

Mathematical Institute, University of Oxford
Research Committee funding

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1 Introduction

- 1 Research Committee oversees the provision of funds to support a range of departmental activities including colloquia, faculty travel, research visits and collaborative links, and seminars.
- 2 Expenditure against Research Committee funds, including research-incentive funds, must adhere to the University Financial Regulations. The Regulations include the requirement¹ that

"[v]alue for money is achieved. Costs should be modest and reasonable, and any cost which an external observer might regard as being unnecessary or excessive use of public/charitable funds must be avoided. "Reasonable" expenses are those that are cost-effective when weighed against the purpose of the activity. Reimbursement in full is not guaranteed if the claim is not considered to be value for money."

2 Research-incentive scheme: overview

- 3 The research-incentive scheme is a departmental fund which rewards those successful in obtaining research contracts or grants that carry overheads. The scheme permits the lead investigator of such grants to spend a percentage of the overheads earned on those contracts or grants. The scheme is administered by the finance team.
- 4 Funds are allocated to the lead investigator (or co-lead investigators, where identified and agreed) named on the application or contract, which is taken to mean the scientist-in-charge for the project, or the lead scientific member of the research project and team.
- 5 Research-incentive funds accrued on independent fellowships or on contracts or grants held by non-permanent faculty, are allocated to the faculty member who sponsored the application.

¹<https://finance.admin.ox.ac.uk/expenses#collapse1042806>

- 6 Where a lead investigator leaves the employment of the department but the grant, or a portion thereof, remains, half the research-incentive allocation will be allocated to the replacement lead investigator in the department, with the other half reverting to the department.
- 7 Research-active emeriti may continue to accrue research-incentive funds in retirement. Research-active emeriti who retain full scientific responsibility and leadership of a project of which they are lead investigator, will receive the full research-incentive allocation.
- 8 Where a contract or grant was obtained by someone who retires before the grant ends and scientific responsibility for the contract or grant is transferred to a new lead investigator, the research-incentive funds accrued on that contract or grant after the date of retirement of the original lead investigator should split evenly between the research-active emeritus and the new lead investigator on the grant, on the grounds that the new lead investigator will assume full scientific responsibility for, and leadership of, the project. Uneven splits may be negotiated, but should be agreed in writing before the change in lead investigator takes effect. Where a retiring lead investigator on a continuing contract or grant does not remain research-active, half the research-incentive funds from the continuing contract or grant will be allocated to the new lead investigator and the remainder will revert to the department. Funds accrued before the date of retirement revert to the department.
- 9 Research-incentive funds are disbursed to salaried members of the department, only.

3 Research-incentive scheme: rates of accrual and transfer of balances

- 10 For the purposes of this policy, overhead means the sum of directly allocated and indirect funds.
- 11 Account funds are accrued at the following rates.
 - 11.1 two percent of overhead *received* on full-economic-cost contracts and grants, noting that overhead received from funders is typically less than the full cost (for example, UKRI pay 80% of the overhead cost); and
 - 11.2 five percent of overhead *received* on full-economic-cost UKRI responsive-mode grants (ie, excluding named calls), noting that overhead received from funders is typically less than the full cost (for example, UKRI pay 80% of the overhead cost).
- 12 The accrual of research-incentive funds at two percent for investigator salary recharges (ie, faculty salary charged to a project as a directly incurred charge) is restricted to CDT Directors.
- 13 Balances of up to £10,000 are carried between financial years (08-01/07-31). Where balances exceed £10,000 at the end of a financial year, without exception, amounts over £10,000 revert to the department and residual balances are carried between financial years.
- 14 Students on the MSc in Mathematical Modelling and Scientific Computing can work on a dissertation project proposed by an industrial partner. The income from each project includes £500 to be shared between the supervisors' research incentive funds.

4 Research-incentive scheme: use of funds

- 15 Research-incentive funds may be used for academic expenses such as books, computing equipment, software and travel costs for the fund holder or members of an associated research group.
- 16 Research-incentive funds may also be used to cover reasonable costs for alcohol (as per the University rules), as part of an event funded by external research contracts or grants that do not permit alcohol to be charged to the funded project (eg, as with UKRI funded projects).
- 17 Research-incentive funds may be used to cover meals associated with events involving external or internal visitors to the Mathematical Institute, as follows. Here, external refers to non-employees of the University and internal refers to any employee of the University. Students are a separate category being both internal but non-employees of the University.
- 18 For events involving an external visitor: meals may be charged for an external visitor and can include reasonable costs for a meal for the visitor and members of the Mathematical Institute as follows:
 - 18.1 no more than three employees are permitted for each non employee (ie the ratio of 3 employees: 1 non-employee is not exceeded). Note here that non-employees include both external visitors and students of the MI.
 - 18.2 Reasonable costs for alcohol consumed with a meal are also permitted.

This is regarded as business entertaining.

- 19 For events involving internal visitors only (employees of the University of Oxford and students at the University of Oxford), 'refreshments and working meals' may be charged so long as the University policy for the charging of refreshments and working meals is observed. It is reasonable to provide light refreshments (e.g. tea, coffee and biscuits) before, during or after a meeting. However, the cost of working meals may only be charged if
 - 19.1 the refreshments are an integral part of the meeting; and
 - 19.2 a copy of the agenda, notes or action points are retained for HMRC auditing purposes; and
 - 19.3 a complete list of attendees is retained;
 - 19.4 the meeting takes place in an appropriate location:
 - If meeting attendees are all University personnel, the meal should take place on University premises (not colleges);
 - If meeting attendees are both University and external personnel, the meal can take place on or off University Premises (including colleges); and
 - 19.5 alcohol is NOT consumed.

