Enhancing Research and Knowledge Exchange Funding Programme

Guidance Notes for Applicants

# Purpose of the Funding Programme:

In addition to the annual Quality Related (QR) funding for research and knowledge exchange, Research England are providing universities with **short-term, one-off funding for the 2021-22 financial year (i.e. spend by 31 March 2022)** to address current Government and UKRI priorities and opportunities. This includes strengthening working with other institutions and external partners, as well as our own internal research environment. Funding is distributed across three schemes:

* Policy Support Fund
* Enhancing Research Culture
* Participatory Research Programme

**The University of Birmingham has been allocated approx. £1m across these funds.**

Allocations are intended to support universities in undertaking activities with local, regional, national and international stakeholders (including, but not limited to, parliament, central government, devolved administrations, local government, health and education bodies, the justice system and other regulatory organisations). The allocations also complement UKRI’s vision and Government’s wider [R&D People and Culture Strategy](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-and-development-rd-people-and-culture-strategy) to support an outstanding research and innovation system that gives everyone the opportunity to contribute and to benefit, enriching lives locally, nationally and internationally by directly involving a wider pool of people, organisations and approaches in research, and by encouraging researchers in universities to engage with the users of research throughout the research lifecycle, from conception to outcomes.

## **Policy Support Fund**

The Policy Support Fund is to enable universities to link effectively with policy research priorities and opportunities, from the local to the international. Allocations may be used to build on activity already underway, and to develop capacity for future initiatives.

## **Enhancing Research Culture**

This fund has been made available to strengthen university capacity around creating an inclusive and vibrant research culture. Funding is designed to enable the transition from addressing immediate Covid 19 pressures to maximising existing and new opportunities for promoting a positive research culture, post pandemic. It is designed to enable universities to prepare activities aligned with the [R&D People and Culture Strategy](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1004685/r_d-people-culture-strategy.pdf).

## **Participatory Research Programme**

Participatory or co-produced research strengthens research outcomes by involving the communities and users of research, better recognising their experience, needs and preferences, and giving greater agency to stakeholders to implement findings.

# How will my application be assessed?

Applications will be assessed with regard to the following criteria:

* Do the projects fall within one or more of the three areas?
* Are they clearly deliverable in the timeframe?
* What will the legacy and outcome of the project be?

*Priority will be given to projects that lead to demonstrable improved capacity or which move research ambitions forward. For example, lead to partnerships which result in grant application, enable ECRs or those without grant experience to apply for grants, extend capacity to improve research grant capture and to extend research ambition.*

*A non-exhaustive list of example types of activity that might be funded is provided below.*

# Who Can Apply for Funding?

Projects may be led by doctoral, academic or professional services staff. Applications from cross-College / disciplinary groups are welcome. Activities should demonstrate how they feed into relevant College and / or Institutional strategies.

# How to Apply for Funding?

Staff based in Colleges (including College-focussed professional services bids) should apply via their College Director of Research, who will be compiling requests. Directors should submit compiled application forms to [centralfunds@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:centralfunds@contacts.bham.ac.uk)

Activities in central Professional Services (such as RSS, External Relations and Planning) should come through their local Directors and will be considered separately, in order to identify existing activities which can be supported via the funding**. All funding requests must be submitted by Wednesday 22nd December.**

**NOTE: Activity which may be suitable for funding and is already underway or “ready to go” can be reviewed via an expedited process where we will aim to deliver an outcome before the Christmas break. Please contact your Director of Research for further details.**

# What Costs Can be Supported?

Funding can support both existing and new activities. Funding will be provided at 100% direct costs (not FEC). Examples of eligible costs could include casual research assistance, consumables, travel, publishing of reports or meeting costs. Projects can include external suppliers, such as consultants, but they must be able to demonstrate contracts can be agreed and the activity can be completed by 31st March 2022. We are not imposing an upper limit on budgets, but please be mindful that costs should be realistically able to be spent by 31st March.

# What is the Timeframe for Undertaking Projects?

Projects MUST be completed, and funds fully spent by **31st March 2022**. Start dates are flexible, however we would expect most activities to start in January.

