

# Overseas Fieldwork Expenses (OFE)

## Guidance Notes 2022-23

### Quick Glance

- Available to full-time students in the doctoral element of the award to support overseas fieldwork essential to the PhD research project.
- Pre-approval of expenses required, at least 3 months in advance of travel. Retrospective applications cannot be considered.
- Students may apply for an OFE grant once over the lifetime of the award, however this may cover more than one trip. Only fieldwork occurring during the funding period may be supported.
- Grants are capped at £6000 and will normally constitute a contribution towards costs, rather than cover all expenses.
- The DTP cannot provide support for overseas travel if the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) advises against visiting the country or area concerned.

### Overview

Full-time students undertaking the doctoral element of their award are eligible to apply for financial support for overseas fieldwork expenses to carry out primary research, such as archival research or fieldwork that is essential to the successful completion of the thesis. Any anticipated overseas fieldwork should have been mentioned in the original application to the University, and supervisor support is required when applying. Students may apply for OFE **once** during their studentship and must have the support of their supervisor.

The DTP has limited funds which need to support students across the entire cohort, therefore grants will usually provide a contribution to costs rather than cover all expenses. Grants are generally capped at £6000, however funding at this level is rare and only awarded in exceptional circumstances. Once an application is approved, no further funding will be provided beyond the amount confirmed in the award letter. However, if you experience financial difficulties whilst overseas, please contact your local DTP institution as soon as possible.

Eligible costs include overseas travel of flights, accommodation costs, visas, and living costs (if significantly higher than the UK). For any trips over 3 months it would generally be expected that accommodation costs would be covered by a student's usual funding arrangements, and they are therefore advised to make their plans accordingly. Economic options for accommodation must be sought and self-contained flats will only be supported in exceptional circumstances.

The OFE scheme can provide support towards travel of up to 12 months, however if a student can demonstrate a strong case for a visit longer than 12 months, fieldwork of up to a maximum of 18 months may be supported. If approval is given for overseas fieldwork lasting more than 9 months, it is advisable that you hold an in-person meeting with your supervisor midway through

the fieldwork and this can be costed into your application (for a trip of up to 10 days). The cost of this trip must be made from the OFE grant awarded, no further funding will be available for this at a later stage.

Whilst you may only apply once students can apply for support for up to 3 periods of fieldwork, providing there is a significant justification for multiple field visits. Overseas fieldwork must be an integral part of the PhD and take place during the life of the award. Studentships will not be extended to reflect periods in the field.

The overseas allowance does not cover the expenses of any family member or partner accompanying the student. Part-time students can become eligible for an overseas fieldwork grant if they transfer for a fixed period to full-time status for the duration of the fieldwork.

If you abandon your fieldwork, or it is unsuccessful and you return early to the UK, the DTP is required to recover some or all of the OFE funding from you. The amount to be recovered is the total OFE funding granted to you, less any reasonable expenditure you have already incurred.

### **Overseas travel requirements**

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 fieldwork if the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office or other UK Government body advises against visiting the country or area concerned. All overseas travel must be subject to a formal risk assessment and departmental approval. It is your responsibility to ensure that risk assessments are completed prior to your intended dates of travel. 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 FCDO or other UK Government guidance.

Travel should be covered by the travel insurance policy of your host institution. Please speak to your respective department/university body about this process.

## **Application Process**

You must apply to the DTP Office of your home institution at least 3 months before the proposed trip to ensure time for consideration and to give you plenty of planning time. However if an opportunity arises with less notice, please do still contact the DTP Office of your home institution for advice, as, in exceptional circumstances, we may be able to approve these.

Any applications received within 3 months 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 overseas fieldwork; retrospective applications will not be considered.

Decisions for applications involving travel will not be finalised until the DTP office has received confirmation of an approved risk assessment. However, you may submit your OFE application

form to your DTP office for review ahead of receiving approval of your risk assessment, as we can review this whilst you await approval from your Department. Your DTP office will advise if they also require a copy of the assessment. If a grant is approved, funds will be distributed as per local practice at your home institution, and no further funding will be provided beyond the amount confirmed in the award letter. All expenses must be supported by receipts.

## Completing the Application Form

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**

All applicants should provide a clear plan as to how they will conduct their research, and what means, mechanisms and support they have in place to facilitate their plans.

### **Level of Funding Requested**

Provide estimates of the costs you expect to incur that are above those usually covered by your funding arrangements. You can either list just those expenses which are covered under the OFE scheme, or you can include those costs that may be covered under the RTSG scheme and these will be considered together. If you're unsure of eligibility, we'd recommend including all costs and the DTP Office will review them for you.

You must provide evidence to support your cost estimates and amounts requested, e.g. screenshot from a price comparison website for accommodation, flights, etc. For overseas travel, you must have travel insurance approved through the relevant scheme at your institution, rather than request support through the OFE scheme.

### **Case for Support**

In this section you should provide a clear and reasoned case for your fieldwork, explaining how it is essential to the completion of your project and why the particular methodology and approach has been selected. If you are applying for funding to cover more than one trip, please explain why your fieldwork has been planned this way and why it was not possible to complete the fieldwork in one trip.

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.

Please note that stating that you must undertake overseas fieldwork to complete your research is not making a case for support, and remember that those reading your application are unlikely to be experts in your field.

### **Any Other Relevant Information**

Please list anything further that you may feel is relevant for consideration of your application. Overseas fieldwork must be integral to the completion of your project and as such the ESRC expects that the fieldwork should have been clearly identified in your initial research proposal. If

it was not listed in your application, please explain what has changed and why it is now considered essential.