

Section A: Official Development Assistance (ODA) and GCRF strategy

The strategy

1. Summarise the key aspects of your three year **strategy for development related and GCRF research activity**, including:
 - a. Your institution's strategy and priority objectives for all development related research activity funded through all sources for three years from 2018-19.
 - b. A summary of the key aspects of your three year strategic plan for QR GCRF, in light of the criteria and objectives for the GCRF outlined in the guidance.
 - c. How activity funded through QR GCRF fits into your broader strategy and priorities for all development related research activity.
 - d. How activity funded through QR GCRF relates to the UK strategy for the GCRF.¹
 - e. How your development-related and GCRF strategies relate to your wider institutional strategy for using QR.
 - f. Likely key barriers and enablers to implementing your strategy.
 - g. The key activities by which you will realise your objectives, such as capacity and capability building; mono-disciplinary, interdisciplinary and collaborative research; generating impact from research; meeting the full economic cost of GCRF activity funded through other sources; rapid response to emergencies with an urgent research need; and pump priming.
 - h. The main developing countries, included in the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) list, which you intend to collaborate with.

Institutional Strategy for Development Related and GCRF Research Activity [a.]

[Note: due to the interconnected nature of the above 8 points, they are not dealt with sequentially, rather cross-referenced in the text as appropriate; e.g. "[a.]"].

The University of Birmingham's overarching institutional strategy is articulated in our 2015-2020 Strategic Framework. It states:

"In line with our founding principles, our goal is to use our strengths in research and education to increase the well-being and prosperity of our city, our region, the nation, and the world."

¹ UK Strategy for the Global Challenges Research Fund,
<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/gcrf/challenges/>

This commitment to global engagement reflects the University's long-established reputation as a centre of excellence in development research. Since the 1960's when our International Development Department (IDD) and Centre for West African Studies were established we have been committed to undertaking ground breaking research that contributes to both theoretical advancement and practical impact across Low and Middle Income Countries.

Our commitment to collaborative and multidisciplinary research in international development has spurred multiple investments across our institution using the flexibility afforded by our QR funding [point e.] - from the creation of a new Department for African Studies and Anthropology (DASA) in 2013, to the establishment of the *Institute for Global Innovation* (IGI) in 2017. When seen in this context, the Global Challenges Research Funding, through QR as well as other competitive routes, has a strong fit with our institutional commitment to research that makes a difference, and has an impact at a global level.

Key Features of our Strategy for GCRF QR [point b. in above list]

The key component in our Institutional approach to development related and GCRF research activity, and the lynchpin of our three year strategic plan for use of our GCRF QR funding, is the recently created *Institute for Global Innovation* (IGI). The IGI is a new flagship university-wide interdisciplinary research Institute designed to bring together diverse groups of researchers from all 5 colleges of the University to address 'Global Challenges'. The University of Birmingham believes that solutions to some of the world's most pressing challenges can only be found by close collaboration across traditional and emerging academic disciplines, and through equitable partnership with relevant organisations (public, NGO, commercial, etc) in Low and Middle Income Countries (LMICs).

The University appointed a lead academic Director in 2017 (reporting directly to the PVC (Research & KT)), and a senior administrative manager, and is currently refurbishing a dedicated building on campus to provide the Institute with visible presence, as well as meeting space. All of these investments have come from the University's core resources, supported through the flexibility of our mainstream QR [point e. above]

The IGI's mission is to:

"Inspire, support & deliver world leading multidisciplinary research that seeks to address some of the world's most pressing challenges, affecting humanity at a global level."

The IGI's mission is therefore closely aligned to that of the UK GCRF strategy which seeks to *"first and foremost ... address global sustainable development challenges... intended to transform the lives of the worlds' poorest."* [point d. above]

The IGI acts as our focal point for University-wide development related and GCRF research activity – as described in more detail below. It has the remit of promoting cross-disciplinary ODA research across the institution, and will be the strategic conduit through which our GCRF QR allocation will be managed.

