



Nottingham Trent
University

NTU Open Research Awards: Application Guidance and Grading Matrix

OPEN Research

Unlocking the power of research for real-world change

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Details:

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Introduction

At NTU, we are committed to recognising and celebrating excellence in Open Research practices. The NTU Open Research Awards are designed to recognise those who demonstrate an outstanding commitment to openness, transparency, and collaboration in their work at NTU. Winners or winning teams will have their case studies published on NTU's webpages, and be recognised at the NTU Researcher Network Conference. This document outlines the eligibility criteria, the process for applying for the award, the review process, and grading matrix for applicants.

Eligibility

We welcome applications from all disciplines and research areas - Open Research is diverse, and the Awards are designed to recognise and reward a breadth of practices being adopted across NTU. These are the eligibility criteria for applicants:

- Any member of NTU staff - academic (on any pathway), research-only, technical, professional services, staff and PGRs - currently undertaking or supporting research at NTU is eligible.
- Applicants can submit case studies individually or as part of a research group. If you're applying as part of a group, your group application can include external collaborators.
- For PGRs considering applying, please note that you do not have to have completed your PhD to apply.
- We welcome re-submissions from unsuccessful applicants from last year's awards.

If you have any questions about eligibility, please email libopenresearch@ntu.ac.uk.

How to apply

Applications must be submitted [using the MS Form](#) by the deadline of 22nd April at 1pm.

If you require any accommodations to participate in the application process, such as needing to submit the application in an alternative format, please email libopenresearch@ntu.ac.uk. Please contact us by 16th April and we can discuss your needs and how best to assist you. All requests for reasonable accommodations will be supported wherever possible, will be handled confidentially and will not affect the evaluation of your application.

Key Deadlines

Applications open on 16th February, and must be submitted [using the MS Form](#) by the 22nd April 2026 at 1pm. If you experience any difficulty with submitting your application, email libopenresearch@ntu.ac.uk.

Application Form Breakdown

Each case study application must be submitted [using the MS Form](#), and will be marked out of 100. Each section of the application has been assigned a percentage of the overall mark. For guidance, prompt questions and word limits have been provided for each section. The section breakdown, prompt questions, and mark weighting for each section is outlined below:

Case Study Title (no marks – no word limit)

Please provide a concise title that reflects the Open Research practices you adopted as well as your research topic. You can focus on a specific project if that is appropriate.

Research Context (10 marks - 300-word limit)

Explain the context and purpose of your research. Provide a clear explanation of your broad research aims and significance, relating it to disciplinary conversations and/or real-world issues. You can focus on a single research project or multiple projects.

Use of Open Research Practices (30 marks - 300-word limit)

Explain what Open Research practices you used, and why you chose these practices. Offer a critical reflection of how you implemented these practices effectively, including any challenges you had to face and overcome (where appropriate). You can choose to reflect on unexpected hurdles, or anticipated ones for ongoing projects.

Higher marks will also be awarded for case studies that apply critical reflection to the implementation process of Open Research, detailing decisions made and any adaptations during the research practice/project.

Outcomes and Benefits (30 marks - 300-word limit)

Outline clearly the outcomes and impact of adopting Open Research practices in your research practice or project(s). Explain in detail how the adoption of Open Research practices has enhanced inclusivity, accessibility, reproducibility, or reliability of your research outputs. Provide details of any measurable improvements, including any evidence to corroborate these. The evidence can be quantitative or qualitative in nature.

It might be useful to consider the 'if not for' question. For example, 'if not for the adoption of this/these Open Research practice(s), then 'x' outcome(s) would not have been achieved'.

Reflection and Lessons Learned (30 marks - 300-word limit)

Critically reflect upon your implementation of Open Research practices. How will this experience inform your future research practice or projects? Share key lessons learned and advice for researchers considering more open practices. Higher marks will be awarded to those case studies that demonstrate deep self-reflection and critical analysis, offering actionable insights and suggestions for continuous improvement in research practices.

Links, References, and Supporting Materials (Optional)

Include any links to research outputs, datasets, publications, or references that support your case study. These do not count towards the total word limit.

Review Process

As part of our ongoing efforts to refine the review process and enhance transparency in the NTU Open Research Awards, this year we have introduced several key improvements to the application process.

To ensure a more rigorous and representative evaluation of applications, we have expanded our reviewer panel to include colleagues from diverse disciplines and professional service backgrounds. These are members of the Library Open Research Team, Research Strategy and Operations, Researcher Development, and previous NTU Open Research Award winners. This broader panel allows for a variety of perspectives in assessing applications.

All reviewers for this year's awards are disclosed on our NTU [Open Research Awards](#) page, ensuring transparency in the evaluation process. Each application will undergo a blind peer review by at least two reviewers using the Grading Matrix outlined below, preventing potential biases. Career stage, esteem or any other characteristics of the applicant(s) will not have a bearing on the assessment process. Additionally, reviewers will be requested to engage with Unconscious Bias training prior to undertaking reviews.

