

Policy on the Payment of Individuals for Involvement with, and Participation in, Research

1. Scope

- 1.1. The purpose of this policy is to set out a uniform approach for the payment of individuals for their involvement with or participation in research at the University of York, recognising the importance of such involvement in producing high-quality, world-renowned research. In line with the University's strategic aim to be a [University for public good](#), this policy sets out reasonable levels of payment for involvement and/or participation in a range of research activities. The policy should be considered in line with HMRC requirements and guidance from relevant organisations, for example the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) guidance for [researchers and professionals](#) and for [members of the public](#) on payments for public contributors.
- 1.2. This policy sets out the principles underlying and the processes surrounding the payment of individuals for involvement with or participation in research. Mechanisms for the payment of individuals, as well as guidance as to the appropriate method and rate, are laid out in more detail in the [Decision Matrix and Payment Guide](#).
- 1.3. This policy applies to all those undertaking research under the University's auspices. This includes all research undertaken on the University's behalf, by staff, students, visiting or emeritus staff, associates, honorary or clinical contract holders, contractors and consultants. It applies across all subject disciplines and fields of study. Those undertaking research on University premises but not in the University's name are expected to adhere to University of York research policies. The Policy should be considered alongside other policies and guidance from the University, most prominently the [Code of Practice on Research Integrity](#) and the [Code of Practice and Principles for Good Ethical Governance](#).
- 1.4. Patients, carers, service-users and members of the public involved with or participating in research do so on a voluntary basis. The point at which a public contributor moves from a 'volunteer' to a worker (someone in receipt of payment) is not clearly defined by HMRC. This policy therefore takes into account various disciplinary norms, examples of best practice, external expert advice and legal requirements to identify reasonable thresholds for the payment of individuals who are involved with or participate in research.

2. Guiding Principles

- 2.1. This Policy is in place to ensure, where possible, that payments to those involved with or participating in research at or with the University of York are made in a uniform and aligned manner, in accordance with relevant legal, regulatory and ethical standards.

Participation

2.2. The following principles should be followed when paying individuals for **participation in research**:

- That participants have a right to feel respected and appreciated in the research project and wider academic environment, and the fair compensation of such individuals is a step towards doing so. That individuals (participants) are a valuable part of the research process whose time, effort and experience should be fairly compensated or rewarded, and that doing so is an integral part of conducting research.
- That participants to research retain the right to withdraw from the research process at any time, and that this is not undermined by the payment of such individuals. Participants have the right to decline payment if they wish. Researchers should consider the risk of coercion or undue influence when working with participants and plan appropriately to mitigate risks.
- That the approaches to the payment of participants should be proportionate, giving consideration to levels of risk and the time investment required for delivery of the research.

2.3. In some instances, such as clinical trials, research projects will include large numbers of participants. It is good practice to ensure sufficient numbers of participants so that there is no undue pressure on any individual participant for delivery, and researchers should plan as far as possible to ensure the study remains viable in the event of unforeseen circumstances, including a consideration of the minimum numbers required.

Involvement

2.4. The following principles should be followed when paying individuals for **involvement in research**:

- Public contributors involved within research have a right to feel respected and appreciated in the research environment, and the fair compensation of such public contributors is a step towards doing so. That individuals involved with research as a public contributor are a valuable part of the research process whose time, effort and experience should be fairly compensated or rewarded, and that doing so is an integral part of conducting research.
- That public contributors involved with research retain the right to withdraw from the research process at any time, and that this is not undermined by the payment of public contributors. People involved with research have the right to decline payment

if they wish. Researchers should consider the risk of coercion or undue influence when working with public contributors and plan appropriately to mitigate risks.

- That the approaches to the payment of public contributors should be proportionate, giving consideration to levels of risk and the time investment involved.
- 2.5. In line with GDPR and Data Protection requirements, individuals should receive an information sheet and a privacy notice outlining the use of their personal data for the duration of the research project. The information sheet should include details of the amount of money paid in recognition of their time and involvement, and the processes and timescales for payments for public contributors involved with research.
- 2.6. It is good practice to involve at least three public contributors in your research, in order to ensure peer support and good cover in the event of ill health or unforeseen circumstances.

3. Rates and Thresholds for Payment

- 3.1. The University assessment of reasonable payment rates is aligned with existing funder payment rates, such as those developed by the NIHR for [public contributors involved in research](#) (and as such are subject to change if funder guidance varies). “Reasonable” in this context refers to an amount of payment which does not risk a public contributor or participant entering into a ‘worker arrangement’ (as defined by the HMRC).
- 3.2. The following thresholds are deemed to be reasonable when paying individuals involved with or participating in research:
- Up to £75 for up to half a day (assuming a standard seven hour work day, making half a day equivalent to three and a half hours);
 - Up to £150 for a full day (assuming a standard seven hour work day); *and*
 - Up to £183.50 total in any given week.