In terms of the main developing countries we intend to collaborate with [point h.], the UoB's engagement with overseas partners is informed by our International Strategy, which makes particular reference to collaboration with Brazil, India and China. However, the University has strong research links into sub-Saharan Africa, and to establish and drive our GCRF strategy in this first phase, the countries we collaborate with will be determined by our research strengths and the opportunities that are identified for taking forward the wider impact of the research in specific contexts. Therefore the activities outlined below will engage with multiple OECD DAC list locations, as driven by the research strengths of the University and the challenges faced by communities in those territories.

Priority Objectives for GCRF at the University of Birmingham

Our three year strategic plan for QR GCRF has four priority objectives [point a. above].

- 1) Capacity and Capability Building in the UK and abroad
 - to broaden the range of scholars engaging with GCRF opportunities, increase capacity in LMICs and ensure effective commissioning and monitoring of GCRF investments.
- 2) Challenge-led disciplinary and Multi-disciplinary research
 - to pump prime collaborative research of direct benefit to LMICs, with the aim of consortia developing bids for major funding awards.
- 3) Partnership building
 - to establish durable and effective international partnerships to provide a pipeline of collaborations for co- designed, executed and implemented ODA-research.
- 4) Impact and Public engagement
 - to maximise the benefits of ODA research and communicate its value to the public.

The key activities [g. above] underpinning these objectives, and for achieving direct benefits to LMICs, are outlined below, and will be led by the IGI. In the majority of cases QR GCRF funding will be allocated internally via a competitive process, with proposals scrutinised by a cross-university panel with ODA expertise. The funding will be allocated to complement Research Council GCRF funding rather than to substitute for it. A steering group involving representation from the IGI will oversee the progress of the research and knowledge exchange activity, ensuring that the research remains ODA focused, and that LMIC interests and concerns are addressed at all stages.

1) Capacity and Capability Building

The following key activities [g.] will be undertaken to deliver this objective:

- *GCRF LMIC Research Capacity Building workshops*

Working in OECD DAC list locations can be daunting for many researchers, particularly those who have only ever carried out research in the UK. The University of Birmingham will use its GCRF QR spend to run a series of LMIC research capacity building workshops, involving Birmingham staff, as well as staff from LMIC partners. This will comprise of a series of half-day events where researchers unfamiliar with working in LMIC contexts will learn about issues such as safeguarding and wellbeing, logistics and best practice when researching in the Global South. Equally, LMIC partners involved will benefit from building their networks with leading UK academics in a context of mutual partnership.

Following the workshops attendees will have access to a mentoring scheme whereby they will be paired with researchers who are experienced in operating in OECD DAC list locations and given 1-2-1 support. Workshop attendees will be able to apply for a small research grant to travel to their chosen OECD DAC list location and carry out initial collaborative research or partnership building activities, under the mentorship of a more experienced researcher. The primary objective of this initiative is to broaden the pool of researchers engaging in ODA eligible research, and therefore ultimately deliver a wider range of solutions to challenges faced by LMICs, as outlined on page 3 of the UK GCRF strategy [d.].

- *GCRF Research Co-Design and Partnership Building Support*

We envisage that across the Professional Services and academic staff at Birmingham involved in supporting research bid development, at least 1 FTE of resource will be involved in supporting the co-design and development of ODA-eligible research. IGI has been established to support this area of activity, and has identified a number of major and emerging themes to focus on over the next three years.

Drawing on existing expertise in IGI and the research support offices at the University, we will provide training to researchers on the key dimensions of effective ODA eligible research, and will support the commissioning of internally administered GCRF funds supported by our QF allocation. Staff in IGI will be responsible for monitoring and oversight of the breadth of our GCRF research, for example, the geographical spread of projects in line with page seven of the UK GCRF strategy [d.], and reporting spend to Research England.

