

Travel Payments

When paying a student, it is important to ensure that payment is paid through the appropriate system that will result in compliance with applicable laws and regulations. One of the following systems will be used when making a travel payment to students.

- GradStar
- University's travel systems: WebTravel/CABS or Concur (*when Concur is made available for student transactions*).

The purpose of a student's travel impacts how funds should be provided and accounted for. In most cases, an argument can be made that student travel benefits both the individual and the University. However, to determine the appropriate payment system, the primary beneficiary of the payment must be identified as follows:

- **Student is primary beneficiary** - the purpose of the travel is educational assistance to aid in the pursuit of study or independent research. Most awards and individual travel grants would typically fall into this category.
- **University is primary beneficiary** - the purpose of the payment is to reimburse the individual for business expenses incurred on behalf of the University. The University has a clear business interest in paying the student's travel expenses (*i.e., the student is representing the University at the conference or event, or travels to support research that primarily benefits the University*).

This guide is to assist the University in identifying the type of payment being made to students so that the appropriate system is selected to make the payment.

Types of Travel Payments

Travel/Expense for University Business

To meet the criteria of “University business travel”, the purpose of the payment must represent a reimbursement for business expenses incurred for travel made on behalf of the University (**i.e., the University is the primary beneficiary of the student’s travel or expense**). Expenses must be substantiated through receipts or by documenting the specifics of travel for per diem payments.

- **Travel payments should be made via the University’s travel system.**
- **Reimbursement of expense payment(s) should be made via [Accounts Payable Voucher](#)**

Examples of travel/expense reimbursement where the University is the primary beneficiary:

<p>Example A. Representing UNC at conference (also see Example E): A UNC student travels to a conference out-of-state. The department asks the student to represent UNC at the conference by attending and presenting a poster at the conference. The student may be expected to report results or share information from the conference with their department or colleagues. The student is reimbursed for travel costs after presenting receipts to the department.</p>
<p>Example B. Representing UNC at a recruiting event. A student is asked by their department to attend a recruiting event in another city to help recruit students to UNC. The student drives to the recruiting event and the department issues a reimbursement for their gas mileage after the student presents receipts to the department.</p>
<p>Example C. Reimbursement for purchase: A student is asked to buy refreshments from a restaurant to serve at a recognition event. The student pays \$65 cash for the purchase and obtains a receipt from the restaurant. Thus, their academic department provides reimbursement for the \$65 spent.</p>
<p>Example D. Reimbursement for lunch expense. Under faculty direction, a student is asked by a staff member to take a potential graduate student visiting UNC to lunch. The student is reimbursed for their lunch purchase.</p>

The department making the payment must determine whether the student is incurring the expenses primarily for University business or to primarily for the benefit of the student. **A travel expense/reimbursement for a student’s personal business or academic benefit should be made via the GradStar system and will be counted as financial aid.**

Example of travel/expense for a student’s personal benefit.

<p>Example E. Travel expense/reimbursement for a student’s personal business: A UNC student travels to a conference out-of-state. Although the student will not be presenting at the conference, their department agrees to pay \$500 for travel costs so the student is able to experience a conference. This is a scholarship/fellowship payment because the student is not traveling to represent UNC, but to primarily further the student’s scholarly education. The payment is made through GradStar and counts as financial aid.</p>
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Travel for Internships

Students may receive payments from the University relating to opportunities to engage in internships. Internship opportunities may be located at UNC or other external locations.

- Travel payments provided by the University to students who are considered employees of UNC as of condition of their internship should be made in the University's travel system.

Example F: A UNC student is interning at the University. As part of their internship requirements the student performs services for UNC and is paid fair market value wages as an employee. Income earned is reported as wages on a W-2. The student is considered an employee of the University. Travel related to this type of internship is not financial aid.

- Travel payments provided by the University to help defray costs associated with an unpaid internship or internship paid by a non-university entity where the student is not employed by UNC is considered a scholarship/fellowship and the payment should be reported in GradStar. **The payment should be made in GradStar using the Research/Internship award type.** The payment will count as financial aid. **See Implications of Financial Aid on page 8.**

Example G: A UNC student is interning for a company in New York. The student's academic department provides the student with a \$2000 travel award to assist with expenses while completing their internship. This payment is considered financial aid because the primary benefit of the payment is for the student.

