# UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM GUIDE TO SETTING UP NEW RESEARCH PROJECTS

Congratulations on your new research funding!

This guide provides information on the next steps in setting up a new externally-funded research project and the Professional Services support available, from the receipt of notification of the award from the funder to the start of the research project. The document gives a brief overview of each stage of the project set up process and provides links to the Intranet for more information and up-to-date contact details.

## ACCEPTING YOUR AWARD

*Key Points:*

- Your new award needs to be accepted within the time period stipulated by your funder
- Processes for accepting awards will vary according to your funder

When you receive notification of an award from a funder the award offer needs to be accepted by the University. The acceptance process will vary according to your funder; the Research Finance team can advise you of the process to follow for individual funders.

For Research Council projects the award needs to be accepted within 10 days via the JeS system; you need to confirm your acceptance of the award to Research Finance who will process the acceptance on JeS. Research Councils also require a starting certificate to be submitted via JeS within 42 days of the project start date. Research Finance will do this for you – you just need to confirm the start date. Contact details for the Research Finance team can be found at:
https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/Financial-Services/Research-Support-Group/Research-Finance/index.aspx

Some funders (for example CRUK and the British Academy) require the Principal Investigator to confirm acceptance of the terms via the funder's electronic portal.

The European and International Research Support team offers specialist support for European and International funded projects, including hands-on help with the negotiation, project set-up and the post-award delivery to all Horizon 2020 award holders. Details on the team's support service can be found at:
https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/RSS/euandinternational/index.aspx

**CONTRACTS**

*Key Points:*

- All research projects require a legal agreement with the funder
- To request a contract simply download and complete the 'Request for Contract Services' form and email it to newcontracts@contacts.bham.ac.uk
- Complex contracts with multiple parties and/or involving significant risk to the University can take a number of months to conclude
- Only authorised signatories are able sign research agreements on behalf of the University

All new externally-funded research projects require a legal agreement between the funder and the University – the Research Agreement.

Standard terms and conditions apply for some major funders, for example RCUK, the European Commission and a number of large charities. In all other cases, a Research Agreement is drawn up by the Contracts Team between the University and the funder(s). This might be based on the University's standard contracts, or alternatively the funder's standard contract might be used.

In addition to the main Research Agreement with your funder, other types of agreement might be required depending on the needs of your individual project, and could include collaboration agreements, sub-contracts or material transfer agreements.

If your project requires support from the Research Contracts team for one or more contracts you just need to download and complete the 'Request for Contract Services' form from: https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/Financial-Services/Research-Support-Group/Contracts/Request-a-Contract.aspx

When you have completed the 'Request for Contract Services' form it should be emailed to newcontracts@contacts.bham.ac.uk. If you have been sent a draft agreement from your funder or a collaborating institution, please forward the agreement to the contracts team alongside the 'Request for Contract Services'. Your request will be assigned to a named Contracts Officer and you will receive an email confirmation within three days with a reference number and the name of the Contracts Officer who will deal with the agreement.

The Contracts Officer will take forward the discussions with your funder (and any other partners where there is a formal collaboration agreement). Research contracts can take varying amounts of time to negotiate, and some complex agreements (for example multi-party collaborative agreements and/or contracts involving high risk to the University) can take a number of months to conclude.

Legally binding research agreements between the University and third party organisations can only be signed by an authorised signatory with formally delegated authority from Council. Principal Investigators are not authorised to sign research contracts on behalf of the University.

**ETHICAL REVIEW**

*Key Points:*

- The Self-Assessment Form (SAF) must be completed for all research projects
- If the SAF indicates a need for further ethics review by one of the Ethics Committees you cannot start your research until the committee has confirmed the granting of ethical approval for the project
- The SAF also acts as the request for sponsorship for studies in the NHS

For all staff and postgraduate research projects being conducted on behalf of the University, you must submit the online Self-Assessment Form (SAF). The form can be accessed at: https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/Financial-Services/Research-Support-Group/Research-Ethics/Ethical-Review-Forms.aspx

The responses to the questions on the SAF will indicate whether further ethics review is required, or whether no further action is necessary. If a review is required by one of the University's Ethics Committees you will be asked to provide information for the committee by completing an 'Application for Ethical Review' (AER) form, and you cannot start your research project until the Committee has confirmed that it has granted ethical approval for the activity.

