Staff Guidance Notes – 2016/17

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1. Introduction

1.1. The full title of URSS is the Undergraduate Research Support Scheme (“URSS”) to emphasise that the scheme supports the student to undertake this development opportunity, both financially and in relation to skills development.

1.2. The URSS is co-ordinated and administered by the Student Development Unit, Centre for Student Careers & Skills at The University of Warwick (“University”). The purpose of the Unit is to provide skills development for all students irrespective of academic performance, in order to enhance their employability and the quality of their life choices.

1.3. Bursaries will only be allocated following an annual, rigorous application and scoring process, in February/March. There is a limited amount of funding and payment of bursaries shall always be subject to University budget constraints.

1.4. The University shall always use reasonable endeavours to act fairly when making decisions to whom to allocate bursaries. The University reserves the right to decide at its absolute discretion how it wishes to allocate the bursaries to applicants. It shall not (unless required by law) be required to give any reasons for its decisions.

2. General Information

2.1. Applications are made for a bursary of up to £1000 for UK-based projects and up to £1500 for research overseas. This is a contribution to the student’s living and other associated costs whilst carrying out the project (e.g. accommodation, travel, subsistence, childcare, conference registration). The bursary does not provide a salary and cannot be used to purchase project-related equipment or services (e.g. laboratory consumables or other equipment, photocopying, library access cards);

2.2. As the URSS supports undergraduate students to experience research, the departmental training and support offered is a core part of that experience and should be tailored to the needs of each student. For this reason, supervisors need to complete a separate application form for each student, even if they are working on a joint project;

2.3. For projects involving overseas travel:
   • If the application is successful, a full risk assessment form must be completed by the student and supervisor together and signed off by the relevant Head of Department, allowing sufficient time in advance of travelling for any issues to be addressed. One copy should be kept by the lead supervisor, with further copies passed to the additional supervisor(s) –
if applicable, the Head of Department or departmental administrator, as appropriate and the URSS administration.

- The University holds travel insurance which covers students travelling on University Business. Indication that the student will be travelling abroad will be passed to the University’s Insurance Services. Please see the web page (www.warwick.ac.uk/finance/insurance) for full details. However, it is advisable for the student to contact the Insurance Services Office directly to ensure that the policy is activated for the duration of his/her time abroad.

2.4. The URSS Review Board will assess the applications and if approved, payment will be made to the student either directly (via a transfer request to Student Finance), or via the nominated departmental cost-code and then by transfer request to Student Finance in April/May each year;

2.5. The student’s performance in the research project should not dictate whether or not the bursary is paid. The funding is provided specifically to enable the student to pay their living costs over the research period, as detailed above. Should the student withdraw or cease to engage with the project before its end point, please inform the URSS Coordinator as soon as possible as the URSS may require the participant to return some or all of the bursary. The student would not gain a certificate evidencing successful completion of the URSS or HEAR accreditation. Withholding the bursary cannot be used as a sanction. You may wish to discuss any issues with the URSS Co-ordinator.

2.6. The Rights and Responsibilities document outlines the rights and the responsibilities of all parties involved in URSS. In particular the following should be noted: “Following discussions with the project supervisor, the URSS administration reserves the right to require repayment of the entire up-front award should it be reasonably determine that the bursary has not been used for the purposes set out in the application or the project has been largely not attempted or if the student fails to complete the required outputs. The participant should make available all information reasonably requested to establish such correct use of the award funding.”

3. Eligible Students

3.1. If the student applying for a research project with URSS is international and requires a Tier 4 study visa, please be aware that he/she has restrictions to the hours he/she is allowed to work, namely 20 hours during term time and full time in vacations. Although it is the student’s responsibility to adhere to the visa requirements, we ask that you support your student in this matter, by recording any meetings and email interaction that you undertake. For further information see the Office for Global Engagement web pages: Employment during and after your studies web pages (www.warwick.ac.uk/immigration/tier4/working/).

3.2. Students visiting Warwick under the Erasmus Scheme or other exchange programmes are not eligible to apply for URSS, primarily because they will no longer be Warwick Students over the summer vacation when the projects are carried out and when submissions are required.

3.3. Students who have taken a year’s temporary withdrawal from their studies are not eligible until their period of withdrawal is complete. If the withdrawal period is only part of the academic year, please contact the URSS administration (URSS@warwick.ac.uk) to discuss the feasibility of undertaking a URSS project, as timing is important.

3.4. There is no barrier for a previously successful URSS student to apply for a further URSS bursary. However, they will be asked to share what more they hope to gain from undertaking another project and what additional skills and experience they are looking to gain. This will be taken into account by the reviewers.
3.5. Final-year students are eligible to apply for a URSS bursary, however it should be noted that some or all of the project period will likely fall after graduation, when student status is changed. This may add additional complications, in particular for IT, Library and building access and although the URSS Administration tries to minimise the impact that this has on the URSS experience, this is not always possible.

