Support for Research Projects

Overview

Our aim is to provide a supportive and vibrant environment for our academic staff and encourage and facilitate the highest quality research linked to our thematic areas by offering tailored advice for projects that use data-drive innovation to:

- address complex real-world societal, economic and environmental challenges and
- collaborate with partners outside academia to formulate questions, develop new skills, gain new knowledge, share the outputs and outcomes and achieve translational impact.

We will normally prioritise large and complex projects that are data-rich, and can contribute to our portfolio of activities on the following themes: Creative, Gov-tech and Data-civics, Fin-tech and Financial Services, Tourism and Festivals, Future Infrastructure, and the Ethics of Data and AI. We are also willing to support smaller externally funded projects if there is the ambition to pursue larger external grants funded by UKRI and similar funders. We encourage our entire research community to actively contribute to the EFI research agenda, and to our wider portfolio of activities including education and engagement.

Our aim is to turn around requests for support in an agile manner to let projects and individuals know as soon as possible whether we have the capacity to support them. We will work with schools and school research offices, and some activities are excluded (see below).

Pre-award support

In order to support EFI in its research ambitions, we want to add value to the support already provided by other units across the University, by offering expert advice on how to structure and resource a large interdisciplinary project and coordinate the submission process. Support should be sought **at an early stage** to make sure we are able to commit our resources in an efficient manner, as the capacity of our team is limited.

Our Research Proposals Manager works with EFI researchers, their external partners, and other colleagues across the University to coordinate and develop large and ambitious research proposals. The main responsibilities of this role include:

- managing the process and timeline of submission for strategic research proposals
- giving advice on the design and structure of the projects; and
- drafting or giving feedback on the non-scientific parts of funding applications.

We also provide advice on funders and funding streams that are relevant to our research themes.

In order to support applicants, we also provide buy-out for the PI and Co-Is or buy-in for researchers who can support academics in preparing the bid. We also facilitate networking and collaboration with external partners, by coordinating and organising meetings to help with co-designing and co-producing research projects with impactful outcomes.

Our support also extends to upskilling applicants and providing digital training resources accessible to research project teams. The Centre for Data, Culture and Society (CDCS) and our Digital Skills Training Manager organise and coordinate a comprehensive digital research methods training programme for researchers across the University. In collaboration with CDCS, we design and deliver training courses

focused on data skills and provide specialist technical expertise to our academic community and post-graduate students, as well as supporting the development of data-intensive projects.

Colleagues in our Innovation and Partnerships team, working closely with Edinburgh Innovation, can help applicants to understand business perspectives and stakeholders' needs, and to develop networks and strategic partnerships with organisations across EFI's target sectors. Support from this team should be sought at an early stage in developing grant proposals, to maximise the potential impact of relationships, and to ensure external/industry perspectives can be fully embedded in the research proposals and impact approach.

We are happy to confirm our contribution to research projects by drafting institutional letters of support or by providing information about EFI that can be used by the PI or the School/College where the applicants are based.

Post-award support

Each research project needs some tailored support after the award is confirmed. These are some examples of how we can help teams in organising and conducting their activities:

- **Working space:** to maximise space utilisation, flexibility and attractiveness to University staff and tenants, when the building opens (scheduled for late 2023) we envisage hot-desking areas, with clusters of individual/shared desks, to reflect hybrid working practices. Secured storage facilities will enable staff to keep personal items and equipment (noise cancellation headphones, keyboards etc.) in the office and allows for the introduction of hot desk, shared desk, and clean desk policies. Please note that EFI will not provide space for academic staff who already have office space elsewhere in the University.
  If interested in the office space, please get in touch with the EFI Senior Research Manager (valentina.guerrieri@ed.ac.uk). All requests need to be discussed and agreed by Jude Henderson (EFI Director of Operations) and the space planning group before submitting a proposal.

- **Access to bookable spaces** in the EFI Building (to be available from late 2023): these include:
  - Meeting rooms (20 rooms of different sizes, with capacity from 2 to 20 people), suitable for co-creation meetings with partners and colleagues. Some will have a flexible layout configuration, others a more formal boardroom look and feel;
  - Collaboration space, a dedicated 'tucked away' collaboration space to facilitate creative workshops for up to 24 people;
  - Makers rooms/project space: Two bookable small 'blank canvas' areas (approx. $46m^2$ each) to facilitate pop-up stage and studio settings. The spaces can also be used to make prototypes using cardboard, paper and other crafting materials.
  - Data visualization space: Two small spaces (in total approx. $83m^2$) that facilitate AV and VR production, data visualisation, 3D scanning, and digital recording dedicated for researchers.
  - Digital Maker space: A large space (approx. $173m^2$), supported by a lab manager, equipped with a wide range of new and transformative technologies including 3D printing, 3D scanning, and Virtual Reality. This space will be primarily used by students taking part in EFI educational programmes, but we hope it will also be able to support research activities (availability permitting), such as sandpits, workshops, or large collaborative activities with stakeholders.
  - High Security Data space: Two bookable small rooms (approx. $32m^2$ each) managed with extra swipe access control where sensitive data can be discussed or presented. Each room will have a workstation with off grid functionality as well as IT technology to present data
  - Small event space, able to host up to 60 people;

o   <u>Lecture theatre</u>: Large event space for approx. 370 people, with a variety of seating arrangements.

