

# **SoECAT Guide**

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## **1) FAQs**

### **1. What is a SoECAT?**

- A SoECAT is primarily used to divide the responsibility for costs involved in research between the NHS & the funder. In a study, routine care that patients receive should be paid by the NHS; whether they enter research or not, their routine care is still covered & paid for by the NHS. However, research activities & associated costs need to be covered by research finance. The SoECAT's primary purpose is to discern between which costs fall under routine care (which the study can essentially piggyback on to receive results) and research activity (procedures not required by routine care but needed to answer a research question). The duty of funding routine care still falls under the responsibility of the NHS & is funded as normal treatment should. However, any additional (research-related) activity requires funding from grants to perform.

### **2. Why do I need one?**

- If you are applying for a grant that requires a costing in agreement with AcoRD principles, then a SoECAT will be required to conform with the requirements, splitting costs into those which activities the NHS will bear responsibility for & activities required in addition to routine care which are needed to contribute to your research.
- If the particular grant that you are applying for does not require a costing by AcoRD principles, or an outline of Research, Treatment or Service Support costs then the Costing Team can assist to apply expertise to the particular presentation of costs in the required format.

### **3. Why can't I use an SoE?**

- The SoE is a previous incumbent to the SoECAT; although fulfilling many of the same obligations that the SoECAT also meets, the SoE is now defunct, purely on the basis that it cannot be used to estimate the generic costs associated with the

### **4. How do I complete one?**

- The guide below will take you through the basic aspects of the SoECAT & allow you to complete the SoECAT to a level at which it can be reviewed by an AcoRD specialist. Once the review is completed & the SoECAT validated (as shown at the bottom of the Study Information tab) it can be submitted alongside your grant application.

## **2) Background**

The SoECAT is a tool, developed by NIHR, Department of Health & Social Care (DoHSC), NHS England & a number of other public & government bodies across the UK. Its primary purposes are:

- A cost attribution tool, to show who (NHS or study funding) is responsible for which costs
- A part of the UK Local Information Pack, which is shared with participating NHS/HSC organisations to support local capacity & coordination
- Providing an estimate of excess treatment costs (ETCs), which assist sites in understanding the financial impact of studies & contributes to methodology behind funding of research organisations for NIHR grants

The SoECAT is governed by the principles of AcoRD (Attributing the cost of Research & Development); a guidance document produced by DoHSC on how to attribute costs in non-commercially funded grants. A SoECAT Specialist (accredited by the local CRN network) will assist you with this aspect of the template.

There are 3 types of cost categorisations in the SoECAT:

- 1) Treatment Cost: for activities that are currently undertaken by the NHS as routine treatment
- 2) Research Cost: for activities that contribute towards research & end when the study finishes
- 3) Service Support Cost: for patient care costs that only occur during the study

AcoRD Specialists will assist you with categorisations during their review. However, having a basic understanding of the categories may expedite the review. More detailed guides on AcoRD can be found here:

[AcoRD Guidelines](#) (an overview of AcoRD)

[AcoRD Annex A](#) (A guide on what may be considered treatment, research & service support costs)

[AcoRD Annex B](#) (a list of FAQs on AcoRD & extensive detail on how to treat some costs)

The SoECAT has 3 main tabs that researchers should consider; the Standard of Care (SoC), General Activities & Per-Participant Activities. These 3 tabs will be covered within this document.

Further useful links can be found here:

[NIHR SoECAT guidance](#)

[Obtain a copy of the SoECAT \(Excel file\) here](#)

## **3) AMRC & Implications for SoECATs**

The AMRC (Association of Medical Research Charities) is a membership organisation supporting research funded by charities in the UK.

If you have secured funding from an AMRC member, you should specify this in the following field within the Study information tab:

3. Are you making application for funding from a portfolio eligible Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC) member?	
	Yes
	No

The main difference for the SoECAT will be splitting the Research Cost categorisation into parts A & B.

A summary of the difference between the two categorisations can be found in AcoRD Annex A (link provided in the summary section of this guide).

- Research costs (Part A) must be covered by the study's funding
- Research costs (Part B) will ultimately be covered by DoHSC

A list of AMRC members can be found by clicking the link in the SoECAT, shown in the above screenshot. Here you'll be able to identify whether your funder is an AMRC member & whether you'll need to consider splitting research costs.

