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## Summary of SeNSS's Research Training Support Grant (RTSG) Policy

- All SeNSS ESRC-funded students are eligible to apply for RTSG funding, including Masters students.
- STUDENTS MUST NOT SPEND ANY MONEY UNTIL APPROVAL HAS BEEN RECEIVED IN WRITING. SeNSS reserves the right not to refund universities (HEIs) where their students have spent money without receiving prior approval.
- Students may ordinarily apply for up to £750 per year for each year they hold their funded studentship award (pro-rate for part-time students), or pro-rata for part-year awards.
  - However, students may apply to spend more than £750 in one year. If, in the view of the SeNSS administrative lead a justified case for support is made, this application should be forwarded to SeNSS for approval (subject to the availability of funds).
- Normally, individual students should not be able to claim more than £3,500 from RTSG over the lifetime of their funded award, unless there are exceptional circumstances. If, in the view of the SeNSS Administrative Lead a justified case for support is made, this application should be forwarded to SeNSS for approval (subject to the availability of funds).
- Should RTSG funds not be spent in any one year, these may be carried over across the duration of the studentship at SeNSS's discretion.
- Students should read this policy, and then complete the SeNSS RTSG application. In particular, it should be noted that:
  - The student's supervisor (primary or second) must support the claim for it to be approved.
  - If the student has not completed their annual Training Needs Analysis (TNA) for that year, they will not be permitted to apply for RTSG funding.
  - If the RTSG application is for funding for training, this training should normally have been identified through the annual TNA. If not, then the application for funding for training must be properly justified.
- Applications for RTSG funding must be made to the Administrative Lead at the student's home HEI.
  - Applications for funding for unusual items, or where this would mean the student is applying for funds which would put them over the £3,500 maximum spend must be referred to the Training Manager ([trainingmanager@senss-dtp.ac.uk](mailto:trainingmanager@senss-dtp.ac.uk)), or, in their absence, the SeNSS Manager ([manager@senss-dtp.ac.uk](mailto:manager@senss-dtp.ac.uk)) for their approval.
  - Applications referred to the SeNSS will be decided on within 14 days. The student, their supervisor and their Administrative Lead will be emailed with that decision.
- Once formal approval has been granted, the student may spend the money, and must submit a receipt/receipts to the Administrative Lead within a month of spending it.
- HEIs should account for these funds via the twice yearly "SeNSS Expenditure Report".
- An annual report (by student, cohort, home HEI and Pathway, and including what it was spent on) will be presented by the Training, Employability, and Development (TED) Group to the SeNSS Management Board (MB), which includes Student Forum (SF) representatives.

## 1. Policy framework

The SeNSS RTSG policy is based on the rules set down in the ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide, which is available at:

<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/files/skills-and-careers/studentships/postgraduate-funding-guide/>

In terms of the ESRC's RTSG policy, SeNSS receives £750 per student per year. For part-time students this allowance is calculated pro-rata. However, RTSG is not personal to each student. Rather, the ESRC requires that SeNSS pools these funds and uses them flexibly across the student cohort, in order to ensure that everyone receives the training they need in order to complete their research successfully. Because these funds are not personal to each student, students will need to apply for this funding. Masters students (those in the "1" of their 1+3 award) are eligible to apply for RTSG funding.

Normally, individual students should not be able to claim more than £3,500 from RTSG over the lifetime of their funded award, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

HEIs should be mindful of their students' individual needs, whilst also bearing in mind the overall training needs of their institutional cohorts. Should RTSG funds not be spent in any one year, these may be carried over across the duration of the studentship, at SeNSS's discretion. Where a student applies to spend more than £750 in one year, and the SeNSS HEI feels this is justified, that HEI should forward the application to SeNSS with a recommendation to approve it (subject to the availability of funds).

A review of the financial spend against RTSG will be conducted annually, in order to ensure that students' needs are being met, and a report, drafted by the TED Group, on RTSG spend will be presented annually to the SeNSS MB.

