

Difficult Language Training Guidance Notes 2021-22

Quick glance

- Support if a student needs to acquire or develop a working ability with a difficult language in order to carry out fieldwork, which will require extensive time away from studies.
- Normally involves an extension to studentship (depending on award arrangements).
- Any anticipated DLT should have been mentioned in the student's original application.
- Pre-approval of expenses required, usually 3 months in advance of start of training.
- Available to students in the doctoral phase of the award.
- Students may apply for DLT once over the lifetime of their award.

Overview

The ESRC allows extra studentship support if a student needs to acquire or develop a working ability with a non-English language in order to carry out fieldwork (including UK fieldwork) or other parts of their research. This is over and above the funded length of the studentship, in the form of an extension to the studentship period. Any anticipated DLT should have been mentioned in the student's original application to their University, and supervisor support is required when applying.

Applications will be considered where the training is considered essential to the success of the research project, and the case for this must be made in the application. Language training may take place in the UK or overseas, however options in the UK must be considered in the first instance.

Along with an extension of funding, students can apply for support for costs related to the language training. Along with course costs, eligible expenses include travel, accommodation costs, and visas (where the training cannot be completed in the UK). For any overseas trips over 3 months it would be expected that accommodation costs would be covered by a student's usual funding arrangements, and they are therefore advised to make their plans accordingly. As the fund is limited, large scale, accredited training courses in the UK and overseas cannot be supported as the cost is too high.

Overseas visits must not be undertaken if the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) advises against visiting the country concerned. Further guidance can be found below.

Extension Details

The length of extension (ranging from 3 months to a maximum of 12 months) depends upon current skill level, the difficulty of the language, and estimated time taken away from studies to complete language training. As a general rule, extensions beyond six months are only allowed if the student needs to spend an extended period of time overseas in order to obtain these language skills. For students who have undertaken a Masters course prior to the doctorate, the ESRC expects that some progress with language acquisition will have been made and therefore extensions beyond six months will not normally be approved. DLT support is not available to students with 2+3 awards as support for language training is incorporated into the award.

ESRC guidelines on extension lengths for various languages can be found under Annex 2 of the [ESRC PG Funding Guidelines](#).

Please note that the total period of extensions on any award will not normally exceed 12 months, and cannot exceed the University enrolment period or thesis submission deadline. Approval of an application and any subsequent extension to your studentship relates only to your funding arrangements, and will not affect your University status and deadlines. You should contact your Department if you have queries about your enrolment status.

Overseas travel requirements

Covid-19 Travel Guidance

Please note that language training would not generally be considered essential travel and so it is highly unlikely that it can be funded if there are FCDO or other UK Government travel warnings in place for the intended country or area.

Please ensure you have read your University's health and safety guidelines and policies relating to overseas travel. You should also check with your department for any University and departmental risk assessment rules concerning travel, along with Foreign Office website for updates on the safety of overseas destinations at <https://www.gov.uk/browse/abroad> and <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>.

The DTP cannot provide support for overseas visits if the UK Government or FCDO advises against visiting the country or area concerned. All overseas travel must be subject to a formal risk assessment and departmental approval, which may require additional consideration of COVID-19 risk. It is your responsibility to ensure that risk assessments are completed prior to your intended dates of travel. The DTP cannot approve any funding for activities for which the student's department/university body has not also granted risk assessment approval, in addition to being in line with FCDO or other UK Government guidance.

Travel should be covered by the travel insurance policy of your host institution. Please speak to your respective department/university body about this process.

Application Process

The DTP would normally have set deadlines throughout the year by which you would need to apply which are published on the DTP website. However the process has been suspended for the 2021-22 academic year due to the uncertainties related to the pandemic.

For 2021-22, applications will be dealt with on an ad-hoc basis as opportunities arise. We recommend you apply to the DTP office at your home institution approximately 3 months before the proposed activity, to ensure time for consideration and to give yourself plenty of planning time. However, if an opportunity arises with less notice, please do still contact the DTP office of your home institution for advice, as, in exceptional circumstances, we may be able to approve these. Any applications received within 1 month of the proposed activity may not be approved, so please get in touch regarding opportunities with less notice as soon as possible. In all cases, applications must be submitted prior to the start of the activity; retrospective applications will not be considered.

It is possible to apply to more than one funding scheme at the same time, e.g. it is fine to apply for DLT and OFE support together (if relevant).

Decisions for applications involving travel will not be finalised until the DTP office has received confirmation of an approved risk assessment. However, you may submit your DLT application form to your DTP office for review ahead of receiving approval of your risk assessment, as we can review this whilst you await approval from your Department. Your DTP office will advise if they also require a copy of the assessment. If a grant is approved, funds will be distributed as per local practice at your home institution, and no further funding will be provided beyond the amount confirmed in the award letter. All expenses must be supported by receipts.

Ensure you have discussed the timing of the training with your supervisor in relation to the progress of your studies and any formal programme assessments. On the application form, you should explain why you feel the timing is appropriate.

Completing the Application Form

When completing your application, think of it as an opportunity to practice grant-writing skills. You must make a strong case, demonstrating careful planning and investigation of costs options to ensure value for money.

Summary of Proposed Activity

Please provide full details of the training being undertaken.

Level of Funding Requested

Provide estimates of the costs you expect to incur that are above those usually covered by your funding arrangements (e.g. flights, accommodation).

You must provide evidence to support your cost estimates and amounts requested, eg. printout from a price comparison website for accommodation, flights, etc.

Case for Support

In this section you should provide a clear and reasoned case for the support for the training, explaining how it is essential to the completion of your project. If you are applying for support for training overseas, make sure to explain why it cannot be undertaken in the UK.

Please provide information on your current skill level with the language, prior training, and estimated time to be spent on the training.

The DTP will be considering how your application shows value for money therefore you should ensure you justify the cost estimates listed, particularly if they are not the most cost-effective options.

Any Other Relevant Information

Please list anything further that you may feel is relevant for consideration of your application. The language training must be integral to the completion of your project and as such the ESRC expects that it should have been clearly identified in your initial research proposal. If it was not listed in your application, please explain what has changed and why it is now considered essential.