

## 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.<sup>1</sup>
  - 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.

**a. Your institution's strategy and priority objectives for all development related research activity funded through all sources for three years from 2018-19.**

The following is the vision statement for the University of Nottingham's development-focused research and innovation strategy.

*We will support excellent research that seeks to enrich the lives and livelihoods of the challenged, disadvantaged and poorest in society, providing gender-sensitive, clean, safe, equitable and locally-appropriate sustainable solutions to enable: inclusive development; access to lifelong education and skills training; promotion of welfare, social justice, human rights and wellbeing.*

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

### Priority Objectives

1. To harness research excellence to develop new solutions to address societal challenges across the global south in order to deliver impact on the welfare and economic needs of developing countries. We will focus on the following key thematic topics: (i) global health and wellbeing; (ii) food systems; (iii) inclusive and equitable education; (iv) resilience to environmental shocks and challenges; (v) cities and sustainable infrastructure; (vi) security, conflict, human rights, social justice, migration and displacement (vii) clean air, water and sanitation; (viii) affordable, reliable, sustainable energy.
2. To co-produce ideas equitably, co-author proposals, collaboratively deliver research and knowledge exchange to ensure the best outcomes to meet the needs of local stakeholders while also delivering impact, developing capacity and ensuring mutually shared outputs and innovation.
3. To work collaboratively with a range of stakeholders in specific ODA countries, supported by the University of Nottingham's regional Associate Pro Vice Chancellors (Global Engagement) and led by the University's ODA Research Champion in order to move beyond 'business as usual', generic QR programme designs through a greater awareness of the context of ODA-led research.
4. To ensure a 'bottom up', inclusive, equitable, fair and gender-neutral internal competition for institutional QR GCRF research funding which promotes innovation and research excellence which cuts across the complexity, agency and contextual factors which underpin development challenges in different localities in the global south, promotes and engages with early career researchers, supports under-represented disciplines and the creation of new multidisciplinary consortia.
5. To support a balanced portfolio of activity which spans the themes above while being receptive to emerging areas, innovation and new opportunities.

### **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.**

Our three year strategy for QR GCRF will draw on the breath of our researcher community to problem-solve from the outset though creating 'bottom-up' partnerships with researchers, actors, stakeholders and policy-makers in one or more ODA country. We focus deliberately on the intersecting nature of different development challenges and seek an holistic, multidisciplinary partnership approach that emerges organically and is refined collaboratively to maximise creativity and innovation that is researcher-led rather than programme-led and informed and framed by partners in the global south. In this way our plan for QR GCRF is adaptable and flexible and seeks to complement existing GCRF and ODA programmes which tend to have a disciplinary or thematic agenda or are focused on particular problems.



Our strategic plan will seek to:

(a) Address the multiplier challenges that the marginalised, poor and disadvantaged in society face. In this activity we will look to add value to our existing ODA research-led activities and networks (previously funded through GCRF or the Newton Fund) enabling the work undertaken in existing equitable partnerships (between researchers, practitioners and policy-makers) to transition to a new level, through the introduction of new researchers and new thematic research areas to co-develop novel solutions to intersecting global challenges e.g. how energy access interacts with indoor air quality and maternal/child health; or how rapid urbanisation and limited access to water leads to conflict and insurgency. To do this we will build new problem-led research out of existing partnerships in Malawi, Kenya, Ghana, South Africa, Ethiopia, India, Colombia, Vietnam, Fiji, Philippines and Mexico. Working collaboratively with existing partners, and engaging locally with new stakeholders, will maximise impact while minimising risk. New projects will leverage existing networks from previous projects which have closed, thus ensuring that there is no possibility of double-counting of research activity between funding streams. In all cases, these multidisciplinary projects will have different Principle Investigators than previously held grants and 40% of these will be led by Early Career Researchers, who will be mentored in this role by the ODA Research Champion. There is an expectation of an equal representation of genders in all projects and this will be made mandatory; to date 50% of all Nottingham's RCUK/UKRI GCRF projects are led by women.

(b) Develop new partnerships in the research thematic topics mentioned above in the poorest, Least Developed Countries (OECD DAC List for 2018-2020) such as Bangladesh, Nepal, Tanzania, Sudan and Zimbabwe, where we have some individual and institutional collaborators but no existing GCRF or Newton Fund projects which we can directly build upon.

