



RCPS to Transfer to the Civil Service Pension Scheme in October 2026

This is an update for all employees enrolled (or eligible to be enrolled) in the Research Councils' Pension Scheme (RCPS). Since before UKRI was established there has been a legislative requirement to reform the RCPS, which many scheme members will already know about. We can now confirm that as part of that reform the RCPS will close and transfer to the Civil Service Pension Scheme. This is planned for October 2026. This move marks a major step in aligning pension administration and benefits with government policy as set out in the Public Service Pensions Act 2013.

Key dates

- November 2025: Initial communication to highlight the changes
- October 2026: Formal migration to Civil Service Pension Scheme (CSPS)

We are sharing this important information now to give you plenty of notice about the changes, there is no action required from scheme members.

Why is the RCPS closing?

The RCPS has long operated by-analogy to the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS), meaning it mirrored the rules and structure of the PCSPS without being formally integrated. Both schemes are unfunded defined benefit arrangements, relying on employer and employee contributions to fund current pensions rather than investment returns.

Reform of the PCSPS started in 2015 and was fully completed in 2022 with all active scheme members in the PCSPS being moved to the new section of the scheme, called Alpha. This change was part of wider reforms to the main public service pension schemes.

HM Treasury Ministers recently confirmed that reform of the scheme should be achieved by closing the RCPS and transferring it into the Civil Service Pension Scheme (CSPS) arrangements, with active members enrolled in the Alpha scheme. Reference to this has been shared by JSS frequently over the last decade.

What does this mean for you?

Your existing pension rights up to 30 September 2026 under RCPS, will be protected. The transition will not affect your pension entitlements to date, including any transfers in, any Added Pension or Added Years you have purchased. From 1 October 2026, all active RCPS members will be enrolled in the CSPS (Alpha scheme).

Impact by current scheme section:

Current RCPS section	What happens
Final Salary (Classic, Classic Plus & Premium)	You will cease to accrue service on 30 September 2026. The pension age will remain at 60 for your accrued Final Salary pension. You will still maintain a 'Final Salary' link when you join Alpha.
Nuvos	You will cease to accrue Nuvos benefits on 30 September 2026. Your Nuvos pension age will remain at 65. Your accrued benefits will continue to be uprated annually in line with inflation.
Partnership	Your membership will cease in September 2026, and you will have the opportunity to switch into the CSPA Partnership arrangement, managed by Legal and General. The pension pot with your current Partnership provider will not be transferred.

Benefits of the transfer:

- Continued access to a Defined Benefit pension, that accrues quicker than the RCPS
- Enhanced digital access to pension information and retirement planning tools via the CSPA Pension Portal
- Opportunity to request a transfer of other non-RCPS pensions when you join CSPA

You will be automatically enrolled in the Alpha scheme unless you choose to opt out, or switch to the CSPA Partnership scheme. You will not be able to remain in the RCPS after the scheme has closed.

Pensions in payment will also be moved to the CSPA, as will management of preserved pensions (people that have left an RCPS employer but not yet reached pension age). If you leave before 30 September 2026 you will not be enrolled in Alpha by your current employer.

What are the key features of the Alpha pension scheme?

Alpha is very similar to the current RCPS Nuvos section; it is a Career Average Defined Benefit scheme. Key features are:

- Accrual rate: 2.32% of your annual pensionable earnings goes towards building your pension each year (Nuvos is 2.30%).
- Annual inflation-linked increases: Your accrued pension is revalued by inflation (CPI) each year.
- Pension age: In line with your individual State Pension Age (this differs to the RCPS where different sections have scheme-specific pension ages of 60 or 65).
- Employee contribution rates: Currently identical to RCPS rates, until 31 March 2027. These may change from April 2027.
- Accrual limits: No limit to the Alpha pension you can accrue (unlike Nuvos which has a limit of 75% of final pay, and final salary sections have a limit of 45 years' reckonable service).

We will provide further information comparing the different sections of the RCPS with Alpha.

The RCPS Reform Project Board

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), who have Accounting Responsibility for the RCPS, have established the RCPS Reform Project Board to govern this important project, which is supported by a capable and knowledgeable project team. The project will include a Trade Union engagement group so we can discuss these changes with the relevant employee and member representatives. This project will span all participating employers, and their employees enrolled in or eligible to be enrolled in the RCPS. JSS, the current administrators of the RCPS will also work closely with the Project Team to ensure a smooth transition to the CSPA administrator.

Which Employers Currently Participate in the RCPS

UK Research & Innovation, UKSBS Ltd, Diamond Light Source, Babraham Institute, Earlham Institute, John Innes Centre, Innovate UK Business Connect, Moredun Research Institute, National Oceanography Centre, Norwich Bioscience Institute Partnership, Plymouth Marine Laboratory, Quadrum Institute Bioscience, Rothamsted Research, UK Centre for Hydrology and Ecology, The Pirbright Institute and Scotland's Rural College.

Support and Information

We want to reassure you that our priority is to make this transition as smooth and transparent as possible. We will share more information before the end of 2025, and we will provide regular updates between now and October 2026. There will be opportunities to attend information sessions, with the first planned for February 2026, and details of these will be shared in the next few weeks.

We will provide detailed comparisons between the various sections of the RCPS and Alpha, including information specific to active members, pensioners and preserved (deferred) scheme members.

Further Information, FAQ and updates are available on the JSS website:

<https://jsspensions.nerc.ac.uk/reform/index.asp>

Questions that are not answered on the JSS website can be sent to: reform@jss.ukri.org.