

RCUK General Election Purdah Guidance

On 8 June 2017, the General Election will take place across the UK.

As non-departmental public bodies the Research Councils are bound by purdah during a pre-election period. This period commences when parliament is dissolved and ends when a new government is formed (not when the polls close). During this time we are unable to engage in any activities that might **in any way influence the outcome** of the election and **must avoid competition with parliamentary candidates for the attention of the public**.

The period of sensitivity is from **midnight (the evening) 21 April 2017 until at least 9 June 2017**. **Purdah will only end when a new government is formed**, which may take additional time after polls close in the event of a hung parliament. Purdah is effectively a suspension of our usual business.

The purdah restrictions extend to Research Council funded research and researchers and any sub-contractors that are employed as part of the research project.

Please consider the following guidance:

- The Research Councils strongly advise against issuing press releases about new research during this period. Any press releases that are scheduled to be issued during this time, that give you cause for concern, should be sent to the relevant press office three working days before they are planned to be issued. We reserve the right to withhold the press release for issue until after the election.
- Researchers called upon to provide expert comment about the elections or local issues during this period should do so under their university affiliation and not attribute research to the relevant Research Council. This also applies to printed materials such as features in commercial magazines and newsletters which may have been scheduled before the election was announced.
- Researchers scheduled to deliver papers or speak about their research at academic or public conferences relevant to the elections must not attribute their research to the Research Councils.
- Any Research Council funded data which relates to voting patterns, or predicts or influences voting behaviour that is currently not in the public domain should not be published during this period. Data already in the public domain can be commented on under their university affiliation and not attribute research to the Research Councils. This includes publication in magazines and newsletters, press releases and press announcements and academic conferences.
- Any posts to websites and social media platforms are done with due care and attention to the principles above. When writing blogs, posting views or content on websites and public social media sites about election-related issues please ensure that they are not attributed to the Research Council support or associated with its investment.

If you are asked about the source of your funding or your link to the relevant Council then you may still confirm this – it is not a secret. However, this information should only be offered reactively in the case of a specific enquiry.

We are aware that this guidance contradicts our usual position that seeks to ensure that Research Council funded research is always clearly attributed, however, this situation is only until after the election takes place (and a new government is formed) and then things will return to normal. Essentially, what we want you to do is to ask the question 'why now, can this wait?' If something is not time-critical then it is best left until after the election and outcome is known.

If you have any questions during the purdah period please contact the most relevant Council:

- AHRC Press office communications@ahrc.ac.uk
- BBSRC press office press.office@bbsrc.ac.uk
- ESRC Press Office pressoffice@esrc.ac.uk
- EPSRC Press Office pressoffice@epsrc.ac.uk
- MRC Press Office press.office@headoffice.mrc.ac.uk
- NERC Press Office pressoffice@nerc.ac.uk
- STFC Press Office jake.gilmore@stfc.ac.uk
- RCUK Press Office communications@rcuk.ac.uk