



GCRF Inequalities and skills acquisition in young people

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

About the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF)

What is GCRF?

The Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) is a five year £1.5 billion funding stream to support cutting-edge research which addresses the problems faced by developing countries. GCRF was announced as part of the UK government's 2015 spending review and forms part of the UK's official development Assistance (ODA) commitment. GCRF addresses global challenges through interdisciplinary research and strengthens capability for research and innovation within both UK and developing countries, providing an agile response to emergencies where there is an urgent research need. For further information see www.esrc.ac.uk/gcrf and www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/gcrf.

GCRF operates across a number of partners, including the research councils, National Academies, UK Space Agency and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). The Research Councils UK (RCUK) GCRF represents the largest portion of this Fund and is a strategic fund spanning all seven research councils. The research councils have each received directly allocated portions of the GCRF. ESRC's total allocation is £45 million across five years. In addition to the funds allocated to councils, there is a large amount of funding that remains unallocated. The research councils and other partners are working towards a strategy for this, and further details will be announced as soon as possible.

Does GCRF replace other research funding initiatives focused on international development challenges?

No. GCRF is not replacing any existing initiatives, and is part of a suite of implementation mechanisms announced as part of the UK Aid Strategy (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-aid-tackling-global-challenges-in-the-national-interest>). ESRC funding to address development challenges will continue to be awarded through schemes such as the Newton Fund, our strategic partnership with DFID, and other multilateral programmes with other UK research councils. The scientific and geographic focus, as well as eligibility and delivery mechanisms, for each of these schemes may differ, and applicants should make sure they submit their proposal to the most appropriate scheme.

Overseas Development Assistance (ODA)

What is ODA?

ODA stands for official development assistance. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) sets the international standard for defining and registering ODA. The DAC defines ODA as “those flows to countries and territories on the DAC-list of ODA Recipients and to multilateral development institutions which are:

- provided by official agencies, including state and local governments, or by their executive agencies; and
- each transaction of which: a) is administered with the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as its main objective; and b) is concessional in character and conveys a grant element of at least 25% (discounted at a rate of 10%).

(www.oecd.org/dac/stats/officialdevelopmentassistancedefinitionandcoverage.htm)

What is the DAC-list and which countries are on it?

The DAC-list of ODA Recipients shows all countries and territories eligible to receive official development assistance (ODA). These consist of all low and middle income countries (LMICs) based on gross national income (GNI) per capita as published by the World Bank, with the exception of G8 members, EU members, and countries with a firm date for entry into the EU. The list also includes all of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) as defined by the United Nations. The DAC-list presents countries and territories in groups, but all countries listed are eligible to receive ODA and therefore relevant to GCRF funding.

The DAC revises the list every three years. Countries that have exceeded the high-income threshold for three consecutive years at the time of the review are removed. The review of the DAC-list took place in 2017. The current DAC-list is available online at

www.oecd.org/dac/stats/daclist.htm

Does my proposal meet ODA requirements?

Only proposals that comply with ODA requirements can be funded under GCRF calls. The definition of ODA eligible research provided by the OECD makes clear that the primary purpose must be to promote the economic growth or welfare of developing countries (see Converged DAC Statistical Reporting Directives, available at

www.oecd.org/dac/stats/methodology.htm).

When trying to decide whether an activity meets ODA requirements, it is important to focus on the questions typically asked by the OECD. Questions you may wish to consider when writing your proposal include:

- Is the project addressing the economic development and welfare of an ODA-eligible country?
- Is there a development need that my project or activity is addressing?
- Are the countries involved on the DAC-list of ODA Recipients, or will countries on the DAC-list directly benefit from the research?
- Would this project or activity be applied in an ODA-eligible country – in which case when, how and with whom?
- What would the impact of the project or activity be, and who would benefit?
- How does the project or activity contribute to sustainable development?

- What would success for this activity look like?
- How would success or impact be measured?

Applicants should ensure they have considered existing advice on ODA requirements. Any queries about the ODA eligibility of projects should be raised with the ESRC contact named in the call specification document before submitting a proposal.