(c) Build capacity within the University of Nottingham to support a cultural transition across all Faculties from activity that encourages research excellence with partners in the developed world (often focused on outputs, industry and commercialisation) towards better promotion and celebration of research focused on impact which delivers economic development and welfare improvements in developing countries. While there are pockets of ODA-led research activity across the institution, we believe that more can be achieved to harness research excellence which has transformative potential. Accordingly, we will appoint:

(i) a named ODA Research Champion at 0.8FTE (Professor M.L. Clarke), who is highly experienced in ODA-focused research and impact activities and well connected to RCUK/UKRI GCRF and Newton Fund teams. She will lead all aspects of implementation of the institutional GCRF QR Strategy, promote the scheme across the breadth of the institution, mentor Early Career Researchers, lead communication with stakeholders (community groups, NGOs, researchers, policy-makers and government agencies) and look to maximise impact in partnership with in-country teams. Appointing a Senior Leader to this position demonstrates the University of Nottingham's commitment to delivery of

the GCRF QR Strategy and will enable all disciplines to contribute to activities with partners, actors and collaborators across the global south in an inclusive, fair and equitable manner.

(ii) a full time GCRF Administrative Manager at 1.0FTE to manage the day to day aspects of activities including reporting, booking travel, managing finances, recording ethical statements and risk assessments for each activity, assisting the ODA Research Champion and acting as secretary to the GCRF Strategy Committee.

**c. How activity funded through QR GCRF fits into your broader strategy and priorities for all development related research activity.**

QR GCRF supports activities across different aspects of our Institutional Strategy 2020 which recognises that The University of Nottingham has been remarkably successful in responding to an increasingly globalised world by internationalising its activities and educational offerings in attracting, retaining and supporting a vibrant and highly-engaged community of international staff and students and developing purposeful global partnerships which further enrich our world-class teaching, research and knowledge exchange activities. Our People Strategy seeks to create an exceptional, diverse and inclusive employment environment for staff and where we foster a developmental, collaborative, inclusive and supportive working environment with open and honest communication and consultation which values the different views and ideas which a diverse workforce brings. Our Research Strategy sets out the University's ambition and vision to recruit and develop our top researchers, create and share our high quality research, adopt a 'systems approach' through global research themes and priority areas, and show the impact of our research. Our Global Engagement Strategy aims to develop new partnerships with international funding bodies, governments and non-governmental organisations to support capacity development and global impact.

QR GCRF aligns with these broader strategies enabling us to be more strategic about how we undertake development-focused research. In the last year we have created a GCRF Advisory Group comprising a small number of senior academics with track records in ODA-compliant research. The GCRF Advisory Group has met periodically to advise the institution on specific GCRF calls from a range of funding agencies and offer informal peer-review and mock interviews to researchers applying for RCUK/UKRI and other partner GCRF funding. QR GCRF allows a more strategic vision to be developed for ODA-compliant research and by creating a GCRF Strategy Committee we will ensure appropriate leadership, monitoring, evaluation, promotion and support of a range of activities which go above and beyond our existing structures. The Strategy Committee will draw on the expertise of the GCRF Advisory Group as reviewers and panel members for internal allocation of QR GCRF funds.

**d. How activity funded through QR GCRF relates to the UK strategy for the GCRF.**

The UK Strategy for GCRF seeks to ensure that the UK takes the lead in addressing the problems faced by developing countries, whilst developing our ability to deliver cutting-



edge research. Specifically, the QR GCRF will significantly increase research capacity and capability in the UK and in developing countries, and excellent research with impact. The ambition is to generate innovative solutions to intractable development issues and to identify practicable pathways to healthier and safer lives, sustainable development and prosperity for all, equal and effective education, social justice and human rights, and stable institutions. The University of Nottingham's QR GCRF delivers a range of activities which through co-production, creation and stewardship with partners in the global south meet this aspiration and focuses on co-production of novel solutions to complex and intractable development challenges, using problem-focused research to understand, find solutions and deliver outcomes and impacts which improve the lives and livelihoods of communities in a range of ODA countries.

**e. How your development-related and GCRF strategies relate to your wider institutional strategy for using QR.**

The University of Nottingham's QR strategy currently focuses on delivering excellent research across the breadth of activity in the institution. QR income has been used to support research activity devolved to Faculties and Schools. The GCRF and ODA-led strategy does something rather different and bridges the instrumental siloes created by unit-focused allocation which are by their nature single discipline led; by focusing on problem-driven interdisciplinary and capacity focused allocation, GCRF QR offers new and exciting opportunities to develop innovative collaborations which are by their nature impact-led.

