2016-17 Programme: Guidance Notes for Submissions

[April 2016]

Aim and Objectives

The Assembly’s Research and Information Service (RaISe) jointly delivers the annual Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS) with the Queen’s University of Belfast (QUB), the University of Ulster (Ulster) and The Open University; formally partnering the Assembly with academia.

Since 2011 KESS has provided an annual seminar series where the public sector joins with academics to consider research findings for the purpose of promoting evidence-based policy and law-making in Northern Ireland (NI). KESS seeks to develop understanding and awareness of issues that relate to the Executive’s ‘Programme for Government’ (PfG). It further seeks to encourage engagement and debate among a spectrum of attendees; encouraging attendance from MLAs and their staff, Assembly Secretariat staff, public and private sector employees, as well as academics and representatives from voluntary and community groups.

KESS Context

The Assembly constitutes the legislative arm of devolved government in NI, which holds the Executive to account. It is empowered to scrutinise, propose and advise on matters relating to policy, legislation (both primary and secondary) and the budget within ‘devolved’ areas; i.e. those areas in which the Assembly has
authority to act ('legislative competence'), as prescribed by the *NI Act 1998*, as amended. The Assembly fulfils those roles and responsibilities by engaging in debates and making decisions via both its committee system (when elected Members sit in Standing/Statutory/Ad hoc Committees) and its plenaries (when the Assembly sits as a whole). To do so, its Members identify, bring forward and or assess evidence within short timeframes, while dealing with diverse, demanding workloads. Consequently the Assembly has unique research and information needs; and is supported and informed by multiple sources - such as the KESS.

As this is an election year, it is important to note that the incoming Executive will agree a new PfG, which in the next mandate will significantly inform policy and legislation that will be brought to and proposed within the Assembly.

In addition, Executive departments will reduce from 12 to 9, meaning functions and responsibilities of existing departments will transfer, as specified, to new departments. This in turn will result in fewer Statutory Committees in the Assembly, as there will be one for each new department.

Supplementing the appended 2016-17 ‘Hot Topics List’ for KESS, the following links provide further information that may serve to inform policy, legislation and the budget in the new mandate:

- Assembly Committee Legacy Reports for the 2011-16 mandate, which include matters of interest for incoming successor committees

- New Executive Departments
  [https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/changes-government-departments](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/changes-government-departments)

**Annual Programme**

The KESS annual programme runs from October-June, including approximately 16 seminar dates. Each seminar addresses 2-3 themes under a broad heading. Academics present on these themes highlighting the relevance of their research findings to Assembly business. To view the current KESS Programme, refer to:


The KESS Panel determines the annual programme, selecting from applications received in the spring prior to the Series commencing.
Panel

The KESS Panel is composed of representatives from the Assembly and all 3 universities. It meets to plan and agree the annual programme, as well as procedures and practices relating to the operation and delivery of KESS. It arranges the support needed for academics presenting at seminars, e.g. Seminar Briefing Packs and Workshops.

Administrative Team

The Administrative Team includes staff from RaISe, which plays a central coordinating role, and each university. It provides administrative support to enable the organisation and delivery of KESS.

Presentations and Policy Briefings

Academics who participate in KESS do so via an oral 20-minute Presentation (including a power point) and a written 5-6 pages Policy Briefing.

Workshops are provided quarterly by RaISe at each university, to facilitate academics’ compilation of Presentations and Policy Briefings.

For examples of Presentations and Policy Briefings, academics can view those previously delivered, using the following link:

Applications to Participate

Academics who wish to be considered for the 2015-16 Programme should fully complete and submit the relevant application form in light of the following paragraphs.

There are 2 routes to apply:

1. **A single submission** – an application proposing one twenty minute presentation on a single theme to contribute to formulation a whole seminar by the Panel; or,
2. **A joint submission** – an application proposing 2-3 20-minute presentations on related themes to collectively formulate a whole seminar. The Panel encourages joint submissions as it aids formulation of the programme.

The Panel also encourages academics to work with academics from other disciplines, both intra- and inter-institutionally, presenting multi-disciplinary, accessible, robust, non-partisan, evidence-based, research findings, which are relevant to Assembly business, including, but not limited to the appended Hot Topics List. As KESS aims, such findings facilitate evidence-based policy and law-making in NI.

Using a maximum of 200 words in the box provided, describe your seminar proposal. Ensure that you highlight how the research findings are/will be:

- Relevant to Assembly business, For example, the research findings help to identify issues for consideration or lines of questioning that could enable Assembly deliberations in the given area;
- Evidence-based;
- Reliable and robust;
- Objective and non-partisan (no party political – in the broadest sense); and,
- Accessible (written in plain English).

The opening date for applications is 11 April 2016; and the closing date is 9 May 2016.

Applications are to be emailed to the Panel representative designated at your university:

- Queen's University – Claire Dewhirst - c.dewhirst@qub.ac.uk
- Ulster University – Ann Marie Gray - am.gray@ulster.ac.uk
- The Open University – Fiona McKerlie - fiona.mckerlie@open.ac.uk

**Panel Decisions Regarding Applications**

In **July 2016**, the Panel will notify applicants of its decision via the lead contact's email address provided on the application.