

ESRC Research Funding Guide October 2017

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Introduction

This guide covers all aspects of research grant funding. It gives details of the arrangements and procedures for research grants, together with a summary of proposal procedures.

The terms and conditions of research grants included in this guide are for information and completeness. Grant offer letters will include a set of current standard conditions, and any conditions specific to the grant offered.

We reserve the right to amend these regulations at any time and without prior notice. The regulations in effect at any time will be those contained in the most recent version of this guide, available at: www.esrc.ac.uk/RFG.

A wider range of information related to funding rules and opportunities is available on our website at www.esrc.ac.uk.

Please note that this guide does not cover postgraduate training. The **Postgraduate Funding Guide** is available at www.esrc.ac.uk/PFG.

Our standards of service

We are committed to high standards of service in all our activities, explained in our Service First Statement: www.esrc.ac.uk/about-us/policies-and-standards/customer-service/.

Our Service First standards are intended to underpin the provision of this service and ensure responsiveness, quality and effectiveness throughout our operations. We are committed to providing a high-quality service to our user community.

We operate a process for considering and responding to complaints which can be found at www.esrc.ac.uk/about-us/policies-and-standards/complaints/.

Contacts

For contact information please refer to our website: www.esrc.ac.uk/contact-us/.

Section I

What funding opportunities does ESRC offer?

Our research grants provide financial support for specific research projects within the social sciences.

We provide a range of funding opportunities, including schemes, competitions and initiatives.

Further information regarding funding opportunities can be found at www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/funding-opportunities/.

Our funding decisions are based on a number of criteria: quality, timeliness, potential impact, value for money and, in relevant cases, fit to the specification for a particular competition.

Our remit

For information on ESRC's scientific remit please refer to our disciplines classifications at www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/is-my-research-suitable-for-esrc-funding/discipline-classifications/.

If further assistance is required please contact esrcremmit@esrc.ac.uk. You may submit a short outline for remit guidance using the remit query form (www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/is-my-research-suitable-for-esrc-funding/remit-query-form/). Your enquiry will be passed to a relevant member of staff, who will contact you directly.

We welcome interdisciplinary proposals as we recognise that many of the most pressing research challenges are interdisciplinary in nature, both within the social sciences and between the social sciences and other areas of research. Applicants should refer to the RCUK guidance at www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/fundingagreement/ for responsive mode research grant proposals which may span other Research Council remits. Proposals that extend beyond the remit of a single Research Council should be submitted to the Council with the majority interest, but peer reviewers will be obtained from each of the relevant communities. The Research Councils will also co-fund those projects where a significant element of the costs resides within more than one Council's remit.

Further information on cross-council funding agreements and the ESRC remit is also available on www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/is-my-research-suitable-for-esrc-funding/. Please note that the same proposal should not be submitted for consideration by more than one Research Council. If you submit a proposal to another Research Council and it is judged to be out of their remit before undergoing peer review, you can submit it to us if it is within our remit. See also Cross Council Funding Agreement www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/fundingagreement/ and "can proposals be resubmitted to more than one Research Council?" and "can proposals be resubmitted?" sections below.

Applications for high performance computing time

Applicants wishing to use high performance computing (HPC) services should first contact one of the national centres and obtain a technical assessment of their proposal. This is to

ensure that the level of resources requested has been appropriately scoped and that any additional technical considerations have been captured prior to submission. An HPC application form available from the national centres should be submitted together with the ESRC proposal. It will be peer-reviewed as part of the proposal process. If a grant is agreed by an ESRC Committee or Panel we will inform the computer centre that we intend to make a grant. The grant holder and the computer centre will then confirm access terms.

Applicants are advised to discuss their needs with their local RO computer centre and with the chosen national computer centre before submitting their proposal to us.

Further information on the national HPC facilities which are available, and on application procedures, can be found at: www.epsrc.ac.uk/research/facilities/hpc/intro/.

Eligibility for funding

Please note eligibility details are given on the specific scheme or call pages on our website under 'Funding opportunities': www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/funding-opportunities/.

Eligibility of applicants

Applicants are eligible for funding whether or not they are established members of a recognised Research Organisation (RO) (www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/eligibilityforrcs/). Applicants for research grants who are not established members of a recognised RO must be accommodated by the RO and provided with appropriate facilities to carry out the research. These requirements also apply to all individuals named as co-applicants. They and other staff engaged in the research are normally expected to reside within reasonable travelling distance of the RO when not engaged in fieldwork. For such applicants, the RO must provide a covering statement confirming that, in the event of a grant, it will provide accommodation and facilities for the applicant such as would be provided for established members of staff.

The applicant should normally be the person undertaking responsibility for directing the research and for observing the terms and conditions, as well as being actively involved in carrying it through. The percentage of the working time that the applicant expects to spend on the research, and the extent of other commitments, must be stated on the research proposal form.

Research proposals may be submitted jointly by more than one applicant. In such cases, one person must be regarded as the principal applicant taking the lead responsibility for the conduct of the research and the observance of the terms and conditions. Correspondence regarding the research proposal and grant will be addressed to the principal applicant only. All co-applicants must make a significant contribution to the conduct of the research.

The principal applicant's RO should normally be the same as the administering RO. Co-applicants may be sited at different recognised research organisations provided that the principal applicant's research organisation takes responsibility for administering the grant and disbursing funds as appropriate.

Research proposals will not normally be accepted from persons who have failed to produce evidence of satisfactory conduct on any research previously supported by the ESRC. In

addition, principal and co-investigators on live ESRC grants must submit a progress report on current ESRC grants to accompany any proposal submitted to the ESRC. For grants that have ended, the Key Findings section of Researchfish must have already been submitted and accepted by the ESRC (see also reporting research outcomes in section 1 and reporting requirements in section 2).

All applicants and named research staff must be able to meet the time commitment to the project as stated in the proposal. Where research staff are to be employed on a grant it is assumed as part of the proposal that they or any replacement will not exceed 100% of their time.

Proposals which may result in over-commitment of time, for any applicant across all of their projects, will not be approved. Applicants have a duty to report immediately in writing to ESRC if at any time this regulation is likely to be breached.

Any applicants employed as staff for more than 20% of their time in an ESRC Research Centre, Group or Network must obtain a supporting statement from the Director to accompany their proposal. This is in addition to the normal endorsements from the head of department and the RO. The Director needs to confirm that the project is not part of the Centre's contracted programme of work and provide a clear explanation of how the project will enhance or complement the Centre's programme. The Director will also confirm that the applicant has time to supervise the project without prejudice to the Centre's contracted programme of work. The Director's statement is not required if the starting date of the project is planned to fall outside the period of Centre funding nor when staff are employed by ESRC Research Centres for less than 20% of their time. The percentage commitment of staff time must be stated on the proposal form.

As a holder of an ESRC research grant, principal investigators are expected to be a member of the ESRC Peer Review College (www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-peer-reviewers/peer-review-college/) and undertake review of research proposals submitted to ESRC when requested. The ESRC research grants process relies on the co-operation of the academic community in providing review comments on proposals and success of proposals are, in part, due to the goodwill of fellow social scientists in providing such comments. If applicants are not currently a member of the Peer Review College, an invite will be issued following a successful decision.

Co-investigators - international, and UK business, third sector or government body

ESRC attaches major importance to the position of UK social science in the international and global arena. It positively encourages active collaboration between UK researchers and those in other countries, where this will help to ensure that UK research is at the international leading edge. To this end, it has forged collaborative funding agreements with leading overseas partners. It is important to note that the **combined** costs for international co-investigators, and UK business, third sector and government body co-investigators must not exceed 30% of the total fEC of the grant application.

Further details about these agreements are available at:
www.esrc.ac.uk/research/international-research/

ESRC supports international collaboration through a range of schemes and initiatives. Co-investigators based in overseas ROs, excluding fellowships, can be included in research grant proposals unless otherwise stated by the call guidance. Please note co-investigators cannot be included in Fellowship schemes.

Further information on the inclusion of international co-investigators is available at www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/inclusion-of-international-co-investigators-on-proposals/.

Business, third sector or government body co-investigators based in the UK can be included in the majority of ESRC research calls. Some specific calls may from time to time specify that these co-investigators may not be included. Further information on the inclusion of co-investigators is available at: www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/inclusion-of-uk-business-third-sector-or-government-body-co-investigators-on-proposals/

Associated studentships

Associated studentships (previously called grant-linked studentships) are only permitted on some strategic calls and cannot be claimed on responsive mode grants. The specific guidance for a call will confirm whether associated studentships can be supported or not.

Applicants must check the call specification (on the specific funding opportunity they are interested in) to see whether associated studentships are permitted before completing their proposal.

Associated studentships may be requested on any research proposal when specified in the call documentation as long as:

- the grant applied for is for three years or more
- the principal or co-investigators are approved to act as a primary supervisors for PhD students and are based within an accredited pathway in an ESRC Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) or Centre for Doctoral Training (CDT) (see exceptions below)
- the student(s) are located in an ESRC-accredited Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) or Centre for Doctoral Training (CDT) and are studying on an accredited pathway (see exceptions below).

