Supplementary written evidence by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) (RFA109)

Thank you for inviting UKRI to give evidence to the Science and Technology Committee's evidence session looking at a new research funding agency. UKRI CEO Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser undertook to write to the committee with further information on UKRI's EDI policies and associated evidence. Please find further information below.

Context

As the largest public funder of research and innovation in the UK, UKRI has a leadership role to play in developing, monitoring and assessing equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) policies that work to continuously improve the R&D system. We are only one part of the UK's R&D sector, which by many measures is exceptionally strong. There are other organisations, institutions, and bodies who play key roles in enabling a thriving, inclusive research and innovation system.

These stakeholders have their own EDI policies. Critically, some of these policies are led or owned by other parts of the system, including government. This wider set of policies needs to align to support and enable the research and innovation ecosystem. As a steward of the system, we spend considerable time mapping how these policies interact and work together to drive change. Where applicable and legally permitted, we work with stakeholders to align our policies. We continue to review our data gathering and monitoring practices to make sure that we only gather the necessary information required for continuous improvement of the system.

In addition to our legal responsibilities, including the Public Sector Equality Duty, UKRI has a suite of EDI policies that cover our roles as a funder and as an employer. The examples provided in this response focus on our EDI policies that have implications for our role as a funder of research and innovation, and not the broader requirements as a Non-Departmental Public Body. Our employer-focused EDI policy[1] sets out our roles and responsibilities and those of our employees, including our monitoring and reporting framework.

Governance

UKRI's governance arrangements enable clear accountability and decision-making, support development and delivery of our overall strategy, and enable our CEO to perform her role as Accounting Officer. Through working closely with the UKRI Board, UKRI Executive Committee, UKRI People, Finance and Operations Committee, each of the Research Council's Councils and with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), EDI is prioritised at all levels of UKRI's governance structure.

Our EDI strategy and cross-cutting programme is led by an Executive Champion, ensuring that there is clear and visible commitment for EDI at the executive level. We also work closely with partners and communities to deliver our vision of 'an outstanding research and innovation system in the UK that gives everyone the opportunity to contribute and to benefit, enriching lives locally, nationally and internationally', as set out in the UKRI Corporate Plan[2].

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[1] UKRI-081020-EqualityDiversityAndInclusionPolicyV1.0.pdf
[2] https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/UKRI-091020-CorporatePlan2020-21.pdf

The Corporate Plan also sets out how we will measure our outcomes using a new performance scorecard, drawing on quantitative and qualitative evidence from a variety of sources including corporate performance data, programme monitoring data, outcome monitoring data, internal analyses of datasets and stakeholder views and opinions. UKRI's Annual Report[3] provides an overview of our performance. We report the progress of our EDI policies and monitor their effectiveness in all of these processes.

We have an established governance structure for our EDI strategic programmes and related policies which shapes, challenges and monitors the development, implementation and effectiveness of our policies:

- UKRI's External Advisory Group for EDI brings together both national and international experts from across the public, private and charitable sectors. The group provides advice and challenge and works with us to identify and prioritise areas where we can make most progress. The Executive Champion chairs this group.
- The EDI Programme Board reports to the Executive Champion, who chairs this Board along with the Deputy Chair, the Deputy Director for R&D Culture and Environment. It brings together senior leaders from across our business areas, including in our roles as a funder and as an employer, to provide overall strategic direction for the programme, including approving associated programme plans, project briefs and specifications.
- The EDI Strategy Team is responsible for developing and leading the overarching strategy and framework for EDI in our role as a funder. The strategy team works closely with the EDI Lead in HR who is responsible for developing and leading the overarching strategy and framework for EDI in our role as an employer. Both the EDI strategy team and the EDI lead in HR report on their work to the Programme Board.
- The EDI Implementation Group, which reports to the Programme Board, brings together Councils, Innovate UK and Research England subject specialists and managers responsible for leading EDI activity to support the overall delivery of the EDI programme. Each Research Council also receives strategic advice from their councils and strategic boards. These bodies provide challenge at discipline / sector level on the design and effectiveness of our policy-making.

