LSE Research and Innovation

LSE Research and Innovation - Research Support core services and service standards

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Core Services

These service statements provide a framework setting out what core pre- and post-award services are offered within LSE Research Support and how we work collaboratively with partners in academic units. They are intended to be used in consultation with academic managers to determine specifically who does what for each academic unit.

For details of core services offered within the Research Development and Research Awards Teams, see annexes 1 and 2.

Service Standards

1. Our service standards are driven by our values:
   - We will strive to provide an excellent service in terms of quality of work, timely delivery, professional behaviour, and customer service
   - We will take a ‘can-do’ approach, working constructively, collaboratively, and creatively to provide positive solutions to challenges
   - We will share information and be transparent in our decision-making, working with integrity in ways that build and maintain trust
   - We will be approachable and treat each other with respect
   - We will be considerate, cooperative, and helpful, to assure quality services
   - We will be collegiate and professional and take pride in our work
   - We will listen effectively to our customers’ requests and take the necessary actions to assist them. We will acknowledge any deadlines and provide assurance over the next steps
   - We will keep our customers informed of any unexpected delays in service

- We want to hear from customers who feel we have not provided an excellent service in terms of quality of work, timely delivery, professional behaviour, and customer service. We will investigate and seek to resolve any issues in line with our escalation procedure.

2. Specific service standards are set out against the statement of core services in annexes 1 and 2, where appropriate.

3. Feedback from our customers highlights the importance of the timeliness of our communications. We will always seek to judge the most appropriate response required of messages. For each message, we will determine (i) if a message requires a response (messages sent only for information do not), and where it does (ii) acknowledge receipt of the message and provide assurance over next steps, where appropriate, and/or (iii) take any actions required by the message in a timely manner. For queries that fall outside of our own areas of expertise (for example, HR) we will re-direct you to the relevant expert within another service division, to ensure you receive authoritative advice and to ensure we use limited resource in an optimal way.

4. The nature of our services demands qualitative service standards on the whole. We encourage open feedback and dialogue on the quality of our services, where things have worked well and have not worked well. We will assess and measure our services through feedback from those we support, including a survey of applicants and grant holders.

Annex 1: Research Development Team

Primary Responsibilities

The team's primary responsibilities are as follows:

The Research Development Team support LSE staff in preparing competitive and high-quality grant applications and liaise with internal parties for approval of proposals and external parties for contractual negotiations and agreements. This annex sets out the roles and responsibilities of the team in supporting academic units, however, the document itself should be the basis for dialogue with individual academic units to create a bespoke service, within reason, and should not be fixed. In addition to our academic unit level activities the team also provides expert support and development of the School's Research Development Panel (RDP), Research Information Sessions (RISe) and Research Briefing and we have our own strategy to further our support. In this capacity we are responsible for:

- Coordination of demand management for select calls and internal selections as governed by the RDP terms of reference
- Development and implementation of an annual programme of events to enhance skills in research grant winning.

Research Development Team Members

Academic Units may be supported by the following members of the Research Development Team:

- Head of Research Development (HoRD)
- Research and Innovation Strategy Manager (RISM)
- Research Development Manager (RDM)
- Grant Applications Manager

All the above team members have experience in proposal preparation and coordination. Grant Applications Managers will be supported by RDMs, RISM and HoRD in strategic development and more complex scenarios. Despite differences in the application of our roles and responsibilities across service areas, we maintain expectations to ensure consistency in the quality of service provided. We recognise the added value that a long-term business partnership has on research development and our reputation. The below list is the default position, but we recognise that duties are shared and balanced flexibly with different academic units.

Research Development Core Services

- Proactively engaging with a unit's academic and research community to discuss funding aspirations and ideas
- Identifying, disseminating, and advising on the pursuit of research funding opportunities in our remit of externally peer reviewed funding sources
- Advising the researcher on: the research idea (e.g., policy links, feasibility, tie into other divisions and academic units, clarity, impact) and the funder/scheme (e.g., scheme criteria and information needed including fit to scheme and evaluation criteria)
- Liaising with collaborators and partners including drafting letters of support
- Costing and pricing budgets for submission including consulting on developing budgets
- Soliciting approvals (pricing policy, contractual, Head/Director)
- Conducting supplier due diligence in line with funder requirements and LSE policy
- Developing appropriate grant and collaboration agreements

- Advising on any issues arising from contractual requirements and supporting decision-making processes
- Handing over grants to the research awards team with accurate, up-to-date budgets
- Ensuring R&I's research management system (Converis) has accurate and current records
- Providing guidance on grant relevant LSE policy and process, and signposting to specialist teams including finance (tax, FP&A), HR (visa, partners) and other research support (ethics, data management)
- Attending routine meetings in the academic unit to share grant information (including relevant updates, proposal statistics, record research ideas and take feedback)
- Developing and delivering training on grant writing bespoke to the academic unit and signposting to other development activities.