Up to three studentships can be applied for on any single proposal. The studentships must be embedded within a DTP or CDT, be subject to the same terms and conditions as a standard ESRC-funded studentship, and the funds managed within the DTP or CDT's training grant. Before submitting a proposal that includes an associated studentship the applicant must obtain the support from the Director of the DTP or CDT which must be confirmed in a letter of support submitted with the proposal.

The studentship must not be a displacement of the normal research support required on the grant. Associated studentships are designed to add value to the proposed research outlined in the proposal, whilst providing a clear opportunity for a distinct and independent course of enquiry for the student. Through being embedded within a high-quality research team, they should offer the student an opportunity to develop their substantive research

skills, alongside broader professional development. The main research grant project should still be viable without the studentship and should have distinct objectives that are not reliant upon the studentship.

Associated studentships are subject to the standard rules for ESRC studentships and should be calculated on the same notional cost basis. For further information on this please see the Postgraduate Funding Guide (www.esrc.ac.uk/skills-and-careers/studentships/esrc-students/). The costs associated with the studentship(s) must be costed as part of the overall value of the proposal. No additional costs, for example travel and subsistence, conference attendance or items of equipment should be costed in to the grant. Where they are, these costs will be removed from the final award.

Whilst associated studentships can outlast the grant they are linked to, the majority of the studentship (ie more than half) must take place during the life of the grant. If successful, the funds for the studentship will be ring-fenced within the grant and paid alongside standard ESRC studentships.

No costs will be added until the ESRC receives confirmation that the student(s) has been recruited. When a student is identified their details must be input via the Je-S Student Details functionality and a grant maintenance request must also be submitted against the relevant training grant requesting that the costs be added. The amount added to the grant will reflect the notional cost in place at the time of nomination and the duration of the studentship requested in the original application.

Costs must be claimed within three months of the student's start date. ESRC reserves the right not to reimburse costs, either in part or in full, where costs are not claimed within three months.

Further information on the terms and conditions of ESRC studentships can be found within the Postgraduate Funding Guide on our website: www.esrc.ac.uk/skills-and-careers/studentships/esrc-students/. Guidance on how to complete a proposal with an associated studentship is available in the Je-S Helptext.

Eligibility of Research Organisations

All UK Higher Education Institutions are eligible to receive funds for research, postgraduate training and associated activities. The higher education funding councils for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland determine whether an organisation meets the criteria to be a Higher Education Institution.

Research institutes for which the Research Councils have established a long-term involvement as major funder are also eligible to receive research funding, from any Council. See www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/noparentrcs/.

Independent research organisations (IROs) approved by ESRC are eligible to apply for ESRC funding. The current list of eligible IROs can be downloaded here: www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/eligibilityforrcs/.

Research Organisations are particularly requested to ensure that:

- the training needs of all staff are identified and recorded, and that an annual staff training plan exists to address these needs
- advice is available on future career opportunities, both inside and outside academia, with guidance on the appropriate options
- bridging opportunities and continuity opportunities are discussed with staff, and that they are involved in the future planning research where this is applicable
- promotion opportunities are available where the capacity for such work is demonstrated
- permanent or rolling contract appointments are available to such staff, especially where they have proven track records in research in excess of six years.

Research Organisations in receipt of ESRC grants must make provision for research careers which is at least equivalent to the full terms and conditions set out at www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/505181/Concordat-to-Support-the-Career-Development-of-Researchers.html

The Research Organisation bears sole responsibility for the duty of care, health, safety and wellbeing of any person or persons employed by them overseas on the grant in any capacity, including but not limited to drivers, researchers, translators, caterers, fixers and consultants. This must be fully compliant with the Research Organisation's and the ESRC's framework for research ethics.

A research organisation may be in receipt of more than one grant from the ESRC at any one time.

Information for IROs on how to apply for eligibility

IROs may be able to apply to us for eligibility if they possess an existing in-house capacity to carry out research that materially extends and enhances the national research base and are able to demonstrate an independent capability to undertake and lead research programmes. They must also satisfy other criteria related to their financial and legal status - these are set out in full in the Research Councils' joint statement on eligibility, which can be downloaded from: www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/eligibilityforrcs/

Requests for eligibility for independent research organisation status need to be submitted via Je-S Helpdesk at least three months prior to any intended proposal for funds. Full supporting documentation needs to be enclosed. Eligibility under these procedures will be subject to periodic review.

Any organisation wishing to apply for IRO status should contact the Je-S helpdesk in the first instance. The Je-S helpdesk will advise you of the process and send the appropriate documentation to be completed. When emailing the helpdesk for this purpose please include "Application for IRO status" in the subject heading and provide the full name and postal address of your organisation.

The helpdesk can be contacted at:

- Email: jeshelp@rcuk.ac.uk
Telephone: 01793 444164

Staffed Monday to Friday 9.00-17.00 UK time (excluding bank holidays and other holidays)
Out of hours: leave a voicemail message

Other organisations

Our funding opportunities are sometimes open to other organisations. Where this is the case, the call specification will outline the eligibility criteria. Please refer to specific guidance under 'Funding opportunities' on our website. These organisations can include:

- certain government research establishments
- executive agencies in the public sector
- other not-for-profit bodies established to conduct research for the public good, where the results are clearly available in the public domain.
- overseas research organisations

See also Research Council Financial and Capability Due Diligence Checking Process
<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/eligibilityforrcs/>

Can proposals be submitted to more than one Research Council?

The same proposal should not be submitted for consideration by more than one Research Council (RC). Applicants should ensure they submit their proposal to the most appropriate RC only. If a proposal crosses the remit of two or more RCs you should contact the RC which you consider the most relevant for advice (see also Our remit). Applicants should not submit proposals to different ESRC calls as this will result in parallel processing of the same or substantially similar proposals, which is not allowed.

Under no circumstances should applicants receive duplicate funding for the same or similar proposal from more than one funding agency. We cannot prohibit the submission of the same or similar proposals to other funding agencies (outside of the RCs), but applicants must add details of similar proposal that have been submitted to other funding organisations to the relevant section of the ESRC application and advise ESRC if a successful funding decision is made by the other funding agency.

Can proposals be resubmitted?

ESRC does not allow the resubmission of any previously unsuccessful proposals (including proposals previously submitted to another Research Council), unless they have been specifically invited to do so. For further information please refer to www.esrc.ac.uk/resubmissions. All proposals will be checked, and uninvited resubmissions will not be processed but treated as an unsuccessful proposal. They will be included as failed proposals in the data that we collect on RO grant performance as part of our demand management strategy (www.esrc.ac.uk/about-us/strategy-and-priorities/demand-management/).

All proposals must be substantially different to the previous submission (ie new proposals)
See www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/resubmissions-policy/what-constitutes-a-new-proposal/ for further information.

Expectations of scientific practice

When applying for funding from ESRC, applicants are expected to comply with our policies on issues such as best practice for researchers, data management and research ethics.

Research conduct and integrity

ESRC has a duty to ensure that the research which it supports is carried out to the highest standards of scientific practice. The Research Councils expect that all individuals and organisations involved in research (including researchers, research managers and administrators, other support staff and research council staff) will follow the principles and guidelines set out in the RCUK Policy and Guidelines on the Governance of Good Research Conduct: www.rcuk.ac.uk/Publications/researchers/grc/. It is also an expectation that all individuals involved in these communities will abide by the principles as set out in the Universities UK Concordat to support research integrity www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/research-concordat.aspx

We also endorse the published guidance by the UK Research Integrity Office (August 2008) on the Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research: www.ukrio.org/publications/misconduct-investigation-procedure/.

ESRC advisory bodies, panels and groups are expected to observe the highest standards of integrity as outlined in the ESRC Code of Practice (available at www.esrc.ac.uk/about-us/governance-and-structure/). Should performance fall short of these standards, we would ask that concerns are escalated to the relevant committee secretary.

See also RCUK terms and conditions of grants: www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/grantstcs/

Conduct of peer reviewers and panel members

Research Councils will ensure that peer reviewers, panel members and committee members acting on their behalf in the assessment of proposals for funding understand clearly the responsibilities placed on them to treat proposals confidentially and to disclose conflicts of interest, either personal or institutional (see also guidance for peer reviewers www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-peer-reviewers/ and guidance and ESRC Code of Practice for Committee and Group members www.esrc.ac.uk/about-us/governance-and-structure/)

Research Data Policy

Making research data available to users is a core part of the Research Councils' remit and is undertaken in a variety of ways. We are committed to transparency and to a coherent approach across the research base.

The ESRC Research Data Policy reinforces and emphasises the ESRC's stated position relating to the acquisition and (re)use of data, as well as the importance of good data management. The requirements of the Research Data Policy are now a condition of ESRC research funding. Some key points of the policy for research funding for applicants are outlined below; however, applicants are advised to consult the full document which is available on our website: www.esrc.ac.uk/datapolicy.