As part of a cross-government assurance review of diversity and inclusion, a government Internal Assurance Audit is scheduled in early 2021 to assess whether the appropriate arrangements are in place to support and embed an effective diversity & inclusion organisational culture. The schedule for UKRI's participation is currently being established.

Creating, monitoring and evaluating our policies

UKRI has taken an evidence-based and evidence-informed approach in developing its EDI programme and policies for our research and innovation programmes. Two reviews on equality, diversity and inclusion, carried out by Advance HE on our behalf, provide evidence of the key challenges and the effectiveness of different interventions and practices[4]. We use these together with our data, and insight gained from working with our communities and stakeholders, to underpin our decision- and policy-making and determine our actions and interventions.

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[3] Annual Report and Accounts 2019-20 (ukri.org)
[4] Equality, diversity and inclusion in research and innovation: UK review and Equality, diversity and inclusion in research and innovation: international review

A mapping exercise for policies and guidance on EDI at UKRI, Council and programme level (where appropriate) has been undertaken. This work enabled us to identify where policies can be aligned and where there are gaps in our policy environment.

Data, monitoring and analysis

In developing our policies and interventions, we identify the need for a policy change (based on evidence and understanding of the current policy landscape), develop the intervention, test and pilot. Stakeholder engagement is an important part of our policy development, and an area that we are developing further to reach out more widely across our many communities, creating spaces for deeper interaction and exchange of perspectives. We use the UKRI governance structures and supporting policy and operations groups to translate policies into local practice and determine reporting processes through the appropriate governance framework. For the EDI programme, we are in the process of putting in place the necessary mechanisms to monitor these polices.

UKRI continues to develop its data capabilities regarding our funding and staffing data to support our policy-making and actions, working closely with the EDI data analysis leads and cross-UKRI Data Working Group. This data analysis helps us identify our actions and will enable us to measure the effectiveness of policies and interventions.

We routinely monitor diversity data for our application and award processes. We published our first set of harmonised diversity data (age, gender, disability, ethnicity) for all seven Research Councils for the past five financial years in July 2020[5]. We presented these data in multiple formats to enable greater access and transparency. In December 2020 we published detailed analysis on ethnicity in our funding[6]. We are also advancing our work on analysing our staff data. In addition to our Gender Pay Gap report[7], we will publish an Equal Pay Audit in Spring 2021. Our staff data analysis will include work to understand ethnicity and intersectional pay gaps.

To understand fully some issues, we will need more qualitative and quantitative information and will work across the sector to assemble information, following data protection protocols, that captures the entire research and innovation system. This is large scale analytical work that we cannot do alone and requires the sector to work together.

Examples of policies that support our EDI ambitions as a funder of research and innovation

Our EDI policies cover a range of activities that support our role as a funder of research and innovation, including our funding policy, systems and competition design. We have outlined examples of policies in these three areas below. These policies may be directly EDI-related or may be policies that have EDI implications but are owned and enacted outside of the direct EDI governance framework. Collaborative work across the organisation and the appropriate governance structures are important to influence and improve EDI related outcomes. Equality impact assessments support understanding and monitoring of the effectiveness of the policies, and to identify where mitigations or adaptations to the policies are required.

Our funding terms and conditions state that equality, diversity and inclusion must be considered and supported at a level exceeding all relevant legal obligations, including but not limited to those of the

[5] Diversity data – UKRI
[6] UKRI-15122020-DetailedEthnicityAnalysisOfFundingApplicantsAndAwardees2014-15to2018-19.pdf
[7]UKRI_GPG-Report_Draft11.pdf

Equality Act 2010. We also require organisations receiving grants from us to have measures in place to prevent and address bullying and harassment. Relevant examples from our training grant (Annex 1) and research grant (Annex 2) terms and conditions are provided.

A. Funding policy

COVID-19 has had impacts across the UK, including in the R&D sector. We are carefully monitoring its impact and working across the sector on mitigations. This includes monitoring our application and funding data, including year on year comparisons of applications and awards, and submitting a response to the Women and Equalities Committee (WEC) Inquiry into the *Unequal impacts of COVID-19 on those with protected characteristics*[8]. We expect to contribute to the work on research portfolios and productivity due to the COVID-19 pandemic as part of the Government-led People and Culture Strategy.