Our Service Standards

As a team we work in partnership within our division, the academic units we support and the wider support available across the School to add value to research at LSE. We pride ourselves on upholding high standards in the support we provide, concentrated around our collegiality, expertise, and accountability.

Figure 1. Words provided by the team about our aspirational perceptions

As part of the international research management and administration community, we recognise the [Hiroshima Statement on Essential Practice of Research Management and Administration] development for The International Network of Research Management Societies (INORMS) conference 2021.

Minimum Levels of Service and Indicative Timeframes

These are the core or minimum levels of services and responsibilities we aim to deliver, recognising that some proposals may need more (or even less) support than others. Prior to pursuing an application, investigators should discuss what levels of support, not covered below, are available to them in their academic unit. Where additional support from the Research Development Team is needed and can be accommodated within the team then this can be arranged.

Timeframes are indicative and may be influenced by several factors, such as current staffing levels, clustered submission deadlines, reliance on others to provide us with information needed to complete tasks, etc. Regardless of the above factors, our team will always endeavour to provide accurate and up to date costings, approvals, and portal submission support prior to the deadline.

Responsibility/task	Research Development Team	Approx. time frame *	PI/Research team/academic unit	Support from other Divisions/Teams
Research Development	Provide unit-specific opportunity identification and dissemination	At regular intervals but expected to be > once per term	AM and HoD advise on strategic priorities to narrow searches and briefings Research team proactively identify specific relevant opportunities.	
	Produce briefings on funding landscape, management information, past and current grant activity, take feedback and ideas	At regular meetings on request	AM sends meeting invitations to research development team member	
	Provide training on grant applications	On request	AM and HoD provide clear request on skills gaps and training needs, in discussion with Research Development Team	
Application Support	Provide advice on the decision to pursue scheme	-	Researcher sends draft budget and proposal with a minimum of 10 working days as per the Research Grants Policy	

			Head/Director provides in-principle agreement to proceed	
	Complete the staff costing via pFACT and advise on budget for overheads as per funder terms	On-going, before submission	Research team provides list of non-staff costs required	
	Provide guidance on grant relevant LSE policy and process, and signposting to specialist teams including finance (tax, FP&A), HR (visa, partners), data protection, IP, and other research support (ethics, data management);	On-going	AM provides departmental process level information	Innovation Contracts Manager Research Governance Manager Data Protection Officer Tax Manager HR Partner/Adviser HR Visa team
	Request PFR selection in principle and advise on process for buyout approval as per Research Grants Policy	Before submission	AM checks buyout request against Buyout Policy thresholds and confirms to Head/Director Head/Director reviews buyout request and escalates for triple approval	
	Provide advice on the application as it develops including fit to scheme, research and knowledge exchange ideas, submission, and evaluation criteria	On-going, before submission	Research team develops proposal Academic unit may organise peer review formally	KEI Integrated Service
	Follow procedure for funder due diligence	On-going	As per the Ethical Review of Grants and Donations procedure, submit relevant Funders for Due Diligence to PaGE.	

	Provide advice on partnerships and collaborations and request any essential information	On-going	Research team develops academic aspects and coordinates partners and collaborators	
	Check pricing policy on RIF sheet and escalate as per the procedure (including through Converis to HoRD)	Before submission		
	Seek Head of Department final approval, including buy-out confirmation	Before submission	Head of Department decides whether to approve submission and confirms buyout position	
	Complete Converis project application data entry	Within the week of submission		
Submission and Pending Outcome	Support submission via the required submission route and any additional portal approvals	-	Research team submits proposal	
	Support response to reviewer comments	On-going	Research team writes and submits response to reviewer comments	
	Organise mock interviews	On-going	Research team attends mock interview	
	Update Converis project application data entry with outcome	Within the week of result	Research team notifies Research Development Team, AM and HoD/CD	
Post-award	Review funder T&Cs and accept	5-10 working days of receipt for standard offers.	Research team may in some circumstance be asked to accept awards: these should always be pushed to the Research Development Team before accepting due to risks related to	Innovation Contracts Manager Data Protection Officer Legal Team