Data deposit requirements

The ESRC supports the UK Data Service which is responsible for the cataloguing and archiving of data. The Service provides enhanced access and support for an extensive range of key economic and social data, both quantitative and qualitative. It is a distributed yet integrated service which, in addition to its key functions, incorporates specialist user support for all data types. Further information on the UK Data Service is available at <http://ukdataservice.ac.uk>

The ESRC requires all research data arising from ESRC-funded research to be made available to the scientific community in a timely and responsible manner unless there are exceptional reasons why this cannot happen. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the grant holder to formally offer any data created or repurposed during the lifetime of the grant to the UK Data Service within three months of the end of the grant. The grant holder is responsible for providing these data to the Service for assessment, and if accepted, to ensure that they meet the requirements of the Service for preservation and future re-use. Further guidance on data deposit with the Service is available at <http://ukdataservice.ac.uk/deposit-data.aspx>

The ESRC can withhold the final payment of a grant if data have not been offered for archiving to the required standard at the UK Data Service within three months of the end of the grant, except where a modification or waiver of deposit requirements has been agreed in advance. If data were accepted, the grant holder is expected to make them available to the UK Data Service for preparation for re-use and archiving without delay.

In order to assist grant holders to deposit their data, the ESRC is prepared to allow a time period within the grant and adequate funding for the preparation of data for archiving. This should be specified in the proposal and data management and sharing plans attached to it as well as discussed with the UK Data Service when preparing the proposal. Applicants who are likely to produce data of any kind as a result of their grant are recommended to read the Service data management guides at <http://ukdataservice.ac.uk/manage-data/plan.aspx> and if necessary to contact the Service prior to making their proposal and preparing data management and sharing plans. From here, applicants can obtain details of deposit requirements so that adequate provision for preparation of data for deposit can be made in the proposal. The UK Data Service will be pleased to offer advice to applicants at this stage.

At the time of deposit, the grant holder will be asked to sign a licence contract specifying conditions of access, including the degree of confidentiality to be observed in making the data available to others. Depositors should follow the instructions on the UK Data Service website www.ukdataservice.ac.uk/deposit-data/how-to. Enquiries may be addressed to collections@ukdataservice.ac.uk

Should any problem relating to the deposit of the data be foreseen, grant holders are expected to contact the UK Data Service at the earliest opportunity. Problems may include issues of confidentiality, data ownership, copyright or subject anonymity. All these issues must be considered and, if possible, addressed before starting any data collection. The ESRC regards a waiver of deposit as an exception and reserves the right to refuse waivers where there is insufficient evidence to prevent archiving and data sharing. A request for a

modification or waiver of the deposit requirements may be granted by the ESRC, as advised by the Director of the Service, only when there is a strong case for doing so.

Use of data in ESRC-funded research

Any applicant whose research proposal involves funds for primary data collection must establish in the proposal that the required data are not already publicly available. This is to ensure that the ESRC does not duplicate its funding effort, for example by funding the acquisition of data that are already available from the UK Data Service or some other data repository. The Service will be pleased to advise applicants on the availability of data within the academic community.

UK Data Service has an extensive set of web pages describing its services, and from which access to the catalogues of data holdings can be gained. These web pages can be accessed at <http://ukdataservice.ac.uk>

In order to promote awareness of data and encourage their use, the ESRC requires grant holders to correctly acknowledge and/or cite full source for all data used in their research.

Research ethics

As the principal funding agency for UK social science research we require that the research we support is designed and conducted in such a way that it meets certain ethics principles, and is subject to proper professional and institutional oversight in terms of research governance.

As an important source of public funds for social science research and as a body charged with encouraging, supporting, undertaking and advising on such research, the ESRC recognises that it has a special obligation towards the general public and academic community to ensure that the research which it funds is carried out to a high ethical standard.

We have agreed a **Framework for Research Ethics** which all submitted proposals and grants are expected to observe. Further details available about the Framework for Research Ethics (together with links to other web based resources on research ethics) can be found at: www.esrc.ac.uk/researchethics

Key principles of ethical research

ESRC's six key principles for ethical research are:

- Research should aim to maximise benefit for individuals and society and minimise risk and harm
- The rights and dignity of individuals and groups should be respected
- Wherever possible, participation should be voluntary and appropriately informed
- Research should be conducted with integrity and transparency
- Lines of responsibility and accountability should be clearly defined
- Independence of research should be maintained and where conflicts of interest cannot be avoided they should be made explicit.

We recognise the importance of high ethical standards within research, and as such we will:

- only fund research which has an adequate and appropriate ethics statement and which takes seriously the ethics dimensions of the research.
- ensure that the peer review of proposals considers ethics issues. During review, peer reviewers and commissioning panel members will be asked to consider whether the information provided by the applicant adequately addresses ethics issues that may be encountered during or following the research.
- consider reviewer or panel member disagreement with the suggested project approach to ethics as either grounds for a conditional grant or rejection of a proposal (where it calls into question researcher competence or the feasibility or validity of a proposal).
- consider suspension of payments and grant termination if REC review shows that a project requires major changes which will alter it so much that it can no longer retain ESRC support.
- only fund research organisations (ROs) that have processes in place to follow the guidance in this framework and comply with the Research Councils' grant conditions and the RCUK Policy and Guidelines on Governance of Good Research Conduct.
- engage in cross-research council assurance activities to check that commitments to thorough ethics assessment and review of projects are being followed by ROs.
- expect that commitment to mutual recognition of common standards of ethical considerations between funders will be agreed when working in partnership with other Research Councils, businesses, public sector organisations, research charities, the voluntary sector or international funding organisations.
- identify any ethics guidance that is specific to postgraduate training within the ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide.
- call into account the RO, principal investigator and researchers involved in upheld allegations of research misconduct and breach of compliance with the Research Councils' grant conditions in ESRC-funded research. Sanctions may apply depending on the severity of the breach. This could result in the immediate suspension of the individual project and other projects based at or co-ordinated by the administering RO, and a halt to considering further proposal submissions from that RO.

In novel and particular circumstances, ESRC Committees or Panels and Council may refer proposals for funding for advice on ethical issues to an advisory panel constituted by ESRC.

Advisory or external stakeholder groups

When creating an Advisory Group or External Stakeholder Group for an ESRC awarded grant, it is expected that best practice will occur. This includes ensuring that:

- Membership has a mix of users and academics.
- When selecting group members, due consideration is given to achieving an appropriate balance in terms of gender and geographical location. Where group members hold party political appointments, consideration is given to achieving a balance with regard to this declared political allegiance.
- Members are aware of who has funded the project.
- Members are clear in their role on the group, including the potential to act as ambassadors on behalf of the group and what this implies.

- Members state any conflict of interests and political affiliations before joining the group, and this should be taken into account in the development of the agenda for all meetings.

Expectations about funded research, including societal and economic impact

The ESRC funds excellent research. The primary criterion is scientific quality. The ESRC expects its portfolio to include a diverse range of research encompassing, amongst other things, work based on single disciplines, research which combines disciplinary approaches, research focused on advancing scientific theory, and research aimed principally at developing practical applications.

As part of this portfolio, we encourage research proposals which demonstrate one or more of innovation, interdisciplinarity and impact.

Innovation

ESRC is keen to support research which is ambitious (but clearly specified) and has the potential for high scientific impact and/or high user impact. We also recognise that such research may carry a higher than normal risk of failing to deliver the full range of expected research outputs.

Such research is likely to:

- use innovative or even untested methods within the context of the particular project
- attempt to develop or to test and apply new theory
- be carried out by researchers without a proven track record in the area of the proposed research, although they may have a strong track record in other areas
- be complex in terms of its management and delivery because of its size or the dispersal of the research team/fieldwork
- investigate a potentially controversial or sensitive topic
- involve multiple or unusual disciplinary combinations both within and beyond the social sciences
- involve accessing or creating data, or accessing research participants or other related research material could be highly problematic
- challenge existing paradigms in respect of research ethics.

Interdisciplinarity

As part of its portfolio, the ESRC also expects to support new and exciting research which combines approaches from more than one discipline. We recognise that many of the most pressing research challenges are interdisciplinary in nature, both within the social sciences and between the social sciences and other areas of research. However, we also remain committed to the support of excellent research within a single discipline.

Impact

In line with the RCUK position on Excellence with Impact (www.rcuk.ac.uk/publications/policy/efficiency2011/), we expect that our researchers will have considered the potential scientific, societal and economic impacts of their research.

ESRC applicants should actively consider how these impacts can be maximised and developed through the Pathways to Impact (www.rcuk.ac.uk/innovation/impacts/) document in their proposal. This will form part of the peer review and assessment process.

Opportunities for making an impact may arise, and should be taken, at any stage during or after the life-course of the research. It is important that researchers have in place a robust strategy for maximising the likelihood of impact opportunities arising and their own capacity for taking advantage of these.

Excellent research without obvious or immediate societal or economic impact will not be disadvantaged in the peer review and assessment process. Researchers who feel that this relates to their research should, however, use the Pathways to Impact document to explain their reasoning. ESRC shares and endorses the RCUK statement on Research Councils' expectations of researchers (www.rcuk.ac.uk/Publications/archive/StatementofExpectation/)

The ESRC's **Impact Toolkit** gives you everything you need to achieve the maximum impact for your work. The toolkit includes information on developing an impact strategy, promoting knowledge exchange, public engagement and communicating effectively with your key stakeholders: www.esrc.ac.uk/impact-toolkit

Research Councils guidelines

ESRC as one of the Research Councils, gives funding recipients considerable flexibility and autonomy in the delivery of their research, postgraduate training and knowledge transfer activities. This flexibility and autonomy encompasses project definition, management, collaboration, participation, promotion and the dissemination of research outputs, enabling excellence with impact.

