TECHNICAL NOTE

UPEX: Reviewer Guide

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European **XFEL**

Revisions

Version	Date	Description
1.5	June 2025	■ Preface: Updated use of symbols ■ Section 1.2, "Log-on screen": Updated Figure 1 ■ Section 1.3, "Your UPEX homepage": Updated Figure 2 ■ Section 1.3.2.1, "View or edit a partially completed proposal or view submitted proposals": Updated Figure 3 ■ Section 1.4, "Icons used in UPEX": Added icon in Table 1 ■ Chapter 2, "Reviewing proposals": Updated / added Figure 4, Figure 5, Figure 6, Figure 7, Figure 9, Figure 10, Figure 11, Figure 13, and Figure 14 ■ Added Section 2.2.2, "Score range" ■ Added Chapter 3: "Cross-panel reviews of specific proposals"
1.4	9 July 2019	■ Updated Section 2.5, "Proposal resubmissions or continuations" ■ Added Section 2.6, "Viewing experiment reports of previous proposals"
1.3	5 June 2018	■ Section 1.1, "How to register": Added note for EuXFEL or DESY staff ■ Section 1.2, "Log-on screen": Added note about UPEX lightweight account and campus account ■ Added Section 2.5, "Proposal resubmissions or continuations"
1.2	5 April 2017	Added new log-on screen, new username recovery procedure, and updated Review member assignment
1.1	4 April 2017	Added "Downloading zipped PDF files of all proposals"
1.0	31 March 2017	First version

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Preface

The European XFEL (EuXFEL) is a research facility open to scientists worldwide. Beamtime is free of charge, but experiment proposals must go through a review process. Proposals must be submitted through the User Portal to the European XFEL (UPEX). As an important condition for access, after the experiments, the authors must strive to publish the results in peer-reviewed journals.

➲ **TIP:** For details, please refer to the "User Publication Policy" of the European XFEL.

Before you start using UPEX, please be aware of some basic features, depending on database criteria:

- Fields in the registration and proposal form should be completed in English. Names should be transcribed into standard Latin characters.

- Please be aware that symbols may not be saved if imported into a form field[1]. In this case, we recommend a transcription into Latin script (e.g. α = alpha, β = beta). However, since an upgrade to the database in summer 2020, a larger number of symbols can be saved when entered in a form field. Nevertheless, please note that text entries in proposals submitted before this upgrade will not benefit from the same possibility.

➲ **TIP:** For specific information about Proposal Review Panel (PRP) chairpersons and members, go directly to Chapter 2, "Reviewing proposals," on p. 11.

ⓘ **NOTE:** For other information, contact the EuXFEL User Office (useroffice@xfel.eu).

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[1] Following the ISO/IEC 8859-1 Standard.

1 Registering in UPEX

At the present stage, external users need a valid account in UPEX to be involved in any of the following tasks:

- Submitting a proposal (Main Proposer)

- Appearing on a proposal as Principal Investigator or Co-Proposer

- Reviewing proposals as a member of a Proposal Review Panel (PRP) or as an external referee

- *After a proposal has been allocated beamtime:* Being assigned to the experiment as a member of the user team (in case there is no perfect match with the list of proposers)

These different tasks are possible in the Normal User role. This implies that none of the above is possible if registration in UPEX has not been correctly completed at a previous stage. Please allow for some time for processing in case your affiliation is not yet in our database and needs to be added by the EuXFEL User Office. In the future, more access functionality is planned: registration for the experiment, submission of feedback forms, experiment reports, and information on publications.

1.1 How to register

To register in UPEX, follow these steps.

1 From the EuXFEL website, and click the link to UPEX:

https://in.xfel.eu/upex

2 At the bottom of the UPEX log-on page, click **Create New Account** to open the registration form.

> ⚠ **CAUTION:** This does not apply to EuXFEL or DESY staff, who can simply log on to UPEX at the above link with their usual EuXFEL or DESY credentials and fill in the few required fields.

3 Fill in all fields, as requested.

Fields marked with an asterisk (*) are mandatory.

1.1.1 Registration rules

When registering in UPEX, follow these rules:

- **Username**

  Usernames can have only 4 to 8 alphabetic characters (a–z). They are case-sensitive and must be unique.

- **Password**

  Passwords are case-sensitive and must have at least 6 characters.

- **Email address**

  An existing unique email address is required to register. All correspondence relevant to the project and other important information will be sent to the email address you indicate. Please make sure you enter this information correctly.

- **Position**

  When attributing the Principal Investigator responsibility in your proposal, make sure that the relevant UPEX user has a staff position and that this information is stated in the appropriate field.

- **Affiliation**

  Select an affiliation from the existing database by clicking Select My Institute and searching by the name of the organization (mostly full name, abbreviation, or both) or town. If you do not find your affiliation, or if the name, address, or department is not correct, click the appropriate link at the bottom of the form to request support from EuXFEL User Office by email and give the correct information.

The same applies if your department is not listed for an organization that is already in our database.

1.1.2 Email verification

After you have registered, a validation email is sent to your email address.

