

## **Guidance Notes for Schools on the Use of Devolved Roberts Funding For Academic Year 2008/09**

Roberts Management Group (May 2008), updated 1 September 2008

Since August 2007 one third of the University's annual Roberts funding for PhD student and early career research staff transferable and career development skills support has been devolved directly to Schools.

This document updates and summarises guidance notes circulated to Schools in August 2007<sup>1</sup>. It provides advice on what Roberts funding can and cannot be used for, together with details of the amount of devolved Roberts funding allocated to each School for academic year 2008/09 (Appendix 1).

Background information on Roberts funding and the University's implementation of the Roberts Review skills training recommendations is available on the web ([www.postgrad.ed.ac.uk/pgskills/wgpublic.htm](http://www.postgrad.ed.ac.uk/pgskills/wgpublic.htm)).

The Research Councils have indicated that University level Roberts funding is expected to continue for at least the duration of the current Comprehensive Spending Review period (to 2010/2011). It is anticipated that one third of this funding will continue to be devolved directly to Schools. The effectiveness of this system of devolved Roberts funding and related reporting arrangements will next be reviewed in early 2009.

### **Restrictions on the Use of Roberts Funding**

There are relatively few restrictions on the use of Roberts funding. It is up to the University and Schools to decide how their allocations of Roberts funding can best be used to support the implementation of the Roberts agenda. The most important thing is for Schools and the University to be able to demonstrate the steps being taken in response to the Roberts agenda and our commitment to supporting the personal, professional and career development of PhD students and research staff.

Whilst the amount of Roberts funding allocated depends on the numbers of Research Council funded PhD students and research staff this funding can be used for training and support that is open to all postgraduate researchers<sup>2</sup>. One constraint is that the funding cannot be used for something that will not be used by any Research Council funded researchers. It would not, for example, be appropriate to use Roberts funding to run a course or event that would only attract international students (i.e. none in receipt of Research Council funding). Nor would it be appropriate to use Roberts funding to pay for a non Research Council funded researcher to attend an external course.

There is considerable flexibility in what sorts of activities can be supported. This includes face to face courses, workshops or events, web-based material, printed information, mentoring, networking, individual advice and more. For research staff, support for career planning is a key element of the Roberts agenda.

Roberts funding cannot be used to pay for specialist training (e.g. specialist research methods or techniques). Roberts funding should only be used to support transferable skills as defined in sections c-g of the Research Councils' Joint Skills Statement (see Appendix 2). Two further specific exclusions given by the Research Councils are the use of Roberts funding to support supervisor training and to support specialist academic conference attendance. The Research Councils have been very clear that they would not consider either of these to be an appropriate use of Roberts funding.

More detailed guidance on what would and would not be considered appropriate is provided in a revised set of Frequently Asked Questions published by RCUK in August 2007 ([www.rcuk.ac.uk/cmsweb/downloads/rcuk/researchcareers/faqs.pdf](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/cmsweb/downloads/rcuk/researchcareers/faqs.pdf)).

---

<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.postgrad.ed.ac.uk/pgskills/schoolguidance0708.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> The term "postgraduate researcher" is used here to include both PhD students and research staff (particularly early career research staff).

## **Examples of Roberts Funded Activities**

It is important that Schools feel able to use the devolved Roberts funding flexibly and in a way that best meets their local requirements, structures and priorities.

Roberts funding can be used to develop new initiatives, to enhance or expand current provision, or to encourage better use to be made of existing central or local support. The purpose of this devolved funding is to encourage flexible and creative approaches. This might include both formal and informal approaches to skills development and career management and can link up with other School priorities for postgraduate researchers (e.g. PhD milestones and review; research staff appraisal and management).

Schools are free to work collaboratively, with one another and/or with groups like transkills, HR, careers, other support groups, external organisations or individuals, industry etc.<sup>3</sup>

In the first year of devolved Roberts funding (2007/08) a considerable amount of new training and development support has been established in Schools. The provision of devolved Roberts funding has also raised the profile of skills training and career development for postgraduate researchers, especially research staff, in many Schools. Examples of the plans for devolved Roberts funding developed by Schools for 2007/08 are available on the web ([www.postgrad.ed.ac.uk/pgskills/schoolplans.htm](http://www.postgrad.ed.ac.uk/pgskills/schoolplans.htm)).

In the interests of sharing and extending good practice and innovation between Schools, annual reports on the use of devolved Roberts funding will also be posted on this web page<sup>4</sup>. We will organise a showcase event in December 2008 for Schools to further encourage the sharing of practice and collaboration between Schools. Examples of activities and events that have run in different Schools include a residential Biotech Entrepreneurship event, summer schools, viva workshops, networking, mentoring and internal poster events. Several Schools have involved PhD students and research staff in developing their plans for how best to use this funding.

The Vitae Database of Practice ([www.grad.ac.uk/practice](http://www.grad.ac.uk/practice)) provides a searchable set of examples of skills development initiatives (including those supported through Roberts funding) in institutions across the UK. It includes examples of courses, events, on-line support, mentoring and evaluation approaches.

