University of Dundee

Institutional Strategic Support Fund (ISSF)

Opportunities and Impact

August 2019
Facts and Figures at a Glance

ISSF underpins research-led initiatives with fast reactive responses

3
ISSF Awards

£17.5M
Total Funding

ISSF 3
2016–2021

Supporting Collaborations across the University
(applications from 7/10 Academic Schools)

Return to Work Fellowship supported
(retraining, skills acquisition)

Capacity Building
in Infectious Diseases, Drug Discovery, Immunology and Cell Biology

Bridging between disciplines
(e.g. chemistry:biology, big-data:biology)

Cultural Transformation
Appointment of Associate Dean for Professional Culture

>150
Vacation Scholarships

Enhancement of multidisciplinary core facilities
PROTEOMICS
IMAGING
FLOW CYTOMETRY
HUMAN PLURIPOTENT STEM CELLS
TAYSIDE TISSUE BANK
DATA ANALYSIS
RESOURCE UNIT

Innovative Public Engagement
(School of Life Sciences 1st faculty in the UK to be awarded a Gold Engage Watermark
(National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement, 2017)
The Institutional Strategic Support Fund (ISSF) from Wellcome provides UK-based universities flexible funding, which they are required to match, to invest in areas of strategic importance and thereby supports a diverse range of initiatives within Wellcome’s remit. It has facilitated collaborations across Schools and departments, and embedded changes in practice and culture in our community. The award enables fast reactive responses to support recruitments, improves our research infrastructure and enhances career development of our staff and students.

The latest Dundee ISSF award helps us to continue to advance our life and health sciences research strategy by underpinning a portfolio of activities under five main pillars:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Strategic Support Fund</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment and Career Development of Researchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancing Research Infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinary and Translational Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Engagement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These include new initiatives to enhance our commitment to support the careers of women in STEM (in alignment with the Athena SWAN charter) and support for innovative ideas for public engagement. These activities will integrate and underpin the activities of our Wellcome funded researchers while strengthening cross-disciplinary collaborations within and outside the University. There are a number of funding opportunities available to researchers across the University and more details can be found in the following pages. We welcome feedback from our community so please contact ISSF@dundee.ac.uk if you have any ideas for development or queries on the ISSF schemes.

Professor Doreen Cantrell.
ISSF Chair and award holder.
ISSF Activities and Funding Opportunities

Recruitment and Career Development of Researchers

- Start-up packages for the recruitment of outstanding biomedical researchers
- Vacation Scholarships targeted at the next generation of scientists to gain practical research experience
- Bridging support for short-term funding gaps to allow data to be generated for publications and grant/fellowship applications

“Getting to do research and exploring my scientific interests and what it’s like to be a PhD student. It made me realise that I would definitely like to pursue a PhD after graduation”

Summer Scholarship Student 2018

Bridging and Training Funds (see page 9)

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives

- Funding to support professional development of our staff who have primary carer responsibilities
- Return to Work Fellowships – retraining, acquiring cutting-edge skills and supported transitions back into research
- Appointment of an Associate Dean for Professional Culture
- Development and implementation of strategy to enhance our culture and environment
- Silver Athena SWAN award made to School of Life Sciences in 2018

Flexible Dependent Care Grant Scheme (see page 10)

Enhancement of Research Infrastructure

- Support for innovative core facilities in key research areas e.g.
  - Establishment of human pluripotent stem cell culture facility
  - Support expertise within other core facilities such as Mass Spectrometry and Imaging
- Develop computational and informatics resources the underpin our Wellcome funded research e.g. www.peptracker.com
- Critical in supporting quantitative skills training - an integral and central component of our PhD student training programmes.
Flexible funding to support interdisciplinary initiatives that enhance and develop the strongest life sciences related research across the University of Dundee.

Supported 6 mass spectrometry based projects in 2016 and 25 projects through the Translation Medical Research Fund (TMRF, 2011-2014)

Increase in activity has been key in embedding translational research within the Universities strategy to 2022.

Inter-Institutional Interdisciplinary Partnership Fund (see page 12)

Interdisciplinary Research Fund (see page 13)

Public Engagement

Support the appointment of a School Outreach Organiser

- this post greatly increases the quality and scope of our work and supports public engagement activities of our Wellcome funded researchers

Support community engagement activities targeted at the next generation of scientists. A key aim is to increase awareness of Life Sciences Research in schools in areas of social deprivation to promote widening of access to opportunities in science.

