Including visa costs for research staff on research grant proposals

Guidance for Investigators

Introduction

From 1st January 2021, all EU and non-EU citizens wanting to live and work in the UK will require a visa https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration. The University's guidance for recruiting managers can be found here as part of the recruitment and selection guidance. The University's guidance on Immigration and Visas can be found here.

The UK immigration system which determines overseas applicants' rights to enter and work in the UK includes charges for:

- Certificates of Sponsorship
- Visa applications for prospective employee and their dependents
- The immigration health surcharge.

The University's visa expenses policy permits Schools to reimburse visa costs on behalf of employees and their dependents but only where grant funding is available and allowed as an eligible cost. Please note that visa costs are not eligible with all funders or funding schemes (see Annex I), please seek advice from your Research Development Manager.

It is usual practice for the University to only cover the cost of the Certificate of Sponsorship (see section 5 in this guidance).

Inclusion on research grant applications

A number of institutions pay the cost of visas for incoming research staff. As these costs are considerable, this can be attractive to potential applicants. The cost of a visa application and immigration health surcharge can vary depending upon individual circumstances, which won't be known at the time of the grant application. It is therefore recommended that £716 for the visa application and £1035 per year for the immigration health surcharge is included in grant applications as in the majority of cases this will be sufficient to cover the costs. The University will cover the cost of Certificates of Sponsorship.

Costing guidance

Investigators who are including a PDRA on their research grant application should include £716 to cover the cost of a visa application and £1035 per year to cover the immigration health surcharge as part of their staff recruitment costs. Some funders, including UKRI, will allow these costs to be vired to other directly incurred costs if they are not required for their original purpose.

Timelines

Visa applications will extend the time required to process a new employee and must be factored into the recruitment process. Current guidelines from UK Visas and Immigration are that a visa application will take up to 8 weeks, in addition to the advertising and appointment process. Therefore, unless the start date is determined by the funder guidelines, please allow at least 4 months from the funding outcome to the start date of the relevant staff member.

Annex I Funders and visa cost eligibility

For funders not listed below please seek advice from your Research Development Manager.

FUNDER	VISA COSTS FOR RESEARCHERS ELIGIBLE?	COMMENTS	LINK TO GUIDANCE
UKRI	Yes for named Directly Incurred Staff directly employed on a grant for 50% or more of their contracted time.	Contingency costs for unknown researchers at point of application are not eligible. However, if there is enough budget available then these costs can be charged to the grant afterwards. Costs can be incurred prior to the start of the grant provided that is does not precede the date on the offer letter.	https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/UKRI-020424-FECGrantTermsConditionsGuidanceApril2024.pdf
British Academy Post-doctoral Fellowships	Yes	If a host institution will incur visa costs to employ a potential applicant, these will be able to be costed and covered	https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/funding/postdoctoral-fellowships/frequently-asked-questions/
British Heart Foundation	No		https://www.bhf.org.uk/for-professionals/information-for-researchers/how-to-apply/grant-costing-guide - see line “Recruitment”
Leverhulme Trust	Yes	Will pay direct to ECF awardees. For other schemes visa costs should not be included	https://www.leverhulme.ac.uk/salary-costs

		as part of the application budget; they will be reimbursed following appointment of the member of staff.	
Met Office	Yes	Visa costs incurred prior to start of the project can be invoiced as part of the first payment point	
Royal Society (University Research Fellowship, Dorothy Hodgkin Fellowship)	Yes	Will cover costs for applicant and dependents	https://royalsociety.org/-/media/grants/university-research-fellowship/urf-scheme-notes---2024.pdf
Wellcome Trust	Yes	Will cover costs of researchers whose salary is funded on the grant. Will also cover dependents	https://wellcome.org/grant-funding/guidance/costs-grantholders-can-claim
EU Funding			

Version control

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