ACADEMIC PROJECTS: PRE-AWARD APPROVALS AND SUBMISSIONS POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

1.1.1 Keele University is committed to delivering distinctive research of the highest quality, recognised internationally for its excellence and impact, and of being sector leading in its teaching & learning activities, and in its engagement with business, external organisations and communities. The development and submission of high quality Academic Projects are essential to this commitment, as is the provision of an environment that ensures our academic activities are conducted to the highest quality standards and in accordance with appropriate legislation and regulatory requirements.

1.1.2 This Policy sets out the approvals which must be in place before a funding application is submitted for an Academic Project (or a contract put in place to deliver an Academic Project, whichever is sooner).

1.2 Scope

1.2.1 **Who is affected?**
This Policy applies to all Keele University staff members, Emeritus Professors, Keele University Honorary Contract holders and others within Keele University who are actively involved in developing Academic Projects.

1.2.2 **Which projects are covered?**
Academic Projects are defined as research, teaching & learning and/or innovation projects that will require Keele University to establish a contractual arrangement with an external body. These include, but are not limited to:

- Proposals for research funding submitted to an external body
- Contract research projects
- Consultancy projects
- Studentships

- Technical services agreements
- Partnership projects
- Innovation projects
- CPD activities
- Knowledge Transfer Partnerships
- Facilities use agreements

This Policy applies to: (i) all Academic Projects involving Keele University, including those led by Keele University; and (ii) Academic Projects in which Keele University is a partner, regardless of whether the Academic Project attracts funding.

1.2.3 **When must approvals be in place?**

Academic Projects can be taken on by Keele University through one of two routes:

(i) Via competitive application (**Applications**); or

(ii) Through a bespoke arrangement with a funder which will go straight to contract (**Direct Awards**)

This Policy applies to Academic Projects following either route. In the case of **Applications**, the approvals set out in this Policy must be in place before submission of the Application (this includes Expressions of Interest and Outline/First Stage applications, even if the funder does not require costings at this stage). In the case **of Direct Awards**, approvals must be in place before a contract is signed.

2. POLICY

2.1 Approval Requirements

2.1.1 See **Annex A** for information on eligibility criteria for leadership of Academic Projects at Keele University.

2.1.2 The **Academic Lead** (as defined in **Section 3**) is accountable for academic integrity and successful development and delivery of the Academic Project in accordance with funder and Keele University requirements. They therefore lead the development and delivery of the Academic Project, supported by professional services colleagues, and are responsible for ensuring effective delivery and financial management of the Academic Project post-award.

2.1.3 In order to demonstrate that Academic Projects are deliverable and aligned to Keele University strategy, three levels of approval are required:

1. **Stage 1:** RaISe Approvals - to confirm that the Academic Project can be successfully delivered in accordance with Keele University's policy framework;
2. **Stage 2:** School / Directorate Approvals - to confirm that the School / Directorate is aware of, and able to deliver, the Academic Project; and
3. **Stage 3:** Faculty Approvals - to confirm that the Academic Project aligns with institutional strategy and to approve any matched funding allocation to be provided by the School or Faculty

2.1.4   A summary of the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the approvals process is set out in **Section 3**.

2.1.5   **Stage 1: RaISe Approvals**
         Approver: RaISe Project Lead (RPL)

All Academic Projects at Keele University will be assigned a professional services lead - the RaISe Project Lead (RPL). The RaISe Project Lead will work with the Academic Lead to ensure that Academic Projects are developed in line with Keele University requirements in the pre-award development phase.

The RaiSe Project Lead will be responsible for ensuring, on the basis of information provided by the Academic Lead and in line with Keele University processes and policies, that the Academic Project is deliverable. These responsibilities are further detailed in Section 3.

2.1.6   **Stage 2: School Approvals; Directorate Approvals**
         Approver: Heads of School; Directors (or delegate)

Heads of School and Directors are responsible for approving School and Directorate commitment, respectively, to deliver the Academic Project. These responsibilities are further detailed in Section 3. Proposals involving more than one School or Directorate will require approval from the Heads of all participating Schools and the Directors of all Directorates.

Heads of School and Directors will be able to view a set of key data about the Academic Project in Worktribe to enable them to provide this approval. This dataset will include approvals of facilities/equipment use as outlined in Annex B.

2.1.7   **Stage 3: Faculty Approvals**
         Approver: Executive Deans (or delegate, in accordance with Faculty processes)

         Strategic Approvals: Faculty Executive Deans are responsible for approving Faculty commitment to deliver the Academic Project. These responsibilities are further detailed in Section 3.