Travel for Student Educational Benefit (Scholarship/Fellowship)

A payment or allowance made to support a student in furthering their academics and/or scholarly education is a scholarship/fellowship payment. The primary benefit of these payments supports the student. Benefits to the University because of a scholarship/fellowship are secondary to the primary purpose of the payment.

- **Payments should be entered in GradStar using the Travel Award type.** Payments will be issued to students via [electronic refund](#) by the University Cashier's Office. Payment(s) will be reported to the Office of Scholarships & Student Aid (OSSA) and included as part of the student's financial aid offer. **See Financial Aid Implications on page 8.**
- Departments processing a large number of travel payments may choose to use the University's travel system to book the transportation and submit a Travel Payment Report Form to the OSSA so that the amount of the travel payment is included as part of the student's financial aid. **See OSSA Travel Payment Request Form on page 9.**

Characteristics of a scholarship/fellowship travel payment where the student is the primary beneficiary include:

- Payment is made for activities in which the University is relatively disinterested.
- The primary purpose and original intent of the program/event for which the student is traveling is to further the student's education or training.

PAYMENTS TO STUDENTS

- The University obtains little or no benefit from the program/event for which the student is traveling
- Activities are performed primarily to contribute to the development of the skills needed in the student's studies.

Examples of scholarship/fellowship travel payments that indicate a student is the primary beneficiary.

Example H. A department in Health Sciences offers health professions students who participate in a rural rotation the opportunity to apply for a travel scholarship to cover the student's additional transportation costs to the rural site. The primary benefit of this travel payment is to the student rather than the University.

Example I. Student travels to a conference in California as an attendee and does not present/contribute in any official capacity for UNC, nor is expected to bring back and share information from the conference with others at the University. The primary benefit of this travel payment is to the student rather than the University.

Example J. Student travels to China for Mandarin language training which will assist in language proficiency needed for their degree. This is supplemental work that the student may need to succeed, but it is not a required part of the degree. The primary benefit of the payment is to the student rather than the University.

Example K. A student receives an honors fellowship to travel to Greece in which they will explore art, literature, and history. The fellowship provides a \$5000 award to support learning experiences while in Greece. The student is required to document their learning experiences while in Greece as a condition of the fellowship. The primary benefit of the payment is to the student rather than the University.

Travel for University Research

Research assistants are enrolled full-time in accordance with their program of study and engaged in research activities directly related to their program of study under the supervision or in collaboration with a member of the faculty. Students may also need to travel for their own independent research to complete their dissertation or other academic expectations.

Some components of travel for research may benefit the University as well as the student. Departments should use their best judgement to determine if travel is primarily for University benefit or the student's academic benefit.

- Travel designated primarily for the University's benefit should be paid using the **Reimbursement of Travel/Expense for University Business** discussed on page 2. Please document the reasons for making this determination.
- **Travel for the student's academic benefit should be entered in GradStar using the Travel award type.** Payments will be issued to students via [electronic refund](#) by the University Cashier's Office. Payment(s) will be reported to the Office of Scholarships & Student Aid (OSSA) and included as part of the student's financial aid offer. Students may request an adjustment to

their financial aid budget to accommodate the travel payment. **See page 8 Financial Aid Implications.**

- Departments processing a large number of travel payments for research may also choose to use the University’s travel system to book the transportation and submit a Travel Payment Report Form to the OSSA so that the amount of the travel payment is included as part of the student’s financial aid. **See OSSA Travel Payment Request Form on page 9.**

Characteristics of research travel/ expense payments:

- Results or research will be used by the student and University.
- Research is performed to fulfill University's obligations to outside funding entity and the student’s academic requirements.

Example of research travel/expense payment that indicate a student is the primary beneficiary.

Example M. A student incurs travel and other research expenses while traveling to Brazil to perform sponsored research on medical treatments, which is the topic of their dissertation.

Example of research travel/expense payment that indicate the University is the primary beneficiary.

Example N. A graduate student uses a portion of the institutional allowance on their fellowship grant on gene sequencing services related to their advisor’s sponsored research. This research supports the student’s academics but primarily furthers support of their faculty/advisor’s research project.

