

## SeNSS OVERSEAS FIELDWORK POLICY:

### GUIDANCE FOR STUDENTS

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The SeNSS Overseas Fieldwork (OFW) policy is governed by the ESRC's Postgraduate Funding Guide, which is available at: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/files/skills-and-careers/studentships/postgraduate-funding-guide/>. Please read this Guide, along with this SeNSS Guidance, before applying for OFW funding.

**Please note: if you intend to undertake OFW, you MUST make an application before you travel. If you travel first, and submit an application later, you will not receive any funds to cover your OFW.**

## **Summary of SeNSS's Overseas Fieldwork Policy**

- **You must be a full-time student and in the doctoral element of your award to be eligible for applying for OFW.**
  - **If you are studying part-time, you will need to transfer to full-time study for the duration of your OFW.**
- **In order to be considered for OFW funding, you must have indicated when applying for a studentship that you were considering or planning to undertake OFW.**
- **You must discuss your OFW application with your primary supervisor, and have their support for your application.**
- **Normally, you may only make one application (noting that the application can be for more than one trip) during your studentship.**
- **You must make your OFW application at least three calendar months before you intend to travel. If you travel first, and submit an application later, you will not receive any funds to cover your OFW.**
- **Normally, OFW may last for up to twelve months.**
- **You must have complied with your home institution's risk assessment policy (or equivalent) before applying for OFW, and before travelling.**
- **In your OFW application, you will be required to include a well thought-out and reasonable budget. Please note that there is a cap of £6,000 on the total amount you may apply for.**
- **SeNSS will have the final say on how much OFW funding you will be awarded.**
- **Under ESRC rules, SeNSS is obliged, in certain circumstances, to recover some or all of the OFW funding if you abandon your fieldwork, or it is unsuccessful and you return early to the UK.**
- **The OFW application form is available at <http://senss-dtp.ac.uk/senss-student-policies/>**

## 1. What is overseas fieldwork (OFW)?

OFW, as its name suggests, must take place overseas; fieldwork within the UK does not qualify.<sup>1</sup> You may only apply for OFW if this fieldwork is essential to your PhD research project.

OFW should not be confused with Overseas Institutional Visits (OIVs), which are intended to encourage international engagement, by allowing students to spend time in an overseas institution.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Am I eligible for overseas fieldwork funds?

You must be a full-time student in the doctoral element of your award in order to be eligible to apply for overseas fieldwork (OFW) funding. In other words, if you are a Masters student, that is, you are in the +1 of your 1+3 award, you will not be eligible to claim this allowance until you begin the +3 element.

You are eligible for OFW funding regardless of whether you hold a full or a fees-only award. However, if you are a part-time student, you will need to transfer to full-time study for the duration of your OFW.<sup>3</sup>

In order to be considered for OFW funding, you must have stated on your SeNSS studentship application form that you are planning to undertake OFW, or have indicated that you were not sure about whether you would need to undertake OFW. If you did state on your SeNSS application form that you intended to conduct OFW, you may change your plans from those you set out in your application. However, you must fully justify any changes, and these must be agreed by both your primary supervisor and SeNSS in writing before you embark on your OFW.

If you stated in your application that you did not plan to conduct OFW, you will not be permitted to apply for these funds. If you have any queries in this regard, please contact your home institution's SeNSS administrative lead to discuss this issue with them. Their contact details are included in section 9, below.

## 3. What does OFW funding through SeNSS cover?

The OFW fund will **only cover directly incurred costs** in relation to your OFW. These include costs such as: flights, visas, vaccines, and interpreters (where necessary).

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<sup>1</sup> If you intend to conduct fieldwork in the UK, you are likely to be able to use your Research Training Support Grant (RTSG) to cover the costs. (For the SeNSS RTSG policy, please go to: <http://senss-dtp.ac.uk/senss-student-policies/>)

<sup>2</sup> Please note that SeNSS will not be offering OIVs during the 2017/18 academic year, but hopes to be able to do so the following academic year.

<sup>3</sup> As a SeNSS student, you may transfer from part-time to full-time study for a period of between three months and one year. Please talk to your SeNSS administrative lead for advice, in the first instance.

Please note that you will continue to receive your normal stipend payments whilst you are conducting OFW, and you are expected to use these payments to help meet your living costs.

You can also apply for RTSG funding to help meet your OFW costs. Please speak to your supervisor and/or your SeNSS Administrative Lead about applying to use RTSG funds for OFW purposes. The SeNSS RTSG policy is available at: <http://senss-dtp.ac.uk/senss-student-policies/>

There may also be other funding available for you to apply for to help cover OFW costs, such as through your department. Please speak to your supervisor to help you identify other sources of funding.

If you are eligible to apply for OFW funding, you may make ONE application (with more than one trip detailed, if appropriate) during your award.

Please note that you are not permitted to use your OFW funding to pay for any of your family members to travel with you, or to visit you overseas.

If you plan to work with, or be based at, a host institution abroad, you should discuss finding suitable accommodation with that institution, to ensure that your accommodation meets the conditions set down in that institution's insurance and health and safety policies.

