



REFERENCE GUIDE FOR PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS

**Research Accounting
Financial Services**

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Background

The **Reference Guide for Principal Investigators** (PIs) has been created as a resource tool for new and existing PIs at Queen's University. This document provides information on various research finance topics, to assist PIs in fulfilling the various requirements for research projects under their authority.

Research Accounting Unit

Queen's Research Accounting (RA) is a department within Financial Services, who supports the research environment at Queen's by providing expert advice, financial accountability and management of all research funds. RA works closely with researchers, research administrative support staff, and funding agencies, as well as various Queen's units such as the VP Research portfolio and Strategic Procurement Services, to ensure adherence to funding agency policies and guidelines.

RA manages the post-award functions for all research grants and contracts at the University. This includes monitoring cash flows and expenditures, communicating with funding agencies, financial reporting and invoicing. RA also provides support in the preparation of year-end financial statements as research is a significant contributor to the results of operations for Queen's University.

Some of the core responsibilities of RA includes the following:

- Providing training, leadership and guidance to the research community on the eligibility of expenses and financial processes.
- Establishing and administering projects in the University's financial system for research grants and contracts.
- Post-award monitoring, including monitoring deficits, expense eligibility and authorization.
- Acting as a key liaison with funding agencies around financial matters, including during audits or monitoring visits.
- Supporting all financial regulatory reporting and invoicing requirements related to research projects.
- Producing management reports to support internal cost allocations, year-end reporting, and various research revenue and expense reports.

Refer to the [Financial Services](#) website for additional information regarding research finance matters.

Research Project Life Cycle

RA establishes research projects in the PeopleSoft Finance system once all regulatory compliance requirements have been met. The approved documentation is forwarded to RA by the VP Research portfolio, through the TRAQ system. Upon receipt of an “Approval for Research Project Set-up” through the approved TRAQ file, the PI will be asked to submit a **Budget Template** and **Research Project Signing Authority and Systems Access Form**, before a project can be established. Projects will be set up within ten business days from the time these two documents are submitted by the PI, through the TRAQ system. During peak periods, this timeline may fall within a ten to fifteen day period. Once established, PIs will receive an email notification from RA.

The following flowchart details the lifecycle of a research project:



Budget Templates

The completed **Budget Template** will be used to establish the research project expense budget in PeopleSoft Finance. The expense budget will not impact how funds are spent, unless there are specific spending guidelines set out by the funder (e.g. Canada Foundation for Innovation).

Tips for completing the Budget Template:

- The total budget must match the total funding per the approved Notice of Award, Agreement or Contract.
- If you have multiple years of funding, you must establish a budget for each year. The total budget by year should align with the annual amounts indicated in the approved Notice of Award, Agreement or Contract.

- The Budget Template will require you to use a start and end date for each year of funding.
- Once the start and end date are populated in the Budget Template, this will open the column up, to allow you to enter your budget amounts by category (i.e. Account IDs).
- Do not enter the Overhead amounts in the **Budget Template** worksheet. Overhead details must be entered in the **Overhead Calculator** worksheet.

Refer to the Financial Services Learning Catalogue to view a [training video](#) on how to complete a Budget Template.

Research Project Signing Authority and Systems Access Form

The [Research Project Signing Authority and Systems Access Form](#) must be submitted before a research project can be set up. However, changes may also occur throughout the life of the research project, which may require updates to this form. The form can be found on the Financial Services website, under the **Forms** tab.

The PI can choose to ADD or REMOVE authorized delegates for any given research project under their authority, throughout the life of a project. One form is required for each research project and there is no limit to the number of authorized delegates a PI can assign to any given project.

Once the project has been set up, if future changes are required to add/remove authorized delegates, the updated form can be sent directly to Financial Services at finance.security@queensu.ca. These changes do not need to be processed through TRAQ, unless there is a change in PI.

Research ChartFields

Once a research project is established, an email notification will be sent to the PI, which will include the research ChartFields to be used with future transactions related to the project.

Research Projects begin with a “3” and are 6 digits in length.

Fund codes for research project transactions include **30000-Externally Funded** research projects or **31000-Internally Funded** research projects.

Mandatory ChartFields for research transactions include:

- Fund
- Department

- Account
- Project

Program and Class IDs are optional, with the exception of **Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI)** projects, which require a program code.

The following is an example of a research ChartField:

Fund	Department	Account	Program	Class	Project
30000	42001	600009	10010	1144	393999

For additional details regarding [ChartFields](#), visit the Financial Services website.