The University will review the thresholds regularly to ensure they continue to reflect best practice within the sector. The full NIHR suggested rates are available in Appendix One for reference, though please note that the figure of £183.50 per week is drawn from external guidance, including that from HMRC.

- 3.3. The amounts listed above are upper thresholds and the actual payment made will depend on the nature of the research and activity concerned. **These amounts do not include expenses.** With regards to involvement, the University recognises the [suggested rates](#) noted by the NIHR and will review the rates as relevant. These rates are provided as examples, and researchers are able to use different rates where they wish.

- 3.4. Lower thresholds for payment rates are not provided. Researchers are encouraged to pay as fairly and appropriately as possible where the upper thresholds are not in budget.
- 3.5. Individuals taking part in research involvement activities are likely to be paid at a higher rate and are therefore more likely to meet the taxation thresholds described below (section 3).
- 3.6. Further guidance on payment amounts is available to researchers through the [Decision Matrix and Payment Guide](#).
- 3.7. The University recognises the value of flexibility, and in developing this policy has taken steps to avoid an overly prescriptive payment rate. Individuals may be paid more than the above amounts, however to do so may change the nature of the relationship and may result in the HMRC status of 'worker' being inferred for tax purposes.
- 3.8. Individuals who are paid more than £1000 per financial year for involvement with or participation in research must be declared by the Principal Investigator (PI) to the University Tax Accountant to meet the University's HMRC requirements. It is the responsibility of the PI to keep a record of such individuals and to inform the [University VAT Specialist](#) as relevant, to enable the submission of a S23 return.
- 3.9. Departments should ensure they have an appropriate framework and supporting system in place to facilitate organisation of and access to payment records. The public contributors or participants concerned are required to self-declare their income to HMRC in addition to the University fulfilling these reporting requirements. See section 3.10 for further guidance as to what information researchers should be collecting and recording.
- 3.10. A record must be kept of any amount paid to an individual and when this payment was made. This should include the following information as a minimum:
 - The name of the payee
 - The amount paid
 - The date of the payment

This record must meet [data protection requirements](#) and be shared upon request in the event of both internal and external audits.

- 3.11. Responsibility for the management of tax implications arising from such payments lies with the individual public contributors and participants, except where such individuals are included on the University payroll. Information on payment for those involved with or taking part in research, including how individuals can expect to be paid, should be included on the information sheet given to public contributors and participants.

- 3.12. Payment might have implications for individuals on benefits. The University is not able to provide financial advice on this due to the variations in personal circumstance; individuals can refer to the NIHR guidance for further information.
- 3.13. PIs should provide individual public contributors and participants with a draft letter to present to the Job Centre Plus where necessary. This letter should outline the nature of the activity undertaken, individual's involvement and the payment received for their time. In the case of Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) work, assistance with developing this letter can be sought from the Involvement@York Team.
- 3.14. A report on payments distributed during each financial year will be coordinated by the Policy, Integrity and Performance Office (PIP) and presented to the University Research Committee on an annual basis, as well as being shared with the Involvement@York Team.

4. Methods of Payment

- 4.1. Full details on how to pay individuals can be found in the [Decision Matrix and Payment Guide](#). Researchers should contact their Departmental Finance Administrator where they are uncertain.
- 4.2. BACS is the preferred method of payment, as this allows for greater transparency and accuracy in record-keeping, however it is recognised that this will not be appropriate in all cases. In certain circumstances (for example where an individual does not have a bank account or in instances where there is a large number of participants in the research project) other methods of payment, such as vouchers, may be necessary.
- 4.3. The decision as to which method of payment to use should be made with consideration of the appropriateness for the task and for the individual's circumstances. The responsibility of the University to pay individuals in a timely and efficient manner, minimising the burden for individuals participants and contributors however possible, should be recognised throughout.
- 4.4. Where information sheets are provided to individuals involved with or participating in research, these must include detail on the method of payment (e.g. BACS or vouchers). Information sheets should be developed in line with guidance from departments and ethics committees as relevant.
- 4.5. The standard retention period for financial data is 6 years plus the current year, however funder requirements may differ. For further information as to how long financial data should be stored, consult the [University Corporate Retention Schedule](#) and the [Financial Regulations](#).

