Research Development Fund – Eligibility Criteria

1. Purpose of the Fund

The Research Development Fund (RDF) is intended to support research-related activity undertaken by eligible postgraduate research (PGR) students at St Mary's University. The fund is designed to contribute towards reasonable and necessary costs that support a student's research, professional development and participation in the wider research community.

Funding is provided on a reimbursement basis. Students are expected to meet the cost initially and may then submit a claim for eligible expenditure, subject to the availability of their individual allocation and approval of the claim.

2. Eligibility

To be eligible to use the Research Development Fund, students must:

- Be an eligible postgraduate research student at St Mary's University.
- Be registered on a research degree programme during the period in which the expenditure is incurred.
- Have sufficient funds remaining within their individual RDF allocation.
- Demonstrate that the expenditure is directly related to their research, research training or academic development.
- Obtain the required initial approval from their Director of Studies (DoS) before submitting their claim.
- Provide appropriate evidence of expenditure, such as receipts, invoices, booking confirmations or other relevant documentation.
- Submit claims within the applicable financial year and by the deadlines communicated by the Doctoral School.

3. Fund Allocation

Eligible PGR students are allocated a set amount for each academic year.

- The standard annual allocation is £350 per student.
- Students who commence their programme part-way through the academic year may receive a pro-rata allocation. £175 for a February starter.
- The available balance cannot be exceeded.
- Unused funds do not roll over into the following academic year.

- Students are responsible for checking their remaining balance before committing to expenditure.

The Doctoral School reserves the right to review and amend the allocation or eligibility arrangements where required by institutional funding or financial regulations.

4. Eligible Expenditure

The RDF may be used towards reasonable costs that are directly relevant to a student's research or research development.

Examples of eligible expenditure include:

Conferences and Academic Events

- Conference registration fees.
- Attendance fees for academic seminars, workshops or research events where attendance supports the student's research or development.
- Poster or presentation-related costs where the student is presenting their research.

Travel and Accommodation

- Reasonable travel costs associated with attending a research conference, seminar, workshop, archive, library, fieldwork location or other research-related activity.
- Reasonable accommodation costs where an overnight stay is necessary for the research activity or event.

Research Materials and Resources

- Academic books and other research-related publications.
- Research-related subscriptions or specialist resources.
- Materials or equipment required to undertake the student's research, where appropriate and proportionate.

Research Training and Development

- Training courses or workshops that directly support the student's research.
- Relevant software or research tools where these are not already provided by the University.
- Other reasonable research-development costs where a clear academic or research benefit can be demonstrated.

- Annual membership or subscription fees for relevant academic, research or learned societies where membership directly supports the student's research, academic development or research community engagement.

5. Conditions of Eligibility

Expenditure must meet all of the following criteria:

1. **Research-related:** The expenditure must have a clear connection to the student's research, research training or academic development.
2. **Reasonable:** The cost must be proportionate and represent reasonable use of University funds.
3. **Necessary:** There should be a clear academic or research justification for the expenditure.
4. **Within allocation:** The claim must not exceed the student's remaining RDF balance.
5. **Evidence provided:** Appropriate receipts or supporting documentation must be submitted.
6. **Approved:** The expenditure must receive the required initial approval from the student's Director of Studies.
7. **Within the relevant period:** The expenditure must fall within the applicable academic/financial year and claim period.

6. Non-Eligible Expenditure

The following would normally not be eligible for reimbursement:

- Personal or non-research-related expenditure.
- General living expenses, e.g. furniture.
- Food and drink
- Entertainment or social activities.
- Costs relating to family members or accompanying persons.
- Fines, penalties or other personal charges.
- Expenditure incurred before the student was eligible for the fund.
- Costs already reimbursed through another University fund, grant or external source.
- Expenditure exceeding the student's available RDF balance.

- Costs where appropriate evidence of expenditure has not been provided.
- Equipment or resources that are already available to the student through the University.
- Any expenditure prohibited under University financial regulations.

This list is not exhaustive. The Doctoral School may determine whether an expense is eligible based on the purpose of the expenditure and the relevant University financial regulations.

7. Approval Process for Home Students (or International Students with UK bank accounts)

Students should follow the process below:

Step 1 – Check eligibility and remaining balance
Before making a purchase or booking, students should confirm that the proposed expenditure is eligible and that sufficient funds remain in their RDF allocation.

Step 2 – Obtain initial approval
The student should discuss the expenditure with their Director of Studies and obtain the required approval.

Step 3 – Make the purchase or incur the expense
The student pays for the eligible expenditure in accordance with the University's purchasing and expenses requirements.

Step 4 – Submit a claim
The student submits the appropriate RDF reimbursement form together with the required supporting documentation. Please submit via this form: https://forms.office.com/e/jmpX6QjRfQ

Step 5 – Doctoral School checks the claim
The Doctoral School will check the claim against the student's remaining allocation and the RDF eligibility criteria.

Step 6 – Finance processing
Once approved, the claim will be forwarded for processing in accordance with the University's finance procedures and payment schedules.

8. Supporting Evidence

Claims should include sufficient evidence to demonstrate:

- What was purchased or paid for.
- The date of the expenditure.

- The amount paid.
- That the expenditure has been paid by the student.
- The relevance of the expenditure to the student's research.

Receipts should be clear and legible. Where a receipt does not provide sufficient information, additional supporting documentation or an explanation may be requested. For example, conference related costs such as accommodation and travel should be evidenced by conference tickets or registration.

9. International Students and Overseas Bank Accounts Process

Students receiving reimbursement into a non-UK bank account may be required to provide additional information to enable Finance to process the payment. This may include:

- Beneficiary name and address.
- Bank account details.
- SWIFT/BIC code.
- Any other information required by the University's Finance team.

International payments may take longer to process than payments to UK bank accounts. The process is the same as for home students for all steps *except for Step 4*. When submitting a claim, please email us directly at research@stmarys.ac.uk or nelly.canji@stmarys.ac.uk to request the international student-specific claim form.

10. Important Points for Students

Students should not assume that an expense will be reimbursed simply because it is research related. Eligibility is subject to the RDF criteria, the student's remaining allocation and University financial procedures.

Students are encouraged to seek clarification from the Doctoral School before committing to significant expenditure if they are unsure whether a cost is eligible.

The Doctoral School reserves the right to decline a claim where expenditure does not meet the eligibility criteria or where sufficient supporting evidence has not been provided.

11. Queries

For questions about the Research Development Fund, eligibility, remaining balances or reimbursement claims, students should contact the Doctoral Office at:

research@stmarys.ac.uk or nelly.canji@stmarys.ac.uk