Research and Personal Development Fund
Policies and Instructions

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1. The Research and Personal Development Fund Description

The Travel Fund is an initiative from the Graduate Council in association with UChicagoGRAD that traditionally provides funds for graduate students at the University of Chicago to attend academic conferences, networking events, and other venues. With the ongoing pandemic, the use of the Travel Fund needed to be addressed for the 2020-2021 academic year, and the result of discussions between the Graduate Council and UChicagoGRAD led to the formation of the Research and Personal Development Fund. While the original goal of this fund remains the same, the way in which money will be awarded has changed. For Autumn quarter 2021, the travel fund has been reactivated and unvaccinated applicants need to attach a copy of approval from the Dean of Students of their division/school (can be uploaded in the application form) while vaccinated individuals don't need to do so. This will be re-evaluated starting January 1, 2022, and will be in accordance with University of Chicago travel regulations. In summary, there are three types of funding this quarter *viz.* Research (Travel), Research (Non-Travel), and Personal Development funds.

Research (Non-Travel) awards are intended to cover the cost of virtual conferences registration fees. With the pandemic canceling most in-person conferences, these awards enable students to virtually attend conferences either to present their work or simply explore their academic interests. Research awards will carry a maximum value of $300 if a student is presenting their work, or $200 if a student is not. If a student is not presenting their work but is still interested in attending a conference, they are still encouraged to apply for this award. Students who receive Research (Non-Travel) awards for presenting their work will also be invited to participate in a Research Symposium hosted by the Graduate Council at some time towards the end of the 2021-2022 academic year.

Research (Travel) awards will facilitate travel to conferences for in-person attendance. If the applicant is presenting then the maximum award amount is $600 while applicants who are not presenting will be entitled to a maximum of $300. We are also accepting applications from applicants who want to travel for a research project for some time. The applicants will need to show certification (offer letter from the supervisor or similar document) when they apply for a reimbursement, just like the certificate of attending/presenting at a conference. The award value for traveling for a research project is $600.

Personal Development awards are a new style of awards that are intended to fund an online course, boot camp, license, or other relevant endeavors that are meant to enhance a student's personal and professional development. These awards will carry a maximum value of $300. This is notably different than in years past; this new award will allow students to invest in their research and academic careers in creative ways such that the pandemic does not render their time in graduate school unproductive. This represents a new area of Graduate Council funding, and as such, the value of the award, the circumstances surrounding its conferral, as well as the events it will fund will be subject to constant review and are designed to be flexible.

Every graduate student is invited and encouraged to apply. You are required to submit an application for an event at least 14 days before it takes place. Because the review committee is comprised of graduate students like you, please allow for up to 2 weeks for applications to be reviewed if you would like to hear the result before your event takes place. Additionally, if your application is rejected, you may apply again using a new application if your event has

not yet occurred. Upon receiving an award, you will be expected to provide some additional information and receipts for reimbursement.

Due to increased demand for these awards in previous years, 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 the applicants could result in delayed or rejected applications. Please send all questions not addressed by the instructions to Grad Council at travelfund@uchicago.edu.

We look forward to reviewing all of your applications and learning about your work and achievements during this year. Ultimately, the goal of the Research and Personal Development Fund is to allow graduate students to enrich their graduate experience in a time that may be challenging to do so. We hope that this new fund works toward accomplishing this goal.

2. Application Rules and Eligibility Requirements

- All applicants must be graduate or professional students (full time) at the University of Chicago.

- Applications may be submitted up to two (2) quarters in advance of an event date.

- Applications must be **submitted no later than fourteen (14) days before the date of an event**.

- No retroactive applications will be considered.

- You may only receive **one (1) Research and Personal Development Fund award per year** at the University of Chicago, including interruptions of student status.

- Rejected applicants are encouraged to apply again in the future using a new application. Applicants are discouraged from submitting the same application twice.

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

- 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 final day of the event.

- Applications that are found to be duplicates of other applications or to have borrowed heavily from other applications will be withdrawn.

- In light of the recently updated University policy for COVID-19, **vaccinated individuals are NOT required to get approval from the Dean of Students while applying for the Research (Travel) fund. However, unvaccinated individuals do need to get approval**.

- Awardees must truthfully list all sources and amounts of other funding. This is especially important in a year where funding sources are limited.

- 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/research-personal-development/ to start the application.

2. Press the "Apply Now" button.

3. Fill out all 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. Select the award you will be applying for.

6. Carefully consider the listed questions and provide your responses in the space pro-vided. Be sure to answer the questions relevant to your award. For the sake of the graduate 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 that would be covered by this award. If the award is intended to cover a Personal Development award, submit the date that you would like to receive this award while complying with the application requirements.

8. Provide an itemized list that is as thorough as possible for the expenses that you are applying for. Even if the listed expenses are greater than the allotted award amount, please list the full amount that you require, as partial values can be awarded. If applying for a specific workshop, event, etc. then these prices should be exact. Please view Section 5 of this document to see a tentative list of what is and what is not reimbursable.

