ESRC Training Funds and Payment Guidance 2019/20

This document is intended to provide an overview of the ESRC training funds available to ESRC SGSSS-DTP funded students, however should you like to review the full guidance, please view the ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide.

Please Note: The SGSSS reserves the right to update the terms of the enclosed funding agreements, in line with the ESRC terms and conditions, at any time.

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Stipend

ESRC funding for students’ tuition fees, maintenance stipends and research training support grants are paid by the Scottish Graduate School of Social Science - Doctoral Training Partnership (SGSSS-DTP) to the Scottish Universities which have ESRC-funded students. If you are in receipt of a full award (fees plus maintenance) you will receive stipend payments from the University at which you are registered.

The standard stipend for full-time students in 2019/20 is £15,009.

It is important that you notify your HEI Admin Lead (see the ‘About SGSSS’ page on the SGSSS website for details) contact at your home institution of any changes to your bank details so ensure no delays to your payments. Any overpayment of maintenance stipend must be returned to your University upon notification.

Fees

Fees for full awards and fees only awards are paid directly to the institution at which you are registered.
Research Training Support Grant (RTSG)

All students are eligible for RTSG. RTSG should not be considered as a personal allocation for each individual ESRC funded student as the RTSG funding is pooled for flexible use across ESRC-funded students from which funds are allocated on the basis of student needs and priorities. That being said however, students are entitled to £750 per academic year, over the course of their studentship.

Students applying for RTSG can spend more than £750 in a given year, so long as the overall spend does not exceed the nominal RTSG allowance of £2,250 over a 3-year studentship award (£3,000 for a 1+3). In exceptional cases where students seek higher amounts of RTSG funding, SGSSS approval is required. It is advised to keep a record of how much RTSG funding has been claimed.

Applications for RTSG funding should not be made retroactively, but rather in advance of the activity. Applications are made via the online application form located on GradHub and are approved by the HEI Admin Lead at the student’s home institution via GradHub, with SGSSS approval only when the application is for more than the nominal allowance, as advised above. All applications which are over £200 require a supporting statement from the student’s supervisor and should be reflected in the Training Needs Analysis (TNA).

Receipts are required for all items and claims can be made up until submission date.

RTSG is intended to be used to pay for expenses which the student, supervisor or department deem to be in direct support of the PhD research. Examples are:

- UK fieldwork expenses;
- UK, EU and overseas conferences and summer schools;
- Language training courses usually undertaken in the UK prior to an overseas fieldwork trip;
- Reimbursement of interpreters, guides, assistants;
- Survey costs e.g. printing, stationery, telephone calls;
- Purchase of small items of equipment e.g. cameras, tape recorders, films;
- Gifts for local informants;
- Books and other reading material not available through libraries.

RTSG can also be combined with the funds provided for overseas fieldwork.

If you are unsure as to whether you may claim for a particular item, please contact your HEI Admin Lead at your home institution.

Please note, the SGSSS - DTP regards it the responsibility of the home institution to provide computing facilities. In exceptional circumstances, we may consider requests from award holders to purchase laptop or other computer equipment from this allowance. Such requests must be clearly rationalised based on the requirements of the research and the successful completion of the PhD. In such circumstances, any equipment purchased in excess of £200 will remain the property of the SGSSS-DTP following the end date of the award.

Claiming for SGSSS events using RTSG

ESRC Students can claim for costs associated with attending SGSSS events, e.g. advanced training or SGSSS Summer School, and do so via the same RTSG form located on GradHub. These claims will not
be deducted from a student’s RTSG allowance. For SGSSS events, it is acceptable to claim after the event, however claims more than 3 months old will not be honoured and must be in line with the SGSSS Travel Expenses Policy.

**Overseas Field Work (OFW)**

SGSSS-DTP receives an annual amount from the ESRC towards the costs of Overseas Fieldwork made by our doctoral students.

Only full-time PhD students undertaking the +3 element of their award are eligible for this allowance, i.e. Masters’ students (including those in the 1 of a 1+3 and the first stage of a 2+2 award) cannot apply for OFW until in their first year of their PhD. Part-time students can become eligible for an overseas fieldwork grant if they transfer for a fixed period to a full-time status for the duration of the fieldwork.

