



**UK Research
and Innovation**

Instant Recognition Awards & In Year Awards Scheme Guidance

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Guidance statement

The Instant Recognition Awards and In Year Awards guidance provides a framework for employees, managers, and HR in recognising and rewarding the efforts of employees.

The scheme operates within public sector pay Guidance 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 purpose of the Instant Recognition Scheme and In Year Awards Guidance is to set out the principles governing the scheme. Detailed guidance on the process will be issued annually including confirmation of the budget allocated to instant/in year awards.

This scheme will be subject to engagement with the Trade Union Side and complies with legislation.

The scope of the Guidance in terms of the types of employees/bands covered, is as follows: all employees of UKRI in Band H or below on permanent contracts and on temporary contracts over 12 weeks including staff on legacy T&Cs. This includes UKRI staff employed in NERC Centres. This Guidance does not apply to Visiting Scientists, Retained Consultants, contingent workers, or agency workers with under 12 weeks service. Innovate UK employees with contractual PRP are excluded from these arrangements. This Guidance operates alongside the MRC SAS In Year Guidance for staff on MRC terms, without amending the terms therein. Where instant award amounts are greater under the UKRI scheme these will apply to staff on MRC terms.

Management Statement

This document provides some additional guidance for managers, employees, and HR on the Instant recognition award and In Year award Guidance and provides examples of application of the scheme. This document is owned by UKRI Reward. Senior management, budget holders, line managers and staff all have a responsibility to ensure that this Guidance is correctly applied.

References

Appraisal & Personal Development Review (APDR) Guidance

<https://www.ukri.org/files/termsconditions/rcukukriterms/appraisal-and-personal-development-review-pdf/>

Version Control

Version Number	Status	Revision Date	Author(s)	Summary of Changes
Version 1.0	Draft	June 20	Reward Team	Draft for TUS
Version 2.0	Final	August 2020	Reward Team	Amended post TU consultation
Version 3.0	Final	October 2021	Reward Team	Updated version
Version 4.0	Final	July 2024	Reward Team	Updated version
Version 5.0	Final	October 2025	Reward Team	Updated Version

Instant and In Year Awards

1. Principles

- 1.1 Awards are available to recognise the efforts of the employee(s), determined by the work carried out, the complexity of the tasks undertaken, the challenges faced, and the impact made. Careful consideration should be given as to whether an Instant award is appropriate, or an In Year award and the descriptions provided below should help determine the type of nomination to be made. Colleagues should note that working additional hours outside of standard working hours is discouraged and will not be recognised as appropriate behaviours to be recognised and rewarded by UKRI.
- 1.2 This scheme is separate from the Annual Performance Review Process which rewards sustained higher levels of performance, on an exceptional basis. If the employee(s)' performance is deemed to have constantly been at an exceptionally high level throughout the appraisal year, then this may warrant an 'End Year Award previously known as an 'Above Standard Award'. Further advice can be sought from HR.

2. Status of Awards

- 2.1 Awards are funded through the UKRI Non-Consolidated Pay pot. All awards are non-consolidated and are non-pensionable. There are two types of non-consolidated awards:
 - 2.1.1 Instant Recognition Awards
 - 2.1.2 In-Year Awards

3. Eligibility

- 3.1 Employees who are subject to a formal Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) or Attendance Improvement Plan (AIP) will not be eligible for an Instant Award or In-Year Award. Employees exiting a PIP, or an AIP must have completed 6 months' satisfactory service to again be eligible for an award.
- 3.2 Employees in receipt of an additional allowance or who have been temporarily promoted can be nominated for an In Year Award. However, in deciding to nominate the employee it is important to distinguish between the activity leading to the additional allowance/Temporary Promotion (i.e., the additional responsibility which is recognised through their existing additional payment) and the activity leading to a nomination for an In Year Award.
- 3.3 If an End Year Award is recommended for an employee who has achieved an In Year Award in the same reporting year clear justification for the nomination must be provided.
- 3.4 Any employee in receipt of contractual PRP are not eligible for either Instant Recognition or In-Year Awards.

