**What is consultancy?**

Consultancy is the **provision of expert advice and work, which is generally commercially priced in response to a client’s need for assistance using existing knowledge. It does not normally involve the creation of new knowledge and the outputs are usually partly or wholly owned by the client.**

Consultancy can be carried out for a range of organisations, including commercial enterprises, public sector organisations (local & central government, the NHS), charities, social enterprises and can also include work for college spin-outs and organisations based overseas.

Examples of consultancy assignments include:

* Providing expert advice on a retained, on-going basis. This can include written reports and recommendations as well as meetings and client visits.
* Analysing and reviewing client data /technology to verify or make recommendations for improvement.
* Working directly with a client to identify issues and suggest solutions through business review or workshops.
* Developing and leading field activities for knowledge transfer and data gathering.
* Acting as an expert witness in either criminal or commercial cases.
* Acting as a subcontractor on a commercial contract for an organisation other than Birkbeck.

If you are not sure whether the work you plan to undertake is consultancy, or to discuss your proposed consultancy project, please contact your pre-award “application” person in the Research Grants and Contracts Office <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/staff-information/research/contacts>

**What are the benefits of consultancy?**

Whilst there is normally a financial incentive to carry out consultancy, there are a range of other, very good reasons to engage in this kind of work, namely:

* Increased opportunities to engage with wider audiences and communities, extending the reputation and reach of the academic and the college.
* Working with external clients can provide valuable insights, for both research and teaching activities.
* Opportunities to develop longer term partnerships or collaborations that result in other research, projects or income streams.
* Further opportunities to test knowledge and expertise in a non-academic setting and opportunities to increase commercial awareness.

**Should I carry out consultancy via Birkbeck or privately?**

Colleagues are encouraged to offer consultancy on behalf of the college rather than on a private basis and are entitled to undertake these activities for up to 30 days per year. This arrangement has the benefit of allowing specified use of college facilities, accessing additional support from the Research Grants and Contracts Office including assistance with contract negotiation, advice on handling intellectual property issues, costing and pricing advice, invoicing and professional indemnity cover.

Where consultancy is carried out through Birkbeck, contracts are signed by the College Secretary and a calculation to cover overheads is included in the overall cost, which is pro-rated on a day basis from the current annual FTE overhead rate. The Research Grants and Contracts Office will confirm current daily rates.

Working in a private capacity means that you are working on your own and you will not benefit from any of the support available through the college consultancy route. It is essential that you make your client aware of this from the outset and you must not use Birkbeck stationery, email accounts or telephone numbers in your communication with them, as this might imply otherwise.

**What support is available for consultancy projects?**

The Research Grants and Contracts Office will provide accurate and practical advice to assist in making and managing consultancy agreements. If you are considering undertaking a piece of consultancy, you can contact the RGCO at any stage but ideally as early as possible in the process to discuss:

**Legal and contractual issues:** Formal contracts should be agreed and signed before you provide any advice, expertise or services to the client. If the appropriate agreements are not in place, this lack of clarity can lead to serious implications for your project and your relationship with your client. A contract is formed when parties are identified, descriptions and quantities are defined, along with timescales, locations, deliverables and payment schedules. A robust agreement will protect both you and the college from the outset. Where necessary, we can also draw upon additional external legal and IP advice and can also advise in cases where your client insists on using their own form of contract.

**Insurance, Indemnities & Public Liability:** If you carry out your consultancy through the college, you may benefit from institutional professional indemnity and public liability insurance. Public Liability insurance in particular can prove extremely costly and so this should be regarded as a significant benefit.

**Costing & Pricing:** Projects can be priced in various ways, depending on the nature of the consultancy but quotations to clients should **always** include accurate overhead charges and be quoted as £x +VAT . The Research Grants and Contracts Office can help with this. We can also assist at pre-tender questionnaire or invitation to tender (ITT) stage, to ensure projects are accurately and realistically priced and resourced.

**Financial Management:** We can arrange invoicing and payments for you, through the finance department. You can elect to be paid via payroll (in which case, tax and NI deductions will be made), or you can have your fee credited to a special fund account. You should bear in mind that income from consultancy is not pensionable. When the agreement is signed, you will be asked to state your preference for your payment and we will also arrange this for you. Please bear in mind that your payment(s) will be made only when funds have been received from the client.

**Consultancy Project Management:** The Research Grants and Contracts Office will also maintain records & files for your consultancy assignment and can act as a central point of communication for any external advisors or stakeholders involved in the project.