Applications should be submitted by research partners through IRAMS. Partners who have not worked together before are encouraged to consider application for less than £1,000 in the first instance; applications of this size can be submitted at any time between 9 a.m. on 5 January 2021 and 5 p.m. on 1 February 2021. Applications requesting between £1,000 and £5,000 must be submitted ahead of gathered field deadlines of 5 p.m. on 1 February and 18 March 2021.

This call is only open to researchers at the University of Oxford and their prospective public policy partners. Researchers are encouraged to join the Oxford Policy Engagement Network (OPEN) before applying. Application takes less than 10 minutes and can be completed here.

Full details on eligibility can be found below. This initiative is funded via the University’s allocation from the Higher Education Innovation Fund.

- Potential applicants are encouraged, in the first instance, to use existing networks to identify potential research or policy partners, and to explore the resources listed in Section 8 below before approaching potential partners.
- Eligible policymakers looking for research partners are encouraged to contact relevant Departments at the University directly, and may also consult members of the University’s Policy Engagement Team using the contact details provided below.
- For support in finding partners or developing proposals, researchers are encouraged to consult:
  - William Pryor, Head of Policy Engagement (for MSD and MPLS);
  - Jessica Simkiss, Humanities & Public Policy Officer (for Humanities); or
  - Irini Tseminidou, interim OPEN Co-ordinator (for SSD).
1. **Introduction**

COVID-19 presents policymakers with unfamiliar and, in many cases, unprecedented challenges. Uncertainty about the nature of the virus, the disease and its transmission, feeds uncertainty as to how to mitigate its impact on individuals and on the wider community. The pandemic obliges policymakers to reconsider their priorities and objectives, as well as the values and assumptions that shape them. It changes familiar considerations of political and economic feasibility, and complicates prediction of outcomes. It exposes to intense scrutiny the issue of who is involved in decision-making, and how decisions are made.

Policymakers who want to be ‘guided by the science’ can be frustrated to find it changing or contradictory; that there is too little of it, even none; or so much of it that they are forced to filter out simply to settle on a policy, if only for a time; to try to predict outcomes and public reactions; and to respond accordingly.¹

Yet the pandemic also makes it possible, at least, for policymakers to revisit previously settled norms, to reimagine and rebuild economies and societies in ways that share burdens and benefits in a more sustainable way. The language of disaster recovery has become widespread, as policymakers propose, or are encouraged, to ‘build back better’.² In all this the effective use of the best available evidence and expertise remains as challenging as it is vital.

**Focus**

Researchers from many different disciplines at the University of Oxford are working on new insights that may help improve our understanding of the virus, how to delay its spread, and diagnose and treat the disease.³ Others are focusing on the economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts of the pandemic.⁴

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'We need to build back better. The Sustainable Development Goals ... provide the framework for more inclusive and sustainable economies and societies.' (UN Secretary-General António Guterres, 23 April 2020)

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The present call for proposals, launched in association with the UK Civil Service Policy Profession, will support partnerships between researchers at Oxford and policymakers, in or outside the UK, that enable partners to improve public policy responses to COVID-19 – to mitigate impact, support recovery, or both – through sharing of evidence, experience and expertise.

**Potential benefits for partners**

Research partners stand to learn more about the value of their skills and expertise to public policy, and enhance both; to build their professional networks; and discover how to collaborate effectively with policymakers at pace and in the face of widespread uncertainty.

Policy partners may use this opportunity to collaborate, for example, on synthesis of evidence from diverse sources, disciplines and contexts to inform policy debates, options or decisions; learning lessons from other countries or regions; or developing monitoring, evaluation or scrutiny of chosen policies. (See Section 6 below for more details of eligible activities.)

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All partnerships must involve at least one applicant from a department or faculty at the University, and at least one from the policymaking community. (See Section 5 below for details of eligibility.)

**Background to the scheme**

The first call under this scheme was launched by the University and the Policy Profession in January 2020, and the second call in July 2020. Examples of partnerships that have been supported to date include those between

- A researcher in the Radcliffe Department of Medicine and a partner in the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, exploring the impact of direct-to-consumer genetic testing on the NHS;
- A researcher from the Department of Continuing Education and a partner at the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, looking to respond to the mobility needs of the urban poor in Istanbul during and after the Covid-19 pandemic;
- A researcher in the Blavatnik School of Government and a partner at the US Department of Defence, exploring ways to tackle policy challenges arising from the intersection of public health and national/international security in the aftermath of COVID-19;
- A researcher from the School of Geography and the Environment, and a partner in the Mongolian Communication and Information Technology Authority, designing COVID-19 policies for pastoral communities; and
- A researcher from the Faculty of Classics and a partner at the UK Department for Education, aiming to improve language teaching in primary schools.

2. **Scope**

The panel will prioritise practical and innovative proposals that

- Contribute to clear policy-related (as opposed to only research-related) goals;
- Define realistic objectives that relate to a clearly identified policy, and to impact that is clearly connected with that; and
- Focus on activities that enable collaboration, co-design and co-delivery of those outputs with those who make or shape relevant policies.

