**Post-Graduate Research Innovation Fund 2016: Call for Project Proposals**

The University is excited to announce the fourth annual call for proposals to provide funding for groups of students working on projects to support and improve the postgraduate research student experience. The PGR Innovation Fund 2016 is now accepting project proposals. The closing date for proposals is **14 June 2016**.

PGR Innovation Fund awards are designed to pump-prime the development of responsive and/or innovative projects to improve the student experience. The awards will not fund individual student research. **It is anticipated that 5-8 projects will be funded, each for up to £4K. Proposals do not have to be for the full £4K.**

This document outlines guidance on how to submit an application as well as criteria on which proposals will be judged.

Interested parties are encouraged to attend a “launch” and information event on **11 May 2016 from 9-11 a.m.** (Barbara Strang Teaching Centre G34). The booking form for the launch event is available here: <http://forms.ncl.ac.uk/view.php?id=7919>.

PVC of Learning and Teaching Professor Suzanne Cholerton will launch the funding call, and last year’s successful project teams will participate with PG Deans and academic staff in a panel on strategies for enhancing the PGR student experience. The application process will also be explained, and any questions you have will be answered.

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**PGR Student Involvement and Leadership**

Student involvement and leadership are central to all PGR Innovation Fund projects. In practice, this means two things: that all projects should focus on the student experience, and that student teams should develop, propose, and carry out all projects. One staff member should be named as the sponsor for each team. Students should not propose individual projects, and teams of students can work together within or across Schools/Institutes/subject areas.

Student involvement and leadership may also entail any or all of the following:

* **Researcher development**

The PGR Innovation Fund asks student teams to articulate what skills will be developed through their participation in the project (e.g., public engagement, teaching, collegiality, innovation, influence and leadership). Proposals should refer directly to the [Vitae Researcher Development Framework](https://www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers-professional-development/about-the-vitae-researcher-development-framework/developing-the-vitae-researcher-development-framework) where appropriate and may explain how the project will build on existing skills as well as enhance and develop new ones.

* **Projects that engage with students**

This approach aims to involve students in the process of doing a project and not only as beneficiaries of it. In addition to teams primarily composed of PGR students, this could include employing student interns and/or consulting students about the scope or execution of a project (e.g., focus groups, SSCs, questionnaires). Depending on the nature of the proposal, PGR student teams may wish to engage with students within or across cohorts and/or academic units.

* **Projects that engage with student opinion**

Proposers may wish to engage directly with 2015 PRES (Postgraduate Research Experience Survey) results either to identify elements of the student experience that should be addressed or to support the need for project funding.

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**Suggestions for Potential Projects:**

Student teams should develop projects with the potential to have a **significant and lasting impact** on PGR student experience in their area(s). Projects should satisfy an identified on-going demand and/or improve an identified weakness in the student experience.

The following list of potential projects is intended to be inspirational rather than comprehensive; teams may of course propose a project that is not listed here.

Potential projects may include:

* The development of new PGR training or induction materials (e.g., online videos, web resources, workshops)
* Pump priming investigations into improving aspects of the student experience
* Opportunities for networking and/or social engagement (e.g., conferences, a cross-faculty or cross-institution seminar series, student-run workshops, induction activities)
* Opportunities for public engagement (e.g., liaising with local industry, seminars with local A-level courses, public seminar series, public events or installations)
* Micro teaching (matching up people who want to practice teaching with those who would like to learn a particular topic, e.g. a language, software skills)

Projects should not propose changes to academic provision (e.g., proposing a new module) unless they are broadly demanded by the student body and integral to improving the student experience. Proposals should not be used to support an individual’s research project and should not duplicate existing projects within the academic unit. Projects should be sustainable – i.e., the project should have a lasting benefit for its recipients and should not be a one-off event. If the team wishes to propose a one-time event (e.g., a conference), the proposal must explain how the event will either be repeated in future (with new funding sources) or how it will continue to have a lasting impact on the student body (and not just on the students involved in organising the conference).

