



Disability Travel Assistance Fund for Academic Staff with Disabilities Procedure

Policy Hierarchy link	The <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i> (Cwlth) Equity and Diversity Policy Statement		
Responsible Officer	Vice-President, Human Resources		
Contact Officer	Head, Workplace Diversity		
Superseded Documents	<i>Travel Assistance for Staff with Disabilities</i> , approved by VCAC in May 1998 and amended March 2010		
File Number	2016/08732		
Associated Documents	Disability Travel Assistance Fund for Academic Staff with Disabilities - Application Reasonable Adjustment Guidelines for Managers of Staff and Potential Staff with Disabilities UNSW Travel Procedure		
Version	Authorised by	Approval Date	Effective Date
2.2	Acting Head, Governance	18 February 2016	29 February 2016

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1. Purpose and Scope

UNSW is committed to achieving its aspiration to continuously improve its position as a leading research intensive university in Australia, and values the contribution of all staff in meeting this aspiration. In addition, UNSW's 2025 Strategy is underpinned by its guiding principles, including **equity, opportunity and diversity**, which are embedded in the UNSW's policies, processes and procedures.

UNSW recognises that *additional expenses* are often incurred by academic staff members with disabilities when reasonable adjustments need to be made to travel arrangements. The UNSW Travel Assistance Fund for Academic Staff with Disabilities (the Travel Fund) is a fund managed by Human Resources that provides a contribution towards these additional costs.

The Travel Fund is not a substitute for the standard funding arrangements for conference attendance, SSP or other research related travel provided by Faculties, Schools or Centres. However, the Travel Fund may provide assistance with the **additional expenses** associated with accommodating a disability.

The Travel Fund is administered by the Head, Workplace Diversity, who will report annually to the Vice-President, Human Resources and the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor on the Travel Fund.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 Disability** is defined very broadly as any physical, sensory, neurological, intellectual, psychiatric or learning disability, and includes physical disfigurement, the presence in the body of disease-causing organisms (for example the HIV virus) and total or partial loss of part of the body or a bodily function. In some circumstances it may include a chronic illness or medical condition.
- 2.2 Reasonable adjustment:** a reasonable adjustment means changing some feature of the work environment so that people with disabilities can do their work more effectively and have an equal opportunity to perform the requirements of their job. The University is obliged to make a reasonable adjustment to accommodate the needs of a person with a disability, unless the adjustment would cause unjustifiable hardship for the University.
- 2.3 Research Activity:** relevant to current research program as approved by the Head of School or Centre Director and may include Special Studies Program (SSP), conference attendance or fieldwork.
- 2.4 Academic Employee:** an academic staff member who has a contract of employment with the University and who is covered by the UNSW Academic Staff Enterprise Agreement or similar agreement.

3. Procedure

The Travel Fund supports the research activity (including SSP or conference attendance) of academic staff members with disabilities by providing a contribution to the additional expenses that arise when travel-related adjustments are required to accommodate a disability. When academic staff members with disabilities are travelling at the direction of the University (i.e. as part of the duties or responsibilities of their role), the reasonable adjustment provisions outlined in the [Reasonable Adjustment Guidelines for Managers of Staff and Potential Staff with Disabilities](#) should be applied.

3.1 Eligibility

An applicant must be a member of the academic staff with a disability who:

- is employed as full-time or part-time academic (including research only academic staff and Postdoctoral Fellows) at UNSW whether fixed term or continuing appointments;
- has applied to attend a conference, or to travel for other research purposes or for SSP;
- has received approval from the Head of School, Centre Director or Dean to undertake the research activity;
- has obtained approval for leave for the proposed activity;
- has been granted School funds (potentially including research funds) to cover standard costs for travel for the proposed activity;
- requires additional financial assistance in order to accommodate adjustments to travel arrangements that are necessary because of their disability.

*Full-time postgraduate and all undergraduate students are **not** eligible to apply.*

Assistance from the Travel Fund is not available for travel on personal leave (recreation, long service, and leave without pay) which is taken in conjunction with the research activity.

Requests for funding will be considered within the total pool of Travel Funds available (which is set at the discretion of the University and could vary from year to year), as well as the number of applications received per round.

3.2 Applications

The Travel Fund will only support **one application each year** from individual staff members, except in exceptional circumstances (refer 3.6).

Completed applications are required to include the following items in addition to the [Fund application form](#):

1. A copy of the application submitted to the School or Centre when requesting financial support for Conference Travel, SSP or fieldwork participation;
2. Written confirmation of conference attendance (if applicable);
3. Medical and/or other relevant evidence of their disability;
4. Itinerary and detailed budget estimates:-
 - One standard budget (i.e. for a person not requiring adjustment)
 - One budget outlining the adjustments and **additional expenses** required to accommodate the applicant's disability.

All applications to the Travel Fund will be treated confidentially with access limited to the members of the Travel Fund Assessment Committee.