**f. Likely key barriers and enablers to implementing your strategy.**

Key barriers include difficulty of engaging with overseas partners, cultural and religious differences and behaviours which disadvantage researchers or collaborating stakeholders or promote intolerance (in terms of race, gender, ethnicity or other characteristics). Nationality or heritage of researchers can also be problematic e.g. it can be difficult for Pakistan citizens or children/grandchildren of Pakistan citizens to get visas to undertake research in India. Different ways of working and expectations around behaviour will require careful management and agreed compromise at the outset of the collaboration. External barriers may include safeguarding, safety and security, financial probity, conflict with and beyond partners and stakeholders, in-country shocks and challenges (e.g. tectonic, disease, sanitation and political insecurity etc). In addition there are potentially internal and institutional behaviours and cultures which will need to be challenged and managed (perceptions, availability, capacity) and honesty in addressing them will be crucial for success. In many post-colonial contexts, citizens are highly sensitive to anything that could be (mis)interpreted as 'imperial' or superior, however unwittingly presented.

In developing the strategy we have taken care to minimise these, where possible, for example by working in regions where we have held existing projects and have good stakeholder networks and in Least Developed Countries where we have some existing collaborators.

Enablers include the appointment of a female ODA Research Champion with experience and expertise in ODA and development focused research and international collaborative working who has first-hand experience of negotiating many of the above potential barriers to deliver impactful research. We will also provide a support group of GCRF, Newton Fund and DFID grant holders to share best practise and act as mentors for engaging the full breadth of academic career levels.

As an institution with a long track record of overseas activities we are experienced in international working including contractual issues and their complexity, risk, ethics, safety and probity. Many of our staff are international citizens and we have an institutional culture that support, celebrates and promotes collaborative working.

**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.**

Co-developing interdisciplinary problem-led research to generate impact from research will involve a mix of:

(a) in-country networking events to understand first-hand the challenges that households and communities face. These events will involve 4-10 UK researchers from different disciplines, the Nottingham ODA Research Champion, in-country researchers, local actors, community groups, NGOs and policy-makers. These activities will define the research challenges, the wants and needs of different stakeholder groups and deliver a 'theory of change' framework to ensure impact remains central to all future plans and which can be used as a key component with which to leverage follow-on research funding from the other GCRF QR opportunities outlined below. The aim of these events will be to share understanding of the context and situation from all perspectives as a starting point for planning future research activities, bringing critical thinking to bear on the assumptions around the research and its impacts and to air views on how a joint research collaboration is expected to work in a transparent and supportive manner. We will support around ten events annually (at a cost of up to £24,000 each) focused on developing ideas, capacities and solutions to local in-country challenges. Proposals for events will be considered quarterly by the GCRF Strategy Committee as part of an open competition and care taken to ensure good representation from all regions globally (which may include announcing an internal call for funding in particular countries or geographical regions, if these appear under-represented). It is expected that proposals will involve capacity and capability building and at least three proposals will be led by Early Career Researchers and five by women; efforts will be made to promote these schemes internally to ensure equal opportunities and representation by researchers from all disciplines.



(b) Pump-priming pilot projects to generate data for future applications. These pilot projects will support new research focused on innovating with local actors, institutions and local capacities, which may either build on existing collaborations (or take findings from previous projects funded from closed GCRF or Newton Fund awards) to new DAC-list countries, thematic research challenges, regional contexts or different stakeholder groups. We will support around five projects annually of up to 12 months duration (at a cost of up to £50,000) and there is an expectation that by involving UK researchers who have not previously held GCRF and Newton Fund awards we can develop both UK and developing country capacity and capability through these awards. It is expected that at least two proposals will be led in the UK by Early Career Researchers and at least two by women. Proposals for pilot projects will be considered in open calls issued every six months by the GCRF Strategy Committee. Care taken to ensure good representation from all regions globally (which may include announcing an internal call for funding in particular countries or geographical regions, if these appear under-represented) and preference may be given in 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 to projects which have previously held GCRF QR networking event funding. Data will be curated locally in-country as well as via institutional practices to ensure it is not 'taken away by UK researchers'. These projects will focus on bottom-up, shared co-production which safeguards against the common criticism often levied at developed world researchers who can be seen to come to the developing world, 'do their work and leave us behind'.

