

# UK-HyRES/RHA SPRINT Projects Call – Q&A

At the webinar launch of the UK-HyRES/RHA SPRINT Projects Call, questions were collated from the chat function and answered at the end of the webinar. This document summarises the questions and answers.

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## 1. Eligibility

### 1.1 Eligibility of the host institution

Question and Answer
Can the applicant be at a university that is not part of the consortium? <b>Yes – the host institution can be any eligible institution, and we welcome applications based at institutions not currently involved in UK-HyRES</b>
Does the host need to be a university or are catapults (i.e. NCC) eligible to be the host? <b>Any institution registered to receive EPSRC funding is eligible as the host.</b>
Is the UK-HyRES-Royce funding open only to applicants based in the UK or can international early career researchers also apply? <b>The applicant can be international, but the research has to be based in an EPSRC eligible institution based in the UK, i.e. you will need to be based in the UK to carry out the research.</b>
Is a current PhD student, who is expected to have completed their PhD by November 2026 eligible to apply? <b>A PhD student must have passed their PhD to be eligible for the funding. Ideally this would have been completed before the full submission deadline to allow fair comparison with other submissions. If two proposals are considered of equal merit on the assessment criteria, but one candidate has already passed their PhD whereas the other is 'expected to', the one who has already passed would be given preference. The end date of the funding cannot be delayed, even if there are delays to the award of any PhD.</b>
Can ECR be entirely based in industry - i.e. no HEI position? <b>The funding must go to an institution which is eligible for UKRI funding, such as HEIs</b> <a href="https://www.ukri.org/publications/organisation-eligibility/">https://www.ukri.org/publications/organisation-eligibility/</a>
Can I do part of the experimental work in another country? <b>The funding must be allocated to an institution in the UK. If some activity is then delivered elsewhere this must be compliant with EPSRC rules and justified in the proposal.</b>

can we get LoS from the applying institution that shows any commitment that goes further than the 20%fec? For instance, time on faculty equipment or time in facilities?

Yes, you will need a letter of support from your institution to confirm that they are happy for you to do this and that the costings are calculated appropriately.

## 1.2 Eligibility of the Project Lead

Question and Answer
What is the maximum number of years after PhD considered eligible? There is no specific number of years as this will depend on an individual's personal situation.
Would you consider mitigation circumstances? I have 3 years and 1 month into my lecturer role and I do not take official leaves. But I have caring responsibilities to care for children who have additional needs. Will people like me be considered eligible? You are welcome to contact us to state cases of eligibility. Anyone who has a status / experience question please send us a detailed query and we will confirm.
I am PhD student in the writing phase and expecting to start a PDRA before the funding would be awarded. Am I eligible to apply? You would need to do your costing through the UK institution that will host you, and have a strong letter of support from them.
If a postdoc in a permanent position for more than 3 years, are they eligible? There is no time restriction on how long you have been a PDRA
I started working in the UK since last year, but I graduated 10 years ago. am I eligible? There is no stipulation on the amount of time since graduation
permanent job in UK? or permanent job across the world? does it mean within the first 3 years academic permanent job in UK? The eligibility criteria applies to any position held globally, not just roles in the UK
Do I need to be employed by university to apply for the fund In order to be eligible, you must be employed by a UKRI eligible institution as either at PDRA (or equivalent) or in your first three years of a lectureship, at the time the project starts.

## 1.3 Eligibility for funding purposes

Question and Answer
If the applicant is the lead on a KTP (over £100k) and does not hold any research funding (above £100k), will this affect their eligibility? Please email us the details and we will confirm.
I was recently promoted from senior research associate to research fellow but have not successfully acquired over £100k in a single funding lump sum. Am I still eligible ECR under the job title research fellow? (this is still contract work/position) Yes, research fellows are eligible for funding.
If I had Innovate UK funding more than £100k for my company and never as an academic, am I still eligible. This would depend on whether you were the lead applicant for the funding for your company. If you have led an application that has won £100k or more, you are not eligible.
Is the cap for 100k funding for a single award or the sum of all previous projects? thanks! It is cumulative, e.g. if you've won 3 research funding awards at £40k then you would be ineligible.

