

Returners and Carers Fund Policy

1. Purpose

The Department is committed to supporting the professional development and career ambitions of its staff. We recognise that staff with caring responsibilities may incur additional costs when participating in work-related training.

To address this, the Returners and Carers Fund (established in the 2025/26 academic year) provides financial assistance to eligible staff to help offset caring costs and enable participation in training and development opportunities.

2. Scope and Eligibility

The scheme is open to all academic, research, research-related, professional, and support staff within DPIR who have regular caring responsibilities, including childcare or caring for a parent, partner, or close relative.

Applicants must demonstrate that their application relates to costs incurred as a result of work-related training, as defined by His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC)

3. Definition of Work-Related Training

HMRC Guidance states that childcare or other caring costs can be reimbursed tax and national insurance free if they relate to "work-related training".

According to HMRC, "work-related training" is any training course or activity designed to:

- Impart, instil, improve, or reinforce knowledge, skills, or personal qualities useful in the employee's role; or
- Qualify or better qualify the employee for their employment; or
- Enable participation in charitable or voluntary activities arising from their employment.

Examples include, but are not limited to, conferences, training courses, and research visits. Activities must fall outside routine day-to-day duties but remain directly relevant to the applicant's role.

4. Eligible Costs

Eligible costs are additional caring costs incurred specifically because of attending work-related training, over and above routine caring arrangements. Examples include:

- Additional nursery fees if attending a course on a non-working day.
- Childminder, babysitter, or after-school club costs when work-related training extends routine hours.

- Travel costs for a dependent child and/or additional carer to attend a conference with the applicant.
- Travel costs for a carer (e.g., grandparent, sibling) to provide support during a training and/or event related to career development.
- Other caring costs associated with work-related training.

Applicants may request funding for more than one work-related training activity; however, a separate application must be completed for each event. Approval of multiple applications is subject to funding availability and the panel's discretion.

Please note that the fund cannot be used to cover the cost of the work-related training activity itself or for a college/department teaching buyout.

The department will not cover any additional tax liabilities resulting from a funding award; these will be the responsibility of the staff member.

5. Funding Structure

The Fund operates on two tiers:

- **Tier 1:** Awards up to £250 for training or courses.
- **Tier 2:** Awards up to £1,000 for exceptional circumstances relating to caring responsibilities.

The total fund for each financial year (August-July) is £5,000. Funds cannot be carried forward into the following financial year, and any unspent balance will be returned to the central budget. No extra funding will be made available, and individual awards will not exceed the scheme's annual limit.

6. Application Process

Submission: Applications must be submitted before the work-related training takes place; retrospective applications will not be considered.

Applicants should complete the application form which outlines:

- The work-related training activity.
- Caring costs associated with their preferred care arrangements.
- Evidence that costs exceed routine arrangements.

Applicants must ensure that their application seeks to cover additional caring costs incurred when attending work-related training, as defined by [HMRC](#).

Rounds: There will be three application rounds per year (Michaelmas, Hilary, and Trinity Terms).

Closing dates for applications in 2025/26:

- Michaelmas: Friday 14th November 2025
- Hilary: Friday 23rd January 2026
- Trinity: Friday 1st May 2026

Funding Source: Applicants should apply to the [University's Returners and Carers Fund](#) first. If unsuccessful, they may then apply to the DPIR fund. Funding cannot be received from both schemes for the same activity.

Notification: Applicants will be notified of the panel's decision within 10 working days following the closure of the application round. Any delays will be communicated within the same timeframe.

Claims: Successful applicants must submit approved claims via the standard expenses system within three months of the activity, and within the same financial year the funding was approved. Receipts and evidence of expenditure are required to comply with the university financial regulations.

Changes to Approved Use: Any changes, particularly if actual expenditure exceeds the awarded tier, must be resubmitted to the panel for approval.

7. Financial Administration

- Claims must be submitted through the standard expenses process for the exact amount spent but must not exceed the maximum award granted.
- If the full award is not used (e.g., if £250 is awarded but only £150 is spent), the unused £100 will be returned to the fund and cannot be reallocated for other purposes.

8. Decision-Making Panel

Applications will be reviewed by the DPIR Returners and Carers Fund Panel, comprising:

- Head of Department
- Head of Administration and Finance
- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Officer
- Human Resources Manager

Decisions of the panel are final, and there is **no right of appeal**.

Governance	Detail
Policy Owner	Matthew Gooch, EDI Officer
Reported to/Noted by	General Purposes Committee (GPC)
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