Within our policy development and operations, we respond to changing economic, social and cultural conditions for those in our sector, through a continuous cycle of improvement, listening to our community and responding to challenge. For example, in response to the pandemic we have developed new policies to support the sector that we monitor for EDI-implications:

COVID-19 costed grant extension allocation: The COVID-19 costed grant extension allocation policy was rapidly developed to provide organisations with resources to sustain UKRI grant-funded research, research and technical staff, and research infrastructures during the period of pandemic disruption and its immediate aftermath. The policy intent and delivery mechanism were discussed with sector mission groups and the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy during their development. An equality impact assessment was undertaken as part of the policy development and has been published on the UKRI website[9].

This is an example of policy development and implementation where we are monitoring for EDI implications, rather than a policy that is directly related to the delivery of our EDI objectives. EDI was embedded into the terms of conditions of award by requiring that recipient organisations maintain the balance of their organisation's 2020/21 grant funding by protected characteristics, and mitigate for disadvantages caused by the pandemic and its impacts on protected groups. Research organisations were required to submit governance plans setting out how they would prioritise the use of the allocation and meet the conditions of the funding. These were assessed, will be monitored during the award, and evidence of the appropriate use of the extension allocation funding will be required in a final report. Although focused on COVID-19 impacts, this policy creation, monitoring and assessment highlights the ways that we develop policies in conjunction with the sector, monitor the effects (including assurance) and assess the impacts and effectiveness of the policy.

UKRI COVID-19 phase 2 doctoral extension funding policy: In April 2020 we announced our policy to support students we fund through the lockdown period and beyond. This included additional funding to cover extensions of up to six months for UKRI-funded doctoral students in the final year of their programme, whose training was disrupted by COVID -19. For students not in their final year, flexibility was given to grant holders to assess their needs on a case-by-case basis and use underspend in the grant to meet the cost of any extension required. Extensions to the stipends and fees for approximately 5,300 final year PhD students were provided. UKRI is in the late stages of analysing the reasons extensions were requested, how awarded extensions compare to those

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[8] https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/6132/pdf/
[9] EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (ukri.org)

requested by students and who received an extension and for how long. UKRI intends to publish this analysis as soon as possible.

A review of this policy was published in our report Review of Extensions for Students Impacted by COVID-19[10]. The phase 2 doctoral extension funding policy was developed to respond to the report's recommendations relating to support for UKRI students not in their final year.

To inform the development of the policy we worked with the sector. Quantitative and qualitative evidence was gathered from students, grant holders and university management across all the areas UKRI funds. This included data from the UKRI-funded SMARTEN survey[11] of nearly 5000 respondents and focus groups to provide more in-depth qualitative insights with participants carefully selected to give us a representative sample of students. The focus groups were conducted by NatCen Social Research, which provided recommendations based on the students' feedback [12]. In addition, university senior leaders were consulted, focus groups were held with training grant holders and we engaged with sector representative bodies, including the UK Council for Graduate Education, the Academic Registrars Council and the National Association of Disability Practitioners. The Equality Impact Assessment[13] references the sector engagement and consultation.

UKRI awarded ~£19 million of additional funding to research organisations to enable support for extensions for UKRI-funded doctoral students who are unable to mitigate the delays and impact of COVID-19 on their research project, on a needs-priority basis. Based on the UKRI Review findings, students in this priority group include those who at the time of the Review were in their penultimate year of funding and have now gone into their final year of study (funding end date before or on 30 Sept 2021), and students in other stages of their doctoral studies for whom project adaptation and mitigation may not be possible, for example disabled students, those with long-term illness, are neurodivergent, or who have caring responsibilities. Organisations will need to provide evidence of the appropriate use of the Phase 2 funding in a Final Report. There are existing provisions in the UKRI Training Grant Award Terms and Conditions for extensions to studentships due to medical, parental or other leave purposes (where required). All UKRI councils operate a harmonised process for the Disabled Students Allowance[14].

