

EPSRC Centre for Doctoral Training: AgriFoRwArdS

Guidance on Provision of Research Training Support Grant Funds (Consumables) to Students

EPSRC Doctoral Training Grants contain 3 elements of funding to support studentships – fees, maintenance and consumables (otherwise known as research training support grant [RTSG] funds). The consumables element is currently £6,000 for a 4-year studentship.

1. Setting up and using the Consumables budget;
2. What the Consumables budget may be used for (and what is prohibited);
3. Best practice for communicating the Consumables budget to students and supervisors;
4. How unspent Consumables funds may be used (and what is prohibited).

1. What the Consumables budget may be used for (and what is prohibited)

Research Council grant conditions do not provide a list of examples of what training support funds may be used for but do require that the University: a) ensures proper financial management and accountability in its use of public funds and b) pays due consideration to value for money across all activities. All consumables expenditure must be evidenced by receipts.

In general, expenses relating to the following may be charged to the consumables budget:

- Training in generic and transferable skills, costs of short courses, workshops, visits to external research labs are permitted expenses;
- Standard/economy-class travel and accommodation for conferences, summer schools and fieldwork is permitted; these should be within reason and agreed in advance by the department and supervisor;
- Experimental resources and use of equipment specifically required by the research project are permitted, but note that apportionment of costs is not permitted unless validated by individual purchase order and receipt;
- Laboratory and IT resources are a permitted cost where these are specifically required by the research project and where any equipment remains the property of the University;
- The grant conditions state *the incidental costs of postgraduate training should have regard for the nature and complexity of projects and the need for fieldwork, conferences, broadening training and industrial or work placements*: in other words, EPSRC expects that individual students and projects will have different needs.

The following expenses have been refused by UKRI auditors and must not be charged to the grant:

- Alcoholic drinks, taxis, first-class travel or first-class accommodation must not be charged to the grant (unless there is specific justification - e.g. taxi necessary due to non-availability of public transport, all conference delegates accommodated in one hotel - and the explanation is clearly set out in the expense claim);
- Charging consumables such as solvents and chemicals using an annual apportionment basis is not permitted; any apportionment of expenses for multiple users of resources or equipment is not permitted (UKRI considers these to be the normal costs of training and should be covered by the fees);
- Equipment such as laptops, the costs of software, subscriptions for electronic data storage – which are not specifically required by the research project or which are purchased towards the end of the project – are not permitted;
- Costs associated with the administration of training, advertising costs, or the costs of open days should not be charged to the consumables budget, as EPSRC expects these to be incorporated into the fees.