UROP GUIDANCE NOTES 2020

These Guidance Notes are for use when applying for a student bursary under the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Programme. Please read the notes before completing the online ‘Application for Placement Funding’ form, if possible.

1. Funding of projects

There are two routes to funding UROP projects, through:

i. a university-funded six week student bursary, and
ii. direct support of an undergraduate student undertaking a research project from individual, departmental or project funds.

The current payment rate is £220/week; £1320 for a six week project. Irrespective of the funding source students participate in the same events as part of the UROP programme. If you wish to discuss direct support of a project please contact Tom McCann (details below).

2. Criteria used to assess UROP proposals for bursary support

Decisions will be based solely on the information provided in the application. Priority will be given to placements based on the extent to which the project:

a. provides a high impact learning opportunity for students in terms of the development of research skills and awareness, preferably providing authentic experience of a range of steps in the research process;

b. makes a valuable contribution to the research of the supervisor and to University research;

c. increases the knowledge and/or awareness of the School or Department.

3. Applying to the UROP scheme

Applications will usually be made by the member of staff who will be acting as Principal Investigator (PI) and supervising the project. Applications are welcome from any University department. PIs should be a permanent staff member (or a member of staff on a fixed term contract that runs until after Nov 2020). PDRAs can apply as a PI (with their supervisor as a Co-I) and PhD students may co-supervise projects only. Applications for funding must be completed online in conjunction with these notes and submitted by Friday 20th December 2019.

Placement applications are reviewed by a panel and decisions will be communicated to applicants by Friday 14th February. If approved, the information provided in the application will be used to advertise placement vacancies and project lists on the UROP website without further revisions. The application therefore has the dual purpose of helping make a decision about which placements to fund and providing student applicants with information about the placement. Please ensure you are happy with the copy before applying. Please note that there is a limit of two applications from an individual PI.

4. UROP and dissertations

UROP is an opportunity for students to engage in extracurricular research. This is recognised through inclusion on students’ diploma supplement annex. Whilst for many students UROP will enhance skills for final year dissertations proposed UROP projects should not have a dissertation as a direct explicit outcome.
5. Advertising Placements

Approved projects will be advertised centrally on the UROP website between 24th February and 3rd April 2020. No student selection should be made until this period expires. PIs are strongly encouraged to advertise vacancies locally in their departments by a variety of means.

6. Student Selection

PIs make their own arrangements for selecting students based on cover letters and CVs; normally interviews will be carried out with the PI and another member of staff. The selection must be open, fair and based on the skills specified in the application document. Academic references may be requested. Please note that the successful student should be allowed to use the PI as a referee for postgraduate courses or employment applications.

7. Student Eligibility

Any undergraduate student registered at the University of Reading can participate (with the exception of students who are paid to be on their degree by an existing employer) providing that the placement occurs in the middle years of their degree (i.e. at the end of the second year of a 3 year degree or at the end of the second or third years of a 4 year degree). Funding is not open to first year undergraduates, finalists, students from other higher education institutions or postgraduate students. Placements are permitted to commence after exams at the end of summer term and must finish by the beginning of the new academic year. A student is allowed to take part in one UROP placement only.

8. Once a Student Has Been Selected
   a. Placement Registration Form (important) - Once a student has been selected the PI is responsible for returning a hard copy of Student Registration Form to the UROP manager no later than Monday 11th May 2020. Funding will be withdrawn if correctly completed forms are not received by this date. The form needs to be signed by the PI, student and the Head of School and clarifies that all involved understand their responsibilities in terms of Health and Safety and Intellectual Property. PIs who allow students to start work before this has been done will not be awarded future funding under UROP and could be in breach of University regulations which could expose the University to legal difficulties. Please provide an accurate end date on the form.

   b. Deadline for Starting Placements – Placements must begin no later than Monday 20th July 2020. (Placements can be run full-time over 6 weeks or part-time over a period equivalent to 6 weeks full time).

9. Student Payments

Student payments will be made 2-4 weeks into the placement via bank transfer. It is essential that students verify that their bank details on RISIS are correct when completed the registration form.
Completing the Online Application Form

Application Form:
Applications must be made online through the link at:
www.reading.ac.uk/internal/UROP/ForStaff/Applying.asp

Applicants are advised that successful UROP proposals demonstrate benefits to both the student who will undertake the placement and their research programme. Sufficient detail to enable an evaluation of the structure and content of the project should be provided. Proposals lacking sufficient detail to enable an assessment of the impact of the experience will not be supported.