<p>Is the 100k limit only referring to UKRI or public funding or does that include industry projects?  <b>Send more details and we will get back with more information.</b>  <b>This specific example was neutron beamtime awards, which we have now clarified DO NOT count in the £100k limit.</b></p>
<p>If the ECR is not already employed, is the ECR still eligible with a support from the host uni? And, can the ECR be employed only for the time allocated for this specific project?  <b>Yes, but the application must include a strong letter of support from the Host institution.</b></p>
<p>As these are personal fellowships rather than PI-led project grants, I wanted to confirm whether holding such fellowships would be considered within the scope of the eligibility criterion stating that the Project Lead should not have previously received funding in excess of £100k?  <b>If you have won funding in excess of £100k then you would not be eligible. That total includes funding won by yourself as a fellowship</b></p>
<p>I have been a Co-I on a project which was worth more than 100k. Does this mean that I am not eligible?  <b>100k stipulation is for money specifically award to the ECR. So if you would only count then amount you received as Co-I, rather than the total project value</b></p>

## 2. Mentoring

Question and Answer
<p>Will the track record of the mentor(s) be assessed as part of the application?  <b>No. However, we will look at why you have chosen them as a mentor. You need to consider what their contribution would be to your training and development, include this in the application.</b></p>
<p>Can my mentor be from different Uni while I'm with another Uni?  <b>Yes, they can, they can also be from industry. Just ensure that they are the right mentor(s) for you.</b></p>
<p>On the application, there's been a requirement of "300 words on 'Support and Development Opportunities' - would you clarify more what are these about please?  <b>What support and development will assist you in the future to be a leader in this particular research area.</b></p>
<p>Would you list some recommendation for the mentor criteria on the website?  <b>You need to have 1 or more mentors to support you during this fellowship. This could be people who provide training, 1-1 meeting each month, etc.</b></p>
<p>Can a senior academic/mentor be a Co-Investigator on the proposal?  <b>If costing a proportion of their time to be paid, you would need a very good justification beyond their contribution as a mentor. The purpose of the funding is that you are becoming independent. It is <b>your</b> project; the mentor is only mentoring.</b></p>

## 3. Project themes

Question and Answer
<p>Do you consider hydrogen-material interactions a potential research area?  <b>Absolutely, consider the use of the material and allocate it to the relevant theme</b></p>
<p>Would biofuels production be considered as part of green alternative fuels?  <b>The funding is not intended to support synthetic hydrocarbon production that is a direct replacement for a traditional fossil hydrocarbon, as this is covered by other UKRI investments. If you can make a strong case for why a particular fuel should be considered a green ALF, then please email us to check eligibility with your justification.</b></p>

<p>Considering "end use" - are Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) eligible?  If it is novel research about Hydrogen in ICE then, yes it would be eligible but be aware of existing HyRES funded projects in this area</p>
<p>Do you consider Methanol as an alternative fuel? Could a proposal focus on Methanol?  Methanol can be considered an ALF but it needs to be green. UK-HyRES cannot fund projects on blue/grey hydrogen or ALFs</p>
<p>I worked on synthesising catalysts for hydrogen production during my PhD. I am now considering synthesising new materials and testing them in an electrolyser. Does UK-HyRES fund synthesis and testing of new catalyst / electrode materials?  Yes. Make sure it doesn't duplicate ongoing work in the hub and demonstrate why it's relevant.</p>
<p>Do you consider hydrogen produced from biomass using gasification as green hydrogen?  UK-HyRES can only fund projects on green hydrogen and ALFs.  Biomass production routes can be classified as green, but only when strict sustainability and emissions criteria are met. We suggest referring to the UK Low Carbon Hydrogen Standard (v3, December 2023), which sets out definitions and eligibility criteria for biomass-based pathways and low-carbon hydrogen more generally:  <a href="https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6584407fed3c3400133bfd47/uk-low-carbon-hydrogen-standard-v3-december-2023.pdf">https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6584407fed3c3400133bfd47/uk-low-carbon-hydrogen-standard-v3-december-2023.pdf</a>.</p>
<p>Can you confirm if Pink hydrogen is in scope, or is this purely for Green hydrogen?  Pink hydrogen is in scope as long as the feedstock is not a fossil fuel. Only hydrogen derived from fossil fuels (Blue and Black/Brown/Grey) is not in scope</p>
<p>is there an expectation to propose work across research themes, embedding cross-cutting with technical?  No. You need to think about the questions you are trying to answer and the techniques appropriate. It might sit in one theme or multiple.</p>
<p>Is it acceptable for the proposed idea to overlap with recently funded projects, such as the UK-HyRES Flexible Fund or Fellowship calls?  There shouldn't be overlap thought UK-HyRES, Royce or other funding streams. There could be compatibility (ie from a different angle) however.</p>
<p>Could a proof-of-concept project eligible?  Yes, Absolutely</p>
<p>If it is for the whole hydrogen chain, why are fuel cells not considered then?  UKRI have stipulated that fuel cells are out of scope for UK-HyRES. These are supported by other investments.</p>
<p>One of the requirements is not to duplicate research already funded by UK-HyRES or Royce. Where could I know about the research already funded by them?  If you are in any doubt, ask <a href="mailto:UKHyRESadmin@bath.ac.uk">UKHyRESadmin@bath.ac.uk</a> or <a href="mailto:hydrogen@royce.ac.uk">hydrogen@royce.ac.uk</a>  Information on previously funded UK-HyRES projects can be found on the website.</p>

