



NILS129 - Guidance on Project Modifications

To make a change to a project after the project application has been approved, researchers must submit a Project Modification form (available on the NILS-RSU website). This form requires details of the project and the type of change/modification requested.

Possible types of modifications are:

- Adding researchers to a project
- Changing the Chief Researcher on a project
- Removing researchers from a project
- Extension to project end date
- Addition of variables
- Addition of data

This document provides guidance to researchers on these types of modifications and the detail required in submitting a project modification request.

NILS Research Approvals Group Guidance

The NILS Research Approvals Group (RAG) have not placed a restriction on the number of modifications permitted for a project. Each modification request is assessed individually and the overall number of project modifications and activity of the project are taken into account to ensure that the direction and scope of the project remains focussed. Clear detailed justification should be provided from researchers for all modification requests. The researcher should detail on the Project Modification form any effects the proposed change will have on the aims and objectives of the research, the robustness of the project methodology and the probability of the outcome being achieved.

1. Adding Researchers to a Project

Researchers can be added to a project at any time. On approval of the modification request, the additional researcher(s) will need to complete all safe researcher accreditation as required.

Data custodians should agree to the addition of any researchers to a distinct linkage project (DLP) by means of a supporting email. This email should be requested by the Chief Researcher and submitted to NILS-RSU.



2. Changing the Chief Research on a Project

If the new Chief Researcher is not an existing researcher on the project they should follow the steps for adding researchers to a project described above, otherwise the new Chief Researcher must complete a Project Modification form.

The Chief Researcher on a DLP cannot be an Undergraduate student. Data custodians should agree to a change in Chief Researcher of a DLP by means of a supporting email. This should be submitted by a member of the project team to NILS-RSU.

3. Removing Researchers from a Project

Once a researcher is removed from a project they are no longer able to access intermediate outputs for that project. Written verification of compliance with this stipulation is required by NILS-RSU. If the project is being carried out by a PhD, Masters or Undergraduate student then their supervisor cannot be removed from the project. A replacement supervisor must be added to the project if necessary.

4. Extension to Project End Date

If further time is required for continued analysis, a completed Project Modification form should be submitted to the NILS-RSU prior to the project end date.

If no further research is planned, researchers should not request an extension to the project end date solely to keep a project open in order to wait on any possible feedback on papers submitted. In these circumstances, projects should be archived. If the researcher receives feedback from referees requiring further work, then the project can be de-archived.

There is no limit to the number of extensions that can be requested for a project. However, repeated extensions will not be granted unless clear detailed justification has been provided. RAG are keen to see project end dates being met and may not approve a further extension request if clear justification is not provided. RAG may only approve a shorter extension than that requested if the additional timeframe is not clearly justified and the production of results in a shorter timeframe is deemed reasonable.

Any proposed change to the end date of a DLP requires agreement from all of the Data Custodians (in written form). Approval for extending the end date should be granted before the end date is reached. NILS-RSU cannot hold onto project data once the end date has passed.



5. Addition of Variables

Clear justification that the requested variables are in line with the original aims and scope of the project should be provided in the Project Modification form. Particular attention should be given to any restricted variables that are requested.

Any proposed change to the variable list of a DLP requires agreement from all of the Data Custodians (in written form).

6. Addition of Data

As a general rule, if external data is to be linked to a project on an individual level, the project will become a Distinct Linkage Project and a new project application should be submitted to the NILS-RSU. A Project Modification request is necessary if the data to be linked is aggregated to a level smaller than SOA. The data must contain no unique entries as these may lead to inadvertent identification of members.

If a research team requests an update of their current data extract to include the latest data released or an expansion to the project cohort for specific variables then they should submit a Project Modification form to NILS-RSU.

Repeated requests for additional data will not be granted unless clear detailed justification for the additional data has been provided. The activity on the project, the project end date, the scope and direction of the project and the value and benefit of the additional data will all be considered.

For example, a request for a newly available additional Census year data (e.g. 1991 data) should include evidence that the variables are in line with the existing Census year's variables in the project and the project must already have data from at least two Census years.

Any proposed change to the data for a DLP requires agreement from all of the Data Custodians (in written form).

Researcher Right of Appeal

The RAG has delegated the responsibility for approving some types of project modifications to NILS-RSU. Researchers have the right to appeal to the RAG (if NILS-RSU made the initial decision) or to the NILS Steering Group (if RAG made the initial decision). Full reasons behind the decisions should be documented. The NILS Steering Group decision is final and no further appeals should be considered.