



ESRC Legacy Centre Status Review – Invitation only

Call specification

Summary

Legacy Centre Status Review is a rigorous process of review to establish the ongoing excellence and credibility of a former ESRC Centre. Legacy Centre Status is intended to follow on from a period of ESRC full, and then transition, centres funding for an existing centre. If successful, Legacy Centre status will enable the centre to continue to brand itself as an ESRC Centre and seek advice and support from the ESRC in its communication and knowledge exchange and impact activities. Centres will typically be invited to apply for this status as their transition funding comes to an end, by which time they would have received eight to ten years of funding from the ESRC.

The Legacy Centre Status Review also provides the opportunity for the centre to apply for limited funding (total value of ESRC grant - £100,000 over five years) alongside the status review process to support knowledge exchange, user capacity-building, engagement and communication with research users. Please note we will fund DI costs at 100% fEC, limited DA staff costs may be requested as an exception but will be paid at 80% fEC. This funding is not intended to fund research; total staff costs may be requested up to a maximum of a third of the total ESRC grant.

Proposals for Legacy Centre Status are invited via a formal ESRC invitation to centre directors. The proposals must be submitted by **16:00 on X XXXX 20XX** using the Joint electronic Submission (Je-S) system. As this is a non-standard call applicants are strongly encouraged to follow the step by step instructions in the call-specific Je-S guidance.

Background and scope

What are ESRC Centres?

ESRC Centres are major ESRC strategic investments, funded at £2.5-10 million over five years. Research centres are expected to provide scientifically coherent programmes of research aimed at driving forward innovations in social science theory, the development and application of novel research methods, data sources, and practical application.

Research centre funding is aimed at experienced research leaders who require longer-term or extended support for research groups, inter-institutional research networks, project-linked programmes, medium-to-large surveys, other infrastructure or methodological developments, or any related larger-scale projects. Research centres also have a distinct role in supporting the development of early career researchers and building new research capacity. They are expected to be high-impact investments over the longer term.

In addition to taking forward an ambitious research agenda and making significant economic or societal impact, centres add value by increasing research infrastructure, building capacity, encouraging interdisciplinary working in social science and beyond, and enabling research collaboration in the UK and internationally.

ESRC Centres policy

In 2017 ESRC announced some changes in the funding model for centres following an internal policy review. This review recognised the strategic value of ESRC Centres as beacons of research excellence, with high impact nationally and internationally.

The review proposed a number of changes in policy to foster and sustain centres' excellence and impact over the longer term in this context, without reducing investment elsewhere. In particular, the funding model was designed to reflect the mutual benefits of supporting these high-profile and high-impact centres of excellence over a longer period, not only for the ESRC, but also for the centre's host research organisations (ROs). The new funding introduced graduated support over the longer term to help centres establish a self-sustaining funding model once ESRC funding comes to an end.

ESRC Legacy Status and funding forms the last stage of the graduated centres funding model, and it is expected that the centre would continue to be supported by strong strategic commitment from its research organisation.

A typical funding pathway for a new centre under this new policy would be as follows:

- **Centres competition funding**
The centre is funded for five years following success in an open centres competition.
- **Transition review**
Towards the end of its grant the centre successfully applies for ESRC transition funding for a further three to five years, which is supplemented by a commitment from their host research organisation.
- **Legacy ESRC Centre status**
Towards the end of the transition funding the centre applies for a further five year period of limited funding and recognition as an ESRC Centre to help it leverage funding from other sources, and in communicating and engaging with research users.

Further information on the ESRC Centre Policy changes, background and principles behind the funding model are detailed in our [Centres Policy summary](#).

Legacy Centre Status Review: Overview

Legacy Centre Status Review is a rigorous process of review to establish the ongoing excellence and credibility of a former ESRC Centre. If successful, Legacy Centre Status will enable the centre to continue to brand itself as an ESRC Centre and seek advice and support from the ESRC in its communication and knowledge exchange and impact activities. The Centre is also encouraged to take part in networking with other ESRC Centres and

investments to ensure the longer term legacy of ESRC investment in the centre for the wider social science research landscape.

