Travel Fund Policies and Instructions

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1 The Travel Fund

The Travel Fund is an initiative from Graduate Council in association with UChicagoGRAD that provides funds for graduate students at the University of Chicago to attend academic conferences, networking events, and other venues. There are two tiers of funding available on a rolling timeline: basic funding for participating in professional conferences or other events such as case competitions and advanced funding for those presenting original work at academic conferences (see FAQ at the end of this document for more information). Basic funding can be won by groups of 1 to 5 persons and awardees can receive up to $350 each in reimbursement for their travel costs, while Advanced funding awardees (for which groups are not eligible) are allotted $600 each for reimbursements. The only requirements are a competitive application submitted more than 7 days before the travel start date, and a brief recommendation form from a faculty advisor or mentor. After your travel, you are also welcome to share your experience with the Grad Council at one of our meetings during the academic year.

Every graduate student is invited and encouraged to apply. Since all of our reviewers are graduate students like you, please leave a couple months for applications to be reviewed if you would like to hear the result before your event. In addition, if your application is
rejected, you may apply again the next quarter if your event has not yet passed. Upon receiving an award, you will be expected to provide some additional information and file receipts for reimbursement.

In addition, due to heightened demand, the Grad Council has been working to automate the application system to better and more quickly meet the needs of our constituents. Therefore, for both the reimbursement and application process, please read the instructions below carefully! Inaccurate contact information for either the applicant or the faculty advisor could result in a delayed or rejected application. Please send all questions not addressed by the instructions to Grad Council at gc.exec.crew+travel@gmail.com.

We look forward to reviewing all of your applications and learning about all of your fantastic work and achievements!

2 Application Rules and Eligibility Requirements

- All applicants must be graduate or professional students at the University of Chicago.
- Applications may be submitted up to two (2) quarters in advance of travel.
- Applications must be submitted no later than seven (7) days before the first day of travel.
- No retroactive applications will be considered.
- Recommendation forms must be received within 30 days of an application submission.
- You may only receive one (1) Travel Fund award (advanced or basic) per 3 years at the University of Chicago, including interruptions of student status.
- Rejected applicants are encouraged to apply again in the future.
- Applicants must be involved in a conference beyond just attending, we require basic level fundees to participate in some way, be that volunteering or advocating for UChicago Graduate Programming while in attendance. See the FAQ (at the end of this document) for more details.
- If funded, students may only use the provided funds for the general purposes outlined in their application.
- Awardees must submit reimbursement requests no later than thirty (30) days after the last day of travel.
- A representative may apply on behalf of a group for Basic applications. The maximum allotted group size is five (5) members.
- Applications that are found to be duplicates of other applications or to have borrowed heavily from other applications will be withdrawn.
• Awardees must truthfully list all sources and amounts of other funding.

• There is no expedited resubmission process if you are rejected by reviewers. You must apply in the normal manner again.

• Any violation of these rules or the application instructions to follow may result in the application being rejected.

3 Application Instructions

1. Go to gc.uchicago.edu/travel-fund/ to start the application.

2. Press the “Apply Now” button for the fund you want to apply for (Advanced or Basic).

3. Fill out all of the requested personal information.

4. Be sure to include a correct UChicago email address. If you do not receive a confirmation email, see the FAQ.

5. Enter the type of presentation for the event you are attending.

6. Carefully consider the listed questions and provide your responses in the space provided. There are two (2) questions in the basic application, and three (3) in the advanced application. For the sake of the grad students reviewing your application please do not go over the word limit or make your responses overly technical.

7. Enter the approximate start date and end date of travel that would be covered by this grant.

8. Provide a semi-itemized list that is as thorough as possible for the expenses that your travel demands. Even if the listed expenses are greater than the allotted award amount, list the full amount that you require. The expenses covered by the Travel Fund are listed below. The prices do not have to be exact, but should be representative. This list is not binding, and the submitted reimbursements may reasonably differ (e.g. in terms of flight details).