## **Reporting Requirements**

The reporting requirements for Schools on their use of devolved Roberts funding will be similarly light touch and proportionate to the approach taken by the Research Councils for University reporting on Roberts over the last 3 years.

Rather than provide a detailed breakdown on their use of Roberts funding, Schools will be asked to provide a short description of their approach to implementing Roberts along with some specific examples of activities, events or support. A simple 1-page reporting pro forma has been prepared to simplify this process (Appendix 3). As part of this reporting Schools will be asked to confirm that their devolved Roberts funding has been spent in a manner consistent with the conditions described above and provide notice if any of their funding allocation is unspent. Reports should be submitted in October each year (i.e. October 2009 for academic year 2008/09).

## **Sources of Further Advice and Information**

To discuss any concerns or queries on the restrictions and reporting requirements around Roberts funding please contact Jon Turner ([j.d.turner@ed.ac.uk](mailto:j.d.turner@ed.ac.uk)).

- Background on University of Edinburgh implementation of Roberts and links to information on School-based Roberts activity: [www.postgrad.ed.ac.uk/pgskills/wgpublic.htm](http://www.postgrad.ed.ac.uk/pgskills/wgpublic.htm)
- Background on national Roberts funding and policy: [www.grad.ac.uk/roberts](http://www.grad.ac.uk/roberts)
- RCUK August 2007 FAQs: [www.rcuk.ac.uk/cmsweb/downloads/rcuk/researchcareers/faqs.pdf](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/cmsweb/downloads/rcuk/researchcareers/faqs.pdf)
- Vitae (formerly UK GRAD) Database of Practice: [www.grad.ac.uk/practice](http://www.grad.ac.uk/practice)

---

<sup>3</sup> see [www.postgrad.ed.ac.uk/pgskills/SupportforSchools.htm](http://www.postgrad.ed.ac.uk/pgskills/SupportforSchools.htm) for details

<sup>4</sup> [www.postgrad.ed.ac.uk/pgskills/schoolplans.htm](http://www.postgrad.ed.ac.uk/pgskills/schoolplans.htm)

### Appendix 1 –Allocations by School for Academic Year 2008/09

Funding allocations are based on allocating one third of the expected annual Roberts funding direct to Schools. Each School has been allocated a minimum of £500 to support PhD students and £500 to support research staff with the remaining allocation based on the number of Research Council funded PhD students and research staff in each School.

This funding will be transferred to Schools in early October 2008. Schools should provide Jon Turner (j.d.turner@ed.ac.uk) with the Cost Centre, Job Code and Account Code for an appropriate School account (or accounts).

School	PhD Students		Research Staff		Total amount
	number RC funded	allocated amount	number RC funded	allocated amount	
<b>Biology</b>	81	<b>23,862</b>	81	<b>21,573</b>	<b>45,435</b>
<b>Chemistry</b>	50	<b>14,730</b>	39	<b>10,387</b>	<b>25,117</b>
<b>Engineering &amp; Electronics</b>	38	<b>11,195</b>	32	<b>8,523</b>	<b>19,718</b>
<b>GeoSciences</b>	52	<b>15,319</b>	40	<b>10,653</b>	<b>25,972</b>
<b>Informatics</b>	61	<b>17,971</b>	37	<b>9,854</b>	<b>27,825</b>
<b>Mathematics</b>	20.5	<b>6,039</b>	5	<b>1,332</b>	<b>7,371</b>
<b>Physics</b>	43	<b>12,668</b>	51	<b>13,583</b>	<b>26,251</b>
<b>Arts, Culture and Environment</b>	13.5	<b>3,977</b>	1	<b>500</b>	<b>4,477</b>
<b>Divinity</b>	4	<b>1,178</b>	0	<b>500</b>	<b>1,678</b>
<b>Education</b>	8	<b>2,357</b>	1	<b>500</b>	<b>2,857</b>
<b>Health in Social Sciences</b>	0	<b>500</b>	1	<b>500</b>	<b>1,000</b>
<b>History, Classics and Archaeology</b>	14.5	<b>4,272</b>	2	<b>533</b>	<b>4,805</b>
<b>Law</b>	6	<b>1,768</b>	2	<b>533</b>	<b>2,301</b>
<b>Business and Economics</b>	8	<b>2,357</b>	1	<b>500</b>	<b>2,857</b>
<b>Literatures, Languages and Cultures</b>	17	<b>5,008</b>	5	<b>1,332</b>	<b>6,340</b>
<b>Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences</b>	24.5	<b>7,218</b>	14	<b>3,729</b>	<b>10,947</b>
<b>Social and Political Studies</b>	58.5	<b>17,234</b>	16	<b>4,261</b>	<b>21,495</b>
<b>Medicine &amp; Veterinary Medicine</b>	102	<b>30,049</b>	70	<b>18,643</b>	<b>48,692</b>

Notes:

Research Council (RC) research staff numbers based on RC headcount (including AHRC) provided by HR in January 2008.

RC funded PhD numbers based on RC headcount (including AHRC) from Registry in March 2008.