Proposals may relate to continuation of ongoing or earlier activity, or substantially new activities. The former must clearly demonstrate the added value of further funding and the potential for timely impact.

**No application should exceed £5,000 in eligible costs.** (See Section 7 below.) **Those successful in securing initial awards of less than £1,000 may not subsequently apply for more than £4,000.**

£25,000 is available for partnerships arising from this call. **All activities must be completed and related expenditure incurred by 31 July 2021.**

3. **Selection criteria**

The scheme aims to support new engagement activity or follow-on support for completed activities, especially those that facilitate or involve collaboration, co-design and co-delivery by partners. Projects that do not envisage such activities are unlikely to be supported. The panel will also consider the following criteria when reviewing the applications:

- **Relevance** to clearly identified current/emerging public policy objectives;
- **Potential for mutual benefit** – reflected in outcomes and outputs of benefit to both partners;
- **Sustainability** – reflecting the potential of the partnership to lead to future collaboration or to create/accelerate impact; and
• **Value for money**: an appropriate and well-justified budget, with careful consideration of individual costs, as well as investment (cash or in-kind) by partners.

Interdisciplinary approaches are desirable but not essential.

4. **Application**

Applications should be submitted by research partners through IRAMS. The partners should work together to complete the Case for Support, available to download through IRAMS, which includes more detailed guidance about what to include in each section. There is no fixed deadline for submission.

**Deadlines and review process**

All applications will be considered by a panel consisting of representatives of at least two Divisions and of the Policy Profession. Partners may submit

- Applications for less than £1,000 at any time from 9 a.m. on 5 January until 5 p.m. on 1 February 2021; and
- Applications for £1,000 to £5,000 ahead of gathered field deadlines of 5 p.m. on 1 February and 18 March 2021.

Applicants can expect to hear of panel decisions within 10 working days. Feedback from the panel review will be available on request.

In exceptional circumstances and with adequate justification, applications for more than £5,000 may be considered. Partners considering such an application are encouraged to consult the Policy Engagement Team at an early stage.

5. **Eligibility**

- Applications are welcomed from members of any department or faculty at the University of Oxford.
- **All applications must involve at least one partner, contracted until at least 31 July 2020, from among**
  - Policymaking staff of central government departments;
  - Policymaking staff of county, district or city councils, or similar local authority;
  - Staff of the House of Commons Committees Office; Library or Scrutiny Unit; Lords Committee Office or Library; or Joint Committees; Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology; or similar structures in other national or regional legislative assemblies; or
  - Policymaking staff of intergovernmental organisations, e.g., the UN and its programmes, funds, and specialised agencies.
- **Approval from the head of the relevant research department or faculty is required.** Many departments and faculties have internal eligibility criteria, approval processes and other guidelines to which all applicants should adhere. Please consult your departmental administrator for internal deadlines and further information.
- College-based academics and those from Gardens, Libraries and Museums who wish to serve as PIs must apply via a department/faculty. Awards can only be held in departments or faculties, not in colleges.
- Current postgraduate students are not eligible to apply; however, postgraduate students who have submitted their thesis and are awaiting examination are eligible to apply as ECRs.
- Retired and Emeritus Fellows are not eligible.
Project staff not already employed by the University must be able to demonstrate their eligibility to work in the United Kingdom.

Funding under this scheme for any researcher who moves to another university during the course of a partnership funded by the scheme will not transfer with him/her.

Early Career Researchers (i.e., within four years of the submission of their doctoral thesis) may serve as Co-Investigators but are not eligible to be designated as the PI for the project unless they have a permanent contract.

The Principal Investigator (PI) must be a current employee, holding a permanent academic post, or PI on a research contract awarded competitively and intended to enable the holder to establish an independent research career.

A PI on a fixed-term contract must be contracted until at least 31 July 2021.

6. Eligible activities

Examples of the types of activities that may be supported include:

- Developing a shared understanding of specific challenges arising from COVID-19 and collaborative approaches to connecting evidence and policy to address those;
- Collaboration on evidence synthesis aimed at informing policy debates, options or decisions, and co-development of approaches to filling gaps;
- Co-production of tools and resources that facilitate uptake of research evidence in policymaking;
- Placement of researchers in policymaking institutions or policymakers in University departments;
- Preparation of policy briefs, working papers, blogs or other outputs that support policy-oriented research or evidence-informed policy;
- Establishment, development or leverage of mutually accessible networks.

Examples of activities that are not eligible include:

- Research consultancy;
- Academic conferences or seminars lacking clear engagement with policymakers;
- Studentships or internships for Research Council-funded DPhil students, where these are funded through Research Council Doctoral Training Grants.

7. Eligible costs

Eligible costs do not include salary of Research or Policy Partner, but include those related to:

- Salaries of other staff, e.g., research support, communications or events management staff;
- Venue and catering;
- Other event costs e.g. equipment, printing, IT/AV support; and
- Surveys.

