

# ESRC International Co-Investigators Policy

## Guidance on the inclusion of international co-investigators in ESRC proposals

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## Summary of recent updates

- Updates to the International Co-I eligibility criteria. Update to the responsibility of lead UK Research Organisations to check that any International Co-Is they plan on working with are from organisations which have appropriate research capacity and capability.

## Background

The ESRC's International Co-Investigators Policy provides the opportunity for UK researchers to collaborate with appropriate researchers from anywhere in the world to enhance and strengthen international collaboration, and to add value to research. The policy is **not a separate funding scheme** and therefore requires no additional forms or review. Rather it is intended to be a **simple and straightforward** mechanism which allows researchers from any country to be included on ESRC proposals (exclusions may apply, check call guidance) with a UK-based principal investigator (PI). There is no direct involvement from any overseas research funding agencies, or separate international decision-making process.

The International Co-Investigators Policy allows researchers from a research organisation outside of the UK to be recognised intellectually and financially for their contribution to the work conducted and 'ownership of ideas'.

The ESRC International Co-I policy encompasses the [agreement between UK Research and Innovation \(UKRI\) and Research Council of Norway \(RCN\)](#) which enables eligible UK principal investigators to submit collaborative applications with co-investigators employed by Norwegian institutions.

## Definition

An international co-investigator is an individual from a research organisation outside the UK who otherwise fits the normal definition for a co-investigator on a research project (see the [ESRC Research Funding Guide](#)). That is, they assist the grant holder in the management and leadership of a project. They would normally be expected to make a major intellectual contribution to the design and conduct of the project.

## Eligibility

Proposals including international co-investigators must feature a PI based at a UK research organisation [eligible for Research Council funding](#). Any academic researcher (i.e. those holding a PhD or equivalent qualification, or higher) from an established international research organisation which has the capacity and capability to conduct the specified work will be eligible. Profit making organisations and international government departments are not eligible under the International Co-Investigators policy.

It is the PI's responsibility to articulate in the proposal the added value that the international co-investigator will bring to the overall leadership of the research and their role in the management of the project, as well as the relevant research experience and expertise that they will bring to the project team.

It is the responsibility of the lead UK research organisation (RO) to ensure that the international

co-investigator's organisation is an appropriate organisation to receive, and has systems in place to manage, the funding provided. The UK RO will also need assurance that appropriate agreements are put in place for the delivery of the overseas activities funded under the grant. ESRC will not undertake eligibility checks as standard but reserves the right to undertake additional checks or seek further information from ROs if necessary.

To determine whether the international co-investigator's organisation has the necessary capacity and capability to conduct the specified work, the UK RO must consider the following questions before adding an international co-investigator to a proposal:

1. What is the organisation type (e.g. research organisation, NGO, charity) and who provides the core funding for the organisation? **Profit making organisations and international government departments are not eligible under the International Co-Investigators policy.**
2. What is the research capacity of the organisation? The organisation should possess in-house capacity to carry out research in the field or discipline in which it wishes to be funded and be able to demonstrate an independent capability to undertake and support research projects. The following criteria should be considered:
  - The number of researchers employed by the organisation and paid through payroll (not including temporary employees or consultancy staff). ESRC would expect a minimum of 10 researchers.
  - The portfolio of research projects led or co-led by staff while employed at the organisation over the last five years. Consideration should be given to the number of research projects, their duration, staff roles and contribution, the overall value of the projects and funding source.
  - Details of any collaborative research partnerships.
  - The organisation's research strategy, for example the ways in which the organisation has sought to maximise the wider impact and value of its research.
  - The organisation's ethical assurance procedures. For reference, please see the [ESRC's Framework for Research Ethics](#).
3. How will the organisation support the international co-investigator during the lifetime of the project?
4. If costs are requested for the salary of the international co-investigator, are these absolutely necessary for their involvement in the project? The reason(s) for the inclusion of these costs must be clearly listed in the justification of resources – please refer to guidance in the section on Eligible Costs below and Annex A.

Please note that if funded it is expected the UK RO will have carried out appropriate due diligence on any third parties or collaborative partners used to deliver any part of the project, before any collaboration begins, as outlined in the [UKRI Terms and Conditions](#) (RGC 2.6). [Further guidance on UKRI Due Diligence and Trusted Research is available on the UKRI website.](#)

## Registering international co-investigators with Je-S

In order for an international co-investigator to be included on a proposal, they must be registered with Je-S.

