

STFC TRAINING GRANTS (TGs) – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

1. General

STFC quota research studentships allocated to university departments are funded through Training Grants (TGs). TGs will be announced in the form of a single grant to each department and will cover all elements of studentship funding, apart from long term attachments and allowances for disabled students. TG funds will be paid quarterly to the University. The University will be responsible for reimbursement of maintenance and other costs to students.

2. What are the advantages to a department of a TG?

The main benefit of a TG is the flexibility it gives the department over how postgraduate training is provided. The TG is awarded on the basis of the value of a number of three and a half year studentships. Subject to [the TG terms and conditions](#), the department has the flexibility to:-

- offer students for three, three and a half or four years depending upon the nature of the project and/or research training needs;
- start students at any point in the academic year;
- part fund a student from the TG and from another source (ensuring that the 50% rule is adhered to).

3. How will the value of the TG be calculated?

TGs will be calculated on the basis of a student unit cost that will provide three and a half years of funding for each student. The funds will cover student maintenance, tuition fees, research training support grant, UK travel and fieldwork costs.

4. How will overseas fieldwork costs be met for students funded through TGs?

Departments will receive a unit cost per student for overseas fieldwork and payments will be made quarterly with the TG. The funds allocated will be notified at the time of announcement. There will be a separate approval process for Long Term Attachments.

5. When will universities receive details of TG funding?

Notification will be sent to Heads of Departments with details of quota studentship allocations in January/February. Formal grant announcements will be issued to departments in August/September. Funding will be announced as a single grant to the department and profiled over the duration of the TG.

6. What period will the TG Cover?

The period of the TG will be specified in the formal grant announcement letter.

7. Can departments use the funds in any way they choose?

As with any Research Council grant, the funding is awarded subject to terms and conditions governing the use of funds. The [terms and conditions governing TGs](#) have been agreed cross-Council and specify the formal minimum conditions for the correct use of the funding and the formal limits to the flexibility allowed by the TG.

8. Are there restrictions on the areas of science to which studentships may be recruited?

TGs must be used to support postgraduate training within STFC remit and departments are encouraged to keep in mind STFC scientific priorities when developing PhD projects. Within this remit departments have flexibility to create studentships in the areas that they wish to support.

9. Who is responsible for recruitment of students and confirmation of awards to students?

The University is responsible for the selection and confirmation of awards to students.

10. What eligibility requirements apply to students funded through TGs?

Students funded from the TG are subject to eligibility conditions relating to residence and to academic qualifications. These rules can be found in the [STFC Studentship Rules and Regulations](#). Existing rules on residence and qualifications are based on Education (Fees and Awards) Regulations 1997 and subsequent amendments continue to apply.

11. Are EU students eligible for TG funding?

The rules relating to EU nationals are complex and for all EU nationals (whether UK or non-UK), eligibility rests on residence, not nationality. A relevant connection may be established if an individual has been ordinarily resident in the UK throughout the three years preceding the date of application.

Students with a relevant connection to an EU country other than the UK are eligible for fees only awards. All the fees must be paid from the TG of one Research Council.

EU students may be eligible for a full award that includes maintenance as well as fees if a relevant connection with UK can be established. A relevant connection may be established if an EU national has been in full-time education in the UK throughout the three years preceding the start date of the course.

Whilst the onus to determine the eligibility of a student is on the University, STFC Studentships Section may be consulted in more difficult cases studentships@stfc.ac.uk.

12. Are non-EU students eligible for funding from TGs?

Students who do not have a relevant connection with an EU country will not be eligible for funding from a TG.

13. Can a department fund a student who wants to start in September or earlier?

Yes, however STFC will not start the grant earlier on this account, so such students will need to be paid out of other funds until 1 October.

14. Duration of PhD projects

Training Grants provide an average of 3.5 years support for each student. STFC expects universities to use funds to support studentships for an average of 3.5 across the department. The expected duration of the PhD project and funding should be agreed with the student at the outset. Universities may decide to operate a mix of three and four year PhDs or PhDs of intermediate periods as appropriate to the needs of individual projects.

15. Can part-time students be supported?

Part-time studentships for those who wish to combine their research training with work or domestic responsibilities should be encouraged. It is expected that the period of study will reflect the percentage of time spent pursuing doctoral studies. For example, if a typical full-time duration is three years, a part-time student might expect support for up to six years. Part-time studentships should usually be awarded for no less than 50% of full-time, and on the understanding that the approved programme of research training can be carried out effectively.

16. Can a student be part-funded from the TG and part from another source?

Yes – though there are limits to the part-funding arrangements; see question 17 for details.

17. Is there a minimum limit to the contribution which must be made from TG, when a student part-funded from a non-Research Council source?

