

North West
Social Science
Doctoral Training
Partnership



Economic
and Social
Research Council

Research Training Support Grant Guidance

Please read this guidance document in full before submitting any requests for Research Training Support Grant funding. Please contact the NWSSDTP office if you have any queries about the guidance, before you make any bookings or purchases.

Introduction

The Research Training Support Grant (RTSG) is the fund from which NWSSDTP Students can claim research expenses. The RTSG is intended to be used for expenses which the student, supervisor and NWSSDTP deem to be in direct support of the student's research project, training or development. This RTSG Guidance is relevant for all NWSSDTP Students, regardless of their start date.

There is not a RTSG allowance per student. The funding, which is provided by the ESRC, is pooled centrally and administered by the NWSSDTP Office across the consortium. There is a finite budget available across the DTP, and as such eligibility rules and caps on individual expenses must be applied to ensure funding can be available for all.

Eligibility

All NWSSDTP Students are entitled to claim RTSG funding towards eligible expenses, at masters and doctoral level, whether studying part-time or full-time.

RTSG funding cannot be claimed for expenses that occur prior to the studentship start date, or for expenses that are incurred or activity that takes place after the studentship ends, even if the student is still undertaking their PhD (i.e. if the student takes an unfunded writing up period, they would not be eligible to claim RTSG during that period).

How to Apply

RTSG funding is usually claimed retrospectively from the NWSSDTP Office. To reclaim eligible expenses, students should complete the RTSG Form in full (<https://nwssdtp.ac.uk/current->

[students/rtsg/](#)) and have this signed by their supervisor. The supervisory signature is to confirm that the expense is necessary and crucial to the development of the student's research or training development. By signing the form, the supervisor is also confirming that the activity is taking place as detailed. Electronic signatures are acceptable.

Evidence of purchase must be provided for each item on the claim form. Original receipts (scans are acceptable) must be submitted for all purchases. Original tickets (e-tickets and scans are acceptable) stating the date, destination and price of the journey must be submitted for all travel - booking confirmations are not sufficient. Bank statements are not sufficient proof of purchase and will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances.

Please note that students do not have to wait until after an event to reclaim the costs of registration, accommodation or pre-booked transport. This can be reclaimed as soon as the booking has been made. Should the event not go ahead for any reason, after reimbursement has been paid, it may be necessary to return the money to the NWSSDTP.

There are two RTSG Claim deadlines a month: the 15th and the 28th (or the next nearest working day). The completed form and supporting receipts should be sent to the NWSSDTP Office at nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk by the student's chosen deadline and it may take up to three weeks for payment to be received after the deadline has passed.

Any incomplete claims (i.e. claims which do not provide sufficient detail, are unsigned or which do not include receipts) will be pushed back to the next deadline while the office follows up for the missing information. This is to avoid delays in payment for other students.

Eligible Expenses

While we have attempted to include the most common expenses eligible for RTSG funding below, this list is not exhaustive. Please email nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk with any eligibility queries, providing as much detail as possible as well as indicative costs.

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Conference / Seasonal School / Specialist Writing Retreat Attendance

RTSG funding can support the cost of registration, travel and accommodation (if needed) for UK and overseas **conferences**. Similarly, the RTSG can be used to support attendance at **Seasonal Schools** (Spring, Summer, Autumn or Winter Schools) or Methods Schools i.e. specialised training that takes place over multiple days. The NWSSDTP and its constituent institutions offer free **writing retreats** on a regular basis, but if a student wishes to attend a specialist writing retreat, this can also be reimbursed. Visas and vaccinations can also be funded for these activities if needed.

There is an overall limit per student of £2250 for conference, seasonal/methods school or writing retreat attendance across the course of the full PhD studentship (those on a +2.5 studentship can access up to £1500). It is down to students, in liaison with their supervisors, to decide how to prioritise conference, seasonal/methods school or writing retreat attendance – the funding available could be used for a single major conference, or across multiple smaller events. The NWSSDTP can confirm individual conference expenditure to date upon request.

To claim reimbursement for the costs of attending one of these events students should provide the details of the activity, a brief statement about why the conference/school/retreat was relevant for their research project or personal development, and a breakdown of costs with receipts.

