

UKRI Instant Recognition Awards Scheme Guidance

1. Introduction

The Instant Recognition Awards and In-Year Awards Scheme Guidance outline a framework for employees, managers and HR in recognising and rewarding the efforts of employees.

The scheme operates within public sector pay policy rules and affordability limits. Historically the operation of in year schemes and non-consolidated pots have varied across Councils. Total spend on non-consolidated pay cannot exceed the total UKRI non-consolidated performance pay pot of 1.83% of UKRI pay bill.

The Instant Recognition Scheme and In Year Awards guidance sets out the principles governing the scheme. Detailed guidance on the process will be issued annually. This document describes the UKRI Instant Recognition Award process for 2025-26.

2. Scope

See *UKRI Instant Awards and In Year Award Scheme Guidance*

If there is any doubt whether this guidance applies, please seek advice from your HR team.

3. Principles of Instant Recognition Awards

These are set out in the *UKRI Instant Awards and In Year Award Scheme document*.

4. Status of Awards

Instant Recognition Awards are both non-consolidated and non-pensionable. Cash awards are subject to tax and NI.

5. Eligibility

All UKRI employees in scope for the scheme as set out in the overall scheme guidance are eligible for consideration for an Instant Recognition Award.

6. Types of Instant Recognition Award

The scheme enables awards to be made in recognition of individual and team performance against the UKRI values.

Nominations for awards reward one-off achievements, performance or contribution. Nominations can take place throughout the performance year.

The nomination should succinctly outline the employee's contribution, with the resulting outcome and the impact and how this links to UKRI values.

Instant Recognition Awards are made for exceptional performance and may be awarded at any time during the year for one of the following:

- A one-off event in which the individual or team has undertaken a task that required performance above that expected.
- Consistent standard of work or attitude over a reasonable period of time
- Commitment beyond the call of duty and expectations.

Instant Recognition Awards are payable via payroll.

7. Instant Recognition Award Nomination Process

Instant Recognition awards should be considered in relation to UKRI Values:

- *Collaboration* – for example, excellent teamwork
- *Innovation* – for example, contribution to cost reduction
- *Integrity* – for example, personal contribution to improving morale/wellbeing of others
- *Excellence* – for example, exceptional service
- **NB** Awards are not payable for working additional hours – where appropriate this should be recognised through the relevant policies.

Annex A- Sample nominations

UKRI and MRC CIU Line managers using Oracle Fusion **must** use the Instant Award Journey on Oracle Fusion.

For Innovate UK line managers who continue to use Workday, should use the downloadable nomination form which is available on The Source. Upon completion, it should be shared with IUK HR Ops colleagues for processing on Workday. **(Nomination forms can be found at Annex B or C)**

Employees can be nominated for award by their line manager, colleagues or peers. Staff can also be nominated for awards from staff in other parts of UKRI.

Other colleagues within the same team may propose an award to the Line Manager of the employee concerned. The award will be considered against the criteria by the line manager in consultation with their own line manager. If in agreement, the award will be notified in person by the line manager to the individual or team.

Employees who wish to propose an award for another individual or team can do so through the respective line manager. In such cases the line manager is not required to approve the award. The role of the line manager is, however, to have a moderating influence and to work with the proposer to ensure the nomination meets criteria. If agreement cannot be reached HR should be consulted.

Line managers will need to check all nominations against the criteria and ensure the same employee has not been previously nominated for the same reason and/or has been nominated already for more than 3 Instant Recognition Awards in a remit year.

Employees may benefit from **up to three** Instant Awards in each remit year. These may be either individual or team awards. Local areas have flexibility in electing to give either individual or team award. Local areas should be aware that multiple team awards may exhaust the available allocation more rapidly than individual awards.

Once approved the local coordinator will advise the employee of their successful nomination, including the reason for the award.

Employees will receive their cash award in the next payroll, providing the information has been submitted to UKSBS prior to payroll cutoff date.

Details of the award must be added to the reconciliation spreadsheet by the local coordinator and submitted to the reward mailbox at the end of each quarter.

8. Instant Recognition Award Approval Process

Employees should not be recognised more than once for the same reason/activity.