TRAQ Amendments

PIs or authorized delegates are responsible for creating a **TRAQ Event Amendment** in the applicable TRAQ file if there are changes to the research project.

Changes that require a TRAQ Event Amendment may include a change to one of the following:

- Principal Investigator
- Project Name
- Department
- Project Spending Deadline
- Project Funding Amount
- Change to Internship Schedule (for Mitacs Elevate or Accelerate projects)

The documentation that supports the change must be uploaded to the TRAQ file. Once submitted, VP Research staff will create an **Amendment Milestone** to notify RA staff of the changes required to the research project. RA will make the applicable change to the research project in the PeopleSoft Finance system.

Funding Agencies

Beginning April 1, 2021, Queen's University began referring to the new Tri-Agency Guide on Financial Administration (TAGFA) for research projects funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). A specific section of the Financial Services website has been dedicated to providing information on the [TAGFA](#), including:

- Background information
- Principles and Directives
- Queen's TAGFA Compliance Plan
- Training Resources
- How to determine if an expense is eligible
- Additional Resources and Contact Details

Contact details for other [major funding agencies](#) are also available on the Financial Services website.

Expense Reimbursement System (ERS)

The reimbursement of expenses (both travel and non-travel) incurred while conducting University business is governed by the Queen's [Travel and Expense Reimbursement Policy](#) and related procedures.

The Expense Reimbursement System (ERS) is an easy, point and click, automated, end-to-end online tool that allows users to create, submit, review, and approve **expense reports (both travel and non-travel) and request advances related to University business**. The use of the ERS substantially reduces the time needed for tedious and resource-consuming manual tasks, facilitates faster payment times, and allows for delegation of claim creation & editing. **Effective January 1, 2021, the use of the ERS is now mandatory for all who have access to it, including staff, faculty and graduate students.** For those that do not have access to the ERS, expenses may be submitted through the [Expense Reimbursement Form](#).

A **Travel Advance** may be requested through the ERS for approved University business travel and must adhere to the [Travel and Expense Reimbursement Policy](#). The travel advance should be used for out-of-pocket expenses that will be incurred for related business travel. A travel advance request $\geq \$10,000.00$ must be accompanied by a detailed expense budget. The advance request must include the purpose of the travel, the dates you are traveling and the destination. If the advance is not used in its entirety, unspent funds must be returned.

Travel advances are being phased out, with a few exceptions that will be approved on a case-by-case basis. These will be replaced with the Travel Credit Card program. More information about this program can be found on the Strategic Procurement Services [website](#).

A **Research Participant or Indigenous Elder/Participant Advance** can also be requested through the ERS system. Research Participant advances are used by PIs or authorized delegates to pay research study participants. Refer to the [Financial Services website](#) for guidance on requesting these advances. If the advance is not used in its entirety, unspent funds must be returned to the University.

For questions regarding the **ERS** please contact Financial Services at expenses@queensu.ca.

acQuire

acQuire is an online eProcurement system for all procurement activities, including departmental goods and service shopping, interdepartmental requests, and invoice remittances. The payment of supplier invoices is completed through the acQuire system.

All active Queen's employees have access to acQuire as Shoppers. Requester and Approver roles are available in the system however require training and departmental authorization. For further details, visit the [Strategic Procurement Services](#) website.

Additional information regarding [acQuire](#), including FAQs, Forms and Training is available on the Strategic Procurement Services website. [Contacts details](#) for all Procurement related topics are also available on the website.

Fast Administrative Support Tool (FAST)

The FAST Administrative Support Tool (FAST) allows users to run a variety of financial reports for both research and non-research activity. FAST research reports are available to PIs and delegates, and provide financial information, including budget, revenue, expense and commitment details for research projects. [Training resources](#) on the FAST system are available in the Financial Services Learning Catalogue.

The three most commonly used FAST research reports are:

- the Project Summary Report
- the Statement of Operations Research Report
- the Project Statement Report

To log into FAST, beginning on the [Queen's University](#) Home Page:

- Click **Sign In** (top right corner)
- Go to **MyQueen'sU – SOLUS, MyHR and more**
- Scroll down to the **Finance Applications** section
- Click **Financial Reporting (FAST)**
- Click **Go to FAST Administrative Support Tool (FAST)**
- Enter your NetID and Password
- Click **Finance Reporting** (left-hand side)

Project Summary Report

The **Project Summary Report** may be accessed under the **Research Reports** tab (top of the page). To generate a report on a specific research project, enter the **Project ID** and indicate the **As of Date**. The report can be generated for the current period, or you may select a past period. Once specified, click **Execute Report**. To learn more about the **Project Summary Report**, visit the [Financial Services Learning Catalogue](#).