4. Project Requirements

4.1. A URSS project cannot be used for anything required as part of the student’s course (i.e. credit-bearing); it must not include any work which will later be submitted for assessment (e.g. final year dissertation/research project), except as background information or in the introduction. As supervisor, the URSS relies on you to ensure this rule is adhered to;

4.2. Projects should last between 6 and 10 weeks; anything less is deemed too insubstantial to gain a good understanding of the research experience;

4.3. Projects usually take place over the summer vacation, but in reality can start any time after summer exams are completed, on agreement between the student and supervisor;

4.4. The project data-collection phase should be concluded in enough time to allow the student to complete and submit the required tasks of URSS (poster, abstract & online portfolio). An extension will not automatically be granted to allow extra time;

4.5. When developing a project for URSS, you should bear in mind that it should offer undergraduate students the following opportunities:

✓ To achieve substantial outcomes;
✓ To develop a range of research skills;
✓ To develop a range of transferable skills;
✓ To develop any required discipline-specific skills or knowledge;
✓ To work as a member of a research team or group and develop awareness of academic research;
✓ To participate in interdisciplinary work where possible;
✓ To contribute to on-going research being undertaken in the department or centre.

4.6. In addition, departments give a commitment that students will:

✓ Receive regular supervision from the PI or additional supervisor (normally one meeting per week in the case of students carrying out a project full time and one meeting every two weeks for part-time students). Be allocated a space in which to work on their project in the department.
✓ Receive training necessary to carry out their project, including health and safety training.
✓ Provide full support to the student in seeking guidance from the appropriate Research Ethics Committee and obtaining the necessary approval.
✓ Receive support to complete their reflective portfolios, academic poster and abstract, as required by the URSS itself.
✓ Receive written feedback on completion of the project.
4.7. The bursary application is scored on three areas of assessment criteria:

**Impact**: refers to the level of impact participating in the project will have on the student and his/her future plans (study, employability, career choices). This section is described fully in the student’s application, but you should take this into account when detailing the support you/your department will provide.

**Quality**: is about the project itself (i.e. the nature of the research), how it fits into departmental research and the ways in which students will be supported in in developing any required skills. It is essential that the student understands the objectives and limitations of the project and can elucidate these in his/her application form.

**Value for money**: requires an accurate, breakdown of projected living and associated costs that the student will need to pay in conducting the research. As this can only be up to a maximum of £1000, consideration must be taken as to how this will support the student’s living costs for the proposed period. E.g. £1000 over 10 weeks = £100 per week - campus accommodation costs £91 per week minimum, leaving £9 per week. Therefore to ensure the student can still buy food & pay travel costs, the project may need to be reduced in length.

5. **Ethical Implications**

Undergraduate projects do regularly involve areas that require ethics consideration and/or approval. Any potential ethical implications of the project must be fully explored with the student, seeking guidance from the appropriate University Research Ethics Committee (REC) and where required, obtaining formal REC approval before the project commences. The URSS liaises with the REC’s regarding ethics within URSS projects to ensure compliance. Please see the REC’s webpages (www.warwick.ac.uk/ris/research_integrity/researchethicscommittees) for further details.

6. **Supervision of URSS Projects**

6.1. **Who Can Supervise a URSS Project?**

6.1.1. Staff supervising URSS projects should be full Warwick employees, primarily for ease of administration and communication.

6.1.2. If you are a clinician primarily employed in a hospital, or other similarly-contracted staff, you are welcome to supervise a URSS participant at the project-level, but we ask that you work in partnership with a full Warwick employee who will complete the application form and be named as lead supervisor, with yourself as additional supervisor.

6.1.3. If you are a member of a support department, you are also welcome to supervise a URSS participant as lead supervisor, but you will need an academic colleague as additional supervisor, in order to ensure adequate research supervision.

6.1.4. If you are a post-doc, you are also welcome to supervise projects as long as you are comfortable and adequately experienced in doing so. If not, please invite your PI to act as additional supervisor.

6.1.5. If you are a PhD student, you are NOT eligible to be lead supervisor on a URSS project. However, you can be named as additional supervisor, as we recognise that supervising can be a learning experience for you too.

If you have any questions over your status, please contact the URSS Co-ordinator (URSS@warwick.ac.uk).
6.2. Supervision over the Summer Vacation

6.2.1. Most projects take place over the summer vacation and we know that you will have arranged to take leave during this period. However, we still expect the participant(s) to have access to proper supervision during this period, as they are often not experienced enough to cope with set-backs, unexpected predicaments or emergencies alone.