Only **one** claim for Overseas Fieldwork expenses can be made in the life of the award (funding cannot be provided for students in their writing-up year). This one claim can consist of more than one trip overseas, as long as this can be adequately justified in the research plan.

ESRC students are eligible to apply for this funding if they are:

- In the doctoral (+3) phase of their award;
- The overseas fieldwork was outlined in the original research application. Exceptions to this regulation will be considered on individual merit.

The purpose of the visit should be to carry out fieldwork that is essential to the successful completion of a student’s thesis and be an integral part of the PhD. Applications will only be considered where the supervisor’s case for support provides evidence that the Overseas Fieldwork is essential to a student’s research.

Please note, as there are limited funds available for OFW, not all costs will necessarily be met, but rather a contribution towards the costs. The ESRC provides funding for a **notional cost of £450 per student per year**; however, it is unlikely that all students will undertake overseas fieldwork. The actual allocation of funds towards fieldwork is at the SGSSS-DTP’s discretion, based on the funding available - typically for fieldwork up to a maximum of 12 months (52 weeks). Students may use their RTSG to supplement the costs associated with overseas fieldwork, entirely at the student’s own discretion. Standard allowable expenses are as follows:

- **Airfares:** The expectation is that students travel economy, try to use low-cost airlines where possible, and book well in advance. In order to avoid problems with monitoring airfare costs and the possibility of overpriced quotes, students should accompany their request with a print-out or screenshot of possible airfares for a given itinerary and dates from established websites (Opodo, Expedia, etc.).
- **Internal travel:** The expectation is that students use public transport unless it is deemed unsafe to do so. In this and also in cases of particularly remote settings where there are no practicable public transport options, a separate case will have to be made for alternative arrangements.
- Related travel and health expenses: visas, research permits, vaccinations and insurance will typically be covered. Students should check with their own institution first for insurance as University policies should cover student travel.

- Accommodation: The expectation when fieldwork lasts between 6 to 12 months is that students move out of their UK address to cover overseas accommodation with their stipend. Exceptions to this rule may be considered on a case by case basis depending on individual circumstances and should be discussed with SGSSS prior to application. Students are to look for economically priced accommodation abroad and evidence this where possible.

- Subsistence: The expectation is that students cover these expenses with their stipend. Requests for partial support in cases where the cost of living is significantly higher than in the UK will be considered.

- Research assistance: These expenses (e.g. translation and transcription) should be met more appropriately through other sources, e.g. RTSG.

- Communications and equipment: Students may need to buy a mobile phone sim card for the country they are visiting, however the SGSSS will not cover the cost of phone contracts, calls or internet access, etc.

If a student’s application for a contribution towards an Overseas Fieldwork Visit is successful, a student may not change the dates or details of the Overseas Fieldwork Visit without first informing the HEI Admin Lead at the relevant institution where the student is registered. Students should also seek approval from the SGSSS, as changes to the research plan will likely affect costings.

Students may include visits to more than one country on their one application. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that appropriate visas are obtained. Applicants should consult the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) guidance regarding their intended destination(s). If the FCO advises against visiting the country, or countries, specified in the student’s application, payment of any contribution towards the fieldwork costs will not be authorised. All students must comply with their institution’s policy on Health & Safety while undertaking fieldwork, completing any appropriate risk assessments.

Students are required to have travel insurance to cover their period of fieldwork and should check with their institution’s insurance office in the first instance. If for any reason the Overseas Fieldwork Visit is cut short or cancelled, the HEI Admin Lead at the relevant institution where the student is registered must be informed immediately. The institution may wish to request a refund less any reasonable expenditure already incurred.

Students must comply with their institution’s auditing processes and provide receipts upon their return from their Overseas Fieldwork— your HEI Admin Lead will be able to provide detail on the process for submitting expense claims. If the costs incurred are found to be less than the contribution provided, the return of said funds will be required. Where costs are incurred in advance, receipts must be provided before the reimbursement of funds.

**How to apply**

Like RTSG, applications for funding should be made in advance for OFW funding. There are three application windows during an academic year. For 2019/20, the dates to apply by are **18 October 2019, 24 January 2020, and 17 April 2020**. Application forms are submitted via GradHub. Applications must include a supporting statement from the student’s supervisor and it is strongly encouraged to liaise with institution’s HEI Admin Leads for advice and guidance. Applications will be assessed by the SGSSS-
DTP Directorate, after which students will be informed of the outcome of their application via email, typically within 3 weeks from the submission deadline date.