To do this, the international co-investigator should go to the [Je-S website](#) and select 'Create Account'. They will need to complete their details until they reach the 'Research Organisation' screen.

If the international research organisation is not listed, the international co-investigator should contact the Je-S helpdesk either by email ([jeshelp@je-s.ukri.org](mailto:jeshelp@je-s.ukri.org)) or telephone (+44 (0)1793 444164) and provide details of the project with which they wish to be associated (reference number, title, PI). The Je-S Helpdesk will then register the international co-investigator, allowing the PI to add them to the proposal.

Applicants should ensure that, if they are submitting a proposal to a closed call (i.e. working towards a specific deadline after which time the call will close and further submissions will not be possible), the international research organisation should begin the process of registering the international co-investigator with Je-S **as soon as possible and no later than seven working days prior to the date of submission**.

Please note that formal recognition of the international research organisation will only be pursued following a positive funding decision. The Je-S Helpdesk is available 9:00- 17:00 (UK time), Monday to Friday.

## Eligible costs

Applicants who include international co-investigators must fully justify the associated costs within the 'Justification of Resources' section of the proposal. The ESRC will fund 100% of justified costs, however the costs associated with an international co-investigator's contribution to a project must not exceed 30% of the overall cost of the grant at 100% fEC. (It is important to note that the **combined** costs for international co-investigators, and UK business, third sector and government body co-investigators **must not exceed 30% of the total fEC of the grant application**.) If the co-investigator is based at an overseas campus, but is recruited and employed by a UK institution, they should not be included as an international co-investigator – they should be funded at 80% fEC as a UK co-investigator.

- International co-investigator salaries – **Considered** (see international co-investigator salaries section below and Annex A for examples)
- Estates and other indirect costs - **No**
- Directly incurred costs - **Yes**
- Overseas Research Assistants – **Yes**

## International co-investigator salaries

The ESRC will consider paying salaries for international co-investigators **only** in circumstances where payment of salaries is absolutely required for the research project to be conducted. For example, where the policy of the international co-investigator's home institution requires researchers to obtain funding for their salaries for time spent on externally-funded research projects. See **Annex A** below for examples.

In instances where the research funding structure of the collaborating country is such that national research funding organisations equivalent to the ESRC do not normally provide salary

costs, these costs will not be considered. Alternative arrangements to secure researcher time, such as teaching replacement costs, will be considered where these are required by the international co-investigator's home institution.

UK institutions preparing proposals for submission are **strongly advised to liaise closely with the international co-investigator/s named on the proposal** to ascertain any requirement for salary cost requests. The international co-investigator is best placed to advise what costs they can typically request on proposals to their national research funding agency. The reason(s) for the inclusion of these costs must be clearly listed in the justification of resources – please refer to guidance in the section on Eligible Costs below and Annex A.

### **Estates and other indirect costs**

Practically, it is not possible for the ESRC to accurately check and monitor the calculation of estates, overheads and indirect costs for institutions outside the UK because they do not use the Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) methodology. In addition, institutions in the UK receive funding for maintaining and developing the UK research infrastructure via the higher education funding councils for England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. Because of the significant variation in practices, it is not deemed to be appropriate for the ESRC to provide funds which could be used to develop the research infrastructures of other countries at this time. For these reasons the ESRC will not consider any estates, overheads or indirect costs pertaining to international co-investigators.

### **Directly incurred costs**

Applicants may apply for funds to cover a small amount of administrative support for international co-investigators. This will be assessed in the context of the proposal as a whole and the justification of the support.

Similarly, applicants may apply for funds to cover the cost of an overseas Research Assistant (RA) to support research activities in collaborating countries. An overseas RA may be locally recruited in the collaborating country, or recruited in the UK and based overseas. Where an RA is locally recruited and employed by an overseas institution to support the international co-investigator, these costs will be paid at 100%: the RA should be entered on the Je-S application under Staff – Researcher and ticked as an 'Exception' cost. In cases where an RA is recruited and employed by a UK-based institution but is based overseas, their costs will be paid at 80% FEC.