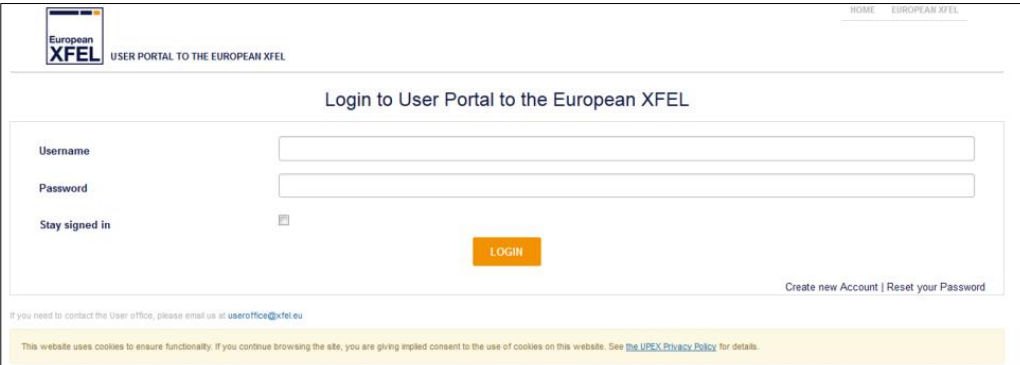⚠ **CAUTION:** This does not apply to EuXFEL or DESY staff.

To validate your email, click the validation link in the body of the message. Before you do this, make sure that the complete validation link is fully marked as such. If it is not, you can copy and paste the link in the body of the validation email into the location bar of your browser.

⚠ **CAUTION:** The validation must be completed within 24 hours from the time of registration. Failure to complete the validation in this timeframe will result in removal of the account.

1.2 Log-on screen

At the top of the log-on screen, you have the option to authenticate by using specific UPEX account credentials or XFEL/DESY credentials, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: UPEX log-on screen

ⓘ **NOTE:** Authentication through an UMBRELLA account will be available at a later stage.

If you already have an account in UPEX, enter your username and password to log on to the system.

If you do not remember your password, you can click Reset Your Password, enter your username or the email address you listed when registering your account in UPEX, and confirm Reset Your Password. A password reset link will be sent to the email address (see Section 1.1.1, "Registration rules"). Open the email and click the reset link. You will then be re-directed to UPEX. Enter and confirm your new password in the form displayed. From there, you

will be able to log on directly. The new password will be active for all subsequent log-ons.

> (i) **NOTE:** If you do not remember your username, request a reset link by indicating your email address. The username will be indicated in the form displayed in UPEX after clicking the reset link. Otherwise, contact the EuXFEL User Office (useroffice@xfel.eu).

> ➲ **TIP:** If you are also a user, you may want to refer to Section 1.2, "UPEX lightweight account vs. Campus account", in the _UPEX Experiment Proposal and Registration Guide_ for more information about the difference between these two accounts.

1.3   Your UPEX homepage

When you register for UPEX, the Normal User role is assigned by default, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: _Normal User dashboard in UPEX_
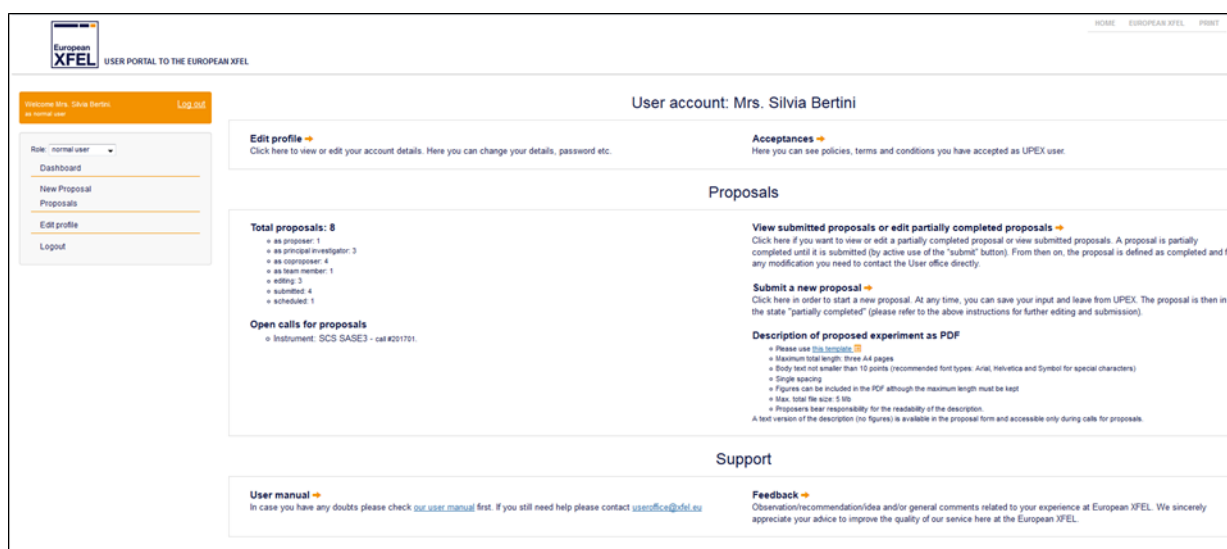
1.3.1   Edit profile

If you select the Edit Profile option, you can update your personal details (e.g. including password, affiliation, and other contact information). After registration, it is possible to update this information without limitation. However, after a first change of your personal details, you be allowed to change them again only 7 days later.