Teams who have previously received funding from the PGR Innovation Fund may apply again, but they should not propose repetitions of previous years’ projects. Any 2016 proposals should either put forward an entirely new project or suggest how additional funding will help to further develop a project based on the outcomes of last year’s success.

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**Criteria against which proposals will be considered**

Proposals will be collated by LTDS (Learning and Teaching Development Service) before selection by a panel of student and staff judges. This panel will then make recommendations to the Chair of ULTSEC based on the following criteria. Please note that these criteria should be read in conjunction with the guidance notes included as Appendix I of this document.

1. Does this proposal show how the project will broadly enhance the PGR student experience:
   1. In the academic unit(s) involved in the project?
   2. In other academic units?
   3. Across the university as a whole?
2. Does the proposal explain sufficiently why the project is needed to improve the student experience? Has evidence of need been provided? (Providing evidence of need is likely to involve some consultation with the School/Institute/Faculty training team and possibly evidence from student surveys or other data.)
3. Does the project demonstrate PGR student leadership and researcher development?
4. Based on the information provided in the proposal, is the project feasible within the resources (funding) sought?
5. Does the proposal include consideration of how the student team will measure and demonstrate the impact of its project on the student experience?
6. Does the proposal consider how on-going student demand might be met beyond the period of funding, if appropriate? Is the project sustainable?

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**Report on Project Outcomes**

Please note that all successful project teams will be asked to produce a one-page summary of their actions and outcomes, to be due in September 2017. Successful teams will be given more information about this requirement.

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**Links to further information**

A link to all relevant documentation will be available here: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/quilt/resources/research/pgrinnovation>fund

**The closing date for proposals is 14 June 2016.** The contact for initial queries about the PGR Innovation Fund 2016 is Graeme Redshaw-Boxwell in LTDS ([pgr.innovation@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:pgr.innovation@ncl.ac.uk) / Ext. 83903).

Proposals should be submitted online and a copy of the proposal uploaded as a Word or PDF document. The link for submission is available here: <http://forms.ncl.ac.uk/view.php?id=8023>

**Appendix I: Guidance notes for preparing proposals**

The following notes are offered as guidance on key information to include and use five subheadings for clarity. Teams are welcome to amend, rename or combine sections; teams may also use a different structure as long as it contains equivalent information.

[A sample proposal is available](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/quilt/resources/research/pgrinnovationfund.htm) to offer teams an example of how they might frame and justify their projects. This sample is entirely hypothetical and is not intended to reflect any existing projects; use it only as a guide when preparing your proposals.

**A. Planning and rationale**

This section should provide a brief background to the project, explain the need and/or demand for the project, and identify its benefits. PGR Innovation Fund proposals should:

* identify the aims and objectives of the project, and explain why you have chosen to do this project;
* provide evidence of why the project is needed to satisfy student demand or improve an identified weakness in the student experience (this may involve consultation with School/Institute/Faculty training teams and/or evidence from student feedback);
* be clear what your project will do, and why this is important in your context;
* make explicit how the project will impact upon the PGR student experience;
* make explicit the leadership and researcher development opportunities for PGR students involved in the project;
* make explicit how the project will be made sustainable (i.e., will continue to have an impact on the student experience after its completion).

Pleasenote that Innovation Fund projects are not a replacement for other local projects and should not duplicate existing projects. Projects may be used to expand upon or restructure existing initiatives (including 2013, 2014 or 2015 funded PGR Innovation Fund projects) as long as the proposal demonstrates substantial additional development.

