

The Graduate School of the Faculty of Human Sciences

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Announcement Conference or congress travel grants

The Graduate School offers conference or congress travel grants upon application that allow recipients to travel to and actively partake in national and international conferences and congresses. The travel allowances are capped at €350/person for national conferences in Germany, at €700/person for international conferences in other European countries, and at €1,000/person for international conferences in non-European countries.

The travel allowances cover:

- Travelling expenses in accordance with the University of Cologne's guidelines on travelling expenses
- Costs for accommodation up to the applicable domestic and international flat rates for overnight stays
- Participation fees
- Where appropriate, membership fees. Note: Applies only if the sum of the membership fee and the reduced participation fee for members is lower than the participation fee alone would be for non-members.

Special circumstances (disabilities, chronic illnesses or family obligations) of the applicant may be taken into account by granting additional financial means (e.g. for the travel of small children, the travel of an assistant, the use of assistance services or special travel facilitations). If you would like to take advantage of such additional funds, please make this clear in your application letter and include it in the cost plan.

The Graduate School will not cover any additional costs, for example for participation in a social program or for private further travel.

Participation in events can also be funded in exceptional cases if there is no active participation, for example if the program of the event does not foresee any own contributions by the participants from the outset or if the event is a scientifically relevant qualification offer (workshop, etc.) that is of direct benefit to the applicant's research project.

Please note:

It is absolutely essential that applications for travel grants be submitted to the Graduate School in advance of the intended travel and in time for one of the four regular deadlines (February 15, June 15, and October 15 of each year).

Unfortunately, retroactive applications for trips that have already taken place by the respective deadline cannot be considered.

Who can apply?

Members who contribute actively to the qualification approach of the Graduate School, and do so voluntarily and regularly, are entitled to apply for conference or congress travel allowances. Regular activities (generally once a year) that entitle a member to apply include:

- Presentation and debate of the individual member's research project at specific presentation days, in colloquia or at other events hosted by the Graduate School

- Contributions (talks, papers, chairing of workshops or parts thereof, presentation of results or methodology, etc.) at events hosted by the Graduate School or partner organisations, e.g. guest lectures, workshops, seminars, field trips
- (Joint) organisation or presenting of events, e.g. seminars, workshops, guest lectures or field trips
- Joint organisation of or participation in networking events of the Graduate School ("Stammtisch"/social meetings, welcome days)
- Making specific recommendations (proposals) for events (e.g. workshops, conferences, congresses) and help organising them
- Serving on the doctoral committee ("Promotionsausschuss") or commitment to working groups ("Arbeitsgruppen")
- Serving as a doctoral representative on the Graduate School's board

Additional forms of active membership not listed above may also entitle to apply for an allowance if they constitute clearly defined personal contributions to the qualification aims of the Graduate School and are equal to the above examples.

Please note that only one application for funding per year can be accepted.

Applicants who obtained membership of the Graduate School before 1 August 2016 are exempt from the condition of an "active membership" and can apply even if they do not meet the above-mentioned criteria.

Which application documents are needed?

The application for obtaining a conference or congress travel grant should include:

1. A written statement, detailing the reasons for applying as well as the importance of attending the conference and its relevance for the dissertation project in an understandable way, even for those not familiar with the respective discipline (roughly 1-2 pages). This explanation should also inform about the applicant's activities that entitle him or her to apply for an allowance (see list above).
2. Information/proof from the event's host about the type of event, duration, programme and participation fees (screenshots of the website, programme booklet, invitation letter, etc.)
3. An abstract of the applicant's contribution to the conference/congress and proof that the contribution has been accepted
4. A calculation of costs for participation fees, travelling expenses and accommodation and, if applicable, for additional costs to compensate for special burdens for which the support is requested (if possible, please already include receipts)
5. A written statement that no other funding has been obtained or, alternatively, information about the amount of funding if the applicant is funded partially by a third party
6. A letter of recommendation from the first supervisor.
The recommendation is expected to support the rationale for the application with regard to the selection criteria (see below) from a specialist perspective.
Ideally, the recommendation should refer to the following aspects:
 - How well does the first supervisor know the applicant?
 - How are the applicant's performance and skills assessed in comparison to other doctoral candidates?