1.3.2 Proposals

You can also access all of the functions described below through the left sidebar on your dashboard. If more than one UPEX role has been assigned to you, you can switch to the relevant dashboard (and the relevant options) from the dropdown list at the top of the left sidebar.
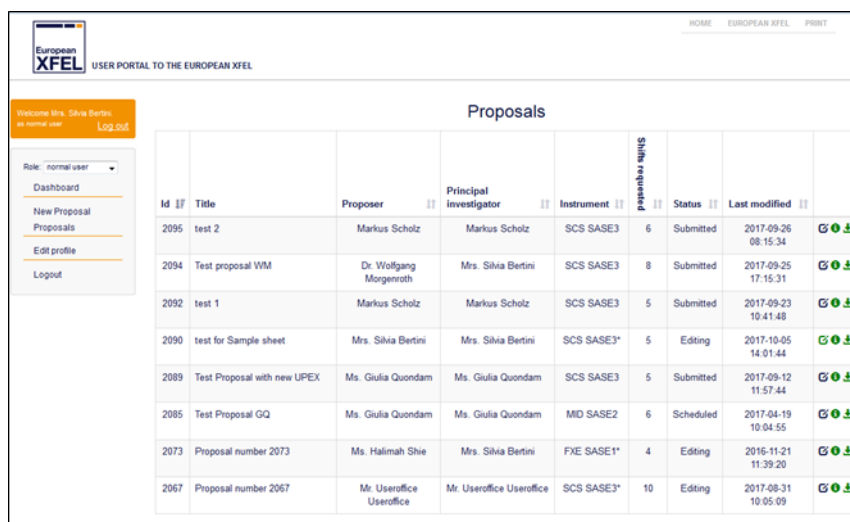
1.3.2.1 View or edit a partially completed proposal or view submitted proposals

By clicking the link View or Edit Partially Completed Proposals, you can view some information about the number of proposals in which you are involved.

⚠️ **CAUTION:** A proposal is "partially completed" until it is actively submitted (by clicking the Submit button). From then on, you will not be able to change anything in the proposal.

By selecting the link, you can access an overview of the proposals you are involved in as Main Proposer, Principal Investigator (PI), or Co-Proposer, as shown in Figure 3. You can also view or download them as a PDF. Main Proposers also have the permission to edit partially completed proposals (i.e. proposals in Editing status) and submit them before the call deadline.

Figure 3: Overview of proposals in UPEX

1.3.2.2 Proposal withdrawal

To withdraw a submitted proposal, contact the EuXFEL User Office (useroffice@xfel.eu).

1.3.2.3 Submit a new proposal

Clicking Submit a New Proposal enables you to start the process of submitting a new proposal by opening the EuXFEL Proposal Form (PF).

1.4 Icons used in UPEX

In the UPEX graphical user interface (GUI), you can hover your mouse over any icon to get context-sensitive help. Clicking the icon executes the action, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: *Definitions of UPEX icons*

| Icon	Name	Action
	View	View a proposal in the UPEX GUI.
	Download	Download the PDF file of a proposal in which you are Main Proposer, PI or Co-Proposer at any stage.
	Edit (green)	Edit the document/section of a form.
	Edit (grey)	Editing function is not available. For example, if this icon appears in the proposal overview on your dashboard, either you are not the Main Proposer who initiated submission and do not have the corresponding privileges or the proposal was already submitted. For details, see the *UPEX: Registration and Proposal Submission Guide* (XFEL.EU TN-2017-001).
	Delete	Delete a specific form section.
	Clone	Clone the current section (e.g. a sample sheet) and edit the copy to produce a new section.
	Normal Reviewer	PRP member has a Normal Reviewer role based on the evaluation of the proposal online.
	PRP Member	PRP member has been selected to act as Lead Reviewer for the specific proposals and will be asked to report about the project at the PRP meeting. if required.
	Add filter	Add filter for searching in the list of review field of expertise

2 Reviewing proposals

As soon as the proposals are available after the preliminary checks, the chairperson of the relevant Proposal Revie Panel (PRP) is informed by the EuXFEL User Office (usually via email) and can start reading proposals and assigning them to members of the PRP. Members are given the Review Member role for a given PRP or committee. The chairpersons of a PRP are attributed the Review Chairman role in addition to the Review Member role. The Normal User role is standard for registration on UPEX.