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 possible in order to ensure that graduate students with less available funding are not negatively impacted in the application process.

10. Note that if your email address is not a UChicago email address, your application may not be processed.

11. Click submit only if you have read and understood these instructions.

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. In a situation where the scores of the two reviewers differ greatly, a third reviewer is assigned.

4.1 Research Review

Question 1: What task are you performing at the conference?

- Talk or performance of original work: +4

- Poster: +2

- Not Presenting: 0

Question 2: In 300 words or less, describe the importance of this event and why it is relevant to your academic or research interests. Additionally, please explain the nature of your participation in the event. How will attendance further your academic and/or research goals? What opportunities does this event provide and how will it enhance your UChicago graduate experience? (12 pts possible: 3 = best, 1 = worst)

Relevance of event clearly described? 3 2 1

Clear justification for participation? 3 2 1

Will the event provide academic/research value? 3 2 1

Clear organization and delivery? 3 2 1

Total: ____

Question 3: In 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. If you are not presenting work at a conference, you are encouraged to expand on how attending the conference furthers your academic goals. (12 points possible: 3 = best, 1 = worst)

Is the purpose clearly stated? 3 2 1

Research significance explained? 3 2 1

Is a larger context explored, for the individual or the University of Chicago? 3 2 1

Clear presentation of content? 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 is reasonable, and especially if the student will need to pay out of pocket for registration. An applicant with extreme need may be a senior student who would have no choice but to pay the cost of attending a conference out of their own pocket, whereas a low-need applicant may be a third-year whose PI can, but doesn't want to, pay for the student to virtually attend a conference outside of the student's research area.

Does this application financially merit funding? 3 2 1

Total: _____

Overall point total: _____

4.2 Personal Development Review

Question 1: In 400 words or less, describe the situation you are requesting funding for and its importance. Why it is relevant to your academic or research interests? What is the nature of your participation in this situation? How will attendance or participation further your personal goals as they relate to your graduate student experience? What opportunities does this event provide? (16 pts possible: 4 = best, 1 = worst)

Relevance of event clearly described? 4 3 2 1

Clear justification for participation? 4 3 2 1

Will the event provide personal value for the graduate student? 4 3 2 1

Clear organization and delivery? 4 3 2 1

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 is reasonable, and especially if the student will need to pay out of pocket for registration. An applicant with extreme need may be a senior student who would have no choice but to pay the cost of attending a conference out of their own pocket, whereas a low-need

applicant may be a third-year whose PI can, but doesn't want to, pay for the student to virtually attend a conference outside of the student's research area.

Does this application financially merit funding? 3 2 1

Total: _____

Overall point total: _____

5. Reimbursements

Awardees will be granted funds as <u>reimbursement</u> of expenses, and awardees must submit receipt copies as documentation. Below is a list of what is and what is not covered under the Research and Personal Development fund.

<u>What is covered under the Research Award</u>:

- Virtual/in-person conference registration. Certificate of participation is required while filing for reimbursement,

- Research projects outside of UChicago. A certificate of conducting research is required while filing for reimbursement.

<u>What is covered under the Personal Development award</u>:

- Online courses or boot camps for building a certain skill or generating knowledge
- Licenses for research tools or software
- Professional networking events

If you are curious about which fund you should apply to for your specific event, please email us at travelfund@uchicago.edu.

If possible, please provide receipts that have the applicant's 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 to be 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 information that might be useful:

- Graduate Council does not reimburse purchases made with credit card or award points instead of dollars.

- Though discouraged, you may use copies of credit card statements in extraordinary circumstances in place of a receipt.

6, Frequently Asked Questions

• Reviewers rejected my application. What can I do?

Your only option is to resubmit a new application through the normal process (including the expected delays for review; therefore, we encourage you to apply early!). Due to the large number of applications we received, it is not feasible to do partial re-reviews. You may only use it once per quarter.

• What is the general timeline of events after I apply?

About 2-4 weeks after submission, you will hear if your application is accepted or rejected.

• Who are the reviewers?

The reviewers are all graduate students at the University of Chicago who serve on the Research and Personal Development fund committee. 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 Wufoo. If this does not solve your problem, contact us.

• So, what can I apply for with this Personal Development award? What are the limitations?

That is a great question. We encourage you as applicants to be creative. This award was designed with the idea that some graduate students may not be able to perform research in this upcoming year as they were expecting to – as a result, we want to encourage graduate students to think of ways in which they can enrich their skills. Examples may include registering for an online class outside of the university, using the award to take a coding or language boot camp, attending virtual professional development or networking events, purchasing a software or computer license for personal research use, or something else entirely. As we get more applications and thus distribute more awards of this nature, we will have a better idea of any limitations we need to place on the awards. We will constantly review the criteria to better fit our data.