



University of
Salford
MANCHESTER

Bench Fee Policy

Version Number 1.0

Effective from July 2023

Owner: Director of Doctoral School

Research & Enterprise Directorate

1.0 Definitions

A Bench Fee is a payment made to the University for the use of specified and/or enhanced facilities. The requirement for a bench fee occurs when a programme (or specific project) incurs additional costs beyond the scope of what might reasonably be expected at a university when conducting day-to-day research projects in any specific disciplinary environment. Bench fees are also referred to as Research Support or Training Support fees.

2.0 Purpose

This policy outlines the University of Salford's approach to determining, setting and charging bench fees for postgraduate research students.

The Bench Fee Policy forms part of the contract between the postgraduate research student and the school with whom the postgraduate research student is studying or has accepted an offer to study.

The Policy should be read alongside the Bench Fee Guidance document (see 6.0).

3.0 Scope

- This policy applies to all University staff involved in setting and confirming a bench fee for a postgraduate research degree programme and/or a postgraduate research degree student.
- This policy applies to all postgraduate research students (Home and International) with whom a bench fee has been proposed and confirmed in writing as part of the University of Salford offer process, regardless as to how the student is funding bench fees or any other part of their studies.
- This policy does not apply to undergraduate or postgraduate taught programme students.
- This policy is separate from the Tuition Fees Policy.

4.0 Policy Statements

4.1 Principles

- a. The University is committed to a fair and transparent bench fees policy, clearly outlining the payment expectations and agreements for postgraduate research students.
- b. All fees are published by the Research & Enterprise Directorate and are payable in pounds sterling (GBP, £) unless otherwise stated in any contractual documentation, or within this policy.
- c. The University reserves the right to change, amend or alter this policy during the academic year if considered appropriate and necessary to do so. Any changes will be communicated in full to all postgraduate research students who are registered students or in receipt of an offer letter.
- d. Bench fees are agreed in principle at prospective postgraduate research student interview and outlined in an offer letter. Bench fees may be re-reviewed at any point during a programme lifecycle only if the direction of research changes and all parties (i.e., the student and the University) agree to a change in bench fee tier and projection. Any such changes must be recorded in writing and signed by the student, supervisor(s), and PGR Director.

- e. Where a bench fee is used in part of in full to purchase tangible or intangible (e.g. software) equipment, the equipment remains the property of the University of Salford.

4.2 Bench Fee Setting and Annual Fee Increases

- a. Bench fees should be discussed and provisionally agreed at the point of interview between a prospective postgraduate research student and a provisional supervisor(s) or supervisory team. A costing form (available in Bench Fee Guidance) must be completed by the supervisor. Agreed bench fees must be signed off by the Associate Dean Research and Innovation (ADRI) of the relevant school(s) before an offer letter is produced.¹
- b. Any provisionally agreed bench fees will be outlined in full in a prospective student's offer letter. The offer letter will include details around how and when to make payment and will provide a contact with whom to discuss the details of the offer and the proposed bench fees.
- c. Acceptance of an offer letter is contractually binding, per the provisions outlined in the offer letter, and at the point of acceptance, the prospective student is agreeing to pay the outlined bench fees amount in full.
- d. Bench fees are payable in full by the date stipulated on the degree programme contract.
- e. No part of the bench fee is refundable. For students on interruption, the bench fee will be placed on hold until studies recommence. If the student ends their contract and leaves their studies at the University of Salford at any stage, no part of the bench fee is refundable.
- f. Bench Fees are chargeable in £500 increments, subject to sign off of a Bench Fee Costing Form by the Associate Dean Research or nominee. Supervisors should calculate the annual bench fee amount for the project as: total cost for project / number of years of project, rounded down to nearest £500 increment.

Total Project Bench Fee ÷ Years of Project ~d~ nearest £500

e.g.

$£10,750 \div 3 \text{ years} = £ \sim d \sim = £3,500$

- g. If the total project bench fee calculation equates to £1500 or less, the Dean or nominee should review and determine whether the bench fee can be covered by existing resources. If it is determined that the total fee cannot be covered by existing resources, then a full, single payment of the total fee becomes payable by the student or sponsor at the start of the project.
- h. PGR Directors will liaise with Associate Deans Research and Innovation and supervisors in their schools annually to assess bench fee chargeable increments; the increments may be increased in order to cover changing costs of equipment, technologies, salaries, other consumables or travel costs. Recommendations for changes will be made to the PGR Forum for assessment as a standing annual item on the agenda.
- i. The PGR Forum will be responsible for informing the Fees and Marketing team of any changes made as part of the annual review to the bench fee increments.

¹ In this instance the Associate Dean Research and Innovation (ADRI) is delegated authority to the Dean of School.

4.3 Bench Fee Provision

- a. Bench fees are required to cover the cost of a wide range of activities and purchases. Many postgraduate research degrees can be successfully completed without the addition of a bench fee. A bench fee should only be used to fund essential additional components to a postgraduate research degree that are agreed between the student and supervisory team. For transparency and easy of understanding, the University has specified what a bench fee may be used for:

4.3.1 Essential Components

Bench fees will fund the cost of essential components which might include:

- To fund the time of a discipline-specialist technician (internal or external) to set up and/or support a study in a specialist environment (e.g. wet or dry laboratory, studio, Energy House, production suites etc.).
- The purchase, or hire, of specialist equipment or software for use by the postgraduate research student as part of their investigative studies.²
- Consumables not provided as standard by the University as part of a postgraduate degree programme of study (e.g. glassware and reagents for use in the laboratory).
- Essential external training courses.
- Specialist text or reference books that cannot be purchased through other internal means (e.g. the Library).
- Other non-standard resources required to enable the planned research project.