2.1 Viewing and assigning proposals in the Review Chairman role

2.1.1 Assigning reviewers from the individual Proposal

In the Review Chairman role, you can access the overall list of proposals submitted to the PRP by clicking **Proposals** in the dashboard or in the sidebar on the left side of the dashboard, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Review Chairman role dashboard
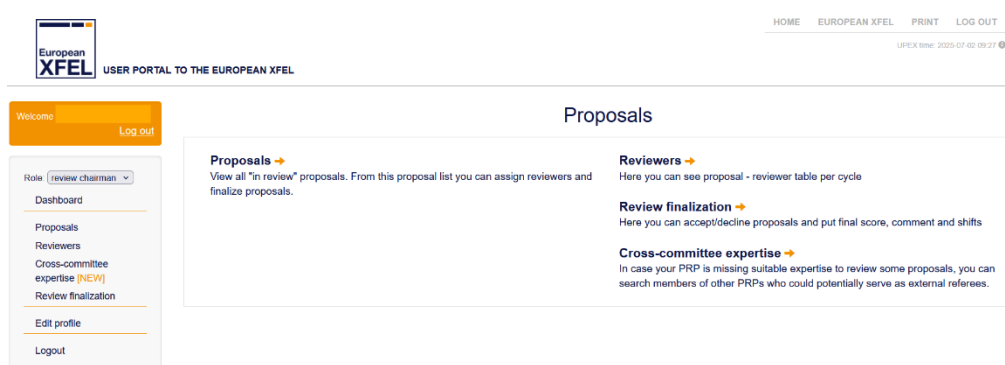
Once the list of proposals in review is displayed (see Figure 5), by clicking the green icon (⬚) at the right of each proposal in the list, the PRP Chairperson (role: Review Chairman) can open the proposal from the UPEX interface and
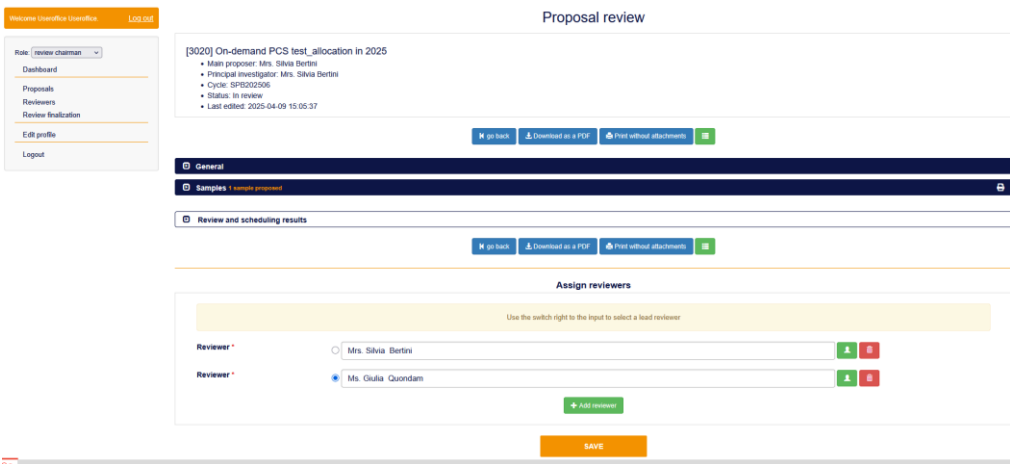
access the Assign Reviewers tool (shown in Figure 6) at the bottom of each of them to assign proposals to members of the same PRP. These are UPEX users having the role Review Member for the specific PRP/instrument only.

Figure 5: List of proposals in Review Chairman role

Figure 6: The Assign Reviewer tool at the bottom of the proposal can be opened from the list of Proposals in the Review Chairman role

In case external referees need to be involved (see the *Terms of Reference of the Proposal Review Panels of the European XFEL*), the relevant role and specific viewing rights for individual proposals can be **assigned by the User Office only**. This also applies to members of other PRPs to be involved as external referees in special cases (see complete instructions in Section 3, "Registering in UPEX", below).

Proposals can be viewed directly from this screen, and opened section by section, by clicking the white arrow on the left side of each dark blue section.

You can also download the complete proposal as a PDF by clicking the respective medium blue button in the button row above the first dark blue section separation (General) and underneath the last dark blue section separation (Laboratory access).