Business areas are responsible for ensuring the awards fall within the allocation available. They will need to ensure that the monthly reconciliation is sent to the Reward Team.

For the purposes of tax reporting the Reward Team will collate details of all awards made from the effective date of 1st July annually.

Business areas will manage the processing and reconciliation of awards including raising Helpdesk Requests (Fusion) and SRs (Workday) to enable the cash awards to be paid.

9. Outcomes

Individuals should be informed of the outcome of an award nomination by their Line Manager / Team Lead as soon as possible after the decision has been made.

10. Roles and Responsibilities

These help ensure UKRI operates the scheme in a way that is consistent and compliant.

a) Employees

1. When you see colleagues undertaking activity or acting in a way that reflects the criteria consider making a nomination using the Instant Recognition Award Nomination form and send it to the appropriate line manager.
2. If you are nominated for an award, you will be notified by your line manager. You should ensure that you check your payslip
3. If you receive an award that you weren't expecting to receive, you are responsible for notifying your line manager immediately. Claiming an award not intended for you, or ordered without correct approval, is an act of fraud, and carries the appropriate sanctions under the UKRI discipline policy.

b) Line Managers

1. Ensure that you are using the policy throughout the year to give recognition to staff in your area. Nominate staff using the Instant Recognition Award Nomination form and consider nominations received by other staff.
2. Be sure that the level of recognition is appropriate to performance, and that the appropriate approval and ordering process is followed.
3. Make sure you follow the scheme rules and that you ensure fairness, consistency and principles of diversity and inclusion.
4. Ensure that you are aware of the aims of the UKRI Inclusion & Diversity Strategy and the challenges it is addressing, including fairness of performance management

outcomes. Further information on the operational arrangements for equality, diversity and inclusion is available on [The Source](#)

5. Make sure you understand the concept of unconscious bias and undertake the mandatory training once a year, along with other diversity and inclusion awareness raising training.
6. Understand the importance of ensuring team members with a disability have the necessary workplace adjustments they need to enable them to remove barriers to working effectively and ensure they are not disadvantaged in their ability to achieve recognition and reward as a consequence.
7. Keep a record of the number of awards an individual has received within a single performance year and ensure all team members are considered for the scheme: this will include the proportion of any team awards they receive.

c) HR Operations

1. Ensure that, once authorised, bonuses and other forms of recognition are awarded in accordance with this guidance.
2. Record all cash awards made by line managers through payroll by keeping a record of the approved Reward Nomination Journeys and logging these on the Instant Award tracking allocation sheet
3. Colleagues should be aware that processing any award without correct approval, is an act of fraud, and carries the appropriate sanctions under the UKRI discipline policy.

d) Senior Managers/Budget Holders

1. Take overall responsibility for the recognition and reward guidance in your business area.
2. You are accountable for ensuring your business area always remains within its allocated budget both against the financial year and remit year.
3. As part of the Quarterly Reviews, ensure fairness, consistency, principles of diversity and inclusion.
4. Keep control and oversight of who can administer the scheme locally.

Appendix A

Sample Instant Recognition Awards (extracts from nomination form)

Individual:

Collaboration (*Consistent standard of work or attitude over a period of time*)

Employee has shown excellent teamwork from the outset by continued support for the workstream in addition to existing responsibilities. Examples include:

- *Proactively developing the all-staff survey, ensuring that it was technically correct, was written with the audience in mind and successfully met its purpose*
- *Regular engagement to develop the approach and advocate the aim to establish the business need before presenting solutions.*
- *Providing guidance on the operational aspects of UKRI's business to a central, strategically driven workstream – making sure that barriers from previous, comparable work is clear so that they can be effective planning and expectations can be managed.*

As a result of the employee's contribution, I have been able to confidently complete the necessary project management forms at this stage. This is a measure of the maturity of the work, despite the relatively low resourcing committed to the workstream.

The impact of the employee's collaboration is that the workstream has strong links with the appropriate expertise and the evidenced based approach going forward has the influence and support from a wider community.

2: Integrity (*A one-off event in which the individual or team has undertaken a task that required performance above that expected*)

During a scheduled non-working weekend an incident occurred at one of the animal units and which lead to several very serious animal welfare issues.