Costs for other international project support staff such as data management, communications or administrative roles etc, can be included in the proposal if fully justified in the justification of resources. These costs should be entered in the Je-S application under Other – DI costs marked as 'Exception'.

Reasonable and fully justified travel and subsistence costs will be provided for international co-investigators in accordance with normal ESRC guidelines. Other directly incurred costs (as outlined in the [ESRC Research Funding Guide](#)) may be applied for, provided they are fully justified.

## Survey Costs

Where a survey will be undertaken in house, by staff at the international co-investigator's organisation, the cost of the survey may be costed as a 100% fEC. Surveys undertaken in-house by the lead UK research organisation, or at a UK-based co-investigator organisation should be costed at 80% fEC.

Costs associated with an international co-investigator's contribution to a project, including any survey costs, **must not exceed 30% of the overall cost of the grant at 100% fEC.**

**Please note:** Some funding calls (for example some co-funded opportunities) operate under different rules and are subject to different allowable costs. Applicants seeking to include international co-investigators should **always** consult the call specific eligibility requirements.

## Inputting international co-investigator costs on Je-S

International co-investigator salaries must be entered in the co-investigator section on the Je-S system. International co-investigator salary costs are entered as an 'Exception' cost type and will attract 100% fEC funding. Detailed instructions on how to complete the co-investigator section for international co-investigators can be found in **Annex B.**

Costs associated with overseas Research Assistants who are recruited and employed at an institution outside of the UK should be entered on the Je-S application under Staff – Researcher and ticked as an 'Exception' cost.

**Please note:** Costs for Research Assistants who are based overseas, but recruited and employed by a UK institution, should **not** be marked as 'Exceptions' as they will be paid at 80% fEC.

All other costs associated with international co-investigators must be entered in Je-S under 'Other Directly Incurred Costs', prefixed with 'Overseas' and should be marked as an 'Exception' using the tick box. To enable UKRI to meet transparency and external audit requirements all overseas costs must be entered into this section using the format 'Organisation: Country: Cost Category: Cost Description'.

*'Example*

*'University of Nairobi; Kenya; Staff; 1 x PDRA'*

*'University of Nairobi; Kenya; Travel and Subsistence; 4 x flights'*

*'University of Nairobi; Kenya; Other Directly Incurred Costs; 5 x Workshops including catering and accommodation'*

*'University of Nairobi; Kenya; Equipment; Name of equipment'*

## Project Partners

An international collaborator from any organisation may be included on a proposal as a Project Partner where they are making a financial or in-kind contribution to the project. Applicants are advised to consult the Je-S Guidance for instructions on how to input Project Partners on Je-S. **Please note that it is not permissible to be both a Project Partner and an international co-investigator on a project.**

## **Consultants**

Costs associated with overseas collaborators may be included on the proposal under the heading 'Consultancy Costs'; however, overseas consultants will not be recognised as international co-investigators within the Je-S proposal.

It is expected that in most cases a consultant will not make a significant scientific contribution to the project overall, but rather facilitate the research. For example, if it was required that an individual outside the main project team conduct some data analysis, this individual could be costed as a consultant.

However, we recognise that there may be cases where a researcher cannot participate unless they do so as a consultant, for example, if an overseas collaborator who would clearly make a valuable intellectual contribution to a proposed research project, is based in a developing country where the funding system is such that it is normal to supplement a low salary with research consultancy work for organisations outside the employing institution (e.g. governments or NGOs). If this is the case, and if participation in an ESRC project would require the overseas collaborator to forego this income, then the principal investigator is required to specify that they will be given proper recognition for their contributions. The award may also be subject to conditions to safeguard this.

All overseas collaborators should calculate costs at a daily rate appropriate to the going rate for their level of expertise in their country. These costs will be paid at 80% fEC.

## **Reimbursement of international co-investigator costs**

In line with ESRC policy, payments on all grants are made in arrears in accordance with a specific payment schedule, as agreed with the ESRC at the time the grant is awarded. This includes grants including international co-investigators. In all cases, funds are transferred to the UK PI's research organisation in the first instance. It is then the responsibility of that institution to disburse funds to co-investigators, international or otherwise. Particular attention should be paid in the Case for Support to the management and communication protocols in place to enable this to happen smoothly.

