

Small and Large Grant Schemes Guidance

Applicants must read the Guidance as they complete the Grant Scheme Application Form. The NBCDTP Academic Directors and Administrators may reject any application failing to follow this guidance.

This document should be read in conjunction with the “Eligible Costs and the Reimbursement of Expenses for Northern Bridge Consortium (NBC) Studentship Award-holders” guidance.

NORTHERN BRIDGE
CONSORTIUM DOCTORAL
TRAINING
PARTNERSHIP



**Arts and
Humanities
Research Council**

Policy

The Small and Large Grant Schemes can be used to enable Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Northern Bridge Consortium Doctoral Training Partnership (NBCDTP) studentship award-holders to (for example and not limited to): undertake overseas and UK study visits and fieldwork; participate in overseas and UK conferences; cover other **primary research costs**, e.g. consumables, exhibition costs or artist materials, that are essential to the satisfactory completion of the award-holder's thesis. The funds can be used to cover (for example and not limited to): the costs of travel; accommodation; fees charged for training courses that are associated with an award-holder's development; and other associated costs that are incurred as a result of the award-holder's activity.

Award-holders should note that Scheme funds are limited, and not every application will be fully funded or funded at all. Therefore award-holders should **strategically prioritise their applications based on necessity for the successful completion of their PhD** and emphasise value for money. Applications may be rejected, or the NBCDTP Academic Directors and Administrators may request further information and/or amendments before confirming their final decision.

Award-holders are required to make themselves aware of the items/services that are **not eligible** for funding, stated below, before making an application.

In occasional instances, and where the NBCDTP Academic Directors identify a common need for a proposed activity, applicants may be asked develop their application so that the proposed training can be offered to the wider NBCDTP cohort. Appropriate advice and support will be offered in such cases.

The NBCDTP is obliged to ensure that the public funds supporting the NBCDTP via the AHRC are used responsibly.

Definitions

Small Grants are a total value of £750.00 and under.

Large Grants are a total value of over £750.00.

“Scheme/s” refers to both Small and Large Grants.

The award-holder's “host institution” is the University at which the award-holder is registered.

The “local NBCDTP Administrator” is the administrator or equivalent based at the award-holder's host institution, whose contact details are listed below. Their local NBCDTP Administrator is the first point of contact for award-holders.

The NBCDTP Academic Directors are members of academic staff appointed at each of the seven partner institutions of the Northern Bridge Consortium: Durham University, Newcastle University, Northumbria University, Queen's University Belfast, University of Sunderland, Teesside University and Ulster University.

Eligibility for Funding

The Scheme can only be used to support AHRC NBCDTP-funded doctoral students actively registered at their host institution.

The Schemes cannot be used to fund award-holders whose funded period has come to an end, whose thesis has been submitted, or whose registration / studentship has been suspended. This includes costs, for example, associated with the printing of theses for examination, or any additional fees incurred after the end of the funded period of the studentship.

Funding is not available for any activity taking place prior to the commencement of the studentship award (usually 1 October, the year the award was confirmed).

Award-holders must be assessed by their Department/School to be progressing satisfactorily and on course to submit their thesis by their latest thesis submission date.

Retrospective funding is not permitted under any circumstances. Applications to the Scheme for activities that have already taken place will be rejected without consideration.

It is **not** recommended that award-holders make purchases prior to the submission of an application to the Scheme on the assumption that it will be approved. Approval of an application is not guaranteed and applicants will not be reimbursed for any costs incurred prior to the submission of an application.

