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September 2026

Law Faculty Research Support Fund – Guidance Notes

The Application Procedure

Applications are considered by the Research Support Fund Committee in four gathered fields. The Committee will normally meet in week 0 of each term, with a further meeting during the long vacation. Deadlines for applications will be notified by email to the Faculty mailing list, but will usually be the Friday of week 0 of each term and week 9 for the long vacation meeting.

Criteria

Applications to the Fund will be judged on their academic merits and taking into consideration the available budget; there is no automatic entitlement to funding.

It is unlikely that any individual applicant will be granted more than £4,000 in total in the academic year, i.e., including joint applications and considering the four rounds of funding for the year (note that £4,000 is the usual maximum amount for larger requests, such as organising a conference or match funding for external funding applications). If you require more than £4,000, you can still apply. The RSF Committee will assess your application(s) based on the purpose and academic relevance and budget availability, however, requests for more than £4,000 in funds are normally declined.

Joint applications will be counted as the value of the award divided by the number of applicants, e.g. a joint application for £4,000 for a conference will, if awarded in full, be counted as £2,000 towards each applicant's individual annual limit if there are two applicants, £1,333 if three applicants, etc. Awards from previous financial years will not be counted as part of an individual's current annual limit. However, the panel will take these into consideration where there is a need to prioritise applications.

Out of Round applications

Late applications

In extraordinary cases, applications submitted after a deadline will be considered; they will be treated as late proposals to the previous gathered field. **These late applications will only be considered if**: a) there is sufficient budget remaining; b) the applicant can demonstrate that they are approaching the fund as a result of a relevant opportunity for which the Fund could not have been approached earlier; (c) the proposed research activity will need to take place before or in the two weeks immediately after the next gathered field deadline; (d) the research activity fulfils at least two of the Faculty's other criteria for prioritisation in the event of scarcity (see below).

If you need to submit an application in advance of a RSF application deadline (for example, for eligible activity during the vacation after the long vacation application deadline but before the Michaelmas Term deadline), please contact the research support team to discuss: research@law.ox.ac.uk. Whether your application will be processed will depend on the academic merit of the proposal and budget availability.

Caps on Out of Round awards

We expect that major research projects and events requiring larger amounts of funding will be planned well in advance and that applications to support them will not require consideration outside of the four annual gathered field deadlines. Furthermore, we cannot reasonably offer larger awards outside of rounds without risking significantly impacting on our capability to fairly allocate awards for the forthcoming gathered field, given we do not know in advance how high demand will be in an individual round. Out of round awards will correspondingly be **capped** at a maximum of (1) 25 hours for research assistance, (2) £500 for awards to cover the costs of UK and European travel, (3) £1,000 for non-European travel, and (4) £1,000 for events at Oxford.

No retrospective awards

In all cases, **award letters should be received in advance of any expenditure**; retrospective applications will **not** be considered by the RSF panel.

- Planned activities, such as travel to conference should not be due to occur before a decision is made by the RSF committee members. This will always be within two weeks of the RSF deadline.

How to submit your application.

Completed application forms should be filed using the Microsoft Forms link found on the Research Support Fund webpage, linked below, using your Single Sign On. If you encounter difficulty, please write to the Research Administration team in the Law Faculty Office: research@law.ox.ac.uk

Research Support Fund Webpage

Prioritisation In the Event of Scarcity

Where there are more well-founded proposals than the budget of the RSF can fulfill, the panel may make partial awards or may prioritise the awards it makes. Where prioritisation is necessary, the panel will favour:

- Applications from early-career academics.
- First time applicants.
- Applications that have a clear connection to a research output, such as an article or book, that are likely to be capable of submission in a future Research Excellence Framework Exercise.
- Applications that are likely to have impact, shaping policy or public debate.
- Applications that involve collaboration amongst Faculty members.
- Applications where there are not alternative sources of funding available.
- Applications for “open” events, i.e., events that welcome all Faculty members and graduates wishing to attend.
- Applications for conferences and workshops where a diversity of speakers have been invited.
- Applications that are likely to facilitate funding from other sources (match funding, for example).

Applications that do not meet any of the criteria above may still receive some or all of the funding requested. Applicants should note that funded requests from early-career staff and first time applicants will normally be funded in full. All other funded applications may not be funded in full (this will depend on budget availability). Also, some applications may not be funded at all. An applicant’s prior funding record for the year will also be taken into account when making prioritisation decisions.