## 2. What RTSG covers

### 2.1 What RTSG can be used for

Examples of legitimate uses of RTSG provided by the ESRC include:

- UK fieldwork expenses;
- UK, EU and overseas conferences and summer schools;
- language training courses necessary for undertaking fieldwork, whether within the UK or outside it;
- reimbursement of interpreters, guides, assistants;
- survey costs, e.g. the associated costs of printing, stationery, telephone calls;
- purchase of small items of equipment of research purposes, e.g. cameras, tape recorders, films, cassettes;
- gifts for local informants;
- books and other reading material not available through libraries; and,
- payments for participants in activities directly linked to a student's research project, subject to first obtaining ethical approval.

Students who purchase [annual "16-25 railcards"](#) to allow them to travel in support of their research may claim back the cost of these cards (£30 p.a. or £70 for a 3-year card). These cards are available to those between 16-25 years old, or mature students who are studying full-time, and save around 1/3 of the cost of ordinary tickets.

**In exceptional circumstances**, requests to purchase a laptop or other computer equipment, including software, from this allowance may be considered, but only where specialist equipment is required which is clearly of a higher specification due to the nature of the research. Any such request must be clearly and adequately justified based on the nature of the research being undertaken, and must be essential for the successful completion of the research project. In these instances, any equipment purchased in excess of £200 must be returned to SeNSS at the end of the studentship.

Overseas fieldwork (OFW) and overseas institutional visits (OIVs) are funded separately. However, please note that RTSG funds can be combined with any funds the student has been awarded for OFW and/or OIVs. For details of how to apply for OFW and OIV funding, please see the Student e-Handbook on the SeNSS VLE.

## 2.2 What RTSG cannot be used for

RTSG cannot be used:

- prior to the start date of the studentship;
- in advance, when the event takes place after the end date of the studentship;
- to purchase capital equipment or facilities which a university would normally be expected to provide (including laptops or computer equipment – see above);
- to buy equipment which is viewed as being “standard”, or that is generally available, through a department or HEI, for example, stationery;
- to buy stationery for home-use, if these would normally be made available to students whilst they are on university premises;
- to purchase books and journals that would normally be provided through a university’s library, or through inter-library loans;
- to cover expenses relating to supervisor visits, to or from the student, during fieldwork, or off-site placements of less than nine months;
- to pay for training that all department postgraduate students are required to attend, e.g. Health and Safety courses. RTSG cannot be used to fund these courses where non-RCUK students are not expected to pay.

However, please note that if, due to the impact of COVID-19, a case can be made for a student to spend funds on items listed above, applications for RTSG funding may be made. (For example, if an HEI’s library is shut down for a lengthy period, students may apply to use their RTSG funds to buy a book that they would otherwise be expected to access via their library.)

## 3. RTSG application procedure

### 3.1 Students

- Complete the RTSG application form ahead of spending any money.
- Ensure you do this in good time to allow your supervisor to complete their statement of support, and to allow your Administrative Lead time to consider your application.
- Email it to your supervisor, so that they can complete their statement of support.
- Once you have received an email from your Administrative Lead approving your RTSG award, spend your funds in line with what you set out in your application, obtaining a receipt, or receipts.
- Submit your receipts to your home HEI’s administrative lead within one month of spending your award.

### 3.2 Supervisors

- On receiving your student’s RTSG form, complete the brief statement of support, and email it to your HEI’s SeNSS Administrative Lead.

### 3.3 Institutional approval process

Each SeNSS HEI may set their own procedure for applying for RTSG, as long as this process complies with this SeNSS RTSG policy. In particular:

- the application must be supported by either the primary or second supervisor in order for it to be approved;
- the RTSG application must not be approved unless the student has completed their annual TNA for that year. If the RTSG is for a training-related cost, then this must be in line with the agreed TNA, unless the need for this additional training has been properly justified; and,
- the student's spend for both the current academic year and across the lifetime of their funded award must be checked. The application can only be approved if these are within the limits set out in this policy.
  - applications for funding for unusual items, or where this would mean the student is applying for funds which would put them over either the £750 annual limit or the £3,500 maximum spend, must be referred to the Manager or Training Manager for their approval.
  - Should such an application mean that the HEI concerned exceeds their RTSG budget for the year, this should be disclosed to SeNSS as part of the written application.

The **Administrative Lead** should email the student with the outcome of their application within 14 days of it being received by the Lead.

