



NERC CDT in Oil & Gas – Research Training & Support Grant (RTSG) Statement of Use

The duration of a NERC Centre for Doctoral Training (CDT) in Oil & Gas studentship is four years in order to accommodate the mandatory 20 weeks of training provided as part of the CDT model and still allow a suitable writing-up period.

Each NERC CDT in Oil & Gas student is entitled to £5k per annum Research Training Support Grant (RTSG) for the four years of their studentship - £20k in total. The Research Council UK regulations state that 'the RTSG is a contribution towards costs incurred in training research students e.g. the provision of consumables, equipment, travel, etc. It is not intended to relieve the host research organisation/university of any part of its normal expenditure.' So, there is an expectation that a basic level of infrastructure is provided by the host institution i.e. suitable office with desk space, stationery, phone, computer and so on. If enhanced computing capability or specialised software is required, for example, this can be charged to the RTSG, but the costs of a basic computer with standard Microsoft or statistical applications or similar loaded onto it cannot.

As stated above, the RTSG allowance is £5k per annum although this does not need to be spent in full each year. Money can be carried over to later years if you have a particular field trip or conference that it'll be important you go to later in your PhD programme for example.

At the moment, we are asking universities to use the RTSG allowance to pay students' travel costs to travel to and from the various Training Academy events. However, we hope that by the end of this year, when we see how much this totals, we may be able to reimburse these costs, either in full or by making an equal contribution to each student from the Training Academy funds. This would then free up the RTSG for students to use on attending other courses, purchasing data, specialised equipment/software necessary for their research, going to conferences or project-specific field trips and so on. Students and supervisors work together to plan the spend of the RTSG across the full 4 year study period to ensure the greatest benefit to the student's research and career development.

Each university is required to send me a breakdown of the spending in the previous 12 months. This is in order for us to pass back to each institution the relevant amount of the RTSG allowance they have incurred in the case of students in receipt of direct NERC funding from the NERC CDT grant that Heriot-Watt holds. In the case of CDT students supported by university-matched funding, Heriot-Watt requires this information in order to be able to demonstrate to NERC that the match-funded students have been treated equally and have received the £5k p.a. RTSG allowance at the end of 4 year studentship.

Students should therefore claim RTSG expenses from their host institution using that organisation's standard claims process and guidelines. The host institution then provides an annual RTSG expenditure document to me, in arrears, in order to reclaim these costs from the NERC grant if applicable, or as evidence of RTSG spend in respect of match-funded students.