UKRI-NSFC Joint Call:
Understanding and Addressing Health and Social Challenges
for Ageing in the UK and China
UK Addendum

Funded by UKRI's International Fund for Collaboration and match funds from the NSFC, call is led by ESRC on behalf of UKRI. This addendum contains supplementary information for UK applicants. Please see the Call Specification and Je-S Guidance for information about this call for proposals and detailed instructions on how to apply.

1. Eligibility

The narrative should address the project’s relevance to the objectives of this call and should fall within the remit of ESRC and MRC. The subject remit of the councils can be found here:

UKRI: https://www.ukri.org/funding/how-to-apply/eligibility/

ESRC: https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/guidance-for-applicants/is-my-research-suitable-for-esrc-funding/discipline-classifications/

MRC: https://mrc.ukri.org/funding/science-areas/

Principal Investigators (PIs) must be based at a UK institution eligible for Research Council funding. Please note that due to the cross-council nature of this initiative, ESRCs standard policy for non-academic Co-Is does not apply and UKRI will not fund Co-Is or Researchers from business, civil society, or government through this call. Non-academic researchers may be involved as Project Partners.

Please note, the focus of this call is to foster collaboration between UK and China to advance understanding of the new health and social risks to healthy ageing. UK funding will allow the inclusion of overseas co-investigators through the ESRC’s policy but researchers from China are excluded. The primary focus of the research must be on the UK and China.

For proposals involving health or biomedical research, please also refer to section 1.1 of MRC’s standard Guidance for Applicants for additional information around the types of organisations that can be funded.

2. Guidance for grant applicants

As part of our commitment to support the recommendations and principles set out by the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA; https://sfdora.org/read/), UKRI reviewers and panel members are advised not to use journal-based metrics, such as journal
impact factors, as a surrogate measure of the quality of individual research articles, to assess an investigator's contributions, or to make funding decisions.

The content of a paper is more important than publication metrics, or the identity of the journal, in which it was published, especially for early-stage researchers. Peer review and panel members are encouraged to consider the value and impact of all research outputs (including datasets, software, inventions, patents, preprints, other commercial activities, etc.) in addition to research publications. We advise our peer reviewers and panel members to consider a broad range of impact measures including qualitative indicators of research impact, such as influence on policy and practice.

3. Funding Information

Up to £5 million is available from UKRI, with up to 2.5M RMB available per project from Chinese applicants from NSFC. A maximum of £1 million and a minimum of £625,000 (100% fEC) can be applied for per UK proposal.

Each grant will require a UK Principal Investigator (PI) and a Chinese PI who will equally share leadership and project management for each project. Each PI will apply for funding to support their specific component of the team grant from their respective funding agency.

The funding agencies also expect the costs on each side to accurately reflect the research effort to be carried out. It is expected that the research effort on both sides should be comparable.

The funding will not cover UK PhD studentships or requests for capital items.

4. Fund for International Collaboration

This call is being funded through UKRI's Fund for International Collaboration (FIC). The FIC was announced in the Industrial Strategy White Paper in November 2017 and aims to enhance the UK’s excellence in research and innovation through global engagement, forging new bilateral and multilateral research and innovation programmes with global partners. Alongside other new cross-UKRI funds including the Strategic Priorities Fund, the FIC forms part of a package of UKRI measures to maintain the UK’s global research and development leadership and thereby deliver against the ambitions of the Industrial Strategy.

As the FIC focuses on enhancing the UK’s bilateral and multilateral partnerships with global R&D leaders, UKRI has identified key partner countries, in consultation with Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), as part of an evolving framework for international investment. Partner countries under the FIC include the USA, Canada, Japan, Australia, Israel, South Korea, Singapore, China and India. The first round of calls announced involve collaborations with 17 lead countries.

5. Budget guidance

The UK team must prepare a budget detailing costs and the requested amount, including staff costs, outsourcing, travel and subsistence, equipment (under £10,000) and consumables, dissemination, evaluation, and other itemised costs. This combined budget should indicate the overall cost for the UK team. All costs should be costed on the basis of
the full economic costs (fEC) of the research and all costs that contribute to the full economic costs of the proposal should be included. Proposals should be costed using TRAC (Transparent Approach to Costing) methodology and should only include the costs required to support the research related to the proposal (that is, costs which fall outside the scope of the grant should not be included).

UKRI have produced a FAQ document for more information regarding costings, which can be found here: https://www.ukri.org/files/legacy/documents/fecfaq.pdf/

For proposals involving health and/or biomedical research, further guidance on costs is available in Section 3 and Section 6 of MRC’s Guidance for Applicants.

If the proposal is successful, UKRI will contribute 80 per cent of the total costs applied for by the UK team.

6. Research Ethics

As the principal funding agency for UK social science research we require that the research we support is designed and conducted in such a way that it meets certain ethical principles, and is subject to proper professional and institutional oversight in terms of research governance.

As an important source of public funds for social science research and as a body charged with encouraging, supporting, undertaking and advising on such research, the ESRC recognises that it has a special obligation towards the general public and academic community to ensure that the research which it funds is carried out to a high ethical standard.

We have agreed a Framework for Research Ethics that all submitted proposals have to comply with. Further details available about the Framework for Research Ethics and guidance on compliance (together with links to other web-based resources on research ethics) may be found at https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-ethics/

For health or biomedical research proposals, please also see the Ethics Addendum.

7. Publication, intellectual property (IP) and collaboration agreements

Where research is funded by or undertaken in collaboration with others, the research organisation is responsible for putting appropriate formal agreements in place covering the contributions and rights of the various organisations and individuals involved. Such agreements must be in place before the research begins.

Ownership of intellectual property generated during the project and rights to exploitation, as well as any costs regarding management of IP, are expected to be agreed between the collaborating research organisations before the research begins. The collaboration agreement must include details of this.

For further information please refer to ESRC’s Guidance for Applicants.
8. Start date and post-award information:

Please note that due to the requirement to start by 15 May 2020, the standard rule for the three month start period outlined in the UKRI Terms and Conditions RGC4, will not apply to this initiative.

9. Reporting requirements

Principal Investigators will be required to record the outputs, outcomes and impacts generated by the grant using the Researchfish system. This information must be submitted annually for every year that the grant is active and for five years after the end of the grant. The information provided should be on behalf of both the UK and Chinese components of the project.

For further information please see: https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/guidance-for-grant-holders/reporting/

10. Terms and conditions of awards


Projects will be administered by the ESRC and will therefore be subject to the standard terms and conditions of ESRC research grants. For further details please see: https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/guidance-for-grant-holders

There will be additional terms and conditions for projects funded under this call, including relating to the start date, ethics, extensions and specific rules pertaining to FIC funds from government.