**School of Technology – Policy on Investigator Time in Research Applications**

The University’s Research Policy Committee has recently approved the attached minimum Investigator Time policy, which will apply to eligible research applications submitted after 1 August 2020.

[Research Investigator Time Policy](https://www.research-operations.admin.cam.ac.uk/policies/research-investigator-time-policy)

The policy requires Schools to implement local procedures for enforcing minimum recovery levels and addressing exceptional cases for dispensation. Nevertheless, the School’s default position remains that Investigator (PI and Co-I) Time at these minimum levels, is recoverable on all eligible awards.

The School supports research volume growth but advocates an approach to costing research applications to maximise indirect cost recovery. This includes provision to recover sufficient Investigator time on all eligible applications, particularly those involving DI research staff. Applicants should consider the amount of PI Time that would look credible to a grants awarding committee; grants can fail due to a perceived lack of PI commitment.

The University’s policy recognises that minimum Investigator Time requirements will increase according to the number of FTE Directly Incurred (DI) research staff on the project. The policy therefore requires that minimum Directly Allocated (DA) Investigator time for eligible applications increases by 5% per DI FTE, up to a maximum of 3 DI FTE, as per the below table.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Directly Incurred Research Staff FTE** | **Directly Allocated Investigator Time (PI and Co-I) Minimum** |
| 1 | 10% |
| 2 | 15% |
| 3 | 20% |

**Dispensations**

While the School expects appropriate levels of Investigator Time to be recovered (where eligible) in all circumstances, there will be certain exceptional circumstances where it is recognised that the stated minimum recovery levels do not apply. The School has the ability to issue dispensation from minimum levels, in exceptional cases, which will include:

* + Applications where University of Cambridge is not the lead institution and other collaborating institutions are recovering Investigator Time at lower levels; so long as Cambridge Investigator Time recovery is consistent with that recovered by other institutions collaborating on the bid;
  + Applications where the relevant PI is already 100% funded directly from research grants (DI cost)[[1]](#footnote-1);
  + Fellowship grants.

**Dispensation applications should be sent to:** [**investigatortime@tech.cam.ac.uk**](mailto:investigatortime@tech.cam.ac.uk)

**School of Technology Dispensation Process**

The default responsibility for enforcing the University’s policy sits with Research Operations Office (ROO) Pre-Award staff. The School expects ROO staff to ensure all eligible applications contain appropriate levels of Investigator Time, at least as much as minimum levels detailed above[[2]](#footnote-2).

This policy allows Pre-Award staff in ROO discretion to automatically apply dispensation from minimum levels in the specific circumstance noted above. Any other exceptional cases for dispensation will be considered by the Head of School (delegated to the School Finance Manager), only where ROO Pre-Award staff are satisfied that there is a strong case for exceptional dispensation from University minimum requirements. This includes securing approval of the respective Head of Department for a dispensation request, as required by the University’s policy.

The School’s default position is that the University’s policy applies in all cases except those specifically detailed above. Dispensation requests in other situations shall be submitted to ROO (receiving on behalf of the School Office), no less than 2 weeks prior to the Research Office submission deadline. The requesting email shall contain:

* + A pdf of the latest project X5 including all DA and DI staff as well as a draft X5 of the project that includes the level of investigator time applied as per policy as a counterfactual;
  + A summary of the proposal, including the collaborators, brief background and purpose of research and why exception should be made in this case– no more than 300 words;
  + A note from the Head of Department providing justification and confirming support for the request (as required by the University’s procedure), including details and commitment of any departmental resources contributed to the project.

ROO staff will forward cases to the Finance Manager of the School, when it is satisfied that the circumstances are genuinely exceptional and all the above information has been supplied[[3]](#footnote-3).

* + Applications direct from individual investigators will not be accepted;
  + The Head of School has delegated responsibility to approve cases to the School Finance Manager;
  + For applications greater than £100k in value the strategic importance of the application will be assessed by the Deputy Head of School, prior to the dispensation being approved.

Departmental Research Office staff, acting under direction from the Head of Department, may appeal to the School Office directly by emailing the School Finance Manager (copying in ROO), where a formal case has been rejected by ROO in the first instance. Although it is unlikely that the School Office will take a different view to ROO staff working on behalf of the School, discretion to grant dispensations ultimately rests with the Head of School.

Decisions will be confirmed by email from the School’s Finance Manager to the Departmental Research Administrator. The School of Technology ROO Team will be informed of all decisions (by copy).

**Office of the School of Technology**

**May 2021**

1. In such circumstances it should be considered whether it is appropriate for that PI to apply for further awards, in view of their existing 100% commitment, or if there are other individuals who can (or already effectively do) act as PI / Co-I on awards, before agreeing to a dispensation. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. ROO staff cannot guarantee to review all applications worth less than £250k in total but the policy applies to all eligible grants. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)