- if successful, confirm the amount awarded, and upload the approved application to [Box](#).
- if a decision is not possible on current information, seek further information before making a decision;
- if the application is declined, advise the student in writing of the reasons for this decision, copying in the supervisor. Advise the student that they should consult the SeNSS Appeals Process Policy, should they wish to appeal this decision. This can be found in Student e-Handbook on the SeNSS VLE

## 4. Reporting and accounting for RTSG spend

### 4.1 SeNSS HEIs

- Retain the RTSG receipts, in case a full audit of SeNSS DTP Grant funds is required.
- Account for RTSG spend via the twice yearly "SeNSS Expenditure Report".

### 4.2 SeNSS Core Team, TED Group, and Management Board

- An annual report (by student, cohort, HEI and Pathway, and including what it was spent on) will be presented by the Deputy Director to the TED Group for analysis, discussion, and recommendations (if appropriate).
- The TED Group will present this report and any recommendations to the SeNSS Management Board (MB), which includes Student Forum (SF) representatives, for its consideration and comment.

### 4.3 Process Checklist and flowchart

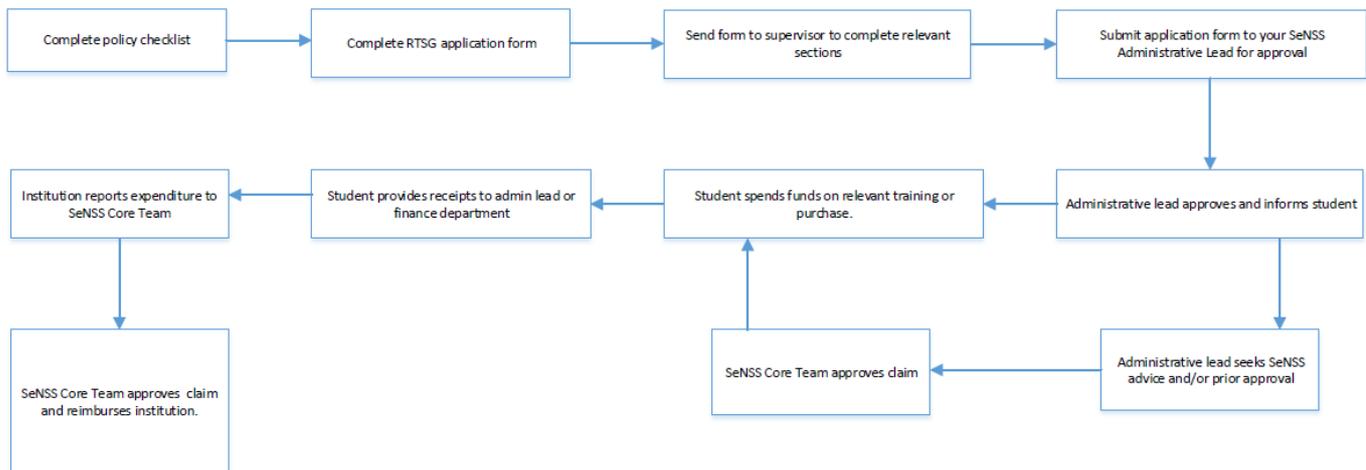
- Have you completed your annual TNA?
- Is this training need identified in your TNA?

*If no, you will need to explain and justify spending these funds*

- Have you already been awarded the maximum of £750 this academic year, or have you already been awarded the maximum of £3,500 over the lifetime of your funded award?

*If yes, you will need to explain and justify any additional costs.*

- Is this an eligible cost?
- Does your supervisor support your application?
- Will this activity or purchase take place within your funded award period?



#### 4.4 Document history

Date	Action
	Drafted by Manager
	Circulated to OG for comment; OG feedback incorporated into document
31.10.2017	Discussed at OG meeting
01.11.2017	Manager updated document in accordance with OG discussion, and circulated to OG for final comment
03.11.2017	Manager circulated document to Director and Deputy Director for comment
06.11.2017	Comments from OG, Director and Deputy Director incorporated into revised document (version 6Nov17)
15.11.2017	Discussed and approved by the SeNSS core team
24.11.2017	Approved by MB
23.07.2019	Reviewed and amended by SeNSS Core Team
09.09.2019	Revised by A. Shirley (Training Manager)
19.07.2020	Revised by F. Szesnat (Manager)
09.09.2020	Approved by MB

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