University of Birmingham

Guidelines for Research-Funded Staff Recruitment

1. Introduction

This document provides guidelines for the approval and appointment of staff whose posts are funded by research grants, following the introduction of the Core Systems in June 2019.

The previous requirement for all research-funded staff posts to be formally approved by Research Finance has been replaced by a process that places trust in the hiring manager to ensure that the cost of research-funded staff appointments does not exceed the budget available in the research project account.

This document also incorporates a revised version of the Trusted Funder policy.

2. Confirming what can be afforded by the research project budget

a) <u>New research projects</u>

For new projects, the acceptance by the School/College of an award will be taken as approval for the recruitment of the posts that are specified in the offer notification from the funder. The agreement of the School/College to accept the funder's offer is indicated by the workflow status in the Worktribe system advancing from 'award setup' to 'award acceptance'. Once the School/College has indicated its approval to accept the budget offered by the funder no further financial approval for recruitment to these posts will be required (a project account code will be needed before recruitment can commence and this is created when the Worktribe status moves from 'award acceptance' to 'project setup' as set out in section 4 below; the appendix to this paper provides a summary of the key project stages in the Worktribe workflow alongside the recruitment actions that can be taken at each project status).

As part of the process of accepting awards, the Grant Set-up and Support Team within Research Support Services will provide Principal Investigators with confirmation of the grade and duration of the posts that have been funded, which may be different to those originally applied for. It is then the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that:

(i) The total cost of all proposed staff appointments do not exceed the awarded staff cost budget that has been formally accepted by the School/College, and

(ii) the costs incurred will be eligible for full cost recovery from the funder (for example, ensuring that the appointment start and end dates do not fall outside the project start and end dates where this is specified as a condition for the reimbursement of staff costs in the funder terms and conditions).

It has been agreed by all Colleges that research-funded posts will not ordinarily need CPAG approval. However, if there are additional financial implications for the College associated with the proposed appointment (for example equipment, facilities or bridge funding) Principal Investigators will be required to gain approval from CPAG. This may occur at the start or at any point during the recruitment process, and it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to seek CPAG approval if needed. If a CPAG approval is needed and it is obtained by a Chair's action outside of the CPAG meeting schedule, the Principal Investigator will need to attach the approval documentation to the recruitment requisition form in the Core HR system.

b) Replacement recruitment on existing research projects

For vacancies that arise during a live project (for example through resignation, maternity leave or supplementary funding), it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the cost of the replacement appointment will not exceed the funding available in the research project account, seeking advice from Research Finance, if necessary. Unless the Principal Investigator or their support staff have access to the details of all staff cost commitments on the project and can therefore use Worktribe to calculate the cost of the proposed appointment and assess whether there are sufficient funds in the project account to cover the appointment costs, they should seek confirmation from Research Finance that there is sufficient funding available in the research project account to cover the cost of the proposed appointment.

3. Funder specific guidelines

The Principal Investigator can start the recruitment process at any point after the research project account number has been created; the account number is generated when the status of a project in Worktribe moves from 'award acceptance' to 'project setup' (see section 4). However, the point at which a formal offer of employment can be made to a candidate depends on funder specific guidelines.

a) Trusted funders

For posts funded by 'trusted funders', a formal offer of employment can be made to a successful candidate in advance of the receipt of a fully signed funding agreement. The policy can also be applied in instances where we need to negotiate a contract with a Lead University which is in receipt of an award from one of the trusted funders.

The list of trusted funders is:

- Research Councils
- Research England
- Cancer Research UK
- Department of Health (NIHR)
- The Wellcome Trust
- Arthritis Research UK
- British Heart Foundation
- Bloodwise
- Leverhulme Trust
- The Royal Society
- The British Academy
- The European Commission
- Innovate UK
- DSTL

In order for the 'trusted funder' approach to be used, the following documentary evidence must be provided and uploaded to the documents area in the project record in Worktribe:

Where UoB is the lead/sole award recipient:

- A formal offer letter from the trusted funder.

Where UoB is a collaborating institution:

- A copy of the award letter from the trusted funder to the lead institution or a copy of the head agreement.
- A notification of intent (either by letter or email) or draft collaboration agreement from the lead institution stating the start date, duration and value of the award to Birmingham and the detailed breakdown of all staff posts assigned to UoB (if this information is not fully itemised in the award letter to the lead institution)

This documentation must be uploaded to Worktribe before a research project account code will be generated; the account code is needed in order to complete a recruitment requisition form (see section 4).

It is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that research-funded staff do not commence employment prior to the start date of the project. This is to ensure that the costs of the staff member are fully recoverable from the funder. Any unrecoverable costs incurred as a result of commencing employment before the project start date specified by the funder will be charged to core College budgets. The Grant Set-up Team in Research Support Services will be able to provide advice on this at any point in the process.

