

**DISCRETIONARY STIPEND FOR A POSTGRADUATE STUDENT – GIFT AGREEMENT**

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**STUDENT DETAILS:**

Full, formal name of student \_\_\_\_\_

Informal/Cultural name (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Student Number (e.g Banner Number) \_\_\_\_\_

Student Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Department \_\_\_\_\_

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**STUDY DETAILS:**

Programme Code \_\_\_\_\_

Programme Type, PGR/PGT \_\_\_\_\_

Expected Qualification, MA, PhD etc \_\_\_\_\_

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**SUPERVISOR:**

Title and Name \_\_\_\_\_

Department \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Email \_\_\_\_\_

Cost Centre where stipend is to be charged \_\_\_\_\_

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**STIPEND PROPOSAL:**

- I wish to establish a discretionary **postgraduate stipend** payment schedule for the student indicated on this form, the payment schedule will be:

Value of tax-free monthly payment of GBP \_\_\_\_\_

*This monthly stipend value should be no-greater than current RCUK monthly equivalents, as an indication, RCUK monthly stipend for 2012/13 are GBP 1132.50 pm and will be GBP 1143.83 in 2013/14. It is quite permissible to offer a monthly stipend of less than the RCUK monthly equivalent.*

The stipend payment shall cover the following monthly payment periods inclusively

Commencing first payment in the Month of \_\_\_\_\_, in the year of \_\_\_\_\_

Final payment to take place in the Month of \_\_\_\_\_, in the year of \_\_\_\_\_

- I wish to offer support towards **tuition fee/continuation fee** costs:

Please circle as appropriate

YES          NO

If YES, then I wish to offer support of GBP \_\_\_\_\_ towards the tuition fee/continuation fee towards this student for the following academic year \_\_\_\_\_

The total stipend and tuition/continuation fee support I wish to offer the student will be TOTAL GBP \_\_\_\_\_; henceforth to be termed the "agreed sum" of the gift.

Agreed sums shall only be paid out by SIFSO if the student has signed a Discretionary Postgraduate Stipend Acceptance Form which confirms their acceptance of the terms and conditions and provides their bank details.

## **DISCRETIONARY POSTGRADUATE STIPEND TERMS AND CONDITIONS (Supervisor/Budget Holder)**

By signing this gift agreement I agree:

1. To meet the cost of the “agreed sum” from the cost centre provided and that sufficient funds are available to cover this.
2. That the student must maintain the appropriate registration status within the University Student Information System (Banner). Acceptable registration states are:

**RE**, indicating that a PGR or PGT student is fully registered, and receiving tuition/supervision,

**CO**, indicating that a PGR student is on Continuation, usually the writing-up period for a thesis outside of active supervision

**CP**, indicating that a PGT student is a Completing Postgraduate, usually writing up a dissertation, outside of active supervision.

Unacceptable registration states include, but are not limited to:

**UE**, indicating that the student is “Under Exam”, and has submitted their thesis/dissertation. This is an interim state between submission and passing, but discretionary financial stipend is not available in this period

**SC**, indicates that the student has successfully completed, ie has passed their exam/viva

**WD**, indicating that the student has withdrawn, or been removed, from their course

**DM**, indicating that the student is dormant, this is often due to a concession to be absent from active engagement in studies. DM is a problematic state, as it also covers ill health concessions or parental leave concessions. It is recognised that in exceptional circumstances, it may be appropriate for a student in the DM state to continue to receive stipend payments. Where this is the situation, a case for mitigation must be submitted to SIFSO for consideration as to whether such exceptional payments are appropriate.

3. If the student currently has any debt outstanding with the University, then the stipend shall initially take the form of a monthly repayment to the University to cover this debt until it is paid off. In this scenario, the student will not receive the stipend directly until their pre-existing debt is cleared. In cases where it is evident that the student is experiencing financial hardship, they should be directed to the Senior Tutor/Student Support Officer of their College, so that a possible application to University Hardship processes can be considered.
4. SIFSO shall maintain a record of the payment, and maintain a student file, for the duration required under regulations for the retention of financial records (currently seven years).

