



## **Autumn 2021 applications open Monday 4<sup>th</sup> - Friday 29<sup>th</sup> October**

Open to doctoral and early career researchers at the University of Sussex, the Researcher Development Programme's Researcher-Led Initiative Fund gives you greater input into your support and development needs.

Apply for **up to £750** to organise an initiative focusing on one of four strands:

- equality, diversity and inclusion
- mental health and wellbeing
- public engagement
- training and development

The fund is available to PhD researchers and early career researchers (i.e. research staff whose role is primarily focused on conducting research) to support **short-term, well defined activities** that will widen participation and encourage diversity, benefit the mental health and wellbeing of researchers, encourage public engagement, or enhance professional and research skills.

Initiatives must be for the benefit of groups of researchers across Schools or, where they focus on one specific group, have the potential to be rolled out to others.

We recognise that our researchers have a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences. We encourage applications from everyone in the community, including those groups who are under-represented in postgraduate research at our institution.

### [Guidelines for applications](#)

The RLI Fund is open to applications Monday 4 October – Friday 29 October 2021. A maximum of £750 is available for any one project. Awarded funds **must be spent** by the end of the financial year (31 July 2022).

Applications fall into one of four strands: equality, diversity and inclusion; mental health and wellbeing; public engagement; or training and development. Please read the guidelines for your chosen strand below.

Find examples of previous initiatives / successful applications on our [RLI Fund webpages](#).

## Guidance on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Applicants are encouraged to consider:

- The **purpose of the activity** – are you aiming to create opportunities for under-represented groups within the doctoral/ECR community, widen participation in research, or foster community and support? Examples could include an event to encourage wider participation in postgraduate study, a community activity for a specific demographic, a BAME role models exhibition, an LGBTQ+ journals club, or a research network for students with disabilities.
- Your **target audience** – who is your initiative aimed at? Is it suitable for all researchers, or only those at a particular stage or in a specific discipline? How will you engage with them effectively? If your initiative is for a specific group, how could it be rolled out to other groups of researchers?
- How will your initiative encourage greater diversity and inclusion, widen participation, foster community and support, or improve equality / equity for doctoral researchers at Sussex?
- Applicants should use the resources on the [webpages of the university's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Unit](#), and ensure any initiative meets the Inclusive Sussex strategy and the university's [EDI policy](#).
- Evaluation is an important part of any initiative. The Doctoral School can provide guidance but, at the outset, how could you **evaluate the success and impact** of your activity?
- The Researcher Development team ([researcher-development@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:researcher-development@sussex.ac.uk)) and [Dr Barbara Crossouard](#) (Reader in Education, ESW) would be pleased to have informal discussions with researchers in the development of their applications.

## Guidance on Mental Health and Wellbeing

Applicants are encouraged to consider:

- The **purpose of the activity** – is this to:
  - **Create community belonging**  
A community provides researchers with support and a sense of belonging. Some groups are potentially more vulnerable (e.g. part-time researchers, parents and carers, international or BAME students); but all researchers face a risk of isolation and a desire for connection. Your activity could focus on immediate (e.g. lab or School) or broader university-level communities.
  - **Cultivate time to breathe**  
Researchers want initiatives to help them maintain wellbeing within the

working day, emphasising the need to regularly ‘take a breather’ but also acknowledging the struggle to find time or motivation. Researchers also value a shared rhythm to the work day with their peers, something that engaging in collective activities provides. Examples could include creative, sporty or physical activities, being in nature around campus, or interacting with others.

- **Celebrate self and successes**

It can be challenging for researchers to recognise, own and celebrate their successes – there is a tendency to write them off as chance. Researchers want positive conversations with their peers, sharing hope, optimism and positive aspects of the doctoral process and academia. Consider activities that help researchers develop self-confidence, or offer space to celebrate the PhD/ECR process.

- **Encourage life outside of research**

Outside interests are a powerful tool to create headspace and a healthy work-life balance. Researchers can feel constrained – mentally and physically – during the doctoral process and want ways to experience freedom from research. Activities could provide a sense of separation from work, highlight non-research identities, or involve finding activities away from the university.

- **Shared PhD/ECR experiences**

Researchers want space to share their own experiences of the research process and to learn from others – separate to skills training and resources. The focus could be on seminars/events to build healthy working practices, or discussions around managing the PhD and personal life. There is also interest in hearing PhD completers or more senior researchers discuss their experiences – their journey, struggles, successes, tips and tricks.

