HDR Student Consumables Allowance
"The new process" Q&A Session

Summary from session - 17th April 2015 11:00 am – 12:30pm

1. **Is there a time limit for students to claim reimbursement on their consumables?**
   Students must submit their claim within a year of the purchase date. Further to this, students can claim reimbursement up to their FEC date or up to 3 months after submission, whichever date comes first. Special cases can be considered, but will not be the norm.

2. **What happens to low income students who do not have the capacity to spend prior to reimbursement?**
   Cash advances will be made available via Concur.

3. **How long does the cash advance process take?**
   This depends on the length of Curtin's approval process. Once approval is obtained, the transfer of funds is projected to take a few days.

4. **If students use cash rewards for participants in their study, how will they obtain reimbursement?**
   Students can use the cash advance function on Concur, although gift cards or other non-cash rewards are preferred.

5. **How will students claim printing costs?**
   Students can pay first and be reimbursed via Concur.

6. **When will the new process be rolled out?**
   For new students, this process will be rolled out relatively quickly. Existing students will use the current process, and it is anticipated that the transition will take place over a few months, and will be rolled out school by school.

7. **Who will determine what proportion of the allowance will be absorbed by the enrolling area as an 'internal cost' of supporting the student?**
   School Business Managers have been consulted and they will provide Financial Services will this figure.

8. **How will postage costs, which are first borne by the enrolling area, be dealt with?**
   This will form part of the 'internal costs' as detailed in question 7.

9. **Who has the authority to approve claims?**
   Supervisors will be asked to authorise claims which fall out of the allowable threshold. They will also be asked to approval claims which do not appear to fall under the 'allowable list'.

10. **Will item reimbursement be checked against the budget?**
    No, it will not.

11. **How detailed must the budget be?**
    The budget is expected to be a high level estimated of projected spending. It is anticipated that these figures will change and it is not expected that too much detail be provided.

12. **Is there an ideal time to lodge a variation to the budget?**
    No, the budget is not granular. General variations to the budget can be reported in the student's Annual Progress Report.

13. **What is the consequence with any changes to the budget?**
    As long as the student's spending in within the allowable list, there are no consequences to any variations.

14. **How does the budget link to expenditure?**
    It is expected that the student and supervisors will have a conversation about allowable items for reimbursement. The supervisor will be responsible for ensuring the student has in the first instance developed an appropriate budget which only includes such allowable reimbursements. Subsequent to this, reports on the GRS cost centres can be generated by Financial Services for supervisors detailing student expenditure.

15. **How are the high/low cost categories determined?**
    These are based on Field of Education (FOE) codes and are set by the Commonwealth.

16. **Where FOEs are classified as low costs, but the resourcing requirement is perceived to be higher, is there provision to change the funding associated?**
    This is not something that can be addressed immediately. However, it is something that can potentially be investigated in the future. There will need to be a process and conditions in place to determine genuine need.

17. **Is the budget to be provided at candidacy for the HDR Student Consumables Allowance, or for the entire research project?**
    The budget is for the annual allowance of either $1,400 (low cost) or $2,000 (high cost), which is released based on the time the student has been enrolled in the course. This budget will cover the lifespan of the research until the student's FEC date.

18. **How will funding for part-time enrolled students be released?**
    At present, the notion is to release funding to students at point of candidacy, and then subsequently at each anniversary date (i.e. at 1 EFTSL, 2, EFTSL and 3 EFTSL). Financial Services has noted the request to review this arrangement in the case of part-time students.

19. **What happens if the student exceeds the funding they presently have available?**
    If the students still have funding available to them in subsequent periods which are yet to be released, there will be a small margin of flexibility allowed – approximately 10 percent.

20. **In special circumstances, what happens if the student has a legitimate expense prior to candidacy?**
    At present, the rule is the funds are released at point of candidacy. Further to this, approval is required from the GRS. A process will be setup to facilitate such requests.

21. **How do we stop students from spending too much in short periods of time?**
    Students can only claim reimbursement to the funds that have been made available to them (as mentioned in Question 9). There is no potential for 'over-spending' as students will need to claim reimbursement.

22. **What does the student do if they need to purchase equipment to proceed with data collection and have not accrued sufficient funds in Concur?**
    The student should be provided all required equipment to conduct their research by their enrolling area. It is an undertaking on the enrolling area to provide crucial equipment where required. The consumables allowance is not designated for equipment purchase.

23. **How do we stop students from purchasing books that are available from the library?**
    Supervisors need to inform Financial Services of inappropriate spending. Where items are not listed on the agreed list, the claim will be escalated to the supervisor.

24. **What happens to unused funds at the end of a student's enrolment?**
    After the student's FEC date, or 3 months after thesis submission, whichever of the 2 dates comes first, any funds leftover will remain in the GRS cost centre. No funds transfer will be required, but the funds will no longer be available to that particular student. It was mentioned that most other Universities only provide Conference Support funding.

25. **How do you obtain student's balances for Conference Support funding?**
    Contact the Graduate Research School Current Students team on GRS.CurrentStudents@curtin.edu.au.

26. **What if the school wishes to provide a top up to funding?**
    The school can nominate a cost centre for which the top up is to be debited from.

27. **With lab based students, will a split be included in the allowance to cover lab items and consumables separately?**
Yes, but this ratio has yet to be determined. Once agreed the lab portion will be transferred directly to the department per student who achieved candidacy.

28. **What cost is there to the University with this change?**
This project is moving forward on existing technology. There are no added costs.