

**Astronomy Grants Round 2019**  
**Report to RAS Astronomy Forum**  
6 February 2020

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# Comparison to 2016

1. Number of applicants has grown slightly: 215 ↑3%
  2. Number of projects proposed dropped very slightly: 194 ↓4%
  3. Requested applicant effort fallen very slightly: 47.6 FTE ↓5%
  4. Requested PDRA effort down slightly: 179.0 FTE ↓4%
  5. Requested technical effort slightly reduced: 11.5 FTE ↓3%
- 2.3x overbidding by groups with current support (nearer to 3.0 prior to 2018)
  - Submissions from new groups:
    - One Research Organisation that had not previously applied for a Consolidated Grant
    - One Consortium Grant
    - Six New Applicant proposals

# Outcome: Summary

## Recommendation overview

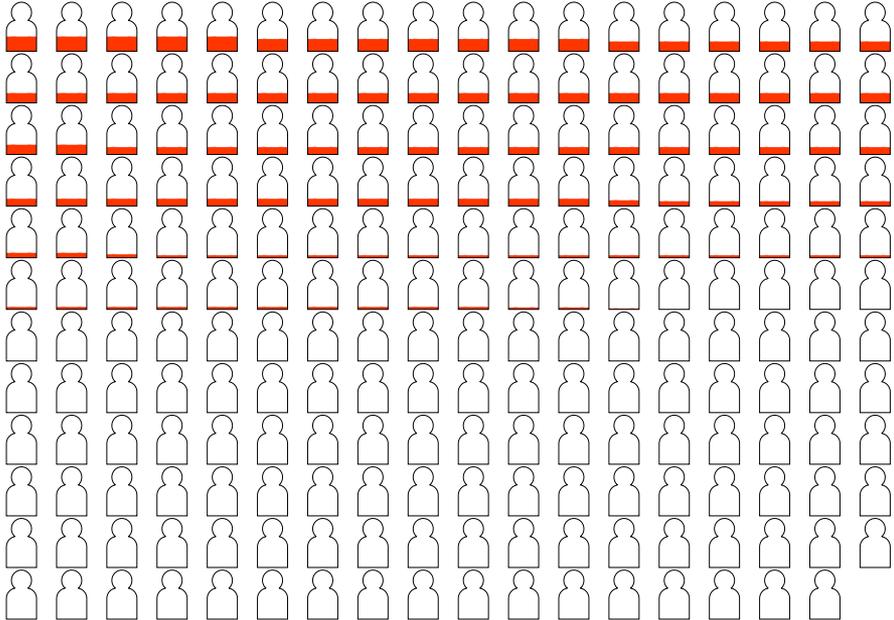
- |   |        |        |
|---|--------|--------|
|   | [2018  | 2016]  |
| • 74 (38%) of the highest-ranked projects on 24 proposals | [37%   | 44%]   |
| • 70.5 FTE PDRA and 3.9 FTE Tech effort (38%)             | [33%   | 38%]   |
| • Applicant time (5-35%) for 48% (103) of applicants      | [40%   | 57%]   |
| • Total cost £9.8M p.a.                                   | [£9.8M | £9.2M] |

## Applicant FTE recommendations

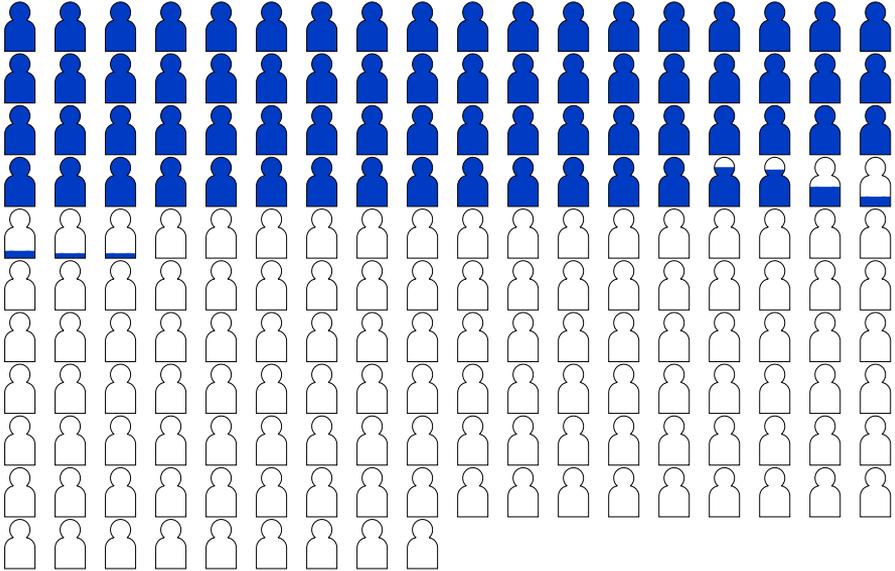
- |   |       |       |
|---|-------|-------|
| • Total 14.2 FTE applicant time recommended   | [15.6 | 18.5] |
| • 103 applicants recommended for FTE on projects above the PDRA funding cutoff (mean 14% FTE) | [103  | 119]  |
|   | [15%  | 16%]  |
| • 0 applicants recommended 5% FTE on high-quality projects below PDRA funding cutoff          | [0    | 3]    |