         Proposals involving more than one Faculty will require approval from the Executive Deans of all participating Faculties. Where a proposal is being made solely or jointly by the Executive Dean as a Principal Investigator or a Co-Investigator, the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research & Innovation will be required to counter approve in cases of research. For non-research Academic Projects, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost will be required to counter approve.

         The Faculty Executive Dean (or delegate), or counter approver where the Executive Dean is a Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator, will be able to view a set of key data about the Academic Project in Worktribe to enable them to provide this approval. This dataset will include approvals of facilities/equipment use as outlined in Annex B.

2.2   Submission

2.2.1   All approvals are required to be in place **<u>before</u>** an Application is submitted (or, in the case of Direct Awards, before a contract is signed) and those involved should ensure that sufficient time is built into Academic Project development processes to obtain these approvals. The RaISe Project Lead will be generally responsible for submitting Applications to the funding body (or through delegation to the Academic Lead where required).

2.2.2   Where possible, Academic Leads are advised to contact the RaISe Team at the earliest opportunity but at least **<u>4 weeks in advance</u>** of the funder or, where applicable, lead collaborator's deadline or target submission.

2.2.3   **Proposals submitted to the RaISe Team less than 5 working days before the funder or lead collaborator's deadline or target submission date may not be submitted to the funder.**

2.2.4   Applications brought to the attention of the RaISe Team after submission may not be accepted at award stage.

2.3 Acceptance

2.3.1   All Academic Projects must go through the approvals process (either at application stage or at award stage) and have all underlying approvals in place before they go live.

2.3.2   **Successful Applications**
The RaISe Project Lead is responsible for accepting Academic Project funding on behalf of Keele University, subject to approval of the grant terms and conditions by the Project Assurance team. Prior to acceptance, the RaISe Project Lead is responsible for identifying if material changes have been made since the Application was submitted. Academic Projects which have undergone material changes that have additional resource implications or impact on internal approvals will require resubmission for approval through the processes identified above.

2.3.3   **Direct Awards**
Acceptance of Direct Awards takes place through the RaISe contract signature processes.

2.3.4   Direct Awards will undergo approval through the processes identified above.

2.4 Post-award Extensions, Supplements, and Virements

2.4.1   **Extensions**
Approval is required for extensions to Live projects. Once confirmation is received from the funder/lead collaborator that the revised end date is acceptable, Worktribe will be updated to reflect the new end date. Approval for extensions is in two stages: (1) RaISe Project Finance followed by (2) Head of School/Director. The Project Finance team's approval confirms the funder's permission is in place for the extension. The Head of School/Director approval confirms the School/Directorate's continued operational support of the Academic Project given its increased duration. Faculty level approval is not required for extensions as the original award approval is considered sufficient. It is important that the Academic Lead informs the RaISe team at the earliest opportunity of any extensions to Academic Projects. Expenditure cannot take place on an Academic Project after it has been closed.

2.4.2   **Supplements**
Approval is required for supplementary funding to Live projects. Supplements may be via either an application process or, frequently, a direct award process. Once confirmation is received from the funder/lead collaborator of the additional Academic Project funding, the budget on Worktribe will be updated by the RaISe team. Approval for supplements is in

two stages: (1) RaISe Project Lead followed by (2) Head of School/Director. The RaISe Project Lead's approval is in line with Stage 1 approvals (2.1.5). The Head of School/Director's approval is in line with Stage 2 approvals (2.1.6). Faculty level approval is not required for supplements as the original award approval is considered sufficient.

2.4.3 Virements

Approval is required for virement between budget lines of Live Academic Projects. Funder permission for post-award budget changes can often be determined from the Funder's Terms & Conditions, award details and/or grant agreement. Where this is not the case, direct confirmation from the funder will be required. Approval for virements is a single stage by the RaISe Project Finance team. The Project Finance team's approval confirms the funder's permission is in place for the change to budget.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Academic Lead (also known as Principal Investigator / Chief Investigator / Local Investigator)

The Academic Lead (usually the Principal Investigator (PI) or Chief Investigator (CI) in the case of research projects) is accountable for the academic integrity and successful development and delivery of the Academic Project in accordance with funder and Keele University requirements. They therefore lead the Academic Project, supported by professional services colleagues, and are responsible for ensuring effective delivery and financial management of the Academic Project post-award. Academic Leads must ensure the Academic Project operates within the expenditure limits set by the funder and must abide by the funder's terms and conditions (and those in any associated collaboration agreements) and ensure staff working on the project abide by the same conditions. Academic Leads are responsible for actively providing all Academic Project related reports as required by the funder and/or collaborators, including any requirements for external returns such as ResearchFish. Academic Leads are responsible for checking and confirming acceptance of the details of Academic Projects.