In return, the Research Councils expect those who receive funding to:

- demonstrate an awareness of the wider environment and context in which their research takes place
- demonstrate an awareness of the social and ethical implications of their research, beyond usual research conduct considerations, and take account of public attitudes towards those issues
- engage actively with the public at both the local and national levels about their research and its broader implications
- identify potential benefits and beneficiaries from the outset, and through the full life cycle of the project(s)
- maintain professional networks that extend beyond their own discipline and research community
- publish results widely - considering the academic, user and public audiences for research outcomes
- exploit results where appropriate, in order to secure social and economic return to the UK
- manage collaborations professionally, in order to secure maximum impact without restricting the future progression of research

- ensure that research staff and students develop research, vocational and entrepreneurial skills that are matched to the demands of their future career paths
- take responsibility for the curation, management and exploitation of data for future use
- work in partnership with the Research Councils for the benefit of the UK.

Further information on the RCUK Delivery Plan can be found at:

www.rcuk.ac.uk/publications/policy/deliveryplan/.

Communication and exploitation of research findings

Communication policy

Effective communication is an integral part of maximising the impact of quality research. Our communication policy aims to enhance the communication of ESRC-funded research to potential users and beneficiaries of the research - especially potential users outside of the academic community (see also www.esrc.ac.uk/research/impact-toolkit/media-relations/).

Adherence to the policy is a condition of the receipt of funds from an ESRC research grant.

The communication policy includes the following obligations:

- Successful researchers involved in large grants and centres must complete an Impact Plan to be submitted to the ESRC for approval
- Giving initial publicity for the grant, together with the host research organisation(s) (although the ESRC reserves the right to make its own announcement after consultation)
- Acknowledging ESRC support as far as possible, including all external communication, such as press releases, PowerPoint presentations, papers, stationery etc. (Please see 'terms and conditions of Research Council grants' for further guidance on acknowledgement of funding.)
- Giving the ESRC advance notice and sight of press releases **at least two working days before** they are distributed and, where possible, advance notice of likely newspaper articles or media appearances. Failure to comply with this requirement will be viewed as a serious matter which could lead to action being taken in respect of the Research Organisation's ability to hold further research grants
- Communicating the research findings through publications, seminars, conferences, electronic outlets and the media, to both academic and non-academic audiences, potential users and beneficiaries (especially business, government, voluntary organisations, community groups and the public). Any communications activity must not be a lobby activity.
- Completing the Key Findings report via Researchfish within three months of the grant ending and submitting in the first annual submission period that follows.
- Providing details of the scientific and practical impacts arising from the grant in a Narrative Impact statement via Researchfish completed 12 months after the end date of the grant and submitted in the first annual submission period that follows.
- Submitting to Researchfish details of outcomes from the grant and for up to five years after the end of the grant period. Grant holders are requested to confirm their record during the Researchfish annual submission periods.

Prior permission must be sought before the ESRC's name can be used in connection with the title of any unit, centre, department, etc which the ESRC is supporting either wholly or in part. The words 'ESRC project' may not be used as a heading in correspondence, reports or questionnaires.

In addition, we expect all ESRC grant holders to comply with ESRC's identity guidelines (www.esrc.ac.uk/logos) when producing promotional and corporate material, including publications, reports, presentations, websites and stationery.

Publication and acknowledgement of support

The ESRC attaches great importance to the dissemination of research results. We expect results to be published. Financial support from ESRC must be acknowledged in all publications and other forms of media communication, including media appearances, using PowerPoint presentations, press releases and conferences, using the ESRC logo where appropriate. This is essential in helping to publicise the ESRC's work and also in providing an indicator of the success of its investment. Acknowledgements should identify the type of ESRC support and quote the grant reference number where possible.

Branding

All outputs produced as a result of ESRC funding must be both acknowledged and branded as per ESRC's branding guidelines. Further information on how to use ESRC's logo and branding is at: www.esrc.ac.uk/logos.

Websites

We expect all ESRC-funded investments which create websites to comply with our guidelines for investment websites: www.esrc.ac.uk/investmentwebsites. All ESRC investment websites will be reviewed regularly by the ESRC.

Elections

The ESRC is bound by a code of conduct during the period preceding a UK General Election or the election of a devolved administration. This period, often referred to as 'purdah', ranges from four to six weeks. Any new announcements during this period pertaining to ESRC-funded research that may be construed as political in nature must be cleared with the ESRC's press office before issue. If there is any doubt advice should be sought from the ESRC.

Public engagement

Social science research plays an important role in our society. The ESRC believes that by raising public awareness of the social sciences and encouraging their involvement in both social and science-related research this will translate into real benefits for society and individuals.

Public engagement involves activities that bring researchers and the public together. It is more than just meeting an audience and telling them about your research - effective public engagement is about two-way communication, with the researchers listening to and learning from participants.

The ESRC supports public engagement in a number of ways including discrete funding to support different engagement activities, as well as by enabling grant holders to include costings in their grant to undertake any activity via the Pathways to Impact section.

Further information about opportunities the ESRC provides in public engagement is at: www.esrc.ac.uk/public-engagement/

The ESRC, as part of the RCUK Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research, believes that engaging the public with research ensures that the work of researchers, departments and universities is relevant to society, helps empower people and communities, and can enable research impacts and exploitation of research results.

The Concordat's key principles are that:

- UK research organisations have a strategic commitment to public engagement
- researchers are recognised and valued for their involvement with public engagement activities
- researchers are enabled to participate in public engagement activities through appropriate training, support and opportunities
- the signatories and supporters of this Concordat will undertake regular reviews of their and the wider research sector's progress in fostering public engagement across the UK.

A copy of the concordat is at: www.rcuk.ac.uk/pe/Concordat/

Further information about how, why, and the benefits of undertaking public engagement are in our Impact Toolkit: www.esrc.ac.uk/impact-toolkit

Knowledge exchange and collaboration

The ESRC is committed to knowledge exchange and encouraging collaboration between researchers and the private, public and civil society sectors. Collaborative working benefits both the researchers and the individuals/organisations involved. Through collaboration, partners learn about each other's expertise, share knowledge and gain an appreciation of different professional cultures. Collaborative activity can therefore lead to a better understanding of the ways in which academic research can add value and offer insights to key issues of concern for policy and practice.

To be most effective, knowledge exchange should not be treated as an 'add-on' at the end of a research project, but considered before the start and built into a project.

The ESRC builds partnerships and works collaboratively in a range of diverse ways.

Examples of our collaborative activity include:

- developing strategic partnerships with organisations to ensure we maximise the impact of our activities
- working with partner organisations to develop and fund major research and capacity building initiatives

- supporting initiatives to foster direct collaboration between social scientists and other individuals and organisations.

For further information please visit: www.rcuk.ac.uk/ke/policies/ and www.esrc.ac.uk/collaboration/

Exploitation of results

The ESRC strongly encourages the exploitation of the results of research. Where results of industrial or commercial value emerge from projects, grant holders are required to make suitable arrangements for exploitation and take up by industry. The ESRC makes no claim to the intellectual property rights arising from research that it supports.

Commercial exploitation

It is the ESRC's policy that potentially valuable results or products arising from ESRC-funded research should, where practicable, be exploited for the benefit of the UK economy, the quality of life of the nation, the research organisation, the grant holder and the UK social science community. This policy applies to all forms of results or products, regardless of the nature of the intellectual property rights involved.

Intellectual property, royalties and income

The ownership of the intellectual property arising from a research project should be clear from the outset. The ESRC will assume that this will rest with the RO receiving the ESRC grant, unless otherwise stated to the contrary and set out in the offer letter.

The ESRC reserves the right to reclaim up to one third of the total income, up to the value of its original grant. When income is generated ESRC should be alerted to open discussion to agree an income plan; this will be agreed annually. During the lifetime of the grant, ESRC should be alerted directly via the Case Officer. Following the grant period, the ESRC should be alerted via Researchfish. In any event, the RO's regulations on the internal sharing of royalty income, as set out in its Statutes, shall take precedence.

See also Intellectual Property Rights under Reporting Research outcomes section below and on the ESRC website www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/intellectual-assets-and-intellectual-property/

Exploitation procedures

In ensuring maximum exploitation the ESRC requires that the Terms and Conditions of Research Council fEC Grants covering Exploitation and Impact will be followed at all times: www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/grantstcs/

In particular it is important that the grant-holding RO has a central point for advice on potential exploitation, and that there is early consultation during the grant period between the principal investigator and this central advisor on how to maximise the application and exploitation of any practical outcomes.