**B. Project management**

This section should show who and what are involved in your project, and how and when you will achieve your objectives. PGR Innovation Fund proposals should:

* identify which students will be involved as team members, who will serve as a staff sponsor, and what their respective roles will be. Primary and secondary student leads should be identified for purposes of communication with the panel;
* identify which academic unit(s) are involved in the project and which students are the intended beneficiaries;
* identify key actions to be taken in the development of the project;
* explain how the project will be made sustainable and will continue to have a positive impact on students beyond the initial year of funding;
* include a preliminary month-by-month timeline for the project. This should begin after the announcement of award recipients in July 2016 and note the PGR Innovation Fund dissemination event in April or May 2017 (details of this event will follow in due course) and the deadline for the final project report in September 2017. Here is an example timeline:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **June** | **July** | **Aug** | **Sept** | **Oct** | **Nov** | **Dec** | **Jan** | **Feb** | **March** | **April** | **July** |
| **Task 1** | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Task 2** |  | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Task 3** |  |  | ✓ |  | ✓ |  | ✓ |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Task 4** |  |  |  |  | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |
| **Team meetings** | ✓ |  | ✓ |  | ✓ |  | ✓ |  | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |
| **Event** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | ✓ |  |
| **Report** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | ✓ |

**C. Support and funding**

This section should clarify the amount of funding requested and show how it will be used. It should also identify any other support that already exists from academic unit(s) to complete the project (e.g. funding pledged by the relevant Head(s) of School/Director(s) of Institute). PGR Innovation Fund proposals should:

* identify how much funding is sought and how the funding will be used. It is anticipated that 5-8 projects will be funded, each for up to £4k, but projects do not have to request the maximum £4k funding. The panel will consider all funding requests based on the rationale offered by project teams and may ask teams to revise their initial cost projections. With sound justification, for example, projects may request funding to purchase equipment, fund travel, pay a visiting speaker, or organise an event. It may also be appropriate to fund student interns or short-term clerical assistance. **Students cannot be paid for their own time.**
* give a breakdown of costs with sufficient detail to demonstrate that the proposal has considered all necessary expenses. For example, a request for an intern’s time should show the amount of time multiplied by the hourly wage, rather than ‘estimated £2k intern costs’. Here is an example breakdown of costs:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Item** | **Calculations** | **Line total** |
| NWE student intern | £600 for 100 hours | £600 |
| Travel to partner schools in Northumberland | 2 days coach hire | £428 |
| eBook to use as key text | £127 educational licence | £127 |
| Design and print of resources (detailed in section Y of project plan) | 140 copies at 84p per copy | £117.60 |
| **Total** | |  |

* note that the panel may ask teams to review the funding and support their request in the light of the panel’s consideration;
* demonstrate that, if resources from another Academic Unit or service are needed, this has been agreed with the relevant Unit. For example: project proposals that include the use of technology (particularly eLearning technologies) should demonstrate initial discussion about the technical feasibility of the project with a named contact in LTDS and/or NUIT, and where appropriate your Faculty computing officer or equivalent.

**D. Impact and dissemination**

This section should show how you will measure the impact of your project on the student experience and evaluate whether or not the planned benefits have been achieved. It should also show how you will disseminate your project internally and externally. PGR Innovation Fund project teams should:

* include in their project plan how they will assess and demonstrate their project’s impact on students. This is likely to include both qualitative and quantitative measures where possible, for example:
  + group interviews with students and/or public bodies impacted by your project
  + a survey of students who were impacted by your projects
  + notes from discussions at SSCs
  + formal or informal evaluations of induction sessions, workshops, etc.
* engage in internal dissemination of their project’s outcomes through local events as well as those facilitated by LTDS, including a presentation at the April/May 2017 PGR innovative practice event.
* consider the ongoing impact of the project and ways in which to increase its sustainability.

**E. Administrative considerations**

Innovation Fund proposals should:

* be approved by the relevant Head(s) of School/Director(s) of Institute. This approval should be emailed separately to [pgr.innovation@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:pgr.innovation@ncl.ac.uk)
* be approved by the supervisors of the student leads involved in the project. Contact details for supervisors should be provided in the submission form.
* be no longer than four sides of A4 paper.

**The closing date for proposals is 14 June 2016.** All proposals should be submitted using the form available here: <http://forms.ncl.ac.uk/view.php?id=8023>