

Executive Summary

Since 2006, Oxford University Press has transferred £5m per annum to create the John Fell OUP Research Fund. The Fund is intended to foster creativity and a proactive approach to research opportunities in all subject areas, by making seedcorn and start-up grants, and providing staff and funds to stimulate applications to external agencies.

In 2010-11, the John Fell OUP Research Fund Committee received 353 applications for small or main awards and allocated the following sums:

Category of award	Purpose	Number of awards	Amount Awarded (£k)
a	Proof-of-concept projects	85	2,367
b	Early career researchers	63	1,428
c	Other academic activities likely to lead to new research initiatives	34	223
e	'matching' contributions to help leverage funding from external bodies	20	246
f	Strategic investment in equipment	2	250

64 'main' awards (that is, grants above £7,500) were made for projects falling under the first three categories above: by value, this represents 41% of the amount requested by applicants for these purposes over the course of the year. No main awards were made for research facilitator posts (category d) this year.

Figure 1 shows the number of applications supported and amount awarded by category in 2010/2011, and Figure 2 shows the same data for all years of the fund to date.

Figure 1

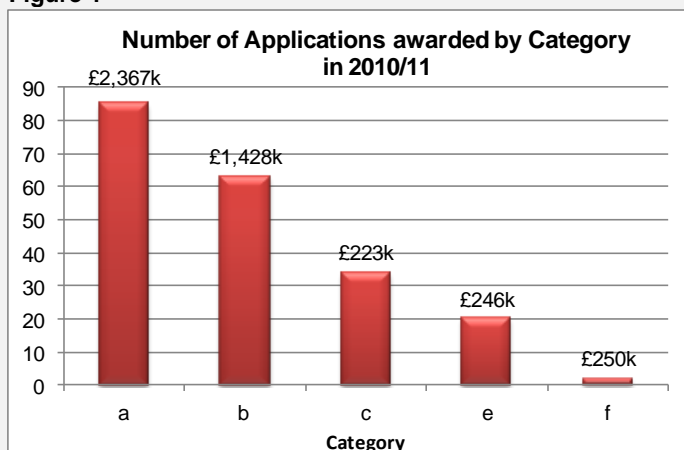
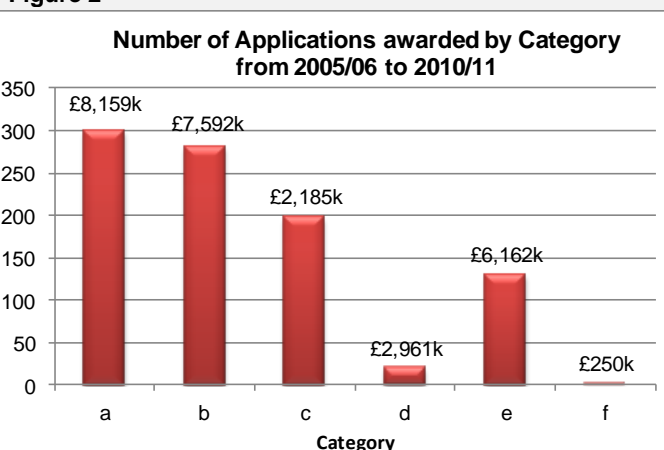


Figure 2



Some of the funds awarded under category f (strategic investment in equipment) are met out of the University's Capital Fund, on the recommendation of the John Fell Committee, under arrangements agreed by the Planning and Resource Allocation Committee. These arrangements supplement the funds available to the John Fell Committee to support applications for major pieces of research equipment.

Of the £5m per annum available for the John Fell Fund, £250k is set aside for each of the four academic divisions to provide for division-specific purposes that cannot readily be met within the categories of award outlined above. The divisions use these in different ways: purposes include provision of start-up funding to establish the research of new senior academic appointees, matched funding for Leverhulme Early Career Fellowships, and preparation for the next Research Excellence Framework. Balances that are not spent in one year may be carried forward to another, and in 2010/11, 47 awards totalling £1,103k were approved out of the divisional allocations.

The total amount awarded by the John Fell Fund for main, small and divisional awards in 2010/2011 was therefore £5.6m. This utilised in full the £5m from OUP for this year, and also drew upon unspent balances from previous years (including money that was reclaimed as part of the ongoing audit of the Fund).

The John Fell Committee regularly collects reports on projects that were funded in earlier years of the fund's existence and have now been completed. Reports received to date on 363 projects, which received a total of £7.6m from the Fell Fund, indicate that overall, these projects have attracted further income from other sources of £52m. These figures suggest that on average, Fell Fund awards are leveraging other funding at a ratio of up to 1:6.8.

Evidence is emerging that research facilitators supported by the Fell Fund are having a substantial impact on the research culture and attraction of external funds. Some aspects of the Fund's work, such as support for early career researchers, may not produce immediate returns, but are intended to help retain researchers of high calibre and identify promising lines of research for the future.