

## **UK Biobank policy on collaborative versus research projects: May 2019**

UK Biobank distinguishes between projects performed as collaborations with a research group as compared with projects performed by a research group through a research application.

**Collaborative projects:** UKB may enter an arrangement in which a research group generates certain derived data-fields. This arrangement is subject to a collaborative agreement between UKB and the research group in which the main characteristics are:

- Only the UKB data that are required to generate and/or validate the derived data-fields are made available to the research group;
- These data-fields have to be returned to UKB in accordance with an agreed schedule so that they can then be made available in association with other UKB data to all researchers on an equal basis (i.e. researchers have no exclusive access period in which to perform research using the new data-fields once they are linked to other data contained in the UK resource).

Consequently, although the research group may publish on the methodology that has been used in a collaborative project to generate the derived data-fields (as, for example, with the genotyping and imputation data, derived variables from brain imaging and activity monitoring, and measures related to the built environment), they are not permitted to undertake research based on the combination of their derived data-fields with other UKB data until those new data-fields have been made available to all researchers through UKB's access procedures.

Collaborative projects may also involve pilot studies to assess the feasibility of enhancements to the resource (e.g. linkage to a new health-related dataset or the use of a new device), and these arrangements are conducted on a similar basis.

**Research projects:** By contrast, access to data that are already in the UKB resource does not involve collaboration with UKB. Instead, the UKB data are available to any academic or commercial research group on the same basis for any type of health-related research that is in the public interest. As stated in our [Access Procedures](#), researchers using the UKB resource are required to return (within the time limits – typically 6 months after publication of the relevant research findings – set out in the MTA) any derived data-fields generated as part of their research (along with the underlying code used to generate them) for other researchers to use.

A research group may, however, propose to enhance the UKB resource by generating new data as part of a research project. For example:

- funding assays on biological samples (e.g. measuring telomeres, exome sequencing, metabolomics) which are subject to UKB's [sample access procedures](#); or
- funding other enhancements (e.g. cardiac image analysis, cardiac rhythm monitoring).

In such circumstances, UKB may grant a limited period of exclusive access to these data, once they are linked to other UKB data (typically 9 months from the time of linkage), before the new data are made available to other researchers. The criteria for such arrangements are set out in our [guidance related to returned data](#).