

Researcher-Led Initiative Fund Application Form

Thank you for your interest in applying to the Researcher-Led Initiative (RLI) Fund.

Applications are invited from University of Sussex doctoral researchers and early career research staff for funding to support short-term, well-defined training and development, public engagement, and mental health, wellbeing and community projects.

The deadline for applications is **Thursday 30th April 2020**.

Please ensure that you have read the [guidance](#) before completing your application.

1. Name

[REDACTED]

2. Sussex e-mail address

[REDACTED]

3. Contact telephone number

4. School and department of lead applicant

School of Psychology

5. Are you a doctoral researcher or early career research staff?

Doctoral researcher

Type of activity

Do you wish to apply for funding for mental health, wellbeing and community, public engagement, or training and development?

Mental health, wellbeing and community initiative

About the mental health, wellbeing and community initiative

Title of initiative

Tea and Talk in the Time of Covid-19

When is the proposed initiative running?

On multiple dates

Start date

03/06/2020

End date

15/07/2020

Mental health, wellbeing and community initiatives must fit into one of five themes.

Select one of the options below. Please explain your rationale when prompted.

Creating community belonging

No

Cultivating time to breathe

Yes

Please explain your rationale

For many doctoral researchers, working remotely has meant struggling to find a working routine or rhythm. Having moments throughout the day to check in with peers can help maintain a sense of routine and

shared working rhythm. A core part of self-care is also having planned breaks throughout the day, the tea and talk will encourage researchers to step away from their work during the work day for a tea break, to mimic what might happen during a working day on campus. It will provide the opportunity to interact with others, a time for collective reflection and sharing of strategies for research continuity and well-being.

Celebrating self and successes

No

Encouraging life outside of research

No

Sharing PhD/ECR experiences

No

How will your initiative promote awareness of, support, or improve the mental health and wellbeing of Sussex researchers, or foster a research community?

Social isolation is a huge risk for Doctoral Researchers and the distance that Covid-19 has created has exasperated this, with a lack of face to face events and the usual levels of social support that we might find from our office mates, fellow Hive users, and PGRs who attend events on campus. Tea and talk initiatives are frequently used as a way for colleagues to meet and support one another, with openness and honesty. We would like to cultivate this remotely in the PGR community at Sussex. While there are many Zoom social meet ups across schools and the Hive has managed to set up a fruitful online community, there are many PhD students who do not or have not engaged in these initiatives. Also, opening up to others over Zoom can be difficult and daunting for those not used to sharing their challenges, or who may have unique and trying circumstances as a result of Covid-19.

Consequently, we would like to develop an online tea and talk session that will be held in conjunction with the receipt of care packages delivered to PGRs' homes. We think that this will help people to know that we are still thinking of them and they are not alone. We also hope that it will encourage other PGRs, who might have a tendency to disengage from support to the detriment of their mental health, to engage with the PGR community. Providing a care package can be comforting to recipients, encourage self-care, and engagement with an event dedicated to well-being.

Who is the target audience of your activity, and how will you engage with them effectively? If your focus is on a specific group of researchers, how could your initiative be rolled out to others?

Our focus is any and all PGRs who are working remotely as a result of the Covid-19 crisis. The Hive has so far had some success in building an online digital community, which has received positive feedback from a select group of students. It is clear that many PGRs want to feel part of the community and to build a support network during this crisis but the support provided and subsequent engagement has so far been limited to online text-based communication within a few circles of students. We hope that by rolling out a distinct initiative and providing doctoral researchers with a tangible package specifically for use during the dedicated sessions will encourage more engagement from across the cohort, particularly from those who tend to self-isolate.

What are the objectives of your activity? Please list the steps you will take to achieve these objectives.

Building on the success of various tea and talk initiatives, we aim to provide a space where researchers can meet for a cup of tea while we are still working remotely. We want to encourage researchers to take the time to connect with others and to build self care into their daily schedules. We think that providing them with a 'care package' will help them feel looked after and will encourage them to take the time out of their day to join us for a tea and talk session.

To do this, we will arrange for care packages to be sent to attendees with a tea and talk theme. To ensure that the initiative remains inclusive during Covid-19, the packages will be letter box sized. Attendees will

sign up using a Google form indicating whether they would be happy to share their address for the care package. Those who do not wish to share their address will still be included in the scheduled event. Their e-mail addresses will be taken to invite them to the online session. Invites to a scheduled Zoom tea and talk will be sent via a calendar invite and details provided using a dedicated post on the Hive blog. The event will be planned following the latest estimated delivery date of the care packages.

The number of care packages will be dependent on interest and sign ups from the PGR community - if we have 55 sign ups, we will give one care package to each attendee. If we have fewer sign ups, we will have scope to offer additional care packages. We will run 4 tea and talk sessions once a fortnight for 2 months. Should Covid-19 still require remote working after these 2 months and there is interest from the community, we will continue the sessions until University reopens, encouraging researchers to bring their own tea/snacks. We also anticipate that the Hive will continue face to face sessions once a term thereafter.

How will you evaluate whether you have achieved the objectives of the activity? If your proposal is based on an existing U-DOC RLI, how will you build on what you have learned so far to improve your initiative?

Details will be retained about numbers of sign ups and attendees at each of the sessions, this will allow us to determine levels of participant engagement. In addition, at the conclusion of the online series, all those who participated will receive a short survey about their experience with the initiative with the opportunity to provide open feedback. This will help us to evaluate the effectiveness of sessions and opinions of using a care package to support the well-being of the research community.

The RLI Fund is designed to provide short-term support to researcher initiatives. Describe how your initiative will be sustained in the future (if that is the intention). What is the potential legacy of the project?

The intention of this action is to provide specific support during the COVID-19 crisis, to alleviate pressure and encourage self care and companionship during a difficult time. This initiative could continue in a post-pandemic research society. We hope that it might normalise the need to connect with other researchers across the University and to prioritise well-being.

While tea and talks are offered on campus when campus is open, with some dedicated to PGRS, very few research students attend. As Hive Scholars, we have developed an active research community online, fostering more peer support than was ever possible via physical events. This highlights the importance of a virtual community during Covid-19. Building these habit during the University closure could have positive benefits going forward and highlight the need for doctoral researchers to take time out of their day to connect with others. We also hope that these connections will re-ignite the inter-disciplinary interaction between researchers that we were beginning to foster in our term as Hive Scholars.

Budget

Please provide a detailed budget indicating what you would spend the funding on if you are successful in your application.

Your budget should include a breakdown of costs and justification for each item (e.g. lunch for 30 people at £6 per head from Sussex Food; accommodation for external speaker at £80 per night at a University approved hotel or guest house). See the guidance notes for further advice on your proposed budget.

Budget details

Item details	£
An Etsy seller has agreed to 55 care packages and postage costs for £750 (https://www.etsy.com/uk/listing/777583850/super-self-care-package-hug-in-a-	£750.00

Total: £750.00

Total requested

£750.00

Budget code

Supporting statement

You must submit a supporting statement (in PDF format) from your PI or Supervisor (for doctoral researchers) or Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange (for research staff).

Their name, title and electronic signature should be included in the statement.

If you have any difficulty with this, please contact researcher-development@sussex.ac.uk or call 01273 873366.

Upload your supporting statement here

Support for RLI application_Hive.docx