Incubator Fund
Guidance Notes 2021-22

Quick glance

➢ Supports activities such as seminars, workshops, and other interdisciplinary events that directly involve ESRC-funded students.

➢ Students can apply for up to £1,000 to support proposed activity.

➢ Pre-approval of expenses is required. Retrospective applications will not be considered.

➢ Scheme is intended to support new activities, rather than pre-existing groups.

Overview

The Grand Union Incubator Fund offers you the opportunity to organise a new initiative and gain research leadership skills. As a Grand Union DTP-funded student you can apply to the Incubator Fund for up to £1000 to support activities such as interdisciplinary research networks, seminars, non-academic collaboration, workshops, knowledge exchange initiatives, non-academic collaborations and other networking events.

The scheme is intended to support new activities or recently established networks or groups.

Bids must directly involve ESRC-funded students, will bring together students or researchers from different pathways / clusters / departments, and may also involve non-academic partners. Students and participants from outside of the Grand Union DTP can also be involved.

Honorariums are not payable, nor are payroll or employment costs. Speakers may only be invited to give single, unpaid, one-off talks. Please make sure that these terms are made clear in advance to anyone invited to present at these activities.

Advice **must** be sought if inviting international presenters to speak in terms of any necessary visa requirements (it is not possible to carry out any work, even unpaid, on a tourist visa). Before you invite or approach an international speaker please check this with your departmental administrator. This is particularly important while travel restrictions are in place due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Successful applicants must publicise Grand Union sponsorship and submit promotional text/description about the project for inclusion in the DTP student newsletter and on the DTP website. It is also mandatory for convenors to provide a report on the activity and its outcomes within one month of the conclusion of the project. The report may be published on the DTP website.

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 amended 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 for 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 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 proposed activity; retrospective applications will not be considered.

Applicants should provide a detailed and costed budget, naming proposed presenters and expected numbers of participants where possible. Applications will be assessed on their value for money, and proposed budgets will be carefully scrutinised. Details and advice about eligible expenses can be found in the section at the end of this document.

When preparing your budget, remember that grants will be made based on the costs provided and cannot be used for other expenses without separate permission. Therefore you should develop a proper financial plan before submitting an application.

Applications should normally involve a co-applicant from a different department/ESRC training pathway, and focus on topics of broad interdisciplinary interest. Post-doctoral researchers or senior undergraduates can also be co-applicants.

If you wish to request that your department or a supplier charge the DTP Office directly, or that your department pays the supplier on your behalf, please discuss this with your local DTP Office before you place an order.

Expenses

Food/drink/refreshments

For a meal, up to £10 may be claimed per participant and a presenter's full (and reasonable) expenses if the cost is higher than £10. Expenses for up to £7.50 a head for a drinks reception can be claimed.

In order to save costs, ask your department about their internal arrangements and rates and get quotes from different suppliers (your Department will usually be able to provide recommendations). Some facilities may not allow food/drink in certain rooms or unless purchased through the relevant department so please check for any such restrictions at the time of booking.

Participant travel expenses

Approved participants and presenters can claim travel expenses, provided the cheapest tickets and advanced bookings are used. UK travel expenses for non-local participants are payable up to £100 total per person, however you may wish to consider if expensive travel is the best use of funds. For rail travel, ensure that tickets and receipts are retained (expense cannot be claimed if the ticket is captured at the ticket machine).

International travel may, in exceptional circumstances, be payable for presenters, provided this was budgeted for in the original bid and approved in the award letter.

Accommodation costs

Accommodation costs for non-locally based participants are payable up to £70/head/night in total.

Accommodation costs for guest lecturers, presenters and speakers are payable up to £100/head/night. Please try to keep costs down by using accommodation offered or recommended by your University in the first instance.

Room booking costs

Where possible, room bookings are normally expected to be provided free of charge through the University or Department. It may be that you need to book refreshments through your department, faculty or school. Make sure to arrange timings so that there is no need for additional costs of out of hours cover, caretakers and security.

Event websites/blogs

Support may be requested, however the complexities of employment legislation mean that we are unable to cover employment/payroll claims and this include students' time in activities such as setting up and maintaining websites and blogs.

Communications technology licences

If you are hoping to request support for a virtual event, please contact your local DTP office for advice if this includes licences for online platforms e.g. Zoom. These can be considered to have a personal benefit under University or HMRC finance rules and so it may not be possible to cover the costs – your institution will be able to advise you further.

Guidelines for events

Record of participants

Please keep a record of overall numbers.

Event report

Convenors must provide a report on the activity and any outcomes planned (e.g. publications, resources) within one month of the conclusion of the project.

Underspends and contingency budget

If you have not used all funding awarded by the end of the stated period of your activity then please contact your DTP Office to let them know that you will not be making further claims. There is no need to include a contingency fund in your budget, but if you anticipate problems with your initial budget, please get in touch.