



BLOCK GRANT PARTNERSHIPS (BGP) TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Where a Block Grant Partnership (BGP) is a collaboration of more than one organisation, the Terms and Conditions apply to all organisations in the collaboration. Collaborations will have a lead research organisation, the term Research Organisation applies to all organisations in the collaboration, where a distinction is necessary 'Lead Research Organisation' will be used to identify the lead partner's responsibilities.

General

1. Once the Research Organisation accepts the offer of a Block Grant Partnership (BGP) from the AHRC, the Research Organisation, the BGP coordinator, and those involved in the supervision of students supported through the BGP are expected to abide by the AHRC rules, regulations and procedures set out within these terms and conditions and in the guide for BGP award holders and as may be amended from time to time. If these are not adhered to, the AHRC reserves the right to terminate the award.
2. The Lead Research Organisation must appoint a BGP coordinator who will be the main point of contact between the AHRC and the Research Organisation in respect of the administration of the BGP award. The coordinator will be responsible for ensuring that the AHRC is kept updated of any changes to the BGP, for providing any reports on the progress of the BGP award, and for any information that the AHRC might require in respect of the award. The award of the BGP will be made to the Research Organisation but all correspondence will be with the BGP coordinator named in the award letter. If the coordinator moves, a new coordinator must be appointed. The AHRC must be informed immediately of any change of coordinator.
3. Where the BGP award is a collaborative award between two or more Research Organisations, the award will be made to all Research Organisation identified in the proposal. It is expected that the BGP coordinator will be based at the lead Organisation. We recommend that, before commencing the award, the collaborating Organisations have in place a signed agreement describing how the BGP award will operate, how funds will be allocated and accounted for, how decisions will be made and how disputes will be addressed. The AHRC reserves the right to request a copy of this agreement for its records. The AHRC will not intervene in any disputes between the collaborating Organisations but reserves the right to withdraw or terminate the BGP award if the agreement is broken or terminated by one of the parties or disputes cannot be resolved satisfactorily.
4. The BGP award will be for five years, which means that the Research Organisation will be allowed to recruit students over a five year period i.e. five cohorts, commencing with the 2009 cohort. The BGP arrangement and these terms and conditions will, however, continue until all the students supported by the BGP award have completed their studentship awards (for

the avoidance of doubt, no additional funds will be available in respect of work done outside the agreed term of the award¹). The Research Organisation must have suitable arrangements in place to ensure that all student cohorts, including the year 5 cohort, receive the full support outlined in the BGP proposal and on which the offer of award was made.

5. The BGP award will be made on the basis of the strategy set out in the BGP proposal with any modifications or specific terms and conditions detailed in the offer letter. The AHRC must be informed immediately of any change in circumstance which will affect the successful delivery of the strategy or will impact on the Research Organisation's ability to provide full support to the students supported through the BGP award. The AHRC reserves the right to modify the allocation of studentships for the remaining period of the BGP award if it considers, at its sole discretion, that this is the most appropriate course of action. The AHRC reserves the right to terminate the BGP award if no other reasonable course of action can be agreed.
6. The AHRC reserves the right to review and modify the allocation of studentships for the remaining period of the BGP award depending on the outcomes of future allocations of funding to the AHRC, and subject to reasonable notice. The AHRC priority will be to honour any commitments to studentship places where nominations have been accepted and the student has commenced study.
7. The AHRC reserves the right to suspend or terminate the BGP award at any time, subject to reasonable notice, if the progress of the BGP award is not satisfactory or the Research Organisation fails to meet the terms and conditions of the BGP award. If the BGP award is suspended or terminated, the AHRC will continue to honour the commitments to existing studentships made under the BGP i.e. where a studentship has been awarded, payments will continue as specified under the terms of the studentship for the period for which the studentship was awarded. The Research Organisation will not be permitted to recruit or nominate students during any period of suspension or following termination of the BGP award. The Research Organisation must ensure that the students already funded through the BGP award receive the support they require to successfully complete their studies.

