

Overseas Institutional Visits

Guidance Notes

Quick glance

- Supports visits to an overseas academic institution of up to 3 months, however generally grants will cover up to 6 weeks.
- Awards are made on a competitive basis, with application deadlines for the year advertised on the DTP website.
- Pre-approval of expenses required, usually 3 months in advance of travel. Retrospective applications will not be considered.
- Students can apply for up to a maximum of £4000 (e.g. for accommodation not covered by studentship stipend, and travel).
- Only one grant can be made per student during their studentship, and only during the doctoral phase.
- Due to the nature of the scheme, it cannot support remote 'visits'.

Overview

The purpose of the OIV scheme is to support international academic networking and engagement by ESRC funded doctoral students. It offers them the opportunity to establish research networks, to disseminate early research findings, to participate in seminars and other academic activities that are directly relevant to their research, or to undertake specialist research training that is not available within the UK. Visits must involve visiting a Higher Education institution or an esteemed research organisation with a substantive research office outside of the UK.

Students can apply for a minimum of one month for a visit to maximum of three months, however requests for trips longer than 6 weeks will require a strong justification, explaining why the longer period is necessary. The DTP expects that most visits will be around 6 weeks. Applications can be for up to three separate visits to the same host during the course of the studentship as long as the total period of the visits does not exceed three months, and a strong case is made for the need for this more expensive arrangement.

The DTP may approve an extension to a student's funding period equal to the visit length, depending on their award length. Please note that the total period of extensions on any award will not exceed 12 months, and the funding end date will not exceed the University enrolment period or thesis submission deadline.

Applicants can apply for a maximum of £4000 to support the costs of the OIV, although awards of this level are rare. Grants may be a contribution to costs rather than cover the full amount. Further funding will not be available after the grant has been approved, and please note that the RTSG scheme cannot be used to supplement OIV costs not covered by the grant.

For successful students with fees-only ESRC awards, the DTP Office will take into account the full funding arrangements when determining the grant, including the estimated level of support available for living expenses if a funding extension is approved.

As OIVs are intended to be an integral part of the student's research training, any visit in the first year of the PhD must not commence within the first three months of the studentship period.

Additionally, visits taking place in the final year of the studentship must be completed prior to the studentship fund end date (before any extensions are applied).

The OIV scheme is not to be used for undertaking fieldwork; however in exceptional circumstances there may be a requirement to carry out some fieldwork as part of an OIV. In these cases the applications must be integral to the work of the PhD and the fieldwork component is not being covered from the Overseas Fieldwork application process.

Overseas travel requirements

Please contact your local DTP office for specific guidance on what you will need to supply during the application process, although we expect in most cases to adhere to the following:

Please ensure you have read your University's health and safety guidelines and policies relating to fieldwork. You should also check with your department for any University and Departmental risk assessment rules concerning fieldwork and 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 Foreign and Commonwealth Office advises against visiting the country or area concerned, and this includes countries and areas on the FCO travel advisory list due to COVID-19 concerns. **All** overseas travel must be subject to a formal risk assessment and departmental approval. This risk assessment must include consideration of the COVID-19 risk. 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 FCO guidance.

The visit should be covered by the travel insurance policy of the student's host institution. This must be in place at the time of submitting the OIV funding application. 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 temporarily suspended due to the uncertainties related to the pandemic.

Applications for OIVs will be considered on an ad-hoc basis until end December 2020, and arrangements will be reviewed in January 2021. Please see the DTP webpage on the OIV scheme for updates. Applications for OIVs scheduled further than 5 months ahead are likely to be placed on hold, given the uncertainties around travel.

We recommend you apply to the DTP Office at your home institution **approximately 3 months before the proposed activity** if you can, 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. In all cases, applications must be submitted prior to the start of the activity; retrospective applications will not be considered.

Funding decisions for visits are based on the quality of five key assessment criteria:

- the purpose of the visit provided by the applicant
- the intended work plan provided by the applicant
- value for money
- arrangements for continued supervision provided by the supervisor
- the confirmation of support provided by the proposed host university.

In order to make the widest use of available funds and ensure engagement across a broad range of countries, the assessors will also take into account the location, length and expected cost of

the visit. They may decide to award lower grants to support a greater number of students, depending on the number of applicants.

If a grant is approved, funds will be distributed as per local practice at your home institution and only upon satisfactory completion of any required risk assessments for your travel. Any unspent funds and funds not supported by receipts must be repaid. Once an application is approved, no further funding will be provided beyond the amount confirmed in the award letter.

All successful applicants are required to submit an end of award report within two weeks of the end of each visit.

Completing the application form

Ensure you have discussed the timing of travel 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.

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

Students should provide a clear plan and developed programme of events for their visit. A general list of activities that may be of interest, or a quite narrow plan of activities, will not make a very strong case for support.

Level of Funding Requested

Provide estimates of the costs you expect to incur that are above those usually covered by your funding arrangements. The costs of the visit should be reasonable and dependent on the country, time period and activity proposed. Ensure you are realistic in your estimates - lavish costs are unlikely to find favour in the application process and a proposal which promises the earth at remarkably low expense will be regarded with caution.

You must provide evidence to support your cost estimates and amounts requested, eg. printout from a price comparison website, recommended levels for living expenses provided by the prospective host institution etc. The DTP expects students to apply for travel insurance through the relevant scheme at their institution, rather than request support through the OIV scheme.

Applicants can apply for a maximum of £4000, though they should note that awards of this level are rare and value for money will be taken into consideration when assessing applications.

Case for Support

Applicants should indicate the purpose of the visit and how it relates to their doctoral research, and current or future academic career. Please describe what has been achieved to date and how the proposed visit will extend/enhance this and offer 'added value' to your PhD experience. Reasons for such a visit might include establishing research networks, disseminating early research findings, participating in seminars and other academic activities that are directly relevant to the student's research, or undertaking specialist research training. If the OIV is to be undertaken for research training purposes, the applicant must demonstrate why the training is integral to their research, and also why this training cannot be undertaken within the UK.

If applicants are proposing to undertake more than one visit to the same university or research institution they should provide clear justification as to why more than one visit is required.

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.

Supplementary Funding

Provide details of any supplementary funding you have applied for or received to support the activity, including source of funding and amount.

Confirmation of support from your supervisor

Supervisors are asked to comment on the quality of the student's research to date and how the proposed visit will extend/enhance this. If the OIV is to be undertaken for research training purposes, please explain why the training is integral to their research, and also why this training cannot be undertaken within the UK.

Students are expected to continue their PhD research and training throughout the course of the visit/s and maintain regular contact with their supervisor. Supervisors are asked to demonstrate what arrangements are in place to meet this requirement. Discussions between supervisors and the student should take place prior to the visit in order to ensure that both parties are fully aware of the arrangements and expectations.

Confirmation of support from supervisors can be provided by email.

Confirmation of support from the proposed host university or esteemed research institution

The main academic contact at the host university or research institution should provide written support for the proposed visit. This should include confirmation of the work plan for the proposed visit/s, details of the academic facilities to which the student will have access, as well as the student's registration status at the host university or research institution during the visit period.

Confirmation of support from the proposed host university or research institution can be provided by email.