ELIGIBILITY FOR RESEARCH COUNCIL FUNDING

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The Research Councils promote and support research, postgraduate training and associated activities in UK research organisations. These may be supported in any field or discipline at the instigation of the Investigator (Responsive Mode) or at the instigation of the Research Council (Calls for Proposals or Managed Mode).

All UK Higher Education Institutions that receive grant funding from one of the UK higher education funding bodies[1] are eligible to receive funds for research, postgraduate training and associated activities.

The Higher Education Funding Councils determine whether an organisation meets the criteria as an HEI. Research Institutes (RIs), for which Research Councils have established a long term involvement as major funder as part of the national research base (and which are listed here) are also eligible to receive research funding, from any Council.

Other Independent Research Organisations (IROs) may also be eligible for RCUK funding (resource and capital) if they possess an existing in-house capacity to carry out research that materially extends and enhances the UK research base and are able to demonstrate an independent capability to undertake and lead research programmes. The organisations must also satisfy all the following conditions:

1) Organisations which are, or which are constituent parts of, a charity registered with the Charities Commission; or associations which are eligible for exemption from Corporation Tax under schedule 508 of the Income and Corporation Taxes 1988; or organisations which are wholly owned subsidiaries of an association approved under section 508 of the Income and Corporations Taxes Act whose articles of association require that all profits are returned (gift-aided) to the section 508 association.

2) The organisation must be a legal entity which is not:
    a. owned;
    b. established; or
    c. primarily (ie 50% or more) funded for research purposes

[1] These bodies consist of Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and Department for Employment and Learning Northern Ireland (DEL).

by any single part (or related parts) of the public sector (other than by a Research Council, HEI, NHS Trust, National museum/gallery/library/archive/botanical garden/observatory) or by a business.

3) The organisation must possess an existing in-house capacity to carry out research, in the field or discipline in which it wishes to be funded, that materially extends and enhances the UK research base; and be able to demonstrate an independent capability to undertake and lead research programmes, as demonstrated by:.

a). Sufficient high-quality current research capacity. This requires:

i) a minimum of ten researchers with a significant number of publications in top quality journals and/or monographs with key academic publishers, and/or other outputs that have been subject to the highest standards of peer review. Journal quality should take account of benchmark measures appropriate to the discipline.

ii) a track record of staff, while employed at the organisation, leading or co-leading innovative research projects in the previous five years, including directing other postdoctoral researchers and/or research students. This should include evidence of the size and complexity of the projects and details of how they were managed and coordinated.

b). Sufficient financial support for research at the organisational level to ensure the availability of essential infrastructure and the long-term sustainability of research activity, as evidenced by research income from independent sources averaging at least £0.5M pa over the previous three years.

c). Importance and relevance of the research capability, as indicated in 1-2 above, to the Council(s) to which eligibility is sought.

d). Evidence of the organisation having a strong track record of maximising the wider impact and value of its research to the benefit of the UK economy and society.

IROs are eligible to receive funding from a Research Council in its managed mode or in response to a specific Call for Proposals. Exceptionally an individual Council may specifically agree access to Responsive Mode funding if an IRO can demonstrate that it can provide a high quality research capability that is not widely represented in the HEI or RI sectors and which is of clear benefit to the health of the research base of the relevant Council.

Organisations currently recognised as IROs are listed on the Research Councils UK website at http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/eligibilityforrcs/

Organisations that are eligible to apply for Research Council funding may work in partnership or collaboration with any other organisation, irrespective of its eligibility status, subject to the conditions of any grant awarded.

In exceptional circumstances Research Councils may have requirements for the development of equipment, facilities or capability, to pursue their research priorities, for which there is no capability in HEIs, RIs or IROs. Only in these specific circumstances Research Councils may fund organisations which do not otherwise satisfy the conditions for eligibility. Research Councils will not provide funding to an organisation to deliver a capability which is already funded by that organisation in support of its own strategic priorities.

The Research Councils will jointly consider eligibility of IROs for research funding and eligibility may be restricted to certain Research Councils. This review will also need to determine that the IRO is able to meet the accountability and audit requirements. An IRO seeking eligibility for funding from any Council should contact the Je-S helpdesk which manages the application process. The Grants Governance Group makes the assessment of eligibility applications to ensure consistency of approach between Councils. The list of eligible organisations will be published on the RCUK website. A change in the status of an IRO would require re-consideration of an IRO's eligibility. Otherwise, once eligibility has been granted, it will last for a minimum period of 5 years; and then continue unless a point is reached where the IRO has received no funding during the previous five years.