2) Challenge-led disciplinary and Multi-disciplinary research

The following key activities [g.] will be used to deliver against this objective:

- *Support for Research under the Institute for Global Innovation*

As outlined above, IGI has been established to support multidisciplinary projects that seek to address 'global challenges'. The GCRF QR funding will be used alongside existing University of Birmingham investment to pump-prime research projects which are designed to explore and address problems experienced by LMICs. The intention is that project groups continue their activity in pursuit of direct in-country benefit in collaboration with LMIC partners through winning major external funding (e.g., Research Council) for their research.

Specific areas of our research strengths that we envisage will benefit from additional support include:

Gender Inequality

Gender inequality is one of the most pressing contemporary Global Challenges, and the UN has recognised the barriers posed to women and girls across the Global South in its Sustainable Development Goals. The research team will aim to address gender inequality in the Global South through multidisciplinary research that addresses legal, social, political and clinical barriers to equality. This research addresses the 'Human rights, good governance and social justice' strand of the UK GCRF Strategy [d.].

Resilient Cities

The proportion of the world's population living in cities is projected to rise to 60% by 2030. Cities confront diverse and interlocking forces that can subject their population to distress such as economic and social change or pressures placed upon infrastructure and environmental resources. The 'City Resilience' project will address the drivers of urban distress and the conditions for securing city resilience, with a focus on global cities that are undergoing transitions at different levels of analysis: individual; community; city; national. This research addresses the 'Sustainable economies and societies' strand of the UK GCRF Strategy [d.].

Water Challenges in a Changing World

Water is a finite resource, a key requirement for human health, prosperity and security. Yet billions of people worldwide are confronted with serious water-related challenges from scarcity, poor quality, lack of sanitation facilities, or water-related disasters such as floods and droughts. This complex set of issues can only be tackled through interdisciplinary and collaborative research, addressing the 'Equitable access to sustainable development' strand of the UK GCRF Strategy [d.].

Environmental Pollution Solutions

Air, soil and water pollution are a major concern for many LMICs. This project will catalyse interdisciplinary and multi-partner research to develop an integrated approach that addresses legacy and emerging pollutants and incentivises reduction, remediation and reuse, with the aspiration of turning the solutions into green and sustainable

business models. This research addresses the 'Equitable access to sustainable development' strand of the UK GCRF Strategy [d.].

Clean cooling

Efficient and effective 'cold chains' (linked refrigerated networks) are essential for the effective transportation of produce and medicine. However, refrigeration systems can also be a major source of pollutants. This research strand will bring together researchers and LMIC collaborators to examine the technical, political and social dynamics of clean cooling, and co-design potential solutions. This research addresses the 'Equitable access to sustainable development' strand of the UK GCRF Strategy [d.].

Transnational Crime

This research will address the challenge of understanding and tackling the changing nature of 21st century global crime. The project will blend research from social sciences, natural sciences, arts and law with insights from collaborative partners to bring new approaches to how phenomena such as 'Borderless Crime, (including modern day slavery) and violence against women and children are addressed. This research addresses the 'Sustainable economies and societies' strand of the UK GCRF Strategy [d.].

Ageing, Frailty and Resilience

While the challenge of managing an ageing population is a global one, the specific stresses placed on health and social care economies in LMIC resource settings offers a unique challenge. The research will draw in colleagues in Brazil, (University of Sao Paulo) where the prevalence of frailty is substantially higher than Europe, and will explore Mechanisms and Interventions and funding Sustainable Health Care in LMIC settings. This research addresses the 'Equitable access to sustainable development' strand of the UK GCRF Strategy [d.].

- *GCRF Rapid Response Research Fund*

The most pressing development challenges often manifest themselves in unexpected ways. From crises such as the Ebola and Zika epidemics, to natural disasters and civil unrest, it is essential that researchers have a mechanism that allows them to quickly respond to situations that require an urgent response. The University of Birmingham will use some of our GCRF QR fund to support a 'rapid response fund' which will allow us to quickly disperse funding that will enable support for travel and research assistance. This addresses the "agile response to emergencies" aspect of the UK GCRF Strategy [d.].