Eligible and Ineligible Activities, Items and Services

Examples of the activities, items and services that **can be supported** by the Scheme include:

- Study visits / fieldwork that is conducted in the United Kingdom or overseas.
- Participating in professional conferences overseas or within the United Kingdom.
- The **non-financial compensation** of interpreters, guides and informants that are assisting an award-holder's fieldwork. (Under no circumstances can such assistance be recompensed in cash.)
- Meeting the costs of conducting surveys and other data collection exercises, including on-site printing and stationery, not otherwise provided by the host institution.
- Purchasing small items of equipment and consumables, such as cameras, recorders, and memory devices, not otherwise provided by the host institution, nor available via the NBCDTP Asset Register.
- Acquiring essential books and other materials that are not available through libraries through any means, including inter-library loans.
- Obtaining specialist IT equipment where this is assessed to be essential to the completion of the award-holder's PhD, cannot be directly funded by the award-holder's host institution or other sources, and which has been indicated as required in the award-holder's NBCDTP Studentship Nomination.
- Training course fees, where the training has been indicated as required in the award-holder's NBCDTP Studentship Nomination.
- Travel to and from a course venue.
- Accommodation for residential courses.
- Short scoping trips for potential placements.

The Scheme **cannot** fund activities, equipment and services that all award-holders can expect to be directly met by their host Department/School as part of the host institution's core/basic provision for postgraduate research students, including, but not limited to:

- Basic IT provision, including access to desktop computing and printing.
- The fee for attending training events provided by the NBCDTP partner institutions. These events are normally provided free of charge to award-holders. (An application for funding can be considered in instances where there is no concession for NBCDTP award-holders.)
- Core books, texts and other research materials that are available through libraries through any means, including inter-library loans, irrespective of the time it may take to secure the item.

The Scheme **cannot** fund subsistence. This includes costs incurred while participating in otherwise funded activities, for example: optional conference dinners or utility bills (including those incurred if renting accommodation during funded activities). These costs must be met from the studentship stipend.

The Scheme **cannot** fund attendance at networking- and career-focussed events that are not related to the award-holder's primary research required for the successful completion of the thesis.

Funding for attendance at professional conferences where there is no evidence of active participation (such as presenting or taking part in a workshop), is **unlikely** to be granted. If not presenting, a case must be made for attending based on the opportunities for development and the contribution towards the successful completion of the thesis. A case based solely on attendance providing "networking" opportunities only is unlikely to be approved.

Funding for certain items that may be deemed to have personal use and/or professional benefit to the student outside of the scope of primary research costs, or research, training and development needs, is **unlikely** to be granted. For example, suitcases needed for fieldwork; car servicing when using your own vehicle for UK-based study visits; subscriptions to cloud-based data services; rental of private office or studio space.

Award-holders and their supervisory teams must ensure that any proposed training activities do not duplicate existing provision by, for example, the NBCDTP itself or its partner institutions' own skills and development programmes for postgraduate research students.

Due to stringent employment legislation, **under no circumstances** should award-holders approach and engage third party service providers to help assist with activities without first requesting the advice of their local NBCDTP Administrator, and **prior** to the submission of an application to the Scheme. Award-holders are not regarded as the employer of the service provider. Depending on individual institutional policy, such service providers may be regarded as temporary University employees. It may be necessary for them to undergo a Right to Work check **in person** at the host institution, and they should be prepared to do so at their own expense before undertaking work. They may be required to have their employment status assessed by the host institution via an IR35 procedure; and institutions may refuse to engage any provider other than a listed University vendor. Failure to seek the appropriate advice well in advance of the proposed activity may mean that payment cannot be made to the provider, or they will be subject to deductions that are irrecoverable via the host institution.

The duration of a single activity (such as overseas fieldwork) or accumulation of several activities (such as repeat visits to a site), must not exceed 12 months in total over the funded period of the studentship.

Insurance and Risk Assessment

Award-holders are responsible for familiarising themselves with the insurance policies for postgraduate students at their host institution before travelling, and taking the necessary recommended action to ensure they have adequate coverage.

