Research Training Support Grant (RTSG)
Guidance

Applicants must read the Guidance as they complete the Application Form. The NBC DTP Academic Directors and Administrators may reject any application failing to follow this guidance.

Overview

The Research Training Support Grant (RTSG) is a fund to enable Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Northern Bridge Consortium Doctoral Training Partnership (NBC DTP) studentship award-holders to claim eligible costs that are essential to the satisfactory completion of their thesis.

The fund can cover the costs of travel; accommodation; training course fees; and other eligible costs incurred during research activity.

RTSG is limited, and not every application is approved. You should **strategically prioritise each application based on its necessity for the successful completion of your PhD** and emphasise value for money.

Applications may be rejected, or you may be asked for further information and/or amendments before confirming a final decision.

You should make yourself aware of the items/services that are **not eligible** for funding, stated below, before making an application.

The NBC DTP is obliged to ensure that it responsibly uses its public funding.

ALWAYS CONTACT YOUR LOCAL NBC DTP ADMINISTRATOR FIRST IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS ABOUT THE ELIGIBILITY OF YOUR REQUIREMENTS.

Definitions

- The **AHRC** funds the NBC DTP, and is part of the UK Research and Innovation (**UKRI**): https://www.ukri.org/. We are required to follow AHRC and UKRI Terms and Conditions for managing the RTSG. These can be found at: https://www.ukri.org/manage-your-award/meeting-ukri-terms-and-conditions-for-funding/

- Applications of a total value of £750.00 and under are **Small Grants.**

- Applications of a total value of over £750.00 are **Large Grants.**

- **RTSG** refers to both Small and Large Grants. This is the fund provided by the AHRC to support these costs.

- Your "**host university**" is the university you are registered at.

- Your "**local NBC DTP Administrator**" is the administrator or equivalent based at your host university and your first point of contact.

- The **NBC DTP Academic Directors** are members of academic staff appointed at each of the seven partner universities of the NBC DTP: Durham University, Newcastle University, Northumbria University, Queen's University Belfast, University of Sunderland, Teesside University and Ulster University.

- The **"funded period"** of the studentship is the time during which you are in receipt of a stipend payment provided by the NBC DTP.

Eligibility for Funding

- You must be **actively registered** at your host university and within the funded period of your studentship.

- You cannot apply for RTSG for any activity that will take place after your funded period has ended, if you have submitted your thesis, or if you have suspended your registration.

- You cannot apply for costs associated with thesis printing, or any additional fees incurred after the end of the funded period.

- You cannot apply for funding for any activity that will take place before the start date of your studentship.

- You must be progressing satisfactorily and on course to submit your thesis by your latest thesis submission date.

- **Retrospective funding is not permitted under any circumstances**. We will reject applications for activities that have already taken place.

- Do **not** make any purchases or bookings prior to the submission of your application. Approval is not guaranteed. You will not be reimbursed for any costs incurred prior to your application being approved.

- We do not anticipate applications for activities taking place during a period of paid sick leave or parental leave.

Eligible and Ineligible Activities, Items and Services

*Examples of **Eligible** Costs:*

- Study visits / fieldwork that is conducted in the UK or overseas.

- Participating in professional conferences in the UK or overseas. Participation would usually include for example, giving a paper, presentation or poster talk, running a panel, running a workshop or participating in a workshop. NBCDTP will usually only support one significant instance of such dissemination training. Repeated or multiple activities for dissemination and dissemination training will not be considered a high priority for funding.

- The **non-financial compensation** of interpreters, guides and informants that are assisting in your fieldwork / data-collection, such as vouchers. You cannot provide cash.

- Conducting surveys and other data collection exercises, including on-site printing and stationery, if not provided by your host university.

- Purchasing small items of equipment and consumables, such as cameras, recorders, and memory devices, if not available for loan, hire or other provision by your host university.

- Essential books and other materials that are not available through libraries, including inter-library loans.

- Specialist IT equipment where essential to the completion of your PhD, which cannot be directly funded by your host university or other sources including loan or hire, and which was stated as required in your NBC DTP Studentship Nomination.

- Training course fees, where a strong case can be made for the need for externally-provided training, that is essential to the PhD. It is expected that any such training needs will have been identified on your NBC DTP Studentship nomination. .

- Travel to and from a training course, fieldwork, data collection or conference venue.

- Accommodation for residential training courses, fieldwork, data collection, or conferences.

- Short scoping trips for potential placements.

*Examples of **Ineligible** Costs:*

- Activities, equipment and services met by your host university's core/basic provision for postgraduate research students.

- Basic IT provision, including access to desktop computing and printing.

- Laptops, unless specifically required under Disabled Students Allowance provision.

- Attending in-person mandatory skills and development programmes provided by your host university.

- Core books, texts and other research materials that are available through libraries, including inter-library loans, irrespective of the time it may take to secure the item.