4.3.2 Optional Components

Bench fees may also be used to cover the cost of optional components that could be considered highly beneficial to the postgraduate researcher's degree but are not essential for its completion. These must be agreed between student and supervisory team prior to commencement of the year of study. Such items may include elements of the Essential Components list and/or:

- To cover the cost of conference fees (including conference fee, travel, accommodation)
 - Optional training courses
 - Open Access publication costs/other publication fees
- b. Bench fees are payable to the University. Following student registration, charging and accessing bench fees is managed through the Costing & Project Accountant Team in Finance but all staff and student liaison regarding bench fees is managed through the Doctoral School Team in the Research & Enterprise Directorate.
- c. Details of Bench Fees, including any conditions, must be clearly detailed in any offer letter(s) sent to students as per standard student admissions process. The Doctoral School Team are notified of bench fees and any condition(s) via the offer letter.

² In situations where equipment (hardware or software) is purchased in entirety through a bench fee, exclusive use for the duration of the project should be agreed and guaranteed in writing. If a bench fee is used to contribute to shared equipment and/or its maintenance, then prioritised use should be agreed however cannot be guaranteed.

5.0 Policy Enforcement

- a. Adherence to this policy in its entirety is a requirement of all University staff involved in setting and confirming a bench fee and all postgraduate research students (Home and International) with whom a bench fee has been proposed and confirmed in writing as part of the University of Salford offer process. Non-adherence may result in disciplinary measures under the [Disciplinary Policy](#) or expulsion from a degree programme, in line with the Academic Handbook.
- b. Agreement and sign-off of chargeable bench fees must be done in line with existing and relevant Finance policy and procedure.

6.0 Related Documentation

Policies and Procedures
All University of Salford student-facing policies and procedures
Bench Fee Guidance
Data Protection Policy
Delegated Financial Authority Policy
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Annual Report 2021 (incl. EDI Statement)
Information Security Policy
Research Code of Practice
University of Salford Privacy Statement
External information of relevance to this Policy
Athena SWAN Charter
Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers
Data Protection Act (2018)
Equality Act 2010

[Researcher Development Framework \(2011\), Vitae](#)

If you experience any issues accessing any of the documents or links listed here, please contact researchgovernance@salford.ac.uk

7.0 Appendices

Appendix A – Considerations for Setting Bench Fees

Bench fees may be set to cover essential or optional items. Bench fees are required to cover the cost of a wide range of different activities and purchases. Bench fees should only be used to fund essential components to a postgraduate research degree. Considerations have been given by the schools to guide supervisors and students towards items or activities that could be funded by bench fees, these include:

- General consumables, e.g.:
 - plasticware, reagents, perishable items and pooled (e.g. laboratory) resources
- Specialist equipment, e.g.:
 - Specialist computer hardware beyond standard provision
- Specialist software, e.g.:
 - analytical / graphical software or access to cloud services that would not normally be provided by the School/University
- Specialist services, e.g.:
 - analytical services provided by external companies
- Travel or training as a specific requirement to the delivery of the project (e.g. fieldwork, specialist training, workshop/conference attendance)
- Contributions to research dissemination, e.g.:
 - poster printing, publication in specialist journals with whom the University does not have an agreement
- VAT, import duties on any of the above (if not medical or veterinary research in the case of VAT)
- Cover the cost of DBS checks

Before any agreement is made to procure specialist equipment or services, appropriate, required and relevant due diligence must be undertaken in line with existing University policy, procedure and code of practice, as well as external compliance and monitoring requirements. Moreover, for any specialist IT equipment, consultation should be taken with the appropriate team(s) in Digital IT to ensure the proposed purchase can be facilitated on University premises and into existing frameworks, policies and regulations. Similarly, consultation should be taken with the appropriate team(s) in Estates to ensure any physically large proposed purchases (e.g. equipment) can be physically moved and installed on University premises.

Document Control Information			
Revision History incl. Authorisation: (most recent first)			
Author	Summary of changes	Version	Authorised & Date
KY, RMc	<i>Submitted to VCET for consideration and approval for publication</i>	V1.0	Approved – July 2023
KY, RMc	<i>Incorporation of minor amendments requested by Research, Enterprise & Innovation Committee</i>	V0.6	Joint AERIC and REIC – June 2023
KY, IG & RMc	<i>Incorporation of changes requested by Research & Enterprise Committee and Finance. Inclusion of Bench Fee Guidance and Costing Template</i>	V0.5	Endorsed – REIC May 2023 Approved – November 2022 ADNPC
KY & RMc	<i>Updates to content following school review</i>	V0.4	PGR Forum, August 2022
RMc	<i>Updates to content, including costing model</i>	V0.3	Research & Enterprise Committee, May 2022
RMc	<i>Updates to content following feedback from PGR Forum</i>	V0.2	Associate Deans Research and PGR Directors (consultation by email)
KY & RMc	<i>First draft of policy</i>	V0.1	PGR Forum, April 2022
Policy Management and Responsibilities:			
Owner:	This Policy is issued by the Director of the Doctoral School, who has the authority to issue and communicate policy on Bench Fees and has delegated day to day management and communication of the policy to the Doctoral School Manager.		
Others with responsibilities (please specify):	All subjects of the Policy will be responsible for engaging with and adhering to this policy.		
Author to complete formal assessment with the following advisory teams:			
Equality Analysis (E&D, HR)	1. <i>Approved June 2023, ref. EIA2023-34</i>		
Legal implications (LPG)	2. <i>Considered, June 2023, no further changes</i>		
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Student facing procedures (QEO)	4. <i>Considered October 2022, no further changes.</i>		
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Staff Trades Unions via HR Students via USSU Relevant external bodies (specify)	1. <i>N/A (confirmed with HR, September 2022)</i> 2. <i>No changes requested</i> 3. <i>N/A</i>		

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