

Further Information on the Junior Research Associate Bursary Scheme 2012

The Doctoral School is offering a number of Junior Research Associate (JRA) bursaries for the summer vacation of 2012, worth up to £1,800 each. The purpose of these bursaries is to provide an opportunity for talented and ambitious undergraduates to participate in original research with staff and other members of the University community during the summer vacation of 2012. It is expected that JRAs will be seriously considering post-graduate research and the scheme aims to help them realise this ambition.



JRA Heather Moore marks a worker while researching bee behaviour.

What do the bursaries offer?

A JRA bursary provides support at an equivalent rate of £200 per week, for a period of eight weeks during the summer vacation. A bursary produces no National Insurance contribution or taxation liabilities. An additional £200 of essential costs can be claimed on completion of the research¹.

Who is eligible?

Bursaries are available to all Schools of the University of Sussex, including Brighton and Sussex Medical School (BSMS). Any undergraduate in the 'middle' years of their degree studies (ie. not the first or last year) and currently registered at the University of Sussex (or BSMS) is eligible.

How do I apply?

You can download an application form, along with the Conditions of Award, from the Funding Database section of the University of Sussex website: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/study/funding/2012>

A JRA application should be made by the student requesting the bursary, although applications must be sponsored by a research-active member of faculty who is willing to act as a research supervisor for the duration of the award. Applicants must therefore discuss the proposed research project in detail with their proposed supervisor, who may contribute to the research design. A curriculum vitae and academic reference will also be required from the applicant.

What is the closing date?

The closing date for applications is **5.00pm on Friday 16 March 2012**. All applications should be submitted to Julie Carr in the Doctoral School, 1st Floor, Falmer House. Applications will not be considered after this time. All applicants will be informed of the outcome by email at the beginning of the summer term.

How will we decide which projects to support?

Successful applications will be chosen by a selection panel consisting of research-active members of faculty from a broad spectrum of disciplines within the University. The panel will be chaired by Prof. Bob Allison, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research).

¹ Subject to proof of purchase, exemptions apply - see Conditions of Award for details

The scheme is very competitive and applications will be judged primarily on their academic merits.

Preference will be given to:

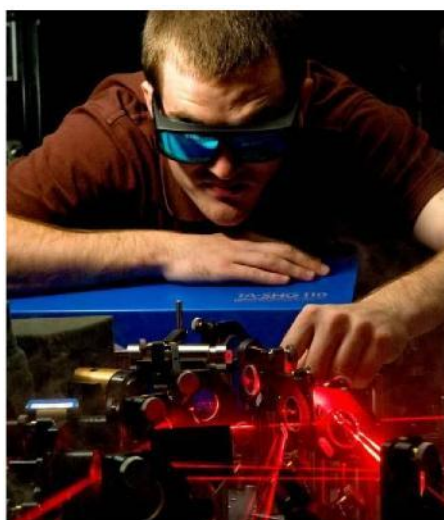
- Students who can demonstrate a strong interest in pursuing post-graduate study and research at Sussex;
- Research projects that have a clearly defined objective, which is achievable by the JRA within the eight weeks available;
- Projects that give scope for thought and initiative on the part of the JRA;
- Students with a strong academic record;
- Projects that clearly link the student to the ongoing research work of the supervisor, and the wider research environment of a Department or Research Centre in the School.

Bursaries will not be awarded for projects that are part of assessed work for a degree (e.g. projects or dissertations) or expeditions.

The JRA panel will use the following criteria to grade applications.

RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	GRADE	RESEARCH BENEFIT
Outstanding: exceptional scientific merit and originality; top 5%	α5 (highest)	Outstanding benefit to all involved in the project, including the undergraduate student and department within which the research is undertaken.
Excellent: at the forefront of field; top 25%	α4	Significant benefit to undergraduate student conducting research and most involved in the project
Very good: generally competitive research; top 60%	α3	
Good: quality research, but not leading edge	α2	Limited benefit to most involved in the project
Of merit: modest advance	α1	
Probably not advancing knowledge	β (lowest)	

Applications will ranked according to the grades above and all available bursaries will be granted to the highest-ranked submissions. All applicants will then be informed of the status of their application at the start of the summer term via email.