- **Subsistence** incurred while participating in funded activities, for example: optional conference dinners, snacks, etc. We may fund short-term accommodation on a bed and breakfast basis.

- Utility bills in short-term accommodation (e.g. during fieldwork).

- Attendance at **general networking- and career-focussed events** not related to your primary research interests.

- Costs associated with publication/dissemination (text or practice) that are not essential research or training activities and do not contribute to the thesis.

- Participation in training activities where similar training is already provided by the NBC DTP or by your host university.

- **Unlikely to be approved:** Travel to countries considered unsafe by the FCO. You should consult https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice for the latest advice and be aware that your host university may not provide insurance.

- **Unlikely to be approved:** Attendance at **professional conferences** where there is no evidence of active participation (such as presenting or taking part in a workshop). You must make a case based on the opportunities for development and the contribution towards your research.

- **Unlikely to be approved:** Items of **personal use and/or professional benefit** to you outside the scope of your primary research, or your research, training and development needs. For example, suitcases needed for fieldwork; car servicing when using your own vehicle for UK-based study visits; subscriptions to cloud-based data services; rental of private office or studio space.

University-specific Travel and Expenses Policies

- Reimbursement is made by your host university, not the NBC DTP. As well as guidance set out by the AHRC and UKRI, all costs must also meet the regulations set out within your host university's own Travel and Expenses Policy.

- These may differ from university to university and we strongly encourage you to familiarise yourself with your local policy. This may include, for example, specific booking arrangements for overseas travel; restrictions on acceptable accommodation and travel providers; and time limits on when reimbursement can be made.

Duration

- The duration of a single activity (such as overseas fieldwork) or the accumulation of several activities (such as repeat visits to a site), must not exceed 12 months in total over your funded period.

Insurance and Health and Safety

- You must familiarise yourself with the insurance policy for postgraduate students at your host university before your planned activities, and take any necessary action to ensure you have adequate coverage.

- You must contact the insurance office at your host university if you have any concerns or questions about your coverage.

- You must engage with the appropriate Risk Assessment, Ethical Approval, and Off-campus Study processes at your host university and seek advice from your local postgraduate office if needed.

- Funding is conditional on you having the Risk Assessment, Ethical Approval, and Off-campus approvals required by your host university.

- You are **not** covered by the NBC DTP.

Ownership of Purchased Items

- The items are the property of the NBC DTP and your host university, and you may be asked to return certain items that can be repurposed (such as voice recorders) after your funded period.

Employing Private Individuals/Companies in Support of your Research

- **Under no circumstances** should you approach and financially engage private individuals or companies to help assist with your research activities, for example, actors, photographers, filmmakers, etc.,

- Please **first** request advice from your local NBC DTP Administrator, and **prior** to the submission of an application.

- You will not be considered the employer. Your host university will usually be considered the employer and is therefore required to undertake compulsory actions, such as compliant recruitment, conducting a Right to Work check, or an IR35 check; and some universities may refuse to engage any provider other than a listed vendor.

- Failure to seek the appropriate advice well in advance of the proposed activity may mean that payment cannot be made to the provider, or they will be subject to deductions that are irrecoverable via your host university.

- **Under no circumstances** can you seek to pay a member of staff employed at or a student registered at an NBC DTP university.

Completing and Submitting your Application

- You are strongly advised to apply well in advance of, an intention to travel. For Large Grants, this must always be **at least three months before an intention to travel.**

- Please complete all appropriate sections.

- Electronic signatures are permitted.

- You are encouraged to seek supplementary sources of funding if you can, but you will not be penalised if you are unable to.

- **Fully itemise all costs**, converted to sterling where applicable, and provide evidence of your estimate.

- You can submit a **Small Grant** application **at any time** throughout the academic year.

- You can submit a **Large Grant** application at any time except July, August or December. Applications submitted in July and August will not be reviewed until September, applications submitted in December will not be reviewed until January.

- The **Large Grant** Committee reviews applications at the end of each month. You will normally receive a response to your application within the following **16 working days**. For example, if you submit an application on 14 October, you will receive a response within 16 working days of 31 October. However, if you submit an application on 2 July, you will not receive a response until within 16 working days of 30 September.

- Ideally, the application form and accompanying documents should be merged into one complete PDF document and named using the suggested convention below. Please do not worry if you are unable to merge the documents, but please give each attachment an appropriate name.

  YourName_HostUniversity_GrantScheme_Date
  e.g. SmithJ_QUB_GrantScheme_20062026

- For security reasons, you must submit your application from your **university email address**.

- If your lead supervisor is not available to support a Large Grant application, another member of your supervisory team can provide a statement.

Assessing Applications

- Applications are first checked by your local NBC DTP Administrator to ensure they are eligible for funding.

- In the case of training activities, applications are assessed against the following criteria:

    - *Contribution to the award-holder's research and/or professional development.*
    - *Quality of the proposed training and expected outcomes and skills development.*
    - *Does the training programme represent value for money?*

- The assessors must be satisfied that the proposed activities/items are relevant to your specific research requirements, necessary for the successful completion of your thesis, and will not have any detrimental effect on your timeline for completion.