OFG Application Guidance:

1) The SGSSS-DTP Directorate will prioritise those applications where OFW was highlighted in the original research proposal.

2) Students and their supervisors must take responsibility for submitting applications that are based on reasonable and accurate costings, including appropriate justification of costs where applicable. There have been considerable variability in supporting statements provided by supervisors, of which those with more detail regarding the research plan better aid in the assessment of applications.

3) Any variations from original plans in the research proposal should be explained in the application.

4) ESRC guidelines relating to fieldwork advise that one visit for no more than 12 months to be the appropriate norm – and communication with supervisors should and can be maintained via Skype or similar, eliminating the need for a return visit during fieldwork.

5) The expectation is that students will work with their supervisors and HEI Admin Lead when completing an application and that supervisors will check for completeness. It is preferable when applications come in well ahead of fieldwork start dates.

Difficult Language Training (DLT)

DLT applications are for PhD students to apply for a funded extension (stipend) to the length of their PhD registration period for the purpose of learning a difficult language as an integral part of their research. For costs associated with undertaking DLT, students should apply for RTSG (UK based training) or OFW (training which will be undertaken in the field, typically abroad).

The SGSSS-DTP will only consider paying up to one year’s additional support, i.e. an extension of stipend payments, if a student has a requirement to acquire or develop a working ability with a difficult language in order to carry out fieldwork (including for the purposes of UK fieldwork) or other parts of their research; this is over and above the funded length of the studentship. Students should consult with their supervisor and HEI Admin Lead regarding any request for Difficult Language Training.

ESRC students are eligible to apply for this allowance if they are:

- In the doctoral (+3) phase of their award;
- The proposed language training was outlined in the original research application. Exceptions to this regulation will be considered on individual merit.

The length of the extension is determined by the type and nature of the language to be learnt, taking into consideration the student’s individual circumstances. Extensions beyond six months are only normally allowed if the student needs to spend an extended period overseas in order to obtain these language skills. Please consult the ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide for guidance on how to calculate the length of Difficult Language Training extension.
How to apply

Applications for DLT should be made in advance. There are three application windows during an academic year. For 2019/20, the dates to apply by are 18 October 2019, 24 January 2020, and 17 April 2020. Application forms are submitted via GradHub. Applications must include a supporting statement from the student's supervisor and should contain sufficient detail to show that their home institution agrees with the need for Difficult Language Training and should be reflected in the Training Needs Analysis (TNA). Applications will be assessed by the SGSSS-DTP Directorate, after which students will be informed of the outcome of their application via email, typically within 3 weeks from the submission deadline date.

DLT Application Guidance:

1) The SGSSS-DTP Directorate will prioritise those applications where DLT was highlighted in the original research proposal;
2) Any variations from original plans in the research proposal should be explained in the application.
3) Retrospective claims will not be accepted, including where an extension has been further lengthened once training has begun.

Please note: A Difficult Language Training funding extension will require institutional approval for an equivalent extension to the PhD registration period.

Overseas Institutional Visits (OIV)

The primary purpose of an OIV is to support and encourage the international engagement of ESRC funded students. SGSSS wishes to encourage students to spend a period of time abroad to undertake activities and take advantage of opportunities that would not be available in their home institutions. The aim of the visit is to support timely completion of a student’s PhD; to enhance employability post-PhD and to reflect on impact potential of the project.

Students should use their TNA and the VITAE framework to underpin the rationale for their proposed trip. Please note: Syllabus development is not included in the purpose of the award. Seminar and conference attendance should be funded via RTSG.

The SGSSS will only fund an OIV, and the subsequent stipend extension, for a maximum of 4 weeks. The maximum grant that can be awarded is £4,000 (£2,750 to the student for the cost of the trip and the cost of the 4 week stipend extension which is £1,250 for 2019/20).

