



TRAVEL AND RESEARCH FUNDING FOR PHD STUDENTS 2025-2026

The Annenberg School for Communication is pleased to support the professional development, travel, and research of our PhD students throughout their tenure in our program. Our funding supports scholarly and dissertation-related academic research and production.

At Annenberg, we define academic and research travel as travel undertaken to develop an academic project, advance research, or foster professional development. This may include primary research (library and archive visits, interviews, fieldwork), the development of ideas and knowledge base (working meetings with collaborators, summer institutes, training workshops), and the presentation of research at academic conferences and workshops. The research activity should advance scholarship, whether for a dissertation or another academic project. Creative projects should connect to academic work and be supported by the academic advisor to be eligible for departmental research travel funding.

You may tack personal travel onto research travel, but you may only use departmental funding to cover qualifying expenses related to research travel. Eligible Annenberg students may apply once per year to receive an [Annenberg Conference and Professional Development Family Grant](#) to offset qualifying expenses.

The expense guidelines below serve as a high-level overview of our processes and policies. All student funding is subject to [Penn's complete set of financial policies](#). The list of allowable and unallowable costs here highlights the most common student spending habits and is non-exhaustive. Please contact the [ASC Business Office](#) for guidance regarding expense types or processes not detailed here.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Students actively enrolled in the Annenberg PhD program are eligible for travel and research funding.
- Student funding is renewed on an academic year basis. **For expense purposes, the academic year at Annenberg begins on September 1 and ends on August 31 annually.**
- Students must have sufficient funds available within the current academic year to cover the total cost of the expense at the time the expense is incurred and once the expense is processed.
- Active Research, Teaching, and Education Fellows are awarded \$1,700 in travel and research funding each year in years 1-5 of their tenure, and they receive an additional \$1,200 when the Education/Dissertation Research Fellowship (DRF) begins following approval of their [DRF application](#).



- Students can carry over unspent travel and research funds up to \$4,000 into the following academic year.
- The Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GAPSA) administers several travel and research grants each year. For information, application procedures, and deadlines, please visit <https://www.gapsa.upenn.edu/individual-grants>.

PROCESS, POLICIES, AND BEST PRACTICES

- **We require [Travel and Research Approval](#) for all expenses drawn from ASC doctoral research and travel funds**, including payments made directly to vendors or reimbursements processed through [Concur](#). Your advisor and the Director of the Graduate Studies Program must approve your form before purchasing. Please attach your approved form to any [Concur](#) expense reports.
- **Travel and research expenses must be reasonable, with a clear, detailed justification for your research, teaching, or professional development stated in all requests submitted through [Concur](#).**
- **Annenberg and Penn offer a variety of resources and services at no cost or negotiated rates. We encourage students to utilize these as the first option before making purchases.** These include, but are not limited to: [Annenberg Library](#), [University Library](#), and [IT resources](#); [PennBox](#) for storage; [Teams](#) and [Zoom](#) for business messaging and video conferencing; media and equipment through [the Paul Messaris Media Laboratory](#); software licenses including [O365](#) and [Adobe](#); subscriptions including [provided news outlets](#); headshots photographed by the School; and any other brokered products and services. The ASC Business Office is happy to help students access these resources and can confirm if a service is offered by the university.
- The ASC Business Office will process reimbursements for out-of-pocket expenses through [Concur](#). **To adhere to University policy, please submit expense reports for reimbursement within two weeks of incurring the cost.**
 - Expenses submitted more than 60 days after the transaction date or trip end date may be denied or treated as taxable income at the discretion of Central Procurement.
- The University provides [resources](#) about using [Concur](#), and the ASC Business Office can provide personal support and training in person or via video conferencing.
 - We encourage you to set up your [Concur](#) profile at the start of your appointment. During setup, assign Kiara Rosario (krosaril@upenn.edu) from the ASC Business Office as your [Travel Approver](#).



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UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

- Concur payments will be automatically denied by the system if your [banking information](#) is not on file, so please ensure this information is complete before submitting your first expense report.
- The University requires itemized receipts for all purchases. Acceptable receipts include the merchant, the purchase date, details about what was purchased, the form of payment used, the purchase amount, and an indication that you paid the amount in full at the time of purchase.
- The **[ASC Business Office](#) hours are 9 am - 5 pm ET Monday-Friday. The best way to reach us is by emailing us at ascbusinessoffice@asc.upenn.edu.** The appropriate subject-matter expert from our team will respond to your inquiry within 1-2 business days.
- The ASC Business Office tracks student spending in [Teams](#) and updates balances on Wednesdays.

