News

Projects user group

Research Accounts is calling for expressions of interest to form a projects user group from across departments. The group will aim to provide a forum to share any concerns and good practice, as well as enabling Research Accounts to disseminate information, and for users to outline their needs to inform future developments.

Please contact Klajdia Bullari if you are interested in this group.

British Heart Foundation - Project Set Ups

The British Heart Foundation are a major funder for the University of Oxford, funding approximately £61.5m worth of Active Research Projects. With this in mind we want to ensure the financial aspect of running these Research Projects are as efficient as possible in order to maintain a happy relationship between us as an institution and BHF. This will aid us in securing as much funding as possible for the future.

On looking at our outstanding debt, it appeared that the number of abatements coming from the BHF was high compared to other funders, so further analysis of this has been carried out.

Remittance advices received between 20 January 2017 and 3 March 2017 were reviewed. Out of a total of 19, 11 abatements were made because we had made an over claim on a budget. That is nearly 58% of all abatements. At the time of this analysis there were roughly 30 BHF funded projects which had costs abated accumulating to roughly £85,000.

Solution
Given the issue highlighted above, a solution has been formulated to reduce abatements on BHF projects, using the systems and processes that we already have in place.

Going forward each (standard) BHF project should be set up with one “Top Task” and a “Sub-Task” for each budget awarded. This is illustrated below. Furthermore the budgetary controls will be set at the lowest level so there cannot be any overspend at “Sub-Task” level.

This has been successfully trialled with one department who holds a significant number of BHF funded awards and the decision has been made to apply this across all academic departments.

**Standard BHF Award:**

- Controls set at **LOWEST** task level to avoid overspending.
- One Top Task
- One Subtask per budget awarded

**Going forward**

Research Accounts, along with Tricia Murkin and Paul Fox in Research Services, have created bespoke BHF Schemes which have the pre-defined sub-tasks already set up within X5. This means that projects can be costed and the RPF1 generated in the correct format with little additional input. Each budget awarded for by a BHF award will have its own subtask, and can be easily transposed from the award letter/email onto X5. If you would like to see a worked example, or require any help, please contact Laura Middleton.

**Diabetes UK**

For Project grants, PhD Studentships and Fellowships, departments are allowed to claim supplementary funding from the research funder to meet the nationally agreed pay awards.

If your department holds one of these awards, please get in touch with your Research Accounts advisor to ensure that projects are uplifted appropriately and in good time.

**NIH and other awards with annual budgets**

Departments are reminded that where there is an annual award letter for projects awarded in foreign currency, each year’s budget will be set-up on Oracle at the prevailing budget rate **at the start of the new budget year.**
EC equipment capital/ non-capital update

The university has recently updated its financial accounting policies as noted in the July Finance Bulletin (issue 112). This has moved the capitalised threshold of the university to £50k from £25k and depreciation will be spread over five years or the life of the research project; this affects all equipment purchases after 1 August 2017. Equipment purchased before this time will be treated under the previous policy i.e. depreciation over three – five years.

The Research Services European Team have circulated the guidance below to assist with the costing of EC research proposals going forward. Equipment funding is available from the ERC under a top-up scheme which with an increased capitalisation threshold could have limited the university to only applying for equipment over £50k in value. This is not the case; however, we will need to adhere to the university policy as set out below to ensure that we can apply for and claim correctly the charges to the project. One consequence of the changed policy is that the total equipment purchase costs will be met by the EC project going forward.

RS guidance:

The cost of equipment needs to be shown in the budget table according to the depreciation policy of the University. This means that items of equipment between £10,000 and £50,000 should be included in the budget table in the year of purchase, while items of equipment over £50,000 in price should be shown in the budget table divided over five years or the time remaining on the project, whichever is shorter.

When charging equipment to projects, purchases between £10k and £50k should be reported quarterly through the DEL as equipment non-capital. There is a project expenditure type that can be used to help the tracking of this.