



QUEEN'S UNIVERISTY, BELFAST CARER'S RESEARCH SUPPORT FUND POLICY AND GUIDANCE

Introduction

Participation in conferences, training, and research-related events is a cornerstone of career development for academics and researchers. However, participation in such activities is more difficult for those with caring responsibilities. Queen's recognises these challenges and is committed to supporting parents and carers in their engagement with work-related training activities, as part of its broader approach to enhancing and enabling an inclusive and supportive research culture. The **Carer's Research Support Fund (CRSF)** has been designed to contribute towards the cost of care that is additional to normal care provision when staff are attending career development activities such as conferences, training, or other research-related events. The fund has been developed by the Queen's Gender Initiative as part of the Institutional Athena Swan Programme and is launched in partnership with the Research & Enterprise Directorate.

The fund is being run in 2024/25 as a pilot and thereafter will be evaluated for uptake and efficacy.

1. Scope and Eligibility

a) Who and what is eligible?

The fund is open to **Academic (T&R), Academic (Education) and Research staff of all grades with caring responsibilities who deliver research** at Queen's. The definition of research in this context covers pedagogy.

The fund covers those employed on either a Permanent or Fixed Term Contract. Please note that Professional Services staff including Technicians are not eligible for this fund. Expansion of the fund to other staff categories will be considered after the pilot period of the fund.

Under HMRC regulations, the activity being undertaken e.g. conference, must be considered as work-related training, on university business, which is defined as any training course or other activity which is designed to impart, instil, improve or reinforce any knowledge, skills or personal qualities which:

- are, or are likely to prove, useful to the employee when performing his/her duties; or
- will qualify or better qualify the employee to undertake the employment, or to participate in charitable or voluntary activities arising through the employment.

Members of the Extended Workforce are not eligible for this scheme.

b) What can it be used to support?

Additional Caring Needs

It is envisaged that the fund will be used to support individuals' additional caring needs while attending events such as conferences, workshops, training or partnership-building engagements, directly linked to their research at Queen's.

The fund will contribute to costs associated with the additional care of dependants i.e. care that is additional to normal care provision. A 'dependant' is defined as the staff member's spouse or civil partner, child or parent, or someone living in the same household who is not their employee, lodger, or boarder and relies on the staff member for their care.

The fund can contribute to various expenses, including additional time at nursery or day-care, extra hours for a registered childminder, additional elderly care, nursing, medical, or respite care supplied by a care provider registered with an agency, and additional after-school clubs.

Payments cannot be made to family members unless they are registered childminders or registered care providers.

Under HMRC tax regulations, there are no personal tax implications for the staff member if the reimbursement is for eligible caring costs and the work-related training criteria is met.

c) What is not eligible?

- Conferences, training events, or activities that are not directly related to research or pedagogy aligned with the relevant School/Centre are not eligible for support.
- Events which do not meet the definition of work-related training as explained in Section 1a.
- Costs that are not directly associated with the individual applicant or their dependants, such as expenses tied to delivering research activity, fall outside the fund's purview.
- Currently, the fund cannot support travel and accommodation for dependants accompanying a staff member to a conference or other career development activity. This will be reviewed after the pilot period.

2. Application Process

Applicants are required to complete a short application, which can be accessed here: [HYPERLINK]. Eligibility and approval will be determined by colleagues in the Research & Enterprise Directorate in consultation with the Queen's Gender Initiative team, if required.

- Staff members may apply for up to £500 per academic year, covering the period from August 1 to July 31.
- Applications are assessed on a first-come, first-served basis until the fund is exhausted.
- Applications must be submitted prior to the planned research activity; retrospective applications will not be considered.
- Applications should include evidence of anticipated costs. It is recognised that receipts will not be available until the costs have been incurred, so evidence may include invoices to be paid or outlines of rates for care services.
- Applicants are required to seek approval from their Head of School or Director of Research. This endorsement should be submitted along with the application.

- The application review process, undertaken by colleagues in R&E/QGI, commits to providing a decision within two weeks of application submission.
- Please note that some research Funders may fund such costs, but generally only activity integrally linked to the research grant will be chargeable, and tax and national insurance will apply as described above for events which do not meet the definition of work-related training, and for costs which are ineligible for tax exemption such as travel and accommodation for dependants.

3. Finance and Claims Process

- Once an application has been approved, the approved amount will be transferred to the School / Directorate project code stated on the application. Therefore, if due to unforeseen circumstances your final costs exceed that which you have set out on your application form, please contact Research & Enterprise to request an amendment to your approved application form. If approved, the additional funding will be transferred as above.
- Subsequent to incurring the costs, applicants are required to get in touch with the relevant Finance contact in their School or Directorate in order to reclaim the funds. Payment can only be made upon submission of an approved application form, a completed CRSF Staff Claim Form [HYPERLINK] and original invoices and receipts. All caring costs must be incurred outside of normal care provision/arrangements.
- Care services must be supplied by a registered care provider or agency. The claim should include details of the additional hours of care, dates, times, and associated costs. In cases of self-employed registered childminders, a written receipt detailing additional hours of care with dates, times and the provider's signature will be accepted if submitted with a copy of their Registration Certificate from a Health Trust in Northern Ireland. Carers without this certificate or without agency receipts are ineligible.

Section 5: Monitoring and Review

- Successful applicants will be required to provide a brief follow-up report detailing the impact of the funding.
- The fund is initially structured as a 1-year pilot. We welcome feedback from all staff. If you would like to comment on any aspect of the fund, please complete the all-staff feedback form [HYPERLINK].
- The University reserves the right to vary or discontinue the fund. It should be noted that the fund is provided on a discretionary basis and does not form part of staff terms of employment.

Section 6: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What if my care provider does not provide formal receipts?

Registered childminders are recognised as self-employed carers who must be registered with the Early Years Team in a local Health and Social Care Trust in Northern Ireland. Therefore, a written receipt detailing additional hours of care with dates, times and the provider's signature will be accepted if submitted with a copy of their Registration Certificate from a Health Trust in Northern Ireland. Carers without this certificate or without agency receipts are ineligible.

2. The guidance states that I can claim up to £500 in a financial year. What does this mean?

To streamline the financial administration of the scheme, it adheres to Queen's financial year (1st August – 31st July). This structure allows for claims up to £500 within this defined period.

3. If my claim is unsuccessful, do I have to wait 12 months to apply again?

No, applicants can submit a further application within the funding round, but the maximum claim remains at £500 within any given financial year.

4. I am no longer able to attend the conference/the conference is cancelled, what should I do?

In the event of a change in circumstances or the cancellation of a conference, immediate communication with both the Line Manager and the R&E team (rse@qub.ac.uk) is essential. This ensures the prompt reclaiming of any funds transferred to the School or Directorate, and the timely cancellation of booked care.

5. What does it mean that the activity being undertaken must be considered as work-related training?

Under HMRC regulations, additional care costs for dependants are not considered as a benefit in kind and therefore subject to personal tax, if the activity being undertaken is considered as work-related training, on university business. Applicants to the fund are required to fill out a declaration on the application form that the activity they are undertaking adheres to the HMRC definition of work-related training. The full definition can be found in Section 1a.