JRA James Sayers adjusts lasers as part of research into quantum computing.

Supervision

New lecturers early in their career are strongly encouraged to participate in this scheme as supervisors. A key role of the supervisor will be to discuss with the JRA their options for post-graduate study and demonstrate this planning as part of the JRA's application. If the application is successful, the supervisor should be able to commit a good amount of time each week to ensuring the JRA gains the most out of their research experience and will be available should the JRA need support and guidance. The supervisor should also identify a suitable mentor for the JRA, for example a current DPhil student, who is willing to help the JRA in pursuing post-graduate study and research throughout the JRA's final year of their degree.

Research Posters and Poster Exhibition

Following the success of last year's JRA Research Poster Exhibition, attended by over 100 members of the University community, JRAs will be expected to produce a conference-style A1 research poster for presentation at an Exhibition held on the University of Sussex campus on in September (date tbc). The poster printing will be paid for by the University and would therefore not affect the bursary paid directly to the student. The posters provide JRAs with an opportunity to publicise the research they have been conducting over the summer vacation and gain valuable presentation skills.

Important dates and deadlines for 2012 JRA scheme

Friday 16 March	All applications must be submitted by 5.00pm to Julie Carr in the Doctoral School
w/c Monday 16 April	All applicants informed of outcome of application by email
w/c Monday 25 June	Research projects can start and first half of bursary paid to JRAs
Friday 20 July	Supervisors required to email progress report - to jra@sussex.ac.uk
w/c Monday 30 July	Second half of bursary paid to JRAs, subject to satisfactory progress report
Friday 14 September	Deadline for Poster designs to be submitted for printing - to jra@sussex.ac.uk
Friday 7 September	Research projects must finish by this date
September (date tbc)	JRA Research Poster Exhibition to be held in the Library

FAQs - Applicants

Do I have to think of some completely original research for my application, or can it be part of some ongoing research my proposed supervisor is undertaking?

Successful applications will clearly demonstrate that the proposed project fits well with the ongoing research of the supervisor and their department. Therefore, it is often practical that a JRA project forms a discrete part of a larger research programme, although this is by no means compulsory. Importantly, it must be you that makes the JRA application and so there will need to be a clear understanding on your part as to the research design and objectives. Furthermore, the awarding panel will give preference to applications which give scope for initiative and development on the part of the JRA.

What happens if I am unable to start/complete the proposed research for any reason?

As far as reasonably possible, when making a JRA application you must make sure you are able to commit enough time to complete the proposed research project. Similarly, your proposed supervisor must also make sure that all resources and necessary approvals are in place before making the application. Inevitably, changing circumstances can mean that the research will no longer be possible to complete as planned. In this instance, you must Julie Carr (jra@sussex.ac.uk) as soon as possible explaining what problems you have encountered. A decision will then be made as to the viability of the project in consultation with Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) Prof. Bob Allison. Bursary money may also be reclaimed in this instance, although consideration will be given to circumstances and work already done.

What sort of commitments will I need to make as part of the JRA scheme?

Bursaries are paid on the assumption that they provide subsistence that you would normally gain from employment over the summer vacation. As such, you are expected to work full-time on a research project if granted a bursary and must make sure you have the capacity to do this. Make sure you discuss with your proposed supervisor about the sort of commitments that you will need to make when writing the application and agree a reasonable minimum of contact time with them. Bear in mind that you may also be required to travel as part of the project and that essential expenses can only be claimed, up to £200, at the end of the eight-week research term on production of proof of purchase.

Can I get a JRA bursary for a research project which will be based away from the University of Sussex campus?

Generally speaking, no. Bursaries will not be awarded for expeditions or research based entirely off-campus as there must be a large amount of direct contact time between you and your supervisor and this should take place within the campus research environment. Similarly, the supervisor must be available on campus for the majority of the research. However, it is recognised that some research necessitates field work and travel and, permitting this is made clear within the research design with good justification, this will not go against your JRA application.

I've not designed a conference-style research poster before. What support is available for me to do this?

Normally, your supervisor should be able to advise you as to how a research poster should be designed and they will probably want to have input in to its content. A handout will also be made available to all JRAs during the summer vacation which gives some guidelines for designing your poster. Essentially, the poster should not be too complicated and it is often the most simple designs which are the most successful. Designs should be submitted as Powerpoint or PDF files, so everyone should have access on campus to the necessary software.

