Guidance for the MRC Proximity to Discovery Fund 2019/20

Overview
The MRC’s new Proximity to Discovery: Industry Engagement Fund (PtD) will aim to support individual mobility to enable early engagement with industry as well as placement opportunities with businesses that could accelerate the translational potential of your work.

These are the two popular streams under the Proximity to Discovery banner:
1. Rapid Response Mobility
2. Exchange & Explore

Applications to the MRC PtD RRM or E&E funds should be made using the appropriate forms and submitted to Ryan Brown (R.M.Brown.1@bham.ac.uk) and Alice Sayers (A.E.Sayers@bham.ac.uk).

Prior to submission, all applications must have been discussed with your College Business Engagement Partner:
- For MDS: Jo Smith (J.L.J.Smith@bham.ac.uk, 0121 414 4056 or 07855 349 283), Jess Stede (J.Stede@bham.ac.uk, 0121 371 8455) or Flo Gannon (F.Gannon@bham.ac.uk, 0121 414 9120).
- For LES: Holly Searson (H.L.Searson@bham.ac.uk, 0797 039 7568).
- For EPS: Richard Fox (R.Fox@bham.ac.uk, 0121 414 8921) or Jack Tasker (J.B.Tasker@bham.ac.uk, 0121 414 8635 or 07970 987 037).

Rapid Response Mobility (RRM)

One of the main issues raised by researchers is the lack of available funding to enable a quick response to ensure emerging ideas can be translated into real opportunities for collaboration. This is primarily where contact is made between industry and an individual academic with no past experience of working together to rapidly progress potential collaborative opportunities. Where these interactions are followed up through email exchanges or phone calls progress is often slow and tangible outputs may fail to materialise, but where face-to-face discussion can be realised rapidly, progress is typically much more definite.

This scheme will support applications for funding to mobilise researchers and enable accelerated industry engagement, where other funds do not exist. This may be for travel (including international flights) and accommodation where necessary, and may even fund child care cover where needed (to ensure equality in line with our commitment to Athena Swan). There is no specific upper limit to funding requested, however value for money must be apparent. Additionally, you may apply to the PtD RRM fund more than once to visit multiple potential industry partners if appropriate.

All successful applicants will be expected to complete an Outcome Report Form detailing collaborative projects, funding grant applications, partnerships, donations or agreements on how to move forward together resulting from the visit. This information will be used to demonstrate the effectiveness of the implementation of this scheme in further funding applications to the MRC.

Upon submission, your application will be considered by the Chair of the internal MRC CiC / PtD Panel and the Head of Research & Knowledge Transfer. Where possible, a funding decision for RRM will be made within one week.
Exchange and Explore (E&E)

This fund will support clearly defined exploratory projects with the objective of generating sufficient preliminary data to build towards a collaborative application, either an internal fund such as CiC or external funding application such as a larger scale industry funded collaborative project, CASE Studentship or project grant. E&E project objectives should be clearly defined, including details on the project end-points and next steps.

Applications of up to £10,000 (consumables only, i.e. no staffing costs) are welcomed.

In line with the MRC’s policy on collaborations, we would welcome a contribution from the industry partner where IP is being generated that will directly benefit that partner. We therefore request that IP arrangements are agreed prior to award so that all parties are comfortable with these, and we are happy to advise on specific discussions. If the Industry partner is willing for the resulting IP to be the property of UoB (which they will still be able to access e.g. through licensing), then the full project cost will be funded through PtD.

If the Industry partner wishes to part-own resulting IP, collaborations and contributions should be captured using Section 4: Industrial Parties’ Contributions from the MRC’s Industry Collaboration Agreement (MICA) form. As well as the E&E application form, you should complete the MICA form with your industry collaborator, and a letter of support must be appended to the final submission.

Upon submission, your application will be considered by the internal MRC CiC / PtD Panel. Where possible, a funding decision will be made within two weeks.

Note: While we do not support staffing costs, the PtD E&E fund can support people exchange into and out of industry, for example the movement of postdoctoral or technical staff, including some elements of personal support for travel and accommodation. However, where this movement is more substantive (either in duration or cost), or for people exchanges between universities and other non-industry organisations, the main funding route should be considered as the centrally managed Wellcome Trust ISSF Mobility scheme, which runs open calls quarterly. The key contact for the WT ISSF is Lucy Caton (L.Caton@bham.ac.uk, 0121 414 5888).