

Research and Training Support (Grant) policy

Aims

- maximize PGR training opportunities and mobility and ensure access to funds where necessary
- give doctoral researchers a degree of responsibility over funds, in consultation with their supervisor (and ease administrative burden)
- provide an attractive package in competing for the best candidates
- ensure economical and effective use of funds

Background: RCUK provide, besides maintenance and tuition, additional funds for research student training.¹ These payments are calculated on a per capita basis. They are regularly paid into 'Research and Training Support Grant' budgets for each student.² For some time, the School has provided a small budget for doctoral researchers who do not have access to RTSG, as well as a School conference support grant scheme (see Appendix).

Policy

1. Every doctoral researcher has access to an RTSG budget. They manage these funds and how they are spent themselves, in consultation with their supervisors.
2. Doctoral researchers are informed about their budget and how to access it when they first register, by the Research Degree Coordinator or nominee.
3. Initial values and top-ups for RTSG, as well as approvers, are set out in schedule A.
4. RTSG can only be spent on eligible costs, including personal computing equipment for use by the doctoral researcher and attendance at Schools, conferences, workshops, or collaboration visits.
5. All equipment purchased from RTSG reverts to the School at the end of the PhD course, or when it is replaced, whichever is earlier, for reuse toward doctoral training (direct or through monetizing).
6. The balance of RTSG budgets will be reused toward doctoral training in MPS.
7. The School provides a central laptop scheme through which doctoral researchers can purchase a used laptop for a reduced cost.
8. Doctoral researchers who have exhausted their RTSG can apply for funds through the School conference travel support schemes, as set out in schedule B. In exceptional cases they may apply for other eligible RTSG costs to this scheme
9. The Director of Doctoral Studies with the Research and Enterprise Coordinator oversee the application of the policy
10. The School Research Degree Committee receives an annual report from DDS and REC on spending under the policy, normally at a meeting in September.

¹ STFC currently 1250 pa, EPSRC ca 1600 pa, Doctoral School matches this for match-funded students. Equivalent payments provided by School for School-funded studentships.

² As payments to the institution the balance of RCUK-funded RTSG can be retained after a studentship ends, and these funds have contributed to the costs of these schemes, besides certain central costs, eg PGR induction.

11. The School Research Degree Committee reviews and updates the policy, normally on an annual basis, at a meeting in September.

Schedule A – payments into and out of RTSG budgets

1. Every RCUK-funded doctoral researcher receives an initial payment, and annual top-up, at the nominal RCUK payment.
2. Self-paying doctoral researchers, as well as any externally funded doctoral researchers who do not have another source of RTSG funds, receive a one-off payment of 1000 GBP.
3. Any further payments from the School for a doctoral researcher would require an application to the School under the MPS Travel Grant Scheme.
4. RTSG expenses are to be approved by a designated approver.

Schedule B – MPS Travel Grant Scheme

1. MPS doctoral researchers are able to apply to the MPS Travel Grant Scheme.
2. Each application will consist of a case for support, written by the student, and a statement of support, prepared by the main supervisor, each of maximum length of one side A4, 12pt.
3. Applicants are expected to have exhausted their RTSG and to demonstrate that they have applied to other sources of funding, such as the university's overseas conference support scheme, or have no recourse to those. A list of funding sources is provided on the MPS PGR web page
4. An award may consist of a payment into the RTSG budget or an promise to pay an expense claim. Where the result of an application to an alternative funding source is not yet known, a School award will be treated as an underwriting and expenditure recovered at a later time if the external application is successful.
5. Evaluation criteria
 - a. Scientific excellence of the proposal
 - b. Benefit to the doctoral researcher and/or the School (training, academic impact, career progression as appropriate to the event and stage of the doctoral researcher)
6. Each proposal will be assessed by a subset of the School Research Degree Committee, normally the DDS and sub-Director(s) of Doctoral Studies, with a suitable substitute where there is a conflict of interest.
7. Exceptionally, students can apply for other RTSG-eligible costs under the travel grant scheme (eg, to replace a broken laptop).

As agreed by SMT July 2020, extending and superseding the previous policy from 2016