Student Leaders and Volunteer Travel

Student leaders are generally students interested in pursuing an activity to further their learning experiences in developing leadership skills. These students are classified as volunteers who do not fall within a UNC employment classification. As such, payments for leadership and volunteer travel will primarily benefit the student.

Payment amounts for volunteers are often based on the students’ unreimbursed expenses related to the responsibilities of the leadership positions, as well as the duration of their commitment and any travel that will be required. In these situations, the students are not paid based on the quantity of what they do or on an hourly or salaried basis, but rather the payment is intended to encourage the volunteer student to play a leadership role within the University.

- **Payments should be entered GradStar using the Travel Award type.** Payments will be issued to students via [electronic refund](#) by the University Cashier’s Office. Payment(s) will be reported to the OSSA and included as part of the student’s financial aid offer. **See Financial Aid Implications on page 8.**
- Departments processing a large number of travel payments for student leaders/volunteers may also choose to use the University’s travel system to book the transportation and submit a Travel Payment Report Form to the OSSA so that the amount of the travel payment is included as part of the student’s financial aid. **See OSSA Travel Payment Request Form on page 9.**

PAYMENTS TO STUDENTS

Students filling leadership roles that have a HR job classification such as Resident Advisors, USO Student Leaders and Orientation Leaders are considered employees of UNC; travel payments should be made via the University's travel systems and are not considered financial aid.

Professional or Leadership Development Travel

Travel for professional or leadership development primarily benefits the student. These types of payments generally include expenses associated with airfare or transportation, lodging, meals, or conference/workshop registration fees.

- **Payment should be entered in GradStar using the Travel award type.** Payments will be issued to students via [electronic refund](#) by the University Cashier's Office. Payment(s) will be reported to the OSSA and included as part of the student's financial aid offer. **See Financial Aid Implications on page 8.**

Characteristics of professional development or leadership travel payments that primarily benefit the student:

- Payment is made for activities in which the University obtains little or no benefit.
- The activity is not a degree requirement but aids in the professional development or enhancement of leadership skills for the student.
- Activities are performed primarily to contribute to the development of the skills needed in the student's studies.

Examples of professional development or leadership payments that indicate the student is the primary beneficiary.

Example R. A student enrolled in the nursing program receives a \$1000 award from their program to attend a health care leadership and administration conference. The conference is not required for degree completion but will assist the student professionally as a healthcare administrator. This type of payment primarily benefits the student rather than the University.

Travel for Student Retreats or Student Organizations

Generally, payments provided by student-led organizations to students for travel or expenses to participate in retreats or other student activities primarily benefit the student.

- **Payment should be entered in GradStar using the Dept. Travel award type.** Payments will be issued to students via [electronic refund](#) by the University Cashier's Office. Payment(s) will be reported to the OSSA and included as part of the student's financial aid offer. **See Financial Aid Implications on page 8.**

In some situations, student organization travel may primarily benefit the University. Typically, this will involve student travel coordinated and funded by University Sponsored Organizations (USOs) to further the University's mission.

- **Travel designated primarily for the University's benefit should be paid using the Reimbursement of Travel/Expense for University Business discussed on page 2.** Please document the reasons for making this determination.

PAYMENTS TO STUDENTS

Examples of student organization travel that primarily benefits this University

Example S. The Carolina Union Activities Board funds an annual weekend retreat for the student leaders. The retreat's agenda is focused on making plans for programming and student activities for the upcoming academic year. The travel primarily benefits the entire University student population rather than the individual travelers.

Example T. The Residence Hall Association pays for student delegates to attend a national conference for residence hall organizations. These delegates represent UNC at the conference and bring back knowledge and expertise to enhance the UNC Residence Hall Association. The travel primarily benefits UNC rather than the individual travelers.

Example U. University Sponsored Organizations (USO) that supports travel for students and require service to receive funding (i.e. poster, white paper, etc.). See Example A on page 2.

Travel for Intramural, Sport Club, and Competitive Teams

Travel or expenses payments for students to compete in intramural, competitive and sporting events primarily benefit the student.

