

# Notes on ODA eligibility

(for Chinese applicants to the UK)

The funding for this PhD placement programme is provided by the UK on the basis that it will be used to fund programmes that will contribute to the UK's Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitment. All programmes and activities with ODA funding need to demonstrate that they aim to contribute to a reduction in poverty and further global sustainable development or improve the welfare of poor or vulnerable populations of recipient countries. All the applications will be assessed as to whether they are ODA eligible. The following guide explains how you can express the ODA relevance of your work in your application.

**Official definitions of ODA come from the UK Government Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), [www.newtonfund.ac.uk/about/what-is-oda/](http://www.newtonfund.ac.uk/about/what-is-oda/)**

The definition of ODA is broad and can be dependent on interpretation. This note is not intended to be a full checklist of ODA eligibility, but highlights two of the main criteria in determining ODA eligibility:

## **Section 1: Research areas and topics**

BEIS and MOE have agreed to support PhD placements in the following fields:

1. health and life sciences (e.g. HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, neglected tropical diseases, child mortality, maternal health)
2. environmental technologies (e.g. climate change, green technology, sustainable development, ecosystem services, resource scarcity)
3. food and water security
4. energy
5. urbanisation
6. education and creative economy for economic development and social welfare.

### **Research topics that are generally ODA-eligible for PhD studies in the UK**

- ✓ Agriculture (e.g. irrigation, crop yields)
- ✓ Climate and environment (e.g. climate change, green technology, sustainable development, ecosystem services, resource scarcity)
- ✓ Sustainable energy for all
- ✓ Education research and innovation for development
- ✓ Economic growth (e.g. equitable growth)
- ✓ Health (e.g. HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, neglected tropical diseases, child mortality, maternal health)
- ✓ Water and sanitation

- ✓ Food and nutrition (including food security)
- ✓ Demographic change and migration
- ✓ Rural and urban development
- ✓ Infrastructure (including civil engineering, information and communication technologies, big data for social and economic development)
- ✓ Humanitarian disasters and emergencies, disaster risk reduction
- ✓ Resilient and connected communities
- ✓ Future cities
  - Governance, society and conflict (e.g. transparency, accountability, effective institutions, land and natural resource rights, poverty alleviation, social development), inequalities, violence and security, peace building, civil society)
- ✓ Development-relevant data collection, quality and access (including administrative data and macroeconomic statistics).
- ✓ Arts and humanities for development (linguistics, use of digital media, cultural heritage for economic development, creative industries for empowerment and economic development)
- ✓ Women's and girls' empowerment
- ✓ Supporting people with disabilities

In each case you will be required to outline a link between your research topic and the development relevant impact suggested.

#### Areas that are NOT generally ODA-eligible for PhD studies in the UK:

- Defence or military research
- Military applications of nuclear energy
- Research specific to issues in developed economies
- Research into application of technologies where the primary benefit will go to UK companies

## **Section 2: how to understand “to promote economic development and welfare of developing countries”**

OECD guidelines on ODA include the following sentence: (funding must be) “*administered with the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as its main objective*”.

The key principles involved with assessing for ODA are all to be found through taking a closer look at this sentence and provides the key pointers included below:

1. Promotion
2. Economic Development
3. Welfare
4. Developing Countries
5. Objective

### 1. Promotion:

Impact is an important measure of the success of promotion, although the word suggests that an immediate impact is not mandatory. Different programmes have different timescales and their impacts manifest in different ways.

The British Council approach to impact:

*(impact can be achieved...) “through knowledge exchange, new products and processes, new companies and job creation, skills development, increasing the effectiveness of public services and policy, enhancing quality of life and health, international development...”.*

Public engagement is also considered as an eligible form of impact.

To be ODA eligible the impact indicators must be in an area related to development as covered in the next two sections (economic development and welfare).

It may be that some of the measures of impact mentioned above are included in the proposal outputs. **However, with research immediate impact is often not possible. In these cases we look for a plausible pathway to impact. By this we mean a convincing suggestion of how the outputs from the proposed research will lead to impact within a reasonable time frame (within fifteen years). To be ODA eligible we need the impact to extend beyond academic impact alone.**

### 2. Economic development:

Economic development is a broad term that goes beyond simple measures like GDP. In addition it is not easy to define in advance what may or may not lead to an economic benefit (increasing profits through an improved industrial process for example may not always feed back to the population and may even promote further inequality).

We ask for impact that fosters economic performance that specifically benefits low income or vulnerable members of society. **Examples could include research that could lead to the creation of jobs in rural, underdeveloped regions or improving efficiency/yield in a related industry.**

Due to the broad scope for this definition it is important to avoid the following common pitfalls:

- The proposal should not be **too general** (sweeping comments about benefits to the economy or GDP in general without substantiation are insufficient) – it must clearly demonstrate a pathway to economic impact for low income and vulnerable sections of society.
- The central claim should not be **unrealistic**. In some cases it is clear that claims for impact are exaggerated or not likely to be realised within 15 years.
- There must be a mechanism in place to ensure benefits are **captured**. For example a proposal with a theme strongly related to ODA is considered not eligible if the outputs are weak or restricted by IP agreements, or if it is unlikely to influence policy.

### 3. Welfare:

OECD guidelines mention economic development and welfare. This applies at the call

level, but individual proposals can be assessed as impacting economic development or welfare as these terms are not always mutually inclusive.

As with economic development, social welfare is broad term that roughly (but not exclusively) **consists of enhancing quality of life (wellbeing), health and creative output.**

**Pathways to impact in these areas could include increasing the effectiveness of public services and policy, or political representation of vulnerable populations.**

Due to the broad scope for this definition it is important to avoid the following common pitfalls:

- Proposals should not focus on **general health benefits** that don't have a particular benefit for poorer/vulnerable in society. Although it could be argued that someone who is ill is necessarily vulnerable, a case needs to be made for why underdevelopment in a particular region exacerbates the condition targeted. Where possible such claims should be justified with statistics.
- The proposal should not confuse **healthcare** with **academic enquiry**. In the case of an academic enquiry into a medical issue, a plausible pathway to impact is still required. A proposal suggesting a study thematically linked to an ODA topic (such as dengue fever) is not by default eligible but must demonstrate a pathway to impact within 15 years.
- Monitoring programmes for not communicable diseases must be considered in terms of their **affordability/productivity** in vulnerable populations.

#### **4. Objective**

Research projects will usually include more than one objective. It is important to distinguish between primary and secondary aims of a proposal.

Applicants that understand ODA requirements often try to pass secondary objectives as primary objectives. We will be pragmatic in these cases and put the ODA eligible part of the application into perspective. An example could be in the case of a project that receives industrial sponsorship – a primary objective may be to improve a process and thereby make it more profitable. If the secondary objective has a particularly strong case for being ODA then the proposal can still be acceptable – but the judgement on eligibility (including the pathway to impact) will be entirely based on *that* objective.