



Policy for supporting PI Status for EMCRs

The Department aims to actively support career development for EMCR's including developing the skills to become a Principle Investigator (PI). The purpose of this policy is to be clear about the factors that will be taken into account when determining whether or not an EMCR has PI status on a project.

The PI of a study is the lead researcher responsible for research conduct, research governance, leadership, project planning, financial management and staff management.

– It is the objective of the department, through the Personal Development Programme and other skills training, to enable EMCR's to develop the full range of skills, experience and competencies that they will require as a successful PI.

The department, and the University, aim to maintain the highest possible standards of research output. Accordingly, the department must ensure that individuals who lead research have the skills and knowledge to act as an independent researcher in Oxford. Staff who have significant responsibility for research (ie as PI) are classified as Category A eligible staff for Research Excellence Framework (REF) purposes and must be submitted in our REF return. Given that we aim for 3* and 4* papers for REF purposes in our outputs, it is important that our PI's are well placed to create academically rigorous outputs. REF is a measure of our research excellence and it is incumbent on all members of our department to ensure that we are able to maintain our reputation for excellence in research.

We recognise the value of responsibility for smaller awards as part of the skills development of EMCR's and encourage to be involved in, and to lead their own, funding applications at all level of award. In some instances, although the EMCR is named as PI on an application, their post (and therefore their ability to undertake research), or the nature of their research, is dependent on funding and infrastructure provided by their team lead. Awards of this nature are valuable for the EMCR but would not be recognised as independent research for REF purposes.

The department will consider the following factors in the internal application approval process:

- Is the value of the application over £100k? A project of this size would indicate genuine independence if it succeeds through the application process and independent peer review.
- Does the group lead consider that the applicant has the skills to lead a successful project with appropriately high quality outcomes?
- Is the project genuinely independent or is it an adjunct to a project led by a more senior member of the department?
- Is the project in line with the research strategy of the department?
- Is the individual genuinely leading the research idea and the research design?
- What is funding the individual's salary during the course of the project?

- Do the terms of existing funding permit the EMCR to undertake another project?

Process

Any grant application from an EMCR must have a supporting email from a Professor or Associate Professor in the department (not necessarily the group lead) confirming:

- The individual has the appropriate skills and experience to act as a PI on this particular project;
- Whether the research question has been developed by the individual and is not an adjunct answering a sub-question, or dependent on the funding, of a larger project;
- The application has been reviewed internally and is of appropriately good quality.

The Head of Department (or Associate Head for Research) will have the final say where an application is borderline or disputed.

Follow up

Where an EMCR application is submitted by the department, the department retains a responsibility for supporting the EMCR in their role: the EMCR should draw on the experience available from their line manager and mentors in the department and the wider University.

Where it is determined that an EMCR may not submit an application as PI, the department will hold an honest conversation with the EMCR and help them develop their career as an independent researcher including exploring options for co-applicant or co-PI.

Resources

[Roles and responsibilities - Health Research Authority \(hra.nhs.uk\)](https://hra.nhs.uk)

[Doing research — Vitae Website](#)

[Becoming a PI: From 'doing' to 'managing' research \(cam.ac.uk\)](https://cam.ac.uk)

Policy approved by People and EDI Committee 27 October 2022. Next review by October 2025