9. List all other funding sources that you have applied for, or have received. We encourage you to look for as many funding sources as are available.

10. Enter the name and email of a faculty/staff contact who can provide a recommendation form (inaccurate information could result in a delayed or rejected application).

11. Note that if your email address is not a uchicago email address, or if your travel end date is invalid, you will not see a submit button.

12. Click submit only if you have read and understood these instructions.
Important for Group Applications only

Groups may submit applications for the Travel Fund’s Basic Award. If you are submitting on behalf of a group, please check the box stating that this is a group travel award, and enter the number of individuals in your group (limit 5). These applications are processed the same way as individual applications. If your group is larger than 5, consider applying for Grad Council’s Professional and Academic Fund.

4 Review System

The following is the point system used to review applications. Each application is reviewed by 2 different graduate students. The reviewers have the opportunity to leave comments after each question.

4.1 Basic Review

**Question 1:** In 400 words or less, describe the importance of this event and why it is relevant to your academic/professional interests. Additionally, please explain the nature of your participation in the event. How will attendance further your academic and/or professional goals? What opportunities does this event provide and how will it enhance your UChicago graduate experience? (25 pts possible: 5 = best, 1 = worst)

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<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Relevance of event clearly described?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Clear justification for participation?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Will the event provide academic/professional value?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will this event enhance the student’s graduate experience?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clear organization and delivery?</td>
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<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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**Question 2:** Graduate Council’s goal is to build a strong community of scholars from across the University, from which this fund benefits. In 200 words or less, describe how in the months following your attendance you will contribute to the greater UChicago community. This can either tie directly into your event or can instead be general service to your fellow graduate students. (e.g. perhaps you will report back to your school, write a post for a website, create educational material, review for the travel fund committee, host a departmental event)? (15 pts possible: 5 = best, 1 = worst)
Overall Strength of Application: Please take a moment to decide the overall strength of the application and whether you feel the student has appropriate need for funding. Consider, e.g. if the PI can provide funding if the student does not receive this award, if the cost of the conference and its location are reasonable, and especially if the student will need to pay out of pocket for travel. An applicant with extreme need (4-5) may be a senior student who would have no choice but to pay the cost of attending a US conference out of their own pocket, whereas a low-need (1-2) applicant may be a third-year whose PI can, but doesn’t want to, pay for the student to attend a conference in Portugal. (5 points possible: 5 = best, 1 = worst)

Does this application financially merit funding? 5 4 3 2 1
Total: ______

Recommendation form. (10 pts possible)

4.2 Advanced Review

Student information (5 points possible)
What task are you performing at the conference?

- Talk or performance of creative work: +5
- Poster: +2
- Unknown: 0
- Not Presenting: -5

Question 1: In 200 words or less, describe the importance of this event and why it is relevant to your academic/professional interests. Additionally, please explain the nature of your participation in the event and describe how competitive it is to present at this particular event. (20 points possible: 5 = best, 1 = worst)
Relevance of event clearly described? 5 4 3 2 1
Clear justification for participation? 5 4 3 2 1
How competitive is this event? 5 4 3 2 1
Clear organization and delivery? 5 4 3 2 1
Total: 

**Question 2:** Within 400 words or less, please explain to your fellow graduate students what your project is and the significance of your research. How does your project contribute to your field of study? This information helps us understand how your event ties into the advancement of your degree. Please use language that would be appropriate for an educated lay-person. (20 points possible: 5 = best, 1 = worst)

Is the purpose clearly stated? 5 4 3 2 1
Research significance explained? 5 4 3 2 1
Is a larger context explored? 5 4 3 2 1
Clear presentation of content? 5 4 3 2 1
Total: 

**Question 3:** Graduate Council’s goal is to build a strong community of scholars from across the University, from which this fund benefits. In 200 words or less, describe how in the months following your attendance you will contribute to the greater UChicago community. This can either tie directly into your event or can instead be general service to your fellow graduate students. (e.g. perhaps you will report back to your school, write a post for a website, create educational material, review for the travel fund committee, host a departmental event)? (15 points possible: 5 = best, 1 = worst)