# 2019 Round Outcome

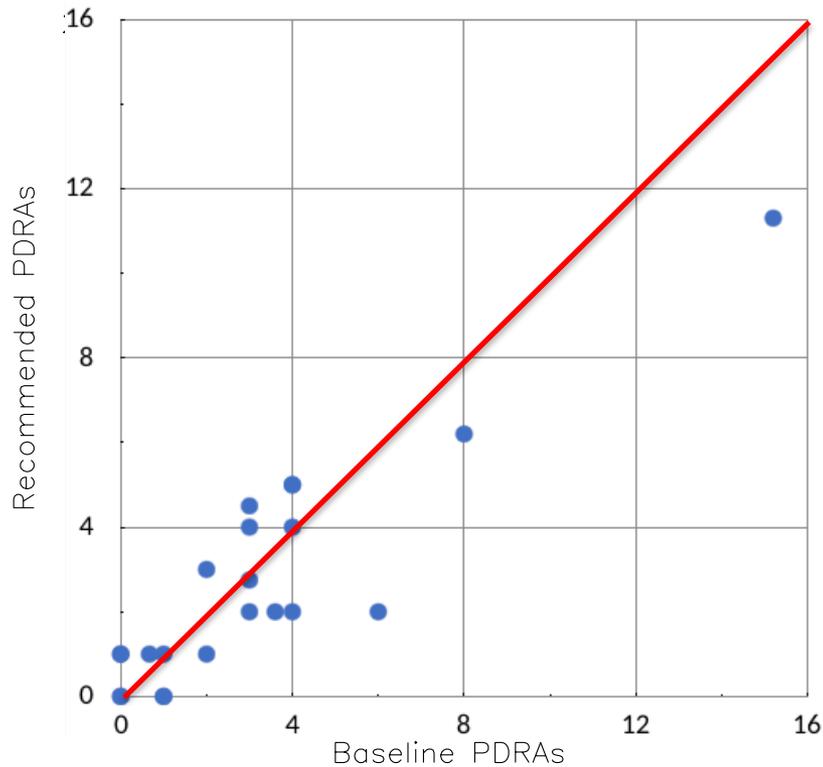
Applicant FTE



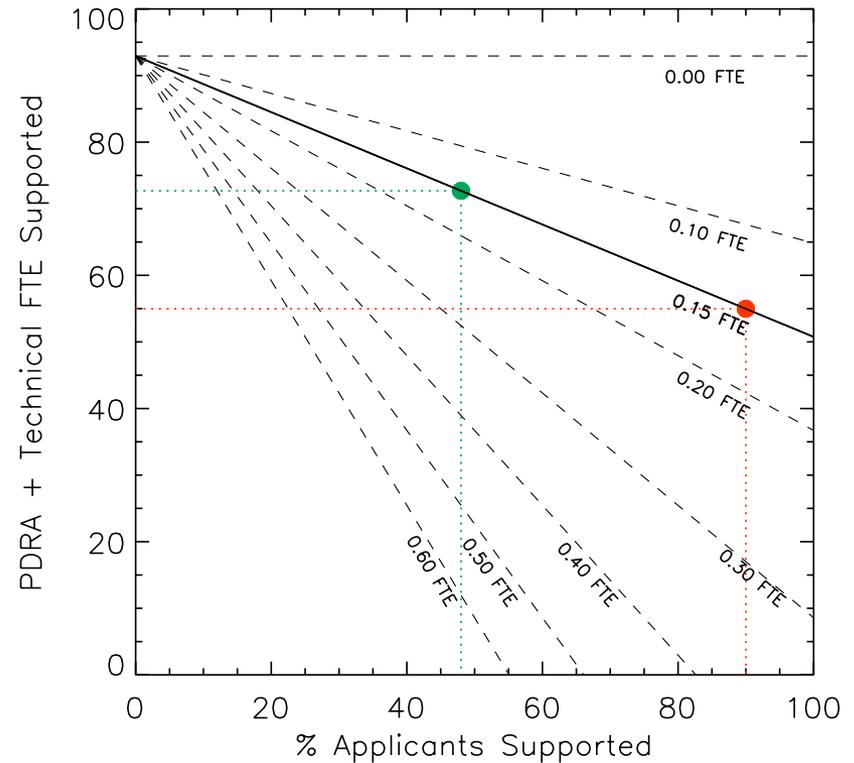
PDRA FTE



# Outcome: Analysis

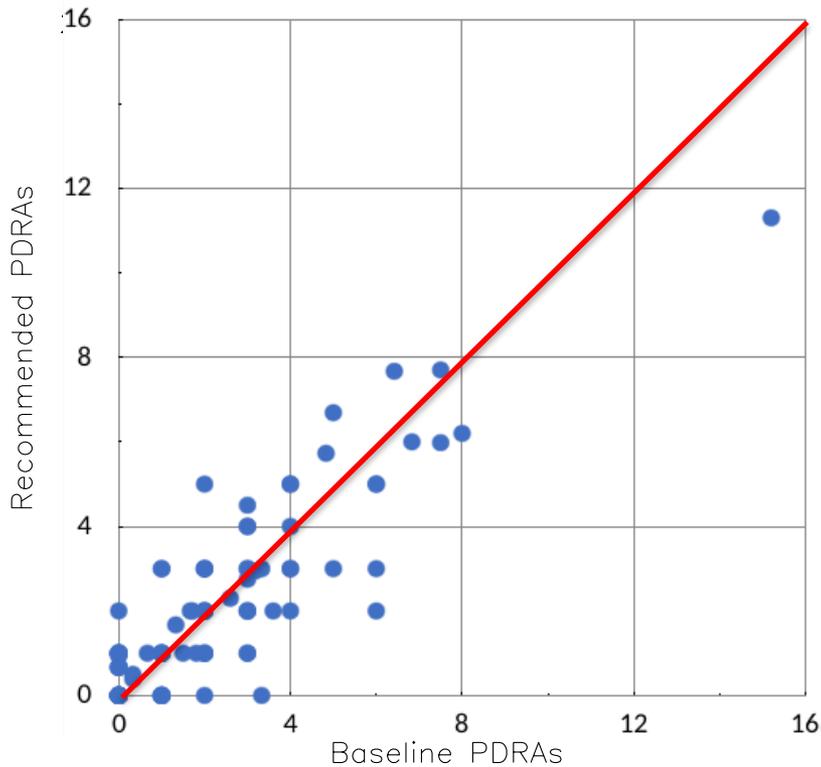


- A comparison of the number of PDRAs recommended in each proposal in this round versus existing STFC support to that research organisation (“Baseline”).
- No evidence of varying success rates as a function of group size (although at