Yes. The TG allows for studentships to be part-funded from the TG, and part from another source though in all cases of part-funding, at least 50% of the total cost (where maintenance is awarded) over the lifetime of the studentship should be funded from the TG.

Where a student is eligible for a fees-only award, 100% of the fees should be met from the TG over the lifetime of the studentship. It is not permissible to provide small sums of funding from the TG to support, for example, a student funded primarily from another source. Students who are funded from the TG must be funded according to these minimum levels, and will count on this basis as ‘recognised’ STFC students.

Recognition as an STFC student is important for the student as it means that the student is eligible for funding to attend a [GradSchool](#) course and [STFC sponsored summer schools](#) and any other events organised specifically for STFC students.

18. Can a department part-fund a studentship from the TG of another Research Council?

Yes – 50:50 funding from the TGs of different Research Councils is permitted, and the cross-Council’s terms and conditions (TGC3 Use of Funds) provide further details on this. The TG mechanism is particularly useful to facilitate studentships in interdisciplinary/cross Council areas. However, where a studentship is part-funded from the TG of another Research Council, the department holding the STFC TG must satisfy itself that sufficient research within the project is within STFC remit to justify the collaborative arrangement.

19. Can the TG be used to give an extended period of funding to an existing studentship?

Yes, but only for STFC funded studentships and provided that this is a decision taken in order to allow the student's research to follow promising new developments. A clear assessment should be made of the likely value to the student of being able to extend their work. TG funding cannot be used to support an extended period of study for a student who has been funded for three years from a different source, as this would mean that less than 50% of the studentship would be funded by STFC.

20. Can TG funding be used to fund a writing-up period?

No. The project should be designed and managed to allow for the writing up of the research within the scope and agreed duration of the PhD. A department should not fund a student for three to four years of research work and then expect the student to have to write up in their own time.

21. What will happen if the department is awarded further studentships in future quota competitions?

The intention is that departments will hold separate but overlapping TGs and draw on their funding simultaneously. The department will however be expected to account for funds drawn from each TG.

22. What happens if the student's period of support goes beyond the end of the grant?

The balance of the funding may be met from a subsequent quota TG award or from another source. TGs are cash-limited and will not be supplemented or extended for this reason.

23. What happens when a student moves to another department or university?

STFC expects universities to come to an agreement about transferring resources. Essentially, the 'exporting' university should make an appropriate financial transfer to the new university to cover the balance of cost of the studentship award. STFC expects both university departments to place the interests of the student first in reaching decisions about the transfer of the student and associated funding.

24. What are the national minimum maintenance rates?

The minimum Research Council maintenance rate is £13,590 pa (outside London). Students eligible for maintenance must be in receipt of at least the Research Council minimum for the academic year in question, including where appropriate the current London supplement of £2k pa.

25. Can funds not used in the first year of the TG be carried forward to a later year?

Yes. Funds may be used at any time during the grant; however, any unspent funds remaining at the end of the TG will not be paid when the final expenditure statement is reconciled.

26. Can departments replace students who leave early?

Yes, if there are sufficient funds to support a replacement and the department can guarantee any funding required beyond the period of the current TG from another source.

27. What happens if additional costs are incurred due to maternity or long term sick?

The additional costs should normally be met from within the cash limit of the TG as set out in the common TG terms and conditions (TGC 3 – Use of Funds). However, it is recognised that departments in receipt of training grants at the level of one or two studentships may not have the flexibility to use of funds in this way. In these instances, STFC will consider a request for additional funding above the cash limit of the TG.

28. What submission period is required for TG studentships?

The four year submission period applies to all students – including those funded for four years. Students who submit after this period will count against the department's four year submission rate.

29. How will STFC monitor the use of TG funding?

The University is accountable to STFC for the use of all funds in a TG and should keep auditable records to ensure that this can be done. [The Research Councils' Funding Assurance audit process](#) will seek to ensure that universities have proper processes in place for management of their TG funding.

30. What information will STFC be seeking on students funded from the TG?

The terms and conditions of the TG state the requirement for student and project information. It is important for STFC to have information on the students (and their research) supported with STFC funding. An outline of the information that will be required includes:

- student and project details
- agreed duration of studentship awarded
- start date of award
- stipend
- fees, inclusive of college fees

31. When will STFC be seeking student/account information from universities?

Details of students funded from a TG should be returned to STFC within one month of the student starting. The main collection date will be mid-November, when universities will be expected to provide details of students who have taken up awards in October.

32. How will studentships funds for Collaborative Awards in Science and Engineering (CASE) studentships be paid in future?

Separate TGs will be announced to departments where CASE studentships have been awarded. CASE awards will be subject to the common TG terms and conditions.

Further questions – please send any further questions you may have to studentships@stfc.ac.uk. We will respond to your question and where appropriate include the question and answer in periodic updates of these FAQs.