3.2 RaISe Project Lead (RPL)

See Approval Requirements - Stage 1 (2.1.5).

The RaISe Project Lead (RPL) is a member of the RaISe professional services team who will act as the main point of contact for the Academic Lead throughout the Academic Project and will steward an Academic Project through the Academic Project development processes. The RaISe Project Lead will be responsible for ensuring that Academic Projects are

developed in line with Keele University requirements in the pre-award development phase and that any changes that impact upon deliverability of the Academic Project are reviewed at award stage prior to acceptance. Assurances will include, for example, ensuring that the requirements of the Costing & Pricing Policy are followed, that the resources outlined in the proposal are sufficient to cover delivery and that regulatory requirements can be fulfilled. Additionally, the RaiSe Project Lead will ensure that all appropriate signatures required pre-submission are obtained prior to submission. More detail about signatures and the relevant signatory processes are set out in the Research, Innovation and Engagement Internal Directorate Delegations document.

3.3   RaISe Team
The RaISe Team comprises professional services colleagues working in concert together across several functions to support academic colleagues in developing Academic Projects. The RaISe Team will take Academic Projects through the pre-award stage from idea to contract, with additional specialist post-award support around impact, regulatory compliance and financial reporting. The RaISe Team functions comprise Research Development, Partnership Development, Project Finance (Pre-award and Post-award), Project Assurance (Contracts), Project Assurance (Governance) and Research Operations.

3.4   RaISe Project Finance Team
See Post-award Extensions and Virements (2.4). The RaISe Project Finance Team is responsible for approving extensions and virements to live Academic Projects, essentially confirming that permission is in place from the funder for any post-award changes relating to an Academic Project's revised end date or the transfer of existing funds between budget headings.

3.5   Head of School (or delegate) / Director (or delegate)
See Approval Requirements - Stage 2 (2.1.6).
The Head of School or Director is responsible for approving resources allocated for delivery of Academic Projects. This includes approval of the Academic Lead, staff time (funded, unfunded and appropriate buyout costs, where applicable), availability of space to accommodate staff and any project hardware, and commitment of any other resources required for Academic Project delivery, including any matched funding provided by the School or Directorate (within the School or Directorate's financial envelope). Costs are generated at the School / Directorate level and approved by the Head of School or Director. Approvers are responsible for agreeing to undertake Academic Projects at less than full economic costs (fEC) and, in so doing, are confirming that an assessment of the benefits of undertaking the Academic Project justifies it being done at less than full cost recovery,

whilst still ensuring that the overall annual research income for Schools, Directorates and Faculties enables the University to recover a level of economic costs comparable to and not below that of Keele University's benchmark group of institutions as defined by Keele's TRAC return.

3.6   Faculty Executive Dean (or delegate)
See Approval Requirements - Stage 3 (2.1.7).
The Faculty Executive Dean is responsible for strategic approval of Academic Projects led by academics based within their respective Faculty and for approval of any matched funding allocations (within the Faculty's financial envelope). The Executive Dean will consider the proposal in its entirety, including the quality of the application, its fit with Faculty priorities, risks, resource requirements (including staff time and any matched funding), and the cost recovery model - ensuring on behalf of Keele University that there is adequate provision of resources to meet all commitments. The Faculty Executive Dean is responsible for agreeing to undertake Academic Projects at less than full economic costs (fEC) and, in so doing, is confirming that an assessment of the benefits of undertaking the Academic Project justifies it being done at less than full cost recovery, whilst still ensuring that the overall annual research income for Schools, Directorates and Faculties enables the University to recover a level of economic costs comparable to and not below that of Keele University's benchmark group of institutions as defined by Keele's TRAC return.

3.7   Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research & Innovation
The Pro-VC for R&I is responsible for approving submission of Academic Projects (research) of which the Executive Dean of a Faculty is a Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator.

3.8   Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost
The DVC & Provost is responsible for approving submission of Academic Projects (non-research) of which the Executive Dean of a Faculty is a Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator.

4.   REVIEW, APPROVAL & PUBLICATION

4.1.1   This Policy shall be reviewed at least every three years, led by the Director of Research Strategy Delivery. Any proposed amendments and future versions of the Policy will be authorised in line with the University's Policy Framework. University Research Committee has overall responsibility for the Policy.