Application Form Section A: Applicant Details and Eligibility

The following people are eligible to apply for a grant from the Research Support Fund:

1. Any Faculty member who currently holds an academic post funded by the Law Faculty and whose contract will not end before the proposed RSF project's end date, excluding new members of Faculty who have start up grants suitable and sufficient for covering planned costs.

2. Any Faculty member who currently holds a College post and has a contract with their College that will not end before the proposed RSF project's end date. Junior Research Fellows are only eligible if, in addition, they have a contract with their College that includes a teaching obligation of at least 4 hours per week during term.

3. Any member of research staff employed by the Faculty, the Centre for Socio-Legal Studies, the Bonavero Institute of Human Rights or the Centre for Criminology who is on grade 07S or above, provided that their contract will not end before the proposed RSF project's end date.

4. Researchers working on somebody else's grant (for example, Postdoctoral Research Fellows working on an externally funded project led by a senior PI) can apply to the fund if they meet the criteria specified above, however, they cannot request funds to pay for activities that would be covered by the grant they are working on. In addition, these applicants are required to secure approval from their PI for their RSF application before submission (more details on this are available on the RSF application form).

Note: RSF-funded projects cannot outlast the PI's contract; extension requests will therefore not be granted in cases where the new project end date would fall beyond the end date of the PI's contract.

If you are not sure if you are eligible, please enquire with Research Administration (research@law.ox.ac.uk).

Regarding faculty or researchers on fixed-term contracts

If the PI's contract will end within the following 6 months of the RSF application being submitted, the PI should explain in the relevant section how they will make sure the project will be completed before their contract ends.

Start and end dates are particularly important if considering applying for research assistance, as whilst casual letters of engagement are suitable for shorter term projects of under 12 weeks, RAs engaged for longer periods of time should instead be employed on a variable hours contract. Planned RA length of engagement and letter/contract type should be made clear by the PI at the application stage.

The proposed project duration should be based on the best estimate for the planned work. Applicants on fixed term contracts should ensure that the proposed project is due to be completed before the contract expires (if their contract will end within six months of the submission of the RSF application, as part of the proposal they should explain how they will make sure the project is completed before their contract ends)

Applications do not have to relate to the term in which the application is made but may relate to activities taking place at any time within the academic year (i.e. up to 30 September) or in the following academic year in the case of applications related to conference organization.

Application Form Section B: Proposal Details

Title of Project or Activity

All applications should have a project title that can be used to administer the award and monitor expenditure. If the application is for support to write a book, then the book title should be given.

Description of Activity, Start/End Dates

The activity should be described explaining its benefit to the applicant's research programme and/or career development and/or overall professional trajectory. You should also provide beginning and end dates for your project.

If you are submitting a late/early application, please explain why this is the case.

Although the Law Board wishes to avoid being prescriptive about the uses to which the fund may be put, applicants should note that **the RSF is not an academic allowance**. Broadly, the fund handles all research-related proposals. It is anticipated that **the majority of grants will be for**:

- Research Assistance supporting small/pilot empirical research projects.
- Research assistance, either on current projects or to assist with the preparation of a large grant application to an external funder.
- Conference attendance where a paper is being presented (applications from early career academics to attend conferences where a paper is not being given will also be considered). Application budgets can include daily childcare costs for the duration of the conference.
- Other research-related travel.
- Organisation of a colloquium or small conference in Oxford including book launches. Application budgets may include related research assistance.
- Knowledge Exchange, Public Engagement and Impact activities that might be aimed at the public in general, policy makers or those affected by research. These might have a wider scope than traditional research activities (for example, artistic activities such as plays).

Organising Conferences and Workshops

The Research Support Fund committee is glad to receive proposals to hold conferences and workshops in Oxford as it regards support for such conference as one of its primary tasks.

The committee will also consider applications for events held outside of Oxford but events in Oxford will generally be prioritised.

Applications to the Research Support Fund for funding for workshops or conferences should be made as early as possible before the proposed event (ideally, 12 months in advance). The proposed workshop or conference must clearly be a research or academic activity. Teaching activities will not be funded under this scheme and non-core activities for students will also not be funded.

Events that lead to potential further research may be regarded more favourably. Conferences organised on behalf of a learned society are more likely to receive an underwrite of the costs rather than a grant, because the Panel would normally expect the society to provide funding or to secure funding itself from other sources. It is not realistic to expect the Research Support Fund to underwrite, let alone to fund, larger conferences. Experience shows that the Fund budget will not stretch to more than about £4,000 per event, and may not even stretch that far when several eligible proposals are received at once. The fund may provide a contribution towards larger conferences and workshops.

The Committee will normally be better disposed towards contributing to a workshop/conference if realistic plans exist to raise additional funds elsewhere. Even then, however, the limitations in the above apply.

