



STFC e-Val – Principles of use

To continue demonstrating the case for investment in science, it is vital that STFC has accurate data on the outputs of our research funding. Following a successful pilot scheme, we are rolling out the e-Val system to ensure that we have a robust, repeatable method to collect this information.

We will use the e-Val system to collect data on impacts arising from grants which we fund in our core areas of Astronomy, Space science exploitation, and Particle and Nuclear Physics. We will also collect data from areas such as Facility Research and Development, Science in Society, High Performance Computing, Follow-on Funding, Innovation Partnerships, and Project Research and Development.

We have commissioned the STFC e-Val on-line system for gathering data related to the impacts from STFC-funded research. This is modelled closely on the system already in operation by MRC. At this stage, STFC e-Val and MRC e-Val exist as stand-alone systems, and it is therefore possible that a researcher with funding from both Councils would need to log into both systems. We recognise that repeated requests for information which is essentially the same, or very similar, puts a strain on resources and anticipate that in the future, a cross-Council Research Outcomes system will address this. In the meantime, we believe that alignment of the process and architecture of the two systems will at least ensure that the burden on researchers is minimised.

The Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA)

STFC complies with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 with regard to the collection, storage, processing and disclosure of personal information and is committed to upholding the Act's core data protection principles.

STFC e-Val is not intended to collect or store personal information, such as names or contact addresses. STFC therefore requests that researchers and host institutions in receipt of STFC funding do not directly identify individual researchers, team members, or other members of staff via STFC e-Val. Wherever data of this nature is identified, the STFC evaluation team will, in conjunction with the host institute, revise or delete the data as appropriate.

Freedom of Information

STFC aims to be as open as possible in informing others how we conduct our business through our publications, our website and face-to-face discussions. The STFC Freedom of Information policy (<http://www.stfc.ac.uk/About+STFC/5974.aspx>) applies to the data collected and held within STFC e-Val. One of the key principles of STFC e-Val is that researchers and their host institutions are asked only to provide information that is already (or soon will be) in the public domain.

Researchers are advised to ensure that they do not disclose data that contravenes agreements they may have with STFC or third parties, that is sensitive or may, in some other way, be considered



confidential. Further guidance can be sought from the STFC e-Val office, or from university research support offices.

Information provided to STFC via STFC e-Val may be made available in response to a request, except where there is a good reason not to do so in line with relevant exemptions under the Act.

Final grant report

This data collection exercise is the first step towards introducing a formal and repeatable method for capturing data related to the outputs and outcomes from STFC-funded research. Some of this data is presently collected in 'free text' format in the final grant report proforma, and in future we intend to remove these elements from the proforma. However, during the transition phase we have not yet made any changes to the current final reporting requirements.

How STFC will use the data in STFC e-Val

- The objective of STFC e-Val is to strengthen the evidence base the STFC has to draw upon for strategic decision-making, for reporting its performance against the government's ten-year vision for science, and to better understand the research system. Information is collected at an individual researcher level but, for the purposes of the evaluation undertaken by the STFC, will normally only be reported at an institutional level or higher.
- STFC is regularly asked to provide evidence for case studies, often in specific areas of research. In these instances, individual data may be used to demonstrate key outputs from STFC-funded research. Researchers should be aware that text provided may be quoted, in full or in part. By submitting data to STFC e-Val it is assumed that researchers consent to this onward dissemination of results.
- Analysis of the output from different modes of STFC funding, specific initiatives, grant schemes, or subject areas will be provided for consideration by STFC Management Boards. This analysis and STFC Boards' conclusions may be published in full, or in summary, on the STFC website.
- It is our intention that data from STFC e-Val will be aggregated and returned to host institutions annually, following successful completion of data gathering. The STFC e-Val principles of use apply only to the way in which the STFC will use and publish this data and researchers in universities should contact their research support office for guidance on how the data might be used within their own organisation.
- STFC may share data aggregated at the level of grant scheme, strategic initiative, or field of research with other funding agencies, or research organisations, as part of joint evaluation studies.
- STFC may contact researchers or their host institutions for further information if more detail or clarification is required. Where this is the case, we will always explain how this information is to be used.
- STFC will not market or sell the data in STFC e-Val.



- STFC will not publish reports which draw comparisons between the outputs from individual researchers, although individual researchers may be identified in case studies highlighting notable achievements.