

Returning Carers' Fund: Guidance Document

1. Applications are invited from academic and research staff for funding to support the development of their research career following a break in their career or a period of leave for caring responsibilities. This can include maternity, adoption and shared parental leave, or leave to care for an ill, disabled or elderly family member.
2. Applications should be submitted to your divisional contact by Friday of 5th week: **9 November 2018, 15 February 2019 and 31 May 2019.**
 - Humanities: Isabelle Pitt (isabelle.pitt@humanities.ox.ac.uk)
 - Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences: Daisy Hung (daisy.hung@mpls.ox.ac.uk)
 - Medical Sciences: Katherine Corr (athena-swan@medsci.ox.ac.uk)
 - Social Sciences: Fiona Groenhout (diversity@socsci.ox.ac.uk)

Scope of the Fund

3. Funding can be requested for any legitimate purpose identified by the applicant that addresses a clearly identified barrier to return to research and demonstrates a link to career development in research. Support could include, but is not limited to:
 - teaching buy-out to enable you to concentrate on research;
 - training or professional development;
 - short-term secondments to 'get up to speed' with recent research developments;
 - conference attendance to enable you to re-establish your profile;
 - short-term research or administrative assistance;
 - small scale lab equipment purchase;
 - visits to Oxford by your research collaborator(s).
4. Childcare-related expenses over and above a staff member's usual childcare costs are eligible if requested as part of an application for 'work related training' (which includes conference attendance and research visits). The existing financial limit will still apply. Please note that the payment of childcare expenses for reasons other than 'work related training' are considered by HMRC to be a taxable benefit, and are therefore not eligible under this scheme.
5. The costs of providing a maternity cover post or other support during the leave period are not permitted. These should be discussed with and considered by the applicant's department as part of the process of agreeing a maternity leave plan.

Funding

6. Awards will normally be up to a maximum of £5,000.
7. Larger amounts may be awarded, up to an absolute maximum of £10,000, where it can be demonstrated that the costs of the proposed activity cannot be broken down or reduced without affecting the impact of the activity, e.g. travel to a high-cost region.
8. Applications may request funding for more than one activity, provided that it can be demonstrated that the activities are linked in terms of the expected grant outcomes.

9. Retrospective payments are not permitted. If you wish to apply for funding for an activity requiring expenditure before the application deadline, please speak to your divisional contact.
10. Awards are normally valid for a year. Applicants may apply for funding over a longer period or apply for an extension if the project is delayed (via an email to your divisional contact), but if such a request is not made any unspent funds will be reclaimed automatically at the end of the award period.
11. Awards are made for the purposes outlined in the application only. Any changes to the proposed use of the funds must be approved in advance, via a request to your divisional contact. If the costs of the proposed activities are lower than outlined in your application, any unspent funds will be reclaimed and returned to the Fund.
12. Costs should first be met or part-met from other sources, such as grant funding or departmental sources, and details of any matched funding or other support being provided by your department should be supplied.

Eligibility

13. The scheme is open to all members of academic and research staff employed by the University, including those holding joint appointments, but excluding those who have achieved full professorial title or who hold statutory chairs. The scheme is not open to members of staff with college-only contracts.
14. The scheme is open to all those who, at the closing date for applications:
 - are currently on leave for a minimum of six months;
 - have returned from a break of at least six months within the last two years; or
 - have returned from two breaks each of at least six months within the last five years.

A break may comprise two or more discontinuous periods of leave totalling at least six months provided that they relate to a single life event, e.g. as part of a shared parental leave arrangement.

15. If you are concerned that you do not meet the eligibility criteria, please speak to your divisional contact.
16. Only one application may be made per career break, as defined in paragraph 12.
17. Those on a fixed-term contract should hold a contract of employment for a sufficient period beyond the date of their application to permit the grant to be spent and to have an impact that increases the likelihood of them securing a new contract; the application should give evidence of being on a research or academic career trajectory and clearly outline any future career plans; applicants may submit a supporting statement from their supervisor if they wish to do so.
18. Applications must be signed by the staff member's supervisor, Head of Department or Faculty Board Chair and by their Departmental or Faculty Administrator to confirm that a) the department/faculty supports the application, and b) the applicant is eligible for funding, as per the above criteria.

19. Applications for funding of college buy-outs must be discussed and agreed with the college before the application is submitted.

Administration

20. Please submit the attached application form to your divisional contact, who will:

- confirm whether your bid is eligible for support, consulting your Departmental or Faculty Administrator as necessary; and
- submit a prioritised list of divisional bids for funding to the scheme's Advisory Group.

21. The Advisory Group will make decisions on funding, ensuring consistency across Divisions. The Group may approve a lesser amount if the case for funding is not deemed strong enough. Should the number of applications received be greater than the amount of funding available in the scheme, the priority list from each Division and the strength of individual applications for funding will be taken into account.

22. You can expect to receive a decision on your application within a month of the closing date. There will be no appeal against the Group's decision. Applications will primarily be judged against the likelihood of delivering benefits that would enable the applicant to remain in an academic or research career, taking into account their career stage.

23. You will be required to produce a one page report on your use of the funds within 12 months of receipt of the funds or on completion of the project. A template will be provided. The report will detail:

- any research outputs, as evidenced by publications, presentation of papers, development of collaborations or submission of grant proposals;
- any career development, as evidenced by attendance at conferences or participation in training or development; and
- any other identified benefits to your career.