- Your **target audience** – who is your initiative aimed at? Is it suitable for all researchers or only those at a particular stage or in a specific discipline? How will you engage with them effectively? If your initiative is for a specific group, how could it be rolled out to other groups of researchers?
- How will your initiative **promote the awareness of, support, or improve** researcher mental health and wellbeing at Sussex?
- Evaluation is an important part of any initiative. The Doctoral School can provide guidance but, at the outset, how could you **evaluate the success and impact** of your activity?
- The Researcher Development team ([researcher-development@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:researcher-development@sussex.ac.uk)) and [Dr Clío Berry](#) (BSMS healthcare lecturer and researcher into graduate mental health) would be pleased to have informal discussions with researchers in the development of their applications.

## Guidance on Public Engagement

Applicants are encouraged to consider:

- The **purpose of the activity** – is this to:
  - **Inform and inspire the public:** These projects will have a dissemination function – inspiring, informing, educating and making your research more accessible. Possible activities might include participation in festivals, interactive talks and shows, films and animations.
  - **Consult and listen to public views:** These projects will involve listening to the public's concerns or opinions about your research, providing an opportunity to gain fresh perspectives and insights into your work. Possible activities might include public debates, online consultations, panels and user groups.
  - **Collaborate with the public:** Here researchers and the public work together on projects. The public help to define your future research directions, policy or the implementation of your research outcomes. Possible activities might include citizen science, co-production of knowledge, user groups.
  - Or some combination of the above.
- It is essential to consider the **reasons for engaging** with the public, and **what you hope to achieve** from the engagement.
- An important part of any public engagement is to think about the people you want to engage with. Who are the public and how can you ensure you engage with them effectively? To find out more about **understanding your target audience** see the [National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement \(NCCPE\) audience webpage](#).
- Consider how you will **evaluate your activity**. Evaluation is an important part of any engagement activity, and most funders require it. It is important to evaluate the project as it progresses (formative evaluation) as well as how well the project has met its aims (summative evaluation). Tools to help you are available on [the NCCPE evaluation resources webpage](#).
- Applicants are encouraged to [refer to the NCCPE](#) and draw upon their resources in developing their application. The University is signed up to the NCCPE's Manifesto for Public Engagement.
- The Public Engagement Fund is intended to develop the skills of our researchers – outsourcing of public engagement activity will **not** be supported. Neither are we able to support projects that form a core requirement of your qualification e.g. the practice component of a practice-based doctorate.
- The Researcher Development team ([researcher-development@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:researcher-development@sussex.ac.uk)) and

[Prof Martin Evans](#) (Professor in Modern European History, MAH) would be pleased to have informal discussions with researchers in the development of their applications.

### Guidance on Training and Development

- There must be a **clear training and development focus** to the activity proposed. The activity should enhance and complement the training and development activities available for researchers at School level and through our RDP.
- **Interdisciplinary initiatives** benefitting researchers across Schools are encouraged.
- The funding could be used to develop initiatives addressing a development need not already offered at Sussex, for example career development forums, networking events, journal clubs, or doctoral/early career researcher conferences. We **encourage the development of new initiatives** that are innovative, creative and use non-standard approaches to skills development.
- Funding **will not be given** for travel, course or conference attendance, or staffing costs. Similarly, research projects are outside the scope of this funding stream.
- The Researcher Development team ([researcher-development@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:researcher-development@sussex.ac.uk)) would be pleased to have informal discussions with researchers in the development of their applications.

### [Application and budget](#)

- The maximum amount available to any one submission is £750, from an overall budget of £10,000, allowing the RDP to fund 20 projects annually. If you are successful you will be required to identify an existing School/department budget code to which the funds will be transferred.
- RLI funds must be spent by the end of the financial year (31 July 2022). If you anticipate a delay in spending please discuss this with the Doctoral School when you submit your application.
- An application form should be completed for each request for funding. The funding request must be endorsed by your Director of Doctoral Studies for training and development activities or your PI/supervisor for EDI, health and wellbeing, and public engagement activities.
- Applicants planning in-person activities must consider how they could adapt their plans and budget if lockdown rules remain in place. Applicants **must** adhere to government and University of Sussex Covid-19 guidelines at the time activities take place e.g. activities must be virtual if a lockdown or travel

restrictions are in force. Any recipient found to contravene these regulations will have funding withdrawn.