Research organisations should also ensure that adequate procedures and resources are in place to maximise the exploitation of any research. These might include support for:

- networks, conferences, roundtables and other engagement activities which ensure regular contact between researchers and those who will have an interest in its practical application
- databases and information services including regularly updated web pages, which give easy access to those outside the RO to research work with a broader application
- rewards in terms of salary and promotion opportunities for staff successfully promoting and engaging the users of research in their work
- the development and maintenance of databases, computer models and computer software resulting from research projects, which may have wider application
- advice on patenting and licenses which may be important in some areas
- publication in professional journals, magazines and the general media which may increase the outreach of the research.

Computer software

Whilst computer software, firmware and related documentation are governed by the general conditions outlined above, the ESRC requires grant holders to take particular care to protect the value of any computer software, firmware and related documentation resulting from its grants by:

- Confining public statements about the software or firmware merely to what it does without revealing details of the software or firmware itself.
- Ensuring that copies are not supplied to third parties except to individuals who have undertaken to keep them confidential and not to use them for commercial purposes.

Open Source Software (OSS)

Publicly funded R&D projects which aim to produce software outputs shall specify a proposed software exploitation route at the start of the project. At the completion of a project, the software shall be exploited either commercially or within an academic community or as OSS.

Full details of the government policy on OSS can be found at: www.opensource.org

Institutional responsibilities

The RO must ensure that all those associated with the research, whether staff, students, fellows or visitors, are aware of and accept these exploitation requirements.

Reporting research outcomes

It is a condition of ESRC funding that the grant holder regularly submits details of research outcomes from their grant to the Researchfish.

Submission of outcomes, Key Findings and Narrative Impact

- The principal investigator must ensure that all outcomes arising from the grant are recorded in a timely manner in Researchfish as soon as practically possible after their creation. The principal investigator may delegate to co-investigators to prepare and submit records to Researchfish and the Research Organisation may undertake to collate and submit records on behalf of the principal investigator.
- Information may be uploaded to Researchfish at any time after a grant has started, and should continue to be submitted up to five years after the grant end date and

confirmed during the annual submission period. Failure to use the system to record the outcomes of ESRC-funded research may result in ineligibility to apply for future funding from ESRC for both the principal and co-investigators, and suspension of other ESRC grants held by the principal investigator.

- The grant holder must complete the Key Findings report within three months of the grant end date, and a Narrative Impact statement 12 months after the grant end date. The reports will be checked for completeness and failure will result in a request to update the report.
- The grant holder must submit all research outcomes arising from the grant electronically to the Researchfish for up to five years after the end of the grant period.
- It is the responsibility of the grant holder to ensure that all outcomes submitted do not breach the ownership of intellectual property rights held by persons or bodies other than the ESRC.
- Details entered onto Researchfish, including reports submitted during the final reporting process, may be made publicly available through the RCUK Gateway to Research or other ESRC/RCUK websites.
- From time to time ESRC and Researchfish will send the grant holder automated email reminders from Researchfish prompting the submission of outcomes and impacts that may have been produced in association with the grant.
- The grant holder must ensure that any emails received from ESRC or its agents are not included on 'junk mail' lists. Such emails may be received from websupport@esrc.ac.uk, admin@researchfish.com or researchoutcomes@rcuk.ac.uk and others.

Further information can be found on www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-grant-holders/reporting-guidance/.

Intellectual Property Rights

The grant holder will ensure that ESRC has the right to make use of all necessary intellectual property rights (IPR) free of charge, to make available for world-wide access, display, downloading, storage, archiving, linking and use on the RCUK Gateway to Research or other ESRC/RCUK websites:

- any content arising from the grant
- any websites or online media the grant holder may establish or use from time to time to disseminate content via the internet.

Such use will be permitted on terms stipulated by the ESRC from time to time which the ESRC will ensure are protective of grant holder/Research Organisation IPR as the ESRC shall reasonably determine, consistent always with allowing access to the content and linking to any websites via the RCUK Gateway to Research or other ESRC/RCUK websites.

ESRC evaluation

We undertake a rolling programme of reviews and impact assessment studies of our research and policies. The focus of this programme is informed by Council, our advisory committees and the Office, with the outcome of these studies informing strategy, policy and delivery, as well as providing evidence as to the value and importance of social science.

We do not evaluate or review all the activities that we fund, instead we focus on strategic reviews and studies of funding schemes, priority areas and cross-cutting themes.

Further information about the ESRC's evaluation programme can be found at:
www.esrc.ac.uk/research/research-and-impact-evaluation/

Section 2

How to apply

Proposals to ESRC must be submitted via the **Joint Electronic Submission System (Je-S)**. Je-S is the RCUK submission system, used by all Research Councils to provide a common research administration electronic system. To be able to submit a proposal the organisation must be registered (or self-registered) for Je-S and the applicants must hold Je-S accounts. If you are unsure about this you should contact your research office for further guidance.

Further information can be found at www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/je-s-electronic-applications/

Applicants from recognised research organisations (www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/Eligibilityforrcs/) with the necessary Je-S registration should use the Je-S system to prepare and forward proposals for submission to the ESRC. All principal and co- investigators must have a Je-S account. For information on creating an account please refer to the Je-S System Helptext at https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/Handbook/pages/SettingupajeSaccount/SettingupajeSaccount.htm#Accessing_Je-S. When applying for calls and schemes that have a closing date for proposals, please ensure that you allow sufficient time for completion of the RO submission process checks and authorisation. Your proposal will actually be sent to Je-S/ESRC from the submitter pool at your RO. In other words, **there is a further layer of administration** between your submission of the proposal and the proposal being submitted to the ESRC, via Je-S.

If you experience difficulties using Je-S or have questions regarding its use, please see the Je-S website <https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/> or contact the helpdesk at jeshelp@rcuk.ac.uk or telephone 01793 444164.

The content and quality of the proposal you submit to the ESRC will determine whether or not you are successful. Applicants are advised to read the **guidance notes** on 'How to write a good research grant proposal': www.esrc.ac.uk/how-to.

Applicants for all schemes should consider the **potential scientific, societal and economic impacts of their research**, including who will benefit from these, how they will benefit and what steps should be taken to ensure that they do so.

More information is available on our website at www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/.

When do I apply?

Proposals for **Research Grants**, **Secondary Data Analysis Initiative** and **New Investigator** scheme funding may be submitted at any time. Proposals for other forms of support must comply with the dates and timescales set out in the relevant call for proposals or announcement of opportunity. Please see the funding opportunities page on our website: www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/funding-opportunities/ for further information on closing dates for specific schemes and calls.

Outline proposals

In some strategic programmes, outlines or expressions of interest are requested in advance of full proposals. Guidance on completing outlines is available on our website under funding opportunities.

Writing a good proposal

The **content and quality** of the proposal you submit to the ESRC will determine whether or not you are successful. Therefore it is vital that you have a full understanding of what is required, as well as knowing the various stages of the proposal process, so that you maximise your chances of receiving funding. We offer guidance notes on 'How to write a good research grant proposal' (www.esrc.ac.uk/how-to) which should be read in conjunction with these guidelines. They provide informal guidance on points for applicants to remember when drafting proposals.

Submission of proposal forms

Where a closing date is specified it will be strictly enforced. For proposals submitted through Je-S, the proposal receipt must be **before 16.00** on the actual closing date.

It is our policy that once a proposal has been submitted, no amendment can be made to that proposal, nor will additional accompanying documentation or attachments be accepted (ie no erratum changes will be accepted). Proposals will need to stand as submitted.

In exceptional circumstances, RCUK (on behalf of the ESRC) may return an existing proposal to the submitting Organisation for minor amendment or inclusion of attachments via the Je-S Document Synchronisation (Je-S Doc-Sync) process. This process can only be instigated by ESRC, and submitting organisations may not request a proposal to be returned in this way. Je-S Doc-Sync cannot be used to make substantive changes to an existing proposal.

If mistakes are noticed by applicants on submitted proposals within the closing date, it is recommended that applicants withdraw the original proposal and submit a fresh revised proposal, by contacting RCUK grants administration. See www.rcuk.ac.uk/contacts/sscont/ for further information.

The ESRC reserves the right to decline to consider any proposal.

Approaching ESRC reviewers, Committee or Panel members

Applicants who attempt to lobby or canvas ESRC Committee or Panel members or ESRC staff on behalf of any current proposal, or of proposals about to be made in current competitions, in such a way as to seek to improperly influence the prospects of the proposal, will be disqualified. Committee or Panel members are required to notify the Director for Policy and Research about any such lobbying or canvassing.

It is also not acceptable for researchers to approach reviewers or panel members who they think may have assessed their proposals. If this does happen, we advise reviewers and panel members not to enter into any discussion regarding the proposal, including whether they have assessed it or not, and to inform ESRC immediately so that we can take appropriate action.

Declarations of interest for grant applicants

Applicants for Research Council funding are expected to observe the highest standards of integrity, honesty and professionalism and to embed good practice in every aspect of their work. As part of this, any private, personal or commercial interests relating to an application for funding to the Research Councils must be declared in a covering letter included as an application attachment (www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/howtoapply/).

What costs do grants cover?

General principles

Established academic staff are deemed to be those with permanent appointments or period appointments of not less than two years, in posts whose funding, for teaching or research, is derived from, or attributed to, RO general funds including funds received from the Higher Education Funding Councils (HEFCs) in England, Scotland and Wales, and the Department of Education Northern Ireland.