Title of Placement and project outline: The title will be used in placement listings and vacancy adverts, the outline (maximum 50 words) should indicate the disciplinary area and nature of the research.

Provide a longer description of the placement (maximum 250 words): This description should include information about the field of research, the research aims/activities and whether the placement is stand-alone research or part of a larger research project. If the placement is part of a larger project, how does the placement fit in? E.g. at which stage of the research project does it begin and end?

What will the research outcomes of the placement be? What do you plan to do with this research? Even if the placement is one short part of a longer research project there should be defined outcomes and achievements for the placement.

What tasks will the student undertake? This section will be used to advertise placement vacancies. The answer must provide the prospective applicants with a clear idea of what to expect from the placement. It should list the tasks that will be carried out and indicate the approximate proportion of time spent on them. This section must provide clear information and sufficient clarity to help students make informed decisions about the value of the placement to their personal development.

What skills/knowledge/experience will the student need? This section will be used to advertise placement vacancies and forms a person specification against which you should select a placement student. List the skills and knowledge which are required by the student at the start of the placement. Indicate whether skills are essential or simply desirable (by stipulating too many essential requirements you may limit the number of students who are able to apply for the placement). State any special requirements, such as travel etc.

What further skills will the student develop as a result of the placement? Outline the opportunities for development (specific research skills, software knowledge, lab techniques) offered by the placement. Please also state whether the placement is likely to lead to authorship for the student on any publications resulting from the research.

This is a key section for the selection of placements for funding – successful applicants will demonstrate that the placement offers a high impact learning opportunity for students in terms of the development of research skills and awareness, preferably providing authentic experience of a range of steps in the research process. Proposals where the student is simply providing additional resource to an existing project will not be supported. See the guidance on ‘Planning a Placement’ on the UROP web site for further information.

Student Application Procedure: State how you want students to apply (e.g. CV and covering letter). All projects must hold interviews with the supervisor and at least one other person. Will any skills be tested? This is up to you; make it simple, clear and fair and please retain your records for a period of at least 6 months. We encourage students to seek feedback on their application.
**Start and End Dates:** Note that for 2020 there is a requirement to start the placement no later than Monday 20th July and return Placement Registration Forms by Monday 11th May 2020.

**Place of Work:** Please specify where the placement will be based. Please note that if the student will be working off-campus for any length of time the PI must arrange insurance cover. Importantly, if the project involves a significant off-campus component (e.g. visiting sites, in the field or in libraries/archives) you should detail arrangements for the student’s supervision and travel.

In advance of the placement you will need to organise any additional facilities that may be needed for the student locally e.g. desk space, PC, swipe card access, telephone etc. We discourage PIs from permitting students to work at home other than for short periods as many benefits of UROP accrue from contact with the PI and other staff and researchers (postgraduates etc.).

**Induction:** The placement must include a structured induction within the first week. Please put the name here of the person who will be responsible for this. This must include a full health and safety briefing, according to normal School procedures.

**Progress Reviews/ Feedback:** The placement must include at least two reviews. It is suggested these take place after 2-3 weeks and at the end of the placement. Ideally students will have an informal review at the end of each week to discuss progress and revisit objectives. Please put the name in this section of the person who will be responsible for this.

**Second Supervisor:** If you are appointing a second supervisor please name them here. PhD students of the PI may provide some secondary supervision.

**Other Team Members:** Please put the main people with whom the student will be working on the project. This should give the student an idea of the range of people with which they will be interacting.

**School Authorisation:** Please enter your Faculty/School/Department – the online application will trigger a request for Head of School authorisation. Applications will not be considered without authorisation; you are therefore advised to ensure this is in place before the closing date.

**Research Theme:** Please select the most appropriate Research Theme for your proposal.

**Capturing the Benefits of a UROP Placement**

PIs and students are required to complete an online evaluation form shortly after the placement ends to help assess the impact of the experience for the student and supervisor.

All UROP students will be expected to present a poster showing the outcome of their placement at an Undergraduate Research Showcase event in the autumn term.

**Contact Details**

For a discussion about a planned project, alternative funding mechanisms or enquiries about any aspect of UROP placements contact:

**Tom McCann, Careers – Carrington Building, First Floor**

[tmccann@reading.ac.uk](mailto:tmccann@reading.ac.uk) / [urop@reading.ac.uk](mailto:urop@reading.ac.uk) / 0118 378 4976

FAQs and further information can be found online: [www.reading.ac.uk/urop](http://www.reading.ac.uk/urop)