If a Health and Safety risk assessment is required, this should be carried out and approved before submitting the AER form. Information on H&S risk assessments can be found at: https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/hr/wellbeing/worksafe/topics/riskassessment.aspx

It is advisable to complete the SAF as soon as possible after accepting your award; this will ensure that any committee review process can be instigated promptly and avoid delays in opening your research account (Research Finance require confirmation that the SAF has been completed before opening a project account).

For further information or guidance on the University's ethical review processes you can contact the Research Ethics team: https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/Financial-Services/Research-Support-Group/Research-Ethics/Who-Can-Help.aspx

The SAF also acts as the request for sponsorship for studies in the NHS covered by the Department of Health's Research Governance Framework. Studies involving the NHS will require sponsorship from the University and external ethical review via the National Health Service Research Ethics Committee system (NRES). Studies involving animals will require ethical approval via BERSC (an internal University sub-committee).

For information or guidance about research governance, including university sponsorship, applications to NRES ethics committees, and advice on regulatory requirements, you can contact the Research Governance team: https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/Financial-Services/Research-Support-Group/Research-Governance/Who-can-Help.aspx

**YOUR RESEARCH ACCOUNT**

*Key Points:*

- A formal commitment from the funder is required before your research account can be opened by Research Finance; for most funders this will be a legal agreement, but for some major national funders the formal offer letter is sufficient
- You need to complete an Ethics Self-Assessment Form before your research account can be set up by Research Finance

Research Finance will open a project account for you once they have formal and binding confirmation that the funding will be received. In the case of some major national funders where standard terms and conditions apply, for example RCUK, the European Commission and a number of large charities, the formal notification of the award is sufficient; in other cases a legal agreement between the funder and the University will need to be in place before the research account can be opened.

Research Finance will also require confirmation that the ethics Self-Assessment Form has been completed in order to set up the account.

At this point you will be able to charge eligible expenditure items to your project. It is important to be aware that some funders will only reimburse expenditure that is incurred between the start and end date of the project, whereas others will allow expenditure prior to the start date, for example on staff recruitment advertising. If you have any questions concerning funder terms and conditions on eligible expenditure the Research Finance team can give advice. Contact details for the Research Finance team can be found at:
https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/Financial-Services/Research-Support-Group/Research-Finance/index.aspx

**STAFF RECRUITMENT**

*Key Points:*

- If your award includes funding for the appointment of research staff who will be employed to work on the project you will need to complete the vacancy template in the WCN system
- Research Finance will check and confirm that funds are available for each proposed appointment, and HR will then support you in advertising the post, collating responses and making formal offers to candidates
- You must verify at interview that a candidate has the right to work in the UK

If your award includes funding for the appointment of research staff who will be employed to work on the project you will need to complete the vacancy template in the WCN system (https://atsv7.wcn.co.uk) for each staff post on your project.

In order to complete the vacancy template you will need the appointment details for each post (including the salary grade, start date and appointment duration that have been confirmed in the award notification and/or contract), a job description, where the post will be advertised and the wording for the advertisement. You will also need to enter the project account code that has been provided by Research Finance; if you need to advertise a post for a confirmed award that does not yet have a project account opened (for example while awaiting a fully signed research agreement) please contact Research Finance before completing the WCN vacancy template who can approve the post(s) for advert only. Contact details for the Research Finance team can be found at: https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/Financial-Services/Research-Support-Group/Research-Finance/index.aspx

Once the vacancy template has been submitted, Research Finance will check that the funds are available in the project budget for each proposed appointment. HR will then instigate the recruitment process. Specifically the HR Recruitment team will:

- advertise your vacancy
- collate and provide you with a longlist of applicants
- contact candidates on your behalf to organise interview times and dates
- make a formal offer of employment to your selected candidate.