- school projects such as a Life Sciences career paths booklet and resources, Animating Science partnership project with Dundee Contemporary Arts and work experience week

- support and participation in community projects such as city and rural Science Festivals, the Dundee Women's Festival, Magnificent Microbes and Incredible Immunology activities

- projects to translate science into public art

- University led activities such as Café Science, Bright Club science comedy, public talks and debates

Measure the impact of public engagement activities

- developed an evaluation strategy for our public engagement work in partnership with Evaluation Support Scotland where we have defined what we would like to achieve with our public engagement work and how we will evaluate our success.

Supports the University of Dundee's participation in ScotPEN (Scottish Public Engagement Network). As an ISSF holder the University is one of the steering members of the network and contributes to an annual Scottish meetup as well as oversight of the new Scottish Wellcome Enrichment Award, available to any Wellcome-funded researchers.

Public Engagement Seed Funding and Small Grant Awards (see page 14)
Bridging and Training Funds

Scheme Remit
Priorities are to provide flexible and reactive support to junior investigators and to provide strategic funding for research that will underpin future fellowship/research grant proposals. Applicants are reminded that funding is available to support access to our scientific technologies as well as to cover short-term staff and consumable costs. As a new initiative, support is also available to fund training activities that allow researchers to expand knowledge and skills in innovative cross discipline scientific technologies and promote interdisciplinary collaborations. All proposals should fall within Wellcome’s remit and applicants should note that this scheme is highly competitive.

Eligibility
Academic staff (research group leaders only)

Timings
Bi-annual

Costings
To apply for bridging and training funds, a PRF document is not a requirement and approximate salary costs are sufficient at this stage. To estimate total salary costs (i.e. with added on costs) the spinal salary point can be multiplied by 1.25 X time period (e.g. 0.5 if for 6 month appointment). Budget requests for consumables or other costs should also be detailed.

Application Process and Assessment
The requisite application form can be found on the ISSF webpages which should be completed and sent to your Head of Division for comment. Heads of Division are kindly requested to send the completed application to the School of Life Sciences Dean’s office using mailbox ISSF@dundee.ac.uk

Applications are assessed against scheme priorities by members drawn across the University community, and we aim to inform applicants of outcomes within approximately 4-6 weeks from the deadline.

Case Study
Dr. Li Kang, a Discovery Fellow and group leader in the School of Medicine, received ISSF bridging funds in 2018 to support research into Type 2 diabetes in her recently established research group. The preliminary data generated from this ISSF supported project underpinned the successful award of a £300k British Heart Foundation project grant to Dr. Kang where she aims to investigate the contribution of structural components outside cells to cardiac insulin resistance and dysfunction.
Flexible Dependent Care Grant Scheme

Scheme Remit
The ISSF Flexible Dependent Care Grant scheme aims to encourage the professional development of researchers working in Life and Health Sciences, at all career stages who have primary carer responsibilities.

Funds can be requested to:

- Provide research assistant or other appropriate support to academics who are on maternity/paternity leave or who have primary caregiver responsibilities to enable their research to continue whilst they are away from the lab.
- For additional short-term dependent care expenses incurred when attending workshops, or professional development opportunities, including conferences. These awards are to defray costs of approved expenses to cover additional caregiving required as a result of travelling for or participating in career development activities. For example, this would include funds for covering the cost of the travel of another carer to look after children.
- For additional short-term dependent care expenses incurred when attending academic meetings or other core work activities, the purpose of which is not career development. In accordance with HMRC guidance, expenses paid in this category will be subject to tax and national insurance deductions.
- Undergraduate students with caring responsibilities who wish to participate and have been offered a place on a University of Dundee Summer School Programme. Additional funds will be available on a case-per-case basis to help defray the costs of the caring responsibilities.

Eligibility
Applications are welcome from all research staff and students

Timings
Applications are accepted year-round. Please submit at least 6 weeks prior to event requiring funding.

Case Study
Maintaining my research progress while on maternity leave was challenging but support from the Flexible Dependent Care Grant scheme was invaluable by enabling my young baby and partner to travel with me to an international scientific conference shortly after my return. Supported by these funds, I presented key data and formed new collaborations which wouldn’t have been possible otherwise.

Sarah McKim, Principal Investigator
Plant Sciences
Costings

To apply for a flexible dependent care grant, a PRF document is not a requirement and approximate costs are sufficient at this stage which should be noted on the application form. For academics applying for research assistant cover, please estimate salary costs (i.e. with added on costs) by taking the appropriate spinal salary point and multiplying by $1.25 \times$ time period (e.g. 0.5 if for 6 month appointment). Budget requests for consumables or other costs should also be detailed.

