



Policy on Research Support Fees for Postgraduate Research Students

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POLICY ON RESEARCH SUPPORT FEES FOR POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS

1. Introduction

Research support fees (sometimes called Bench Fees) are defined as a fee charged to provide funding to cover additional costs incurred by the University which are essential to support a student's research, such as consumables, materials, additional specialist training and trips. These costs are not covered by the tuition fee.

Allowable additional programme costs include:

- a) Laboratory consumables
- b) Specialist technical support which is not available within the University
- c) Specialist off-site testing or processing of data which cannot be done at the University.
- d) Training in specialist techniques, software etc. unique to a particular project.
- e) Travel to other locations that are essential to complete the project.
- f) Conference attendance, including travel and associated costs.

Such costs will not include academic supervision or administrative support, or normal overheads such as space, IT support and library provision, which are included in the tuition fee.

2. Purpose

This Policy has been established to define the criteria and schedule of charges for the application of research support fees (Additional Programme Costs) for Research Degree programmes. It aims to provide guidance to applicants, students, staff, and others on the circumstances whereby University will apply research support fees and how such fees will be determined.

3. Principles

The University is committed to a consistent, transparent, and equitable research support fees policy, clearly outlining the payment expectations and agreements for research students:

- Ensuring that a pre-determined band of research support fees is applied in all relevant circumstances.
- Ensuring that students who fall under the scope of this policy are informed of the level and requirement for payment of research support fees prior to their acceptance of an offer.

The implementation of this policy is in accordance with the University's core values which are:

- Ethical
- Respectful
- Transparent
- Inclusive and fair
- Challenging

- Confident
- Collaborative
- Professional

4. Scope

This Policy applies to all:

- University staff involved in setting and confirming a research support fee for a postgraduate research degree programme.
- research students (Home and International) with whom a research support fee has been proposed and confirmed in writing as part of the offer process.

5. Research Support Fee Setting

The research support fee amount payable will depend on the programme undertaken and an assessment of the prospective students' research proposal.

The amount will conform to a schedule of research support fee bands, which correspond to the expected level of use of the university's facilities.

The research support fee will be:

- Applied only when it has been stipulated in the formal offer made to the student.
- An annual charge applied in addition to the tuition fee in each year of the programme, except the writing up period.
- The annual amount payable will be fixed at the time the student accepts the offer.

Research support fees must be clearly set out alongside the tuition fees on the website and wherever else the programme is advertised. All fees published are payable in pounds sterling (GBP, £) unless otherwise stated in any contractual documentation.

6. Research Support Fee Bands

Research support fees will be applied at one of the following band levels, dependent on subject area (see Appendix A: Research Support Fee Band by Subject Area):

	Research Support Fee Per Annum	
	Full-Time	Part-Time
Band A	£0 - 1,000	£0 - 500
Band B	£1,000 - 2,000	£500 - 1,000
Band C	£2,000 - 4,000	£1,000 - 2,000
Band D	£4,000 - 6,000	£2,000 - 3,000
Band E	£6,000 - 8,000	£3,000 - 4,000
Band F	£8,000 - 10,000	£4,000 - 5,000

Band G	£10,000 - 12,000	£5,000 - 6,000
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7. Research Support Fee Provisions

An individual Research Support Fee within the stated band will be calculated dependent on the specifics of the project. The Research Support fee should include a breakdown of how the fee was calculated and what it covers. The offer letter should specify both the tuition and Research Support fees.

Once an offer is accepted the research support fee is fixed. Even if the university's cost of securing materials or resources increases in the following years, students will not be expected to cover these additional programme costs.

Research Support Fees will be invoiced upon first enrolment and then annually on the anniversary of enrolment. The fee will be held by the University on behalf of the student (or sponsor) to ensure that these additional research costs can be met.

Students and/or their supervisory team will submit requests for consumables, equipment, software, or costs associated with research conference attendance via local Faculty processes. Requests will only be approved by the faculty providing they are justified in line with the programme of research and resource implications outlined in the Research Proposal and that sufficient funds remain.

Any unused funds must be carried over into the following year; the value of any annual invoices will be adjusted to top up the account to the level of the stated annual fee.

If a student withdraws before the end of the course, any unspent funds will be refunded.

Students (and sponsors) will be provided with an annual statement with a breakdown of spend against their RSF accounts at the point when the invoice is raised for the subsequent year.

Any unspent funds at the end of the project must be refunded to the student (or sponsor).

Any equipment purchased from a Research Support fee remains the property of the University and should be returned when the student leaves.

8. Externally Funded/Sponsored Students

When a research support fee is covered by a sponsor, they will do so on the same annual basis as the original offer letter. Therefore it is not possible to overspend using the following year's allocation.

Where students are in receipt of externally funded studentships, any amount to cover research support fees will be payable to the University in accordance with the stipulations outlined above.

Where externally funded studentships do not cover research support fees, they will be payable by the student.

9. Exceptions

There are no exceptions to this policy.

10. Amendments

This Policy was approved by the University's Academic Board in January 2024. The University may change this Policy at any time, and where appropriate. Where a policy is not due for review, but is found to require updating, it will remain published, unless the reasons for review render it obsolete.

11. Information and resources

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Research Policies, Procedures and Guidelines www.wlv.ac.uk/researchpolicies
- Research Degree Regulations <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/about-us/governance/legal-information/regulations-codes-of-conduct-and-by-laws/academic-regulations/>

12. Contact

For general queries regarding Research Policies, Procedures and guidelines contact Jill Morgan, Research Integrity Manager, by email: J.Morgan4@wlv.ac.uk

For general queries, please contact the University Corporate Compliance Team via email: compliance@wlv.ac.uk.

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APPENDIX A: RESEARCH SUPPORT FEE BAND BY SUBJECT AREA

Research Areas	Band
Architecture & the Built Environment	A-C
Art & Design*	A
Biological Sciences	D-G
Biomedical Sciences	D-G
Botany	C
Business	A
Chemistry	C-G
Computer Science	C
Computing & Mathematics	C
Earth Systems & Environmental Sciences	C
Education	A
Engineering	D
English Language and Literature	A
Forensic Science	C-G
Health	A
History	A
Humanities	A
Languages & Related Subjects	A
Law	A
Library & Information Management	B
Linguistics	C
Media & Communication	A
Microbiology	C
Molecular Biology	D-G
Music	A
Nursing	A
Performing Arts	A
Pharmacy (Practice)	B
Pharmacy (Research)	D-G
Psychology	A
Social Sciences/Social Policy	A
Social Work/Social Care	A
Sports Science	A

* Students are required to pay for their own art materials