- It is expected that high costs and essential training requirements were identified during the Studentship Competition and stated on your NBC DTP Studentship Nomination. Otherwise, you must present a strong case and clearly state the reasons these were not identified earlier.

Outcomes

- Your local NBC DTP Administrator will notify you of the outcome of your application, and will provide information on accessing or reimbursement of the approved funds.

- Appeals can be made on the grounds of *Procedural Irregularity* or *Misapplication of the Assessment Criteria* in the event that an application is not approved.

- You must not be employed or have any form of contract of employment with a host organisation while undertaking approved funded activities with them. (This does not include, for instance, activities at your home university, where you may be a paid TA.)

Accessing and Reimbursing Approved Funds

Processes will be specific to your host university. Your local NBC DTP Administrator will advise you:

- **Following approval by NBCDTP, you must follow your host University procedures for prior approval, booking travel and ordering items. This may include, for example, the requirement to book travel via your university's own travel services provider. Make bookings ASAP once this is complete to ensure best value. Contact your local NBC Administrator for guidance.**

- **In some cases, you** will need to incur an expense personally and then submit a claim for reimbursement. You must therefore be prepared to make the initial outlay. You will normally be asked to complete a university-specific claim form and provide receipts/proofs of purchase in line with your host university's Travel and Expenses Policy. Reimbursement claims must be made in a timely manner, check with your host institution regarding claim deadlines, these may be within 3 months of the activity being completed. Check with your host organisation for the deadline.

- In **exceptional** cases, where the approved amount far exceeds a single stipend payment, an advanced payment **may** be made directly to your bank account. **This may not be possible in all partner universities**. Following the submission of receipts, if your costs are found to be less than the contribution made, a repayment is requested.

- It is not normally possible to pay or reimburse more than the approved amount. However, we understand that at times costs can rise due to unforeseen circumstances beyond an applicant's control. Where a valid case can be presented for such changes and we will endeavour to reimburse the approved activities/items, but this cannot be guaranteed. In such cases, you must comply with your host University's procedures, for example increases of more than 10 % may require your host University re-approval or amended approval. Seek advice from your host NBC administrator.

- You may not change any detail of the approved funding without prior approval by the NBC DTP. You must report any changes to an approved activity to your local NBC DTP Administrator at the earliest opportunity. You are not usually required to resubmit an application.

- If you no longer require the funding, inform your local NBC DTP Administrator immediately.

- Only your host university can reimburse you.

Monitoring and Reporting

- During the approved activity, you will maintain contact with your supervisory team, who will continue to provide support and guidance.

- You will continue to meet required university-specific milestones in your PhD cycle including, for example, Annual Progress Review.

- If any activity results in impact relating to your development, research, or collaboration with a non-HEI partner organisation, for example, we encourage you to submit a report or case study to northernbridge.admin@newcastle.ac.uk (maximum 400 words), shortly following the end of the

activity. We highlight the impact and achievements of our students in our annual report to the AHRC.

Frequently Asked Questions

How much do I have left to spend?
You do not have a personal "allowance" to draw on so there is no "remaining" amount due to you during or nearing the end of your funded period. You are eligible to apply for RTSG, but cannot draw from the fund by right.

How many applications can I submit over the duration of my studentship?
You can submit multiple applications. However, in accordance with the AHRC's recommendation, we will give priority to students who have not previously received funding.

What is the maximum amount I can request?
There is no maximum amount of funding that can be requested in a single application, but your cumulative total spend over the duration of your studentship will be monitored to ensure that no individual student greatly exceeds a notional amount associated with a studentship and which therefore encroaches on the amount notionally attached to another studentship.

What is the "notional" amount?
RTSG is funded by the AHRC at £500 per year, per studentship: a total of £2000 per studentship. You are not restricted to this amount. However, if cumulative spend is rising excessively over £2000, you will be advised that further funding may be limited.

Will I be reimbursed for unexpected costs arising during my activity?
You must seek approval for additional costs that arise during an activity (for example, opportunities not foreseen at the application stage, or resulting from an emergency) by emailing your local NBC DTP Administrator at the earliest opportunity. We cannot guarantee approval, but we will prioritise those related to health and safety. Claims for such additional costs that have not received prior approval by the NBC DTP will be rejected.

Local NBC DTP Administrator Contact Details:

Durham University	northernbridge.admin@durham.ac.uk
Newcastle University	northernbridge.admin@newcastle.ac.uk
Northumbria University	northernbridge.admin@northumbria.ac.uk
University of Sunderland	graduate.school@sunderland.ac.uk
Teesside University	k.metcalfe@tees.ac.uk
Queen's University Belfast	northernbridge.admin@qub.ac.uk
Ulster University	northernbridge.admin@ulster.ac.uk

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