- A lead applicant must be identified for the purpose of allotting funding. Further applicants can be named in the 'other participants' field, and will be listed on the website if your initiative is successful.
- Funding will not be granted retrospectively to cover initiatives occurring before the application deadline. All applications will be reviewed after the closing date unless your proposed event is to take place before the deadline. If this is the case please inform the Doctoral School when you submit your application, and ensure you apply at least three weeks before the date of your initiative.
- A **clear budget** is required in your application. Funds cannot be used to cover applicant's time or conference attendance. Projects are expected to deliver value for money, and funds can only be used for items that are required for the activity.
- Successful applicants are expected to provide a final statement of expenditure after the event, and any unspent funds must be returned to the Researcher Development Programme. The deadline for the final statement of expenditure is six weeks after your initiative has taken place.
- Award recipients should make themselves familiar with the [University's supply agreements](#), particularly for purchasing stationery and laboratory supplies.
- If you are intending to pay an individual for work carried out in relation to your initiative (e.g. you wish to pay a speaker), you will need to obtain evidence of their right to work in the UK before the work commences. Please refer to the University's [guidance notes on the provision of temporary staff](#). You must also complete the External Speaker Request Procedure. If you have any questions about this process please contact your School Office, or your School's [HR Business Partner](#).

Please note: All initiatives **must** follow the University's coronavirus guidelines at the time an activity takes place. The additional guidelines below will only apply if travel and in-person events are possible at that time.

- Costs for catering an event should be reasonable and, where an external caterer is used, in line with hospitality provided by Sussex Food. We are unable to fund evening wine receptions.
- Applicants are expected to take low-cost options with regard to accommodation for external speakers (e.g. standard hotels from the [University approved list](#)). In most cases the University has negotiated special rates to stay in these hotels/guest houses. When making a booking it is essential that you quote that you wish to make a booking at the University of Sussex rate.

- To obtain value for money the University has appointed a preferred travel management company, [Key Travel](#). Key Travel should be used for booking all air travel for external speakers *except where the use of an alternative supplier is substantially cheaper, low risk and outweighs the other benefits of using the preferred provider*. The RLI Fund can only support travel by means of public transport.

### Selection process

- Membership of the selection panel will be drawn from the Doctoral School and Sussex's academic community.
- The panel will evaluate the applications, judging them against the criteria listed in this document.
- The panel reserves the right to consider the distribution of Researcher-Led Initiative Fund allocation across the university.
- The panel reserves the right to offer partial funding for applications, and may seek expert advice on any aspect of the application. Applicants may be asked for further information, or to amend their application.
- We aim to inform you of the decision within four weeks of the closing date. The decision of the panel is final and there is no appeals procedure. We encourage you to seek feedback on your application.
- Unsuccessful applications may be resubmitted; however, due to the competitive nature of this fund, projects which have previously been funded will not be considered. We encourage building sustainable activities into your initiatives, to avoid repeat applications to the RLI Fund.

### Terms and conditions

Awards are offered subject to the following terms and conditions:

- That all promotional materials include the words "Supported by the Researcher Development Programme".
- That award recipients submit a short evaluation report within six weeks of delivery of the activity, which should include a final statement of expenditure. Recipients may also be asked to contribute to the Doctoral School's Festival of Doctoral Research or a Researcher Development Programme event to share their experiences of developing the initiative.
- Where projects involve collaborating with the public (as per the definition in the Public Engagement guidelines above) award recipients must adhere to [University ethics and governance requirements](#).

- Where projects involve external speakers, organiser must complete the External Speaker Procedure in accordance with the University's Freedom of Speech Code of Practice [DOC, 33KB] before the project takes place.
- That the organisers identify an existing School/department budget code to which the funds will be transferred, or work with their School/department to set up a new budget code for their activity.
- That Researcher Development should be informed of any proposed changes to the budget agreed by the awarding panel in advance of the activity taking place.
- That any and all unspent budget allocation reverts to the Researcher Development Programme after the activity has taken place, to allow reinvestment in researcher development activities.
- A library of successful applications will be made available to new applicants for assistance in putting together their application. Your application may be included.
- The University is committed to providing an environment that advances equality of opportunity. We are all responsible for ensuring that staff, students and visitors to the University of Sussex or involved in our events are treated with fairness, dignity and respect. For more information see the [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion webpages](#).