If you're unable to identify your funder while you're completing the SoECAT, do not split research costs while completing the template.

#### 4) How to record activities

Before you start to enter activities, you should complete the Study Information tab. As the fields required here are self-explanatory, they will not be covered further in this guide. Completing this tab is also required to enable functionality in the SoECAT; you will not be able to categorise activities until this has been done.

The SoECAT has two types of activities:

- Investigation: An activity showing a set-cost procedure (EG: an MRI scan)
- Procedure: An activity costed at staff time

For investigations, they can be displayed as per the below screenshot. You do not need to add values for "Duration" or "Undertaken by".

Area of Activity (Select this first)	Specific Activity (Drop down only present when Area of Activity selected first - if required activity is not shown - follow guidance above)	Duration (Minutes)	Undertaken by (Required field - Drop down only)
<b>Complete only for procedures</b>			
Medical Exposure or Imaging Tests and Investigations	MRI single area with contrast		

When adding a procedure though, you will need to add these values in order to properly record a cost:

Area of Activity (Select this first)	Specific Activity (Drop down only present when Area of Activity selected first - if required activity is not shown - follow guidance above)	Duration (Minutes)	Undertaken by (Required field - Drop down only)
<b>Complete only for procedures</b>			
Other Procedures or Activities	Medical history	15	Medical Staff

Duration should always be measured in minutes.

The “Undertaken by” field contains 3 options, which describe who will be performing the activity. The 3 options are designed to cost at an average salary for the following staff roles:

Medical Staff: costed at consultant rate of pay

Nurse/Manager: costed at NHS Band 7 rate of pay

Admin/Data Entry: cost at NHS Band 4 rate of pay

Once you have recorded the activity as above, you’ll need to show when the activity will occur. This can be done as per the below screenshot:

Specific Activity (Drop down only present when Area of Activity selected first - if required activity is not shown - follow guidance above)	Duration (Minutes)	Undertaken by (Required field - Drop down only)	Day -x to -y	Day 0	Column2
<b>Complete only for procedures</b>			Screen	Base	Visit 1
MRI single area with contrast					Research Cost (Part A)
Medical history	15	Medical Staff			Research Cost (Part A)
Informed consent	10	Nursing/Manager	Service Support Cost		
Blood sample - collection only	10	Nursing/Manager		Treatment Cost	Research Cost (Part A)
Monitoring on-site visits or risk/remote based monitoring communication	30	Nursing/Manager		Research Cost (Part B)	Research Cost (Part B)

You do not need to enter multiple lines for the same activity if it occurs more than once. As shown above, you can repeat occurrences across the same line for recurring activity.

For the standard of care tab, you will only have to denote activities with an “x” to mark when they’ll occur, instead of the cost categorisations shown in the screenshot above.

## 5) Standard of Care tab

The Standard of Care (SoC) tab is used to denote the current routine care a patient would receive from the NHS. It also helps by providing a baseline that helps to calculate the Excess Treatment Costs of the study.

For this tab, your clinical knowledge will be required to show what activities are undertaken in the routine care.

As per the guidance given in the SoC tab, you do not have to complete this tab if you are undertaking an observational study, or only conducting interviews of participants. However, you should clearly state this to the JRO costing officer when presenting the SoECAT for their review.

If the Standard of Care for your study varies greatly depending on the outcome of treatments, you should select the most common version & model this in the SoC tab.

It may be useful to re-label the visit titles on line 15 to better represent your modelled SoC (below screenshots).

Day -x to -y	Day 0	Column2	Column3	Column4	Column5	Column6	Column7
Screen	These	cells	can	be	edited	Visit 5	Visit 6

This can also be done in the Per-Participant Arm tabs.

## 6) General Activities tab

The General Activities tab is used to record activities that will only once in the study; activities such as archiving, database searches & other activities that are not measured in a “per-participant” fashion should be recorded.

It is important that, where you are entering a procedure (activity measured in staff time) that you estimate the entirety of the time that will be spent on said activity during the study.

For example, eligibility checks of 100 participants, taking 5 minutes for each, should be recorded as shown below:

Specific Activity (Drop down only present when Area of Activity selected first – if required option is not available please follow guidance in Non-tariff Costs tab)	Duration (Minutes)	Undertaken by (Required field - Drop down only)	Site Set Up
<b>Complete only for procedures</b>			
Eligibility check (exclusions)	500	Nursing/Manager	<b>Service Support Cost</b>

In this tab, there are 4 times at which activities can occur (below screenshot). These cells will need to be given a categorisation to generate a cost.

