RESEARCH AND TRAVEL FUNDING FOR PHD STUDENTS 2026-2027

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 research and travel funding. Students may use their research and travel funding until the end of the month in which they deposit their dissertation.
- 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 Research and Travel 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 Graduate Programs must approve your form before purchasing. Please attach your approved form to any Concur expense reports.
- **The Student Business Related & Educational Travel Certification Form must be completed in advance for all travel expenses.** This form is completed as part of the ASC Research and Travel Approval Form and must be attached to any Concur expense reports.
- **Research and Travel 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.
- Students are encouraged to make non-travel purchases and payments through the ASC Business Office rather than paying out-of-pocket and submitting for reimbursement. **This process helps your funds go further because we can help you take advantage of contract pricing and sales tax exemption (when applicable).** It also helps ensure your purchases are allowable and compliant at the onset of the process.
- 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, select "36 Annenberg School for Communication" as your Travel Approver.
    - 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 and "direct bill" the cost to your research and travel funds. 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 made 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.
    - 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, headphones, carrying cases, external mice and keyboards, external hard drives, and replacement power supply cables, may be purchased using research and travel 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.
    - Passport renewal is an allowable expense if the renewal is required for international research, conference attendance, or University business.

- 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
- 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 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
- Regalia, commencement, convocation costs, and alumni activities
- Sales tax on non-travel purchases
- Social, non-academic memberships
- Technology and computer accessories not listed in the first bullet of allowable expenses (ex. laptops, monitors, desktops, iPads, cell phones, etc.)
- Travel to campus, including for students who live outside the Philadelphia area

REACH THE ASC BUSINESS OFFICE TEAM ANYTIME!

ASCBUSINESSOFFICE@ASC.UPENN.EDU

Patricia Lindner, CFO and Executive Director of Facilities Operations
Audrey Romano, Associate Director of Finance
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