



SESAME

Synchrotron-light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East

SESAME

PROPOSAL REVIEW COMMITTEE (PRC)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

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PROPOSAL REVIEW COMMITTEE (PRC) TERMS OF REFERENCE

Drawn up by the Director in May 2016. Revised text incorporating amendments introduced by the Director in April 2022.

Article 1 - Status and responsibilities of the Proposal Review Committee (PRC)

1.1 The Proposal Review Committee (PRC) is an international advisory body set up by the SESAME Director to advise him or her on the distribution of user beam time. The Committee shall be organized in thematic Sub-Committees.

1.2 Initially, there shall be up to four Sub-Committees. The Director may subsequently increase this number when this is required by the scientific theme of the proposals being received. The Director may also establish *ad hoc* Sub-Committees when needed.

1.3 The PRC shall be responsible for evaluating the scientific and technological merit of proposals from the General Users and those from Participatory Research Teams (PRTs) to be peer-reviewed by the PRC as laid down in the SESAME User Policy, and for determining their priority using the following criteria based on IUPAP's Recommendations for the Use of Major Physics Users Facilities¹:

- (a) scientific merit (interpreted as: relevance, impact, innovation, potential of the scientific and/or technological case and/or relevance, and applied importance of instrumental development);
- (b) technical feasibility;
- (c) capability of the proponent(s); and
- (d) availability of the resources required.

1.4 The PRC shall also be responsible for making recommendations to the SESAME Director on the allocation of beam time.

Article 2 - Membership

2.1 Each Sub-Committee shall normally consist of up to four (4) members, including the Coordinator, appointed by the Director following his or her consultation with the Chair of the PRC, who will seek suggestions from the Coordinators of the Sub-Committees, and the Chair of SESAME's Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC), who will seek suggestions from the members of the SAC.

¹ <https://archive.iupap.org/ga/ga22/majfacil.html>

2.2 The Chair and members of the PRC, including the Coordinators, shall be renowned specialists recognized for their scientific and technical expertise in the fields of specialization of SESAME. They shall serve in an individual capacity and may not be associated with SESAME by contractual arrangement.

2.3 The term of office of the members of the PRC is three years. An additional appointment of three years is possible, but not automatic.

2.4 Every effort shall be made to ensure that the main scientific disciplines in which SESAME expects to receive proposals are represented on the Committee, but in order to allow multiple reviews of all proposals the PRC may have recourse to external reviewers.

2.5 The Scientific Director of SESAME shall be *ex officio* member of the PRC.

Article 3 – Officers of the Committee and their functions

3.1 The Officers of the Committee shall be:

- (a) The Chair of the PRC who shall be independent of the Sub-Committees, and shall be appointed by the SESAME Director from among the members of the international scientific community following consultation with the Coordinators of the PRC Sub-Committees and the Chair of the SAC.
- (b) The Coordinator of each Sub-Committee who shall be appointed by the Director from among the members of the Sub-Committee to which he or she belongs following consultation with the Chair of the PRC and the Chair of the SAC.
- (c) The Secretary of the PRC who shall be the serving Scientific Director of SESAME.

3.2 The Chair of the PRC shall normally be appointed for a term of three (3) years. Re-appointment as Chair for a second term of three (3) years is possible, but not automatic. Re-appointment as Chair for further periods beyond a second term shall be exceptional.

3.3 The Coordinators of the PRC Sub-Committees shall normally be appointed for a term of three (3) years. If reappointed as a member of the PRC for a second term of three (3) years, re-appointment as a Coordinator for a second term of three (3) years, is possible, but not automatic. Re-appointment as Coordinator for further periods beyond a second term shall be exceptional.

3.4 The Chair of the PRC shall determine the agenda for the biannual meetings with the Coordinators of the PRC Sub-Committees, and any meeting of the Committee as a whole, following consultation with the Director of SESAME, or his or her designated representative, and shall send out invitations to the meetings jointly with the Director of SESAME, or his or her designated representative. He or she shall conduct these meetings and report the findings of the PRC to the SESAME Director. The Chair may participate in the meetings of the Council if requested to do so by the

Council. He or she may also participate in the meetings of the Advisory Committees of the Council if requested to do so by the Director or the Advisory Committees.

3.5 The Secretary of the PRC shall prepare and distribute the proposals from the General Users and the PRTs to be peer-reviewed by the Sub-Committees and the documents to be examined at the meetings of the PRC, as requested by the Chair. He or she shall summarize the recommendations and deliberations of the joint biannual meetings of the Chair of the PRC and the Coordinators of the Sub-Committees and any meeting of the Committee as a whole. He or she shall record and distribute the reports of each of these meetings and ensure that the appropriate materials (meeting agenda and report, written proposals, etc.), as requested by the Chair, are available to the members of the PRC in a timely fashion. He or she shall assemble the reports of the PRC and, following their approval by the Chair, shall distribute them under the Chair's direction.

3.6 The Chair of the PRC, following consultation with the SESAME Director, shall appoint an *ad interim* Chair from among the Coordinators of the PRC Sub-Committees to replace him or her in a PRC meeting when due to unavoidable circumstances he or she is unable to be present at the meeting.