For conferences, the Fund will normally expect non-speakers from outside of Oxford to pay to attend and will not be inclined to subsidise them, except by helping to fund speakers or infrastructure costs. A small subsidy for graduate students attending is a possible exception.

The Fund committee will not normally help to fund non-academic speakers at conferences or workshops, nor will it normally help to fund conferences and workshops with a high proportion of non-academics in attendance or participation.

Conference applications can include costs for entertaining, e.g. for a drinks reception or conference dinner. Planned expenditure should be in accord with University hospitality and entertaining expenses guidance, i.e. reasonable, proportionate and not excessive from a value for money and public perceptions point of view. Whether the event takes place at a College or a restaurant, the RSF will not pay for dinners, including alcohol, exceeding £75 a head.

It is expected that all conferences/events supported by the Fund will be organised and conducted according to the EDI aspirations of the Law Faculty (for example, gender balance should be considered when inviting speakers and in terms of attendance).

New Framework for Events Assistance

Applicants applying for events funding must discuss budgets in advance with the Research team (research@law.ox.ac.uk) and the Events team (events@law.ox.ac.uk) (generally at least 5 working days in advance of the Fund deadline). Where event support is required that does not require an explicit research-related contribution from the assistant, applicants should instead cost in time for support from the Events team's dedicated Events Coordinator.

Subject to capacity, the Events team is available to provide direct support including:

- Pre-event planning: budgeting, procurement, finance coordination, advertising and marketing, and guest management.
- Event-day coordination: on-site presence to manage staff, oversee workflow, and troubleshoot issues as they arise.
- Post-event administration: assisting with expense claims, distributing surveys, and collecting feedback.
- Research assistant training and guidance.

Events team support cannot be guaranteed for all events; where unavailable, a graduate student may be engaged to complete the work instead.

The cost structure for Event team time can be found on the Law Events fee schedule for event support webpage.

Research Assistance

Funds have previously been awarded for research assistance for writing book chapters and other publications. Assistance may also be sought for the preparation of large grant applications. The request should be justified in terms of the work needed to write the proposal, to respond to comments and suggestions from colleagues who may read a draft application, and to liaise with the Research Support Team.

Rules on employing Research Assistants

Research Assistant opportunities should normally be advertised to current graduate students in the Faculty of Law. This is based on the wishes of the Research Support Fund committee that Faculty funds should, where possible, support Faculty students. Exceptions to this policy will only be considered if the PI can demonstrate that no other student would have wished to be considered for the work.

Named researchers

Research assistant opportunities funded by the RSF must be advertised unless the PI can show that no graduate students other than their preferred candidate would be interested in applying. Accordingly, the option to name an RA on the RSF application form is no longer available.

Limitations on employing students

The University guidance on paid work for Oxford graduate students recommends that full-time graduate research students ensure that any paid work should still allow them to spend at least 40 hours per week for a minimum 44 weeks of the year on their studies. Full-time graduate taught students are recommended not to undertake more than 8 hours' paid work each week during term-time study periods. There are additional rules for students with visas wishing to undertake paid work.

MSc Criminology students must receive written approval from the Centre Director if they decide to undertake paid work for the Faculty.

- In all cases the work must be undertaken in the UK unless there is an operational need for the work to be done overseas (subject to approval by the Vice Dean for Teaching and Recruitment).

- No student may work for their own supervisor without the approval of the Associate Dean for Graduate Students.

Any queries re: the eligibility of a particular student should be directed to Geraldine Malloy.

Visit the website for more details on the Faculty's recruitment process for RAs:
https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/content/recruiting-research-assistants

Rates of pay for Research Assistants

The standard rate of pay for an RA is based on Grade 6, point 1. For budgeting purposes in RSF applications, the figure to use is **£26.96** per hour (as of September 2026). This is the **budget cost to the Faculty** of employing a Research Assistant and includes an estimate for employer's NI and pension contributions.

A total number of hours of work must be provided for the purposes of advertising, and the actual hours worked must be by agreement between the PI/Budget Holder and the RA (and will not be specified in the Casual Letter of Engagement or the Variable Hours Contract).

The hourly rate paid to an RA in 2026-27 is expected to be £19.18. They will also accrue holiday pay, which is generally paid at the same time as the timesheet is processed. PIs must ensure that RAs submit timesheets in a timely manner.

Paid leave entitlement is different for Casual Engagements (12 weeks and under) and Variable Hours Contracts (more than 12 weeks). Casual workers earn holiday pay of £2.32 (est.) per hour worked, and variable hours workers earn holiday pay of £3.28 (est.) per hour worked.