		Others: dependent on agreement complexity	intellectual property and award management	
	Update costs on pFACT and in RIF sheet in line with funded amount and current costs			
	Confirm the PFR selection with relevant research team members	Before start date	Research team confirms PFR	
	Conduct supplier due diligence as per LSE Policy and funder terms	Before contract signature	Research team support partner information gathering	
	Draft and negotiate collaboration agreements and consultancy agreements	Dependent on agreement complexity		Innovation Contracts Manager Data Protection Officer Legal Team
	Handover award to Research Awards Manager on Converis and hold meeting	Before start date		

Annex 2: Research Awards Team

Primary Responsibilities

The team's primary responsibilities are as follows:

- Responsible for the preparation and submission of financial claims, invoices, financial statements, and reports to funders, in line with the funder's terms and conditions, claim formats, schedules and deadlines
- Provide support, guidance and best practice advice on all post-award matters relating to research awards
- Support LSE's compliance with accounting principles, LSE's Financial Regulations and other related policies and procedures
- Ensure compliance with funder terms and conditions:
    - Financial costing and approval of research funded staff appointments and studentships, to ensure sufficient budget and project duration are available and complies with the funder's terms and conditions
    - Review expenditure throughout the lifecycle of research awards and verify expenditure is eligible before final approval
- Monitor budgets to ensure that the project operates in accordance with its budget and, if required, assist the PI to prepare budget adjustments and reforecasting
- Advise on and draft sub-contracts, new collaboration agreements, amendments relating to the project
- Support changes during the project lifecycle – extensions, suspensions, supplements, virements, and terminations
- Co-ordinate financial assurance requirements, including review and audit undertaken by research funders and project audits of financial statements
- Investigate and resolve queries and provide information for PIs, local research support and funders
- Project closure.

As standard the types of awards we support are:

✓ Externally funded research grants and contracts, meeting the HESA definition of research or those that have external reporting requirements
✓ HEIF and HEIF-related finances and project accounts
✓ Internal research support funded awards

We don't support the following types of awards:

X Departmental and Centre outside fund/reserve type accounts
X RIIF accounts (other than allocating their annual funding and coordinating annual reporting)
X Academic personal and outside funds accounts (other than allocating PFRs and surplus research funds on closure of project)
X Donations/gifts for research where there are no reporting requirements

Minimum Levels of Service and Indicative Timeframes

These are the core or minimum levels of services and responsibilities we aim to deliver, recognising that some projects may need more (or even less) support than others. Prior to accepting the award, investigators should discuss what levels of support, not covered below, are available to them in their academic unit. Where additional support from the Research Awards Team is needed and can be accommodated within the team then this can be arranged.

Timeframes are indicative and may be influenced by several factors, such as current staffing levels, major reporting periods, year-end, reliance on others to provide us with information needed to complete tasks, etc.

Responsibility/task	Research Awards Team	Approx. time frame *	PI/Research team/academic unit	Support from other services departments
Getting started	Complete Converis project data entry and circulate Project Information Report (PIR)	5-10 working days from handover	Review and let RAM know if any corrections needed. Keep for future reference	
	Set up project code in OneFinance and link associated components, e.g., fund source, cost centre, project type, budget groups	1-5 working days from handover		
	Advise on the award agreement T&Cs Signpost to LSE Financial Regulations, and other School procedures	On-going	Read and fully understand the project's description of work and budget and the award agreement T&Cs Be aware of and understand LSE Financial Regulations and other School procedures and how they relate to project expenditure	
	Organise kick-off meeting with PI and project team	Within 5-10 days of handover	Discuss within academic unit the level of support provided to PI and project team during the project	