Legacy Centre Status acknowledges that while ESRC is not in a position to fund existing centres through follow-on funding over the longer term, recognition of existing ESRC Centres of continuing excellence and high impact has a mutual value to the centre, research organisation and to the ESRC. Legacy Centre Status and funding aims to:

- Maximise the impact of the research activity and ESRC investment to date, through support for knowledge exchange, user capacity-building and communication activities (eg research methods and skills training for users)
- Support the centre through its assurance of excellence in leveraging further funding and supporting the centre's efforts to ensure the influence and use of its research

Legacy Centre funding can be requested through this review to support costs relating to knowledge exchange, communications and capacity-building activities during the period of Legacy Centre Status. We would welcome proposals for impact-generating activities broadly relating to the ESRC Centre. The funding can be used:

- To strengthen researcher-user engagement
- To support knowledge exchange – to support costs of engagement with non-academic partners, including at early stages of progressing research design, outputs and outcomes to the point when they can be supported by other funding
- To progress engagement around research outputs and outcomes towards impact
- To support new, innovative and imaginative approaches to KE and impact, including processes that enable “fast failure” and appropriate learning.
- To support secondments to research user organisations
- To provide research methods and skills training and exchange for users.

Legacy Centre funding is **not** intended to:

- fund activities that should already have been anticipated in (ie duplicate) an existing ESRC grant and supported through an existing grants' Pathways to Impact activities
- fund primary research or researcher capacity building activities if the researchers are based in an (I)RO.
 - NB researchers based in user organisations would be treated as research users for the purposes of this funding. Research skills and methods training/ capacity building activities must be centred around non-academic stakeholders and not for supporting research staff.
- support indirect and estates costs
- visiting researchers or studentship costs

Eligibility for Legacy Centre status

Current centre directors (PIs) are eligible to apply for Legacy Centre funding by invitation only. Typically, as a centre approaches the end of its transition funding grant ESRC centre directors will be offered the opportunity to apply for continued recognition as an ESRC Centre for a further five-year period. Centres will typically be contacted nine months before the end of their transition award at the same time as a request for a preliminary final report to accompany application.

Please refer to the Je-S guidance and contact the ESRC if you propose to change PI ahead of or during centre legacy funding. Standard processes around change of grant holder may apply (see ESRC Research Funding Guide, p37: <https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-funding-guide/>).

As an exception, centres unable to apply for transition funding may also be invited to apply for ESRC Legacy Centre Status, at the discretion of the ESRC. Centres that are not successful in their application for centres transition review will not typically be eligible to apply for Legacy Centre Status and funding.

It is essential that the activities proposed are clearly related to the aims and objectives of the centre, and that the centre continues to demonstrate its strategic fit with ESRC and UKRI priorities. If the activity supports multidisciplinary engagement or relates to multidisciplinary research activity in the past, the activity must be at least 50% social science-related. Please also refer to the list of research areas that fall within ESRC remit (<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/is-my-research-suitable-for-esrc-funding/discipline-classifications/>) for further information.

As in other areas of Centres policy a significant change in scope (aims and objectives) of a centre applying would signify a new centre and so make it ineligible, but we envisage that a centre's work programme will evolve and develop over time. Final recommendations will be sought from the Legacy status panel on the coherence and suitability for legacy status. Please contact ESRC to seek initial advice prior to application.

Can a centre apply when it already has other ESRC funding, or wishes to apply for other ESRC funding?