Important Notes:

A meal taken immediately after a meeting or including alcohol, is considered to be entertaining and not a working meal.

College premises are NOT considered to be University premises.

Hospitality and entertainment events that take place off University premises and only include University personnel are classed as non-business (social) entertaining and each attendee is subject to tax and National Insurance on the value of the entertainment.

- 20 Where there is doubt as to the appropriateness or eligibility of an expense, advice should be sought from the departmental Finance Manager before funds are committed.

5 Seminars, colloquia and other events: overview

- 21 Each research group is allocated a seminar budget for the financial year and may spend within this budget, subject to the limitations set out in this policy.
- 22 Seminar organisers should take maximum advantage of external sources of funding. Seminar costs should be split between the seminar budgets and research grants, where appropriate.
- 23 The Committee chair must approve requests for events other than colloquia and seminars, with the understanding that this is last-resort funding to be granted if support is not available from research grants, research groups' own funds or otherwise from external sources.

6 Seminars, colloquia and other events: use of funds

- 24 Funds may be used to cover meals associated with seminars, colloquia and other events involving external or internal speakers to the Mathematical Institute, as follows. Here, external refers to non-employees of the University and internal refers to any employee of the University. Students are a separate category being both internal but non-employees of the University.
- 25 For seminars, colloquia and other events involving external speakers: meals may be charged for an external visitor and can include reasonable costs for a meal for the visitor and members of the Mathematical Institute as follows:
 - 25.1 no more than three employees are permitted for each non employee (ie the ratio of 3 employees: 1 non-employee is not exceeded). Note here that non-employees include both external visitors and students of the MI.
 - 25.2 Reasonable costs for alcohol consumed with a meal are also permitted.

This is regarded as business entertaining.

- 26 For seminars, colloquia and other events involving internal speakers, (employees of the University of Oxford and students at the University of Oxford), 'refreshments and working meals' may be charged so long as the University policy for the charging of refreshments and working meals is observed. It is reasonable to provide light refreshments (e.g. tea, coffee and biscuits) before, during or after a meeting. However, the cost of working meals may only be charged if
 - 26.1 the refreshments are an integral part of the meeting; and
 - 26.2 a copy of the agenda, notes or action points are retained for HMRC auditing purposes; and
 - 26.3 a complete list of attendees is retained;

- 26.4 the meeting takes place in an appropriate location:
If meeting attendees are all University personnel, the meal should take place on University premises (not colleges);
If meeting attendees are both University and external personnel, the meal can take place on or off University Premises (including colleges); and
- 26.5 alcohol is NOT consumed.

Important Notes:

A meal taken immediately after a meeting or including alcohol, is considered to be entertaining and not a working meal.

College premises are NOT considered to be University premises.

Hospitality and entertainment events that take place off University premises and only include University personnel are classed as non-business (social) entertaining and each attendee is subject to tax and National Insurance on the value of the entertainment.

- 27 Where there is doubt as to the appropriateness or eligibility of an expense, advice should be sought from the departmental Finance Manager before funds are committed.

7 Travel expenses of members of faculty

- 28 Members of faculty in the department are permitted to spend up to £1,250 per financial year (08-01/07-31) on research-related travel costs. Funds may not be carried over from one financial year to the next. Visa costs may not be charged to the department. Where possible, faculty that benefit from funded research projects are expected to charge research-related travel costs to funded projects.
- 29 The fund is open to all members of faculty employed by the department, with part-time employees able to draw a pro-rated amount per financial year.

8 Visitor expenses

- 30 Funds for longer-term visits to the department are available at the discretion of the committee chair. Members of faculty in the department with funds to host visitors should ensure the correct procedures are followed and departmental approvals are obtained² in advance of any visit.

9 Diversity Fund

- 31 There is a Diversity Fund (£20,000 per financial year) for enhancing the diversity present in academic activities beyond the standard efforts. Requests to the Diversity Fund are to be sent to the Chair of Research Committee, outlining the reason for the request, how it will increase diversity beyond standard efforts, and the amount being requested.

10 Policy maintenance and distribution

- 32 All queries concerning use of RC funds should be referred in the first instance to Sara Jolliffe (*lead Research Group Assistant*) and the Finance Team, as appropriate.

- 33 Changes to this policy are made by Research Committee in consultation with the Finance Manager, with the exception of changes to the research-incentive scheme rates of accrual and transfer of balances policy, which are made by Finance Committee.
- 34 This document is maintained by the secretary to Research Committee.
- 35 Before the last Research Committee meeting of each year, the secretary to Research Committee will consult the chair of the Committee and the Finance Manager before any proposed changes to the policy are put to the Committee at the last meeting of the year. Agreed changes will be incorporated and a new version of this document will be circulated to Committee members.
- 36 Changes to this document resulting from decisions of Finance Committee will be communicated by the secretary to Finance Committee to the secretary to Research Committee. Changes will be incorporated and a new version of this document will be circulated to Committee members.
- 37 Committee members should ensure that colloquia, seminar and other event organisers in the research group are provided with the current version of this document.

revision history

version 1.0, 2024-06-06	version 4.0, 2025-09-09
version 2.0, 2024-07-19	version 5.0, 2026-03-02
version 3.0, 2024-10-15	