There is the possibility of **applying in advance** for funding towards attendance at a conference, if the conference will cost more than £300 in total and if the student will be presenting a paper or poster at the conference. To apply for funding in advance of a conference, students should email nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk with the details of the conference, a brief statement about why the conference is relevant for their research project or personal development, the accepted abstract for the paper or poster, and an indicative costing for attendance. Please bear in mind it will take up to six weeks for review, approval and the payment to be made, so students must plan accordingly.

Research Training Courses

RTSG funding can support the cost of any crucial training required. This includes course registration, travel and accommodation costs (if needed) associated with training. There is no cap on the amount that can be claimed per student for this purpose, but training courses must be crucial for a student's research project or future development, in line with the content of their Development Needs Analysis (<https://nwssdtp.ac.uk/current-students/dna/>). Training should be undertaken in the UK, unless this is unavailable.

To claim reimbursement for the costs of attending a research training course, students should provide the details of the training, a brief statement about why the training was crucial (with reference to their personal training needs as identified in their latest Development Needs Analysis), and a breakdown of costs with receipts.

There is the possibility of **applying in advance** for funding towards attending a training course, if attendance at the course will cost more than £300 in total. To apply for funding in advance of training, students should email nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk with the details of the course, a brief statement about why the training is crucial (with reference to their personal training needs as identified in their latest Development Needs Analysis), and an indicative costing for attendance. Please bear in mind it will take up to six weeks for review, approval and the payment to be made, so plan accordingly.

Travel for NWSSDTP Events, CASE Partner Meetings or Cross-institutional Supervision

RTSG funding can support costs associated with students' travel within the North West to attend NWSSDTP events, or to meet with their PhD co-supervisors at CASE Partners or at institutions other than their home institution. There is no cap on this type of expense, but travel should always be by the most economical means possible.

Students cannot reclaim expenses for the cost of travelling to supervisory meetings at their home institution. In some CASE Studentships, arrangements will have been made for the non-HEI partner to cover the cost of travel expenses, and in these circumstances, claims should be made to the non-HEI partner and not to the NWSSDTP.

To claim reimbursement for the costs of travel students should provide the details of the event or meeting, and the breakdown of costs with receipts.

Fieldwork and Survey Costs

Students should refer to the NWSSDTP UK and Overseas Fieldwork Fund Guidance here: <https://nwssdtp.ac.uk/current-students/osfw/> for details of how to apply for funding towards travel, accommodation and other major costs associated with undertaking fieldwork. RTSG can be used to support lesser costs associated with undertaking fieldwork and surveys such as printing, postage, stationery or pay-as-you-go telephone calls (where costs on a pay-as-you-go SIM can be reimbursed).

There is a cap of £50 that can be claimed for this purpose without seeking prior approval, but if a student may need more than this, they should email nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk to make a case **prior to purchase**.

To claim reimbursement for these costs associated with fieldwork and surveys, students should provide the date and nature of the work that took place, and a brief statement regarding how the resources in question were used, and a breakdown of costs with receipts. The cost of stationery (i.e. general stationery needs associated with completing a PhD) will not be reimbursed in any other circumstances.

Small Items of Equipment

RTSG can support the cost of buying small items of equipment such as cameras, Dictaphones and external hard drives. There is a cap of £50 per item on equipment purchases that can be claimed without seeking prior approval, but if a student may need to purchase a more expensive item, they should email nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk to make a case **prior to purchase**.

To claim reimbursement for small items of equipment, students should detail the nature of the equipment and why it is needed, provide confirmation that they have investigated the availability of the equipment for loan in their department or school, and a breakdown of costs with receipts.

Computer Equipment

In exceptional circumstances, the NWSSDTP may consider requests from students to purchase a laptop, tablet or PC using RTSG funding. If a student wishes to apply for such funding, they must make a case for support **prior to purchase**, justifying the need for purchase of a computer with RTSG money beyond the need to simply research and write up their thesis. This may be the need to use a particular kind of software for their project, or the need to have a portable device when travelling for fieldwork or to see collaborative partners.

If approved, the student can claim reimbursement of up to £300 towards the computer. Students may choose to purchase a more expensive laptop and cover any expense above the £300 themselves. Only one claim for computer equipment can be made during the course of the studentship, and claims cannot be made in the final year of the studentship. Students are responsible for the upkeep of the equipment and any cost associated with this. Repairs to computer equipment, whether purchased through RTSG or not, are not eligible.