Application Process and Assessment

There are different application forms depending on your role in the University, so please use the one appropriate to you - they can be found on the ISSF webpages. Once complete please sent to Life Sciences Dean's office using mailbox ISSF@dundee.ac.uk. Applications are assessed by a small committee to ensure use of funds are within both the scheme's and Wellcome's remit, with the aim to notify applicants of outcomes within around 2 weeks.

Case Studies

Managing a scientific career while having small children is challenging. The swift and straightforward support available through the flexible dependent care grants allowed me to attend career development opportunities whilst also providing the peace of mind that my caring responsibilities were covered.

Stephan Wilmes, Postdoctoral Research Assistant

Looking after a research group whilst on maternity leave can be difficult as projects do not stop and still require regular scientific direction input. To facilitate the operation of my research portfolio during my last maternity leave, I received support from the Flexible Dependent Care Grant Scheme to cover periods of childcare in my own home whilst my baby was too small to be away from me. This allowed me some time to communicate with my lab members and deal with essential research and supervision related tasks, providing much needed project continuity and support for my lab members which only I was able to provide. The disruption to my research group was therefore minimised as much as possible.

Sarah Coulthurst, Reader and Wellcome Senior Research Fellow
Inter-Institutional Interdisciplinary Partnership Fund

Scheme Remit
Applications to establish both national and international cross-institutional interdisciplinary partnerships and research collaborations are invited. Funds of up to £10k can be requested to support incoming and outgoing visits and workshop activities. The intention is to fund meetings and interactions between other institutes or commercial partners and multiple University of Dundee Principal Investigators. General conference activities or initiatives centred on a single PI will not be supported.

Priorities are to broaden partnerships and research collaborations in key strategic areas such as infection and disease, mathematical biology, anti-microbial resistance and drug discovery with the aim to underpin future collaborative grant applications and research programmes. Applications involving overseas partners allow access to increased funding opportunities (e.g. Newton, GCRF etc.) and are particularly welcomed.

Eligibility
Academic staff (research group leaders only)

Timings
Annually

Costings
To apply for an inter-institutional interdisciplinary partnerships award, a PRF document is not a requirement and approximate costings are sufficient at this stage which should be noted on the application form.

Application Process and Assessment
The requisite application form can be found on the ISSF webpages which should be completed and sent to the School of Life Sciences Dean’s office using mailbox ISSF@dundee.ac.uk. Applications are assessed against scheme priorities by members drawn across the University community, and we aim to inform applicants of outcomes within approximately 4–6 weeks from the deadline.

Case Study
Under Wellcome’s strategic priority “Our Planet, Our Health” and funded under our scheme of ‘inter-institutional partnership fund’, a small group of scientists from Dundee with a representative from the International Centre for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA) visited several organisations and agencies in Ethiopia to initiate and establish meaningful collaborations and to listen, communicate and understand real issues that if addressed could impact food security and economic development, and helping to lift subsistence farmers out of poverty. Following this productive visit, funding applications addressing some of the issues encountered have been prepared and submitted to different agencies to be considered for financial support. Recently, the School of Life Sciences has welcomed an Ethiopian PhD candidate to the group to learn all about the power of molecular plant breeding, with a view to transferring this technology back home while establishing further links with local researchers.

Professors Robbie Waugh and Claire Halpin, 2018
Interdisciplinary Research Fund

Scheme Remit
The Interdisciplinary Research Fund provides flexible funding to support initiatives that enhance and develop the strongest life and health sciences related research across the University of Dundee.

The exact nature/focus of these opportunities will vary call to call but in all cases priority will be given to collaborative or interdisciplinary research projects that combine different approaches in Life Sciences, Medicine, Physics, Mathematics, Engineering, Bioinformatics, Data Analysis and Software Development and where there is evidence that the project will lead to clear outputs.

Eligibility
Academic staff (research group leaders only)

Timings
Biennial

Costings
To apply for funding, a PRF document is not a requirement at this stage and approximate costings are sufficient which should be noted on the application form.

Application Process and Assessment
The requisite application form can be found on the ISSF webpages which should be completed and sent to the School of Life Sciences Dean’s office using mailbox ISSF@dundee.ac.uk. Applications are assessed against scheme priorities by members drawn across the University community. In some cases, short-listed applicants will subsequently be invited to “Pitch” their proposal to the panel, which will include a short presentation and Q&A session.