This example demonstrates how are identifying and responding to evolving policy needs, reviewing effectiveness, engaging with stakeholders to inform further policy development, and assessing for EDI-related implications. In developing this policy intervention, we are continuing to balance a range of factors including the shorter- and longer-term needs of current and future UKRI-funded PhD students, the needs of post-doctoral researchers, technicians, and the wider research and innovation system. This policy remains a live issue; we continue to monitor the situation and maintain dialogue and engagement with our community as the pandemic and its impacts progress.

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[10] UKRI-11112020-ReviewOfExtensionsForStudentsImpactedByCovid-19.pdf
[11] https://www.smarten.org.uk/covid-19-study.html
[12] https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/UKRI-11112020-NatCenUKRICOVID-19StudentConsultation.pdf
[13] EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (ukri.org)
[14] UKRI-031120-DSA-Framework-February-2020.pdf

B. Funding Systems

Accessibility of the Funding Service: We are working on simplifying the UKRI funding system by creating a unified, single platform, delivering opportunities via a single service to reduce administration for applicants and peer reviewers. This work aims to ensure our systems and processes free researchers and innovators to focus on their work, and at the same time support us to make the best funding decisions. User needs are identified and built into the system design, meeting Government Digital Standards[15].

One of the aims of the Funding Service is to make sure all who need to use it can do so. The Service has been tested against the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines version 2.1 AA standard[16]. To gain insight into accessibility requirements, a survey has been undertaken, working with the National Association of Disabled Staff Network (NADSN). The objective was to inform the system design and also identify potential barriers for accessing grant funding. The Funding Service is using this information in its digital system design and to inform developments in the policy and practice of grant funding activities.

In this and other examples, we engage with stakeholders and work with them to review and refine our policies and processes to support delivery of our EDI objectives.

C. Funding competition design

The Future Leaders Fellowships Scheme: The Future Leaders Fellowships (FLF) scheme supports early career researchers and innovators in business and in Universities/Independent Research Organisations on diverse career paths, including those returning from a career break or following time in other roles. To support inclusion and diversity, the scheme is flexible, supports part-time working and job share; offers the opportunity to network and collaborate with talented researchers and innovators from different disciplines and sectors; and supports time and investment in training and professional development. Work is undertaken with host organisations to ensure the diversity of applicants for FLFs are reflective of the community.

The programme provides an example of the design and delivery of UKRI funding programmes. Equality, diversity and inclusion is an integral part of the FLF assessment criteria and process. This includes increasing diversity of reviewers and panel members. ensuring that panel and interview processes are accessible, providing written guidance and briefing to peer reviewers about safeguarding the peer review process. The panel meetings are an inclusive environment where members are empowered to challenge any comments or behaviours that they think are not in keeping with the aims of ensuring assessment is free of bias and that appropriate consideration is given to the circumstances of applicants. For example, assessors are asked to identify whether: *"Consideration has been given to equality, diversity and inclusion aims of UKRI in support for the fellow and, if applicable, their wider team, and in using the Fellowship's provision for flexible working"*. Assessors are also required to take into account time spent outside the active research / innovation environment[17].

The FLF terms and conditions of award also integrate equality, diversity and inclusion, including the ability to take on the fellowship as a job-share, part-time or to work flexibly. Fellows are given

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[15] Technology Code of Practice - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
[16] UKRI Funding Service accessibility statement – UKRI
[17] FLF Career breaks and flexible working (ukri.org)

guidance and training on research culture and equality, diversity, inclusion and access. We are developing the fellowship cohort with leadership training, tailored to the individual, and in this we have a growing network of experts to consult with on policy and strategic matters.

