

2026/27 IAS Major Project Application

Guidance Notes

Section One: Project Details

To consider and what should be included

- A sizeable Project team (At least two Faculties, and multiple different Departments / disciplinary areas).
 - i. The Project investigators (PIs), i.e., the Major Project applicants, must be academics employed by Durham University. The two PIs must come from different Faculties. Please note that PIs of previous or current Major Projects are ineligible to apply within five years (of their previous or current award). They do remain able to be part of the wider research team on a Project.
 - ii. Funding can be sought to provide teaching buyout for two PIs for the first three months of the Project. The PIs' departments will receive £8000 to cover a full teaching term.
 - iii. A CV must be provided for each PI. This should be no more than 2-pages for each PI and include relevant information such as education and employment history, relevant recent publications, relevant recent grants, relevant interdisciplinary research or activity.
 - iv. For the wider Project team, please give consideration to equality, diversity and inclusion. See: [EDI hub - Home](#)

- Consider Impact: does the Project have potential impact, and who might benefit from the Project's research, and how they might benefit? Preliminary ideas and consideration at this stage would be helpful, but do not have to be fully formulated. There is not an expectation that a Project will have potential impact, and this is not a criterion for Project selection/award.

- Describe the planned research, its aims and objectives and planned outcomes in no more than two A4 pages or 1000 words and in language accessible to non-specialists. The criteria for Major Projects are as follows:
 - i. Each should have a very explicit focus or topic or question, but preferably one that is demonstrably novel and represents a major potential intellectual breakthrough.
 - ii. Each must involve *at least* two disciplinary areas or Departments from different Faculties within the University and be genuinely and creatively interdisciplinary. Applicants should describe how and why an interdisciplinary approach matters.
 - iii. Each Project must have a clearly defined outcome indicated in the proposal (this could be a traditional outcome such as a book, an edited volume or articles in high quality peer-review journals; a conference/workshop; the development of a grant application (in which case please specify the intended funding body and a target date for submission); or the opening and exploration of a new subject, as is appropriate to the disciplines involved and the topic suggested).

- The IAS will consider the following when evaluating Major Project applications:
 - i. **Novelty and ambition:** to what extent does the Project open new perspectives and create new inter-disciplinary synergies?
 - ii. **Rigour:** to what extent does the Project employ appropriate and state-of-the-art concepts and methods, and/or develop promising new ones?
 - iii. **Clarity and quality of objectives:** how clear and realistic are the intended outcomes; what impact will there be on Durham University's research capacity and international competitiveness; how well does it fit with University and Department research strategies?
 - iv. **Quality of the proposed research team:** track record relative to career stage, including notable publications, awards, prizes and other esteem indicators, complementarity and suitability to the Project objectives of team members' expertise, evidence of interest in interdisciplinary perspectives; in the case of the PIs, evidence of intellectual leadership/leadership potential.

Section Two: Budget

- The IAS has an annual budget which runs from 1 August 2026 to 31 July 2027. Major Project costs awarded for the Project year 2026/27 will only become available from August 2026. Awards cannot be accessed before allocation. Project expenditure **must** be incurred in 2026/27, and any unspent funds cannot be carried forward to the following financial year (i.e. into 2027/28). Pre-Project development funds may be allocated in 2025/26, and if allocated these must also be fully spent *that* year (2025/26).

What can be requested in terms of funding?

- Two PI teaching buyouts (awarded as Christopherson Knott Fellowships). Each buyout is a maximum of £8,000.
- Up to £3500 in general research costs, which might include:
 - i. Funding for shorter visits of Visiting Scholars (for travel, subsistence and accommodation). Visiting Scholars are not the Fellows associated with the Project, who are funded separately (see note below).
 - ii. Funding for hosting conferences and workshops (travel and accommodation for key participants, catering).
 - While we encourage the involvement of post-graduates in workshops and conferences, they should not be used as administrators. It is anticipated that Project PIs will do the academic organisation (invitations, programme etc.) and we recommend that they get liaise with Event Durham for assisting the logistical work.
 - iii. Research assistance in Project development. (The IAS cannot fund research assistance in the carrying out of research Projects, but it is possible to request funding for some assistance in developing the Project).
 - Research assistants can be employed for activities that demonstrably meet the key criterion of supporting the development of the research: for example, scoping work. Applicants must confirm that they have Departmental and HR permission for the person to be employed.

Note: **costs for Fellows *should not be*** included in the Major Project Application.

- If PIs are seeking funding for more substantive elements of the research itself, they are advised to seek Grant Seedcorn funding (or to write these into the Applicant (under 'Please indicate any additional sources of funding available or applied for in conjunction with your Project proposal')

Reporting

At the end of the Major Project term, the Project PIs must provide the following:

- A brief Project report within two months of the completion of the Project term. This should include a report on all Project activities, collaboration with Fellows, expenditure, and outcomes (to date and anticipated) such as grant applications, publications, and any other outputs. The report should also include a description of the IAS's assistance in the Project's development. A report template will be provided by the IAS.
- PIs are required to reference IAS assistance in the Worktribe system for any grant funding arising from Project.
- PIs will be asked to participate in a Post Project meeting to discuss the outcomes of the Project as a whole. This meeting will also be used to help identify potential for follow-up activities, for which further funding may be available.
- PIs are required to inform the IAS about any publications/outputs arising from the Project, and make reference to the IAS in the Worktribe system for any submitted publications arising from the Project (Worktribe allows a URI to be selected). Where possible they should acknowledge IAS assistance in publications, and they should provide the IAS with copies of such outputs.

Other

- The IAS logo must appear on all publicity material relating to the Project.
- Projects will be promoted on the IAS website and in related IAS communications. The PIs are asked to provide relevant material for these purposes several months before the official project start.
- PIs will also be responsible for promoting the Project internally and externally (e.g. to the media, to the general public), as appropriate.