PI guidance on completing ODA compliance statements for NERC

NERC commissions some research as part of the UK’s Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitment which is monitored by DFID throughout the year to enable the UK to meet its targets. ODA funded activity focuses on outcomes that promote the long-term sustainable growth of countries on the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee list, and is administered with the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as its main objective. Both Newton Fund and Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) calls are commissioned as ODA activities. Additionally, research commissioned by NERC under other funding schemes may also contribute to NERC’s ODA commitment e.g. some Discovery Science grants, joint programmes with DFID.

NERC’s funding for Newton Fund and GCRF activities is allocated by BEIS. Detailed programme-level data on ODA is reported, scrutinised and published by the OECD via DFID. As a requirement of funding, UK PIs on these proposals are required to demonstrate that their project is ODA-compliant.

There are various guidance documents which have been published to assist with ensuring that proposals submitted under the Research Councils ODA schemes are ODA compliant.

- RCUK ODA guidance (Newton Fund)
  [http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/international/odaguidancercukspecific-pdf/](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/international/odaguidancercukspecific-pdf/)
- RCUK ODA guidance (GCRF)
  [http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/international/gcrfodaguidance-pdf/](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/international/gcrfodaguidance-pdf/)

For the Newton Fund and GCRF, NERC collects and assesses ODA compliance via an ‘ODA statement’ from PIs. As ODA compliance is a requirement for NERC funding proposals which do not meet NERCs office assessment of ODA compliance will not be funded.

The ODA statement is intended to be a stand-alone document, and will form the initial evidence base for any DFID/International Development Committee/OECD scrutiny. NERC has put together some guidance on what should be included in an ODA statement, which is intended to help PIs strengthen their ODA compliance evidence. This should be read in conjunction with all other published guidance.

1. Remember that the focus of an ODA statement should always be upon addressing the economic development and welfare of developing countries as the primary purpose of the researcher that will be undertaken. You should use other sections of the application submission to better describe the science. As such, you should not rely upon expanded explanations within other sections of your Je-S submission which you expect to support your ODA statement. Always bring the focus back to the impacts upon local populations, and how their lives will be improved.

2. State the developing country or countries that you will be working with.
3. Clearly define the challenge in the context of the impact upon the welfare of local populations, and back it up by figures if available. Issues which are global in nature are not ODA-compliant unless your research is linked to a specific aspect in a developing country.

4. Define how your research will seek to address the challenge, and the impact that it will have on the economic development and welfare of local populations. Outputs which are global in nature with global benefits are not ODA compliant unless the primary objective of your research will have a specific impact in the developing country.

5. Show a route to impact, and how solutions will be realised.

6. Whilst capacity building is an important part of ODA research, unless the call has been specifically set up as a capacity building programme then capacity building on its own is not enough to justify ODA compliance. All capacity building in the overseas country should clearly underpin a defined poverty alleviation challenge (as described in points 2-5). Capacity building programmes may be specifically launched by NERC to build capacity in the country in specific areas which will in the long term contribute to economic development and increase welfare in developing countries.

7. Simply stating that a proposal is ODA compliant, or will lead to economic development and poverty alleviation does not make it so - it is the supporting evidence that you describe which makes it ODA compliant.