- How is the scientific quality and relevance of the dissertation project assessed?
- How is the relevance of the conference topic and the importance of the conference trip for the development of the dissertation project estimated?

7. If applicable, a proof of chronic illness or disability

Please note:

It may happen that you are planning a trip, but you cannot control the submission of certain application documents (e.g. a confirmation that your contribution to a conference has been accepted, or the recommendation of your first supervisor) in time for the appropriate deadline.

In this case, we ask that you still submit the part of your application that you can prepare yourself in time for the appropriate deadline and indicate in the application letter which documents could not yet be obtained.

A decision on your application will then be made under the proviso that the outstanding documents are submitted as soon as possible, but at the latest before the start of the scheduled trip without being requested to do so.

Who decides upon the applications?

Based on all applications, the board of the Graduate School debates four times a year whether to grant the applicant an allowance and also decides upon the respective funding amounts. The following deadlines apply:

- 15 February
- 15 June
- 15 October

Please note:

Please allow for the fact that several weeks may elapse between the application deadline and the decision on the individual application.

In the case of trips planned at short notice, it is possible that your application was received on time but the trip is to be started shortly after the submission deadline and before a selection decision is made.

Provided that a positive selection decision is then made in the meantime, the amount stated in the notification will be granted via a subsequent reimbursement of travel expenses; however, if the selection decision is negative, no reimbursement of travel expenses can be made.

What are the selection criteria?

The following criteria will be taken into consideration:

- Plausibility of reasoning of the application:
It should be clear to the selection committee whether the conference topic is relevant to the dissertation project and how important and useful participation will be for the development of the dissertation project, for opening up professional or specialist perspectives, for establishing (international) specialist collaborations, and the like.

- Scientific/academic quality of the dissertation project as well as its originality and relevance to the discipline of the project
- Applicant's contribution of the applicant to the submitted conference contribution: Generally, the applicant should be the first author of the prospective talk or poster or have prepared the talk or poster as one of two first authors (shared first authorship). Funding for other parties involved in the contribution is generally excluded.
- The relation of costs to the expected benefits of attendance (i. e. networking in the scientific community)

Please note:

It is true that it can be of great importance for individual applicants to participate in a conference in order to collect relevant conference experience.

In a competitive selection situation, however, conference travels that enable applicants to present their topic to a particularly relevant community will be considered more favorably than conference participation with a less narrow professional focus.

If it is not possible to make a selection on the basis of these criteria the board of the Graduate School will also take into consideration the quality and quantity of research and other academic performances of the applicant at the time of application, i. e. publications, lectures or further aspects of academic performance.

How to claim expenses?

For internal and external doctoral candidates alike, the settlement is made as a Statement of Travel Expenses according to the State Travel Expenses Act ("Landesreisekostengesetz") in the form provided at the UoC:

(For more information about the administration of travel expenses, please see https://verwaltung.uni-koeln.de/abteilung44/content/travel_expenses/index_eng.html).

Please keep in mind that even those who are not employed at the UoC and do their doctorate as external candidates, if they have been promised funding by the Graduate School, must request and obtain a formal travel authorization ("Dienstreisegenehmigung" in advance of the trip so that their trip can later be accounted for by the UoC.

In these cases the travel authorization must be signed by the respective first supervisor of their dissertation instead of an immediate superior or head of institute.

You will receive the information on the mandatory field "Financing: cost center or PSP element (mandatory information)" together with the information on funding by the Graduate School.

Please send the complete statement of travel expenses including all original receipts for the costs incurred as well as the travel authorization and the completed statement form and (please leave the fields: "Funding: Cost center or PSP element (mandatory)" and "Head of institute / department (cost centre manager)" at the end of the form blank; they will be filled out by the Graduate School) to the Graduate School office no later than four months after the end of the trip.

Please send in your application for a conference or congress travel grant by e-mail (as a single PDF file) to:

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