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4. Instant Recognition Awards

- 4.1 The aim of Instant Recognition Awards is to provide recognition for smaller individual or team contributions that have gone above and beyond what is normally expected for satisfactory performers and provide timely recognition for exceptional achievements reflecting the UKRI values of *Collaboration, Excellence, Integrity, and Innovation*.
- 4.2 Instant Recognition Awards can be awarded at any time of the year for the following:
- A one-off event in which the individual or team has undertaken a task that resulted in performance above that expected.
 - Consistent standard of work or attitude over a short period of time
 - Commitment beyond the call of duty and expectations.
- 4.3 Instant Recognition Awards will be available as £100 cash award through payroll, subject to normal deductions.
- 4.4 Employees should be able to benefit from a maximum of three Instant Recognition Awards in each performance year. These may be either individual or team awards. Local areas should be aware that multiple team awards may exhaust the available allocation more rapidly than individual awards.
- Line Managers can identify an individual or team they would like to recommend for an award and complete the nomination form. The award will be considered against the criteria by the line manager in consultation with their own line manager. Peers may propose an award to the Line Manager of the employee concerned. Awards via Payroll are subject to tax and NI.

5. In Year Awards

- 5.1 The aim of In Year Awards is to provide recognition for individual or team contributions that have gone above and beyond what is normally expected. This provides timely recognition of achievements on a bi-annual basis. The timeframes for consideration of award will be January to June, and July to December.
- 5.2 In Year Awards can be made in recognition of the following performance:
- 5.2.1 Individual Performance
- 5.2.2 Team Performance
- 5.3 Where overall performance justifies, this should continue to be recognised through end year performance markings and end of year PRP.
- 5.4 When submitting a nomination, employees are required to put some context around the award, for example: background for the piece of work undertaken; why it was necessary; its

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importance and finally, the impact on the organisation. Submissions should be objective with neutral language being used and non-emotive.

5.5 An indication of the time spent should be captured in the nomination and employees should consider one of the following categories:

5.5.1 Additional work of normal complexity, with standard benefits to UKRI taking less than 3 months

5.5.2 Additional work of above average complexity, with additional benefits to UKRI taking up to 6 months

5.5.3 Additional work of significant complexity, with significant benefits to UKRI taking 6-9 months.

5.6 For individual nominations the nominee needs to be achieving their annual objectives and to have achieved something of significance. This needs to be over and above normal duties and pre-set objectives. The point of a team nomination is to recognise and promote team working. For team nominations (either functional or project) the line manager or Project Manager must be able to demonstrate that the team members included in the team award have all remained on track with their individual objectives as well as worked collectively to achieve something of significance and / or exceptional.

5.7 Employees can benefit from up to **three** In Year Awards in each performance year. These may be either individual or team awards. Local areas should be aware that multiple team awards may exhaust the available allocation more rapidly than individual awards.

5.8 The In Year Award scheme will allow up to £1000 to be awarded, in £250 increments. These amounts have been set to ensure consistency and fairness and to ensure all staff have the opportunity to benefit from the scheme by broadening access and harmonizing the value of In Year Awards. This means values may differ to previous schemes in some parts of the business. The In Year Awards incorporate the contractual MRC SAS scheme, without amending the award amounts therein. Innovate UK staff on contractual PRP arrangements are excluded from these arrangements.

5.9 In Year awards recognise contributions that have gone above and beyond what is normally expected. Awards will be determined by panels against the criteria and budgets are set in advance. As a guideline only, it is anticipated that around a quarter of employees will be eligible for an In Year award across the year. All awards are non-consolidated and subject to tax and national insurance. Awards will not be pro-rated for part-time staff.

5.10 When making the award managers should consider the following:

- Nominations should provide timely recognition for exceptional achievements reflecting the UKRI values of *Collaboration, Excellence, Integrity, and Innovation*.
- The award level chosen should not be related to grade or basic pay but to the contribution made.
- Everyone should have an equal chance of being awarded any level of award based on the expectations for their role.
- Awards should be for good performance related to the “what” and the “how” and not just limited to the delivery of set objectives.

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- In year awards will be subject to local moderation to ensure consistency and fairness in line with the agreed criteria.
- 5.10.1 Budgets for Instant Recognition Awards and In Year awards will be held locally by Directors/ budget holders and allocated by Directorate.
- 5.11 HR will monitor and report awards made under the scheme to PFO (People, Finance and Operations Committee) on a biannual basis.

6.Guidance Review

6.1 This Guidance will be regularly reviewed to incorporate any legislative change. The Trade Unions may request that the Guidance is reviewed.