Any request to extend a casual engagement must be accompanied by a clear explanation as to why the work could not be completed within the 12-week period, which is the only circumstance in which we can extend a casual engagement.

All student workers are expected to undertake their work in the UK. Working abroad can attract very substantial additional costs – please see the University's Global Mobility Policy for further information.

Research Assistant Award Norms

This is for guidance only and the Committee may choose to award more or less in different circumstances.

- 100 hours to assist with a 1st edition book.
- 75 hours to assist with a 2nd or later edition book.
- 50 hours to assist with writing a large grant/funding application.
- 50 hours to assist with an edited collection, regardless of how many chapters have been written by members of the faculty.
- 30 hours to assist with a paper or chapter.

This applies to both academic, teaching and practitioner books; priority will be given to academic books and papers.

Conference Attendance

In the case of conference attendance, funding will normally only be given to applicants who are giving a paper (as mentioned above, there is flexibility in relation to this for early career applicants). Attendance at commercial conferences is not encouraged and is only likely to be funded in exceptional circumstances.

Members of the Faculty who have an Academic Allowance or a Start-Up Grant or a Faculty Officer Allowance may use these to pay for attendance at a non–academic conference or at an academic conference where they do not present a paper.

US Law Schools would normally fund speakers for conferences or workshops, so if this is not the case, then applications to the RSF must state explicitly why funding is not provided.
The committee will not normally make awards for subsistence for those attending a conference or workshop. An exception to this may be for official conference dinners.

Travel for research activities

Applications may include the travel costs for research visits, whether visiting libraries or universities, conducting interviews or doing other empirical research. Costs for travel and accommodation may be requested.

The cost of a single-visit visa may be requested, but not the cost of a visa for a long period that could then be used for personal travel as well as faculty-related travel.

Travel Insurance and Risk Assessments

Travel Insurance and Risk Assessments: It is a requirement that any person undertaking fieldwork or travelling abroad on University business completes a risk assessment. This should be done prior to applying for travel insurance, and attached to the on-line travel insurance application. This requirement exists even where the University is not directly funding the travel. Insurance cover is provided without cost to the individual, under the University's Group Travel Insurance scheme. Please note that the Faculty of Law cannot insure staff or students from other departments or college-only staff even if the Faculty is funding the travel.

Details can be obtained from the Research team at research@law.ox.ac.uk , and all applications for cover must be sent to them the TIRS online application system as soon as possible after a financial commitment to travel has been made, in order to mitigate the financial risk of cancellation. Where travel to an area which is subject to specific advice by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is envisaged, cover can take up to 2 weeks to arrange, and should not be treated as automatically provided. Where cover is not provided the Dean may refuse authorization to travel. See www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/
The Faculty of Law website has full details on how to apply for travel insurance cover:
https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/content/travel-insurance

Claims for Expenditure on Uncompleted Research Activities

The RSF will only fully cover claims for expenditure on uncompleted planned research activities, e.g. missed plane flights, missed appointments/unfulfilled bookings, where the award holder can show that they and their collaborators on the project are not at fault for this, e.g. due to unexpected illness, travel disruptions, and that they have nevertheless not been covered by their travel insurance as expected. Claims for uncompleted research activities where the traveller has failed to take out travel insurance will be considered but will be capped at a maximum of 75% of requested reimbursement (the panel will decide how much to reimburse based on circumstances).

Sustainable Travel Policy

As part of moving towards more sustainable business practices, the University has updated its policies on travel for university business. In particular, as of August 2022 departments will be charged a flight levy on all air travel bookings, calculated at £30/tonne of CO2 equivalent. The calculation is based on the distance between the airports, the category of flight and the cabin class booked. The Faculty has yet to decide on how this levy will be implemented, both operationally and in terms of policy, but will provide further updates once it has been considered by the Planning and Resources Committee.

The University will also no longer allow (unless exceptions or reasonable adjustments* are applicable) for university business travel via domestic flights (excluding Northern Ireland, Shetland, the Outer Hebrides, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man), flights to Paris or Brussels (travel via Eurostar is instead

advised), or business or premium-economy flights. Any exception to these rules must be approved in advance by the Dean. As currently, first-class flights are not permissible in any circumstance.

*An exception or reasonable adjustment must be based on a disability, protected characteristic, impracticality or emergency.