Even with Trusted Funders, all other pre-conditions for opening a research account need to be satisfied before a project can be set to 'live' in Worktribe, for example, the completion of the ethics self-assessment checklist in Worktribe.

b) <u>Other funders</u>

For funders not covered by the Trusted Funder policy, no offer of employment should be made until the formal funding agreement is in place and signed by all parties, and it is recommended that recruitment does not start until the funding agreement has been finalised.

However, it is appreciated that Principal Investigators may feel that they need to begin the recruitment process earlier than this in order to ensure that once a funding agreement has been signed there will be no unnecessary delay to undertaking research due to staff not being in post. In this event, the Principal Investigator is advised to consult with their assigned Contracts Officer to gain an indication of the expected time required to conclude the contract negotiation with the funder. The Principal Investigator should not initiate the recruitment process unless they are satisfied that there is little or no risk that an offer of employment to a candidate may not be possible at the end of the recruitment process due to the absence of a fully signed agreement.

In the event that the recruitment process is complete before the funding agreement has been signed by all parties and the project set to 'live' in Worktribe, the Principal Investigator is responsible for ensuring that no offer of employment is made before the contract is fully signed unless a case for bridge funding has been approved by the relevant CPAG.

4. Research-funded staff recruitment requisition process

The Principal Investigator can proceed to raise a recruitment requisition in the Core HR system when they have:

(i) confirmed that their research project budget will fully cover the cost of the proposed appointment as set out in section 2, and;

(ii) ensured that the recruitment process can start based on the funder specific guidelines as described in section 3.

The recruitment module of the Core HR system can be found at uobrecruit.bham.ac.uk. A full range of eLearning materials and step-by-step guides for the staff recruitment process in the new system are available on Canvas at https://canvas.bham.ac.uk/courses/30112/pages/hiring-manager. The HR Recruitment team are available to support Principal Investigators with recruitment activity and can be contacted on 0121 415 900; team member contact details can be found at https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/hr/about/contact/index.aspx. There is also a recruitment toolkit available on the intranet at https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/hr/Managers/recruitment-and-resourcing/recruitment.aspx.

In order to initiate a recruitment requisition for a research-funded staff post the Principal Investigator will need:

(i) **the research project account number.**
For new projects, Research Finance will be able to create the project account number when the project status in Worktribe moves to 'award acceptance'. Within five working days of the project moving to 'award acceptance' the Research Finance team will progress the project status to 'project setup' which will automatically generate the project account number. This will allow Principal Investigators to raise a recruitment requisition but no expenditure can be charged to a research project account until the status in Worktribe is moved from 'project setup' to 'project live'. The appendix to this paper provides a summary of the key project stages in the Worktribe workflow alongside the recruitment actions that can be taken at each project status.

The research project account number will be communicated to the Principal Investigator through the project record in Worktribe. The account number will be shown in the Worktribe project record under the 'Finance Project Code' heading. The project account number is one element of the POET[1] code that needs to be entered accurately on all research project requisitions in order to ensure that costs are charged to the correct project account and budget line; if these details are incorrectly entered on the recruitment requisition then the information on expenditure provided to Principal Investigators in the new 'Project Budget versus Actuals Report' in the Core Finance System will be inaccurate, which will potentially result in over or underspending on research projects.

[1] There are four elements to the POET code: **P**roject account number, **O**rganisation (i.e. school/department), **E**xpenditure type (eg. academic staff) and **T**ask (the way that costs for different schools or funders are charged in a research project; for a project with one funder and one school this will always be Task 1.1)

(ii) **a position number.**

For new staff posts a position number will need to be obtained from the HR Recruitment team by submitting a request via the HR Portal (www.hrserviceportal.bham.ac.uk), picking the case type 'Employee Position Request' and completing the embedded form. The form requires the four elements of the POET code to be entered correctly when completing the form for a research funded position.

For recruitment to replace an existing position (ie. backfilling a staff member on a project who has left the University) the Principal Investigator should not request a new position number, and should instead enter the original position number in the recruitment requisition form in the Core HR system. Position numbers for existing roles can be found by the Line Manager for the position (for positions funded by research projects the Line Manager is usually the Principal Investigator) by (i) logging into Core Systems, (ii) selecting the 'Me' tab, (iii) selecting 'Directory', (iv) searching for the employee currently in the position, (v) clicking on 'View Hierarchy' and (vi) locating the position number beneath the job title. To request a change to the details of an existing staff position the Principal Investigator needs to raise a case in the HR Portal, specifying the changes required.

APPENDIX

Recruitment actions by project status in Worktribe

PROJECT STATUS	RECRUITMENT ACTIONS
Bid marked as 'successful'	
Award setup	Recruitment cannot start; the College needs to confirm acceptance of awarded funding
Award acceptance	The College has approved the award and the budget; a project account code is needed in order to complete a recruitment requisition in Core HR
Project setup	Project account code is created and available under the 'Finance Project Code' heading in Worktribe FOR TRUSTED FUNDERS: an offer of employment can be made when a candidate has been selected FOR OTHER FUNDERS the offer cannot be made until a fully signed funding agreement is in place
Project live	Staff employment can start