5. Breaches of Policy

- 5.1. Breaches of this policy may be considered a breach of duty of care to participants and public contributors, and as such would constitute research misconduct. Such incidences would be taken forward under the [Research Misconduct Policy and Procedure](#) if applicable.
- 5.2. Where the breach is not understood to be research misconduct, it will be taken forward via the Disciplinary Procedure as necessary. Legal involvement may be sought in certain cases, for example where payments are criminally mismanaged.
- 5.3. In certain circumstances, a breach of policy may be judged to be a capability issue, and in these instances will be addressed through a range of more appropriate measures, for example further training. Researchers who are concerned that their actions might breach policy can seek advice from the [Involvement@York](#) team, the [Patient and Public Involvement \(PPI\) and Stakeholder Engagement Manager](#) for the York Trials Unit, and PPI advisers in the [NIHR Research Support Service](#) (RSS).

6. Definitions

- 6.1. **Research engagement** refers to raising awareness of research and communicating new knowledge created by research with the public through for example science festivals, media communications, university open days etc.
- 6.2. **Research participation** refers to taking part in a research study, sometimes referred to as being the subject of the research. For example participation in a clinical trial investigating the effectiveness of a medicine or behaviour change intervention, surveys or completion of questionnaires, focus groups, one-to-one interviews, online or in-person experiments. Members of the public are generally referred to as research participants in this context.
- 6.3. **Research involvement** refers to research that is done 'with' or 'by' the public, not 'to', 'about' or 'for' them. It means that members of the public with relevant life experience contribute to how research is prioritised, designed, conducted and disseminated and involves an active partnership between members of the public and researchers across the lifecycle of the research process. Members of the public are generally referred to as public contributors to research in this context.
- 6.4. **Creative input** refers to individuals whose creative output is used as part of the experimental design but is not itself analysed. For example, a vocal recording is made of an individual singing. This recording is then played back to experimental subjects whose responses are then analysed.

6.5. **Project input** refers to individuals who bring a specific professional skill set which assists the conduct of the research but which is not itself analysed. For example the translation of subject interviews. The content of the interview would be analysed rather than the technique or quality of the translation.

Glossary of Terms

Terms are listed in the order they appear in the policy, rather than alphabetically.

Term or Acronym	Definition	Notes
HMRC	His Majesty's Revenue and Customs - the UK's tax, payments and customs authority	https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs
NIHR	National Institute for Health Research	The nation's largest funder of health and care research, providing the people, facilities and technology for research to thrive.
Public Contributor	The term given to a member of the public who gets involved in research, as a way of identifying them as different to a researcher or a member of staff in an organisation. Where research is done with, or by, them, in partnership with researchers, academics and clinicians.	<p>From the NIHR: When we use the term 'public', we are including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● patients and potential patients ● carers and people who use health and social care services ● people from organisations that represent people who use services. <p>https://www.nihr.ac.uk/patients-carers-and-the-public/i-want-to-help-with-research/</p>

Auspices	If something is done under the auspices of a particular person or organisation, or under someone's auspices, it is done with their support and approval	
Participant	Someone who takes part in a study, where research is 'done to, about, or for' them.	For example, a person taking part in a clinical trial, or who answers a survey or question about their experience of living with a particular health condition.
Principal Investigators (PIs)	The person leading and responsible for a research project	
Policy, Integrity and Performance Office (PIP)	A team within the University of York Research Innovation and Knowledge Exchange Directorate	The role of PIP takes on all aspects of implementation of the Research Strategy and the promotion of good practice of research at an institutional level
University Research Committee	The University-level committee with responsibility for research activity at the institution, including oversight of policy and performance.	URC has formal ownership of the policy on the payment of individuals for involvement with and contribution to research.

Document Control

Approval body:	University Research Committee
Policy Owner:	Professor Matthias Ruth, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research
Responsible Service:	Directorate of Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange (Involvement@York, Policy, Integrity and Performance Office) Department of Finance
Policy Manager:	Policy Officer (Integrity), Policy, Integrity and Performance Office
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Appendix 1

The [NIHR](#) sets out the following rates, which can be used as a guide/ benchmark:

- £12.50
For involvement in a task or activity such as reading and commenting on an abstract **which equates to less than half an hour**. For example, reviewing papers for the development of Alerts.
- £25
For involvement in a task or activity requiring little or no preparation and which equates to approximately one hour of activity or less. For example, participating in a focus group to provide feedback on a proposal.
- £50
For involvement in a task or activity likely to require some preparation and which equates to approximately two hours of activity. For example, a teleconference with related papers to read or review a few short documents.
- £75
For involvement in a task or activity where preparation is required and which equates to approximately half a day's activity. For example, participating in a meeting to interview a small number of candidates who have applied to join a committee or panel, participating in a focus group, or delivering training.
- £150
For involvement in all-day meetings. For example, attending a committee or panel meeting as an observer prior to becoming an active public member of a committee/panel.
- £300
For involvement in all-day meetings that require substantial preparation. For example, when chairing or co-chairing a meeting or when carrying out other discretionary work, which requires additional responsibilities.