Student Sponsored Travel

- Travel payments reimbursed to intramural, sport club and competitive teams that require students to pay annual dues or participation fees and use team fund raising to support student travel can be made using [Accounts Payable Voucher](#). *These payments are exempt from financial aid consideration.*
- Intramural and sport club travel coordinated by student participants using their personal funds for travel to events/championships should be booked through World Travel with assistance from the [Campus Recreation staff](#).

Departmental Intramural, Sport Club and Competitive Travel

Departments providing students with a cash advance (or reimbursed after the travel occurrence) to purchase their own travel costs should follow the step below. *Departments should contact [Student Life](#) or [Campus Recreation](#) staff before making a cash advance to a student.*

- **Requests for cash payments entered in GradStar using the Travel award type.** Payments will be issued to students via [electronic refund](#) by the University Cashier's Office.

Departments providing payment for intramural/ sport club travel to students who are not required to pay fees /dues to the sport club for travel are considered financial aid. **See Financial Aid Implications section on page 8.**

- Departments may use the University's travel system to book the transportation. A Travel Payment Report Form should also be submitted to the OSSA so that the amount of the travel payment is included as part of the student's financial aid. **See OSSA Travel Payment Request Form on page 9.**

Group Travel

UNC departments may provide payments to students for travel or expenses when traveling in groups. Group travel might include groups of students traveling to competitions, attending service trips, attending conferences, or other student related activities.

The UNC department providing the payment must determine how payment should be split between individuals traveling within the group.

Example of payments for group travel

Example V. Three students are traveling in a group on a public service mission during spring break. The service mission is optional and not related to the student's degree requirements. One of the students pays for lodging for all three group members during the three-day mission. The department could choose to only reimburse the student who paid for lodging during the trip. Similarly, if all three group members paid a portion of the lodging costs during the three-day trip, the department can choose to reimburse each student for the portion they paid. This type of payment primarily benefits the student rather than the University.

Note: See Suggestions and guidance for processing student travel awards via GradStar section.

- Departments processing a large number of travel payments for group travel may prefer to use the University's travel system to book the transportation and submit a Travel Payment Report Form to the OSSA so that the amount of the travel payment is included as part of the student's financial aid. **See OSSA Travel Payment Request Form on page 9.**
- **Payment may also be entered in GradStar using the Travel award type.** Payment will be issued to students via [electronic refund](#) by the University Cashier's Office. Payment(s) will be reported to the OSSA and included as part of the student's financial aid offer. **See Financial Aid Implications section on page 8.**

Financial Aid Implications

The Higher Education Act of 2008 (*the first HEA became law in 1965*) defines other financial assistance as any other assistance known to the school. If the assistance is a result of enrollment, but not a result of employment, the school must treat it as a financial aid resource. **Thus, funds provided for student travel or expenses must be considered as financial aid when the payment is for their academic or personal benefit.**

- **Payments should be entered in GradStar using the appropriate award type.**
 - Applicable refunds are issued to students via [electronic refund](#) by the University Cashier's Office. Students should sign up for electronic refund so that the Cashier's Office can quickly deliver any credit balance (payment) directly to their bank accounts.
 - Payment(s) will be reported to the OSSA and included as part of the student's financial aid offer.

In some cases, a reduction to aid initially offered by the OSSA may be required to remain compliant with financial aid guidelines. The U.S. Department of Education requires a school's operations to be

PAYMENTS TO STUDENTS

administered in a way that ensures all the information the school receives which might affect a student's Federal Student Aid eligibility is communicated to the financial aid office. When creating a student's financial aid package, to ensure that a student's aid does not exceed his/her need or cost of attendance, the OSSA must include all aid the student is receiving from external sources, institutional aid, and Federal Student Aid (FSA) programs. **Students receiving aid from the Office of Scholarships & Student Aid (OSSA) should contact OSSA or use the [OSSA Cost of Attendance & Remaining Aid Eligibility Calculator](#) to determine if the payment will impact their aid.**

Student travel that is in addition to the normal financial aid cost of attendance (COA) may be added to an individual student's COA at the discretion of the OSSA.

