

Learning & Leading: Gap Scholarships

● Frequently Asked Questions

What is a gap year?

A gap year is 'time taken out of education for a purpose'. For example, instead of going straight onto Higher Education (HE) after school, some students decide to take a gap year and go to HE a year later.

Why take a gap year?

There are many reasons to take a gap year. Undertaking meaningful activities during the gap year could benefit you by improving your personal skills (such as confidence, independence, communication etc), broadening your horizons, improving your geographical skills and knowledge through experiencing and understanding other cultures, environments and the world we live in. It could help you to develop useful skills for university and employment and could help research into a particular career area of interest to you.

What are the Learning & Leading scholarships for a 'gap experience'?

A gap experience is a period of time within the gap year spent undertaking meaningful learning experiences abroad. The Learning & Leading scholarships consist of a bursary of up to £4,000 plus support and mentoring to enable you to plan and carry out this meaningful gap experience.

Who are they for?

Individuals who through challenging circumstances or lack of opportunity would not normally benefit from such an experience. They should be UK nationals resident in the UK, taking a year out between studying geography at A level/Scottish Advanced Higher (or equivalent) at a state school/college and HE, and wishing to spend at least part of the year undertaking meaningful activities and learning opportunities abroad before going on to study geography or related subject at degree level in a UK HEI (Higher Education Institution). If you are unsure if you are eligible please contact the Learning & Leading Project Co-ordinator to discuss.

How do I apply?

Application and guidance forms are available to download from www.rgs.org/learning&leading If you have any queries about applying please contact the Learning & Leading Project Co-ordinator: landl@rgs.org

What kind of activities could I do for my gap experience?

Activities that could provide meaningful learning opportunities could include fieldwork, expeditions, cultural exchanges, conservation, research, teaching, educational courses and independent travel amongst others.

Do I have to do this on my own?

No, you may wish to travel with a friend or join a group placement, project or expedition.

How long do I need to be away for and can it be several trips?

It is expected that scholars will be away for a minimum of 3 months in order to reap the full benefits of the experience. If this is not appropriate, it may be possible to take several shorter trips.



What can money be spent on and when will it be paid?

The bursary can cover reasonable expenses for a gap experience including flights and other transport, in-country accommodation, placement fees, food, insurance, fees for documents e.g. passport, visas, equipment etc.

Once you have provided all the required information, and your plans have been agreed in writing by the Society, the amount of your bursary will be agreed. You will receive these funds upfront in one lump sum.

Will I need an invoice?

No, but as part of your plans we will need to see a detailed budget of your planned expenditure.

Do I need parental consent?

If you are under 18 at the time of applying for the scholarship, you should provide written parental/guardian consent to take part in the programme. If you are over 18 we expect you to have discussed this with your parents and will expect you to evidence this.

What advice and guidance will I get?

The Society will provide you with advice and guidance to enable you to independently research and plan for a gap experience following good practice procedures. The Society will provide ongoing advice and guidance throughout your scholarship by providing you with a mentor, agreeing your gap experience plans, especially relating to safe practice, and providing advice and guidance on good practice in planning and carrying out a gap experience.

The Society will also provide you with a mentor. Your mentor will support you in setting aims and objectives, researching and planning your gap experience.

Who is responsible?

- You are responsible for researching, planning and carrying out your gap experience using the advice and guidance provided by the Society.
- The Society will provide you with advice and support to enable you to independently research, plan and choose a gap experience following good practice. We will provide you with a trained mentor with recent and relevant experience of a gap year, to help you with research and planning for your gap experience. The RGS-IBG will agree your scholarship for the purpose outlined in your plans once they are submitted, confirming the amount of funding, or requesting the plans be amended and re-submitted for approval. For further details see the programme terms and conditions.

Who are the mentors?

The gap scholar mentors have recent and relevant experience of planning and researching a gap year involving overseas travel. They are geography ambassadors, most of whom are current geography undergraduates, recent graduates or Society staff. They have had a fully enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check.



Questions on the application form:

Question 3: Previous experience

Please outline your previous experience of fieldwork which you may have undertaken either in school or outside of school. Outline how much fieldwork you have done, what kind of fieldwork activities you did, when and in what locations you carried them out in.

Give details of which countries outside the UK you have visited in the last five years, what reason you visited them and what activities you did there. E.g. Living abroad, family holidays, working, travelling, volunteering, placements etc.

Question 4: Your gap experience

Please give any ideas that you have already for the type of activities and places you would be interested in going to for your gap experience. If you are successful in your application you will not be committed to these and we will work with you to develop your ideas further.

Please specify when you are thinking of taking the gap experience. For example you may already have an idea of when you would like to take your gap experience which would need to fit around other commitments you already have. You may wish to take the gap experience towards the beginning, middle or end or over your entire gap year.

Question 5: Making a difference

In this section you should outline why undertaking a Learning & Leading gap experience would make a difference to you and how it would make a difference. The kind of things you should refer to are your personal development (e.g. developing confidence, leadership, teamwork, communication skills etc); how it will develop your geographical skills knowledge and experience to prepare yourself for further study at HE; how it will help develop skills and knowledge or experience for a particular career; or other benefits that you feel it will have for you.

Question 6: Your family circumstances

Please give brief details if anyone in your immediate family (i.e. your parents/guardians/siblings) have been to higher education and if they have taken a gap year involving some overseas travel. You do not need to mention names - just their relationship to you e.g. brother.

Please give details about whether you currently receive any external financial support (e.g. from your school, LEA, government, other organisation etc.) with your A level studies. This could be funds such as the 16-19 Bursary, free school meals etc.

Question 7: Why you couldn't otherwise do a 'gap experience'

You should demonstrate why the Learning & Leading Gap Scholarship provides an opportunity that would not otherwise be available to you. This could be due to a range of factors which have meant that you have never been able to have such experiences previously and would not otherwise be able to have such an experience in the future.

Question 8: Your commitment

Gap scholars will be asked to share their experiences on the gap scholarship programme with others. The way that you do this should be discussed with your mentor and agreed by the Society as part of your planning process and could include written work (e.g. diaries, blogs), presentations, photography, films and other alternative approaches. You will also be required to submit information to the Society during and after the scholarship to monitor the progress of the programme.



You must also commit to becoming an active geography ambassador when you are at your HEI. The geography ambassador scheme trains and supports geographers who are currently at university and graduate geographers from the work place to act as ambassadors for geography in the school classroom. They introduce younger students to the benefits of studying geography and encouraging them to pursue the subject beyond the compulsory stages. The ambassadors act as positive role models for pupils and can illustrate, with enthusiasm, both the specific and transferable skills they have developed as a geographer. Your gap experiences may be an invaluable part of this. Further information can be found at www.rgs.org/ambassadors