A past ESRC centre is eligible for Legacy Status and funding even if receiving other ESRC funding (with the exception of full centres competition or centres transition funding). Any existing ESRC grants must be declared in the Je-S application, and clearly demonstrate that the activities and costs requested are for *additional* work that has genuine value to ESRC separate from existing activities already funded. Where a centre has considerable ESRC funding through non-centres funding, the timetable for the delivery of activities to be funded through legacy funding may, as an exception, be scheduled for delivery later in the five-year period. Please contact the legacy centres call coordinator in this instance to discuss the application.

Eligibility to apply for ESRC open centres competitions or other ESRC funding

There are no restrictions on whether a centre in receipt of legacy centre funding can apply for further ESRC funding, including a current or future Centres Competition, and other uplifts to the grant in response to additional knowledge exchange and other opportunities.

We anticipate that centres competitions will typically be held every two years. There are no restrictions on how many times an ESRC centre can apply for centres competition funding during a period of ESRC legacy centre status. If successful in applying for a centre competition, centre full funding would supersede legacy funding.

Legacy Centre Funding

Sustainability planning

Legacy Centre funding is intended to constitute a minor contribution to the total resources available to an already self-sustaining centre. The funding should be used to facilitate additional activities to supplement the centre's wider activities. It is important that the centre can demonstrate its sustainability as a centre, and, at a minimum, provide a credible plan for the centre's ongoing sustainability. Centres applying for this status should provide a strong financial sustainability plan to support the bulk of its activities over the requested duration.

How much funding can be requested?

The centre can request up to a total ESRC grant value of £100,000 over five years (up to a maximum £30,000 in any 12 month period).

Does the Legacy Centre funding need to be costed at the same amount per year?

Costs do not need to be the same amount every year, but cannot exceed a maximum of £30,000 in any 12 month period. A centre could, for example, budget to spend more in the initial years than in the later years to fund planned activity, or budget to spend later to support activity to follow on from existing planned activity.

Detailed proposals for planned activity for the first two years should be provided. To allow for flexibility to respond to opportunities, plans for the following three years may be provisional on application, outlining likely activities that may be agreed in detail in year two with your ESRC investment manager. Centre directors should explain the proposed profiling of costs in the 'Justification of resources' attachment. The Legacy Centre Status Review costings template is provided to enable you to request the profile of costs preferred.

What costs will be covered by Legacy Centre funding?

Please note that this funding is not intended to fund research or research-related activities.

Legacy Centre funding will support the full economic costs requested (100% fEC) for DI costs. DI costs should be entered as 'other directly incurred costs' and be marked as an 'exception' to be claimed at 100% fEC. Limited directly allocated (DA) staff costs may be requested as an exception but will be paid at 80% fEC.

Specifically, Legacy Centre funding may be used to support the following:

- Directly incurred activity costs, including travel and subsistence, related to knowledge exchange, communication, user capacity building and impact-generating activities.
- Limited (DI or DA) staff costs/fees (up to a maximum of a third of the total value of the ESRC grant) may be requested to provide administrative, communications or knowledge exchange support for the activities proposed. As a guide, we would expect this to be no more than a maximum of a third of the total value of the grant (at 100% fEC) requested.
- This funding is not designed to support research staff, visiting researchers or technicians, but limited research (DI or DA) staff / salary costs may, as an exception, be requested (within the staff costs limit) to support translation/ knowledge exchange activities which require more specialist research knowledge or secondment to a user organisation. The credibility, nature, and intended outcomes (e.g. outputs and benefits to the user organisation) of the secondment must be justified. Please contact the ESRC office in the first instance with any queries on the inclusion of these costs.
- We would encourage ESRC Legacy Centres to engage with the network of other ESRC Centres, and may include travel and subsistence costs to attend one event p.a.

All costs must be fully justified.

ESRC Legacy Centre Status Review process

The Legacy Centre Status Review is intended to be light-touch for both applicants and assessors, as centres were originally selected through rigorous open competition. Funding decisions will be based on a process of independent assessment by senior academic members of the ESRC's Strategic Advisory Network.