Nominations

8. The BGP award is for a number of doctoral, Research Preparation Master's and Professional Preparation Master's studentships in specific subjects in specific years and the AHRC expects the Research Organisation to advertise the studentships available on an annual basis according to the profile specified in the BGP offer letter. The Research Organisation must seek prior approval from the AHRC for any proposed change in the distribution of studentships within the BGP.
9. Students must be recruited to the BGP studentships in a fair, open and transparent way, taking into account the AHRC's equal opportunities policy, and in accordance with the good practice guidance outlined in the Guide for Student Recruitment and Nomination. It is the responsibility of the Research

¹ 'Term of the Award' means until every studentship under the BGP has finished.

Organisation to ensure all students being offered a BGP studentship by the Research Organisation meet the appropriate eligibility criteria for that type of studentship.

10. Once a student has been identified for a BGP studentship place, the AHRC must be informed through the nomination process. The AHRC reserves the right not to approve a nomination for a studentship if the candidate does not meet the appropriate eligibility criteria or aims of the scheme (Doctoral Awards Scheme, Research Preparation Master's Scheme or Professional Preparation Master's Scheme) or the profile of the BGP award as detailed in the offer letter, or if the recruitment process appears to be unfair.
11. The BGP offer of award will include a profile for the numbers of studentships to be made by scheme and subject area for each academic year. The studentships must be advertised according to this profile in such a way that the profile is maintained but without restricting student choice or the principle of enabling student-driven projects. The Research Organisation must ensure that recruitment is in accordance with the profile and that the AHRC is notified of any problems in recruitment or in matching the profile. The AHRC's written approval must be sought before studentships are advertised or nominations are made which are not in accordance with the profile.
12. The number of studentships available will be specified by subject area and there will be no expectation on the part of the AHRC regarding the distribution of studentships between departments, faculties or schools within the Research Organisation. The Research Organisation is expected to nominate students to the department, or equivalent, that is most appropriate to their course or programme of study. The AHRC will not intervene in any disputes between the Research Organisation and individual departments or between individual departments, faculties or schools.
13. The Research Organisation will not be permitted to nominate students if they have been sanctioned according to the specified terms of that sanction eg. the submission rate survey. The AHRC reserve the right to modify the profile of awards if an organisation is sanctioned.
14. Master's and doctoral studentships are included as separate and distinct awards within the BGP. A student holding a Master's studentship must emerge with a Master's qualification and must not be transferred to doctoral study. A student who has held a Master's studentship with the Organisation, and who wishes to continue to doctoral study at the same Research Organisation, must apply for one of the doctoral studentships in competition with all other applicants for that studentship (which will have been advertised in a fair, open and transparent way). When a student is offered or takes up a Master's studentship, the Research Organisation must not offer the student a doctoral studentship to commence on completion of the Master's award. In other words, the Research Organisation may not automatically transfer a student from a Master's studentship on to a doctoral studentship.
15. The AHRC must be informed immediately, in writing, if a nominated student fails to take up the studentship so that a suitable course of action may be agreed.