Given that there is a limited amount provided to SeNSS by the ESRC to pay for OFW, it may not be possible for SeNSS to award you the full amount of funding you have applied for.

#### **4. What duration does OFW funding cover?**

Normally, OFW is expected to last for up to twelve months. However, if you are able to provide a strong case for a longer visit, you may be permitted to spend up to a maximum of 18 months overseas.

If you remain overseas longer than has been agreed with your supervisor and SeNSS, you will not be permitted to make any retrospective reimbursement claims, nor will you be permitted to apply for an extension to your award period or your thesis submission date.

If you are going to be based overseas for more than nine months, it is advisable that you hold at least one in-person meeting with your supervisor halfway through your OFW. Either you should travel back to the UK to see your supervisor, or your supervisor could travel to see you where you are based. The cost of this trip must be met from the OFW funds you have been awarded; no additional funding will be granted. If you travel back to the UK to meet with your supervisor, it is recommended that you remain in the UK for a maximum of ten days. However, please note that you will not be granted an extension to your fieldwork period as compensation for making this visit.

## **5. How much funding can I apply for?**

Please note that, ordinarily, there is a cap of £6,000 on the amount of OFW funding you can apply for, and be awarded. Additional funding might be available, but only in exceptional circumstances.

The final amount you are allocated for your OFW will be determined by SeNSS, regardless of the amount you have actually applied for.

If you are awarded OFW funding, you are responsible for managing these funds, and for ensuring that you spend these on the items you listed in your application.

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

## **6. Are there any countries I cannot apply for OFW funding to travel to?**

Please note that, if the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) advises against visiting the country in which you wish to conduct OFW, SeNSS is not permitted to approve your application for funding. You can view the FCO advice here:

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>

If you would like to conduct OFW in a country for which the FCO has expressed safety concerns, you should discuss this with your primary supervisor, and adhere to any policies and procedures your home university has in place to conduct risk assessments in this regard. For further information, please also speak to your home university's administrative lead. Their contact details appear in section 8 of this guidance.

## **7. How do I apply for OFW?**

- If you are eligible for OFW, you should first approach your supervisor to discuss your making an OFW application. If your supervisor supports you making an application, please complete the OFW application form, which is available at <http://senss-dtp.ac.uk/senss-student-policies/>
- Once you have completed your section of the form, please email it to your supervisor, as they will need to complete their section of the form too, as well as signing and dating it. Your supervisor must then submit the application form electronically to your home university's SeNSS Administrative Leads (contact details for these Leads are provided in section 9 of this guidance).
- If your institution supports your application, it will be sent to the SeNSS Manager, who will approve all straightforward applications. Should your application raise any difficult or complex issues, the Manager will discuss your application with the SeNSS Director and/or Deputy Director. SeNSS aims to make a decision on your application within two weeks of having received it from your home university.

## **8. Do I need to account for my use of funding awarded to me at the end of my OFW?**

SeNSS will require proof of your expenditure on your OFW. Please retain all receipts for the expenses you have incurred.

SeNSS will require your home university to submit a final Statement of Expenditure in respect of your OFW trip. This statement should confirm that all funds have been spent in accordance with your plans as set out in your SeNSS OFW application form. If you have not spent all your funds, you must return these to SeNSS, so that they can be used to support other students' OFW, or to pay for further studentships.

## **9. SeNSS Administrative Leads: who to contact**

If you have any queries about this policy, or about applying for OFW funding, please contact the administrator at your chosen SeNSS university in the first instance:

- **City, University London:** Dr Claudia Kalay: [researchsupport@city.ac.uk](mailto:researchsupport@city.ac.uk)
- **University of East Anglia:** Mel Steele: [senss.dtp@uea.ac.uk](mailto:senss.dtp@uea.ac.uk)
- **University of Essex:** Laura Ruddick: [laura@essex.ac.uk](mailto:laura@essex.ac.uk)
- **Goldsmiths, University of London:** Chris Robson: [graduateschool@gold.ac.uk](mailto:graduateschool@gold.ac.uk)
- **University of Kent:** Rosalind Beeching: [graduateschool@kent.ac.uk](mailto:graduateschool@kent.ac.uk)
- **Reading University:** Joanna John: [esrcdtp@reading.ac.uk](mailto:esrcdtp@reading.ac.uk)
- **Roehampton University:** Fiona Eddleston: [SeNSS@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:SeNSS@roehampton.ac.uk)
- **Royal Holloway, University of London:** Jane Gawthrope: [esrcdtp@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:esrcdtp@rhul.ac.uk)
- **University of Surrey:** Shane Dowe: [phdstudentships@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:phdstudentships@surrey.ac.uk)
- **University of Sussex:** Shelley Jenkins: [esrcdt@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:esrcdt@sussex.ac.uk)

## **10. FAQs**

We plan to build up this FAQ section based on the queries you share with us throughout your studentships about whether you can apply for RTSG for certain events or resources.

### **Can I request an extension to my studentship on the basis of the time I spent doing OFW?**

No. 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