that your plain English summary is neither clear nor of a good quality then you may be required to amend your summary prior to final funding approval.

It is helpful to involve patients / carers / members of the public in developing a plain English summary.

When writing your summary consider including the following information where appropriate:

- Aim(s) of the research
- Background to the research
- Design and methods used
- Patient and public involvement
- Dissemination.

The plain English summary is not the same as a scientific abstract – please do not cut and paste this or other sections of your application form to create the plain English summary. Please also avoid the use of acronyms or medical terms (unless an explanation is given in the Plain English section of the application).

Further guidance on writing in plain English is available online at NIHR Make it Clear. www.involve.nihr.ac.uk/makeitclear .

For further support and advice on writing a plain English summary, please contact your local Research Design Service www.rds.nihr.ac.uk

9. Clinical Trials Unit Participation

Please indicate if a CTU is involved with the study and if applicable complete the details of the CTU. Please provide a brief description of their role in the research
(Limit: 200 characters)

Any invited full proposal will require greater detail around participation and a letter of support from the CTU.

Clinical Trials Units are regarded as an important component of any trial application and can advise and participate throughout the process from initial idea development through to project delivery and reporting. However, they may not be essential for all types of studies.

NIHR CTU Support Funding www.nihr.ac.uk/funding-and-support/funding-to-support-research/funding-to-support-research-in-the-nhs/ctu-support-funding.htm provides information on the units receiving funding from the NIHR to collaborate on research applications to NIHR programmes and funded projects.

In addition UKCRC CTU Network (www.ukcrc-ctu.org.uk) provides a searchable information resource on all registered units in the UK and lists key interest areas and contact information.

10. Uploads

It is important to upload one document at a time and save it before adding another, otherwise earlier documents will be over-written.

There is a **maximum upload limit of 2Mb per document**. You will not be able to proceed with the upload if your document exceeds this size limit. If this is the case you should reduce the file size as much as possible before trying again. Guidance on how to reduce file size can be found at: www.nihr.ac.uk/about-us/how-we-are-managed/managing-centres/nihr-evaluation-trials-and-studies-coordinating-centre/management-information-system/

PLEASE NOTE: we will only accept the upload types listed below. Any additional documents not requested will not be considered by the board during its review

10.1 Flow Chart

Please supply a flow diagram illustrating the study design and the flow of participants. The flowchart should be in a PDF format and not PowerPoint. Applicants should also describe complex interventions and controls as accurately and fully as possible within their diagram. If proposing an RCT, we advise you refer to the CONSORT statement and website for guidance, (www.consort-statement.org). Alternatively, you may find the EQUATOR Network website useful (www.equator-network.org). The file should be uploaded to the 'Flowchart' section of the Uploads tab and submitted along with your application form. Please bear in mind the flowchart will be projected on a large screen to the board at the meeting, so please ensure it is clear, and that any text is concise.

10.2 References

Please list all references using either the Vancouver or Harvard referencing conventions. References should be uploaded as a separate document. Please DO NOT include them in the same document as your flow diagram**.**

10.3 Research CV of lead investigator

Please provide a brief relevant summary of the lead applicant's CV (one side of A4)

If you are proposing a Clinical Trial of an Investigational Medicinal Product (CTIMP) – the Chief Investigator must be an authorised health professional as defined in the Medicines for Human Use (Clinical Trials) Regulations 2004 (SI 2004/1031) . This means a person registered in the UK as a doctor, dentist, nurse or pharmacist. Further information on the requirements for a CTIMP can be accessed via the Clinical Trials Toolkit.

10.4 Cover letter

Please provide a covering letter with your application.

10.5 Mechanistic study

If you are applying for any collaborative call with the **EME** programme you **must** complete the mechanistic study template and attach it as part of your submission indicating whether you intend to produce a mechanistic study or not. This does not apply to standard HTA applications.

Please do not attach any additional information, as it will not be considered in your application when reviewed by the board.

11. Acknowledgement

11.1 Agreement to the Terms and Conditions

Please tick the check box to indicate that you have read and understood the terms on which you have been nominated as Chief Investigator for this proposal along with the associated documentation and accept this role. Ticking this box constitutes an electronic signature of the Lead Applicant with regard to this application.

A list of terms and conditions can be found here:

www.nihr.ac.uk/about-us/how-we-are-managed/managing-centres/nihr-evaluation-trials-and-studies-coordinating-centre/management-information-system/terms-and-conditions.htm

No original (wet or ink) signatures are required for this application.

12. Review and Submit

Please ensure that before you submit your application, you have completed the required fields and saved a version of your form. You must submit your application form and flow diagram / references where required, by the stated deadline **before 1pm**. We cannot grant any time extensions and the deadline will be strictly observed. You should therefore plan your application carefully. We will not enter into negotiations for extensions.

Expressions of Interest must be submitted electronically.

The HTA programme no longer requires paper copies of submissions.

Submit your application using the Submit button on the last page of the web form. Please note that the Submit button will not appear unless all necessary sections have been completed. Warning signs (!) may appear to indicate that you may have omitted some information but this sign indicates the information is not mandatory and you can submit without it.

✓	Complete	The section/form has been filled out correctly
X	Incomplete	Mandatory information has not been provided and the task cannot be submitted until this has been completed
!	Attention	This section has not been completed but is not mandatory

We strongly advise applicants at this point to check that all sections are completed and the correct documents have been uploaded into the system as they cannot be altered once submitted.

Once all sections have been completed and show as green ticks (or as a yellow advisory exclamation mark) a submit button will appear in the top left hand corner of the page and the form can be submitted to the HTA.

You will then receive an automated confirmation email from the HTA. If you do not receive an email please contact us immediately as there may be an issue with your submission.