3.7 The Coordinator of a PRC Sub-Committee, following consultation with the Chair of the PRC, shall appoint an *ad interim* Coordinator from among the serving members of the Sub-Committee he or she is coordinating to replace him or her in a meeting of the Sub-Committee when due to unavoidable circumstances he or she is unable to be present at the meeting.

Article 4 - Proposal review procedure

4.1 The Chair of the PRC Committee and the Coordinators of the PRC Sub-Committees will convene in a joint meeting, normally twice a year, two or three months following the closing date of each call for proposals, to elaborate a final recommendation on the proposals from the General Users and the PRTs to be peer-reviewed by the PRC.

4.2 Prior to each biannual meeting, the Chair of the Committee and the Coordinators of the Sub-Committees will assign to the members of the Sub-Committees, including the Coordinators, those proposals from the General Users and PRTs which, based on their scientific expertise, they are to peer-review. The Secretary of the PRC will distribute these proposals to the members concerned, together with the initial assessment of SESAME's health and safety officer and the report on the technical feasibility of each proposal by SESAME's relevant beamline scientist. Each proposal will be assigned to a minimum of two reviewers of whom at least one should be a PRC member or Coordinator. Multiple proposals for similar science from a single user or group of users may be treated as a single proposal.

4.3 Each Coordinator, PRC member and external reviewer will provide constructive scientific comments and scoring for the proposals they are to peer-review, as well as comments if appropriate on technical feasibility, the capability of the proponent(s), and the availability of the resources required. Guidelines for scoring are given in Annex 1.

4.4 Each Sub-Committee will subsequently meet separately in a virtual meeting called by the Sub-Committee's Coordinator to compare the scoring for each proposal peer-reviewed by the Sub-Committee and to discuss and resolve any large variance in scores, following which the Coordinator of each Sub-Committee will provide the Chair of the PRC with the Sub-Committee's proposed ranking of the proposals for the allocation of beam time. He or she shall draw the Chair's attention to issues on which there were significantly diverging views and any specific issues the Sub-Committee believes merits the Chair's attention.

4.5 The final decision on the proposals for which beam time is to be allocated will be taken by the Director of SESAME.

Article 5 - Reporting

5.1 The Chair of the PRC shall communicate to the SESAME Director the Committee's final recommendation on the proposals from the General Users and PRTs reviewed by the PRC, as well as recommendations on matters discussed at each of the biannual meetings with the Coordinators of the PRC Sub-Committees, any meeting of the Committee as a whole, and the meetings of the Sub-Committees. He or she shall draw the Director's attention to issues on which there were significantly diverging views and any specific issues the PRC believes merits the Director's attention. He or she shall also communicate *ad hoc* recommendations to the Director, as and when appropriate. The Chair of the PRC shall do so in the form of written reports to be presented to the SESAME Director.

5.2 The Secretary of the PRC shall forward the Chair's reports to the Director of SESAME under the direction of the Chair.

Article 6 - Conflict of interest

A PRC member, including Coordinator, and external reviewer may not take part in the discussion and grading of a proposal if:

- (a) he or she is a primary author, co-author or collaborator in the proposal; or
- (b) the proposal is in direct competition with his or her own scientific programme.

Article 7 - Support for the work of the Committee

7.1 The SESAME Director will provide the PRC with the necessary documents, proposals, reports and information needed for its work.

7.2 The SESAME Director will ensure that the PRC has the necessary back-up administrative and logistical support necessary for implementation of its tasks and organizational and financial support for its meetings.

Article 8 – Amendments

These terms of reference may be amended by the SESAME Director.

GUIDELINES FOR SCORING BY THE PROPOSAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

Scoring	Scientific Merit
<i>1.0-1.5</i>	Highly innovative research proposal of exceptional quality and outstanding scientific and/or practical relevance. It must be awarded beam time.
<i>1.6-2.0</i>	A well-conceived and original research proposal, with strong potential for making an important contribution to an active field of research. No alternative analytical tool is available. It should definitely be awarded beam time.
<i>2.1-2.5</i>	Very good proposal, with a relevant scientific case and likely to produce significant results. The need for SESAME is evident and it should be awarded beam time under normal circumstances.
<i>2.6-3.0</i>	A potentially excellent proposal which is lacking some information, e.g. preliminary results, further explanations, etc. Although not groundbreaking, it is likely to produce significant results. The need for SESAME is evident. It may be awarded beam time provided there are not too many exceptional proposals.
<i>3.1-3.5</i>	SESAME is required and the science is interesting, although in a well-worked area of research. It is of lower priority in a competitive environment. It may be awarded beam time if the pressure on the beamline is not heavy.
<i>3.6-4.5</i>	Although the science is interesting, it is in a well-worked area of research and SESAME is not strictly essential for the measurements. It is of low priority in a competitive environment. It may be awarded beam time if the pressure on the beamline is not heavy.
<i>4.6-5.0</i>	Doubts exist regarding the scientific content of the proposed project, the validity of the experimental methodology, or the need for SESAME. Under normal circumstances it should not normally be awarded beam time.