3) Partnership building

The following key activities [g.] will be used to deliver against this objective:

- *GCRF Collaborative Research Design Sandpits*

Collaborative Research Design Sandpits will allow researchers based at the University of Birmingham to invite partners from OECD-DAC list territories to design events intended to explore specific development challenges faced by LMICs. The aim is to support initial partnership discussions with LMIC partners, which would result in more major collaborative projects being taken forward, addressing the identified challenges faced by LMICs.

These events will be held either at Birmingham or at an overseas location, supporting the travel costs of partners where necessary. In this way, we can ensure that local context and requirements are embedded in the design and implementation of a research project, and therefore deliver better outcomes for those in LMICs. Participation of Early Career Researchers from both the UK and overseas will be encouraged. This initiative addresses the 'Capacity building and partnership' and 'impact' aspects of the UK GCRF Strategy [d.].

- *Birmingham International Engagement Funding*

The building of face-to-face relationships with overseas partners is a vital part of developing fully collaborative research proposals, as well as enabling UK researchers to have a good understanding of the challenges faced by international partners. The Birmingham International Engagement Fund provides a flexible mechanism for academic staff at the University to travel, hold workshops, or indeed bring key partners to the UK for discussions. Where the engagements are with LMIC partners, and with the purpose of exploring development challenges and collaborative research endeavours, the funding will be counted against our QR GCRF allocation.

4) Impact and Public engagement

The following key activities [g.] will be used to deliver against this objective:

- *GCRF Impact Generation Follow-on Fund*

The GCRF impact fund will allow existing GCRF funded researchers at the University of Birmingham to undertake additional impact activities beyond those anticipated in their original funding application, in order to maximise the benefits to LMIC partners involved in the research. This could include delivery of training, dissemination or translation events within OECD DAC list countries. This initiative addresses the 'impact' aspects of the UK GCRF Strategy [d.].

- *GCRF Public Engagement Fund*

A key aspect of the sustainability of ODA investment by government is a well informed and supportive electorate. The University of Birmingham will create a 'public engagement fund' which is designed to help those undertaking ODA eligible research to 'make the

case for Aid'. The University will use core funding for this, rather than regard the activity as ODA eligible.

Risks, Barriers and Enablers [f.]

The key risks and potential barriers to implementing our strategy are as follows:

- 1) Lack of engagement/ buy in from members of the academic community resulting in low uptake of opportunities supported by the GCRF QR fund, and limiting the benefits that the funding can achieve for people in LMICs.
- 2) Lack of meaningful engagement and delivery from overseas partners in LMIC territories.
- 3) Poor portfolio management, resulting in inefficient or duplicative spending.
- 4) Poor Due Diligence and assessment of ODA compliance, resulting in spending that is out of scope or represents poor value for money.

We will address these risks and barriers principally through putting in place active partnership building measures with LMIC partners, key compliance activities and support:

- 1) Training for academic staff provided by IGI and existing research development staff, promoting GCRF opportunities (including those supported by the QR fund) to the academic community. This will allow individual concerns / barriers of colleagues to be addressed.
- 2) Flexible internal funding schemes, assessed on the basis of the needs of international partners, and the development challenges faced. For example, we will offer researchers the opportunity to host workshops and other events in LMICs addressing their specific development challenges, and will also support items such as visa costs for partners visiting the UK.
- 3) The risk of poor portfolio management will be mitigated by the existence of IGI, which has overall visibility of investments stemming from the QR fund and will be able to identify synergies and avoid duplication of efforts. See question 3 for additional details.
- 4) The barrier posed by poor due diligence and assessment of ODA compliance will be mitigated by the recently created Grant Set-up & Support team (ca 6 FTE). The team manager will oversee and coordinate due diligence and compliance across GCRF projects (including those funded outside of the QR allocation). Having an identified individual acting in this capacity will ensure we have sufficient resource and expertise to minimise the risk posed by poor due diligence and lack of ODA compliance.

