To: Colleagues at UK HEIs

RESEARCH
COUNCILS UK

09 September 2015

Polaris House,
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Dear colleague,

Re: Data Protection amendments to RCUK Training Grant Terms and Conditions – RCUK expectations on collecting and displaying PhD project information in the RCUK Gateway to Research

In my letter of January 2014 I wrote to inform you of the new harmonised Terms and Conditions (Ts&Cs) for training grants that went live in February 2014 and plans to include PhD student project information in the RCUK Gateway to Research (GtR). This was followed by a letter in June 2014 to advise that plans to publish student data in GtR were being put on hold because important data protection issues needed to be resolved.

I am writing to you now to inform you that we further amended our Training Grant Terms and Conditions in January 2015 to address these data protection issues [**Annex 1**[1]]. These revised Terms and Conditions have already been issued for training grants awarded from 1st February 2015 onwards. In line with these changes we have also updated the Je-S system help text [**Annex 2**[2]]. We now intend to proceed to include PhD student project information in the RCUK Gateway to Research (GtR).

A key purpose of this letter is to clarify our expectations of Research Organisations in terms of informing students, supervisors and research partners of the data that we expect to capture and publish for RCUK studentships awarded during or after academic year 2009/10. In order to assist your implementation of this, we have categorised the studentships on which we will collect and publish data as follows:

1. RCUK Studentships starting during academic year 2015/16 funded from training grants awarded after 1st February 2015 for which we plan to publish the data fields listed on Annex 4. We plan to publish this data around Spring 2016. We also intend to publish data for studentships starting during 2015 funded from training grants awarded prior to 1st February 2015 once final data protection concerns have been addressed.

2. RCUK studentships starting prior to 2015 that are not subject to the revised T&Cs. We will continue to look at expanding GtR coverage to include these studentships as far back as 2009/10 if appropriate data protection permissions can be put in place.

These categories of studentships all fall under one or more of our standard headings for doctoral training including Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTPs), Centres for Doctoral Training (CDT), associated studentships and Collaborative Training such as CASE. See our 'Research Council Common Terminology for Postgraduate Training'[3] for further details.

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[1] **Annex 1** contains the revised Terms and Conditions for Training Grants from 2015 onwards including the studentship data that will be published.

[2] **Annex 2** contains the revised Je-S system help text for studentship details.

[3] Research Council Common Terminology for Postgraduate Training: http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/RCUK-prod/assets/documents/skills/RCUKCommonTerminologyforPostgraduateTraining2013.pdf

I particularly ask you to note that RCUK intends to publish the names of students for studentships starting during 2015 funded from training grants awarded after 1st February 2015. This is a new intention and it is therefore critical that these students are aware of this fact.

Our expectations are summarised in the following statements:

1. **Training grants announced from 1st February 2015 and subsequently have revised terms and conditions relating to Data Protection (see Annex 1).** The Ts&Cs list the fields, including student name, that will be published. Further, it states that information on studentships provided to RCUK will be published in the Gateway to Research and that the Research Organisation must ensure that research students, supervisors and project partners are aware of the information about the studentship, including personal data, that <u>will</u> be provided to the Research Councils and how that information will be used.

2. **Students starting in 2015 who are funded from training grants awarded prior to 1st February 2015 have Terms and Conditions that do not stipulate the data that will be published in the Gateway to Research.** For these studentships the data requirements and publication strategy will be the same except that, at present, we do not plan to publish the student's name as submitted through Je-S Student Details functionality.

3. **Regardless of which of the above categories an RCUK studentship falls into, we expect that you will ensure that, your supervisors, research students, and third party research partners are aware of what information about the studentship, including personal data, is provided to the Research Councils and that data submitted by your organisation to the Research Councils will be displayed in Gateway to Research.** We have provided a suggested briefing for you to share with these affected parties [Annex 3]. You may wish to add this to student handbooks or to provide it to RCUK funded students, supervisors and project partners.