### Co-I Eligibility for Salary Costs Examples:

An International Co-Investigator **is eligible** to request salary costs where:

- An international co-investigator is employed by a university on a contract that requires they obtain external funding for their salary to work on research projects.
- An international co-investigator is employed at a university which requires teaching replacement costs to allow them to participate in the project. This is only permissible for international co-investigators.
- An international co-investigator is employed by a university on a contract which specifies that they are expected to teach and carry out research for X months of the year. The remaining X months, they are expected to supplement their income with external contracts. They are eligible to request salary costs as an ESRC international co-investigator for the X months of the year they are not under contract from their institution or are on a sabbatical from research and teaching.
- A researcher is employed by a university in a developing country. Their base salary is expected to cover teaching and research but does not constitute a living wage. They would normally supplement their salary through several consultancy contracts with the national government or NGOs. The individual would clearly make a significant intellectual contribution to the proposed ESRC project but would have to forego their normal consultancy work in order to participate in the ESRC project. The researcher could be costed into the grant as an international co-investigator with salary costs. Alternatively, they could be included as a consultant at the going local rate, if more appropriate.

An International Co-Investigator is **not eligible** to request salary costs where:

- An international co-investigator is employed by a university on a contract which specifies that they are expected to teach and carry out research throughout the year. This is the norm in their country and their national research funding agency therefore does not normally pay salary costs on its research grants.



## International Co-Investigator Salary Cost Entry on Je-S

When a Co-Investigator is added to the Je-S form, the cost type of that new entry defaults to 'Directly Allocated' cost type. For International Investigators the '**Exception**' cost type must be ticked. Costs under the 'Exceptions' cost type are paid at 100% fEC.

The screenshot shows the 'Co-Investigator' form in a web browser. The 'Cost Type' field is highlighted with a red circle, showing three radio button options: 'Directly Allocated', 'Directly Incurred', and 'Exception'. The 'Exception' option is selected. Other visible fields include 'Scheme: UKRI', 'Project Title: s', 'Organisation: Zorg Testing Organisation for JeS 1', 'Department: Zorg Academic Department A', 'Name: Professor Marius Smuts', 'Post will outlast project?: Yes', 'Total number of hours to be worked on the grant over duration of the grant: 244', '% Council Contribution Rate: 100', 'Post: Co-Investigator', 'Start Date: 01/07/2020', 'Duration Months: 24', 'FTE %: 100%', and 'Scale: 1'.

The following details must be entered for the International Co-Investigator:

<b>Select Name</b>	The Co-Investigator name from the database. All applicants must have a Je-S Account that allows them to be included within the proposal as either PI, Co-I or Researcher Co-I
<b>Will the post outlast the project</b>	Answer should be 'Yes'
<b>Total Number of Hours to be worked on the grant</b>	Maximum hours per year cannot exceed 1,650
<b>Select Exception</b>	The Exception option is applicable to International Co-Investigators. Salaries paid under the Exceptions cost type are paid at 100% fEC.
<b>Start Date</b>	The Date will default to the current date. To amend this click on the calendar icon or enter the date in the DD/MM/YYYY format
<b>Duration Months</b>	The period, in whole months to be spent working

	on the Project
<b>FTE %</b>	This is the percentage of time that the post holder will spend working on the project based on a full-time post. This does not relate to the contracted working hours of the post holder. For example, someone that is contracted to work at their Research Organisation for 50% of full time and will be spending the whole of this time devoted to this project should put 50% as the FTE%
<b>Scale</b>	Enter the Research Organisations pay scale. This can be alpha or numeric
<b>Effective Date of Scale</b>	The date on which the scales used came into use
<b>Increment Date</b>	The Date will default to the proposed project start date. To amend this click on the calendar icon or enter the date in the DD/MM/YYYY format
<b>Starting Salary</b>	Annual salary when starting on the project
<b>London Allowance</b>	If in receipt of London Allowance include the £ Value (numeric)
<b>Other Allowances</b>	If applicable
<b>Super Ann and NI</b>	Superannuation and National Insurance costs over the duration of the project (numeric)
<b>Total Costs</b>	Enter the total cost of the Post over the period of the project (numeric)