How do I demonstrate that my proposal meets ODA requirements?

Applicants must clearly demonstrate how they meet ODA requirements throughout their case for support and pathways to impact. In addition, all proposals must include a one-page attachment addressing the following three questions:

1. Which country / countries on the DAC-list will directly benefit from this proposal?
2. How is your proposal directly and primarily relevant to the development challenges of these countries?
3. How do you expect that the outcome of your proposed activities will promote the economic development and welfare of a country or countries on the DAC-list?

The ESRC reserves the right to reject applications that do not respond to all three questions. For technical reasons, the way in which this attachment is provided within the Je-S proposal may differ from call to call, so applicants should check the call-specific requirements. Further information can be found within call guidance documents.

Initial assessment of ODA compliance will take place within ESRC, though final decisions may include input from commissioning panels as well as external sources of ODA expertise. We expect applicants to refer closely to ODA guidance as part of preparing their proposal.

Does my research have to take place in a DAC-list country?

No. Where research is conducted, or where research participants are from, are not necessary or sufficient indications of whether or not research meets ODA requirements. The key to ODA compliance is what the primary purpose of the research is, and where the benefits of the research are expected to be experienced.

The primary purpose of any GCRF research must be to promote the economic development and welfare of a country or countries on the DAC-list. Any benefit to the UK or any other non-DAC-list country can only be a secondary consideration: the primary benefit must be to a country or countries on the DAC-list. Not all research conducted in DAC-list countries will meet these criteria, but some research involving non-DAC-list countries may. Applicants will therefore need to carefully consider how they demonstrate ODA compliance regardless of where their proposed research takes place.

Are proposals relevant across more than one country eligible?

Proposals may be relevant to one or multiple countries on the DAC-list.

Are there priority countries on the DAC-list for GCRF?

There are no priority countries within GCRF. All countries on the DAC-list are eligible except those which are flagged as likely to graduate from the DAC-list during the course of the proposed research project.

What happens if a country is flagged as likely to graduate from the DAC-list during the course of the proposed research project?

The DAC-list includes footnotes which indicate which countries are likely to graduate from the list and when, subject to certain conditions. If a country is flagged as likely to graduate it should not be the primary focus of a proposal, although it can be included as an additional case study or comparison. In such proposals the primary purpose of the research should be to promote the development and welfare of a developing country **not** due to graduate from the list.

Can my impact-generating and knowledge exchange-related activities focus on international organisations and/or INGOs?

The impact-generating and knowledge exchange related activities must be focused on a DAC-list country or countries, and if the applicants intend to generate impact via international organisations or INGOs they should explain why this is likely to lead to greater impacts than working directly with stakeholders in-country. Impacts should be targeted at specific DAC-list countries and should not depend on the trickle down of a global public good.

Eligibility and costs

Are associated studentships permitted on these calls?

No, associated studentships will not be funded through these calls.

Does the lead research organisation have to be based in the UK?

Yes. Research proposals must be led by a UK principal investigator based at a research organisation that is eligible for ESRC funding. Guidance on eligibility for Research Council funding can be found on the RCUK website (www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/eligibilityforrcs/).

Proposals can be submitted by researchers who are not established members of the proposed host institution. By submitting the proposal, the research organisation is confirming that, in the event of an award, they guarantee to provide facilities for the PI (as if they were an established member of staff) for the duration of the award.

Can I be the principal investigator if I'm not affiliated with a UK eligible institution?

No. Applications must be led by a researcher at a UK-based organisation eligible to hold ESRC grants. However, non-UK academic researchers may be eligible to be included as an international co-investigator, as explained below.

Can I include researchers from outside the UK as co-investigators?

It is permissible to include researchers based in any country, not just those on the OECD DAC-list, as international co-investigators as long as they comply with the policy.

Academic researchers (at PhD or equivalent status) from an established overseas research organisation of comparable standing to a UK research organisation will be eligible to be listed as an international co-investigator under GCRF.