4. **RCUK wishes to ensure that data displayed in Gateway to Research is accurate and suitable for publication.** In previous letters to Vice-Chancellors dated January and June 2014 we invited you to review and amend, where necessary, the data submitted through the Je-S Student Details functionality. Managers of Postgraduate Research (or equivalent) and their staff have access to the Je-S Student Details functionality at any time. If your institution has not already done so, then you may want to use this opportunity to review your data prior to it being published in the Gateway to Research. In particular, you may want to ensure that no sensitive or confidential information has been included. If a record is published and an issue arises at a later date then please get in touch so that we can remove the record from the Gateway to Research temporarily. The first tranche of data to be published in the Gateway to Research will be students starting in academic year 2015 funded from training grants awarded after 1st February 2015. We expect this data to be published around spring 2016.

I would also like to make you aware that a separate communication has recently been sent to outcomes contacts within your institution outlining the Research Councils intention to include studentships in Researchfish outcomes gathering from November 2015. There is a longer-term aim to publish the outcomes entered in Researchfish by students through the Gateway to Research.

Thank you for all your support with this project, we greatly appreciate your help and assistance. If you have any questions about these developments please email info@rcuk.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely

Prof Jackie Hunter, BBSRC Chief Executive and RCUK Impact Champion

CC: RCUK studentship contacts in Research Organisations

Annex 1 to RCUK letter of September 2015

<u>Revised RCUK Training Grant Terms and Conditions as at 1st February 2015</u>

<u>Added to Definitions:</u>

Gateway to Research is a web-based portal <u>http://gtr.rcuk.ac.uk/</u> that publishes information about funded research that can assist businesses and other interested parties to identify potential partners in research organisations to develop and commercialise knowledge, and thereby increase the impact of publicly funded research. It provides better access for the research community, business and the public to information on research funded by the seven Research Councils and Innovate UK

TGC 1 Data Protection Act

1. The Research Councils **will use information** provided on the Training Grant proposal, or equivalent, for processing the proposal or in relation to the administration of the Training Grant, for the award of any subsequent grant, and for the payment, maintenance and review of the grant. This includes data submitted through the Je-S Student Details Portal (SDP).

2. Use of submitted data **may include**:

- Registration and processing of proposals;
- Operation of grants processing and management information systems;
- Preparation of material for use by reviewers and peer review panels;
- Administration, investigation and review of grant proposals;
- Sharing proposal information on a strictly confidential basis with other funding organisations
- To seek contributions to the funding of proposals
- Statistical analysis in relation to the evaluation of postgraduate training trends
- Policy and strategy studies.
- Meeting the Research Councils' obligations for public accountability and the dissemination of information.
- Making it available on the Research Councils' Gateway to Research
- Making it available on the Research Council's web site and other publicly available databases, and in reports, documents and mailing lists.

Data that will be made available on the Research Councils' web sites and other publicly available databases, including Gateway to Research, and in reports, documents and mailing lists will include the following data:

- Student name (for students starting from 2015 onwards)
- Name(s) of project partner organisations and supervisors
- Project titles and topics
- Project summaries
- Registration and expected submission dates
- Numbers of students in particular regions, universities or departments in context of the Training Grant funding announced.
- Aggregated information regarding demographics, student numbers, stipend

levels, qualifications, age at start, migration levels (from first degree university to another) etc.

3. Research Organisations must ensure that students, supervisors and project partners are aware what information, including personal data is provided to the Research Councils, and how that information about their studentship will be used by both the Research Councils and the Research Organisation.

4. Research Organisations must provide, on request, a description of their students areas of study (updated abstracts), which the Research Councils might include in any of the Council's publications, such as Annual Reports or on website.

TGC 13 Monitoring and information requirements

87. The Research Organisation will be required to provide the Research Council with standard information on students and their training programmes through the Je-S Student Details (SD) for inclusion in the Research Council's management information system and other uses referred to in paragraph 2. Where a student is funded from two Councils' TGs, the information should be returned to the Council which is acting as the majority funder (see above), and not returned to the other council. Details of the secondary Research Council funder would be included in the submitted data. Information should be entered within one month of the student starting their studies and updated as soon as any changes occur. Failure to provide this information may result in sanctions being imposed on future payments.

Annex 2 to RCUK letter of September 2015

Revised Je-S Helptext for Studentship Details

Data Protection

The terms and conditions of training grants announced by AHRC, BBSRC, EPSRC, ESRC, MRC, NERC and STFC place a responsibility on universities to provide information about students and their projects. The Research Councils will use information provided about students and supervisors for monitoring purposes and policy studies in relation to the Research Councils' involvement in postgraduate training, including statistical analyses in relation to the evaluation of research and the study of trends.