5. That the process of determining that the student should be awarded a discretionary stipend has been undertaken in a *fair and equitable* manner.

What defines a fair and equitable selection manner? As these stipend payments are discretionary in nature, there needs to be a rationale as to why the proposed recipient of the stipend has been selected to receive it. Discretionary payments to students are at risk of challenge from students who were unsuccessful, or were not considered to receive such stipends. In order to show a fair and equitable process, consideration must have been given to:

The source of funds:

For example, if the funds are wholly within the academic supervisor's control, then the process must be fair and equitable to all students the academic supervises, who are at a similar point in their studies. Similarly, if departmental funds are being used, the process must be fair and equitable to all students in the Department, at a similar point in their studies.

The amount of funds, and the year of spend:

For example, if funds exist within one Financial Year to support a student, it IS NOT necessarily unfair, nor inequitable if a similar student is refused discretionary stipends in the following financial year IF appropriate funds no longer exist within the source cost-centre in the new financial year. However if funds do exist, and are not actively earmarked for other purposes, it may be unfair and inequitable to the student in the following financial year.

The need for support:

If the student has a demonstrable need for support, then giving priority to one student over another, need not be unfair, nor inequitable IF the need is demonstrable, and can be explained in the event of a challenge from another student. An example may be where the recipient student has a need that has come about due to some unavoidable personal circumstance, eg bereavement, geopolitical instability in their home country, significant research problems during their period of study etc. If however, two students have broadly equal needs, in comparable circumstances (eg both needing support during the writing up year, to avoid seeking employment), within a reasonably concurrent timeframe, then a decision needs to be fair and equitable to both of them. The discretionary stipend process must be able to demonstrate that favouritism, patronage or other unfair influences have NOT been part of the allocation procedure by the submitting supervisor/department.

Whilst it is not necessary for the justification demonstrating that the award is fair and equitable to be submitted with this application, it may be requested, and must be supplied to SIFSO in the event of a challenge to the process. It is, therefore, important that documentary evidence is produced and retained.

6. That the budget holder has the appropriate authority to allocate the monies in this way, that the identified source of funds can be used for this purpose and such use does not in any way render the University liable to subsequent liabilities, loss/transfer of IPR or other fiscal implications.

If it is subsequently shown that the source monies were not eligible for such expenditure, the responsibility resides with the budget holder and will not be deemed to have been transferred to SIFSO. SIFSO cannot be considered to have acquired any responsibility towards the due diligence towards the expenditure of the original source of funds, other than to pay stipends/fees.

7. This Discretionary Postgraduate Stipend process is a commitment to support the student for the period specified, for the amount specified. Under normal circumstances it will not be possible to revoke the award of the stipend within the payment schedule. Exceptions will exist where the student can no longer maintain an applicable registration state in the student record system, the student becomes in bad-standing with the University or their College, the student has ceased engaging with their studies (and there is demonstrable evidence that the supervisor has tried to get the student to re-engage in a timely fashion), is under an Academic Progression Notice, or that exceptional circumstances exist whereby the Supervisor AND the Head (or Deputy Head) of the Student Immigration and Financial Support Office agree that continued payments are no longer appropriate.
8. That the student shall be expected to conform to, and the supervisor to accept that the student shall have the benefits of, and the responsibilities of, the Postgraduate Terms and Conditions posted at

[http://www.dur.ac.uk/graduate.school/finance/awardholders/pgr\\_terms\\_and\\_conditions/](http://www.dur.ac.uk/graduate.school/finance/awardholders/pgr_terms_and_conditions/)

where such terms and conditions are applicable (not all terms may apply to a student on Continuation), including aspects of annual leave, sickness leave, employment hours , repayment in the event of erroneous overpayment etc. Specific conditions cannot be imposed on individual recipients of a Discretionary Postgraduate Stipend.

**Signing page of Gift Agreement**

Signed (Supervisor)

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name Printed: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed (Budget Holder, if different to above)

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name Printed: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed (Representative of SIFSO, if proposal is accepted)

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name Printed: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

This document must be returned in-full, and in duplicate (both copies signed) to SIFSO, for counter-signing, and one copy will be returned to the signing Budget Holder.