

Frequently Asked Questions: Research Funding Applications

As Research Facilitators, we support academics from across SAHSS in the development of funding applications. Here are simple answers to questions most frequently asked by Heads of Department. It is not a comprehensive list, but it offers some preliminary guidance. If you have any additional questions or would like to discuss further, please get in contact with us directly: Dr Anna Cieslik (amc23@cam.ac.uk) and Dr Elizabeth Penner (eap49@cam.ac.uk).

If a UTO commits their time to a grant-funded research project, how do I cover their teaching? Across the University, research conducted on a grant is considered a part of the UTO's standard contractual obligations of research, teaching and service. In some instances, it may be possible to arrange a teaching replacement on a grant:

- On UKRI grants, where a percentage of overheads are recovered, a share of that recovered cost flows to the Department/Faculty and could be used to cover replacement teaching. The amount available will be calculated by the Research Grants Administrator at the point of application. This will allow the HoD to plan for a replacement. Other funders, such as the European Research Council, offer overheads as a percentage flat-rate of direct costs, a share of which again flows to the Department /Faculty.
- Fellowships often require a 100% time-commitment from the applicant and funders, such as the Leverhulme Trust and Wellcome Trust, provide resources for teaching replacement. This replacement funding usually covers an early career stage teaching associate position.

How do I support the administration of an awarded project? Will it put a strain on the Department's resources? Most funders allow – and encourage – costing administrative support into projects. A project administrator will be able to assist with running the project, expense claims, travel and conference organization, recruitment, liaison with project partners, budget management and reporting, etc. Some Faculties make at least part-time project managers compulsorily for larger or complex grants. Similarly, it is possible to cost 'pooled labour' on some grants, where the project 'rents' the time of existing members of staff.

What about space? There is no room in my Department for additional workstations. The Schools can facilitate locating workspace where possible. It might not be located close to other Departmental facilities, but it will provide workstations for postdoctoral research associates.

Can I say no to a grant proposal? Yes, the HoD has the right to refuse to support any grant proposal as they ultimately bear the responsibility for any risks or financial shortfalls that arise from a grant application. They should feel confident to make the decision of whether an application proceeds based on careful risk assessment and Departmental priorities. In some instances, it may be a deferral rather than a rejection as the proposed project would benefit from further development before submitting to an external funder.

I want to support ambitious/large scale bids, but I am worried about financial implications for the Department. How do I mitigate potential risks? When considering a large and complex grant application, it is always best to notify the Research Operations Office as soon as possible as they can provide advice and support risk assessment of grant proposals. Along with the Research Grants Administrator, they can help identify and troubleshoot legal, ethical, financial, reputational and practical risks at the point of application. Guidance on risk assessment can be found on [the ROO website](#) and further guidance on supporting research is offered through the ROO's [HoD training programme](#).

I have doubts about eligibility of researchers who want to apply for grants through my Department. How do I establish whether retired staff, college staff or external applicants are eligible? The eligibility of applicants varies by funder and by type of funding. Your Research Grants Administrator and the Department Administrator will be able to advise on a case-by-case basis. For more information on CTOs eligibility, you can consult [this document](#). For guidance on University Officers who wish to continue employment beyond retirement age, see the [Retirement Policy](#).