#### 4. **Costing Related**

<b>Question and Answer</b>
<p>Is detailed costing by the department required ?  We need to know what you are requesting, so you will need permission and a draft budget to get permission from your institution</p>
<p>Is there any guidance on the FTE for the lead applicant/fellow?  This depends on your role and the research you are proposing and is entirely up to you. For example, if you are currently on a fixed term contract then you will likely request all/most of your working hours. If you are on a permanent contract then you might request a lower FTE for you, to fit around other</p>

commitments, but also request time for a PDRA, or you might use the fellowship to buy yourself out of other commitments and request a high FTE for yourself. It is important to discuss the FTE proposal with your host institution to ensure it would be acceptable to your employer.

Regarding the costing: what if a system is made of few parts, each one is less than £10k, but the whole system itself may exceed £10k - for example A data acquisition system made of different modules.

Equipment is not eligible for this funding, which according to UKRI standard rules is items > £10k. Talk to your host institution to ensure that any consumables or small items requested meet EPSRC requirements, or consider if you can access a facility that provides this.

Are the costs associated with using relevant central or national experimental facilities for fabrication/characterization eligible under 'Consumables'?

Yes, access to facilities can be included in the costing and should be fully justified as with other costed items.

Is there a min/max proportion of a postdocs hours the project is expected to take up or just whatever the project is expected to require?

No, whatever is appropriate for the project

Can postdoc time be costed part-time?

Yes, it can

How would we cost for accessing facilities within RHA and how would we get confirmation whether our proposed work is viable at Royce?

It would be possible to use the Royce Research access scheme in parallel to this funding, but they should be treated as two separate applications. You must also check eligibility for the Royce Research access scheme <https://www.royce.ac.uk/access-schemes/> . The equipment you are looking to use must not be based at your host institution.

Given the absence of the required specialised facilities at my current institute, would it be acceptable for the proposed experimental work to be conducted at an external site in UK or outside? also, it might be difficult to get final formal agreements during the application process?

Yes, this would be OK, provided it fits EPSRC rules for use of funds. You would need to explain the requirement and planned course of action in your proposal.

If you do not anticipate being able to negotiate any necessary agreements within the timeline required for this funding, then we would advise considering an alternative approach. Please get in touch if you have specific needs where we might be able to suggest a route forwards.

Can I have a external partner/mentor whose staff time can be costed?

If you are going to cost in someone else, you need to justify why and what they will bring to the project. We wouldn't expect mentors to be costed to the project. Their contribution would though in-kind support

## 5. Miscellaneous Question

### Question and Answer

Does the MSForm allow for the inclusion of figures?

The MSForm does not, however, the Case for Support requires the completion of the MSForm and your proposal to be emailed to [UKHyRESadmin@bath.ac.uk](mailto:UKHyRESadmin@bath.ac.uk) . Therefore, figures can be included in your Case for Support.

How many proposals will be accepted out of all submitted proposals?

This depends on the total cost of the projects and number of high-quality proposals. A maximum of £800k will be awarded to projects though this call

is there a limit on how many people can apply from a single institution?

No, there is no limit

can one person make more than one submission?

No, we encourage you to put your best application forward

can multiple people/organisations contribute to a single application?

Yes, just make it clear in the application. We would expect the majority of the work to be completed by the ECR.

How can a company support an application?

Mentors can be either from academia or industry. In the application the mentor must submit a Letter of Support detailing how they will contribute to the project.