Clear commitment to helping the community? 5 4 3 2 1
Plan described for use of knowledge to help peers? 5 4 3 2 1
Clear organization and delivery? 5 4 3 2 1
Total: 

**Overall Strength of Application:** Please take a moment to decide the overall strength of the application and whether you feel the student has appropriate need for funding. Consider, e.g. if the PI can provide funding if the student does not receive this award, if the cost of the conference and its location are reasonable, and especially if the student will need to pay out of pocket for travel. An applicant with extreme need (4-5) may be a senior student who would have no choice but to pay the cost of attending a US conference out of their own pocket, whereas a low-need (1-2) applicant may be a third-year whose PI can, but doesn’t want to, pay for the student to attend a conference in Portugal. (5 points possible: 5 = best, 1 = worst)
Recommendation Form (10 pts possible)

5 Reimbursements

Awardees will be granted funds as reimbursement of expenses, and awardees must submit receipt copies as documentation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is Covered</th>
<th>What is NOT Covered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any Transportation</td>
<td>Meals or Food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodging</td>
<td>Coffee or Caffeinated beverages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference Fees</td>
<td>Items bought while traveling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If possible please provide receipts that have the applicant name and a date on them. You only need to provide receipts that you want to be reimbursed for. Please provide digital copies with sufficient resolution. On the expense report, please list all the expenses that you want reimbursed (they must match receipts) and if you have alternate funding, clearly list (and label) everything that is covered by the alternate funding if applicable.

More instructions will be provided in the award notification email.

Extra info that might be useful:

- Grad council does cover rental cars. Just keep and upload the receipts for the rental and for gas.
- Grad council will cover travel in a personal car using the standard IRS mileage rate (53.5 cents per mile)
- Grad council does not reimburse purchases made with miles/points instead of dollars.
- Though discouraged, you may use copies of credit card statements in extraordinary circumstances.
6  Frequently Asked Questions

My application was rejected by reviewers. What can I do?

Your only option is to resubmit a new application through the normal process (including the delays; this is why it pays to apply early!). Due to the large number of received applications it isn’t feasible to do partial re-reviews. You may only apply once per quarter.

What constitutes participation at a conference for the basic fund?

The rule of thumb for the basic application is that you must do more than simply be there. You may volunteer or actively advocate for UChicago while there (there must be some commitment that you’ve formally entered in this case). Critically, your participation must forward your education; we cannot fund e.g. meetings preparing you for the steps after you graduate. Some examples of valid events are case competitions, spring break treks, travel expenses for internships, summer schools, workshops, and networking events (with active involvement).

What constitutes participation at a conference for the advanced fund?

For the advanced fund you must present in some way, whether that be research or presentation of something else you’ve created. For example, you may attend a performance of a piece of music composed or present original research. Critically, your participation must forward your education; we cannot fund e.g. meetings preparing you for the steps after you graduate.

What happens if my advisor/mentor does not submit the materials?

We will not review your application until we receive the materials from your advisor/mentor. If we do not receive any material 30 days after you submit your application is grounds for us to close your application (this implies that it is okay for us to receive the recommendation form after you travel if you satisfy all the stated deadlines). We will contact you if no form is received after two weeks; however, bear in mind that we will not waive the requirement overall.

What is the general timeline of events after I apply?

2-4 weeks after submission you will hear if your application is accepted or rejected (assuming your advisor/mentor has submitted their form).

Who are the reviewers?

The reviewers specific to your application are shown to you when you are accepted or rejected. The reviewers are all graduate students at the University of Chicago. When available, graduate representatives on Graduate Council are given priority as reviewers.

Where is my confirmation email?

The first culprit is an incorrect email address. If this is not the case, please check your spam filter for an email from Jotform. If this does not solve your problem, contact us.