12.1 Submission checklist

1. Electronic form completed with no sections showing red crosses.
2. Uploads are all attached in one of the accepted formats (.doc, .docx, .mpp, .pdf, .xls, .xlsx)
    - Flow diagram (upload to 'Flow chart' section).
    - References can be attached as a separate document in the 'References' upload section
    - A cover letter, if desired (upload to cover letter).
    - Research CV of lead applicant (restricted to one side of A4)

12.2 Un-submitted applications

Seven days prior to a funding opportunity application submission deadline you will receive an automatic email reminder. If you no longer wish to submit your application you do not need to do anything. However, you will not receive another reminder for this application submission.

If you are completing a researcher-led (CET) application (i.e. **not** in response to an advertised Commissioning Brief) and will be unable to complete the application form before the submission deadline date, please inform us.

If you do not contact us within 7 days of receiving the automatic email reminder, your application will be closed but not submitted and you will no longer be able to edit or submit it after the call close date.

Although you will still be able to view the application in a PDF format under the 'View all my tasks' tab in your homepage, you are strongly advised to keep a copy of the content of your application on a local hard drive/local copy of the form, from which you can copy and paste into an application form when you are ready to submit an application in time for a close date.

13. Assistance and Contacting Us

Any questions, queries or requests for clarification in relation to the call you are applying to should be to one of the following e-mail addresses with the reference number and title for the call for proposals as the email header. Please be aware that while every effort will be made to respond to enquiries in a timely fashion, it is advisable to send queries in as far in advance of the call closing date as possible to ensure we can respond whilst still leaving you enough time to complete your application.

Commissioned Calls for Research (advertised briefs):
htacommissioning@nihr.ac.uk / 023 8059 5621 (24 hr. answerphone)

Clinical Evaluation and Trials / Researcher-led
htacet@nihr.ac.uk / 023 8059 6974 (24 hr. answerphone)

14. Useful links

You may find the following presentations helpful when preparing your application.

- Professor Tom Walley, Director of NIHR Evaluations Trials and Studies - 'top tips for applying to the NIHR for funding' – from the NIHR workshop on surgery research, May 201*2*
- Professor Dion Morton, Professor of Surgery, School of Cancer Sciences, University of Birmingham - 'top tips for applying to the NIHR for funding' – from the NIHR workshop on surgery research, May 2012
- Mr Matt Costa, Senior Lecturer at Warwick Medical School and Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon at The University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire – 'views on working with the NIHR and tips for applying to the NIHR for funding' – from the NIHR workshop on surgery research, May 2012
- www.nihr.ac.uk/05-development/useful-links.htm

15. Appendix 1

Differences between the EoI and outline application forms

HTA EoI	Outline	Summary of changes
HTA EXPRESSION OF INTEREST - RESEARCH DETAILS	**OUTLINE APPLICATION - RESEARCH DETAILS**	Largely the same but an estimated cost is now accepted
CONTACT INFORMATION	**CONTACT INFORMATION**	Retained and no changes
	LEAD APPLICANT DETAILS	These three sections have been removed from the new form and replaced by a simple uploaded document detailing the lead applicants CV
	CURRICULUM VITAE	
	RESEARCH CV	
CO-APPLICANTS	**CO-APPLICANTS**	Applicants are now asked to include 'Role in this Project' to define the input of the co-applicant. Also in this section applicants are asked to declare any conflicts of interests of the study team.
PATIENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT (PPI)	**PATIENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT (PPI)**	Only 3 of 7 sections retained to ensure applicants begin to address aspects of PPI and are then able to expand on it in the context of a full application.
HISTORY OF APPLICATION	**HISTORY OF APPLICATION**	Retained and no changes
SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL	**CASE FOR SUPPORT**	Summary of the research proposal now replaces the two sections 'Case for Support' and Background and Rationale'. The questions have been refined to enable a single free text answer. The Plain English Summary and Scientific Abstract sections have both been retained with no changes and there has been **no loss to the overall character count** in this section.
	BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE	
	RESEARCH PLAN (Previously 'Differences in planned care pathways' and 'other')	This section has been removed from the new form but will be expected to be completed if applicants are shortlisted to submit a full application
CLINICAL TRIALS UNIT (CTU) PARTICIPATION	**WIDER CONTEXT**	This section has been renamed and reduced to allow applicants to provide a high level description of the CTU's role. The section should be expanded upon in the full application
	CHANGES FROM FIRST STAGE	This section has been removed as in most cases the HTA EoI will be the first version of an application to the programme

	DISSEMINATION AND OUTPUT	This section has been removed from the new form but will be expected to be completed if applicants are shortlisted to submit a full application
	RELEVANT EXPERTISE	This section has been removed from the new form but will be expected to be completed if applicants are shortlisted to submit a full application. The expertise of each co-applicant is now described in the Co-applicants section above.
	JUSTIFICATION OF COSTS	This section has been removed from the new form but will be expected to be completed if applicants are shortlisted to submit a full application
	INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY (IP)	This section has been removed from the new form but will be expected to be completed if applicants are shortlisted to submit a full application
	DH MONITORING	This section has been removed from the new form but will be expected to be completed if applicants are shortlisted to submit a full application
	RDS INVOLVEMENT	This section has been removed from the new form but will be expected to be completed if applicants are shortlisted to submit a full application
	SUGGESTED REFEREES	This section has been removed from the new form but will be expected to be completed if applicants are shortlisted to submit a full application
UPLOADS	**UPLOADS**	Uploads have been revised to include the lead applicant's CV but not to require the addition of a CTU support letter, though this can be provided if desired.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**	No changes to this section