(c) Awards for multidisciplinary challenge-led research projects. These projects will last for 12 months, must be co-created with in-country stakeholders and must include at least three disciplines and a mix of researchers from all career stages. There is an expectation of equal gender representation in project teams and this will be strongly encouraged. There is also an expectation of equal representation from the UK and in-country project partners. Five awards of up to £250,000 will be made annually in open competition. Proposals may request funding for staff time and overheads, travel and subsistence, consumables, communications, workshop and event costs but exclude equipment and consultancy fees. There is an expectation that in Year 1 (2018-2019) projects will involve one or more country partners from Malawi, Kenya, Ghana, South Africa, Ethiopia, India, Colombia, Vietnam, Fiji, Philippines and Mexico. In Years 2 and 3 (2019-2020) projects must involve at least one Least Developed/Lowest Income Country from Bangladesh, Nepal, Tanzania, Sudan and Zimbabwe but may include additional DAC-list countries, as long as the focus is challenge-led and appropriate to all partners.

Within the University of Nottingham we seek to develop capacity though directly allocating resources to create an ODA Research Champion and appointing a full time ODA Administrative Manager and running in-house workshops on various aspects of ODA-led research such as the effective use of a theory of change approach. It is recognised that capacities to tackle complex global problems are shared amongst various actors and stakeholders, no single organisation or network can influence change alone however at an institutional level we look to increase capacity through these mechanisms.

**h. The main developing countries, included in the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) list, which you intend to collaborate with.**

Malawi, Kenya, Ghana, South Africa, Ethiopia, India, Colombia, Vietnam, Fiji, Philippines, Mexico, Bangladesh, Nepal, Tanzania, Sudan and Zimbabwe

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

This strategy will develop new research capability to deliver solutions to the challenges facing poor, marginalised and disadvantaged sectors of society in targeted developing nations. We will use a theory of change approach with all research projects which an essential tool in designing and appreciating the complex network of factors which influence project outcomes. Research will focus on in-country development and welfare problems identified through co-developed situational analysis taking into account the context, political and institutional landscape and opportunities for change; beneficiaries will be identified at the start so that at all times 'who will benefit and how' drives how the research is designed and delivered. The outcomes and impacts of each project will, in this way be context specific and individual theories of change will identify actors, assumptions, spheres of influence and interventions involved in delivering successful outcomes and impacts.

Given our focus on the key thematic research topics: (i) global health and wellbeing; (ii) food systems; (iii) inclusive and equitable education; (iv) resilience to environmental shocks and challenges; (v) cities and sustainable infrastructure; (vi) security, conflict, human rights, social justice, migration and displacement (vii) clean air, water and sanitation; (viii) affordable, reliable, sustainable energy; examples of outcomes may include: the number of households in a community whose joint annual income remains below the poverty line relevant to that country; or the change in percentage of children suffering from diarrhoea as a result of a specific medical intervention. Outcomes will link to the individual co-developed project goals.

Examples of impact may include a reduction in poverty in a specific group or reduced child mortality rates. These are long term consequences of the research activity and will be specific to each project and monitored annually and reported on by the GCRF Strategy Group. All projects will be required to identify impact pathways as part of their submission process.

### **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.



The responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the progress and compliance in ODA and GCRF activity will sit with the GCRF Strategy Committee. The Committee reports directly to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research, and the University's Research Board.

Membership is:

Associate Pro Vice Chancellor for Research Strategy, Performance and Policy (Chair)

ODA Research Champion

Associate Pro Vice Chancellor (Global Engagement) Asia-Pacific

Associate Pro Vice Chancellor (Global Engagement) Americas

Associate Pro Vice Chancellor (Global Engagement) Africa and the Middle East

Associate Pro Vice Chancellor (Global Engagement) Europe

Associate Pro Vice Chancellor for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Head of Research Contracts

Head of Strategy, Policy, Performance, and Impact

Finance Office Representative

Two invited NGO external representatives (e.g. Practical Action and VSO)

Secretary: GCRF Administrative Manager

All funded activity will be approved by the GCRF Strategy Committee, in line with the aims and objectives set out in this document. Peer review of proposals will be undertaken by the existing GCRF Advisory Group comprising senior academics from across the university with development-research expertise and experience. Both GCRF Strategy Committee and GCRF Advisory Group members will undergo training in unconscious bias before shortlisting proposals for funding.

