

Collaboration in Research and Consultancy

Principles

The Institute is increasingly engaged in collaborative research and consultancy, with collaboration ranging from a few days' input by an expert in another field, to consortia with many partners each making similar and significant contributions to the overall project. The Institute is responsible for ensuring that the quality of research in which it is involved is of the highest standard, and must ensure that research carried out collaboratively does not detract from the reputation it enjoys for high quality research. These procedures are intended to ensure the quality of partnerships for this reason, and to assist project directors in planning collaborative projects effectively.

Definitions

The following definitions are used to describe the partnerships covered by this policy:

NB the term **Award** in the research procedures refers to the award of a grant or contract to carry out research.

Joint award: a grant or contract awarded jointly to two or more organisations, both (or all) of which are named in the award. One may act as **lead institution** for financial purposes.

Main award: a grant or contract awarded to a single organisation which then makes separate **sub-awards** (sub-contracts or sub-grants) to collaborating partners

Letter of agreement: a simple form of contractual agreement, particularly suited to making a sub-award where the main funder's terms and conditions apply to the sub-awardee.

Process

The approval of collaborative research and consultancy activities follows the standard process for approving proposed research. However, attention must be paid to the implications of collaborative working at each stage.

Initiation: This may be the result of an approach from a potential partner to the Institute or an individual member of staff. Likewise, initiation may be prompted by an approach made by the Institute or one of its staff. In many cases, proposals for joint activities are based on previous successful collaborations, and a 'lighter touch' review of proposed arrangements may be used.

Where a new partnership is proposed, the member of staff concerned should assess the prospective partner's suitability, considering their reputation, reliability in delivering research outputs, and the qualifications of their staff to undertake the proposed research. A risk assessment approach should be used, and all collaborative research will be subject to a risk assessment at proposal stage, regardless of the value of the contract.

Development and approval of project If the Institute's project director is satisfied as to the suitability of the partner, a research proposal should be developed in the

normal way, and subject to the normal procedures at School and Institute level. Particular consideration should be given to the division of work and responsibility between partners, and the additional time required for managing a collaborative project as compared to a single-partner project, and this consideration should be reflected in the budget proposed for the work.

Even where the funder does not require a detailed division of budget between partners, such a budget should be prepared and agreed by all partners, and filed with the proposal.

A range of other issues should also be considered at this stage, and, as far as possible, agreement reached up upon them. These include:

- the role of each partner on the collaboration in relation to conducting and managing the proposed research or consultancy
- the extent of each partner's accountability for financial management, timely delivery of work and quality of work
- arrangements for the ownership, custody, retention and deposit or archiving of data generated in the proposed research or consultancy, for access to new and pre-existing datasets, and for ensuring compliance with data protection guidelines
- access by each partner to electronic resources, licensed software and similar resources held by other partners
- arrangements for ownership and protection of pre-existing intellectual property (IP) and IP which may be generated in the course of the proposed research or consultancy, including procedures for keeping information confidential where this is important to protection of IP.

Whilst it is unlikely that meaningful agreement can be reached at this stage on issues of authorship, it should be acknowledged that collaborations, particularly large collaborations, raise complex issues around authorship, including ensuring appropriate credit to members of research teams involved, and determining the order of authors on academic papers. These issues should be explicitly discussed early in the process of planning dissemination of the research or consultancy.

Collaborating partners should be listed in the proposal record in the Research Database System (i.e. the database which will replace the pink/blue form system in 2006).

All proposed research or consultancy is to be approved at School and Institute level prior to submission.

Agreement When the proposed collaborative research or consultancy is accepted by a funder, whether as a joint award or a main award to the lead institution with sub-awards, contractual arrangements need to be put in place appropriate to the scale and nature of the collaboration, prior to the commencement of the work. The Institute has a series of model agreements (currently under review), ranging from a simple letter of agreement to a detailed sub-contract, all of which should be signed by an authorised signatory (usually the Dean of Research & Consultancy).

The agreement should address the following areas, either directly, or by incorporating the terms of the main award: duration; financial arrangements; management arrangements; ownership, custody, retention and archiving of data;

access to electronic resources and software; ownership and access to intellectual property (new and pre-existing); confidentiality; use of the names and logos of each partner by the other(s); dispute resolution; and arrangements concerning the withdrawal of a partner and termination of the activity and/or the collaboration. Detailed budget breakdowns should be appended to any agreement, together with the original research/consultancy proposal and any additional details which are necessary.

Ongoing process: Project directors are advised to review the effectiveness of the partnership from time to time throughout the project, reflecting on management and communication issues and how these might be improved. An end-of-project review of the collaboration and lessons which may be learned for future collaborations is particularly encouraged.

Advice

Advice on any aspect of collaboration in research and consultancy is available from the Dean of Research & Consultancy or from Research & Consultancy Administration.