the extremes, the two large groups in this round are recommended slightly less than level funding)

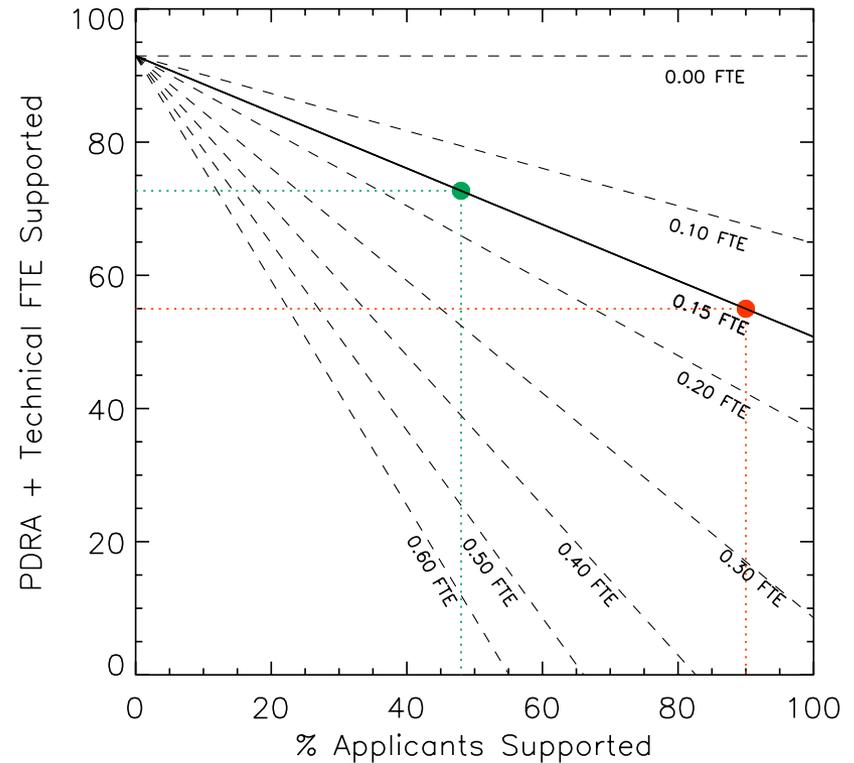


- An estimation of the funding parameter space in which AGP operates.
- Green dot shows recommended outcome: 48% of applicants receive 15% FTE support on average, ~75 FTE PDRA+Tech supported
- Red dot shows impact of funding 90% of applicants at 15% FTE, ~55 FTE PDRA+Tech affordable.