Please refer to ESRC's international co-investigator policy for further information (www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/inclusion-of-international-co-investigators-on-proposals/). Please note that in addition to our standard policy there are GCRF specific conditions (with particular reference to the costs which exceed the standard 30% limit, that

can be claimed, see below). It is important that applicants seeking to include international co-investigators also consult the specification of the call they are applying to.

For an international co-investigator to be included on a proposal, they must be registered with the research councils' submission system, Je-S. To do this, the international co-investigator should go to the Je-S website (<https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/JeS2WebLoginSite/Login.aspx>) and select 'Create Account'.

What international Co-I costs can I claim?

Applicants who include international co-investigators must fully justify the associated costs within the 'Justification of Resources' section of the proposal. The ESRC will fund 100% of justified costs. For this call, there is no upper limit to the costs that can be incurred by non-UK co-investigators, but these costs must be fully justified. This applies to co-investigators from countries on the DAC-list and from countries who are not on the DAC-list (available at <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/daclist.htm>). Please note that we strongly encourage co-investigators from countries not on the DAC-list to make a significant contribution to their own research costs.

What level of indirect costs can I claim for International Co-Is?

The overhead rate for DAC-list country co-investigators is up to 20% of salaries and other staff-related costs (statutory contributions analogous to UK National Insurance or Superannuation contributions). Indirect costs may not be charged on non-staff related direct costs, such as equipment, consultancies and conferences as well as travel and subsistence. Please note that only DAC-list country co-investigators are eligible for 20% of international salary related costs as overheads/indirect costs and that this does not apply to non-DAC-list country co-investigators. If a co-investigator is from a country flagged as likely to graduate from the DAC-list during the course of the project this should be treated as a country NOT on the DAC-list.

Can I include costs for international consultants in my proposal?

Yes, costs associated with international consultants may be included on proposals. It is expected that in most cases a consultant will not make a significant scientific contribution to the project overall, rather that they facilitate the research. However there may be cases when it is not viable for a researcher to participate unless they do so as a consultant. Please refer to the international co-investigator guidance (www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/inclusion-of-international-co-investigators-on-proposals/).

All overseas consultants should calculate costs at a daily rate appropriate to the going rate for their level of expertise in their country.

Ways of including international costs on a proposal

These are indicative ways of including international costs on a proposal. Other ways may be permissible on a case by case basis, please check with the office if unsure.

For surveys

- If the survey is being undertaken by an in-house, overseas, team at the institution of an overseas coinvestigator, the cost needs to be included within the directly incurred costs. This is effectively like an overseas Co-I having research assistants working on a survey.

- If a survey is being **tendered** by an overseas team OR a UK team it would be costed at 100% fEC. Regardless of where the fieldwork takes place it is not a direct cost associated with an international co-investigator, rather it is a cost that has been subcontracted out to an expert third party for a specific purpose.
- Where a survey is not being done in house we expect it to go to tender regardless of where it is being done/ led from:
 - Costs within proposals to meet externally commissioned surveys are fully allowable. However if proposals include costings for surveys planned to be done using internal resource, such costs will need to be fully justified and benchmarked.
 - Large surveys over £10,000: based on the expectation that they will be done by specialist survey companies, ESRC requires that such surveys will be subjected to external competition to ensure best value for money through competitive purchasing processes.
 - When surveys are commissioned via this sub-contractor route and the work is done by third parties, these costs are eligible for fEC exception funding at 100%. Where it has been agreed that large surveys should be performed by an in-house team, costs are funded at the standard 80% fEC funding rate. (Research Funding Guide: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-funding-guide/>)

For research assistants:

- If research assistants are based overseas for their work on a project, but recruited and employed by a UK institution, they will be paid at 80% fEC.
- If research assistants are recruited at a Co-Is institution and supported by them, they count as part of the co-investigator costs.

