

ACCEPTANCE OF RESEARCH AND INNOVATION FUNDING

This policy covers the acceptance of external funding for research and innovation activities (i.e. consultancy based on research and technical services) by staff within the Research, Engagement and Innovation Office.

Academic staff have the freedom to undertake their research, and the following policy is not intended to restrict colleagues from undertaking their research. However, it is ultimately the responsibility of the University to determine whether to accept funding or not in cases where there could be legal, ethical or reputation issues arising as a result of accepting the funding.

Core principles:

The University will not accept funding that it judges to be illegally obtained or that risks adversely affecting its reputation or compromising its academic freedom or integrity.

This may include, but is not limited to, refusing to accept funding where:

- It results from illegal activities (under the Proceeds of Crime Act, the Bribery Act or anti-terror financing legislation including unlawful discrimination, violation of international conventions on human rights or any form of theft, bribery, fraud, tax evasion, money laundering or terrorist activity) whether in the UK or overseas
- It requires an action or actions on behalf of the University or its staff, which are illegal
- The funding derives from activity that limits freedom of enquiry, contravenes the core values of impartial, independent research, scholarship and teaching or contravenes [specific policies](#) at the University, including freedom of speech
- The conditions tie the funding to a specific activity, which causes unacceptable conflicts of interest for the University and/or is not in keeping with the charitable objectives, values and strategic goals of the University and/or limits freedom of enquiry and/or contravenes the core values of impartial, independent research, scholarship and teaching
- It will cause damage or injury to third parties
- It will harm the University's relationship with other research funders, partners, or students
- The funding may give rise to an actual or perceived conflict of interest between the funder and their activities and the area of work or research being funded
- It could cause any damage, including financial or reputational, to the University.
- The University may also refuse to accept funding where the offer of support is dependent on the fulfilment of terms and conditions placed upon the University, which are perceived to be too onerous or go against the University's objectives

Research and Innovation funding

Responsibilities

Ultimate responsibility for all decisions relating to the acceptance and refusal of research and innovation funding resides with the members of the University Executive Board. Research and Innovation funding shall be accepted on behalf of the University by the Research, Engagement and Innovation Office (REIO) in consultation with the Principal Investigator.

Staff who are or might be considering seeking funding for or generating income from research and innovation should contact REIO as early as possible in the funding process.

Key principles

- Prior to entering into any research and innovation funding arrangement, due diligence on either/both funder and partners, and sign off of their suitability, procedures must be undertaken to safeguard the University's ethics, reputation and finances.
- The University will establish if working with a specific country or organisation will raise ethical or reputational issues including areas such as human rights, diversity and/or national security and will make decisions based on relevant, available information.
- The University will also look at sectors and industries from whom we may accept research and innovation funding. We will look at the potential health and wellbeing, environmental, societal and economic impacts of the research and innovation funding activity.
- The University will expect any organisation we accept funding from not to interfere with the research process and to allow the right for results arising from the research to be published (after embargo periods to enable the protection of intellectual property, if appropriate; and allowing for the protection of funder and University confidential information).

Due diligence

REIO will ensure that Due Diligence is carried out on sources of research and innovation funding, as appropriate. We will endeavour to carry out this Due Diligence (DD) prior to submission of a research grant application but if there are delays in the process (e.g. due to being notified late) then an application may be submitted which may then have to be withdrawn or, if funded, we may not accept it if the DD has subsequently raised issues. REIO will make reasonable efforts to satisfy any questions raised before funding is accepted. Based on the results of and scrutiny of any potential adverse results of the due diligence checks, the Director of REIO will have responsibility in conjunction with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation) for deciding whether funding should be accepted, or whether further consideration is required by other bodies, including the University Committee for Research and Innovation or the Fundraising Ethics Committee, or by the Vice-Chancellor.

Where sources of funding are proposed from which the University has not received funding within the last 3 years, the standard funder due diligence checks will be carried out which include finance capacity checks and a review of all proposed terms and conditions to make sure they are acceptable. Where funding has been received from an organisation within the last 3 years, light touch corporate, reputational and credit searches will be undertaken.

Where there is any doubt over the acceptability of a funder or when the project may pose a high ethical risk, the matter should be referred, in the first instance to the Director of REIO who may raise with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation).

Any funding, regardless of value, which, in the opinion of the Director of REIO, is likely to give rise to significant negative public interest, or potential controversy, or which raises questions with regard to acceptability, must be referred at the earliest possible stage to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation).

In any cases where the PVC (Research and Innovation) considers that there is a significant risk (including legal, financial or reputational) relating to a strategic institutional research relationship, they will refer the matter to the University Executive Board, which, in turn, will refer cases where there is significant risk to Council.

Information on any funders that have raised concerns or have been rejected after due diligence checks by REIO should be shared immediately with the Fundraising team and potentially with Legal Services, Global Partnerships and Procurement. All due diligence reports are retained for 7 years and are accessible within the University for future review.

Exclusions

Proposed funding from the UK government and related bodies, UK Universities, major UK or overseas charity funders, funding councils and related bodies within the UK, or equivalent systems will not be subject to the due diligence process and can be progressed to the signing of an appropriate agreement with the funder.

Review of previous decisions

The University can at any time review and reconsider previous decisions taken in good faith relating to the acceptance of particular funding (e.g. if subsequent events or the subsequent availability of additional information require it). This will include currently running grants and contracts if new information comes to light, which raise significant concerns. Should the University elect to reject funding for current grants or contracts, relevant academic and professional services staff will be required to enact early termination of the project to the extent permissible.

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