- When possible, departments should use The Travel Payment Report on the [OSSA website](#) or an [email](#) to inform OSSA in conjunction with providing travel payments that involve students incurring expenses they believe should increase the students' cost of attendance to avoid negatively impacting the student. If a payment is made on GradStar without this information being provided we risk adjusting student's other aid when it is not necessary.
- Financial aid recipients can also complete a [Financial Aid Budget Increase Request Form](#). Documentation is required for all budget increase requests.
- The OSSA will review requests to determine if the amount intended for travel is allowable.
 - The OSSA will review students on a case-by-case basis and make allowable adjustments to the COA. **NOTE:** Determination of the appropriateness of an increase in the student's
 - There are many scenarios for students receiving travel payments. This guide does not provide an all-inclusive list for every scenario. However, the chart below can help you determine the appropriate payment method.

OSSA Travel Payment Request Form

Departments processing multiple travel payments for student's academic or personal benefit may choose to use the University's travel system to book the transportation. A Travel Payment Report Form must also be submitted to the OSSA so that the travel payment amount can be included as part of the student's overall financial aid.

The Travel Payment Report Form will be located on the [OSSA website](#) (*see Reconsideration and Budget Adjustment section*). Departments will report student names, PIDs, amounts, travel purpose and term (semester) for which students are traveling on the Travel Payment Report Form. OSSA will use this information to make necessary financial aid adjustments.

Departments should [contact OSSA](#) in advance of using this method to ensure proper training and understanding.

Decision Tree

Is the payment being made to an enrolled student at UNC-CH?

YES (see below chart)



NO

Travel Purpose	Is this Financial Aid?	Payment Method
Research to support academic dissertation, thesis, or training that is primarily for the student's benefit.	Yes Complete OSSA Online Form. There may be limits on how much can be paid to, or on behalf of, a Federal aid recipient.	Grad Star
Travel to complete service or project as part of a scholarship, fellowship, or award. <i>(can include various travel methods such as airfare, bus, car, etc.)</i>	Yes Complete OSSA Online Form. There may be limits on how much can be paid to, or on behalf of, a Federal aid recipient.	Grad Star
Travel for enrichment opportunities such as conferences, seminars, networking events, education related activities, etc. that primarily benefit the student.	Yes Complete OSSA Online Form. There may be limits on how much can be paid to, or on behalf of, a Federal aid recipient.	Grad Star
Internship travel. <i>Includes, but not limited to, funds provided for housing, food, and relocation expenses.</i>	Yes Complete OSSA Online Form. There may be limits on how much can be paid to, or on behalf of, a Federal aid recipient.	Grad Star
Travel for University business on behalf of the department or school. <i>Ex. Student is presenting or actively participating in a conference or competition on behalf of the University</i>	No	Accounts Payable (AP) Voucher System/ Travel System
Reimbursement for Travel on behalf of the University (primarily benefiting the University not the individual) <i>Ex. Student travels to China to perform sponsored research, which happens to be the topic of her dissertation. The University would otherwise perform research on this topic, regardless of the student's research – the University is the primary beneficiary.</i>	No	Accounts Payable (AP) Voucher System/ Travel System

If the answer is "NO" to travel payment being made to student.

Travel Purpose	Is this Financial Aid?	Payment Method
University business	No	AP Voucher System/Travel System

Guidance for processing student travel awards via GradStar

For travel awards issued through Gradstar, departments may provide funding to students in advance of their trip to allow the student funds available for booking. Once the student receives their funding through the cashier's office process, students should book their travel arrangements by working with the University's preferred travel agency, [World Travel](#). This ensures the student is receiving the best rate for the trip. Students will need to verify their PID, email address and other basic information with World Travel when requesting booking assistance. Do not use CABS and WebTravel to book a trip for a student.

Suggestions and guidance for processing student travel awards via GradStar:

- Require an application process for student travel awards.
- Require written estimates or a budget proposal for the travel if providing the funds in advance.
- Departments may choose to require receipts after the trip to track that the funds were used as agreed upon.
- Documentation is not required in GradStar or OSSA. The department are expected keep documentation in their own records and in case of audits.
- Consider creating a form for the student to sign agreeing to use the funds as intended
- Reconcile any advance funding and actual funding as needed to prevent an overpayment. Adjust awards in GradStar as needed to correct overpayments.
- **Financial Aid Implications on page 8.**