Software

RTSG can support the cost of buying software that is crucial for the completion of a students' research project. General organisational software, or software that is freely available through institutions, cannot be reimbursed. There is a cap of £50 on software subscriptions that can be claimed without seeking prior approval, but if a student may need to purchase a more

expensive piece of software, they should email nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk to make a case **prior to purchase**.

Books

RTSG funding can support the cost of inter-library loans for unavailable texts or, if this is not possible, can be used to purchase essential research texts. There is a cap of £100 on book purchases that can be claimed without seeking prior approval, but if a student may need more than this, they should email nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk to make a case **prior to purchase**. To claim reimbursement for book costs students should provide a brief statement regarding why the text is crucial, confirmation that they have investigated the availability of the text through the inter-library loan system, and the breakdown of costs with receipts.

Membership Fees

RTSG funding can be used to pay for membership fees to key academic societies. Students should email nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk to make a case **prior to purchase**, providing details of the membership, the costing and whether this will be a recurring annual expense during the studentship.

Transcription Costs

RTSG funding can be used to cover the transcription costs associated with data collection for students' research projects. Transcription rates should usually not be more than £1 per minute. Supervisors or the students' local finance team should be able to advise on recommended suppliers of transcription services. A maximum of £1500 in total can be supported towards transcription costs for an individual student's doctoral project.

A case for funding transcription costs must be made in advance of any activity taking place. To request funds for this purpose, students should email nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk and detail why the transcription support is needed, the nature of what will be transcribed, and an indicative costing. If successful, funding for the transcription will typically be made available through the home institution and students will then need to follow local departmental processes for booking the required services and making payments.

Payment of Participants

RTSG funding can be used to pay participants for taking part in students' research projects. Supervisors or the students' local finance team should be able to provide information on approved methods for paying participants. A maximum of £1500 in total can be supported towards payment of participants for an individual student's doctoral project.

A case for funding payment of participants must be made in advance of any activity taking place. To request funds for this purpose, students should email nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk and detail the nature of what participants will be asked to do, explain the number of participants needed, and provide an indicative costing. If successful, funding for the payment of participants will typically be made available through the home institution and students will then need to follow local departmental processes for booking the required services and making payments.

Hire of Translators or Research Assistants

RTSG funding can be used to hire individuals to assist with aspects of a students' research project – usually this would be to act as translators or aid with large scale data collection. Supervisors or the students' local finance team should be able to provide information on approved methods for hiring assistants. A maximum of £1500 in total can be supported towards hiring assistants for an individual student's doctoral project.

A case for funding the hiring of assistants must be made in advance of any activity taking place. To request funds for this purpose, students should email nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk and detail why the assistance is needed, the nature of what work they will undertake, and an indicative costing. If successful, funding for the hiring of assistants will typically be made available through the home institution and students will then need to follow local departmental processes for booking the required services and making payments.

Foreign Currency

When expenses are in currency other than pounds sterling, the amount of reimbursement in pounds sterling will be calculated using the exchange rate on the day the claim is processed

as shown on [XE Currency Exchange](#). This doesn't account for any bank fees applied. If there is a reason to believe that a student will be unfairly reimbursed due to the exchange rate on the day of processing (e.g. if they are undertaking fieldwork in a county with economic difficulties) the student will need to provide additional proof of the exchange rate on the day of purchase.

Mileage

While the NWSSDTP encourages students to use sustainable public transport wherever possible, mileage can be reclaimed at a rate of 45p per mile where necessary when undertaking activity eligible for RTSG funding as outlined above. As part of their breakdown of expenses, students should provide the start and end postcodes for the journey and make it clear if the journey was one way or a return trip. The mileage will then be calculated using the [AA Mileage Calculator](#) on the day the claim is processed.

Subsistence Costs

General living expenses (e.g. food costs) incurred during conferences, training or other RTSG funded activity are not eligible for reimbursement. It is expected that these costs would be covered from the student's maintenance stipend.

Further Guidance

Blogposts from NWSSDTP Students highlighting RTSG-funded activity can be found on our website here: <https://nwssdtp.ac.uk/tag/rtsg/>

If NWSSDTP Students or their supervisors have any queries relating to the above guidance or the Research Training Support Grant more generally, please email us at nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk