

**Summer Research Scholars (SRS),
Student Experiential Learning Fellowship (SELF),
Signature Work Research Grants (SWRG),
and the Signature Fund (SF)**

Frequently Asked Questions

December 2024

Q1. What is the difference between the SRS, SELF, SWRG, and SF?

A1. The quick answer is:

SRS: Funds summer research stipends for UG students working as research assistants on a collaborative research project with a faculty mentor. SRS provides the funding for the student's labor, and the SW mentor generally covers the costs of research materials and supplies. SRS does not cover travel expenses, or off campus housing. Students may not have both an SRS and a SELF in the same summer.

SELF: Covers costs associated with doing an off-campus Experiential Learning (EL) activity related to a student's SW. Most funding will be used to cover the cost of travel and accommodation, as well as visa/work permit expenses. SELF does not provide a student stipend. Students may not have both an SRS and a SELF in the same summer.

SWRG: Provides funding to help defray research expenses for DKU student signature work projects. The research may be the student's independent research idea, or it may be related to a DKU faculty member's research. For the latter, the grant application should explain why the additional funds from the SWRG program are needed. In most cases, for collaborative research, faculty are expected to cover the student's research costs. SWRG does not provide a student stipend.

SF: Supplemental funding provided through the SWRG or SELF programs. The funds for this grant were generously donated by the parents of DKU students. In instances where the funds provided by the SWRG or SELF programs are insufficient to complete the experience or project, students can apply for an SF for funding above the SELF or SWRG limits.

The long answer is:

The **Summer Research Scholars** program funds **faculty-student collaborative research** projects. These projects are generally part of faculty's research program. The program aids faculty in their research activities by providing undergraduate student researchers for whom the projects must be meaningful as well as educationally valuable. The student should be intellectually contributing to the project, playing a role similar to that of a graduate student. The SRS can count toward the student's Experiential Learning requirement for SW and the research will generally contribute to the student's SW project. The application is initiated by the faculty. Faculty apply for the funding, and the students then apply directly to the faculty. Some faculty may already have research students working with them.

The goal of SRS is to provide students and faculty mentors with a mutually beneficial research experience.

The **Student Experiential Learning Fellowships** program supports **Experiential Learning (EL) for SW that is generally not directly connected to the faculty mentor's research program.**

SELF generally covers the costs of participating in such activities as housing, travel, and visa/work permits. The projects are usually student-designed or student-arranged and generally take place off campus. Activities might include:

- Research with faculty at another university, including Duke, Wuhan, Westlake, Huazhong, or government, private, or industrial facility
- Internship, field work, volunteer work, any other experiential activity.
- SELF can be used to cover the costs of field work associated with a collaborative student/faculty research project in the event that other funding for this EL is not available and an SWRG is insufficient to cover costs. A student may not hold an SRS and a SELF at the same time.

The student applies for SELF, with support from their SW mentor.

The goal of SELF is to provide students with funding to do an EL they would not otherwise be able to afford to do. Note that the SELF EL activity might be an EXPERIENCE rather than a research project. That is fine, as long as it relates to the overall SW project. Coursework, conference attendance or presentations, and credit-bearing activities are generally not covered.

The **Signature Work Research Grants (SWRG)** are provided to help defray research expenses for DKU student signature work projects. The SW research grant makes funds available to purchase approved supplies and equipment (nondurable goods) for SW-related research projects. It may also be used to pay research participants in IRB-approved studies when appropriate. The research may be the student's independent research idea, or it may be related to a DKU faculty member's research. For the latter, the grant should explain why the additional funds from the SWRG program are needed. DKU will generally not provide research expenses for a student doing experiential learning with a non-DKU faculty.

The **Signature Fund (SF)** is a grant provided to supplement funding provided through the **Signature Work Research Grant (SWRG)** or **Student Experiential Learning Fellowship (SELF)** programs. The funds for this grant were generously donated by the parents of DKU students. In instances where the funds provided by the SWRG or SELF programs are insufficient to complete the experience or project, students can apply for an SF for funding above the SELF or SWRG limits. The Signature Fund is particularly interested in providing this added support for innovative, creative, and impactful proposals. The guidelines and restrictions of the SF are identical to those of the program that it supplements; however, the applications to the SF are only considered once in fall for the SWRG, once in spring for the SWRG, and once in spring for the SELF.

All of the programs above are competitive.

Q2. May a student apply for more than one of these programs at the same time?

A2. DKU will not fund more than one SRS or SELF project per student during the same summer. However, a student may apply for a SWRG along with SRS or SELF funding. A student may apply for a SF along with SWRG or SELF funding.

Q3. What does SRS fund?

A3. The 2024 summer SRS program provided students with a 5,600 RMB summer stipend and a 6,200 RMB dining hall card. It also provided housing in DKU accommodations (double occupancy room). It is anticipated that the 2025 program will have similar funding.

Q4. What doesn't SRS fund?

A4. SRS does NOT provide funding for research equipment and supplies. As the program provides the faculty with a research student free of charge to them, they are expected to use their own funding (external, research center, discretionary, start-up, etc.) to support the student's research. If additional funding is necessary, the student may apply for a SWRG, if eligible.

Students whose research requires travel or field work might opt for SELF rather than an SRS if the travel expenses cannot be covered by the faculty mentor's funding or an SWRG, even if the project is collaborative. Students may not hold both an SRS and SELF in the same summer.

Q5. What is the time commitment for SRS?

A5. Students participating in the SRS program are expected to spend the equivalent of 8 weeks of full-time research assistance to a faculty research project during the summer. There are no part-time positions, and participating students are not permitted to take any coursework or other internships during their 8 week research commitment.

Q6. What does SELF fund?

A6. SELF funds participation in EL activities related to a student's SW. Though the EL requirement for SW has been placed on hold, the SELF fund can be used to support equivalent activities related to a student's SW. Generally, the student identifies and makes arrangements to do an EL activity off campus. The EL activity is not necessarily a whole research project or the full SW project itself; it can be a complementary experience that enhances or informs the greater SW project. The program can provide expenses up to 12,800 RMB to cover travel to the EL site (if not DKU or student's home), local accommodation (if not DKU or student's home), visa/work permit if needed. In some cases, the cost of commuting to the EL site might be provided with appropriate justification. In most cases, the EL supervisor is not DKU-affiliated. An affiliation letter from the host organization and/or EL supervisor should be provided as supporting documentation. Such a letter must confirm that the student will be allowed to carry out the project if it is funded. The EL supervisor should provide oversight of your work. Note that the SELF EL activity might be an EXPERIENCE rather than a research project.

Students whose research requires travel or field work might opt for SELF rather than an SRS if the travel expenses cannot be covered by the faculty mentor's funding or an SWRG, even if the project is collaborative. Students may not hold both an SRS and SELF in the same summer.

For students doing an EL activity within convenient commuting distance from Kunshan, SELF projects can provide housing in DKU accommodations (double occupancy room) if needed.

Q7. What doesn't SELF fund?

A7. SELF does not provide stipends. SELF does not fund equipment, supplies, cost of research participants, etc.; such costs are covered under the SWRG program.

SELF does not cover the cost of food or personal living expenses (such as laundry). The cost of daily commuting is generally not considered, but might be covered for appropriate situations (such as a

case in which a student saves accommodation expenses by living at home/DKU but needs to commute longer distances (such as into Shanghai) as a result.)

SELF does not fund transportation to or from a site that the student was going to anyway. For example, students doing study away at Duke in the fall cannot use SELF to fund airfare for a summer of research at Duke.

SELF does not cover the costs of training programs or summer courses, nor does it cover the cost of housing in two locations at the same time.

Q8. What does SWRG fund?

A8. The SW research grant makes funds available to purchase approved supplies and equipment (nondurable goods) for SW-related research projects. It may also be used to pay research participants in IRB-approved studies when appropriate. In general, the grants will only pay for disposable items, not reusable equipment, although exceptions will be considered with suitable justification. Any reusable equipment purchased using SWRG money is the property of Duke Kunshan University.

The research may be the student's independent research idea, or it may be related to a DKU faculty member's research. For the latter, the grant should explain why the additional funds from the SWRG program are needed, since generally faculty would be expected to cover research expenses for collaborative work.

Q9. What doesn't SWRG fund?

A9. Grants may not be used to buy personal items, books, journals, cameras, laptops, e-readers, hardware, software, or to pay for training or classes, data storage, or to pay salaries. In general, the grants will not pay for reusable equipment, although exceptions will be considered with suitable justification. Any non-disposable items must be pre-approved for purchase using SWRG funds and, if approved, are the property of DKU, not the SWRG recipient.

DKU will generally not provide research expenses for a student doing experiential learning with a non-DKU faculty, which would reasonably be expected to be covered by the EL supervisor or the EL host organization. For example, a faculty member at another university would reasonably be expected to cover the cost of research supplies and equipment for a SELF student doing research in their laboratory.

Q10. How might I find a sponsor for an off-campus EL activity?

A10. We periodically offer a Pathways to Success Workshop on finding project sponsors. Keep your eyes open for an announcement. In the meantime, the second half of this SW presentation offers advice: *Planning for your SW Research Project* [Presentation PPT](#); Contact Letter Examples for Critique [PDF](#). You are also encouraged to reach out to Career Services.

Q11. How do I write a competitive SELF proposal?

A11. We periodically offer a Pathways to Success Workshop on writing a project proposal. Keep your eyes open for an announcement. In the meantime, the first half of this SW presentation offers advice on what to consider: *Planning for your SW Research Project* [Presentation PPT](#); Contact Letter Examples for Critique [PDF](#).

You are also strongly encouraged to review the [folder on Project Proposals](#) in the Grad&Fellowships Sakai site, which contains a lot of useful materials on writing project proposals.

Tips:

1. Read the SELF call for proposals carefully. Pay particular attention to what it says about the description of the EL activity, the considerations that should be addressed in the application, and the review criteria.
2. Consider your audience: The proposals will be reviewed by a team of faculty representing all 3 divisions, but they are not necessarily experts in your field.
3. You have 2 pages, single-spaced for your proposal. You should use this space to sufficiently explain your project and address everything requested. If your proposal is less than a page, it probably does not cover everything that is needed in sufficient detail.
4. Clarify:
 - a. General description of the proposed EL and its relationship to your SW. Include the how, what, why, where, and when. Remember that the SELF funds the experiential learning component of your SW, not the full SW project. Make sure your proposal focuses on the actual EL activity to be funded, although it should be presented in the context of the SW. See Question 19 below.
 - b. You should clearly state where you will be doing the activity and the dates, as well as who will be supervising you and their role.
 - c. What exactly will you be doing? Be as specific as possible. For an off-campus internship or EL activity, you might not know exactly what you will be doing, but you should describe how the experience fits in with your SW plan.
 - d. If you are doing a group SW project, you must explain your role.

Q12. Does my SW mentor need to review my SELF proposal?

A12. Absolutely. Your SW EL activity must fit in with your SW plan, and it must be approved by your SW mentor. That is why a letter of recommendation from your SW mentor is required as part of your SELF application. Your SW mentor should read the proposal and provide you feedback to strengthen both your proposal and your project idea. This is part of the process and helps ensure that you are developing plans that both fit with your SW project and that have the appropriate level of academic rigor. (But your mentor should ABSOLUTELY NOT write the proposal for you, nor should the EL supervisor.) In their letter, your SW mentor should be commenting on the feasibility of your proposal and your ability to carry it out. SELF proposals without a supporting letter from the SW mentor will not be reviewed.

Q13. Do I need to include citations in my SELF proposal?

A13. While not strictly required, the majority of proposals will *need* to include citations. Just like any other form of writing, you must acknowledge original sources as well as ideas that are not your own. The background information – including conversations or materials provided by your SW mentor or EL supervisor – will require appropriate acknowledgement. If you are not sure how to appropriately cite sources in your discipline, please consult your SW mentor or the WLS. SELF proposals are held to the same academic integrity standards and policies as any other written work at DKU.

Q14. The SELF and SWRG applications ask me to justify my budget. What does that mean?

A14. Your justification should include an explanation of what is needed (and how you came up with the amounts, if available). For example:

- Travel: airfare or train fare, based on Ctrip.

- Accommodation costs: Please indicate city; estimated rent per day, week, or month; and time period.
- Equipment and supplies: Please include a breakdown of items. For example, rather than just stating “2,500 rmb for supplies,” you should include something like “1000 rmb for chemicals, reagents, and solvents, 750 rmb for specialized glassware not currently available at DKU, 500 rmb for chromatography supplies, 250 rmb for disposable items (syringes, pipets, etc.)”. If available, please include additional breakdown of the glassware and chemicals, reagents, and solvents.

Q15. What if I am part of a group SW project? Do we all need to apply for SELF or SWRG?

A15. The different participants in a group SW may or may not each need SELF or SWRG funding. For example, if more than one student is participating in an off-campus EL activity, they might each need money for travel. If they can share an apartment, they should each put in for 50% of the accommodation costs – which should be clearly indicated in the budget explanation. On the other hand, if they are not doing the same EL activity, they might not each need funding.

For SWRG, the cost of any communal supplies and materials may be split amongst the team members’ applications or requested on one application, but the total amount requested by all team members may not exceed the total amount needed for the project and the same items cannot be requested in more than one application. The budget explanation should clearly indicate how funding is broken down across the group.

The proposal should clearly indicate that the SW project is a group project, the role of each student in the SW project and the role of each student in the EL activity or research, if applicable.

Q16. What if I only need DKU housing in order to do my SW EL, but no other funding?

A16. That is great! You should still complete an application for SELF, but you need only indicate that you will only need support for DKU housing. Be on the lookout for information about a room assignment application from Residence Life (residencelife@dukekunshan.edu.cn) that will open in mid-April and close in late April. You will need to stay aware of the deadlines when they are posted.

Q17. Will all SRS, SELF, and SWRG proposals be funded?

A17. No. DKU has limited funding and all three programs are competitive. Please make sure to follow all directions here and on the SRS, SELF, and SWRG calls for proposals carefully. Your SW mentor and your EL supervisor (if applicable) should review your proposal before you submit it.

Q18. Can I still do my proposed activity if my SELF proposal is not funded?

A18. Yes, absolutely! If your SW mentor has approved the EL for your SW project (which would have been required for SELF as well), then you may do the project or activity. The SELF program provides funding for the activity, but it is not an approval process for the actual EL activity itself. (It is up to your SW mentor to approve the activity.) If you can do the project without SELF funding, then you are encouraged to do so. For example, other options to support EL activities include:

- Self-funded
- Other internal or external funding sources (research centers, etc.)
- Funded by EL host
- No funding required (e.g., commute from home)
- If no funding is required other than DKU housing*, see question 16 above.

Q19. What is the difference between the SELF proposal and the SW project proposal?

A19. The SW project refers to the overall signature work process, encompassing the three thematic courses, experiential learning activity, two senior capstone courses, e-portfolio, planning and discussion with the signature work project Mentor, and creation of the Signature Work Product. The SW proposal will focus on the *overall project*, including the separate components. See the [Signature Work Student Guide](#).

The SELF program specifically provides funding for the *experiential learning* part of your SW project. While the overall SW project is relevant to the EL activity and the connection should be addressed, the SELF proposal should focus primarily on the EL activity itself, which is what is funded through the program.

Examples:

- **EL activity connects directly to SW product:** For example, a student doing research off campus at Westlake University that is anticipated to lead to a senior thesis as the SW product. In this case, the SW proposal and the SELF might be more similar, as the research is an essential part of the SW. The SELF proposal should focus on the work to be done at Westlake, how it leads to the SW project, and the arrangements the student has made with Westlake to do the work there. It will likely have a lot of overlap with an explanation of the SW project itself.
- **EL activity complements SW project:** For example, a global health/public policy student doing EL at the Kunshan CDC, to complement a research-based global health-related policy proposal as the SW product. In this case, the SW proposal and the SELF proposals will differ more. The SELF proposal should focus on the work to be done at the CDC, the nature of the arrangements, the plans for supervision, etc. The proposal should describe the SW project and clearly state how the EL will contribute to or inform the SW project/product, but the focus should remain on the EL experience that will be supported by the SELF funding.

Q20. What if my funding needs change?

A20. You should not expect to get additional total funds beyond those specified in your original award letter. You can have minor budget changes, such as spending slightly more on travel and slightly less on accommodations, or purchasing different but equivalent supplies, so long as the total award is not exceeded. Any significant modifications to your original proposal, any changes to your EL destination or activity, or a different signature work project, should be approved by UG Studies before the SELF or SWRG money is spent.