> ℹ️ **NOTE:** A one-click PDF download option for all proposals submitted to a PRP in the same call is still under development at the time of this writing.
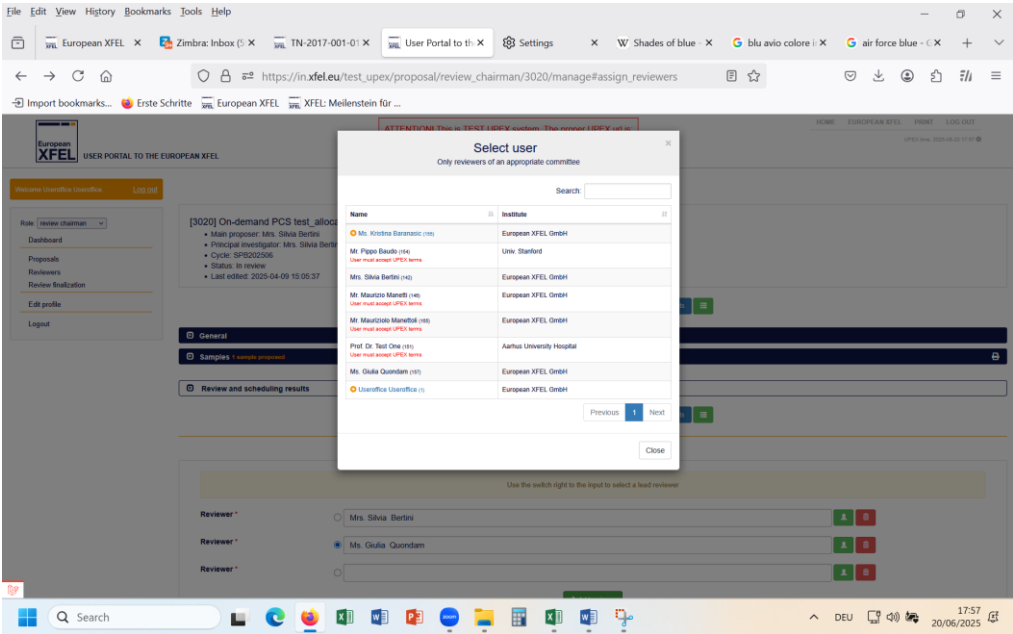
In order to assign reviewers, click the Add Reviewer icon (➕ Add reviewer) at the bottom of the Proposal Review tool start screen (Figure 6). A new, smaller window opens, as shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7: *Assignment of a reviewer selected among the PRP members*

By clicking Select, the orange symbol at the left side of each one of the records browsed, you will be able to select the name of a reviewer among the members of your PRP. Proceed again the same way to add another reviewer.

> ℹ️ **NOTE:** At least three reviewers should be assigned to each proposal.

After assigning reviewers as needed, appoint one of the reviewers as Lead Reviewer by clicking the radio button at the left of the name field, as shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Assigning a Lead Reviewer by selecting a radio button

⚠ **CAUTION**: After completing the assignment, click Save before going back to the proposal list (by clicking the Go Back button at the top and bottom of proposal fields).

ⓘ **NOTE**: The reviewer selection in the Review Chairman role can be modified even after the reviewers have entered their evaluation for the specific proposal. Please use this feature very carefully and inform the relevant PRP members directly in case of changes in their assignment.

To see an overview of the reviewers assigned to each proposal, click Reviewers in the Review Chairman role dashboard, shown in Figure 8 above.

2.1.2   Assigning reviewers from the Reviewers table

Alternatively, by clicking Reviewers in the dashboard or in the sidebar on the left side of the dashboard, as shown in Figure 9 below, you can browse a table containing the list of proposals in review and, in the top row, the members in your PRP. You can directly assign them proposals to review by clicking on the corresponding plus sign (+) in the column underneath each PRP member's name. At the same time, you will have to assign them Lead Reviewer or simple Reviewer responsibility by the dropdown, which will open after clicking the plus sign (+), as shown in Figure 9 below.

Figure 9: Assigning proposals to reviewers from the Reviewers tool

After all proposals have been assigned, the PRP chairperson is requested to inform the PRP members or the EuXFEL User Office, which will inform the PRP members. At this point, if there are no other topics requiring clarification, the members can start reviewing proposals.

> **NOTE**: In case the reviews of some proposals would benefit from additional expertise and reviewers in other European XFEL PRPs, please refer to Chapter 3, "Cross-panel reviews of specific proposals", below.

2.2 Reviewing proposals in the Review Member role

2.2.1 How to access and review proposals

PRP members can browse the list of proposals by logging on to UPEX and switching to the Review Member role through the dropdown menu in the top left of the dashboard, as shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10: How to switch to the review member role
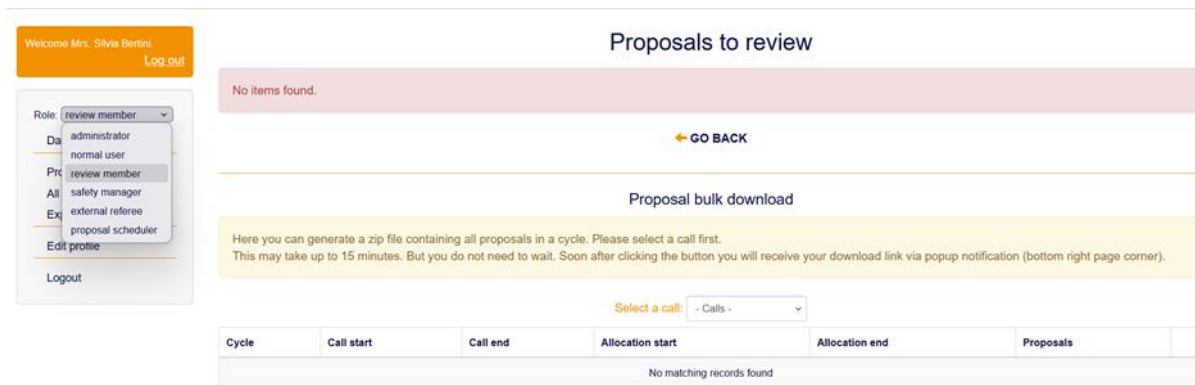
PRP members have permission to see all proposals related to their PRP via
All Proposals.