Data analysis supports the effectiveness of the programme design and delivery. Diversity information on applicants and awardees are released as part of the UKRI annual diversity data[18] publication. Key data[19] (rounded to the nearest 5%) for the first four rounds of the scheme include:

- The Future Leaders Fellowships (FLF) scheme has made 306 Fellowship awards over its first four rounds
- 45% of FLFs are female, and 55% are male. Some FLFs (<5%) opted not to disclose their gender
- 15% of FLFs are from an ethnic minority group, 80% are white, and 5% did not disclose their ethnicity
- 5% of FLFs flag that they have a disability, 90% do not have a disability, and 5% opted not to disclose this information
- 5% of FLFs were under 30 years old at the time of application, 75% were 30-39, 15% were 40-49. The remainder were either over 50, or did not disclose this information
- 50% of FLFs are UK nationals, 45% are non-UK nationals, and 5% opted not to disclose their nationality
- 90% of FLFs are hosted by HEIs, 5% by businesses, and 5% are based at either IROs or Research Council Institutes.

These data are not directly comparable to similar schemes, due to the reach across sector, disciplines and career stages of the FLF competition. The data are used to gain insight into potential causes of any disparities that may be seen in award rates, to support the development of future FLF activities and inform UKRI EDI policy development.

Future work to support diversity and inclusion

We continue to actively develop programmes of work to deliver our EDI objectives. We are committed to challenging ourselves, being open to challenge, working with and across the sector to drive change, and taking action to create a research and innovation system that is for everyone, by everyone.

January 2021
Also sent to the Women and Equalities Committee

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[18] https://www.ukri.org/about-us/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-data/
[19] https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/UKRI-28102020-FLF_Round4_Diversity_Data_narrative.pdf

Annex 1

UKRI Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policies for Doctoral Students

Summary of policies set out in the Training Grant Terms and Conditions and Guidance: [20]:

Equality Diversity and inclusion
You are expected to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion is considered and supported at all stages throughout the performance of the Training Grant, in alignment with Our policies and principles at: https://www.ukri.org/about-us/policies-and-standards/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/ for equality, diversity and inclusion. Your approach to supporting equality, diversity and inclusion is expected to exceed all relevant legal obligations, including but not limited to those of the Equality Act 2010.

Parental leave including maternity, paternity and adoption leave
UKRI funded Students are entitled to 52 weeks of maternity or shared parental leave, if the expected week of childbirth will occur during the period of their award. The earliest Maternity leave can commence is 11 weeks before the expected week of childbirth. The first 26 weeks should be paid at full stipend rate, pro-rated as necessary for part time Students. The following 13 weeks should be paid at a level commensurate with statutory maternity pay. The final 13 weeks are not paid. Partners are entitled to up to two weeks paid Ordinary Paternity Leave on full stipend. Ordinary Paternity Leave cannot start before the birth and must end within 56 days of the birth.

Partners are also entitled to an extended period of unpaid parental leave, up to a maximum of 50 weeks, with their studentship extended accordingly. Unpaid parental leave must be completed within 12 months of the birth of the child. This leave may be taken in up to three blocks of leave or all at once. Adoption leave should be granted on the same basis as maternity leave. There is no qualifying period for maternity, paternity or adoption leave. Additionally, their Studentship end date should be updated to reflect the period of leave.

Sick leave
Payment of a Studentship must continue for absences covered by a medical certificate for up to thirteen weeks within any 12-month period. If the illness lasts for more than thirteen weeks You must suspend the Studentship for the period beyond the thirteen weeks.

Disabled student's allowance (DSA)[21]
Disabled Students Allowances (DSA) are intended to help with additional expenditure for the costs of study-related requirements that may be incurred as a result of disability, mental health problems or specific learning difficulties that means additional support is needed to undertake a UK Research and Innovation funded studentship. The allowances can cover the cost of non-medical personal assistance, items of specialist equipment, extra travel costs and general expenses.
Research organisations should undertake the assessment of need and provide costs for the student when they are required. They will be able to claim back eligible costs at the end of the academic year by submitting a completed DSA claim form to the individual research councils.