Statement of Operations Research Report

The **Statement of Operations Research Report** may be accessed by clicking on the **Operating Statements** tab, then **By Account**, followed by **Statement of Operations Research**. To run a report, enter the **Project ID** and indicate the **Fiscal Period**. The report can be generated for the current period, or you may select a past period. Once specified, click **Execute Report**. To learn more about the **Statement of Operations Research Report**, visit the [Financial Services Learning Catalogue](#).

Project Statement Report

The **Project Statement Report** may be accessed under the **Research Reports** tab. To generate a report on a specific research project, enter the **Project ID** and select the **Balance As Of** date. The report can be generated for the current period, or you may select a past period. Once specified, click **Execute Report**. To learn more about the **Project Statement Report**, visit the [Financial Services Learning Catalogue](#).

Within each report, there are additional drill-down capabilities. Amounts in blue represent hyperlinks. You may access additional details by clicking on any of these hyperlinks.

There are additional research reports available under the **Research Reports** tab.

Research Commitments

Commitments are known future expenses, which have not yet been incurred.

Examples may include commitments for:

- Salaries and Benefits
- Graduate Research Fellowships (GRFs)
- Purchase Orders
- Overhead
- Travel Advances
- Research Participant Advances

To learn more about [Research Commitments](#) visit the Financial Services Learning Catalogue.

Salary and Benefit Expenses

While salary and benefit expenses may be posted to a research project, **salaries and benefits are managed by Queen's Human Resources**. If you have questions regarding salaries and benefits, including how to pay someone out of a research project, please contact your [HR Advisor](#) for guidance. Salaries and benefits may be split between more than one source of funds (i.e. projects). Account IDs for salary and benefit expenses begin with a 5xxxxx.

In order to **move or clear a payroll commitment** from a research project, the PI or an authorized delegate must contact their [HR Advisor](#) and request the salary contract be moved to another source of funds or cancelled.

In the first month of pay, salary and benefit expenses will be reflected in the research project along with the remaining commitment, calculated to the earlier of the end of the contract or the university fiscal year-end (April 30th).

Note: To clear a non-payroll commitment from a research project related to a **Graduate Research Fellowship (GRF)** contract, the PI or an authorized delegate must contact the **School of Graduate Studies** at SGSGRF@queensu.ca to request a GRF contract be moved to another source of funds or cancelled.

Research Overhead

Research overhead or indirect costs include expenses necessary to support research, which may not be attributable to a specific research project. Overhead costs provide general support for the university research environment. Examples include utilities costs, insurance, research administration support services, etc.

Research overhead rates are determined through the negotiation of research agreements and contracts. Rates may vary depending on the source of funds. Some external agencies provide revenue to cover overhead costs, however many research projects do not include an overhead component.

To learn more about [Research Overhead](#) visit the Financial Services Learning Catalogue. The [Indirect Costs of Sponsored Research Policy](#) is available on the Queen's University Secretariat and Legal Counsel website.

Financial Reporting and Invoicing

RA is responsible for preparing, approving and submitting **financial reports** and **invoices** to research funding agencies. RA manages the financial reporting and invoicing deadlines related to research projects.

Financial reporting requirements may include annual, interim and final reports. One common type of report is the **Statement of Account (i.e. Form 300)**, which is required for most Tri-Agency funded projects. There are different reporting templates and formats, depending on the related funding agency and/or research project requirements.

Invoices are prepared based on the requirements outlined in the underlying agreement or contract. If invoicing is “Deliverable Based” or “Cost Reimbursement Based” it is the PI’s responsibility to inform the RA Finance Contact when deliverables have been completed. Once confirmed, the RA Finance Contact will prepare the invoice.

It is the RA Finance Contacts’ responsibility to prepare financial reports and invoices, which are then approved by a Manager within the RA unit. PIs may also be required to provide input (e.g. forecasting) and/or approve these documents. Once approved, the Finance Contact will forward the final documents directly to the funding agency.

Research Project Overspending

Research project overspending results when actual expenses plus commitments for future expenses (e.g. salary contracts, purchase orders, overhead, etc.) exceeds the approved budget in a project.

The following is the process for addressing research project deficits, per the [Research Project Over-Spending Procedure](#):

Month 1: If a research project results in a deficit of $\geq \$1,000$, at the end of Month 1, an email is sent to the PI, authorized delegates and Department Head.

Months 2 & 3: The PI has Month 2 and Month 3 to resolve the issue before the project is inactivated.

