

Departmental Request for Student Awards: Student Travel Funding & Reimbursement Policy

Purpose: To clearly define when a travel funding or reimbursement must be included as other financial assistance (OFA) in a student's financial aid offer. Guidance from the Department of Education (ED) and National Association for Federal Aid Administrators (NASFAA) outlining these requirements is on file with Student Financial Services.

Request Submission

Departments must submit a Dept RSA Student Travel Award Form to Student Financial Services (SFS) through the DeptRSA@mail.wvu.edu email. Once submitted, SFS will determine if the stipend must be considered other financial assistance (OFA) and if the travel must be included in the student's cost of attendance.

Section 1: Program Requirements

Required Travel for the Student's Course of Study

To qualify as required travel:

- The travel must be part of a degree-pursuant course, listed in the course syllabus or in the program handbook
- The requirement must apply to all students in the cohort, not on a case-by-case basis.
- Travel that is strongly recommended or required for a non-degree-pursuant course does **not** qualify.

If travel is required:

- The associated costs must be included in the cost of attendance (COA).
- The department must provide an **itemized cost summary** to Student Financial Services and maintain all records.
- The cost of attendance (COA) will not be updated until an **itemized cost summary** is received.
- Any funding, reimbursement, or funding provided to the student must be included as OFA on their financial aid offer.

Travel NOT Required for the Student's Course of Study

In the following scenarios, travel does not meet the definition of “required for the student’s course of study” and **cannot** be included in COA.

Section 2: Student Examples

Scenario 1: Reimbursement Based on Itemized Receipts

The student paid, out of pocket, the expenses for the travel. The student provided itemized receipts to the department for the travel expenses. The department may choose to reimburse the student up to the exact cost of the documented expenses. This includes mileage and meal per diems as described in the accountable plan rules for reimbursement found in the [University Travel and Expense Manual](#). Mileage may be a flat rate per mile, but parking, tolls, and taxi fare must have receipts.

This reimbursement is not considered OFA and does not need to be included in the student’s financial aid offer. Any reimbursement exceeding the value of the itemized receipts must be included as OFA in the financial aid offer.

Scenario 2: Department Pays Vendor Directly

The student’s travel is upcoming. The department elects to pay the cost of the travel on behalf of the student, directly to the vendor. Examples include purchasing the airline ticket, hotel room, conference fees directly from the vendor. No money is ever given to the student directly.

This is not considered OFA and does not need to be included in the student’s financial aid offer. Student Financial Services does not need to be included in this transaction.

Scenario 3: Lump Sum Funding Provided to Student

The department would like to give the student funding to help fund their travel. This funding is not based on itemized receipts. Traditionally this occurs before the student travels, though not exclusively. As the student could use the cash for any educational expense, this is considered OFA and must be included in the student’s financial aid offer.

Section 3: Documentation Requirements

It is the responsibility of the department providing the funding to collect and maintain all receipts related to travel reimbursement. In the event of an audit, the documentation will be requested from the department. Student Financial Services will document on the student's account which department provided the funding and is maintaining documentation.

Incomplete Submissions

If forms are submitted with missing or incomplete information, they will be returned to the originating department. The department will be responsible for correcting and resubmitting the complete documentation to Student Financial Services (DeptRSA@mail.wvu.edu) for review.