How to apply

ESRC Centre directors will be invited to apply for Legacy Centre Status funding by ESRC, unless there is an ESRC strategic review in process affecting particular investments. The application will involve a Je-S standard application, case for support outlining the case for status – evidencing track record, and a 'Pathways to Impact' attachment outlining intended activities proposed. The application will also be supplemented by a preliminary draft of the final centre report as additional evidence of track record and an institutional letter of support for the application.

Assessment of applications

Two independent academic and a user reviewer (typically members of the ESRC Strategic Advisory Network), will be asked to assess whether the centre should be awarded the ongoing status of an ESRC Centre on the basis of its centre's track record (the quality and impact of the work programme to date) and the proposed activity going forward. Assessors will review the proposal on the basis of the assessment criteria outlined below:

Legacy Centre Status

1. Track record: research excellence and scientific impact to date
2. Track record: capacity-building, knowledge exchange and impact through engagement with research users
3. Track record: management of the centre
4. Sustainability and institutional strategic commitment
5. Alignment with ESRC and UKRI strategic priorities

Legacy Centre funding

6. Planned programme of work to support knowledge exchange, user capacity-building, engagement and communication with research users.
7. Value for money

Centre directors should note that Legacy Centre Status Review is not a competitive process and applications will be judged on their own merits. Assessors will also be asked to provide an overall judgement of the application by selecting one of the scores available using the four-point scale below.

Grade	Description	Brief reason for grade
4	Meets criteria – status awarded, fund without conditions	Clear evidence that the centre has an excellent track record and remains a credible and sustainable entity and the proposal meets the aims of the funding.
3	Meets most criteria but requires minor clarification/ amendment – status awarded, fund with minor conditions	Evidence that the centre has an excellent track record and remains a credible and sustainable entity and the proposal meets the aims of the funding, but minor clarifications / amendments may be required.
2	Meets some criteria but requires major clarification/ amendments – status awarded with major conditions	Some evidence that the centre has an excellent track record and remains a credible and sustainable entity and the proposal meets the aims of the funding, but requires significant clarification and/ or amendment.
1	Does not meet criteria – status not awarded/ not funded	Not convinced the centre has adequately evidenced that the centre has an excellent track record and/or remains a credible and sustainable entity and the proposal does not meet the aims and conditions of the funding.

Institutional support

The proposal will need to highlight the strategic commitment of the RO to the centre. Eligibility requirements for legacy status or funding do not include a minimum financial commitment from the RO. However, providing convincing evidence of sustainability planning for the centre will be important in establishing the centre's ongoing credibility as an ESRC centre.

The institutional letter of support from the lead RO will need to briefly outline how the centre is embedded into the strategy of the host RO (and any other ROs involved in the

centre) and how, in the longer term, the work of the centre will be supported by the relevant research organisation.

Engagement with ESRC during the legacy grant

If successful, we will encourage the centre to proactively engage with the ESRC to access wider opportunities that ESRC may be able to provide to develop skills in knowledge exchange and communications, networks with research users and awareness of further funding opportunities. ESRC will also expect centres to provide us with impact case studies to demonstrate the impact of ESRC's long-standing investment in the centre and keep us in contact with activities.

Successful applicants to ESRC Legacy Centre Status Review will continue to be expected to follow our branding guidelines (<https://www.ukri.org/about-us/brand-guidelines/>) and any other funders when developing digital or printed material as part of the grant activity, such as including appropriate logos on websites or publications.

Commissioning timetable

The letter of invitation to apply will include the timetable for submission of applications through the Je-S online system.

Further enquiries

Please contact your ESRC Investment Manager if you have any questions about this process or ESRC research funding rules. Enquiries relating to technical aspects of the Je-S form should be addressed to:

Je-S helpdesk

Email - jeshelp@rcuk.ac.uk

01793 444164 - Monday to Thursday 08.30 to 17.00, Fridays 8.30-16.30 (UK time, excluding public and other holidays).