Information may also be used to contact Research Council-funded students.

To meet the Research Councils' obligations for public accountability and the dissemination of information, details of training and research grants may also be made available on the Research Councils' Gateway to Research, the Research Councils' web sites and other publicly available databases, and in reports, documents and mailing lists.

The following information about training grants and funded students will routinely be made publicly available:

- Student name (for students starting from 2015 onwards
- Aggregated information regarding student numbers, stipend levels, qualifications, age at start, migration levels (from first degree university to another) etc.
- Name(s) of project partner organisations and supervisors
- Project titles and topics
- Project summaries
- Numbers of students in particular regions, universities or departments in context of the Training Grant funding announced.
- Registration and expected submission dates

Information will be retained, after completion of the Masters or PhD, for policy studies involving analyses of trends in postgraduate training and reporting on these to government bodies such as DBIS. Students should always have been informed that the university is passing personal details on to AHRC, BBSRC, EPSRC, ESRC, MRC, NERC or STFC for the above purposes.

Annex 3 to RCUK letter of September 2015

Briefing for Students, Supervisors and Project Partners

Use and publication of Information provided to RCUK on RCUK funded Studentships

1.   PhD project information displayed on the Gateway to Research?

The Gateway to Research (GtR) is a web-based portal http://gtr.rcuk.ac.uk/ where information about funded research is published. The aim is to assist businesses and other interested parties to identify potential partners in research organisations to develop and commercialise knowledge, and thereby increase the impact of publicly funded research. It provides better access for the research community, business and the public to information on research funded by the seven Research Councils and the Innovate UK.

The PhD project information which the Research Councils will publish on the GtR website is given below. Note that the project summary (abstract) is a key piece of content for display in GtR and it must be suitable for publication and not contain sensitive or confidential information.

Item of data	Notes
Student Name	for students starting from 2015 onwards
Training Grants	The grant(s) from which the student is funded. A student may be funded by more than one grant. These are already published on GtR.
Organisation	The organisation that holds the training grant.
Project Title	This should be as informative as possible, even if final title not yet confirmed
Summary	Sensitive or confidential information should NOT be included in this summary
Supervisor	The academic supervisor(s)
Organisation	This will be the Organisation where the student is registered.
Department	The Department of the Organisation at which the student is registered.
Project Partner Organisation	This will be displayed to highlight collaborative working
Registration Date	The date on which the student started their studies
Expected Submission Date	The date by which the thesis is due to be submitted.

2.   Other use of information provided to RCUK

Use of submitted data may include:
- Registration and processing of proposals;
- Operation of grants processing and management information systems;
- Preparation of material for use by reviewers and peer review panels;
- Administration, investigation and review of grant proposals;
- Sharing proposal information on a strictly confidential basis with other funding organisations
- To seek contributions to the funding of proposals
- Statistical analysis in relation to the evaluation of postgraduate training trends
- Policy and strategy studies.
- Meeting the Research Councils' obligations for public accountability and the dissemination of information.
- Making it available on the Research Council's web site and other publicly available databases, and in reports, documents and mailing lists.

The following information about training grants and funded students will routinely be made publicly available:
- Student name (for students starting from 2015 onwards)
- Aggregated information regarding student numbers, stipend levels, qualifications, age at start, migration levels (from first degree university to another) etc.
- Name(s) of project partner organisations and supervisors
- Project titles and topics

- Project summaries
- Numbers of students in particular regions, universities or departments in context of the Training Grant funding announced.
- Registration and expected submission dates and rates

Information may be retained, after completion of the Masters or PhD, for policy studies involving analyses of trends in postgraduate training and reporting on these to government bodies such as DBIS. Students should always have been informed that the university is releasing personal details to AHRC, BBSRC, EPSRC, ESRC, MRC, NERC or STFC for the above purposes.

3. **Je-S Student Details Functionality**

The Research Organisation provides standard information on the details of students and the student research projects funded by the Research Councils' through the web-based data collection functionality Je-S Student Details which Research Organisations use to return details of the students and student research projects funded from the Training Grant.

The Information that is required is available in the Je-S system help text: Go to the following web address, click Show, select Studentship Details and then select Data Protection

https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/handbook/pages/StudentResearcherDetails/StudentResearcherDetails.htm