ALLOWABLE EXPENSES

- Travel expenses for approved academic or professional development, such as professional memberships, conference registration, economy airfare, train, hotel, and meals associated with academic conference travel, are allowable. **Penn's Travel & Entertainment Policy governs all academic and business travel: <http://www.finance.upenn.edu/comptroller/travel/>.**
 - Penn's preferred travel agency is [World Travel](#). You can make reservations online in [Concur](#) or over the phone at 888-641-9112. Please note that reservations should be made during the work week and no later than noon on Fridays. World Travel requires the ASC Business Office to approve travel within 24 hours, so reservations reserved over the weekend will not be processed.
 - **Penn requires students to register international travel in the [MyTrips International Travel Registry](#) before traveling.** MyTrips keeps you connected to Penn resources in an emergency and pre-authorizes medical insurance coverage.
- **Human Subject and Participant Payments** are allowed under [Penn's Policies Governing Human Subjects Research](#) and should only be processed after an approved [IRB](#) submission.
 - All human subject and participant payments must be made through the ASC Business Office. Contact the ASC Business Office when you submit your IRB for approval to arrange your subject payments.



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SCHOOL FOR COMMUNICATION
UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

- The [Greenphire ClinCard](#) program is Penn's preferred method of administering subject compensation.
- If the Greenphire ClinCard program does not work for a particular study, it may be possible to compensate subjects with gift cards or through services like MTurk, CloudResearch, Prolific, and Tremendous. Please reach out to the ASC Business Office to determine the most appropriate method for your study.
- **Payments to Service Providers, Individuals, and Consultants** are allowable expenses, and students must contact the ASC Business Office before engaging or paying internal and external service providers, individuals, and consultants.
 - There are strict university guidelines regarding payments to corporate service providers, research firms, individuals, independent contractors, single-member LLCs, sole proprietors, and internal/external students (graduate, undergraduate, and secondary). It is imperative to work with the ASC Business Office on these arrangements. The ASC Business Office will help determine whether a payee is eligible and how they should be classified and paid.
- **Supplies, Books, and Minor Equipment** are allowable expenses.
 - Supplies and minor equipment such as software unavailable through the University, notebooks, binders, sticky notes, pens, pencils, highlighters, index cards, and minor technological supplies such as headphones, carrying cases, external mice and keyboards, and replacement power supply cables may be purchased using travel and research funds.
 - You may purchase books for research, coursework, exam preparation, or professional development if they are unavailable from the library.
 - Before making a purchase, please be sure to confirm that the item is not available through the school and university resources (please reference the third bullet in the Process & Policies section above).
 - Visa Applications or Extension Fees are allowable expenses.
 - Rental cars are allowable if they are pre-approved by the ASC Business Office through the [university contracts with Enterprise and National](#). Completing Penn's [driver safety training](#) is required before you can reserve a rental car.

UNALLOWABLE EXPENSES

- Acela trains, any class of travel or airfare besides economy, travel/trip insurance



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UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

- Advertisements, except those to recruit human subjects for research
- Alcohol
- Cars, car services, and car payments
- Cellular phones, devices, accessories, and service plans, including international plans
- Childcare
- Debt, fees, fines, interest, losses, overdrafts, or penalties associated with an allowable expense, such as late fees, taxes when a tax exemption is available, and international transaction fees
- Donations, fundraising, and lobbying
- Entertainment
- Furniture
- Home internet (Wi-Fi), home office equipment, and home office supplies
- Insurance payments
- Legal fees
- Living expenses, groceries, rent and mortgage payments, personal items, PPE, toiletries, and utilities
- Passport renewal
- Regalia, commencement, convocation costs, and alumni activities
- Social, non-academic memberships
- Technology and computer accessories not listed in the first bullet of allowable expenses (ex. laptops, monitors, hard drives, iPads, cell phones, etc.)

REACH THE ASC BUSINESS OFFICE TEAM ANYTIME!
[**ASCBUSINESSOFFICE@ASC.UPENN.EDU**](mailto:ASCBUSINESSOFFICE@ASC.UPENN.EDU)

[Patricia Lindner](#), Executive Director of Finance & Operations
[Kathleen Bailey](#), Director of Finance & Sponsored Programs
[Audrey Romano](#), Business Administrator & Payroll Manager
[Kiara Rosario](#), Financial Administrative Coordinator