# Who Can I Contact with Queries?

Please direct project questions to your College Director of Research. Any technical questions around funding / remit should be directed to Lucy Caton in Research Support Services ([centralfunds@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:centralfunds@contacts.bham.ac.uk)).

# Examples of Potentially Fundable Activities:

**Policy Support Fund:**

Non-exhaustive examples of possible projects include:

* New research activity working in partnership with policymakers, for example, to better understand or address local, regional or national challenges;
* Extending existing research activity with policy stakeholders including, but not limited to, international organisations and bodies parliament, central government, devolved administrations, local government, health and education bodies, the justice system and other regulatory organisations;
* Facilitating the use of existing research and the exchange of knowledge between universities and policymakers;
* Activity aimed at establishing or improving the dialogue between universities and policymakers;
* Activity and training to better equip academics, including postgraduate researchers and early career researchers, to engage with policymakers;
* Partnerships and collaborations aimed at supporting evidence-based policy making;
* Reframing of research outputs to make them suitable for policy audiences. This could involve copy writing/ editing services, graphic design and translation of documents or shifting outputs into new formats such as short video production, or podcasts.
* Support for visits, or short secondments, to facilitate inward or outward mobility from policy makers. This could involve funding to support travel, accommodation and expenses to visit parliament, government departments organisations with a strong policy influence remit (e.g. NICE, WHO, etc.)

**Enhancing Research Culture**

Proposals are encouraged to consider the priorities outlined within the Government’s People and Culture Strategy and indicate how they might contribute to the delivery of one or more of the areas. These include but are not limited to:

* Supporting interdisciplinary skills and methods development to help researchers collaborate beyond their own disciplines
* Encouraging cross-sector training programmes, movement and collaboration between academic, industry and third sector
* Creating cultures of best practice in relation to inclusive research design and delivery, with a focus on stakeholder engagement and involvement
* Improving access to and participation in research, including postgraduate research study, for people from currently underrepresented groups;
* Furthering open research practices;
* Improving research conduct and reproducibility;
* Creating routes for collaboration and exchange with businesses, third sector organisations and government;
* Delivering new approaches to public dialogue and community-led research;
* Initiatives designed to gather insights on good practice currently employed elsewhere, and share it within the institution. For example, supporting training on safeguarding and inclusivity from specialist NGOs.
* Building on the above, work to directly support embedding of best practice in the sector within Birmingham, including that which supports relevant national programmes such as [the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](https://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy/concordat), particularly where this complements and enhances [existing initiatives](https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/excellence/support/index.aspx);
* Mentoring and support initiatives, especially those which enable underrepresented groups to thrive (building on institutional programmes such as Aditi, Aurora and MDS SUSTAIN). This could also include activities to support Colleges / Schools / Departments such as reverse mentoring, cultural awareness, facilitated sessions on specific topics;
* Interdisciplinary research methodologies and skills focused training (e.g. funds for organising workshops for a specific output)
* Developing best practice resources and training on inclusive research design (funds for external consultants, support to develop intranet content)

**Participatory Research Programme**

Non-exhaustive examples of possible projects include:

* Developing new partnership or extending existing partnerships which will to lead to applications for funding for co-produced research;
* Pilot projects using innovative models and methodologies for participatory research which will lead to future applications or on-going partnerships;
* Extending and strengthening co-production, in ways which leads to grant application or potential income stream
* The development of materials to support researchers to develop their skills in participatory research;
* Public engagement activities directly related to participatory and co-produced research;
* Training programmes for patients and community members which enhance their confidence and abilities to be fully involved in our research projects and programmes;
* Evaluations of the effectiveness of co-production from different institutions/disciplines.
* Supporting local or participant led data collection. This could include:
* Training residents of fieldwork locations to place and monitor air, water or other forms of sensors.
* Training research participants to deliver peer-to-peer / co-researched research programmes. For example, delivering training on ethics, data management and methods that would allow participants to interview their peers therefore enhancing the quality of data collected.
* Broadening data collection methods employed in existing projects. For example, issuing research participants with camera’s or recording devices to enable photo essays or other participant led forms of data.

*The above examples are not exhaustive, and applicants are encouraged to discuss ideas with their College Director of Research.*