FAQs - Supervisors

I'd like to supervise more than one JRA – is this possible?

There aren't any explicit rules which say you can't, although you would have to be sure you're able to spare the time and resources. However, as there are a limited number of bursaries available, and an increased interest in the scheme following its success last year, the Awarding Panel will want to allocate bursaries as widely as possible. Consequently, the Panel will only award more than one JRA bursary to a given supervisor if the applications are very strong.

Are supervisors remunerated for their time spent working with JRAs?

No – the role of the supervisor is to help talented students develop their skills and this is done on a voluntary basis. It is expected that JRAs will be offering up a substantial amount of their time to apply to research which will benefit the supervisor too.

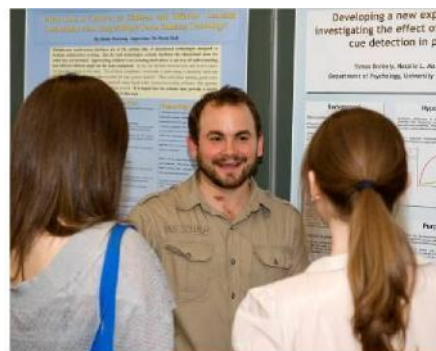
Why are supervisors expected to demonstrate what planning has been done with the JRA about post-graduate study and research?

The key aim of the JRA scheme is provide JRAs with a taste of "real-life" research, and to enable them to gain a better idea of the pathways through to achieving this as a career, should they wish to do so. Consequently, it is important to provide the JRA with the information and support needed to make this a viable option to consider during the final year of their degree studies.

Contact details

Most of the information about the 2012 JRA scheme can be found by reading the Conditions of Award, and application form, along with these

However, if you have any other queries which aren't answered here, please contact Julie Carr in the Doctoral School at jra@sussex.ac.uk



Some comments from previous JRA award-winners

"The opportunity of becoming a junior research associate was both academically and personally fulfilling. The chance to carry out my own empirical research into the provision of support within a local harm minimisation hostel for homeless service users with various issues such as substance misuse and mental health has had a profound effect on my chosen career pathway. As a social work student, research was not an area I had previously given particular consideration. However, the JRA scheme has opened prospective career opportunities within the research field. I am hoping to use my research to co-write a journal article with a member of faculty next year. I would highly recommend this opportunity to students from all disciplines as it has helped me further develop research mindedness which is invaluable to a graduate student."

Marie Bliss .JRA (Social Work)

"The JRA scheme allowed one of the most rewarding experiences in my academic career. I studied honey bees in the new £250,000 bee and social insect lab over the summer, loving every minute. I carried out original research [which] I'm hoping to publish soon in a scientific journal. The scheme catapulted me into real-life research with real-life animals, and thus I now feel more confident overall as a student, as well as having a much clearer idea of the career I want to pursue. When you take part in this scheme, its not just research you undertake; you understand your degree topic from many further angles, you see how your university functions, and you make contacts and friends invaluable to your academic success."

Heather Moore .JRA (Biology)

"I feel that only positives have come from my summer as a JRA. I have worked as part of a group that are researching ground-breaking technology, which is a huge privilege and only came about because of the JRA scheme. I have had a really good look into the research lifestyle, which has given me a better idea of whether I want to do a PhD. The time I spent working will also help throughout the rest of my degree as I have been encouraged to think independently whilst working on a side project I was given."

James Sayers .JRA (Physics)

"I'm an English undergraduate, and my JRA research project investigated the way the figure of the servant functions in postcolonial women's writing, specifically in Indian fiction and memoir. Being awarded a JRA bursary was a really exciting opportunity for me because it allowed me to explore and expand my interest in postcolonial and feminist literary debates, as well as gain some firsthand experience of the academic research process. From putting together a research proposal and gathering material in the British Library, to compiling an annotated bibliography and designing a conference poster, the JRA scheme was a real learning experience, through which I developed a range of research skills which are already benefiting my work in my final year. Above all it was fun, challenging and has helped me gain the confidence to move towards postgraduate study. Good times!"

Bridie France .JRA (English)