The NBCDTP takes seriously the health and safety of its award-holders undertaking funded activities both in the UK and overseas. To assess the risk involved with the proposed activity award-holders are required to complete the "Practical Arrangements and Difficulties" section of the application form. We appreciate that not all of the information listed may be obtainable or relevant to an award-holder's particular circumstances, but award-holders must engage with this process as far as is appropriate: otherwise it may not be possible to consider the application. This is not intended to be a replacement of a Risk Assessment process in an award-holder's School/Department. Award-holders may be required to submit similar information for assessment by their School/Department's own Health and Safety Office or equivalent. All activities must first have received Ethical and Health and Safety Approval at your institution.

Ownership of Purchased Items

All items of equipment purchased via the Schemes will remain the property of the NBCDTP and the disbursing institution, which will insure and account for such assets. Please note that in most cases your host institution will require you to raise a purchase order internally in order to purchase items. In all cases it is essential that you follow your institution's procedures regarding the purchase, use, and storage of any items.

Applying for Funding

All sections of the application form must be completed, and the form must be typed. Incomplete and handwritten forms will be returned to the applicant without consideration. Electronic signatures are permitted.

Award-holders are encouraged to seek supplementary sources of funding, such as travel bursaries, and must make clear what other sources and amounts of funding have been identified, if any.

Award-holders must ensure that all costs incurred are reasonable and in line with their host institution's own Travel and Expenses Policy and the guidance on "Eligible Costs and the Reimbursement of Expenses for Northern Bridge Consortium (NBC) Studentship Award-holders".

All costs must be **fully itemised**, converted to sterling where applicable, and as accurate an estimate as possible based on current prices. You must evidence your estimates with, for example, a copy of screenshots or quotations for your chosen travel routes, identified accommodation, etc.

Applications for a total amount of £750 or under (Small Grants) can be submitted to the NBCDTP Administrator at the award-holder's host institution **at any time** throughout the academic year for assessment by the institution's NBCDTP Academic Director or NBCDTP Administrator.

Applications for a total amount of more than £750 (Large Grants) must be submitted to the NBCDTP Administrator at the award-holder's host institution. These applications will be considered by the NBCDTP Large Grants Sub-Committee. **The Sub-Committee meets monthly.** You will receive a response to your application within **16 working days of the end of the month in which you submitted your application.** For example, if you submit an application on 14 October, you will receive a response within 16 working days of the 31 October.

The application form and accompanying documents should be merged into one complete PDF document in the order stated on the application form and named using the following convention:

Award Holder Surname + Initial_Host Institution_GrantScheme_Date DDMMYYYY
e.g. SmithJ_QUB_GrantScheme_20062021

Failure to format the document correctly or include the required supporting evidence may result in a delay to its being considered or being returned to the applicant without consideration.

The application should be submitted from an institutional email account to the NBCDTP Administrator in the award-holder's host institution.

Large Grant Scheme applications received without a supporting statement from the award-holder's supervisor will be rejected without consideration. Where the primary supervisor is not available, applications may be supported by another member of the supervisory team. Small Grant Scheme applications do not require a supporting statement from a member of the supervisory team, but by signing the application award-holders confirm a supervisor has seen and approved the application.

Award-holders may submit multiple applications to the Schemes. However, in accordance with the AHRC's recommendation, **priority will be given to students who have not previously received funding via the Schemes.**

There is no maximum amount of funding that can be requested in a single application to the Scheme, but the cumulative total spend of an award-holder over the duration of the studentship may be limited and will be monitored as described below.

Applicants must seek approval for additional costs that arise during an activity (for example, opportunities not foreseen at the application stage, or resulting from an emergency) by making a request by email to their local NBCDTP Administrator at the earliest opportunity. Approval of such requests is not guaranteed. Claims for such additional costs that have not received prior approval by the NBCDTP will be rejected.

Allocation of Funds and the Source of Funding

The NBCDTP allocates the funds that are at its disposal via an open, transparent and equitable process, which is focused on meeting the individual needs and priorities of its award-holders. To meet these objectives, the available funds are pooled and managed directly by the NBCDTP at the request of the AHRC.