Proposals may include provision for promotion during the lifetime of the grant where there is a clear case for doing so, where it has been foreseen at the time of application, has been approved by the employing RO, as is justifiable to the ESRC.

ROs must ensure that expenditure on sub-contracts at home and abroad are subject to robust controls to ensure value for money and propriety and that all costs should be fully vouched and maintained for possible ESRC inspection and checks.

Proposals will need to show 100% of full Economic Cost of the proposed research. The Research Councils will meet 80% of the full economic costs on proposals submitted.

See also fEC grants FAQs www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/grantstcs/

Fund headings

Grant announcements will classify the funding according to the four summary fund headings (Directly Incurred, Directly Allocated, Indirect and Exceptions) and their subheadings, and will show for each one both the full economic cost and the Research Council contribution, and the percentage rate used.

Directly incurred costs

This heading will include specific sub headings, the familiar direct costs of the research project, comprising:

- Staff - for example research assistants.
- Travel and Subsistence - prior to travel overseas, the grant holder must check with the Finance Office at the hosting Research Organisation to ensure that travel is permissible, and not against the advice of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (www.fco.gov.uk).
- Other directly incurred costs:
 - Purchase /hire of vehicles, recruitment and advertising costs.
 - Consultancy Fees
 - Predicted costs for any communication, knowledge exchange, public engagement or other impact activities planned throughout the project.

- Predicted costs for certain types of publication, eg monographs, books, critical editions, volumes, catalogues, or forms of non-peer-reviewed material.
Please note that article processing charges (APCs) and other publication charges relating to peer-reviewed research articles and conference proceedings can no longer be included in research grant proposals. From 1 April 2013 the payment of APCs and other publication charges related to ESRC-funded research are supported through RCUK open access block grants which are provided to eligible research organisations. For further information see the ESRC open access information: www.esrc.ac.uk/open-access
- Equipment and survey costs - up to £10,000 (£8,330 excluding VAT) should be included within Other Directly Incurred.
- Equipment - costing between £10,000 (£8,330 excluding VAT) and £138,000 (£115,000 excluding VAT) will require extra justification and evidence of an evaluation of the use of existing relevant capital assets. The Research Organisation is expected to make a contribution of 50% of the costs of such equipment items.
 - Equipment costing above £138,000 (£115,000 excluding VAT) will potentially be funded at 100%.

Directly allocated costs

Costs in a proposal will need to show 100% of the full Economic Cost (fEC); costs will be broken down by heading.

Investigators

This heading provides for the costs of all principal and co-investigators working directly on a project, if their time charged to the grant will be based on estimates rather than actual costs. Where costs are actual, auditable and verifiable, they should be included under the Directly Incurred heading. Investigator time, not cost, must be justified in the Case for Support.

It is a requirement of the fEC costing methodology that, for any one investigator, the maximum amount of time that Research Councils will fund across all the projects they support is 1,650 hours a year (equivalent to 37.5 hours a week, 44 weeks a year).

Principal investigators and co-investigators whose time is not fully funded on other Research Council grants but who are not paid a salary by the RO (eg Emeritus or honorary staff), should show their hours attributed to the project, but with a zero salary cost request.

Salary increments over the period of the project should be taken into account, but possible future pay awards should not be anticipated. Where it is expected that individuals will be promoted during the lifetime of the grant, provision may be made in the grant proposal.

If a principal investigator or co-investigator is retired, the expectation is that their involvement in a project would be covered by a contract with the RO. If there are costs associated with such time then these should be regarded as a Directly Incurred cost.

Estates

These costs may include building and premises costs, basic services and utilities, and any clerical staff and equipment maintenance or operational costs that have not been included under other cost headings. They will be calculated by the RO and a single figure will be required at time of application.

Where an individual will be working away from the RO on long-term secondment for a period in excess of six months during the project, estates costs should not be charged for the period of secondment. No reduction should be made for shorter term absence.

Where the level of staff effort to be awarded is different to that requested, an organisation will be required to re-calculate within 10 working days the estates and indirect costs, using the same costing basis applied to the original proposal. If an organisation is unable to recalculate the costs on this timescale, they will be adjusted by ESRC in proportion to the change in staff costs.

Although Research Councils will not question the Estates and Indirect Costs declared by ROs, the full cost of the proposed research (including estates and indirect costs) will be taken into account in any assessment of its value for money.

Other directly allocated

These will include the costs of shared resources, such as staff (eg pooled technicians) and equipment. Proposals will need to provide a full justification for the requirement for the level of pooled staff effort and shared facilities requested and should indicate (but do not need to justify) the cost basis (eg £X per day). Central and distributed computing costs including charge out rate for shared equipment.

Indirect costs

The Indirect costs heading will be calculated by the RO according to the Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) and should be declared as a single figure on the proposal form, with no need for information about its derivation or justification.

Exceptions

In addition to the three TRAC headings, "Exceptions" will include specific categories of funding that Research Councils will potentially fund in full (ie at 100%) rather than the common percentage rate as follows:

- Equipment above £138,000 (£115,000 exclusive of VAT).
 - For these items a two page business case outlining the strategic need for the equipment is required, as a separate attachment.
 - ESRC will potentially fund these items at 100%.
- Any social survey costs which are sub-contracted, regardless of value. Surveys which are completed using in house resources should be included under Directly Incurred Equipment, see next section.
- Project students are outside fEC and therefore 100% of stipend, fees and RTSG will be funded, but must not be counted as research full-time equivalent for the purposes of calculating estates and indirect costs.
- International co-investigators costs.

- UK business, third sector or government body co-investigators costs.

Equipment, surveys and high cost item

Research proposals may include high cost items, which for ESRC are chiefly survey costs and IT equipment. Applicants should note that all such items costing over £10,000 (£8,330 exclusive of VAT) will be considered under the equipment heading. Funding below £10,000 for single capital items of equipment will be funded as Other Directly Incurred.

Further justification for all items of equipment costing between £10,000 and £138,000 (£115,000 exclusive of VAT):

The research organisation will need to provide extra justification for these items, providing evidence of an evaluation of the use of existing relevant capital assets. They will be expected to make a contribution towards the cost of the equipment. Given that capital provision across councils has been reduced by about 50%, contributions of this order will be expected.

Business case required for all items of equipment above £138,000 (£115,000 exclusive of VAT):

All requests for single capital items of equipment should be accompanied by a two-page business case outlining the strategic need for the equipment. RCUK will decide the strategic location for these items and will potentially fund them at 100%. Each Council will have flexibility in relation to the funding of equipment to negotiate with potential grant recipients to achieve best value from the limited funds at its disposal. Individual Councils are currently working to develop the process they will use for handling such requests, and more details will follow.

Surveys

Costs within proposals to meet externally commissioned surveys are fully allowable. However if proposals include costings for surveys planned to be done using internal resource, such costs will need to be fully justified and benchmarked.

Large surveys over £10,000:

Based on the expectation that they will be done by specialist survey companies, ESRC requires that such surveys will be subjected to external competition to ensure best value for money through competitive purchasing processes.

When surveys are commissioned via this sub-contractor route and the work is done by third parties, these costs are eligible for fEC exception funding at 100%.

Where it has been agreed that large surveys should be performed by an in-house team, costs are funded at the standard 80% fEC funding rate.

At proposal stage cost inclusions for major spend on equipment, surveys etc should be estimated as robustly as possible. For all items exceeding £25,000 (£20,830 exclusive of VAT) the proposal should explain the basis for the estimates, using benchmarking figures wherever possible. Estimates for survey costs should **not** allow for inflation.

For all equipment costing more than £25,000 (inclusive of VAT), professionally qualified procurement staff at the RO must be consulted at the beginning of the procurement process and must approve the order before it is placed with the supplier. Additional documentary evidence for the estimated cost (eg supplier's written quote, specialist advice) should be included in the 'Equipment' section as attachment type 'Equipment Quotation'. Equipment quotations are added within the equipment item screen, not within the attachments section. Having added the details for your item press 'Save' which will then provide a link to add the attachments.

For all items of equipment requested with a value over £138,000 (£115,000 exclusive of VAT), three equipment quotations must be provided. Where you believe that there are less than three potential suppliers for an item you should explain this in the 'Justification of Resources' attachment and upload two blank documents as equipment quotes. For items of equipment which cost less than £138,000 but more than £25,000, it is optional to provide quotations and up to three can be uploaded.

See also <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/Efficiency/Efficiency2011/>

Support for items expected to be found in a department

Any proposals requesting items that would ordinarily be found in a department, for example non-specialist computers, should include justification both for why they are required for the project and why they cannot be provided from the research organisation's own resources (including funding from indirect costs from grants).

Retired academics

Salaries for retired academics who have pensions from schemes other than the USS can be funded in full.

Salaries for retired academics who receive USS pensions can be funded in full provided they are working on a part time contract where the annualised pay plus pension does not exceed the full time rate for the job.

Retired academics in receipt of USS pensions whose actual pay rate is being abated by their employer because the annualised pay for the hours they work plus their pension exceed the normal salary for the job, are only eligible for funding on the adjusted (ie reduced) pay scale on which they are engaged.