Site Set Up	On Trial	Close site to recruitment	Site close out
<b>Service Support Cost</b>			
	<b>Research Cost</b>		
		<b>Research Cost</b>	<b>Research Cost</b>

## 7) Per-Participant Activities tab

These 5 tabs will be used to show the different routes participants can take through the study & completing these should be your main focus for this template.

You should ensure that you include all activities in each tab & attempt to categorise them. If you are not confident in categorising, you should still add a value to show when the activity occurs. SoECAT reviewers generally do not have clinical knowledge, so will rely on you to show when activity occurs.

The different arms will denote the differences between the routes that participants can take through the studies (EG: control & experimental groups)

In each tab, you should denote the number of participants as shown in the below screenshot. You may also name the tabs here, although this is optional.

4	IRAS Reference Number:	EXAMPLE
5	Study Arm Name, Phase or other Designator (optional):	An arm of the study
6	Number of Participants in Arm 1	100

Typically, at least one arm should contain all the activities you’ve listed in the standard of care. If you are not including a tab with all SoC activities, you should explain why to the Costing officer reviewing your SoECAT.

## 8) Summary tab

The summary page gives an overview of the costs from the General Activities & various Per-Participant Arm tabs that have been completed. You cannot add or amend this tab, but it can be useful to understand it & refer to it.

The first table shows the costs at a per-participant level (the cost for each participant):

Participant Costs (Per Patient)				
	Standard of Care	Arm 1	Arm 2	Arm 3
Research Cost (Part A)		Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Research Cost (Part B)		Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Research Cost		£ -	£ 98.10	£ -
Service Support Cost		£ 6.00	£ 48.00	£ -
Treatment Cost	£ 12.00	£ 6.00	£ 460.00	£ -
Excess Treatment Cost /Treatment Cost Saving		£ -	£ -	£ -
<b>Total per participant</b>		<b>£ 6.00</b>	<b>£ 146.10</b>	<b>£ -</b>

The next table shows the total & will depend on you entering values for the number of participants in the Arm tabs:

Total Participant Costs				
	Standard of Care (all arms)	Arm 1	Arm 2	Arm 3
Number of Participants	190	100	90	0
Research Cost (Part A)		Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Research Cost (Part B)		Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Research Cost		£ -	£ 8,829.00	£ -
Service Support Cost		£ 600.00	£ 4,320.00	£ -
Treatment Cost	£ 2,280.00	£ 600.00	£ 41,400.00	£ -
Excess Treatment Cost/ Treatment Cost Saving		£ -	£ -	£ -
<b>Total Participant Costs</b>		<b>£ 600.00</b>	<b>£ 13,149.00</b>	<b>£ -</b>

Finally, the last table here is the General Activities table. Please note that if you have more than 1 site planned in your SoECAT, these values will be multiplied by the number of sites.

As parts of the SoECAT are locked in Excel (to be unlocked so only an accredited AcoRD Specialist can validate), it can be easy to corrupt the formulas. The Summary tab can therefore be useful to check if the template has been corrupted. If this is the case, it'll be easier to copy & paste your progress into a fresh template.

## 9) Non-Tariff Costs & adding specific activities

If you cannot find an activity that accurately describes what you want to include, this can be added via the non-Tariff tab.

To do so, in the non-Tariff tab, enter the name of your activity & choose whether it will be an investigation or a procedure. Investigations are set-price activities, while procedures are measured by staff time.

Activity	Activity Type	Cost (IF INVESTIGATION)
An activity with a set cost	Investigation	£2,000.00
An activity measured in staff time	Procedure	

You can now select the activity in any of the relevant tabs (SoC, General Activities or Per-Participant Arm) as shown below:

Area of Activity (Select this first)	Specific Activity (Drop down only present when Area of Activity selected first - if required activity is not shown - follow guidance above)	Duration (Minutes)	Undertaken by (Required field - Drop down only)
		<b>Complete only for procedures</b>	
Non Tariff Cost	An activity with a set cost		
Non Tariff Cost	An activity measured in staff time	10	Medical Staff