

Terms of Reference for UKRI Digital Research Infrastructure Pool; Supporting Technical Review, Insight, Knowledge, and Evaluation (STRIKE)

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To provide impartial, high-quality technical insight and advice to UKRI's Digital Research Infrastructure (DRI) Programme Team and the UKRI Digital Research Infrastructure Committee (DRIC), supporting the ongoing development, and assurance of the UKRI DRI Programme. The UKRI DRI Programme is a £129 million UKRI initiative to develop a coherent state-of-the-art national DRI. It will seamlessly connect researchers and innovators to the computers, data, tools, techniques and skills that underpin the most ambitious and creative research.

2. Responsibilities

STRIKE members may be invited to:

- 2.1 Assess and provide feedback on submissions to the UKRI A Statement of Community Engagement and Needs for Digital Research Infrastructure (ASCEND) initiative.
- 2.2 Contribute expertise to time-limited task and finish groups, led by the DRI Programme Team or DRIC members.
- 2.3 Conduct technical due diligence and/or value-for-money assessments of DRI Programme projects after they have been recommended by the UKRI Advisory Group for Digital Research Infrastructure and approved the UKRI Executive Committee. STRIKE will provide recommendations to the DRI Programme SRO to assure each initiative is clearly defined, well-designed and feasible.
- 2.4 Contribute to peer review panels convened by the DRI Programme Team to assess the quality and technical robustness of funding proposals.
- 2.5 Participate in reviews of ongoing DRI Programme initiatives to assess technical risks and overall readiness to proceed. These reviews are intended to support informed decision-making and will complement Council-level Project Boards.
- 2.6 Provide rapid input on ad hoc technical issues or questions raised by the DRI Programme Team, DRIC or other UKRI governance bodies.
- 2.7 Champion the UKRI DRI Programme, advocating for its goals and supporting its objectives.

3. Membership and Appointment

- 3.1 Potential members must complete a registration form to join STRIKE, clearly outlining their areas of expertise. Successful applicants will be invited to join.
- 3.2 Membership does not guarantee involvement in specific activities. Members will be selected on a case-by-case basis, depending on the requirements of each task, the relevance of their expertise and any Conflicts of Interest.
- 3.3 Members will typically remain in the STRIKE Pool for an initial period of three years, with the option of extension.
- 3.4 To maintain continuity and balance within STRIKE, the duration of service may be staggered, particularly for those members who are more frequently called upon.
- 3.5 Continued inclusion beyond the typical period of service, or early removal, will be at UKRI's discretion. Members may also withdraw from STRIKE at any time by notifying the DRI Programme team.
- 3.6 UKRI reserves the right to remove any member from STRIKE if their conduct is deemed inconsistent with the Seven Principles of Public Life (The Nolan Principles): selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership, or if they are no longer considered suitable to contribute to STRIKE's activities.
- 3.7 If any member has a concern about a possible breach of these Terms of Reference, or a concern about misconduct or wrongdoing in any other areas, they are invited to raise this internally with the DRI Programme Director and/or make use of the UKRI [Complaints Procedure](#). Anonymous complaints can be submitted via UKRI's [Whistleblowing Policy](#).

4. Meetings

- 4.1 STRIKE is not a standing committee and does not hold regular full-member meetings. Instead, members are engaged on a task-specific basis according to programme needs.
- 4.2 Engagement may be regular (e.g. quarterly ASCEND proposal reviews) or ad hoc.
- 4.3 Engagement may take the form of:
- Expert Input Sessions: Joining meetings to provide technical advice and feedback on concepts or submissions (e.g. to assess ASCEND submissions).
 - Task and Finish Groups: Collaborative working groups focused on defined challenges led by the DRI Programme Team or DRIC. (e.g Task and Finish group to define the data lifecycle).
 - Technical Review Panels: Small groups of members convened to assess specific DRI Programme initiatives, typically to conduct technical due diligence, value-for-money assessments, or programme-level reviews (e.g., contributing expertise to a mid-term review of the DRI Programme).
 - Peer Review Panels: Participating in formal review panels to evaluate proposals submitted to specific DRI funding calls. Members will assess proposals against defined criteria, such as technical merit, feasibility, scalability, and alignment with strategic objectives, and provide independent scores and recommendations to inform funding decisions.
 - Written Reviews: Remote evaluations or assessments submitted in writing, particularly when rapid turnaround is required or where scheduling a group meeting is not necessary.

5. Governance

- 5.1 STRIKE provides technical advice and expertise to DRIC and the UKRI DRI Programme Team.
- 5.2 While STRIKE does not operate as a decision-making body, its insights inform recommendations to the UKRI DRI Programme SRO and Council-level Project Boards. UKRI will endeavour to keep STRIKE members informed of how their advice has contributed to the development of the DRI Programme.

6. Ways of working

- 6.1 Act independently, impartially, and in the best interests of UKRI, its DRI Programme, its portfolio, and the R&I communities it serves. Upholding the Seven Principles of Public Life (The Nolan Principles): selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.
- 6.2 As the DRI Programme operates within resource constraints, processes will be designed to minimise administrative burden while ensuring effective collaboration.
- 6.3 MS Teams will be the primary platform for collaboration, document sharing and discussions.
- 6.4 Members will not receive remuneration.
- 6.1 Members will be provided with clear terms of engagement for each task, including scope, timelines, expectations and conflict of interest declarations. Any relevant meeting papers and background materials will be shared ahead of time and action points will be documented and circulated afterward.
- 6.2 Participation methods will be designed to respect members' time and availability, with most activities being remote by default, unless in-person presence is deemed essential.
- 6.3 When in-person meetings are deemed necessary, the UKRI DRI Programme team will cover travel costs in accordance with the [UKRI Policy on Travel and Subsistence](#).
- 6.4 The number of requests made to any one member will not normally exceed six per year.
- 6.5 Each Task & Finish Group will provide concise, structured updates to the DRI Programme Team, outlining progress, key challenges and recommendations when required.
- 6.6 The effectiveness of STRIKE's ways of working will be reviewed annually to identify areas for improvement. Experts will have opportunities to provide feedback and adjustments can be made based on feedback to enhance efficiency and impact.

7 Conflicts of Interest

- 7.1 STRIKE is governed by the UKRI conflicts of interest policy (www.ukri.org/about-us/governance-and-structure/conflicts-of-interest/). Members are required to provide an initial declaration on commencement of membership, with subsequent reassessment performed on an annual basis or

following a change in circumstances.

- 7.2 Project-specific conflicts of interest are provided separately and are categorised as either 'direct', incorporating individual member and affiliated research group interests; or 'indirect', incorporating affiliated departmental and institutional interests. Members with a 'direct' conflict will not be involved in the relevant activity. For 'indirect' interests, members are required to verbally declare potential conflicts of interest prior to any project-specific discussions and provide factual responses to questions only. They are allowed to remain in the meeting room.
- 7.3 All conflicts of interest will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

8. Confidentiality and Data Protection

- 8.1 Members shall maintain strict confidentiality regarding all discussions, documents, and information shared during the course of their engagement.
- 8.2 Personal data of experts shall be handled in compliance with applicable data protection regulations.