Cash limits

In line with TRAC, costings on proposal forms will be at prices at the time of submission. Research Councils will continue to award research grants on a cash limited basis; that is, awarded amounts will include the application of standard indices to account for inflation and the payments made against a grant will not exceed the original value announced, apart from additions for maternity or sick leave associated with staff under the Directly Incurred heading (the Research Councils will bear no financial responsibility for the cost of sick/maternity pay of grant holders).

Grant announcements will continue to include an allowance for inflation calculated using standard indices.

Grant transfers

If a grant is transferred from one RO to another, it will not be re-costed to take into account different Indirect and Estates charges used in the new RO. The Directly Allocated and Indirect costs awarded to the new RO should be calculated on the basis of the amount of time that has passed since the grant started.

How proposals are assessed

ESRC relies on peer review to evaluate research proposals and to prioritise proposals when in competition. There are generally two stages in the process: reviewing and consideration by assessors. We select most reviewers from a college of peer reviewers. The college is made up of approximately 2,000 independent experts.

Details and full membership of the Peer Review College are available at:
www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-peer-reviewers/peer-review-college/

ESRC grant holders are expected to be members of the Peer Review College.

How does assessment work?

All ESRC research funding decisions are made on the basis of:

- external peer review
- consideration by assessors from specially constituted bodies (the Grant Assessment Panels; Assessor Colleges; Commissioning Panels).

How are proposals assessed?

For details of the numerical peer review scoring scale, the core criteria for assessment and the panel member numerical scoring scale, please see www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-peer-reviewers/peer-review-scoring-scales-and-je-s-classification/

Who reviews funding proposals?

For details of the review process for current funding opportunities, please refer to the specific web page under 'Funding opportunities': www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/funding-opportunities/

Applicant response to reviewers' comments

Applicants with proposals receiving sufficiently supportive reviewers' comments (average score of 4.5 or above) will have the opportunity to provide a response to reviewers' comments. Applicants will have five days to provide a response of up to two sides of A4, which can be used to highlight any areas of agreement or disagreement with reviewers, factual errors or misunderstandings about the proposal and/or to clarify issues raised by reviewers. The response is not intended to provide an opportunity to change a proposal or the financial aspects of the proposal in light of reviewers' comments.

Please note that reviews received after the five-day response period will not be forwarded to applicants for further response. However, any further usable reviews received before the panel meeting will still be used in the peer review process and will be sent to applicants following the final funding decision.

Please note that the ESRC will not accept an inability to respond to issues raised in late reviewers' comments as grounds for an appeal. To ensure that a request for a response to reviewers' comments is received, applicants should make certain that the ESRC or its agents are not included on anti-spam blacklists, or are included on 'whitelists' to allow the successful delivery of the email to a valid email address.

A successful proposal: What happens next?

How applicants are notified about the decision

If a proposal is successful, a grant offer letter will be sent to the RO's administrative authority via Je-S. The letter sets out the funding awarded and the proposed dates on which the project should start and end.

The administrative authority will accept the grant via Je-S and submit a start confirmation via Je-S following the actual start date. Receipt of a valid start confirmation activates profiled payments.

Investigators who do not wish to take up the offer of a grant should notify the ESRC, via their administrative authority, as soon as possible.

Applicants who hold an existing grant which terminates during the processing of a new proposal are advised that a formal offer of grant will not be made until the Key Findings section of Researchfish has been received and accepted.

Prospective grant holders must not commit expenditure until the formal offer of grant is made and accepted and the period of grant has commenced.

Funding responsibilities

The ESRC accepts no responsibility, financial or otherwise, for expenditure or liabilities arising out of the research it funds, other than that specifically covered by the conditions of the grant and which has been incurred during the period covered by it. Any expenditure relating to activities, goods or services incurred before a grant is formally announced, or retrospective payments for such expenditure before an approved starting date of a grant, are the responsibility of the RO and are ineligible for ESRC funding.

Any expenditure in excess of the approved grant cash limit, or expenditure incurred after the end date of the grant, are also the responsibility of the RO, and ineligible for ESRC funding. Expenditure properly incurred during the lifetime of a grant, but for which bills or invoices are unavoidably after the end date, can properly be charged to a grant. However expenditure relating to activities, goods or services commissioned during the period but for delivery after the end date are not eligible, and must be the responsibility of the RO.

The ESRC accepts no responsibility for any redundancy, severance or compensation payments for which the RO may become liable as an employer, unless expressly agreed in writing by either ESRC's Finance Officer or Director for Policy and Research.

Cash limits

Costings on proposal forms will be included at the rate available at the time of submission. Research Councils will continue to award research grants on a cash limited basis; that is,

awarded amounts will include the application of standard indices to account for inflation, and the payments made against a grant will not exceed the original value announced, apart from additions for maternity or sick leave associated with staff under the Directly Incurred heading. The Research Councils will bear no financial responsibility for the cost of sick/maternity/paternity pay of grant holders and co-investigators, unless they are also Research Fellows or Research Assistants funded by the grant.

Start date

The preferred start date requested in the proposal form should be at least 13 weeks after the date by which a decision is expected. Applicants should bear in mind the time needed to recruit staff, particularly where work permits are required. Following a decision to offer a grant, the ESRC will confirm the preferred start date or agree a revised date with the grant holder. The ESRC reserves the right to impose a start date when necessary.

All applicants should understand that under no circumstances may the start date for a grant be earlier than the date the offer letter was issued.

Once a grant has been issued, grant holders are required to make every effort to start on the agreed date. It is recognised, however, that this is not always possible due to unexpected difficulties in, for example, recruitment or data access. In circumstances where such a delay is unavoidable, the ESRC allows a degree of flexibility where grants may commence within three months of the agreed start date on the grant letter. Confirmation of the actual start date must be sent via Je-S as soon as the research commences. Any change to a start date will not affect the cash limit even if the start date moves to a new financial year.

Start confirmation

ESRC must receive the start confirmation for a grant within 42 days of the date on which expenditure actually commences, and within three months of the start date indicated in the grant letter.

ESRC will also not accept responsibility for any expenditure undertaken more than a month prior to the receipt of these documents. Grant holders and research organisations should be aware therefore that late delivery of these documents may incur a financial penalty.

If a research grant has not commenced within three months of the grant start date specified in the grant offer letter (and the start certificate not received within four months), and a later date has not been approved, the offer of the grant will be withdrawn. The grant may not then proceed without further written confirmation from ESRC that it has been re-issued.

See also RGC 4 of Terms and Conditions of Research Council fEC Grants.

Delaying start date

Indications of possible offers of grants, which have not commenced within 12 months of the notification to grant holders that a grant has been recommended, lapse automatically at that point if a formal grant letter has not been issued.

Payments

A payment profile is created for each grant based upon an expected pattern of expenditure over the lifetime of the grant. This is set out in a payment schedule, available in Je-S. Payment will normally be made quarterly in March, June, September and December each year to the organisation through the BACs system.

Annual statement

The ESRC may request an Interim Expenditure Statement (IES), each year to detail expenditure and payments made during the year. The Statement can be requested by ESRC at any time during the year.

See also RGC 14 of Terms and Conditions of Research Council fEC Grants.

Final claims

A Final Expenditure Statement (FES) will be available to research organisations, via Je-S, within the last month of the grant period. These are expected to be completed, certified and returned by research organisations, via Je-S, within three months after the end of the grant.

The ESRC reserves the right not to accept supplementary final expenditure statements in the following circumstances:

- Where the FES amount added to previously paid amounts exceeds the overall cash limit for the grant announced in the offer letter at the start of the grant, ESRC reserves the right to reduce the FES by the amount necessary to ensure that the cash limit for the grant is not exceeded.
- Where the FES on a grant has not been submitted to ESRC within three months of the termination date, ESRC may recover 20% of expenditure incurred on the grant.
- Where the FES has not been submitted within six months of the termination date, ESRC may recover all payments made on the grant.

Note that requests for supplementary expenditure statements must be made within sixty days of the final payment. Any requests after this date will be declined.

See also RGC 15 and RGC 18 of Terms and Conditions of Research Council fEC Grants.

Vouching and transaction listings

The ESRC may request the following information in support of an FES to support claims, and to enable sample checks to be performed if required:

- Directly incurred costs: transaction listings are required if the amount claimed over the period of the grant is over £10,000. Copy vouchers are required for individual items over £20,000.
- Equipment: transaction listings are required if the amount claimed over the period of the grant is over £10,000. Copy vouchers are required for individual items over £20,000.

The books, records and financial procedures of the RO shall be open to inspection by the ESRC or any other body or individual engaged by the ESRC for the purpose of such inspection.

The RO will, on request by the ESRC, provide accounts for the grant, independently examined by an auditor who is a member of a recognised professional body, certifying that the expenditure of the grant has been in accordance with all ESRC conditions.

Research grant reconciliation and evaluation

Expenditure statements (final and interim) will declare the Directly Incurred costs of the project and the Research Councils' share - calculated using the standard percentage contribution rate in place at the time of the grant announcement. In the reconciliation process, the Research Councils will pay the remaining Directly Incurred costs due.

