

NORTHUMBRIA UNIVERSITY

RESEARCH PARTICIPATION PAYMENT GUIDELINES

1.1 Introduction

Payments to research participants should only be offered where it is likely to be difficult to recruit a suitable pool of participants without an incentive. For example, where participants must give up a considerable amount of time or/and are subject to demanding psychological or/and physical requirements.

Even where an incentive is appropriate, it should be advertised in a way that makes clear it is a nominal token of thanks for taking part, not a formal payment for services provided.

Incentives must never be so large that people may be induced to take part against their better judgement.

Before progressing with an incentive, you must ensure you have both funding and ethical approval.¹

This guidance applies to university staff undertaking internal or externally funded research and to Postgraduate (research) students. Undergraduate and Postgraduate (taught) students should not be allowed to pay participants to take part in their dissertation research.

1.2 Payments to adults and children aged 16-18

Payments should be limited to a token gesture of appreciation and, where payment is for reimbursement of costs, then it should be fair and not so excessive that it becomes an inducement.

Criteria for payment level could be on:

- nature of the trials, for example amount of time participants must give up.
- whether participants are subject to demanding psychological (e.g. stress testing) or physical requirements (e.g. exercise regimes, substance ingestion, blood sampling).
- ease of obtaining volunteers, for example where the 'group' is very small.

Researchers must justify the amount chosen, and state the source of any funding, in their ethics application.

It remains at the discretion of the researcher whether travelling expenses are also paid. If participants are not coming from the local community, we can expect that additional 2nd class travel expenses ([University Travel and Expenditure Policy](#)) may be needed to encourage participation.

¹ The ethics online approval system and guidance on the process can be found on the University Ethics and Integrity webpage: <https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/research/ethics-and-integrity/>

Some volunteers may be university staff, but their participation in the research is not part of their duties of employment and they do it in their own time and are under no obligation to take part.

It goes without saying that members of the research team should not be paying themselves to undertake their own research – this is likely to be classed as ‘gross misconduct’.

Additional guidance for specific disciplines: NIHR resources suitable for considering issues in paying people and calculating the costs for health and social care research involving patients, carers and the public can be found on the [INVOLVE website](#). This webpage also links to guidelines on how payment for involvement in research may impact on the benefits people receive as a result of the Welfare Reform Act (2012).

1.3 Payments to children aged under 16 years of age

Payments to children between the ages of 16 and 18 can be made using the guidelines in section 1.2.

For those children under the age of 16, several different methods can be employed:

- E-vouchers to schools (or similar institution).
- E-vouchers to parents/children.
- The use of other (non-payment) ‘rewards’ (e.g. sticker, badge, certificate etc.).

Key principles:

- Payments should be discussed at the informed consent stage of the research process.
- Payments should be limited to a token gesture of appreciation and, where payment is for reimbursement of costs, then it should be fair and not so excessive that it becomes an inducement.
- Explanation and justification for total payments must be clearly stated in the ethics application.
- The payment should be made after testing has been completed to prevent it from becoming an inducement (to the child or parent).

Two payment policies relevant to typical Northumbria University research projects:

1) Institution-based

- a) In such studies, the researcher is collecting data with children and young people within an institutional setting (School, detention centre, hospital, nursery etc.) which has provided written consent for the research to take place.
- b) In such cases, the parents/guardians should also have provided their written consent, and the children given their verbal (and wherever possible written) assent. There should be no mention of payment to the Institution at this stage.
- c) After the research has been conducted however, it is possible to provide the Institution with a modest recompense as a ‘thank-you’ gesture – this could be in the form of vouchers (e.g. book tokens) commensurate with the involvement of the Institution. Following completion of the study, the minors could also be provided with some sort of token of appreciation (e.g. sticker, badge, certificate etc.) for their participation.

- d) If recompense will be offered to the Institution after the research has been completed, then the amount should be justified in the ethics application, including the source of any funding.
- 2) Non-institution based
- a) In such studies, the researcher may be conducting research with children and young people in their home-setting, within a youth or community group, or the young people may have travelled to the University site.
- b) In such cases, it may be extremely difficult to obtain volunteers for participation (especially in the latter scenario) unless some form of financial recompense is made at the outset. This should reflect travelling and time expenses and not act as an inducement for parents to encourage their children to take part.
- c) Full information as to the payment should be outlined at the information/consent stage.
- d) Following completion of the study, rewards should be in the form of E-vouchers. It should be explained to the parents that the token represents appreciation of the child's involvement.
- e) Researchers will have to justify the amount chosen, and state the source of any funding, in their ethics application.

1.4 Considerations when reimbursing research participants overseas

Payments to International Participants

In addition to the guidance already given in this document, researchers working with international research participants should also consider the following, particularly when working with low-and middle-income countries (LMICs).

Equitable Partnership and 'Ethics Dumping'

The UK Collaborative on Development Research (UKCDR) defines equitable partnership as those 'in which there is mutual participation, mutual trust and respect, mutual benefit and equal value placed on each partners contribution at all stages of the research process. UKCDR provides resources to researchers working internationally that seek to avoid 'ethics dumping', the practice of exporting European or high-income country research practices into countries that may not have the resources to stop exploitation. This can be avoided by establishing equitable partnerships and cocreating or co-designing research studies with beneficiary communities.

- UKCDR: [UK Collaborative on Development Research | UKCDR](#)
- Ethics Dumping: [Fighting Ethics Dumping through Equitable Partnerships | UKCDR](#)
- Global Code of Conduct: [Print \(globalcodeofconduct.org\)](http://globalcodeofconduct.org)

Due Diligence and Research Security

UK Research Organisations are required to undertake due diligence on international partners, whether because of funding terms and conditions, compliance with legislation or best practice. A due diligence exercise will identify any risks to the success of the research project and seek appropriate mitigations through partnership. If you are working with international partners, please notify [your department-aligned Pre-Award Coordinator](#) or contact Paul Smith, Research Delivery and Compliance Manager (paul.smith@northumbria.ac.uk). More information can be found on the [Research and Innovations Services intranet pages](#).

1.5 Payment procedure

There are two acceptable methods of paying UK research participants, the procedures for which are outlined below. Payments should only be made after participation in the study has been successfully completed and in-line with the funding and ethical approval.

1) BACs Payment

- a. Record participant bank details on Research Participant [BACs Request Form](#) and [submit here](#). The right workflow will automatically be applied to route your form to the relevant approvers. (The University complete a weekly payment run (normally initiated on a Thursday to be paid into accounts on the Tuesday).)
- b. N.B. It is essential that no personal details (i.e. bank account details) are held outside of the form.

2) eVouchers (in general, only for payments to children aged 16 and under)

- a. Academic to place order on NUPF for Love2Shop vouchers (please click [here](#) for more information).
- b. It is the buyers responsibility to keep a record of vouchers distributed for audit purposes and any unused vouchers must be returned by contacting the Resources team [here](#).

In overseas research projects where participants need to receive payments, please consult with Josh Collingwood (j.collingwood@northumbria.ac.uk) in the first instance.