

Institute for Liberal Arts and Sciences/PVC R&E, Vice-Chancellor's Office

Seedcorn Funding - Interdisciplinary Research Workshops Guidance

Background

Interdisciplinary research is an important component of the research landscape in the UK and internationally. A number of recent [studies](#) have been conducted and there is a growing interest in and funding for Interdisciplinary Research (IDR) ; IDR has an essential role in addressing the complex problems posed by global social challenges and brings increased rigour to the understanding of the disciplines, a strong and valuable basis for developing the University's research capacity, as well as the most innovative forms of its research-informed teaching.

It is widely recognised that IDR requires more time and resources; there may be more initial groundwork, planning and team building required to foster successful collaborations. Collaborators need space to develop their work and there must be flexibility and leeway to support projects which may evolve. Institutional disciplinary focused structures can also be a barrier to interdisciplinarity and can limit innovative ID approaches. Cross-cutting funding mechanisms are needed to underpin IDR and seedcorn funding is the small investment needed to foster the development of more ambitious projects.

Seedcorn Funding

Development of interdisciplinary research collaborations is a key priority for Keele. In order to identify, nurture and support interdisciplinary research activities at Keele, the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Enterprise and the Institute of Liberal Arts and Sciences will provide a third round of seedcorn funding. Funding is available for research workshops where the activities will underpin a grant proposal, or application, that will support a collaborative interdisciplinary research project , or applications which are focused on developing an IDR proposal that will lead to substantial IDR grant application/s or which have more ambitious plans that will follow from, for example, an innovative pilot network.

Themes

Whilst there are no set themes, proposals should be focused around areas where Keele can demonstrate strength and expertise across different disciplines.

The following themes have been identified as offering external funding opportunities linked to interdisciplinary research:

- Health and ageing
- Mental health
- Prospering from the energy revolution
- Global public health

In addition, we welcome proposals linked to development of the University's strategic research priorities: global health, sustainable futures and social inclusion

What does the funding cover?

The research workshops provide space for colleagues to get together in a neutral space removed from everyday constraints and day to day pressures. It is expected that an IDR team should comprise between 4-7 members, including external partners if proposed, with mixed disciplinary expertise. The group will be mainly Keele academics and the contribution of external expertise would, depending on group size, involve 1 or 2 external partners.

Workshop funding will cover the following costs:

- Two 'away' days in Keele Hall, or a venue that will promote appropriate collaborative activity, including accommodation, hospitality and administrative support.
- Travel and accommodation to enable the involvement of external UK academics or policy related partners

The application should account for the way in which the two days will be used. The outline above is a possible format for a research workshop; however, we envisage flexibility here to enable researchers to achieve the best outcome. IDR teams will have different needs and so workshops will have different formats and structures and we are open to your proposals about your team's needs.

As IDR is about building research capacity, it is expected that participants will be at a variety of career stages and it is also possible to involve postdoctoral and PGR colleagues. For all of the team roles, the Lead Applicant must indicate the contribution and distinctive expertise that each member will bring to the enterprise (see Section 6 RW Proposal Document) In addition the teams will be provided with the support and input of a critical friend: that is, a Keele colleague with significant experience and knowledge of IDR who will provide a sounding board, stimulus or advice as needed. It is anticipated that the 'critical friend' will be involved in the course of the second day as the team moves towards delivering the outcomes identified by the application.

How to Apply

Researcher groups are invited to put forward their proposals for consideration using the *Research Workshop Application Form*. This should be accompanied by a separate word document, the *Research Workshop Proposal* (See Section 2) outlining the proposed activity, the collaborators, internal and external, and the intended or potential interdisciplinary outcomes. Please include details of the recent research activity of the proposed participants; either a webpage link, or a list of 5 most recent publications, and how the individual's research profiles will be strengthened through their involvement in the workshop.

Applications will be considered by a panel including representation from the following, the PVC R&E, the Director of ILAS, the three Faculty Associate Deans for Research and Research Development Managers. Anyone considering applying for workshop funding should feel free to discuss their plans with the Associate Dean/s for Research, or the Research Development Manager/s.

The following grading system will be used in considering applications for funding

<u>6</u>	<u>Outstanding: likely to</u> contribute to highly innovative outputs, impact, and environment. Definitely value for money. Priority for funding.
<u>5</u>	<u>Excellent: likely to</u> contribute to innovative outputs, impact or environment. Value for money. Fundable, but not the highest priority.
<u>4</u>	<u>Good:</u> Likely to contribute to outputs, impact or environment. Value for money. Fundable, if budget allows.
<u>3</u>	<u>Satisfactory:</u> Seems value for money. May contribute to outputs, impact or environment. Low priority for funding.
<u>2</u>	<u>More information needed:</u> Not clear that it will contribute to outputs, impact or environment. Not clear that it will be value for money. Not fundable at this time.
<u>1</u>	<u>Case not proven:</u> Not fundable.

On completion of the Research Workshops the workshop leader is expected to provide a report on the activities which will be used to generate news items for the ILAS website, case studies and will made available to the ILAS Steering Group.

Schedule

Opening date January 22nd 2018

Closing date March 9th 2018

The outcomes of the process will be shared in the week beginning March 23rd 2018

It is expected that workshops will take place in May /June/July and that all funding claims will be made before the end of the financial year July 2018.

Completed applications should be sent through to Ms Jo Flynn, the ILAS manager e.j.flynn@keele.ac.uk to be received by Midday on Friday March 9th 2018