The Directly Allocated and Indirect costs will be paid in full at the level stated in the original grant announcement, with the exception of grants that have been transferred between organisations (where a pro-rata reduction is made at the time of transfer) and grants subject to premature termination or financial sanction.

Sick/maternity pay for staff under the Directly Incurred heading will be paid at the standard Research Councils percentage fEC rate and will be shown under a separate fund heading ("Absence") on the expenditure statement.

See also RGC 15 of Terms and Conditions of Research Council fEC Grants.

How the grant funds are managed

Following notification of the grant details the RCUK will calculate a forecast of expenditure and payment schedules on individual grants - based on the financial data in the proposal, any changes to this in the grant, the indexing of future costs, and any revision in forecast starting date. The RO's finance officer and the grant holder can review a schedule of forecast expenditure and proposed payments on Je-S.

Where expenditure during a year is likely to be 15% more or less than the forecast (for example because of delayed starting dates, or loss of staff) a revised payments schedule may need to be agreed. The RO should contact the RCUK to discuss. The RO must advise the RCUK of these circumstances in writing at the earliest possibility. If the RCUK is not advised in these cases then payments may be withdrawn or reduced.

Monthly status report

This information is sent to the Finance Officer/Research Support Office and contains a record of all live grants and, where appropriate, where action is required - such as:

- awaiting start confirmation
- awaiting receipt of final expenditure statement (FES) or Key Findings.

Changes to grants

Research grants provide support for the research proposals submitted by the grant holder and accepted (or modified) by the ESRC. The research grant is made on the understanding

that the ESRC's contribution to the cost will not be increased. The funds available within any grant may only be applied to meet the objectives and outputs of the grant approved by ESRC, and may not be diverted to any other purpose.

Grant holders may encounter circumstances forcing them to modify their research plans (including failure to obtain ethics committee approval) which compromise the prime objectives of the research as approved in the grant. There may also be circumstances where modifications are proposed to take advantage of new opportunities or new technology. In such cases grant holders must obtain the prior approval of the ESRC before the implementation of any modifications.

See also RGC 5 to RGC 7 of Terms and Conditions of Research Council fEC Grants.

Extensions

Under certain circumstances ESRC may allow extensions (but with no added costs) to the duration of the grant by an overall total of up to 12 months. These will only be considered in the following instances:

- breaks or delays in the appointment of staff
- maternity, paternity, adoption, shared parental or paid sick leave
- death
- extended jury service
- changes from full-time to part-time working
- where data gathering or fieldwork has been unavoidably delayed for reasons wholly beyond the control of the research team

Extensions will be limited to the additional time needed to complete the research.

See also RGC 7 of Terms and Conditions of Research Council fEC Grants.

Virements

Virement will only be permitted within and between Directly Incurred and Exceptions headings. Grant holders are expected to provide details of virements on ESRC claim forms. The ESRC reserves the right to seek full justification of any virements. Virements in or out of the equipment heading is not permissible as these funds are ring-fenced.

Costs vired from Exceptions to Directly Incurred heading will be vired at the RC contribution rate of 80% only. The remaining 20% must be repaid to ESRC at the final reconciliation stage.

See also RGC 6 of Terms and Conditions of Research Council fEC Grants.

Teaching

Prior approval of the ESRC is required if the RO wishes to adjust the salaries of staff required to do teaching, demonstrating, or part-time employment on work not funded by the grant. The RO needs to be able to assure the ESRC that a research worker is employed full-time on the project or should make a pro-rata adjustment of the time charged to the grant. Nonetheless, it is recognised that occasional teaching, not to exceed six hours per

week inclusive of preparation (normally not more than two hours' contact time), could enhance the value of a project. The ESRC will therefore not object when this can be done without detriment to the principle of full-time employment, or to the conduct of the research.

Change of grant holder

If a grant holder resigns or retires during the period of the research grant, a replacement may be nominated by the relevant head of department and a request made to continue the research. If, however, the grant holder has moved to another organisation, the arrangements for transfers would normally apply.

See also RGC13 of Terms and Conditions of Research Council fEC Grants.

Transfers of grants between organisations

When a grant holder takes up an appointment at another recognised RO before the grant finishes, the ESRC normally transfers the balance of the grant, subject to the agreement of the research organisations concerned (for transfers under the Money Follows Researcher scheme please see www.rcuk.ac.uk/international/funding/moneyfollowsresearcher/).

Exceptionally, the ESRC will approve the transfer of responsibility to another individual at the same RO. Grant holders proposing transfers are required to seek approval as early as possible (at least three months prior to proposed transfer date), through a Je-S Grant Maintenance Request (Transfer Request). Information on how to process this can be found in the Je-S help pages. Responsibility for the conduct of the grant remains with the original RO until such time as the transfer has been agreed by all parties concerned and until the date of transfer.

In agreeing the transfer, the first RO thereby agrees not to claim from ESRC any amount which is in excess of the original cash limit less the transferred amount. If the RO later establishes that it has incurred costs beyond this limit they may not be claimed from ESRC. They may, with the agreement of the second RO, be claimed from it. The second RO may however only pass these costs on to ESRC as long as all claims by it (including these amounts) do not exceed the cash limit for transferred grant.

If a grant is transferred from one RO to another, it will not be re-costed to take account of different indirect and estate charges used in the new RO. The Directly Allocated and Indirect costs awarded to the new RO should be calculated on the basis of the amount of time that has passed since the grant started.

See also RGC 12 of Terms and Conditions of Research Council fEC Grants.

Right to terminate

The ESRC reserves the right:

- to revise or amend at any time the conditions of the grant
- to suspend or terminate a grant at any time.

In reserving these rights the ESRC will, where possible, seek to ensure that in the event of changes or termination, reasonable notice is given to the RO and grant holder. The minimum notice will be six months.

In appropriate cases, the ESRC will consider paying such final instalments as may be necessary to cover outstanding and unavoidable commitments.

Reporting requirements

Risk management

Risk Management Plans in the form of Risk Registers must be produced by all large grant holders within three months of being contracted. These should be fully commensurate with the host institution's Risk Register and should be sent to ESRC for initial comment. The Risk Register should identify, assess and manage key risks in relation to the delivery of outputs required under the funding agreement. This should include, but not be limited to, the following:

- governance and staffing
- delivery and outputs
- infrastructure and facilities
- finance, income management, procurement and VfM-related matters
- legal, DPA, FOIA and IPR-related matters
- quality
- research sustainability
- ethics, scientific fraud and misconduct
- reputational aspects
- socio-political factors.

Final Reporting

Key Findings report

The Key Findings report must be completed on Researchfish and data submitted to UK Data Service for all ESRC research grants within three months of the final date of the grant period. The Key Findings report should then be submitted at the following Researchfish annual submission period. Grant holders will be reminded up to three months in advance of this date of the reporting requirements for their grant. The preparation and submission of the Key Findings report is the responsibility of all the named grant holders. Grant holders will not be eligible for further ESRC funding where the Key Findings report has not been completed or where data has not been submitted.

Narrative Impact

Grant holders must submit a Narrative Impact 12 months after the end date of the grant and this should then be submitted in the following Researchfish annual submission period. This report will detail the early and expected scientific and practical impacts of the project. Grant holders will not be eligible for further ESRC funding while the report is overdue or has not been accepted by ESRC.

The Key Findings report and Narrative Impact will be made publicly available on the Gateway to Research (or other ESRC/RCUK websites).

Changes to reports will not normally be accepted after ESRC has confirmed its acceptance.

Researchfish annual submission period

Grant holders will also be asked to confirm outcomes on Researchfish during the annual submission period. Confirmation of the upload and update of outputs and impacts for up to five years after the end of the grant is a condition of ESRC funding.

Please refer to the 'Reporting Research Outcomes' section above for additional terms and conditions relating to uploading outputs.

Contact sanctions

If outputs and outcomes are not reported as directed the Research Councils collectively will not consider further proposals where the grant holder is named as the Principal or Co Investigator. In addition the Research Councils will suspend payments for the associated grant. See also RGC 17 to RGC 18 of Terms and Conditions of Research Council fEC Grants.

RCUK terms and conditions of grants

Terms and Conditions of Research Council fEC Grants

These terms and conditions relate to grants, comprising Research Grants and Fellowships, costed and funded on the basis of full economic costs (fEC), calculated in accordance with the TRAC methodology (universities and other higher education bodies) or by an equivalent methodology by other Research Organisations.

Grants awarded by the Research Councils are made to Research Organisations on the basis of this single set of core terms and conditions. The Research Councils are:

- Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)
- Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC)
- Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)
- Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC)
- Medical Research Council (MRC)
- Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)
- Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC)

Individual Councils may add additional conditions to the grant to reflect the particular circumstances and requirements of their organisation, or the nature of a particular grant. Acceptance of a grant constitutes acceptance of both the core conditions and any additional conditions. Any request by the grant holder to the council to vary these terms and conditions must be submitted through the Je-S grants maintenance facility and approved in writing by someone authorised to do so on behalf of the Council.

The Research Councils reserve the right to vary these terms and conditions the latest version is available on the RCUK website: www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/grantstcs.