TRAC Academic Time Survey: Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What is TRAC?** TRAC stands for Transparent Approach to Costing, it is an annual, mandatory return submitted to the OfS analysing the university's income and expenditure between the categories of Teaching, Research and Other.

2. **Why is TRAC important?** TRAC data is used by government and research funders to assess the proper financial management of all UK HEI's. The return calculates the Indirect, Estates and Technician Infrastructure cost rates that apply to research applications. The aggregated data informs government funding for teaching.

3. **Why do I need to complete the Academic Time Survey?** Crucially, TRAC is not just a data collection exercise but is also used to generate research income for the university via the TRAC Research Charge Out Rates. A key requirement of the TRAC model is for staff on mixed teaching and research contracts to undertake a survey to identify how their time is split between Teaching, Research and Other. This data is aggregated and department level and used to distribute pay costs between these categories. To ensure validity, TRAC guidance mandates a minimum 75% response rate at the department level for the survey data.

4. **Who will see my survey results?** Heads of School, Department Managers, and School Managers review aggregated data within their respective for reasonableness. Apart from them, only a small Corporate Accounting team has access to individual submissions. The data is utilised exclusively to fulfil reporting and data obligations as outlined by OfS and UKRI. This approach ensures individual identities remain unidentifiable.

5. **How can a survey covering months provide an accurate reflection of work undertaken?** TRAC Guidance 3.1.4.26a states that *"All staff not directly charged to TRAC activities (must) complete at least three schedules, covering the whole academic year, at least every three years"*. At Sussex, we survey each school for one term, once per year to reduce the administrative burden on staff. The surveyed term rotates each year to account for seasonality in the results. Then the annual average is calculated using the most recent survey data available for the terms that were not surveyed that year.

6. **How can I remember and accurately represent all my activities during the survey period in the return?** We recognise that this may be a difficult process, please make use of any planning documents, such as your workload plan/model to inform the split of your time. We are aiming for a reasonable reflection of the split of your time, rather than a return that is accurate to the hour. The survey will automatically identify and display any externally funded research projects you are recorded against that were open during the survey period.

7. **I work part-time for the university and part-time for another organisation – which work should I include?** Please only record the split of your time that relates to the work you do for the university.

8. **I need to change part of my survey response; how do I do that?** Please contact Joanne Seddon Resource Accountant in the Corporate Accounting Team j.seddon@sussex.ac.uk

9. **How should I record absences such as holiday of sick leave?** Please ignore absences when recording the split of your time. The percentages reported should only reflect your actual worked hours. If you were absent for the whole of the reporting period please submit a nil return by entering a zero in one of the categories and saving and confirming your survey.

10. **How should I record industrial action?** Please do not include strike action, the percentages reported should only reflect your worked hours.

11. **Why are there so many categories and not just Teaching, Research and Other?** The TRAC return requires us to report using all the categories listed. A link to the list of definitions can be found here on the Sussex Direct Academic Time Survey webpage.

Common classification queries:

- Travel time should be recorded in line with the purpose of the trip.
- Sabbatical leave carried out under research fellowship should generally be recorded under Research and the appropriate sub-category (unless the individual is still undertaking Teaching or Other activities) where there is no external funding body this will be generally coded to Own Funded Research.
- Administration activity in support of the whole University, rather than your School should be recorded under General Support - Management, Admin & Committee work. This includes sitting on university committees (where the committee does not specifically relate to Teaching or Research), or work to promote the University as a whole.
- Conference attendance should be recorded in line with the purpose of the attending the conference.

How do the Research Funder classes map to the ATS reporting categories?

Please see the table below:

Research Funder Class Description	Research Funder Class Ref	ATS Reporting Category
UK Research Councils	1	Research - Externally Funded - Research Councils
UK Govt Depts (Inc LA's,Health and Hospitals)	4	Research - Externally Funded - Other Government Dept's
EU Government	6	Research - Externally Funded - EU government bodies
EU Charities (Open Competition)	7	Research - Externally Funded - EU Other
EU Industry	8	Research - Externally Funded - EU Other
EU Other	9	Research - Externally Funded - EU Other
UK Charities (Open Competition)	2	Research - Externally Funded - UK based Charities
UK Charities (Closed Competition)	3	Research - Externally Funded - UK based Charities
UK Industry,Commerce and Public Corporations	5	Research - Externally Funded - Industry
Other UK Sources	13	Research - Externally Funded - Industry
Overseas Charities (Open Competition)	10	Research - Externally Funded - Other Overseas
Overseas Industry,Commerce and Public Corporations	11	Research - Externally Funded - Other Overseas
Overseas Other	12	Research - Externally Funded - Other Overseas