The completed application should be submitted via email to the Executive Assistant to the Director Human Resources

Applications will be stored according to the UNSW Record Keeping Policy and held on a Central Administrative File.

3.3 Assessment Criteria

Assessment of UNSW's financial contribution towards the specific travel requirements will comply with the principles of reasonable adjustment as required by relevant disability discrimination legislation.

The following information will be considered when assessing applications to the Travel Fund:

- The purpose of the travel and the benefit to the applicant's research activities / program and to the University;
- The nature of the applicant's disability such that additional support to travel is required;
- The mode of travel and adjustments required to accommodate the applicant's disability;
- The financial contribution made by the School or Centre, and other relevant parties (e.g. conference organisers), to support the travel arrangements of the applicant;
- Head of School or Centre Director support and approval for the research activity associated with the travel arrangements; and
- Any other relevant considerations.

The Travel Assistance Fund Assessment Committee (refer 3.4) may seek advice from experts external to the Committee or the University as necessary, to assist in the assessment. The Committee will also require medical and/or other relevant evidence in support of an application for funding.

The Assessment Committee may not approve an application for funding if, following consideration of all circumstances, it is decided that the assessment criteria have not been met and/or the adjustments are not reasonable or would impose unjustifiable hardship on the University.

3.4 The Assessment Committee

The Travel Assistance Fund Assessment Committee comprises:

- President of the Academic Board (Convener)
- Head, Workplace Diversity and
- Director (Risk Management)

3.5 Application Schedule

Where the balance of the funding pool allows, there will be three application rounds per annum for the Travel Fund.

Round	Dates for Conference/SSP/Research Activity	Applications Open	Applications Close	Notification
Round 1	1 January – 30 April	1 November	30 November	15 December
Round 2	1 May– 31 August	1 March	31 March	15 April
Round 3	1 September – 31 December	1 July	31 July	15 August

Your completed application should be submitted via email to:

Human Resources, hrdirector@unsw.edu.au

3.6 Limitations and Exceptions

Applications to the Travel Fund will be limited to:

- One application per calendar year from eligible academic staff members.
- The **maximum** financial assistance provided by the Travel Fund is usually \$10,000 per application. Applications greater than \$10,000 will only be considered if supported by evidence that the adjustments required to accommodate the applicant's disability will be greater than this amount.
- An additional application for funding may be submitted if supported by a clear and compelling rationale.

3.7 Payments and Reimbursements

Payment or reimbursement of **additional travel expenses** will be made to the School, Centre, Faculty or academic staff member with a disability who has successfully applied to the Travel Fund under the application procedure outlined in this document. Funds granted to applicants will be released to the School or Centre Manager or Faculty Finance Manager as required, following provision of invoices, receipts or purchase orders to the Executive Assistant to the Vice-President, Human Resources.

Payment or reimbursement of travel expenses can be made by one or a combination of methods including UNSW credit card, reimbursement of reasonable expenses actually incurred, and payment of a travel allowance. Receipts or invoices for cash expenses must be retained and submitted for settlement within 30 days from the date of travel return.

3.8 Accountability

Within four weeks of return from travel, successful applicants will be required to provide a two-page report to the Travel Fund Assessment Committee with details of conference or SSP participation, the benefit of it to their research career and the specific research outcomes achieved. This is not intended to increase a staff member's workload, and may be the same report as required for School / Faculty / Centre or other funding body.

3.9 Exchange rates

All estimated costs including transport will be subject to exchange rate fluctuations both up and down:

- if payment for the service is by cash (supported by receipts), the reimbursement should be at the exchange rate when the cash was obtained (supported by transaction documentation);
- if payment was by credit card, reimbursement should be at the date of the actual credit card-transfer/payment (either by cash or by bank reimbursement, supported by credit card statements) in Australia.

3.10 Application Checklist

Applications **must** include the following documentation:

- ☐ Completed [Travel Assistance Fund Application Form](#)
- ☐ Copy of documentation for research activity submitted to School/Centre/Faculty attached
- ☐ Written confirmation of conference participation attached
- ☐ Evidence of disability / medical condition requiring adjustment attached
- ☐ Travel itinerary attached
- ☐ Estimated standard budget attached
- ☐ Estimated budget inclusive of adjustment attached
- ☐ Other relevant documentation

Applications that do not include the above documents will not be processed.

4. Review & History

This procedure will be reviewed prior to December 2016.

Appendix A: History

Version	Authorised by	Approval Date	Effective Date	Sections modified
1.0	Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Committee	May 1998	May 1998	
1.1		March 2010	March 2010	
2.0	Vice-President, University Services	9 April 2013	1 May 2013	Full review
2.1	Administrative update by Acting Head, Governance Support	28 June 2013	28 June 2013	Application form included as an associated document; link inserted section 3.2 and section 3.10.
2.2	Administrative update by Acting Head, Governance	18 February 2016	29 February 2016	Administrative updates to senior leadership positions.