# SeNSS RESEARCH TRAINING SUPPORT GRANT:

# POLICY AND PROCEDURE

## Contents

## Summary of SeNSS's RTSG Policy

- All SeNSS ESRC-funded students are eligible to apply for RTSG funding.
- Each SeNSS partner will be allocated £750 per year per student, and must use this fund flexibly across its student cohort.
- Should RTSG funds not be spent in any one year, these may be carried over into the next academic year. Where a student needs to spend more than £750 in one year, the SeNSS partner should support this, where appropriate.
- Normally, individual students should not be able to claim more than £3,500 from RTSG over the lifetime of their award, unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- In designing a process for approving their students' applications for RTSG, SeNSS partners will need to bear in mind their overall budget for that academic year.
- Each SeNSS partner may set their own procedure for applying for, and approving, RTSG, subject to this SeNSS RTSG policy. In particular, it should be noted that:
  - The primary supervisor must support the claim.
  - The RTSG application may not be approved unless the student has completed their annual TNA for that year and, if the RTSG application is for funding for training, this training need should normally have been identified through the annual TNA.
- SeNSS partners will be required to provide annual accounts for each of their students.

## 1. Policy framework

The SeNSS RTSG policy is based on the rules set down in the ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide, which is available at:
http://www.esrc.ac.uk/files/skills-and-careers/studentships/postgraduate-funding-guide/

In terms of the ESRC's RTSG policy, SeNSS receives £750 per student per year. However, RTSG is not personal to each student. Rather, the ESRC requires that SeNSS pool these funds and use them flexibly across the student cohort, in order to ensure that everyone receives the training they need in order to complete their research successfully. Because these funds are not personal to each student, in order to access RTSG, students will need to apply to use funds from this grant. Masters students (those in the "1" of their 1+3 award) are eligible to apply for RTSG funding.

It is recognised that some students will require less RTSG funding than others, and institutions are required to be responsive to their students' individual needs, whilst also bearing in mind the overall training needs of their institutional cohort. Should RTSG funds not be spent in any one year, these may be carried over into the next academic year. Where a student needs to spend more than £750 in one year, the SeNSS partner should support this, where appropriate. Should this mean that the partner concerned exceeds their RTSG budget for the year, SeNSS supports that partner using their following year's RTSG allocation to replace any shortfall.

Normally, individual students should not be able to claim more than £3,500 from RTSG over the lifetime of their award, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

A review of the financial spend against RTSG will be conducted in September 2020, in order to ensure that this policy is meeting students' needs.

## 2. RTSG financial management

- SeNSS partners will be required to provide annual accounts for each of their students (this information will be cross- and spot-checked against TNAs to ensure that students are able to access the resources they require in meeting their training needs).
- The University of Essex, as co-ordinating institution, will check these accounts, and clarify any queries. Should there be any concerns about the amounts approved, or the types of activities/resources for which funding has been approved, these will be raised with that institution's academic and administrative lead in the first instance.
- If the RTSG spend is disallowed, this is the responsibility of that partner. SeNSS will not reimburse partners for any ineligible spend.

## 3. RTSG: SeNSS partners' responsibilities

- Partners will be responsible for:
  o Ensuring that the guidelines established by the ESRC setting out what RTSG covers are adhered to (difficult cases should be discussed with the Manager before being approved/rejected);
  o Providing a summary of their internal RTSG procedure to SeNSS (this includes confirming that it adheres to the ESRC and SeNSS guidelines). In designing a process for approving their students' applications for RTSG, SeNSS partners will need to bear in mind their overall budget for that academic year.
  o Ensuring that this internal procedure for using RTSG is followed. This includes ensuring that there are mechanisms in place so that students are able to apply for RTSG only after they have completed their annual TNAs.
  o Although, in general, students are required to apply for RTSG funds in advance of incurring the costs this funding is intended to cover, SeNSS partners may allow retrospective claims, particularly where a student may be making multiple small applications. However, there is a risk that retrospective claims might not be approved. For applications for larger amounts (over £100), approval should always be sought in advance.