6.2.2. Experience has shown us that reliance on email and/or Skype is not enough. If necessary, we will direct the student to contact the Head of Department named in the application, should the need arise.

6.2.3. Should the URSS Co-ordinator have any concerns with the student-supervisor relationship, the Head of Department will also be contacted.

6.3. Numbers of Students / Numbers of Projects

6.3.1. We do not restrict the number of projects that you can supervise – we leave it to you to assess the workload that you can manage! We ask that you bear in mind that undergraduate students often need more support and guidance than postgraduates.

6.3.2. We also do not restrict the number of students working on a project. However, as each application is assessed on its own merits (although by the same reviewers), there is no guarantee that all members of the team will be successful. An application will not be reconsidered just because the student is part of a team. Please consider the consequences in these circumstances and ensure your students are aware of the implications.

6.4. Extended Absence / Leaving the University

Should you no longer be in a position to actively supervise the URSS participant(s) during the project period for any reason (e.g. due to sickness, change of employment, parental leave), you should inform the URSS administration as soon as possible, communicating any cover arrangements and contact details for any staff replacing you. Please also ensure your Head of Department also has this information;

7. Specific Guidance for Completing the Staff Application Form

7.1. As supervisor, you must submit a separate form for each student, even if he/she is working on a group project. This will then be combined with a separate but corresponding form from the student(s) as, for technical reasons, the application forms cannot be accessed jointly.

7.2. Please note that once submitted, you are unable to go back and edit/make additions to the form(s). Any major discrepancies between the forms may count against the application.

7.3. The URSS administration will not follow up on incomplete applications (e.g. where one half of the application is missing). Please therefore ensure you complete it in full communication with your student.

7.4. Please ensure that the project title is exactly the same on both your and your student’s application forms, as this field is used to link the forms together into the full application.

7.5. Please ensure that the project end date is well in advance of the URSS tasks submission date, (specified on the URSS website). An automatic extension will not be given to allow for time to complete the tasks, as this needs to be taken into consideration from the outset.
7.6. Please ensure that you indicate on the form whether the student will be travelling overseas as part of the project and to where. This is essential, as the URSS administration will require this information should the application be successful.

7.7. Please include the name(s) & email address(es) of additional supervisor(s), both at the University, elsewhere in the UK and overseas. They will be included in any communications from the URSS Co-ordinator relating to the project and/or the student.

7.8. The supporting information (questions 1-6) is the primary area assessed by the reviewers against the quality section of the assessment criteria (see section 4.7 above). A strong application will contain information that is clear, realistic and appropriate. It should show evidence of being well-thought out, personalised for each student and supporting the student’s stated aims for undertaking a research experience.

7.9. Please support the student in creating the funding breakdown. This will remain a key element of the application form so the Review Board can assess the feasibility of the project plan. Bursaries cannot be granted to pay for project-related costs, so mention of these should be omitted.

7.10. If the amount requested differs between the two forms, the student’s amount will be used in the review process.

7.11. The amount requested does not affect the decision to award the bursary. Further funding cannot be granted once the application has been reviewed and accepted, so please ensure the funding breakdown is correct at the time of submission.

7.12. Please ensure that the details of both the finance code and the financial/administrative staff member you nominate are correct. This is vital for the bursary transfer process to run smoothly. Finance codes fall into one of three categories, each with a particular number (n) / letter (l) combination:

- Cost code - nnllllnn
- Order code - variable combination, but no more than 10 digits
- Project code - l.llll.nnnn.lll

If you are unsure which category your code falls into, please contact Victoria Timms in the Finance Office directly, rather than URSS.

7.13. When you submit your completed application, you will receive an automated response and copy of your submission to say the application has been submitted successfully. If you DO NOT receive this email immediately, please check you clutter/junk folder, and then contact URSS@warwick.ac.uk to verify your submission. This receipt will be taken as proof of application in case of query, so please retain for future reference.

8. Application Review Process

8.1. All applications go through a Review Board decision process in February/March, after the closing date for submission of applications.

8.2. The application is scored on three areas of assessment criteria as detailed in section 4.7 above:

- Impact
- Quality
- Value for money

8.3. You should expect to hear the outcome by email, by the end of the spring term.
8.4. The URSS will not return your application form and nor will it provide individual feedback on applications.

8.5. A bursary awarded through URSS is given in good faith; i.e. if the application is successful and the student accepts the bursary, he/she is expected to complete the project in the agreed timescale and submit the required outputs to URSS and/or the department on or by the deadline given. The URSS would appreciate you supporting the student in this and inform the URSS Co-ordinator as soon as possible should you and/or the student identify any issues which impact the project.

8.6. The bursary agreed by the Review Board following a successful application, will be transferred to the project department via the nominated cost code. The department will then arrange the transfer of the bursary to the student, via Student Finance.