Travel and accommodation costs are also eligible, but should be calculated with close attention to travel and other restrictions as they affect partners and other participants at time of application.

**Funding for this scheme is not provided on a full economic cost (FEC) basis.** Estates and indirect costs are not covered by this funding but 100% of direct costs will be covered. More information about costing and pricing projects is available [here](#).

Clear details of any combination of cash or in-kind contributions are sought from both partners to reflect shared commitment to and value of the partnership. The contribution of policy partners is expected to be at least 25% of the total sum requested from any partnership.
Efficiency, cost-effectiveness and value for money should be clearly demonstrated in the application. Payments will not be made for miscellaneous expenses or unspecified items. If you are unsure about the eligibility of a specific expense, please contact those identified on page 1 for further guidance.

8. Further information and support

In considering their choice of potential partner, all applicants are encouraged to explore relevant explanatory links in Section 5 above, as well as the following:

- How can I engage with policymakers?
- How does UK Government work and what do policymakers look for?
- How do I engage with the UK Parliament and how do parliaments work?
- How do I build policy engagement into project design?
- How do I engage with policymakers internationally?
- Oxford’s Experience in Policy Engagement – news, stories, and advice from OPEN Fellows and other policy-engaged academics at Oxford
- ‘How to engage with policy makers: a guide for academics in the arts and humanities’ (Institute for Government, Arts & Humanities Research Council)
- Divisions and departments at Oxford
- ‘About the UK Civil Service’
- UK Government Departments’ Areas of Research Interest
- UK Parliament’s COVID-19 Areas of Research Interest (Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology)

For support in developing proposals, researchers are encouraged to consult those identified on page 1. If partners would like feedback on a concrete proposal, the research partner should email this at the earliest opportunity and in any case no later than 10 working days before the deadline to ensure adequate time is available for review and revisions.

9. How to apply

Research partners should check with their department for internal approval procedures and deadlines and seek guidance from their departmental administrator at the earliest opportunity to take into account any notice they may need to assist.

Submissions should include of the following components, to be submitted as a combined PDF through IRAMS:

- Case for Support
- Statement of support from senior representative of parent organisation of policy partner

a) IRAMS application form

The earliest start date for projects between £1,000 and £5,000 in value is two weeks after the call deadline. Earlier start dates for such projects, and for all proposals of less than £1,000 in value, must be agreed in consultation with the Policy Engagement Team.

b) Case for Support

Research partners should download the Case for Support from IRAMS and complete together with policy partners all relevant sections. Detailed instructions for completing the Case for Support are included in the form.
**Budget information** Partners are asked to provide clear, quantified descriptions of all resources required, indicating amounts requested from this scheme, along with estimates of any match funding or in-kind funding provided.

**Other information** Research partners should use the space provided on the application form to disclose activities/relationships with partners involved in the project that might give rise to conflicts of interest or the perception of conflicts, and describe how, if necessary, they will be managed or avoided. Conflicts of interest may be financial, non-financial or both. For more information on declaring interests, please see Research Services’ guidance page.

c) **For policy partner: letter of support from parent organisation**

A letter (or email) of support should be provided by the line manager of the policymaking partner (or lead partner if more than one is involved). The letter should

- Reflect an understanding of the proposed goal, outcomes outputs and activities;
- Describe how the proposed goal relates to the policymaking agenda and how the proposed partnership will benefit the partner organisation;
- Outline the support that will be provided to the partners. A named individual from this organisation will be required to be responsible for overseeing the project.

In cases where obtaining a support letter is particularly difficult/inappropriate at the proposal stage, the panel may consider applications without one, and subsequently offer a conditional award, pending provision of such a letter.

10. **Sharing best practice**

All successful applicants will be invited to a cohort-building meeting in March 2021. They may also be invited by the University or Policy Profession to take part in briefing or training or other events that support the aims of the scheme.

Applicants should note that successful applications are likely to be used as exemplars for future applicants but an opportunity to opt-out of this will be available.

In addition to any publications that may be delivered through their partnership, successful applicants will be invited to help the Policy Engagement Team prepare a short lay summary of their project for publication via University channels and others at their discretion.

11. **Reporting requirements**

Partners will need to submit joint periodic reports. Reports will be the key mechanism to collect critical information for reporting and will assist the Policy Engagement Team in monitoring project progress and managing any issues that arise.

A schedule of reporting dates will be provided with award offer letters. Research partners will be contacted with email reminders closer to the date that a particular report is due for submission.

- **End-of-project report** – The end-of-project report (max. 1,500 words) should evaluate the project, demonstrate the impact and benefits, including those for both partners, and detail any future plans for ongoing engagement. This report should be submitted within 1 month of the end of the project.
- **Impact report** – The impact report should briefly outline further impacts achieved in the three months following the project’s completion. The aim is to capture any impact since submission of the end-of-project report.