2. Provide details of the main intended **outcomes and impacts** of your strategy.

Maximum 500 words

Successful implementation of our GCRF QR strategy will result in the following broad outcomes and impacts:

- 1) Our capacity building activities will result in an expanded base of researchers across the University who are willing and able to contribute their research expertise to challenges being faced in LMIC contexts. This will have the effect of generating a broader range of insights and potential solutions to problems experienced by LMICs.
- 2) Our partnership building activities will generate a broader and deeper network of partnerships between the University of Birmingham and partners able to support innovation and change in LMICs. This can include LMIC-based research organisations and HEIs, NGOs, civil society agents and those in the private sector. This will have the effect of ensuring research is designed, executed and implemented with local context in mind and therefore enhancing the likelihood of transforming the lives of the intended beneficiaries.
- 3) Together 1) and 2) will produce a series of tangible research outcomes that will be of benefit to some of the poorest members of society in LMICs. The outcome of this work will be impactful insights that have a practical application in OECD-DAC list territories.
- 4) The GCRF Impact Follow-on fund will ensure research outcomes can be taken forward toward wider impact through further partnership working, and that the positive aspects of ODA research are communicated to the public.
- 5) The University's research development staff and the new Grants Set-up & Support Team will ensure that funds are allocated and spent in an efficient, accountable and responsible manner, so maximising the benefit to LMICs. The impact will be targeted and effective research investments that are well placed to fulfil the objectives of this institutional strategy and the wider UK GCRF strategy.

Management of GCRF

3. How will your HEI **monitor** and **evaluate** its progress and compliance in ODA and GCRF activity, including assessing geographical distribution of activity, outputs, outcomes and economic and social impacts?

Please describe the policies, procedures and approach you have in place to measure progress, evaluate outcomes, identify lessons learned, and ensure ODA compliance.

Maximum 1,500 words

Monitoring and Evaluation

Oversight for monitoring and evaluation of GCRF funding, in terms of ODA compliance and performance against stated outcomes, will be the responsibility of the IGI. The Director of the IGI will report directly to the PVC (R&KT), who takes high level responsibility for this activity on behalf of the University Executive Board, and for monitoring information provided to the University's Research Committee.

IGI will support the promotion and development of new research activities funded by the GCRF QR allocation. By having a single administrative office for these activities the University of Birmingham will be able to deliver consistency of communication and ensure projects are designed with ODA eligibility in mind. IGI will also act as central point of expertise on ODA eligibility and be in a position to advise research development staff where necessary, so preventing unsuitable projects being taken forward under GCRF. IGI and existing research development staff will also deliver training on ODA compliance to researchers across the institution in conjunction with the Grants Set-up and Support Manager. The end goal is to promote the possibilities available to those who are able to carry out ODA-eligible research.

The IGI will be responsible for monitoring the geographic distribution of awards to promote and ensure diversity, and is also responsible for monitoring the outcome and impact of projects. This will be achieved by the requirement that all award holders complete a post-award report which will be reviewed and signed off by the Director of the IGI, and reported to the PVC (R&KT).

GCRF Compliance and Due Diligence

The University's new Grants Set-up and Support Team will provide researchers with dedicated support in the initial due diligence checks, project governance setup, and monitoring and reporting arrangements for all research funded by the GCRF (both QR and competitively awarded). The team will work with PIs of new starting projects to ensure that the due diligence on proposed partners is undertaken (using an agreed Due Diligence Questionnaire), as well as advising on the set up of appropriate project governance arrangements.

The Grants Set-up and Support manager will also ensure coordination across the University's wider due diligence and research governance arrangements, liaising with the Director of Research Support Services, or other colleagues, as necessary. Our procedures include:

- GCRF Due Diligence Questionnaire for use with potential project partners. This questionnaire checks the suitability of each partner against a number of criteria, such as financial viability and ethical conduct.
- Checking partners against UK sanction / watch lists.