For each activity (pump-priming, pilot project, multidisciplinary research award), a project proforma will be developed which will include aims and objectives, case for support, financial breakdown, ethics statement, an ODA statement, pathways to impact. A key part of the proposal development process will be co-development of a theory of change with the partner organisation(s) and each of the projects will produce a standard DFID-approved logframe (Logical Framework Approach) in which the work plan will be defined in terms of projected impact, specific outcomes (usually deliverables), research outputs, how outcomes and outputs will be measured using qualitative and quantitative key performance indicators, the individual research activities involved and the resources required/ persons involved. These will contribute to the development of a risk register; the Principle Investigator will have overall responsibility for the register and ensuring that it is up to date. Engagement with experienced stakeholders (NGOs) and local communities from the start of the project ensures the co-production of knowledge which should increase end-user engagement and adoption of interventions. The impact(s) of the project will be measured over an extended period of time through follow up consultations and surveys. The GCRF Strategy Committee will monitor progress of each project quarterly against the KPIs and milestones in the Logframe.

All projects will be required to have a social media presence to engage in real time with wider communities, interest groups and the general public (normally using twitter) and

submit a six monthly interim report and a final report. This will specifically detail the impact of the project, any changes made, difficulties and lessons learned and plans for the future. Honesty will be valued in an open and fair manner given the complexity of issues likely to be faced and the benefits of learning from what hasn't worked as well as what has.

The GCRF Strategy Committee will ensure appropriate due diligence and risk assessment processes have been completed before any project commences and the contracts team will be responsible for ensuring a Collaboration Agreement has been agreed and signed by all relevant parties. The GCRF Strategy Committee will periodically review the countries listed in this QR GCRF Strategy to reflect on the reach and impact of existing collaborations and ensure we are well positioned to capitalise on emerging opportunities with Least Developed and Lowest Income DAC list countries.

Project leads (UK and In-Country Principle Investigators) will hold overall responsibility for the day to day management of individual projects and financial reporting, assisted by the GCRF Administrative Manager. A summary of the geographical distribution of activity, and the partners involved in the activity will be maintained by the GCRF Administrative Manager, and reported to the GCRF Strategy Group on a quarterly basis for review.

The GCRF Strategy Committee will author periodic reports to the University of Nottingham Research Board and to our overseas stakeholders on the projects supported, lessons learned, opportunities for future engagement within and beyond the scope of GCRF, providing an opportunity to share outcomes and impacts with the broader academy and global south communities, actors and policy-makers.

## **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.

The three types of research award that we have developed are costed separately in Annex A2. Capacity and capability funding has been combined into a single theme and includes funding for 0.8FTE of the ODA Research Champion (£140,411 = £98,323 salary, £42,088 Estates & Indirect Costs), 1.0FTE GCRF Administrative Manager APM-4 (£35,163 salary) and £14,676 for the ODA Research Champion to support travel and subsistence and delivery of theory of change workshops.



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.

Changes in funding will impact the scale of Multidisciplinary Research Awards which will be modified according to any changes (increase/decrease) in QR GCRF allocation. These are the most substantive element of the Institutional QR GCRF allocation and while every attempt will be made to ensure the number of projects is consistent the scale of funding will be modified according to funding allocation such that the breath of geographical reach and potential impact of the research remain unaffected.

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.

The main change from 2018-2019 will be an increased focus on Least Developed and Low Income DAC list countries (Bangladesh, Nepal, Tanzania, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Ethiopia), with greater activity being developed relative to existing partnerships in Middle Income DAC list countries (Ghana, India, Fiji, Philippines, Vietnam, Colombia and Mexico) where existing collaborations enable relatively rapid research delivery with well-developed stakeholder networks. The proportions of Least Developed/Lowest Income to Middle Income DAC list countries involved in projects will increase while ensuring a wide geographical reach for this year's research activities.

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.

Priorities in 2020-2021 will be the Least Developed/Lowest Income DAC countries and it is expected that all of the Multidisciplinary Research Awards will go to teams working in partnership across these countries. Pump-priming awards and Pilot Projects will continue to include all of the named DAC list countries but the focus will shift to research collaborations with the poorest nations.