

10 June

ODA review Questions and Answers

Q: When will everyone know the outcomes of the review process?

A: This first stage of the process covered a key element of UKRI's ODA funding – the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) grants and Hubs. These outcomes have been communicated. The timeline for the Newton Fund is different and communications will follow by mid-June.

Q: How many grants were reviewed?

A: More than 800 live projects across the ODA portfolio were in scope of the review. Full details of the results of the review will be published once this process has been finalised.

Q: How many projects is UKRI terminating?

A: At this stage, no GCRF grants have been terminated.

At the start of the ODA review process, to ensure that we could mitigate the impact of the budget reductions on our legal commitments, grants which were close to starting had to be stopped before funds were fully committed.

The process for Newton is ongoing and further details will be communicated once the process concludes.

UKRI also acts as a delivery partner for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) ODA research funding, through our Councils and Innovate UK. This funding is also subject to budget reductions. Research Councils and Innovate UK are in discussions with FCDO in relation to a small number of schemes impacted by the FCDO's ODA allocation process for 21/22 and will be contacting affected partners as soon as possible.

Q: Given the scale of the budget reductions, how have so many projects been able to carry on?

A: The majority of grants have been able to continue because they have taken the option to reduce their spending. Full details of the review and individual grant outcomes will be published once the review process is finalised.

Q: What is happening with the GCRF Hubs?

A: Full details of the review and individual grant outcomes will be published once the review process is finalised. We will commission an independent review of the GCRF Hubs, in place of the intended stage gate review, to assess performance and develop the case for funding in 2022/23.

Q: What is happening with Newton grants?

A: The timeline for the Newton Fund is different and communications will follow by mid-June.

Q: What is happening with GCRF grants held by overseas institutions?

A: VCs and grant holders at overseas institutions have been written to in a similar way to those based in the UK and asked to complete a similar template. Because these institutions don't receive the same support as UK-based organisations from the dual funding system, institutions based in countries on the OECD DAC list of recipients have been offered funding for 21/22 for an additional 2 months, so a total of 6 months funding.

Q: How many cases for special consideration were granted?

A: UKRI received 53 requests for special considerations against GCRF grants, of these, 45 were approved. A full summary of the review and its outcomes will be published once the process has been finalised.

Q: How were cases for special consideration assessed?

A: All cases for special consideration were assessed on the basis of their fit against the key categories which UKRI has prioritised for the small amount of exceptional funding available. Cases were then be evaluated on the basis of the evidence provided and ranked according to the strength of the case for funding.

The categories prioritised for exceptional funding are:

- Clinical trials or animal research currently underway - where there is a need to comply with specific ethical or legal frameworks or obligations which would not be possible in the event of termination/reprofiling;
- Interventions where curtailment/termination of funding could result in risk of serious harm to vulnerable individuals or groups.

The submissions which fell within one or both of the above key categories were ranked according to the strength of their case based on evidence provided and the funds allocated to them until exhausted. That means that some grant submissions which arguably met the above requirements may nonetheless not have received exceptional funding.

Where a case for special consideration has been supported, it will result in a small amount of additional funding to allow a specific activity or intervention which is underway to conclude. No new activity can be funded via an exception unless its primary purpose is to draw the existing treatment / intervention to an ethical or safe closure.

Q: What options were grant holders asked to consider in submitting their returns?

A: All HEIs (and businesses) were asked to assess the funding against the following three options:

1. Termination of those grants which become inviable on this reduced level of funding. For example, a grant may no longer be able to realise development impact on a reduced level of funding;
2. Acceptance of the four months funding that we can offer in order to reprofile this funding across up to 12 months of financial year 2021/22;
3. Make a case on an exceptional basis for a small amount of additional funding for a particular grant.

We have assessed the returns and made final decisions based on affordability to ensure it is within our new allocation for 2021/22 set by BEIS.

Q: How were equality issues arising out of the cut to ODA funding taken into consideration?

A: HEIs and grant holders were reminded that they must take into consideration their public sector equality duty in implementing the ODA budget cuts to projects.

UKRI is mindful of its public sector equality duty and will maintain oversight of the assessment process. UKRI has carried out an equality impact assessment in relation to the impact of the cut in ODA funding and will publish this assessment in due course.

Q: Is the FCDO's review of ODA research grants separate to this process?

A: Yes – the FCDO also funds ODA funded research directly with our councils and Innovate UK acting as the delivery partner. There are a number of grants subject to review and discussions are ongoing between FCDO, Councils/Innovate UK and grant holders. Any outcomes will be communicated as soon as possible.

Q: What additional funding has been made available for Climate Change?

A: Some projects, which meet the strict qualifying criteria, have had some funds made available via International Climate Finance (ICF) in order to mitigate the reductions to them.

Q: Can I apply for a no cost extension for my GCRF or Newton project?