To further uphold fairness and consistency, moderation panels will be conducted to address any discrepancies in scoring against the Grading Matrix below. This will ensure that evaluations are equitable across all applications and aid the selection of winners. Unsuccessful candidates can request reviewer feedback on their application, following the notification of results.

Notification of Results

All nominees will be informed of the outcome of their applications in the week commencing 24th May 2024. An awards ceremony will be held at this year's NTU Researcher Network Conference.

Introduction to the Grading Matrix

Building upon last year's assessment criteria and in response to applicant feedback, this year we have designed a new structured Grading Matrix to aid applicants and reviewers. This framework provides clear guidance on how applications will be assessed, ensuring consistency in scoring across different reviewers.

We encourage all applicants to engage with the Grading Matrix as a tool for writing their applications.

Understanding the Grading Matrix Scoring System

As outlined above, applications are marked out of 100, with each of the section of the application being assigned a different proportion of marks.

Each section will be assessed for where it sits in one of five bands, ranging from Low to High (as set out in the Grading Matrix below). Within each band, there will be a range of points available, based on whether an application sits at the top, middle or bottom of that band. Each section of the application will be assessed independently, and the scores of each section combined will determine the overall mark of the application.

What does the Grading Matrix Means for Applicants?

Applicants can use the Matrix to understand what reviewers are looking for and the distinctions between different bands of score. The matrix provides clear definitions for each band, for each section, helping applicants identify and reflect on how their work could be improved. This provides a more structured and transparent evaluation guideline for both applicants and reviewers.

After the notification of results, applicants can request feedback on their applications to see how they were marked against the matrix.

Grading Matrix

Research Context (10 marks)

Low - 1-2 marks - Offers a basic outline of the topic and aims but lacks depth and clear explanation of significance

Low-Medium - 3-4 marks - Clearly states the research topic and aims with adequate context, though details on broader significance of research are not drawn out.

Medium - 5-6 marks - Provides a well-defined context with clear aims and a good explanation of the research's significance within its field and in the world

Medium-High - 7-8 marks - Presents a compelling, succinct summary that outlines the research topic, aims, and broader impact effectively.

High - 9-10 marks- Delivers an exceptionally clear, engaging narrative that not only outlines the research topic and aims but also widely contextualises its potential contribution to the field and real world challenges.

Open Research Practices Employed (30 marks)

Low - 1-6 marks - Mentions the Open Research practices employed with minimal explanation; lacks reasons why they were chosen or how they were executed.

Low-Medium - 7-12 marks - Describes the Open Research practices employed with some rationale and basic description of implementation, though critical reflection is limited.

Medium- 13-18 marks - Provides a clear explanation of the chosen Open Research practices with thoughtful rationale and a moderately detailed account of their implementation.

Medium High - 19-24 marks - Offers a detailed, reflective explanation of each Open Research practice used, including a strong rationale and evidence of effective, thoughtful implementation.

High – 25-30 marks - Delivers an exceptionally comprehensive and insightful narrative that not only explains each Open Research practice used and its rationale but also critically examines and reflects on the strategies used for effective implementation, setting a benchmark for best practice.

Outcomes and Benefits (30 marks)

Low - 1-6 marks - Mentions outcomes and benefits in a general sense with limited evidence; limited attempts are made to connect Open Research practices with outcomes.

Low-Medium - 7-12 marks - Provides clear outcomes and some evidence of benefits of Open Research practices. Reflections are superficially linked to Open Research values and practices.

Medium- 13-18 marks - Clearly describes tangible outcomes or benefits of adopting Open Research practice with well-supported evidence. Reflections are tied closely to inclusivity, reliability, accessibility, reproducibility.

Medium High - 19-24 marks - Delivers a detailed narrative which convincingly and thoughtfully links Open Research practices to clear outcomes, or benefits. Detailed reflections are offered on the consequences of this for inclusivity, reliability, accessibility, or reproducibility.

High - 25-30 marks - Presents an outstanding analysis of outcomes with compelling evidence; expertly connects Open Research practices to significant, measurable improvements in research quality, integrity, and reproducibility.

Reflection and Lessons Learned (30 marks)

Low - 1-6 marks - Offers basic reflections with generic lessons that don't link to their chosen Open Research practice(s); lacks critical insight and depth in advice.

Low-Medium - 7-12 marks - Provides some thoughtful reflections on successes and shortcomings with some specific lessons learned from using their chosen Open Research practice(s). An attempt is made to link lessons learned to advice given.

Medium - 13-18 marks - Offers a very thoughtful and clear reflection with detailed analysis of strengths and weaknesses of incorporating their chosen Open Research practice(s). Provides practical, actionable advice for implementing Open Research practice that is linked to lessons learned.

Medium High - 19-24 marks - Presents a comprehensive, reflective analysis that critically examines the process of incorporating their chosen Open Research practice(s); from this process, offers deep insights and well-articulated, actionable lessons learned.

High - 25-30 marks - Delivers exceptional critical reflection of the effective implementation of Open Research practice. It evaluates the lessons learned for the successful implementation of their chosen Open Research practice(s) with clarity and depth, but also uses reflections to offer insightful recommendations for future practice.