## 4. What RTSG covers

### 4.1. What RTSG can be used for
Examples of legitimate uses of RTSG provided by the ESRC include:

- UK fieldwork expenses
- UK, EU and overseas conferences and summer schools; this includes paying for students' travel costs to the SeNSS Summer Conference
- language training courses usually undertaken in the UK prior to an overseas fieldwork trip
- reimbursement of interpreters, guides, assistants
- survey costs, e.g. the associated costs of printing, stationery, telephone calls

- purchase of small items of equipment of research purposes, e.g. cameras, tape recorders, films, cassettes
- gifts for local informants
- books and other reading material not available through libraries.

**In exceptional circumstances**, requests to purchase a laptop or other computer equipment, including software, from this allowance may be considered. Any such request must be clearly and adequately justified based on the nature of the research being undertaken, and must be essential for the successful completion of the research project. In these instances, any equipment purchased in excess of £200 must be returned to SeNSS at the end of the studentship.

Overseas fieldwork is funded separately. However, please note that RTSG funds can be combined with any funds the student has been awarded for overseas fieldwork. For details of how to apply for overseas fieldwork funding, please see the SeNSS Overseas Fieldwork Policy, available at: http://senss-dtp.ac.uk/senss-student-policies/

### 4.2.    What RTSG cannot be used for
RTSG cannot be used:

- prior to the start date of the studentship;
- in advance, when the event takes place after the end date of the studentship;
- to purchase capital equipment or facilities which a university  would normally be expected to provide;
- to buy equipment which is viewed as being "standard", or that is generally available, through a department or institution, for example, stationery;
- to buy stationery for home-use, if these would normally be made available to students whilst they are on university premises;
- to purchase books and journals that would normally be provided through a university's library, or through inter-library loans;
- to cover expenses relating to supervisor visits, to or from the student, during fieldwork, or off-site placements of less than nine months;
- to pay for training that *all* department postgraduate students are required to attend, e.g. Health and Safety courses. RTSG cannot be used to fund these courses where non-RCUK students are not expected to pay.


## 5.  RTSG application procedure
Each SeNSS partner may set their own procedure for applying for RTSG, as long as this process complies with this SeNSS RTSG policy. In particular:
- The primary supervisor must support the claim
- The RTSG application may not be approved unless the student has completed their annual TNA for that year, and if the RTSG is for a training-related cost, then this must be in line with the agreed TNA.

## 6. SeNSS Research Training Support Grant (RTSG) application form: template

SeNSS partners may choose whether to use this form, or whether to use their institution-specific form.

Please ensure that you have read and understood the SeNSS RTSG policy before completing this form.  The policy document is available at: http://senss-dtp.ac.uk/senss-student-policies/

### Section 1: To be completed by student

| | |
|---|---|
| **Name:** | |
| **Student registration number** | |
| **Department/School:** | |
| **Supervisor's name** | |
| **SeNSS Pathway:** | |
| **Please confirm that you have completed your TNA for the current academic year** | **YES / NO [delete as applicable]** |

| |
|---|
| Please state what you are applying for RTSG for and, in particular, please provide details as to how this activity or resource supports your research project? Please also provide the start and end dates the activity/ies will take place. |
| Amount requested: |

## Section 2: To be completed by student's primary or second supervisor

Please confirm your support for this application, stating why it is essential to your student's research project. Please also confirm that your student has completed their annual TNA

## Section 3: To be completed by the SeNSS administrative lead, or their institution's designated person

Student's application is eligible for funding: Yes / No (delete as applicable)

Amount awarded and any conditions attached:

Total amount spent by student in current academic year (including this application):

Name and position:

## *Document history*

| Date | Action |
|------|--------|
| | Drafted by Manager |
| | Circulated to OG for comment; OG feedback incorporated into document |
| 31.10.2017 | Discussed at OG meeting |
| 01.11.2017 | Manager updated document in accordance with OG discussion, and circulated to OG for final comment |
| 03.11.17 | Manager circulated document to Director and Deputy Director for comment |
| 06.11.17 | Comments from OG, Director and Deputy Director incorporated into revised document (version 6Nov17) |
| 15.11.17 | Discussed and approved by the SeNSS core team |
| 24.11.2017 | Approved by MB |