- The University's Governance and Ethics Team supporting the University ethics review process for research. The University of Birmingham has a range of underpinning policies designed to ensure good practice across the research that we undertake. This includes an overarching Code of Ethics that outlines the high levels of ethical conduct expected in all areas of University activity. Our code of ethics is supplemented by a Code of Practice for Research. This sets out the University's policies and expectations in relation to the conduct of all its research, and the expectation that academic researchers provide a safe and trusted environment for any research activity, particularly where individuals from outside of the University will be involved.
- The University Research Contracts team – with a clear policy that formal contracts are required with all collaborating partners, setting out contractual expectations, milestones, payment arrangements, as well as dispute resolution and termination clauses.
- The University Research Finance team which oversees claims made against research project codes, and eligibility of expenditure against funder rules.

In addition, the University is currently reviewing its Health & Safety procedures in relation to research and fieldwork in order to strengthen the consideration of risk to researchers (as well as collaborating partners) posed by a proposed research project. This is particularly relevant for collaborative research in potentially unstable regions.

Finally, the University also has a range of other policies in place for its staff that cover areas such as: Anti-bribery and corruption; Whistleblowing; Sexual Harassment and Bullying and Safeguarding Children and Young People. All of these policies are available to Research England upon request.

Section B: Use of QR GCRF 2018-19 allocation and future QR GCRF priorities

4. Please complete the table in Annex A2 detailing the expected spending and activities for QR GCRF in the academic year 2018-19. Note that the total QR GCRF spending must equal the indicative allocation (available in Annex C), and all activities must be ODA-compliant for strategies to be assessed as ODA-compliant overall.

5. Please add here any explanatory notes on how you have completed the table in Annex A2 that will help inform assessment of ODA compliance.

Maximum 200 words

The table lists both new activities directed to the support of ODA relevant research, and existing University costs where we are confident of being able to clearly identify ongoing activity and costs in direct support of ODA research.

6. How would your **priorities and activities** for 2018-19 QR GCRF change if the funding level differs from that outlined in indicative allocations? Please include detail of how priorities will change with increases and decreases to QR GCRF funding, and details of how each priority meets ODA criteria.

Maximum 500 words

The suite of activities we will support using our GCRF QR allocation are all linked to the key priority areas outlined in the UK Strategy for the GCRF. Consequently, we would not anticipate significantly changing the activities outlined in this document as a result of a change in funding. Rather we would simply scale up / down the level of funding available for each initiative.

Increasing the volume of funding available for these activities would mean we could further maximise the potential for our researchers to engage with LMIC partners, and therefore the potential global impact of Birmingham's world-class research.

By the same token, should our levels of funding decrease, we would simply exercise a greater level of discretion when selecting which initiatives we would support.

7. Based on indicative funding allocations, what are your **priorities** for QR GCRF activity in 2019-20? Please include detail of how priorities will change with increases and decreases to QR GCRF funding, and details of how each priority meets ODA criteria.

Maximum 1,000 words

Given the long-term commitment of the University to research with global impact, and its creation of the Institute for Global Innovation, we would not foresee any significant change in priorities for 19-20, but rather seek to support a balanced portfolio of alignment of activities supported by our GCRF QR allocation and guided by the UK GCRF strategy.

However, as existing GCRF projects (e.g. RCUK funded) reach completion, it is possible that there will be a greater focus on developing new areas of primary research and using the Impact Follow-on fund (allocated through internal application) to support projects which can demonstrate clear plans for further pursuing the impact of the research.

8. Based on indicative funding allocations, what are your **priorities** for QR GCRF activity in 2020-21? Please include detail of how priorities will change with increases and decreases to QR GCRF funding, and details of how each priority meets ODA criteria.

Maximum 1,000 words

As above, we do not foresee any significant change in the priority objectives being pursued in 20-21, but again will be looking to support a portfolio of activities.

However, it is likely that new projects will be added to the list of research challenges supported by our Institute for Global Innovation. By the same token, some of the existing projects supported by the IGI are likely to have secured external research funding and graduated beyond the level of support available to them from the GCRF QR Fund.