Figure 11: List of proposals assigned to a PRP member for evaluation

2.2.1.1 Entering reviews of proposals directly from the "Proposals to review" list

This list includes proposals specifically assigned to you for evaluation.

If the feasibility checks for a proposal have been carried out, the outcome is
displayed in the corresponding field in the table. Generally, the outcome of
these checks should be available at least two weeks before the PRP meeting.

The Normal Reviewer icon (⊘) next to the proposal information means that
you, as PRP member, have a Normal Reviewer role regarding the evaluation
of the proposal online and participation in the discussion at the PRP meeting.

However, if the Lead Reviewer icon (⊘) appears next to the proposal
information instead, this means that, in addition, you have been selected by
the PRP Chairperson to act as Lead Reviewer for the specific proposals and
will be asked to report about the projects at the PRP meeting in order to
introduce their discussion.

Independently of the responsibility mentioned above, you are requested to
enter your score, the number of recommended shifts, and a short review
report directly in the Proposal to Review table, in the corresponding fields.

2.2.1.2 **Entering reviews of proposals after opening each proposal document**

Alternatively, clicking the Edit icon (🖉) enables you to open the proposal to review from the UPEX interface. Then you can view the proposal directly from this screen, section by section, by clicking the white arrow on the left in each dark blue section:

▶ General

In the last section at the bottom of this view, the Review Form (Figure 12 below), you can provide the results of your evaluation (Score, Shifts Recommended, and Comments).
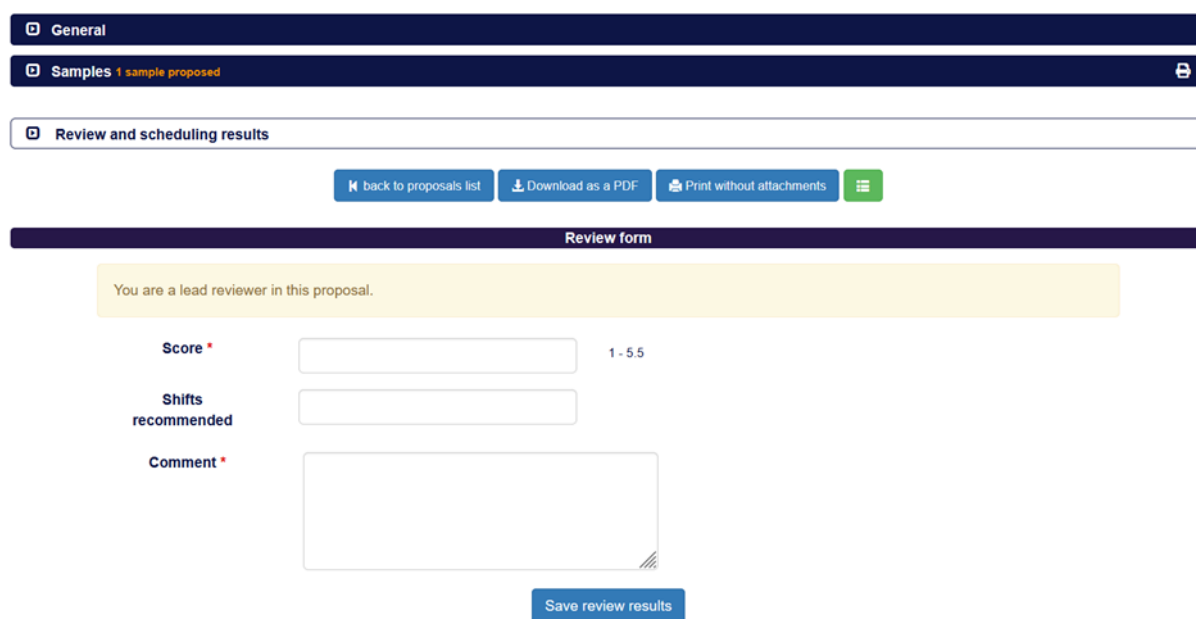
⚠️ **CAUTION**: Save your work before moving to another proposal (by clicking Save Your Results). You can edit your input after saving, generally until one day before the PRP meeting.

Figure 12: *Proposal Review Form*

To switch to another proposal, save, click Back To Proposal List and select another proposal through the Edit icon (🖉).

Shortly before the PRP meetings, the input concerning internal checks and scientific reviews is finalized, and all proposals acquire the status In Chair Review. At this stage, no changes will be possible in the evaluation texts by reviewers or instrument scientists. In case of problems, contact the EuXFEL User office (useroffice@xfel.eu).

2.2.2 Score range

Proposal scores range from 1 (inadequate—not to be allocated) to 5.5 (excellent). Panel members are encouraged to make use of the full scale with decimals when assessing scientific merit.