4.1.2   This Policy will be available on [Keele University Policy Zone](#).

5. ANNEXES

5.1 Annex A: Eligibility Criteria

5.1.1 In order to be eligible to submit a proposal for funding for which Keele University will act as a lead institution, the Academic Lead must have either a contract of employment (i.e. be a substantive member of staff on either an open ended or fixed term contract) or an honorary contract that covers the full Academic Project period. Where a fixed term employment or honorary contract is not planned to cover the full Academic Project period, then the individual should be responsible until the end of the funded period and a named alternative (usually a Co-Investigator or a Supervisor) made responsible and held accountable for successful completion of the Academic Project. Similarly, if an Academic Lead intends to retire during the lifetime of the Academic Project an alternative, accountable individual should be identified. In such situations the designated alternative should be identified during development of the Academic Project.

5.1.2 In the case of Fellowship applications, the external Fellowship applicant can be named as the Academic Lead on the application if the expectation is that the Fellow will have a contract of employment at Keele University should the application be successful. As per 5.1.1, a named alternative should be included to take responsibility for the full Academic Project period.

5.1.3 Emeritus staff and Research Assistants are permitted to act as Academic Leads where there is a permanent member of Keele University staff acting as a Co-Investigator on the Academic Project and who will be identified during development as the individual responsible and accountable for successful completion of the Academic Project in the event that the named Academic Lead is unable to do so. In certain circumstances, Emeritus staff may be permitted to hold grants in their own right where the terms and conditions of the grant do not preclude it, and in accordance with the terms of their appointment.

5.1.4 Individuals on formal Honorary Contracts are permitted to act as Academic Leads. Individuals with Honorary Titles (but not Honorary Contracts) cannot act as Academic Leads but are permitted to act as Co-Investigators on awards where there is a permanent member of Keele University staff acting as the Academic Lead.

5.2 Annex B: Key Points for Approval

5.2.1 In submitting the Academic Project for the three stages of approval, as set out in Section 2 of the Policy, the Academic Lead and the RaISe Project Lead are responsible for ensuring that the following internal approvals have been agreed for the Academic Project:

5.2.2 **Matched funding**
Executive Deans (or delegates) are responsible for approval of commitment of matched funding if within their Faculty financial envelope. If matched funding is beyond the Faculty financial envelope, approval must be obtained from the Deputy Vice Chancellor prior to submission of the Academic Project proposal

5.2.3 **Equipment or facilities use**
Approval must be obtained from the relevant Faculty/School/Facility for use of Keele University equipment or facilities for Academic Project delivery. This approval will include confirmation that the facilities or equipment are available and that the cost of usage has been factored into the proposal. Individuals approving use of equipment or facility will vary depending on the equipment or facility in question.

5.2.4 **NHS treatment costs**
Where appropriate, confirmation must be obtained from an NHS Nominated Signatory at the relevant NHS body(ies) to confirm that NHS treatment costs have been identified appropriately.

5.2.5 **Demand management**
Certain funders require adherence to demand management processes at institutional level. In these cases, confirmation must be obtained from the Chair of the relevant internal panel coordinating this process that the Academic Project can proceed to submission.

5.2.6 **Research Governance**
Where delivery of the Academic Project involves regulated areas or high risk research (e.g. Overseas research, Clinical Trials of Investigational Medicinal Products (CTIMPs) or Security Sensitive Information, etc) or where reputational risk of Keele University is a factor; involvement of the Project Assurance Governance team is required. The team will make clear statements which Academic Project approvers must take into account when approving Academic Projects. Risk areas will be identified in the Worktribe record for the Academic Project.

5.2.7 **Peer review**
Academic Project proposals meeting peer review criteria must undergo peer review prior to submission.

5.2.8 **Non-standard funder terms & conditions / tenders**
In cases where non-standard funder terms and conditions need to be accepted at the point of submission (i.e. in response to tenders) approval of the terms must be obtained from the Project Assurance Team prior to submission.

5.2.9 **Clinical Trials Unit (CTU)**
Where a proposal relating to an Academic Project requires use of the CTU, approval must be obtained from the Director or Deputy Director of the CTU, confirming that the Academic Project has been costed appropriately and meets the criteria for use of the CTU.

5.2.10 **Biological Services Unit (BSU)**
Where a proposal relating to an Academic Project requires use of the BSU, approval must be obtained from the Head of the BSU confirming that the Academic Project has been costed appropriately and meets the criteria for use of the BSU.

5.2.11 **Credit-bearing teaching provision**
Where an Academic Project involves credit-bearing teaching provision, approval should be obtained from the Quality Assurance Team prior to submission.

6. DOCUMENT CONTROL INFORMATION

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For Office Use – Keywords for search function	