Studentships

16. Following an approved nomination for a studentship under the BGP award, confirmation of the studentship award will be made by the AHRC to the successful student. The funding offered will be in accordance with the type of award (e.g. which scheme it falls under, whether it is a full award or fees only) and the student's status (full-time or part-time study). The Research Organisation and the AHRC will require that students supported through the BGP award will abide by the terms and conditions specified in their offer of award and any other applicable terms, guidelines or codes of practice (as amended from time to time).
17. Studentship awards will be made to individual students within the BGP award but these awards must be managed within the terms of the BGP award. Any changes to a studentship which will impact on the BGP must be considered and approved by the Research Organisation. Depending on the nature of the change the AHRC must either be informed in writing or give its approval in writing as specified in the Guide for postgraduate award holders and the guide for BGP award holders.
18. The Research Organisation must abide, and require that the students abide, by the terms and conditions for the studentships awarded within the BGP and any other guidelines or codes of practice (as amended from time to time) but it should also manage the individual studentships within and according to the BGP strategy. Within the bounds of the terms and conditions for the BGP and for studentships, in any situation in which the conduct of the studentship conflicts with the BGP strategy, it must give reasonable regard to the needs of the student. Where problems arise, the AHRC will expect the Research Organisation to reach an agreement which is acceptable to all parties. The AHRC will not intervene in any dispute between a student and the Research Organisation but reserves the right to transfer or terminate a studentship if this is deemed by the AHRC to be the appropriate course of action.
19. The Research Organisation must ensure that all students supported through the BGP are registered as a full-time, part-time or distance-learning student (as appropriate to their studentship) for the course or programme of study and for the period of time specified in the AHRC's offer letter. If the student's registration ceases for any reason (other than a temporary suspension of study), the studentship will be terminated by the AHRC.
20. There are strict conditions determining in what circumstances a replacement can be nominated if a student terminates/fails to register for their studentship. The Research Organisation must inform the AHRC in writing immediately so that a course of action can be agreed.
21. The Research Organisation should ensure that the AHRC is informed immediately if any student supported through the BGP has a change in circumstances that will affect their studentship. If any change in their circumstances results in an overpayment of any money, the Research

Organisation will reimburse the full amount of such overpayment to the AHRC.

22. The AHRC reserves the right to withhold payments on any studentship within the BGP where monies are owing to the AHRC or proof of expenditure of additional allowances has not been forthcoming. The AHRC also reserves the right to withhold payments or suspend a studentship where unauthorised changes have been made to the student's studies or, in the case of any dispute, until such changes have been approved and any dispute has been resolved.
23. The Research Organisation shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that, by the end of their studentship (or within a further 'year of grace' for doctoral students) the student will have achieved the qualification for which their studentship was granted.

Reporting and data protection

24. The Research Organisation must provide reports on the BGP award, as required by the AHRC. It is expected that, as a minimum, the requirements will be for an interim report and a final report. The Research Organisation must also submit information on the training support provided through the BGP award for inclusion in the Research Organisation's report on the use of the career development and transferable skills training payments² which is submitted annually to Research Councils UK. It is expected that these reports, or the BGP's contribution to Research Organisation-wide reports, will be organised by the BGP coordinator. Similarly, in agreeing to take the lead for the BGP, the coordinator will agree to organise the provision of any other financial, progress, research or training reports that might be required from time to time by the AHRC.
25. The Research Organisation will be surveyed on an annual basis against the AHRC's submission rate threshold. Doctoral students supported under the BGP will be expected to submit a thesis within four years of the start of their studentship, if they are studying full-time, and within seven years if they are studying part-time. Sanctions will be applied by the AHRC if submission thresholds are not met.
26. The Research Organisation must ensure that reports are provided for individual studentships, as required by the AHRC or by organisations³ acting on the AHRC's behalf or on behalf of Research Councils UK.
27. In accepting their award, individual students within the BGP will be authorising the Research Organisation to disclose to the AHRC any information that the AHRC requests regarding the progress of their studies and the submission of their thesis. They will be authorising the Research Organisation to provide to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) or any other organisation² acting on the AHRC's or the Research Councils' behalf

² Usually referred to as the 'Roberts funding' or 'Roberts money'. In AHRC it is termed the 'Research Training Fund (RTF)'

³ 'Organisations' should be taken to mean any agency empowered to act on the AHRC's behalf or on behalf of the Research Councils

any such information requested by them on the AHRC's or Councils' behalf. The Research Organisations shall ensure that the students are made aware of this.