Employee was not due to work that weekend but came in for over 12 hours on Saturday, supporting and treating the injured NHPs, assisting the vets and staying until employee was absolutely certain the family were settled.

In addition, employee returned for several hours on Sunday to double check the situation.

TEAM:

Excellence: (*A one-off event in which the individual or team has undertaken a task that required performance above that expected*)

Team Awesome were all instrumental in undertaking the necessary preparations and supporting delivery on the day of the first virtual responsive mode panel in healthcare technologies. The change from a physical to a virtual panel was made late in the day and so changes had to be made in terms of the design of the meeting and the briefing and providing support for the panel members. This required considerable extra effort and thinking on their feet. This was at a time when we were extremely busy as a team adjusting plans due to the impact of Covid-19 and coping with adjusting to working from home. In addition, two of the members of the Team had limited access to the necessary Technology at the critical period. The work was also undertaken in the context of limited prior experience and knowledge. The high-quality support that was provided is even more commendable due to these combination of circumstances.

Annex B.1 -For Innovate UK use only
UKRI Instant Recognition Award Nomination Form-Individual

Employee name:			
Employee number:			
Band:			
Employee email:			
Functional Area: (e.g. Science, Finance, HR)			
Date of nomination:			
UKRI Value(s) linked to nomination <i>at least one value must be selected. Nomination may be rejected if value is not identified.</i>			
Collaboration	☐	Excellence	☐
Integrity	☐	Innovation	☐
Reason for Nomination: <i>Please tick all that apply</i>	<i>A one-off event in which the individual or team has undertaken a task that required performance above that expected</i>		☐
	<i>Consistent standard of work or attitude over a period of time</i>		☐
	<i>Commitment beyond the call of duty and expectations</i>		☐
Supporting statement with rationale for award (150 words maximum) : <i>Submissions should support reasons for nomination as selected above.</i>			
Nominated by: <i>(Name and Position)</i>			
Nomination Date:			
Nomination approved by Line manager:		<i>Please ensure nomination is agreed by line manager prior to submission to HR for processing.</i>	☐
<i>On completion of this form, and prior to submitting to your HR team please ensure that:</i> <i>A conversation has taken place with the Head of the Team for the individual / team concerned to advise them of the nomination being made.</i> <i>The individual has been given the news of their nomination for £100 paid via Payroll</i>			



HR USE ONLY:

Nomination form:	<i>Has UKRI value been identified as part of nomination</i>	☐
Please tick all that apply	<i>If nominated by any other than immediate line manager, has line manager agreed nomination?</i>	☐

Annex B .2 For Innovate UK use only

UKRI Instant Recognition Award Nomination form - TEAM

Employee Details <i>Please add all employees as appropriate for a Team Award but use separate forms for individual awards</i>	Name	Employee number	Band	Email	Functional Area (e.g., Science, Finance, HR)	Award Value £100 via payroll
UKRI Value (s) linked to nomination <i>at least one value must be selected. Nomination may be rejected if value is not identified.</i>						
Collaboration	☐	Excellence	☐			
Integrity	☐	Innovation	☐			
Reason for Nomination:	<i>A one-off event in which the individual or team has undertaken a task that required performance above that expected</i>					☐

<i>Please tick all that apply</i>	<i>Consistent standard of work or attitude over a period of time</i>	☐
	<i>Commitment beyond the call of duty and expectations</i>	☐
Supporting statement with rationale for award (150 words maximum) : <i>Submissions should support reasons for nomination as selected above.</i>		
Nominated by: (Name and Position)		Nomination Date:
Nominations approved by Line manager:	<i>Please confirm nomination is agreed by line manager prior to submission to HR for processing.</i>	
<i>On completion of this form, and prior to submitting to your HR team please ensure that:</i> <i>A conversation has taken place with the Head of the Team for the individual / team concerned to advise them of the nomination being made.</i> <i>The individual / team concerned have been given the news of their nomination £100 paid via Payroll</i>		

HR USE ONLY

Nomination form: Please tick all that apply	<i>Has UKRI value been identified as part of nomination</i>	☐
	<i>If nominated by any other than immediate line manager, has line manager agreed nomination?</i>	☐