In the interests of transparency: the total fund comprises the AHRC “Research Training Support Grant” (RTSG), which is the equivalent of £500 per annum per studentship, and “Engagement Provision – DTP2” which is a maximum of 5% of the value of stipend, tuition fees and RTSG. The NBCDTP calculates a **notional** amount per studentship. For example, the notional amount per full-time studentship for standard PhD award-holders beginning in the 2021/2022 academic year is:

*£2000 (£500 per year x four years) RTSG +
Approximately £4121 Engagement Provision =
£6121 total.*

Award-holders should note that the costs associated with undertaking a placement or engaging with an external collaborator in the case of Collaborative Doctoral Awards, such as travel and accommodation, will be deducted from the “Engagement Provision” component of the above notional total.

The NBC and its institutions are responsible for the proper financial management of the grant and accountability for the use of public funds. However, we expect that award-holders will also take responsibility for the management of monitoring of their spend throughout the duration of their studentship against the notional amount.

No award-holder has a personal “allowance” to draw on; there is no per annum voucher scheme; there is no “remaining” amount due to an award-holder during or nearing the end of their funded period. Award-holders are eligible to apply for additional funding via the Schemes, but have no access to such funding by right.

In order to control the budget, the notional amount will be used by the NBCDTP Academic Directors to establish an individual threshold. Spending will be monitored to ensure that no individual award-holder greatly exceeds the notional amount associated with a studentship and which therefore encroaches on the amount notionally attached to another studentship.

The NBCDTP is obliged to select the most eligible applications for support, based upon the award-holder’s specific research requirements and these must be clearly articulated in the application to the Scheme.

It is understood that large costs and training requirements will have been identified at the NBCDTP Studentship Competition stage and indicated on the NBCDTP Studentship Nomination. Otherwise any application to the Schemes must present a strong case and clearly state the reasons these were not identified earlier.

Award-holders with a full award will continue to receive their stipend while on study visits and fieldwork, provided they have met all their obligations under the NBCDTP’s terms and conditions.

In some instances, the length of the award-holder’s studentship may be extended beyond the normal 3.5 year period, by the length of any approved training (up to a maximum of six months in total, including any periods spent on placements), but will **not** change the latest thesis submission date. A studentship extension is at the discretion of the NBCDTP Academic Directors. It is most usually approved for placements only (see separate Placement Scheme Guidance), but may be considered where there is a need to acquire additional skills, for example, high-level methodological skills; or significant and demanding new discipline-specific skills. **It is expected that such need would have been identified in the original NBCDTP Studentship Nomination. Most uses of Scheme funding will not entail an extension to the period of the studentship.**

Assessing and Deciding Applications

Received applications are checked by the local NBCDTP Administrator to ensure they are eligible for funding under the terms and conditions of the AHRC's Research Training Support Grant and Engagement Provision – DTP2.

Applications for amounts of £500 or under are considered by the local NBCDTP Administrator throughout the year; applications for amounts between £501 and £750 are considered by the institution's NBCDTP Academic Director throughout the year; applications for amounts of over £750 are considered by the NBCDTP Large Grants Sub-Committee on a monthly basis.

Applications will be reviewed in conjunction with the award-holder's original NBCDTP Studentship Nomination and original Research Proposal; an up-to-date Research Plan; an up-to-date Training Needs Analysis; the latest Annual Progress Review report(s) if available; and the evidence provided to support the stated estimated costs.

In the case of training activities, applications are assessed against the following criteria:

- **Contribution to the award-holder's research and/or professional development.**
How closely does the proposed training support and complement the award-holder's doctoral research and/or professional development needs? Were these needs identified in the award-holder's Training Needs Analysis?
- **Quality of the proposed training and expected outcomes and skills development.**
- **Does the training programme represent value for money?**
Is the training as proposed the most cost-effective way of securing the expected outcomes?