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[20] https://www.ukri.org/files/funding/ukri-training-grant-terms-and-conditions-pdf/
[21] https://www.ukri.org/files/legacy/skills/dsa-framework-september-2016-pdf/

Bullying and Harassment
You must have clear, well-publicised policies, processes and training in place consistent with good practice. We expect you to take an organisation-wide approach to prevention, and where relevant to take into account guidance and advice as set out by:
• 1752 Group, on addressing staff sexual misconduct
• the Office for Students, on handling harassment and sexual misconduct in higher education
• the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Students in Higher Education, on handling student complaints and academic appeals

Annex 2

UKRI Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policies for Research Grants
Summary of policies set out in the Grant Terms and Conditions and Guidance:[22]

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
You are expected to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion is considered and supported at all stages throughout the performance of the Project, in alignment with Our policies and principles at: www.ukri.org/about-us/policies-standards-and-data/goodresearch-resource-hub/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/ for equality, diversity and inclusion. Your approach to supporting equality, diversity and inclusion is expected to exceed.

Bullying and Harassment
You must have clear, well-publicised policies, processes and training in place consistent with good practice as recommended by the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service's (ACAS) 'Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace: A Guide for Managers and Employers' or equivalent framework. We expect you to take an organisation-wide approach to prevention, including appropriate leadership and management training and dedicated support on bullying and harassment. Where relevant you should take into account guidance and advice set out by:
• 1752 Group, on addressing staff sexual misconduct
• the Office for Students, on handling harassment and sexual misconduct in higher education
• the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Students in Higher Education, on handling student complaints and academic appeals

Maternity, Paternity, Adoption and Parental Leave
At the end of the Grant Period We will reimburse costs incurred by You to cover any additional net parental leave costs that cannot be met within the announced grant cash limit including Statutory Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Pay for staff, within the Directly Incurred and Exceptions fund headings. This will be payable only for the percentage of time that the staff are contracted on the Grant. RGC 8.3.2 Within the announced grant cash limit, the Grant may be used to meet the costs of making a substitute appointment and/or extending the Grant to cover a period of parental leave for staff within the Directly Incurred and Exceptions fund headings (as outlined above). Directly Allocated and Indirect funds will not be increased as a result of such extensions.
You will be responsible for any liability for parental leave pay for staff supported by the Grant outside the original Grant Period.

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[22] https://www.ukri.org/files/funding/ukri-fec-grant-terms-and-conditions-pdf/

Fellows are entitled to take parental leave in accordance with the terms and conditions of their employment. We will consider requests for a Fellowship Grant to be placed in abeyance during the absence of the Research Fellow for parental leave, and the period of the Fellowship extended by the period of leave. We will also consider requests to continue the Fellowship on a flexible or part-time basis to allow the Research Fellow to meet caring responsibilities.

Sick Leave
At the end of the Grant Period, We will reimburse You for any additional net sick leave costs that cannot be met within the announced Grant cash limit for staff within the Directly Incurred and Exceptions fund headings, except where You have already recovered these costs by claiming Statutory Sick Pay from HMRC. This will be payable only for the percentage of time that the staff are contracted on the Grant.

Within the announced grant cash limit, the Grant may be used to meet the costs of making a substitute appointment and/or extending the Grant to cover a period of sick leave for staff within the Directly Incurred and Exceptions fund headings. Directly Allocated and Indirect funds will not be increased as a result of such extensions.

You will be responsible for any liability for sick leave pay for staff supported by the Grant outside the original Grant Period.

Where there is a continuous period of sick leave in excess of 3 months, You may request approval for a substitute appointment to safeguard progress on the Project. Where a Research Assistant has been on sick leave in excess of 3 months, You must comply with all obligations to consider reasonable adjustments before making a substitute appointment. Where a Research Assistant has been on sick leave for an aggregate (not necessarily continuous) period in excess of 3 months, where this is due to a single condition or a series of related conditions, You may request an extension to the duration of the project.

Fellowship Grants: Fellows are entitled to take sick leave in accordance with the Research Organisation's terms and conditions. If requested, consideration will be given to allowing a fellowship grant to be placed in abeyance during the absence of the Research Fellow due to sick leave, and the period of the fellowship extended by the period of sick leave. The additional salary costs for the fellow (pro rata to their percentage FTE on the fellowship) should be claimed, as necessary, at the end of the extended period.

(January 2021)