Head count and amounts for research staff updated 1 September 2008

## **Appendix 2 – Research Councils’ Joint Skills Statement**

Research Council guidance is that sections c to g of their Joint Skills Statement (printed **in bold** below) are covered by Roberts funding.

---

### **Joint Statement of the Research Councils' Skills Training Requirements for Research Students**

#### Introduction

The Research Councils play an important role in setting standards and identifying best practice in research training. This document sets out a joint statement of the skills that doctoral research students funded by the Research Councils would be expected to develop during their research training.

These skills may be present on commencement, explicitly taught, or developed during the course of the research. It is expected that different mechanisms will be used to support learning as appropriate, including self-direction, supervisor support and mentoring, departmental support, workshops, conferences, elective training courses, formally assessed courses and informal opportunities.

The Research Councils would also want to re-emphasise their belief that training in research skills and techniques is the key element in the development of a research student, and that PhD students are expected to make a substantial, original contribution to knowledge in their area, normally leading to published work. The development of wider employment-related skills should not detract from that core objective.

The purpose of this statement is to give a common view of the skills and experience of a typical research student thereby providing universities with a clear and consistent message aimed at helping them to ensure that all research training was of the highest standard, across all disciplines. It is not the intention of this document to provide assessment criteria for research training

It is expected that each Council will have additional requirements specific to their field of interest and will continue to have their own measures for the evaluation of research training within institutions.

#### (A) Research Skills and Techniques - to be able to demonstrate:

- the ability to recognise and validate problems
- original, independent and critical thinking, and the ability to develop theoretical concepts
- a knowledge of recent advances within one's field and in related areas
- an understanding of relevant research methodologies and techniques and their appropriate application within one's research field
- the ability to critically analyse and evaluate one's findings and those of others
- an ability to summarise, document, report and reflect on progress

#### (B) Research Environment - to be able to:

- show a broad understanding of the context, at the national and international level, in which research takes place
- demonstrate awareness of issues relating to the rights of other researchers, of research subjects, and of others who may be affected by the research, e.g. confidentiality, ethical issues, attribution, copyright, malpractice, ownership of data and the requirements of the Data Protection Act
- demonstrate appreciation of standards of good research practice in their institution and/or discipline
- understand relevant health and safety issues and demonstrate responsible working practices
- understand the processes for funding and evaluation of research
- justify the principles and experimental techniques used in one's own research
- understand the process of academic or commercial exploitation of research results

**(C) Research Management - to be able to:**

- **apply effective project management through the setting of research goals, intermediate milestones and prioritisation of activities**
- **design and execute systems for the acquisition and collation of information through the effective use of appropriate resources and equipment**
- **identify and access appropriate bibliographical resources, archives, and other sources of relevant information**
- **use information technology appropriately for database management, recording and presenting information**

**(D) Personal Effectiveness - to be able to:**

- **demonstrate a willingness and ability to learn and acquire knowledge**
- **be creative, innovative and original in one's approach to research**
- **demonstrate flexibility and open-mindedness**
- **demonstrate self-awareness and the ability to identify own training needs**
- **demonstrate self-discipline, motivation, and thoroughness**
- **recognise boundaries and draw upon/use sources of support as appropriate**
- **show initiative, work independently and be self-reliant**

**(E) Communication Skills - to be able to:**

- **write clearly and in a style appropriate to purpose, e.g. progress reports, published documents, thesis**
- **construct coherent arguments and articulate ideas clearly to a range of audiences, formally and informally through a variety of techniques**
- **constructively defend research outcomes at seminars and viva examination**
- **contribute to promoting the public understanding of one's research field**
- **effectively support the learning of others when involved in teaching, mentoring or demonstrating activities**

**(F) Networking and Teamworking - to be able to:**

- **develop and maintain co-operative networks and working relationships with supervisors, colleagues and peers, within the institution and the wider research community**
- **understand one's behaviours and impact on others when working in and contributing to the success of formal and informal teams**
- **listen, give and receive feedback and respond perceptively to others**

**(G) Career Management - to be able to:**

- **appreciate the need for and show commitment to continued professional development**
- **take ownership for and manage one's career progression, set realistic and achievable career goals, and identify and develop ways to improve employability**
- **demonstrate an insight into the transferable nature of research skills to other work environments and the range of career opportunities within and outside academia**
- **present one's skills, personal attributes and experiences through effective CVs, applications and interviews**

**Appendix 3 - Pro forma for School Reporting on Roberts Funding**

**Roberts Funding for Researcher Development**

**Report on activity during academic year 2008/09**

(to be sent to Jon Turner, j.d.turner@ed.ac.uk, by 10 October 2009)

**School:**

**Contact name:**

Please provide an outline report of how the Roberts funding devolved to your School has been used to support the implementation of the PhD student and research staff skills training recommendations of the Roberts Review.

Please describe your general approach and provide specific examples of support for PhD students and research staff (please include web links to sources of further information if appropriate).

I confirm that the Roberts funding allocated has been used in accordance with the guidelines provided.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Unspent balance (if any) at financial year end:

Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