The NBCDTP must be satisfied that any related health, safety and security issues have been properly considered and addressed. Travel to countries considered unsafe by the FCO is likely to be refused. Award-holders should consult <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice> for the latest advice.

The need for the proposed expenditure in support of the award-holder's primary research or training needs will be the primary basis of all decisions made regarding applications to the Schemes. The NBCDTP Academic Directors must be satisfied that the proposed activity is necessary for the successful completion of the thesis, and will not have any detrimental effect on the timeline for completion.

The NBCDTP Academic Directors may seek advice and feedback on an application from other academic or administrative members of staff at the partner institutions.

It is anticipated that applications will be processed within **16 working days of the respective monthly deadline** in the case of applications of over £750, and **within four weeks of receipt** in the case of applications of £750 and under. Award-holders should bear these turnaround times in mind when applying for funding. Award-holders are advised to apply well in advance of, and at least three months before, an intention to travel.

The NBCDTP Administrator of the award-holder's host institution will notify the award-holder and their primary supervisor when a decision has been made regarding their application.

Appeals under the grounds of *Procedural Irregularity* or *Misapplication of the Assessment Criteria* can be made in the event that an application is not approved.

Accessing and Reimbursing Approved Funds

Where funds are approved, payment will take place by one of the following means (dependent upon the host institution's own procurement and expenses policies):

- a) **In the majority of cases**, the award-holder will purchase the item(s) and submit receipts to their local NBCDTP Administrator so that reimbursement may be arranged. Award-holders must therefore be prepared to make the initial outlay;
- b) The NBCDTP will purchase the item(s) on the award-holder's behalf or sign out small items of equipment available via the NBCDTP Asset Register; or,
- c) Funds will be internally transferred to the award-holder's home Department/School to purchase on the award-holder's behalf;
- d) In **exceptional** cases, where the approved amount far exceeds a single stipend payment, an advanced payment **may** be made directly to the award-holder's bank account in line with the host institution's own policies. This may not be possible in all partner institutions. Following the submission of receipts, if the award-holder's costs are found to be less than the contribution made, a repayment will be requested.

It is not normally possible to pay or reimburse more than the approved amount.

Funding is approved on condition that the award-holder may not change any detail of an approved application for funding without prior approval by the NBCDTP. If the approved funding is no longer required, the award-holder must inform their local NBCDTP Administrator. Any changes to an approved activity must be reported to NBCDTP Administrator at the award-holder's host institution at the earliest opportunity, but will not usually require the resubmission of an application.

Where the award-holder requires reimbursement, they must complete the appropriate claim form of the host institution and provide receipts/proofs of purchase in line with the requirements of the host institution's own Travel and Expenses Policy. Only the host institution can reimburse its award-holders.

Terms and Conditions

Award-holders will not be employed or have any form of contract of employment with a host organisation while undertaking funded activities.

Monitoring and Reporting

Throughout any activity, award-holders will maintain contact with their supervisory team, who will continue to provide support and guidance. In addition, award-holders will continue to undergo Annual Progress Review and meet required milestones according to the cycle determined at the start of the PhD.

At the end of the activity, award-holders supported by the Large Grant Scheme are required to complete and submit a reflective report (maximum 500 words) providing details of the activity and the added value that the activity has provided. These reports must be submitted via Inkpath. Please create and record an activity on Inkpath and upload the 500-word reflective report to Inkpath. This creates a record that both you and the NBCDTP can access in future. Reports will be reviewed by the NBCDTP Academic Directors. The information provided by award-holders in their reports may be used by the NBCDTP to publicise the Schemes externally and the NBCDTP's wider activities, and those award-holders may also be invited to participate or present at future NBCDTP cohort events and seminars.

Further Information

The AHRC's Guidelines for the use of funding, to be followed by Research Organisations is available at:
<https://ahrc.ukri.org/skills/phdstudents/award-holders-terms-and-conditions/>

Local NBCDTP Administrator Contact Details:

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