You are responsible for:

- shortlisting candidates for interview
- providing HR with interview arrangements (date, times, venue, panel, content etc.)
- conducting the interviews
- providing HR with the details of the selected candidate so that they can make an offer

You are also responsible for ensuring at interview stage that a candidate's right to work in the UK has been confirmed and verified; without confirmation of the right to work HR will be unable to issue a formal offer of employment to your selected candidate.

It is important to start the recruitment process early enough to ensure that an appointment can be made in time for the start of the project, allowing adequate time for advertising, shortlisting, interviews and the expected notice period of the selected candidate.

If you need any advice on any part of the recruitment process you can contact your HR Advisor with any questions on 0121 415 9000 or via the HR Service Portal:
https://universityofbirmingham.service-now.com/hr/

Detailed guidance on the recruitment process is available in the 'Recruitment Manager Toolkit' at https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/hr/Managers/recruitment-and-resourcing/recruitment.aspx

**PROCUREMENT**

*Key Points:*

- No purchasing commitments should be made without a signed Purchase Order and wherever possible the University's approved suppliers should be used
- The procurement procedures that need to be followed will vary depending on the value of the proposed purchase
- High value purchases will require either three competitive written quotations or a formal competitive tender process

The ordering of goods and services for your research project needs to be in accordance with the University's procurement policies.

All purchasing transactions undertaken on behalf of the University, with the exception of those undertaken using the University Purchasing Card, must have a Purchase Order and Purchase Order number; under no circumstances should you make any sort of commitment unless and until a Purchase Order has been authorised/signed by an authorised person.

For all proposed purchases (but in particular lower value/consumable products and services such as furniture, laptops, notebooks, PCs, stationery and general consumable products as well as travel and accommodation) you should use one of the University's approved suppliers. The University's Approved Supplier list can be found at:
https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/procurement/I-need-to-buy-something/Approved-Suppliers.aspx

The procurement procedures that need to be followed will vary depending on the value of the proposed purchase:

*Up to £500 (excluding VAT)*
Obtain an estimated price and consider using the University Purchasing Card; information on how to apply for a Purchasing Card can be found at:
https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/documents/public/Rules-on-Applying-for-P-Card.pdf

*£501 - £2,500 (excluding VAT)*
Obtain a formal written quotation

*£2,501 - £25,000 (excluding VAT)*
Obtain at least three competitive written quotations or Single Source Approval from an authorised signatory. Information on the Single Source Approval process is available at:
https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/procurement/I-need-help/Single-Source-Approval.aspx

*£25,001 - £164,176 (excluding VAT)*
Obtain at least three competitive written quotations against a formal Request for Quotation process, or at least three Tenders against a formal Invitation to Tender process or Single Source Approval

from the Assistant Director of Finance (Procurement and Insurance). Express written contract signed by Assistant Director of Finance (Procurement and Insurance) is required.

*Above £164,176 (excluding VAT)*
Competitive Tender process in compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 – you must consult with the Procurement Division before any competitive process is initiated or commitment made. Single Source Approval is not available for purchases in excess of £164,176 (excluding VAT)

Further information including contact details for the Procurement Division can be found at:
https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/procurement/I-need-help/index.aspx

## FACILITIES, SPACE AND IT INFRASTRUCTURE

Please contact your College Research Support Office for advice on local arrangements for facilities, space and IT infrastructure.

## DATA MANAGEMENT PLANS

*Key Point:*

- You will need to complete a Data Management Plan for your project in order to ensure compliance with the University's policy on Research Data Management

Although you may have completed a Data Management Plan (DMP) as a funder requirement at proposal stage, it is now important that this is updated and additional information provided. If you were not required to complete a plan at application, it is important that you complete one now in order that appropriate support and management of your research data and its archiving is undertaken in line with the University's policy on Research Data Management:
(https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/libraryservices/library/research/rdm/Policies/Research-Data-Management-Policy.aspx).

Full details of what is involved in the development of a DMP and resources to support this are available at:
https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/libraryservices/library/research/rdm/index.aspx

## FINALLY….

Good luck with your research project – and we wish you every success!

*Research Support Services*