Score descriptions:

5.0–5.5 = Outstanding
4.0–4.9 = Excellent
3.0–3.9 = Very good
2.0–2.9 = Good
1.0–1.9 = Not recommended for beamtime in the present format

2.2.3 Review result finalization

After finalization of the review results in UPEX and discussion at the PRP meeting, the following information is required for each proposal:

■ Number of recommended shifts

■ Final score

■ Final comments (to be used for communication with the proposers)

■ Final notes about events (in particular, list of complete names of PRP present during the discussion of a given proposal) or recommendations made during the meeting (to be used for communication with European XFEL management)-
   (see the *PRP Terms of Reference*)

⚠ **CAUTION**: Chairpersons (or Liaison Scientists) must provide full names of all PRP members attending the individual proposal discussion – not only abbreviations.

In the Review Chair role, you can see a review overview table by clicking Review Finalization in the Review Chair role dashboard (see Figure 4 above).

The Review Finalization table is shown below (Figure 13).

Figure 13: *Review Finalization table in Review Chairman role*

The PRP chairperson can enter the final outcome of the evaluation directly in the table in the field marked Empty. The buttons at the top left of the table enable you to copy the table (in order to paste it into a Microsoft Excel file) or export it as a .csv or Microsoft Excel file.

The exported Microsoft Excel file can be used for taking notes during the PRP meeting (offline). The finalized notes can then be copied and pasted back to UPEX by using the Review Chair role or the Liaison Scientist role.

⚠ **CAUTION:** If you click Finalize at the bottom of the table, the input cannot be edited any longer and will be submitted to the EuXFEL Management as final.

2.3   Supporting PRPs in the Liaison Scientist role

The Liaison Scientist role enables liaison scientists to access the Review Finalization table (as shown on the UPEX dashboard in Figure 13) in order to assist their PRP in the framework of their meetings and enter information online or offline, as required.

ⓘ **NOTE**: Liaison Scientists can only enter and edit the input in the Finalization table. Chairpersons have additional permissions to finalize results in the Review Chairman role.

Besides, this role has access to the records of the fields of expertise and the search options as detailed in Section 3.2, "Retrieving information about scientific expertise available in all PRPs".

2.4 Downloading zipped PDF files of proposals in a specific call

You can initiate a download of the zipped PDF files of all proposals belonging to a cycle in the table at the bottom of Proposal List in the Review Chairman, Review Member, and Liaison Scientist roles.

If you wish to download all proposals in review by your PRP (e.g. in the current round), select the proposal cycle ID in the table at the bottom of the dashboard (e.g. MID202601 would contain all proposals submitted to MID for the single run for 2026). Some instruments may have more than one cycle in the same semester (e.g. screening proposals at SPB/SFX are submitted in a separate specific cycle with a different last digit than the cycle containing regular proposals).

Soon after clicking the Download button (⬇) on the right of the Proposals column, a popup will appear on your UPEX dashboard with a download link. The speed of the process is variable and may take up to 15 minutes, depending on the number of requests received by the system but also on the speed of your internet connection.

Figure 14: Initiating a zip download of proposal PDFs

Proposal bulk download

Here you can generate a zip file containing all proposals in a cycle. Please select a call first.
This may take up to 15 minutes. But you do not need to wait. Soon after clicking the button you will receive your download link via popup notification (bottom right page corner).

Select a call: 201702

Cycle	Call start	Call end	Allocation start	Allocation end	Proposals	
SQS201702	2017-01-11	2017-02-28	2017-09-01	2017-12-01	2	⬇

Figure 15: Review member dashboard after initiating a zip download of proposal PDFs. The light blue popup message at the lower right corner of the UPEX dashboard, here in the Review member role, contains the download link.

2.5 Proposal resubmissions or continuations

2.5.1 Resubmission or continuation proposals regarding the same instrument

Assuming that the Main Proposer indicates the ID of the previous proposal of which the new one is a resubmission or a continuation, in the general part of this one, you will see a clickable link with the proposal ID and title. By clicking it, you will open the relevant proposal in UPEX.

2.5.2 Resubmission or continuation proposals regarding different instruments

In case you need to access to proposals submitted previously to a different PRP (for example, in case of proposal resubmission or continuation), please contact the EuXFEL User Office (useroffice@xfel.eu). We can provide you with the PDF file of these proposals, on request.

2.6 Viewing experiment reports of previous proposals

Experiment reports relevant to experiments carried out in the past are accessible through the "All proposals" list in the review member role. If a report has been uploaded by the users, a download icon (⬇) can be seen in the column "Experiment report".

You can download the experiment report directly by clicking the link. The experiment report will also be included in the PDF file if you download the full proposal to which it refers.

The experiment report is <u>not</u> included in the new continuation proposal assigned for review, since it is not a progress report relevant to the more recently submitted project.

3 Cross-panel reviews of specific proposals

In some cases, some specific reviewers' expertise may not be available in the Proposal Review Panel (PRP) to which the proposal has been submitted. For this reason, the EuXFEL Management encourages PRP Chairpersons to look for suitable reviewers in other PRPs.

3.1 PRP members to provide information about scientific expertise in UPEX

All active members of the PRPs are requested to provide information about their fields of expertise in their profile in UPEX (i.e. scientific areas in which they would feel comfortable about reviewing experiment proposals).