A: We cannot approve extensions with a new end date after the 31st of March 2022. This is because we are unable to move any financial commitments into future financial years.

If you wish to apply for a no cost extension that would finish during this financial year (21-22) please wait until your institutional submission has been approved by UKRI before submitting the extension request via JeS in line with the standard process.

UKRI will still commit to cover any additional payments and allow extensions necessary to cover statutory rights to maternity and parental leave.

Newton Fund

Q: Why are the Newton cuts less severe than the GCRF cuts?

A: Newton and GCRF have separate, ringfenced budget allocations. For UKRI Newton Fund we had £24m of legal commitments in 21/22 and have been allocated £19m. This leaves UKRI with shortfall of £5m at a time when the majority of Newton Fund projects are coming to an end. Because the Newton Fund allocation is provided to UKRI as a separate, ringfenced budget line from GCRF, one cannot be used to support the other.

Q: Can funding be moved between GCRF and Newton Fund projects?

A: Our GCRF and Newton Fund budgets are separately ring fenced by BEIS and funding cannot be moved between grants in different ODA Funds.

Background

Q: What's the overall reduction in UKRI spend on ODA activities this year? i.e what is your allocation from government against what you expected?

A: The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy's ODA allocation to UKRI has reduced significantly in planned ODA expenditure for FY21/22, leading to a £125m budget and a £120m gap between allocations and commitments to grant holders.

Q: What was UKRI's allocation last year?

A: Our allocation for the FY20/21 as of June 2020 was £422m (£367m for GCRF, £55m for Newton)

Q. What programmes will be impacted?

A: The reduction in our allocation means that savings will need to be realised from both the GCRF and Newton Fund, as well as wider ODA funded programmes and activities within our councils including Innovate UK.

Q: Will UKRI cover redundancy costs associated with the termination of grants?

A: Our standard terms and conditions apply, and we will not cover redundancy costs associated with termination of grants.

Q. Why did UKRI launch a funding programme without having a confirmed budget?

A: Our official development assistance programmes involve multi-year commitments in common with most UKRI funding programmes. Our commitments coming into this financial year were proportionate to the recent trend of our ODA allocations. No one could have

foreseen the economic impact of an extended global pandemic when we entered into these longer-term programmes.

Q. Why can't UKRI use money from its core budget to support ODA programmes?

A: Our ODA allocation from BEIS is capped meaning UKRI is not allowed to seek alternative UKRI budget sources to support GCRF and Newton activities. Non-ODA activities will be supported as part of UKRI's wider settlement.

Q: Why can't money from other UKRI international funds such as the Fund for International Collaboration (FIC) be used to alleviate the ODA cut in funding?

A: Our funding for GCRF and Newton are provided separately by BEIS and capped. We cannot therefore move funding between other international funds to support them.

Q. Why is UKRI announcing new funding calls whilst reductions are being made to ODA?

A: The new funding calls being announced by Councils are funded via UKRI's core allocation not via ODA funding. No new ODA activities are being funded.

Q: Does this mean that UKRI is in effect withdrawing from ODA work?

A: No. Over the past year we have seen just how important it is to share knowledge across borders. ODA funding remains a high priority for UKRI and we will continue working collaboratively to tackle many of the pressing challenges facing the UK and the rest of the world in the months and years ahead.

Q: How do the cuts sit with the Government's recently announced international ambitions in the Integrated Review?

A: The government's Integrated Review recognises the importance of research and innovation to tackling global challenges and delivering prosperity. We welcome the government's continued commitment to increase research and innovation funding as a percentage of GDP and to spend 0.7% of gross national income on development when the fiscal situation allows.

Q: Will UKRI be making a case to Government for future ODA funding?

A: We will of course make the case for substantial investments in ODA research and innovation as part of the next Spending Review, expected in autumn 2021. We note that the Integrated Review, published on 16 March 2021, reaffirmed the role of ODA research and innovation in Britain's global partnerships. However, at this time, we simply do not know how much ODA funding will be allocated to UKRI for the financial year 2022/23.

Q: When will UKRI know what the funding envelope for the 22/23 financial year will be?

A: We don't currently have a confirmed timeline for this. We are working hard to make a clear case to BEIS around the need to have stability of funding in 22/23. Conversations with BEIS colleagues are currently ongoing.

Q: Who in the research community has been consulted?

A: UKRI has worked with a range of stakeholders including through the Russell Group, Universities UK and our international networks as well as directly with grant holders and funding partners to mitigate the impact of these cuts.

Q: If organisations/grant holders have questions, who should they contact?

A: We encourage everyone with questions to contact our ODA email address: ODAenquiries@ukri.org, or questions on Innovate UK grants to support@innovateuk.ukri.org.

For press enquiries please refer to UKRI press office at press@ukri.org