28. In accepting the BGP award, the Research Organisation will be agreeing to provide the AHRC, and any organisation² acting on the AHRC's behalf, with any information that the AHRC might require regarding the progress or conduct of the BGP or the students supported within it.
29. The Research Organisation must inform students, in accordance with the fair processing requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998, that their personal data may be shared with the AHRC and/or the Research Councils.
30. The AHRC may reasonably request information from the Research Organisation at any time, as the AHRC deems necessary, for the assessment and review of the scheme, or the AHRC's funding strategy, or of individual BGP or studentship awards. Research Organisations in receipt of BGP awards will be expected to meet such requests.
31. To meet the Research Councils' obligations under the Freedom of Information Act and the Environmental Information Regulations and for public accountability and the dissemination of information, details of BGP and studentship awards may also be made available on the Research Council's web site and other publicly available databases, and in reports, documents and mailing lists. The Research Organisation will respond to any query from the AHRC with regard to information needed to fulfil the AHRC's obligations under an information request under the Freedom of Information Act or the Environmental Information Regulations.
32. The Research Organisations will process any personal data in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 and associated guidelines or codes of practice.

Studentship awards held outside the BGP award

33. Studentships awarded to the Research Organisation prior to the BGP award or awarded through another scheme following establishment of the BGP will not be included within the terms and conditions for the BGP award. These studentships will be managed according to the terms and conditions of the scheme under which they were awarded. Doctoral students will however be included in the submission rate survey for the Research Organisation and may affect the BGP's eligibility to recruit doctoral students if the submission thresholds are not met.

Quality assurance

34. The BGP award has been made on the condition that the Research Organisation will provide all students supported through the BGP with support, supervision and training of high quality as specified in the BGP proposal. Appropriate officers of the Research Organisation, both academic and administrative, will co-operate in ensuring that all students are supported in this way.

35. The AHRC requires all Research Organisations that are involved in postgraduate research and training to comply with the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 'Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Programmes (Sept 2004)' as amended or superseded from time to time and they are also expected to ensure equal opportunities and health and safety issues are taken into account where appropriate. In particular, the Research Organisation must ensure that:
- adequate facilities and resources are made available for the research training
 - a safe working environment is provided, at all times, meeting the requirements of health and safety legislation, and any other legislation concerning the health, welfare and rights of students, including the Data Protection Act (1998)
 - research training programmes contain good training in generic and transferable skills
 - it has in place procedures for governing good research practice and preventing, investigating and resolving any research misconduct or allegations of such.

Research governance

36. It is the responsibility of the Research Organisation to ensure that the work supported through the BGP, including through individual studentships, is organised and undertaken within a framework of best practice that recognises the various factors that may influence or impact on a student's research project. Particular requirements are to ensure that all necessary permissions are obtained before the project begins. The AHRC and the other Research Councils expect all research to be conducted in accordance with the highest standards of integrity and, research governance and research methodology.

Research ethics

37. The Research Organisation is responsible for ensuring that any ethical issues relating to the research supported through the BGP award and individual studentships within the BGP are identified and comply with all relevant legislation and Government regulation, including that introduced whilst work is in progress. This requirement includes approval or licence from any regulatory body that may be required before the research can commence. Ethical issues should be interpreted broadly and may encompass, among other things, relevant codes of practice, the involvement of human participants, tissue or data in research, the use of animals, research that may result in damage to the environment and the use of sensitive economic, social or personal data.

Disclaimer and liability

38. The Research Council accepts no liability, financial or otherwise, for expenditure or liability arising from the research funded by the BGP or individual studentships within the BGP, except as expressly set out in these terms and conditions, or otherwise agreed in writing. The Research Organisation is responsible in all respects for any research undertaken and its consequences.

39. These terms and conditions will be governed by the laws of England and Wales; all matters relating to the terms and conditions will be subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the courts of England and Wales.
40. If any of these terms and conditions is found by a court or other legitimate body to be illegal, invalid or unreasonable, it will not affect the remaining terms and conditions which will continue in force.
41. These terms and conditions together with any additional conditions set out in the offer of award contain the whole agreement between the Research Council and the Research Organisation in relation to the stated award. The Research Council and the Research Organisation do not intend that any of these terms and conditions should be enforceable by any third party.