Figure 16 below shows the dashboard of a PRP member after having received the specific Review Member role. PRP members can access their profile and edit it as required by selecting Edit Profile from the menu on the left of the dashboard when joining the PRPs and at any time later.

Figure 16: UPEX dashboard of active PRP members, after being assigned the review member role (and before being assigned proposals to review).

Currently, a list the areas relevant to science conducted at the EuXFEL is available at the bottom of the UPEX profile of PRP members as soon as they have been assigned the relevant Review Member role by the User Office, after registration in UPEX. The relevant fields of expertise can be selected by the appropriate checkboxes (see Figure 17).

Figure 17: List of fields of expertise as browsed under the UPEX profile of a PRP member—as of 23 June 2025

The list of areas of expertise may not be complete and may evolve over time. In case PRP members wish to request additions to the list, they are welcome to contact the User Office (useroffice@xfel.eu) at any time.

The latest list of areas of expertise at a given point in time can be browsed by opening your own UPEX Review Chair or Review Member profile.

3.2 Retrieving information about scientific expertise available in all PRPs

PRP Chairpersons (in their Review Chairman role) and Liaison Scientists (in the respective role) can browse and search the available information provided by all active PRP members about fields of expertise. After logging on to UPEX, they need to select one of these respective roles from the dropdown at the top of the menu at the left of their UPEX dashboard.

Figure 18: Review chairman dashboard
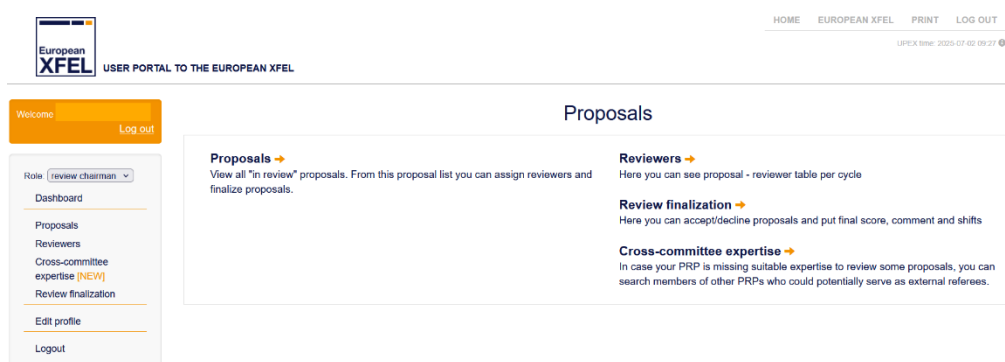
To access the expertise database, select "Cross-committee expertise" from the menu at the left of the UPEX dashboard or from the dashboard (see Figure 18). The names of all PRP members who provided the information (in alphabetical order) and their expertise to-date will be listed as a table.

The table includes the following columns:

- UPEX user ID

- Name of the PRP member (e.g. all UPEX users with Review Member role for any active PRP),

- Names of category and specific fields of expertise as checked in the individual profiles

- Name(s) of the instrument(s) to which their current PRP refers

At the top of the list, you can search for the relevant fields of expertise by typing a keyword or part of a keyword (Figure 19).

> ⓘ **NOTE**: You can check on the list of available expertise keywords by clicking on Edit profile and scrolling down to the bottom of the page, the current list Fields of Expertise will then appear with your selections. A recent list is in Figure 17 above.

A set of related filters on available fields of expertise will then appear (Figure 19 and detail in Figure 20).

By clicking the green icon (⊕) in front of one of them, a table with the corresponding sorted records, as mentioned above, will be browsed.

Figure 19: Searching for relevant fields of expertise: entering a keyword and browsing the available filters

Figure 20: Example of available fields of expertise after typing a keyword in the search field

For the potential reviewers in the search results, two situations are possible:

■ In case the potential reviewers listed are part of another PRP to which the proposal has been submitted (i.e. cross-panel reviews are required), the sentence "Contact User Office useroffice@xfel.eu" appears in the Note column, next to the name of the instrument/PRP to which the PRP member(s) belong. In this case, the PRP Chairperson requiring the additional review support by them is invited to contact the User Office (useroffice@xfel.eu) **as early as possible**.

■ However, in case the identified reviewers are part of the same PRP as the Chairperson, the note Assign via "Reviewers" will appear next to the results and the Chairperson will be able to assign proposals in review directly.

Figure 21: Searching for potential PRP members with relevant fields of expertise: Selection of one appropriate filter and relevant search results

In the first case mentioned above, as soon as the User Office has been contacted, they will inform potential reviewer(s) and the Chairperson(s) of the other relevant Panel(s), clarifying if the external PRP member(s) are in a position to accept the additional assignment(s). Viewing rights to the specific proposal(s) in question will be assigned by the User Office via the External Referee role. In case the assignment should be declined, for any reason, the viewing privileges will be withdrawn.

⚠️ **CAUTION:** If discussion of some of the proposals involving external expert reviews is required, specific virtual meetings must be organized timely before the main PRP meeting. The PRP Chairpersons decide on the need for these additional virtual meetings and the composition of their participants.