Case Study
2nd AssayDev: A University-wide initiative to improve the quality of second stage assays (Lead PIs, David Gray and Paul Wyatt)

Strategic funding was used to develop secondary assays based on ALPHA or ELISA technology which offers a number of advantages including; increased robustness and the ability to be fully automated, rather than a manual process. Multiple projects have since benefitted from developed methodologies.
Public Engagement Seed and Small Grant Awards

Scheme Remit
The aim of the Public Engagement Seed Fund is to lower the barrier for active researchers by providing seed funding that fosters cross-disciplinary activity with artists, animators, writers and scientists. These competitive researcher driven projects to develop novel public engagement ideas within Wellcome's remit must have an 'improve health' focus.

In addition, there is a Public Engagement Small Grant award for those that need funding of less than £100. This funding is to pay for items needed for events or for transport to attend an event you are participating in.

Eligibility
Applications are welcome from all staff groups and students.

Timings
Applications are accepted year-round. For the Public Engagement Seed Fund, please submit at least 2 months prior to event requiring funding. For the Public Engagement Small Grant Fund, please submit at least 2 weeks prior to event requiring funding.

Costings
To apply for the Public Engagement Seed and Small Grant awards, a PRF document is not a requirement and approximate costings are sufficient at this stage which should be noted on the application form.

Application Process and Assessment
There are different application forms depending on the fund that you are applying to, so please use the one appropriate to you – they can be found on the ISSF webpages. Once complete please sent to the ISSF Public Engagement Team at SLS-PublicEngagement@dundee.ac.uk. Applications are assessed by an internal peer review process to ensure quality and that use of funds are within both the scheme’s and Wellcome’s remit, with the aim to notify applicants of outcomes within around 2 weeks.

Case Study
Dundee and Me: How the City Shapes our Moods. January – May 2018

Fhionna Moore (Psychology) and Eddie Small (Humanities) of the University of Dundee, and Robin Sloan of Abertay University worked with local school children and mental health service users to explore the links between our local environments and our emotional wellbeing.

The participants produced art work, photography, creative writing, and performance art in workshops. From the interactions and work produced by the participants, Robin Sloan, Conor Marshall and other students from Abertay produced two digital games (one for each of the two groups worked with). Evaluation data showed that the majority of participants and volunteers enjoyed the project and found it had increased their understanding of how our city shapes our mood.
Information for Award Holders

Successful applicants are expected to conform to the Wellcome’s policy on Open Access Publishing [https://wellcome.ac.uk/funding/managing-grant/open-access-policy].

The relevant grant reference number for ISSF3 is **204816/Z/16/Z**.

In addition, recipients should be aware that the following Terms and Conditions apply to this award:

1. Funding is subject to Wellcome’s standard grant conditions [www.wellcome.ac.uk/funding/managing-grant/grant-conditions](http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/funding/managing-grant/grant-conditions).

2. Wellcome will only be charged in arrears for actual expenditure incurred.

3. Funds are to be spent in accordance with the University of Dundee’s established procurement policies.

4. The control of expenditure awarded on this award is governed by the normal standards and procedures of the University and will be covered by any formal audit arrangements that exist in the University.

5. Recipients are expected to report on outcomes on this award as requested by University of Dundee (or Wellcome).
Key Contacts and Governance

ISSF is governed by an oversight committee which has responsibility for overall strategic direction, allocation of funds and that ISSF objectives are met. See Webpage for information https://www.dundee.ac.uk/research/issf/dundee/governance/

The committee is comprised of the following:

Prof. Doreen Cantrell  
(ISSF award holder)  
E: d.a.cantrell@dundee.ac.uk

Prof. Julian Blow  
(Dean, School of Life Sciences)  
E: j.j.blow@dundee.ac.uk

Prof. Inke Nathke  
(Associate Dean for Professional Culture, School of Life Sciences)  
E: i.s.nathke@dundee.ac.uk

Prof. Nicola Stanley-Wall  
(Academic Lead for Public Engagement, School of Life Sciences)  
E: n.r.stanleywall@dundee.ac.uk

Prof. Rory McRimmon  
(Dean, School of Medicine)  
E: r.mccrimmon@dundee.ac.uk

Dr. Louise Stanley  
(ISSF Programme Manager)  
E: l.z.stanley@dundee.ac.uk

Applications for each of the open-response mode calls are assessed by members drawn from across the University.

Idea?

We actively welcome views from our community, so please contact ISSF@dundee.ac.uk if you have any feedback on our current opportunities or any ideas for new initiatives.