- **Promotions and Comms**: EFI can help to promote the impact of research via appropriate channels (social media, newsletters and website). Event organisation as well as building and maintaining a website for the research project should be costed and charged to external funders.

- **Public and business engagement:** EFI can provide support for public and stakeholder engagement and help reach various public constituencies when preparing a new proposal, engaging with project partners and develop trusted relationship with them. We can also help with disseminating the outcomes of research projects and motivate stakeholders to make use of research evidence.

Exclusions

We work very closely with School Research Offices and the Edinburgh Research Office. It is our intention to avoid duplication of their efforts or interference with their responsibilities and the dedicated support that they are able to provide to academic staff.

Submission process and internal approvals from Head of School/Research Director: applicants and award holders will have to follow the processes put in place at local level and make sure they meet internal deadlines when relevant.

Costings: accurate costing for research proposals will be done by the School Research Office/ERO, although we are happy to provide advice on budgets and confirm in-kind contributions from EFI when required.

Technical aspects: please liaise with the School Research office and/or ERO to check technical requirements of proposals (length of attachments, font size, etc).

Financial Management: processing transactions, budget management and monitoring as well as reporting will be dealt with by the School Research office/ERO.

Promotion and Comms: we assume that costs for dedicated support for PR and Comms will be included in grant budgets. EFI is happy to support research teams in disseminating research outcomes and research successes, using press releases, reports and social media assets prepared by the project team.

Research Ethics support: Support to comply with UoE Research Ethics policies and developing and approving ethics proposals will be provided at local level (College/School). We would ensure that researchers are aware of the need for gaining institutional approval based on the current UoE policy.

Contribution to EFI activities:

At EFI we want to build helpful and meaningful relationships and a culture of mutual support. In order to do so, we encourage our research community to actively contribute to the EFI research agenda, and to our wider portfolio of activities including education and engagement. Here are some examples of how this might work in practice:

- Contribute to the EFI KPIs across the five targets for the City Region Deal (TRADE - Talent, Research, Adoption, Datasets and Entrepreneurship);
- Register with our affiliation programme (Our Research Affiliation Programme on sharepoint.com) to be an active member of our community; this will allow us to promote your activities, celebrate your successes, contact you for input when scoping new initiatives, send you targeted communications. You will also have the opportunity to support colleagues with their research plans and activities and supervise UG and PGT student projects;

- Include in the research proposals costings for UG and PG internships that would prioritise EFI students;
- Incorporate a cluster (number depending on size of grant) of EFI UG and PGT projects to be supported and supervised by PI/Co-I team or suggest and supervise a project area aligned to their grant;
- Contribute to events in our series: offer to present at Futures in Progress seminar, the EFI research seminars run by Bea Alex & Lukas Engelmann; attend other EFI research and community events e.g. EFI Studio and EFI Futures Lectures; offer to present in the Galvanised Series - seminars focused on interdisciplinarity and curated by Jean-Benoit Falisse, Jane McKie and Richard Morris;
- EFI is involved in collaborations with Edinburgh International Festival, and smaller local festivals as well as community projects with local community organisations, e.g. Greyfriars Charteris Centre. We welcome input to strengthen our links and address the challenges faced by these stakeholders.

Appendix – to be completed by the EFI Research Team

Please discuss with our Research Proposals Manager, Anna Votsi, the requirements and expectations of your research team, and confirm how your project can contribute to build a vibrant and exciting EFI community.

Principal Investigator:

Co-Investigators:

Title of the Project:

Start and end date:

Pre-award support:

- ☐ Research Proposal Manager coordination

- ☐ Research Proposal Manager lay-review/feedback on the final draft

- ☐ Access to buy-in/buy-out budget

- ☐ Identifying and liaising with peer-reviewers

- ☐ Preparation or contribution to institutional letter of support

- ☐ Support with creating new networks with partners/external stakeholders

- ☐ Facilitating workshops with partners/external stakeholders

- ☐ Other (please specify):

Post-award support:

- ☐ Working space occupancy (please specify your wishes/requirements):

- ☐ Occasional use of bookable space (please specify your wishes/requirements):

- ☐ Facilitating workshops with partners/external stakeholders

- ☐ PR/Comms support

- ☐ Use of EFI branding

- ☐ Digital Skills training

- ☐ Other (please specify):

Additional requests:

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