The award should be used to provide financial support to allow the student to undertake two or more activities during their OIV. Examples of appropriate activities are:

- Draft a peer-reviewed publication;
- Undertake additional specialist research training not available in the UK;
- Establish research links that will be beneficial to their current or future academic career;
- Disseminate early research findings and interpretation with experts;
- Attend and participate in expert seminars where directly relevant to the student’s research.
FAQs

Can I stay for longer than 4 weeks?
Yes, however this is not recommended and we will only grant a 4 week stipend extension. If you want to stay longer than 4 weeks, you must ensure that the extended stay does not interfere with normal PhD activities and your ability to submit on time. It is acceptable for students to schedule a holiday in the country they are visiting at the end of their OIV, however the costs associated with this holiday must be covered by the student and time used for the holiday must come out of the 8 weeks annual holiday allowance an ESRC funded student is entitled to.

Can students apply for funds from elsewhere?
Yes, students are entitled to apply elsewhere for additional funding if their costs are likely to exceed the maximum amount awarded by SGSSS.

Can students take their immediate families with them?
Yes, however their costs will not be covered by the SGSSS. If a student is traveling with their child/children on their own however, they can contact the SGSSS to discuss possible support with childcare costs.

Can a student attend a conference while visiting their host institution?
Yes, however this should be funded via RTSG (registration, additional accommodation and additional local travel etc.). However if the event is a gathering of experts to which the student’s PhD topic directly relates (e.g. a workshop on their topic or a consensus conference) then students may include such an event as one of their OIV activities. Such examples should be outline clearly in their application, clearly detailing why their participation would be beneficial to their research.

How to apply
Applications for an OIV should be made at least 3 months in advance of the intended visit, e.g. if an application was received on 18 October 2019, the earliest a student would be able to commence their visit would be 18 January 2020. There are two application windows during an academic year. For 2019/20, the dates to apply by are 18 October 2019 and 17 April 2020. Application forms are submitted via GradHub. Applications must include a supporting statement from the student’s supervisor and host institution. Applications will be assessed by the SGSSS-DTP Directorate, after which students will be informed of the outcome of their application via email, typically within 3 weeks from the submission deadline date.

OIV Application Guidance:
1) There are two application deadlines for OIV per academic year;
2) During the course of a studentship, students are entitled to receive OIV funding once, should their application be successful;
3) Applications must be student-led although the applications should also include a statement from both the student’s supervisor and the overseas host institution;
4) Visits must be beneficial and impactful to the completion of the student’s PhD and should not commence during the first or last three months of the studentship (+3 component), including the during the OIV extension period;
5) The purpose of the visits funded must not be for overseas fieldwork.
6) A longer trip of up to 3 months (12 weeks) will be considered if a case can be made that the additional time at the host institution is absolutely necessary to the completion of the student’s PhD. If a longer visit is granted, please note:
   - The SGSSS will only fund a visit lasting 4 weeks. Should the student require additional funding, they must secure this via other means.
   - The maximum stipend extension permitted is 4 weeks.
   - A clear plan of how the student will continue with their PhD and supervision during the extended visit must be clearly detailed within the application, supported by a rationale from the student’s supervisor.

7) Visits must include a visit to a Higher Education institution or an organisation with a substantive research office outside of the UK.

8) Visits must not be undertaken if the Foreign and Commonwealth Office advises against visiting the country concerned.

9) The SGSSS will not fund:
   - Registration fees at the host institution;
   - Travel insurance (unless this is unavailable through the student’s home institution);
   - Mobile phones, sim cards or phone contracts (calls and data);
   - Clothing.

Equal Opportunities Statement

The Scottish Graduate School of Social Sciences believe that all doctoral students should have equal opportunity to succeed in their studies. We acknowledge that everybody’s circumstances are different and this can often make it difficult to abide by terms laid out in general policies.

If your personal circumstances and responsibilities outside of your doctoral studies make it difficult to participate in any SGSSS activities or adhere to our policies, please contact us to discuss further. Some examples of ways in which we may be able to offer support include (but are not limited to):

   - Childcare costs during participation in internships or training events;
   - Exceptions to travelling by public transport;
   - Relinquishing accommodation during a period of Overseas Fieldwork where this has an impact on financial dependents; Costs incurred by attending events offered by SGSSS that impact caring responsibilities.
   - Costs incurred by attending events offered by SGSSS that impact caring responsibilities.