**RCNDE Process for writing letters of support for RCNDE Aligned Research Project** **proposals.**

*Background*

RCNDE receives requests to write letters of support for proposals related to NDE from a range of people, but mainly from academics who are members of RCNDE and are applying for fellowships or research grants. These requests occur quite frequently – several per year – and have in the past been supported based on the judgement of the Director with reasonable informal consultation. In 2019 some concern was expressed regarding the importance of only supporting high quality proposals that also were in line with the industrial vision. Hence, this process has been devised to try to maintain a high level of quality and relevance in any proposals supported by RCNDE.

*Process*

Initial decision by RCNDE Industry Director and RCNDE Director about whether the (probably) unfinished proposal is likely to be a candidate for a letter of support (LoS), based on: relevance to RCNDE members and our ability to actually provide in-kind support. It is important to manage expectations of applicant and only put potentially relevant proposals through the following process.

If we proceed, we need the (virtually) finalised proposal at least two weeks before the submission deadline, in order to assess it and write the LoS.

The RCNDE Director, RCNDE Industry Director and RCNDE Academic Director (or deputies appointed in cases of conflict of interest) each read the full proposal and assess it according to the below table.

* The RCNDE Industry Director, or deputy, scores on industrial relevance.
* The RCNDE Academic Director, or deputy, scores on academic quality.
* The RCNDE Director, or deputy, assesses and gives feedback on RCNDE relevance and importance as well as planned engagement with RCNDE members, collaborations, etc.

In all cases, including fellowships, academic quality includes 'track record / suitability of candidate'.

**Note**: If there are any concerns relating to conflict of interest etc. regarding any of these reviewers, then an alternative reviewer can be requested, and we will try to accommodate the request, as appropriate.

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| **Score** | **Industrial Relevance – % ind. membership to whom relevant** | **Academic quality- includes quality of the proposal and proposed research, novelty, track record and suitability of the proposer/team.** |
| **1** | 10% | Poorly written proposal, lacking in underlying science; dubious novelty; little-known team. |
| **2** | 20% | This approach lacks novelty or the proposal is of poor quality, regardless of the team’s track record. |
| **3** | 30% | This is a novel proposal and its quality is adequate for potential success but with some shortcomings. |
| **4** | 40% | This proposal is novel and of a high standard from a team who will be able to carry it out successfully. |
| **5** | 50% | Well written proposal containing well thought-through research programme with sound science; novel approach proposed by a strong (either well-established or early-career) research team. |
| **Industry Director** |  |  |
| **Academic Director** |  |  |
| **RCNDE Director** |  |
| **Mean** |  |  |

If the proposal scores 4 or above as the mean of the scorings then a LoS can be provided.

The assessors will work towards creating a benchmark proposal to compare with - preferably one that is borderline in both categories, so that it is a simple case of deciding whether it is better or worse than the benchmark in each category.

*Outcome*

The LoS will be written by the RCNDE Director.

If a LoS is provided, it will need to state what level of support will be provided. This is usually ‘in-kind’ support in terms of samples, links into industry, expertise, advice and being a platform for dissemination.

*Requirement*

The recipient of a LoS for a subsequently successful proposal will be expected to attend RCNDE annual reviews to present progress, or a board meeting if more appropriate.

*Status of project*

Successful proposals will become RCNDE Aligned Research Projects.

*Administration and recording*

A record of the requests, progress through the process of assessment and outcomes, will be kept in a spreadsheet on a server, maintained by the RCNDE Centre Manager.