For more information, please refer to the University Travel Policy: https://assets-oxweb.admin.ox.ac.uk/2026-03/Travel_Policy.pdf

Ethical Approval

All Faculty members conducting research that involves human participants or personal data should apply for ethical approval before the research starts. See the University web pages on the process https://unioxfordnexus.sharepoint.com/sites/OxIntranet-research-innovation/SitePages/research-ethics.aspx

Applications in respect of sabbatical leave

The Research Support Fund will not generally meet the costs of accommodation in respect of sabbatical leave. The Fund Panel will, however, consider applications for travel expenses where it has been clearly demonstrated that such travel will make a serious contribution to the research being undertaken.

Book and journal purchase

Grants for the purchase of books and/or journals will not be supported. If books are needed for research, an application can be made to the library for its purchase.

Application Form Section C: Funding Details

Budget details

If you require advice on the budget for the application, please contact the Research Administrator research@law.ox.ac.uk

Travel and Hotel Accommodation

Applications may include travel and accommodation costs. Travel should always be economy class, accommodation should be reasonable and subsistence costs may be claimed if away from Oxford for prolonged periods. The Faculty will favour applications which opt (where possible) for less carbon-intensive economy class modes of transport, e.g. travel by train rather than by plane, whilst also considering additional cost.

If in doubt then please refer to the University guidance on the website:

Travel & Accommodation

https://unioxfordnexus.sharepoint.com/sites/OXINTRANET-finance/SitePages/Travel-Accommodation-and-Subsistence.aspx

Funding request details and Justification of Costs

The requested funding should be explained, including details such as the conference to be attended and any papers that are to be presented, the cost of accommodation and, if applicable, why this is not funded

by the conference organisers. Estimated travel costs should be based on online quotes or quotes from a travel agency. The reasons for the requested number of journeys should be explained.

Other funding sources

The Research Support Fund Panel will always take into account what other sources of funding are available, including funding from Colleges, external grants, Faculty Academic Allowances and Faculty Officer Allowances. Many members of the Faculty will receive an allowance from their College. Applicants are therefore asked to explain why this project cannot be funded by their College.

The above allowances or awards do not exclude members of the Faculty from applying to the Research Support Fund.

Other funding sources should also be considered before applications are submitted to the Research Support Fund. This includes the University's John Fell Fund and external research funders such as the Research Councils, the British Academy, the Leverhulme Trust and the Nuffield Foundation. If applications to the Fund are judged to be suitable for external funding schemes and the required timescale does not make an external application impractical, the committee may encourage applicants to apply to external funders and return to the Fund if their application is unsuccessful. Opportunities for external funding can be discussed with Research Administration (e-mail: research@law.ox.ac.uk) or your Centre Administrator. Research allowances on current externally funded grants will also be taken into consideration, when assessing applications.

Links to other funding

If your application is linked to any other application being made in the current round or in a previous round by the applicant or another member, provide details on what progress has been made in the light of previous grants, and why it has become necessary to apply for additional funds (bear in mind that the Fund will normally not grant any individual applicant more than £4,000 per academic year). Please also advise whether the amount of this application is expected to be sufficient to complete the project.

Any additional information

If there is anything else you would like the RSF Panel to be aware of, mention it here.

Award Process & Grant Management

Following the meeting of the committee to decide on awards, all applicants to a round of the Research Support Fund will receive a notification e-mail from Research administration, usually in the second week following the week of the deadline. Successful applicants will receive an award letter detailing the amount of their award, the start and end date, and details of any conditions for funding required by the committee or reasons for partial funding in cases where the committee chose not to grant the full amount requested. The award letter will also include specifications on recruiting research assistants, purchasing goods or services, making expense claims, and travel insurance and risk assessment. Research administration (contact: research@law.ox.ac.uk) will assist with reporting on expenditure, advertising and recruitment for research assistance positions, as well as general query handling.

If after an award is made an extension is required to spend the funds, then this should be requested from Research administration, with a justification for why the extension is required and details of plans for spending down the award in the additional time requested (note: no project can be extended beyond the duration of the PI's contract). PIs are advised to think carefully about whether the length of extension

requested is sufficient time to complete work on the project so as to help where possible avoid the need for additional extension requests on a project in the near future.

We strongly encourage successful applicants to spend their awards in the financial year when their planned activities will be taking place but acknowledge that this may not always be possible. Research Administration will contact award holders to check on the progress of spending down on grants, especially towards the end of the financial year (31 July). Note that any grant for which no case for further extension has been made within 3 months following the planned end-date for the project will be earmarked for closure, after which point no further costs can be claimed. Awards from previous financial years (i.e. prior to the one ending) will furthermore not be carried forward unless under exceptional circumstances and when a convincing case can be made that these funds will be needed before the upcoming Michaelmas RSF funding round.