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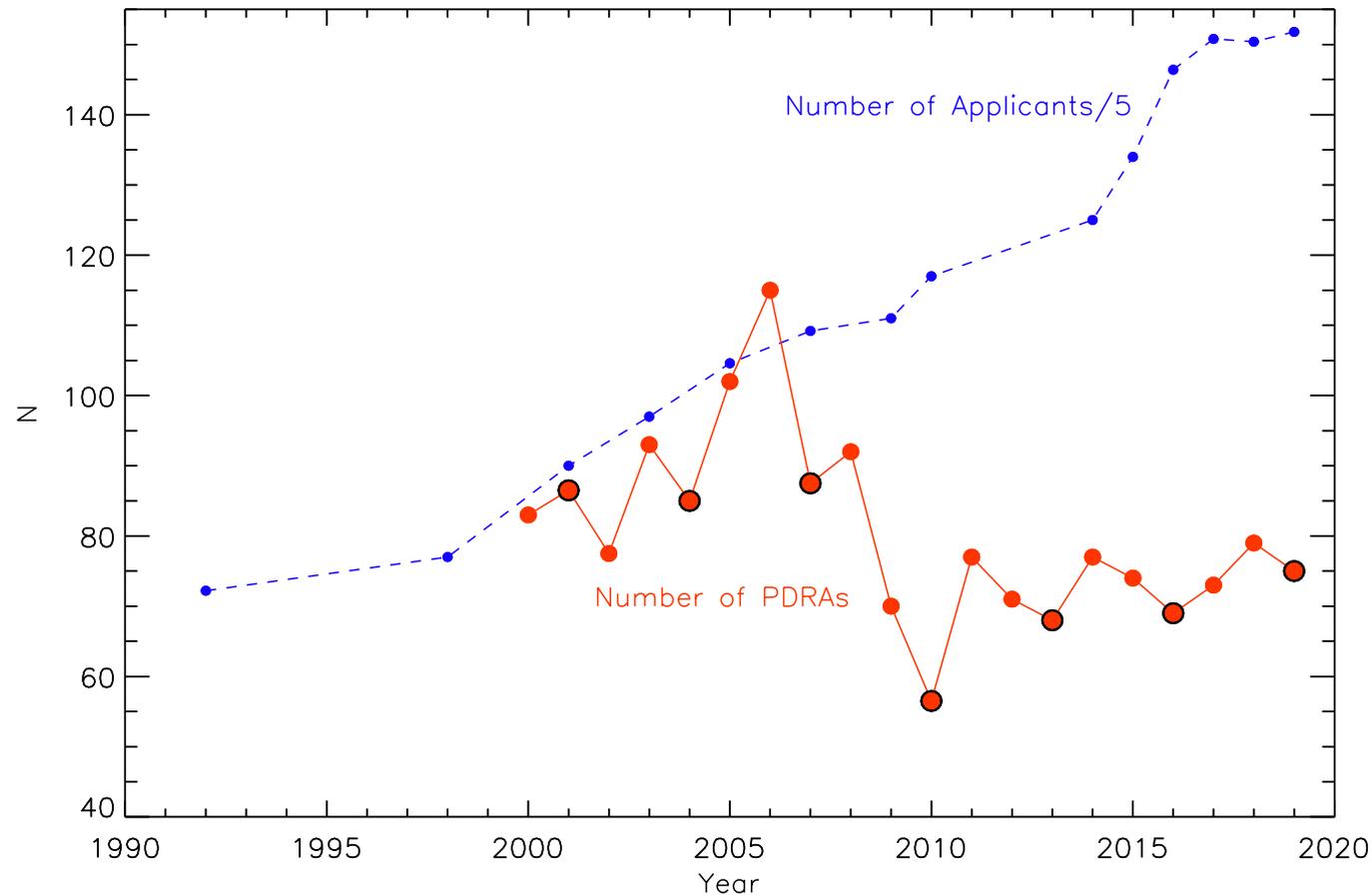


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# Outcome: Long-term trend



*The evolution of PDRA support provided by STFC/PPARC astronomy grants compared to the growth of the UK's academic research community. Note that the Applicants line has been divided by 5, so that it can be compared with the PDRA awards.*

# The CG scheme

- Is there a better process given the small size of the average award? (2.6 PDRAs averaged 2017/18/19)
- Concerns about relative support for larger thematic programmes versus individual projects?
- Community of applicants still growing (but the rate has slowed in recent years)
- AGP flat-cash for AGP over this period, but costs are rising
- PDRA support has remained roughly steady
- Some tweaks to the maximum applicant %FTE allowed in the 2020 round
- Funding pressure will get significantly worse if the UK loses access to ERC