Recruitment of project staff and students	Advise on budget availability and appointment periods Provide financial costing and approval of research funded staff appointments and studentships, to ensure sufficient budget and project duration are available and complies with the funder's terms and conditions	Within 3 days of receiving fund check request	Carry out recruitment of staff and students, following LSE recruitment policies and procedures and within constraints of the approved project budget and funder's T&Cs Draft advertisements and job descriptions, shortlist, interview, and select candidate Complete all recruitment documentation and contract templates and obtain necessary approvals and right to work checks	HR adviser/HR admin: Advice & support with advertising & selection activities HR Hourly Paid Support Team HR Visa and Compliance Team
Spending against the project budget	Review expenditure transactions submitted in OneFinance against the funder's terms and conditions and availability of funds and provide 2nd level approval Provide advice on the eligibility of proposed expenditure against funder's terms and conditions and LSE Financial Regulations Approve staff advances for research submitted in OneFinance. Chase un-expensed advances	3-4 days of receipt 3-4 days 3-4 days	Spend research grant money in line with funder's terms and conditions and LSE financial regulations and policies Provide all supporting documents/receipts with expense claims Review and approve expenditure, ensuring expenditure meets LSE Financial Regulations and complies with LSE policy and procedures Expense any advance in good time providing details and supporting documents in OneFinance. Return unspent funds to the LSE	Accounts Payable: queries on unpaid staff expense claims and external payments Procurement team: Advice on procurement issues, support for tendering. Approval of single supplier request. Support with everyday ordering of goods and services through OneFinance LSE Tax Manager

	Prepare and send financial statements to PI and/or academic manager to assist with budget tracking Preparing and posting correction journals and approving journal requests	As requested As requested	Keep track of expenditure and commitments so that aware of budget availability and pace of spending Review transactions to identify any charging errors and inform RAM of any corrections needed by either submitting a journal in OneFinance or requesting RAM to create the journal	
Timesheets	Populate and send timesheet templates to project staff who need to complete them Advise on completing timesheets Make journal adjustments correcting staff charges following submission of timesheets	As required	Complete timesheets on a regular basis and get appropriate approval e.g., from line manager Ensure that all project members are completing and signing timesheets and obtaining necessary approvals Submit approved hourly paid timesheets to pay team monthly	
Sub-contracts, contracts for goods and services, new collaboration agreements, amendments, and extensions to existing contracts	Advise on procedures for setting up or amending contracts Draft contract and obtain institutional signature and collaborator signature Liaise with LSE research contract manager where changes to standard LSE clauses are needed		Provide details of new contracts or amendments to contracts including clearly defined deliverables/milestones and basis of payment Obtain signature from contractor Approve contractor invoices in accordance with the contract and only when contract deliverables/milestones have been met	Procurement Team

Financial reporting and invoicing	Advise PI/research team/academic unit that financial reporting deadline is upcoming and advise if any input into the process is needed Undertake preparation and submission of financial claims, invoices, financial statements, and reports to funders, in line with the funder's terms and conditions, claim formats, schedules and deadlines Where LSE is the lead on a collaborative project, coordinate with partners on their submissions	As per funder T&Cs and reporting deadlines	Submit expenditure and timesheets within deadlines needed to prepare financial statements by sponsor deadlines Review draft financial statements and notify RAM of any need for revisions/omissions	
Scientific reporting and other project deliverables	Support process by monitoring against deadlines, provide advice and guidance on submission process and obtaining institutional signatures	As per funder T&Cs and reporting deadlines	Prepare and submit reporting/deliverables to funders by reporting deadline Notify RAM if deadline is delayed Where LSE is the lead on a collaborative project, coordinate with partners on their submissions	
Project amendments/variations (extensions, budget virements, terminations, variations in project plan)	Discuss proposed amendments or variations with PI/research team, providing advice as necessary Discuss changes with funder and/or partners and submit amendment request on behalf of PI/research team	As and when	Manage the research project so that variations, such as extensions or budget variation, can be identified as early as possible Inform RAM as soon as possible about the need for any changes e.g., extensions, change to spending	

	Organise contract amendments and signatures as necessary		Provide justification to be included with amendment request if needed	
Project closure	Advise on closing projects Check all deliverables submitted Ensure all funds are received and account balance is zero Close and archive project	Within 2 months of final reporting		
Research Grants Policy (RGP)	Departmental Research Investment Fund (RIF): calculate annual allocation and transfer to departmental RIIF account Coordinate submission of annual reports Agree carry forward balances of unspent RIIF	Annually	Manage RIIF budget and expenditure in line with RGP and RIF policy	FP&A Team for staff appointment approvals
	Personal Financial Rewards (PFRs): Agree how PFR will be taken with PI/Co-I Organise salary supplement and/or transfer funds annually to OSF account or departmental substitute teaching account Provide advice on uses of PFR	As and when	Notify Research & Innovation of any changes that will impact recovery of research income/PFR, such as periods of leave and not working on project Discuss and agree within PI/Co-I's academic unit buyout requirements	FP&A Team for balances on OSF account and substitute teaching account