Month 3: The project is inactivated, and an email is sent to the PI, authorized delegates and Department Head notifying them of the inactivation. **Note: At this time, any salary being expensed to the project will be diverted to the departmental operating fund.**

Month 7: Once a project has been in a deficit for 7 consecutive months, the **excess of expenses over revenue** is recoded to the department operating fund **regardless of the deficit amount**. A preliminary email is sent to the Faculty Business Officer at Month 6 notifying them of the

impending recode to operating. **Program Code 10253 (Overspend from Research)** is used to identify transactions recoded from research to the department operating fund.

There are three ways to resolve a project deficit:

1. Obtain temporary **overdraft** protection from your Faculty/Department/School if the spending of the subsequent year's funding is permitted by the funder. Refer to the [Research Project Overdraft Request and Approval Form](#) available on the Financial Services website under the **Forms** tab. Once the approved form is received by RA, a temporary budget will be added to the project, with a set reversal date. If the deficit is not resolved at the end of the overdraft period, the expenses (i.e. deficit) will be recoded to the ChartFields provided on the approved form.

The Research Project Overdraft Request and Approval Form must be:

- Fully completed
 - Approved by the Department Head or delegate
 - Cannot exceed one year in length
 - Cannot extend beyond the Project Spending Deadline of the research project
2. Expenses can be recoded to another acceptable source of funding (e.g. usually another research project under the PI's authority).
 3. In some cases, additional funding may be obtained from the original source of funds. However, this situation is not a common occurrence.

Please contact your Finance Contact in [Research Accounting](#) to discuss your options. Some restrictions may apply depending on the research project and related funding agency.

Additional details regarding [Research Project Overspending](#) are available within the Financial Services Learning Catalogue.

Project Spending Deadline

The **Project Spending Deadline (PSD)** indicates the final date when all project spending must be completed. Many projects have an automatic extension period to spend beyond the End Date, therefore the PSD is typically \geq the End Date of the project.

The **PSD**, which can be viewed in the **Project Summary Report**, is colour-coded, similar to traffic lights:

- Green** = You may continue to spend as there are > 3 months remaining
- Yellow** = Slow down as you have < 3 months remaining
- Red** = Stop spending as the PSD has passed

Upon project completion, there are a few things to consider:

- Project spending must be completed and any outstanding commitments cleared by the **PSD**
- Any remaining project deficit may need to be recoded
- Any remaining project surplus may need to be recoded or returned to original funder
- A final report or invoice may be required
- Once the project has been brought to a \$0 balance, the project is inactivated and closed in PeopleSoft Finance and TRAQ by RA

30/60/90 Day Notification Process

The **30/60/90 Day Notification Process** informs PIs of research projects with upcoming Project Spending Deadlines. PIs and authorized delegates will receive three (3) emails per project:

- The first email notification is sent 90 days prior to the PSD
- The second email notification is sent 60 days prior to the PSD
- The third email notification is sent 30 days prior to the PSD

The email provides three scenarios that may be applicable:

- 1) The PSD has been extended and a TRAQ Event Amendment must be submitted to request an update to the PSD in PeopleSoft Finance.
- 2) The project has a "soft" end date (e.g. industry or clinical trial contract with no firm end date specified by the funder). Please email your [Research Accounting Finance Contact](#) with an updated estimate of the project completion date.
- 3) The project is ending and the PI believes they can retain any unused funds. The PI would need to contact the [Research Accounting Finance Contact](#) for the project to discuss the terms and conditions set out by the funding agency.
- 4) The project is ending – **project spending *must* be completed and any outstanding commitments cleared by the PSD.** Depending on the Notice of Award, Agreement or Contract in place, unspent funds may need to be returned to the funding agency. Please contact your [Research Accounting Finance Contact](#) for clarification.

Once the PSD has passed the project will be inactivated. **Please note, a subsequent email is not sent to PIs regarding the inactivation.**

Contact Information

Research Accounting contact information is available on the Financial Services website. You may send inquiries related to research project financial matters to research.accounting@queensu.ca or directly to the **Finance Contact** for the research project. Refer to the Research Projects by Finance Contact listing for a list of contacts by funding category.

Tip: The Finance Contact for any given research project can also be viewed by generating a FAST Project Summary Report for the project.

The following are additional contact details for units who are associated with post-award administrative matters:

- Research Services: urs@queensu.ca
- Research Legal Services: researchlegal@queensu.ca
- TRAQ Help Desk: traq@queensu.ca
- Strategic Procurement Services: Visit the website for contact details by area.