For travel and subsistence:

- Any other costs relating to overseas work but incurred by the UK institution, such as organising a workshop, UK attendee travel to that workshop, international attendee travel to the workshop reimbursed by the UK; all come out of the 'UK' portion of the proposal. Even though the funds relate to non-UK activities the costs are being incurred by the UK institution and are not specific costs directly incurred through the involvement of the international Co-I (co-I travel costs etc).

For consultants:

- If there is a consultant overseas (for types of reasons explained in our international co-investigator rules <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/inclusion-of-international-co-investigators-on-proposals/>), they will be paid at 80% fEC and the consultants are not listed as 'Co-investigators'.
- If there is a consultant overseas (for reasons explained in our international co-investigator rules <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/inclusion-of-international-co-investigators-on-proposals/>), they do not need to be included within the 30% because these are paid at 80% fEC and the consultants are not listed as 'Co-investigators'.

Ways of including international researchers/staff on a proposal

International co-investigators – An international co-investigator is an individual from a research organisation outside the UK who otherwise fits the normal definition for a co-investigator on a research project (see the ESRC Research Funding Guide - www.esrc.ac.uk/RFG). That is, they assist the grant holder in the management and leadership of a project. They would normally be expected to make a major intellectual contribution to the design and conduct of the project. For this call, international co-investigators can be based in countries on the DAC-list and also from countries not on the DAC-list (available at <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/daclist.htm>). Please note that we strongly encourage co-investigators from countries not on the DAC-list to make a significant contribution to their own research costs.

Consultants – a consultant cannot be a project partner or a co-investigator

Project Partner – a project partner is someone who makes a contribution to a project either in kind or monetary. A project partner cannot receive funding from the grant.

Business, third sector or government – must be based in the UK
<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/inclusion-of-uk-business-third-sector-or-government-body-co-investigators-on-proposals/>

Do I need to include a collaborator based in a country on the DAC-list?

Unless otherwise stated in scheme-specific guidance, it will not be a formal requirement for GCRF calls to include a collaborator based in a country on the DAC-list. However, we strongly encourage partnerships and collaborative relationships with partners based in DAC-list countries where these are substantive and add value. Partnerships may build on existing relationships or represent the development of a new collaborative relationship. The principal requirement is for meaningful, quality collaborations or partnerships, demonstrated through clear leadership roles across the proposed partnership, and balance and proportionality in partners' roles and responsibilities.

Where international partnerships are included, there must be a strong underpinning research ethic based on mutual respect and understanding for different cultural, ethnic, social and economic beliefs and practices.

Do international partners need to attain matched funding from equivalent funding organisation in their country?

No. There is no requirement in GCRF for matched funding from the country or countries involved.

How can I include a non-academic (business, third sector or government) partner?

ESRC allows UK business, third sector or government body co-investigators to be included in proposals. For further guidance refer to: www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/inclusion-of-uk-business-third-sector-or-government-body-co-investigators-on-proposals/

When a principal investigator includes a business, third sector or government body Co-I on their application they must ensure that all associated costs are fully justified within the

Justification of Resources attachment. The ESRC will fund 100% of justified costs, however, the project costs associated with these types of Co-I contributions must not exceed 30% of the overall cost of the project (at 100% fEC). Applicants should note that where a proposal includes a combination of UK business, third sector and government body co-investigators the combined costs of all co-investigators must not exceed the 30% maximum limit.

While non-academic partners from outside the UK, including DAC-list countries, are not eligible to be included as co-investigators, they can be included as project partners or employed on a consultancy basis. It will be up to the project team to decide on and justify the specific required involvement within the proposal.

Can I apply for more than one GCRF call?

Yes, unless scheme-specific guidance stipulates otherwise. You must have the capacity to undertake all projects applied for, should they be successful. For any one investigator, the maximum amount of time that research councils will fund across all the projects they support is 1650 hours a year (equivalent to 37.5 hours a week, 44 weeks a year).

What level of institutional support is required for a GCRF proposal?

The level of institutional support for GCRF calls is the same as standard Research Council proposals, that is, the Research Council provides 80% of the full economic costs and the research organisation provides the remaining 20%. Please see scheme-specific guidance for any variations on this rule.