

# Student Group Guides: Funding & Finances

*In addition to universal Penn financial policies linked below, the policies and procedures included in this section codify best practices and apply to the UA, GAPSA, G12+ student governments, IDEAL, and any other student organizations and events funded through the General Fee.*

## GENERAL SPENDING AND PURCHASING

All Penn financial policies and guidelines apply to students and student groups spending University funds and General Fee dollars, as well as funds raised through individual payments to recognized student groups.

*Relevant policies include, but are not limited to:*

- [OSA Financial Services Center Student Group Spending Guidelines](#)  
The Office of Student Affairs (OSA) Financial Services Center maintains information related to University-wide student group financial policies and is the primary office responsible for handling financial transactions for Penn Student Government, Resource Center Staff, and Penn Student Groups.
- [Penn Student Group External Sponsorship and Fundraising Guidelines](#) (PDF)
- [Penn Finance Purchasing Policies](#)
- [Penn Preferred Suppliers and Vendors](#)
- [Penn Principles of Responsible Conduct: Use of Property, Funds, and Technology](#)
- [Reimbursement Policy and Process](#)
- [Guest Travel and Honoraria Policy](#)
- [Travel and Entertainment policies](#)

## Payments and Purchases Basics

- All payment and reimbursement requests, SPCard activity reports, and associated documentation must be submitted by the individual incurring the expense or purchase to an appropriate financial administrator or business office.
- In general, all goods and services should be procured from a Penn-approved vendor through purchase order. This includes but is not limited to catering, travel, merchandise, and professional services. PO requests should be submitted through the OSA FSC Graduate Payment Request form (for GAPSA-funded groups) or your group's school or department business office *well in advance* of the desired purchase or delivery/event date.
- When permitted, smaller purchases which may not be feasible for PO issuance may be ordered through a University purchasing card, student program card, or through a non-PO payment. Please consult with OSA

or your business office regarding the appropriate payment method before pursuing these options.

- Reimbursements should be limited to cases in which an unanticipated need arises for a purchase and/or for purchases which could not have been coordinated in advance through a University office. Such cases should be rare and would include purchasing last minute supplies due to higher-than-anticipated event turnout and local travel for organizers needing to transport larger items for which public transit would not be feasible.

## Student Group Activity Spending Limits & Restrictions

*The University has established a number of spending limits for different categories of student group activity.*

*Exceptions to these limits can only be made with advance, documented approval from a group advisor or designated staff in OSA or the Grad Center:*

- *General Body or Regular Group Meetings*
  - This is a scheduled organization meeting including the general body of the student group to plan for upcoming programming or other business.
  - Group meetings are capped at \$15/person and generally should only involve meals (vs. snacks) when meetings are held at mealtimes (e.g., 8-10am, 12-1pm, 6-8pm).
  - Routine or organization meetings may not be held at restaurants.
  - No alcohol at group meetings.
- *Programming and Events*
  - This category includes gatherings open to group constituencies or broader membership and which are centered around a theme/activity supporting the mission of the group. e.g., Social Events, Guest Speakers or Performers
  - Group activities in this category can involve bigger budget – total event cost capped at \$25/person.
  - Celebrations or internal meetings at restaurants/with catering should be limited and include a clear business purpose. Catering must be purchased through a Penn approved vendor.
- *Gala/Formal or Special event*
  - This is a larger, celebratory gathering for group members or constituencies (e.g., annual formal or graduation event). Such events should be limited in number each year.
  - Can include food, entertainment, 3rd party venue.
  - The total event cost is capped at \$85/person.

## General Financial Policies

- Food and transportation expenses should generally be procured through a purchase order (PO).

- Local transportation expenses should only be covered for group travel as part of an organized activity or when essential for event coordinators.
- Detailed documentation is required for all expenses, including:
  - Itemized receipts, including purchaser name, date, method of payment, and list of items purchased
  - Detailed business purpose
  - List of attendees and business purpose for all catered meetings.

Students engaging in any form of misconduct or violation of University, government, or other relevant policies may be referred for action to the Center for Community Standards and Accountability (CSA), which is responsible for matters of student discipline.

## INDIVIDUAL GRANTS, PAYMENTS, AND GOODS

### Payments, Grants, and Awards to Individuals

- There is a \$3,000 academic year maximum of total General Fee dollars that can be given to an individual in direct payments, awards, and fungible gifts or merchandise.
- All individual grants and payments funded by the General Fee and awarded by graduate student groups must be coordinated in partnership with Graduate Grants office. Additional details and guidelines can be found on the [Graduate Grants webpage](#).

### Contracts and Purchase Agreements:

Unless such authority has been explicitly granted to an individual by the Trustees, only the Purchasing Services Department has the authority to enter into a purchase agreement or otherwise obligate the University to any binding agreement.

#### What this means:

- Always identify yourself as a student in any communications with external vendors or suppliers.
- Be sure to include your group advisor and business office in any discussions with external vendors related to establishing payment terms or custom pricing.
- Submit payment request forms BEFORE agreeing to payment amounts or scheduling deliveries
- Include your group advisor(s) and business office in any discussions regarding external sponsorships, donations, or fundraising

### Merchandise and Branding Standards

- The sale of merchandise and branded goods should be conducted in compliance with Penn Purchasing rules and in accordance with the Ticket Sales and Payments policies below. All branded merchandise must be purchased through a Penn-approved supplier.

- In accordance with University policy, groups and relevant financial administrators are responsible for reporting any individuals receiving merchandise valued over \$99. Individuals receiving such merchandise are required to complete tax forms prior to receiving any such goods.
- All revenue from merchandise sales must be deposited into a University account.
- Any / all use of the Penn name or Penn shield must comply with University branding standards.

## FINANCIAL REPORTING AND RECORD-KEEPING

All student groups are expected to maintain financial records which are public or readily available to the student organization's members. Recognized groups with access to a University budget code are expected to maintain financial records which are readily available to both organization members and any/all staff responsible for budgetary oversight of group funds.

Ways this expectation will be met will vary by student group. Best practices include:

- Student group treasurer/finance team should meet monthly with advisors to review spending and financial reports from the previous month.
- Student group treasurer should share monthly financial reports at student group meetings.
- The student group's proposed budget and actual spending should be available on their website. Actual spending should be updated regularly.

## EVENT REGISTRATION

As part of the University's community care efforts, all student groups must register *any* events on- or off-campus at which there will be alcohol. *This includes events held at an off-campus residence or third-party venue at which alcohol may be consumed by attendees which are sponsored or promoted by a recognized University group.*

### [EVENT REGISTRATION](#)

#### Events with Alcohol

Please note that your organization cannot charge for *any* event at which alcohol will be served unless the venue has a license to sell alcohol (such as a bar or restaurant). This is a state law, not Penn policy. This means that you cannot charge students to attend an event with alcohol has been purchased from a separate vendor than the space which is hosting the event, including social events, happy hours, etc.

Additionally, free food and nonalcoholic beverages must be readily available for free at any event with alcohol. Please review the [full alcohol policy](#) carefully as you plan your events.

## TICKET SALES AND PAYMENTS

University policy requires that all payments and funds collected for events and groups receiving General Fee funds, which includes GAPSA and G-12+ government annual allocations, must be conducted through an official University office or department-managed platform.

Any and all exceptions to the following rules must be approved in advance by group advisors and must be shared with all potential purchasers in clear and detailed language in advertising and at the point of purchase.

### Ticketing and Payments

There are a number of policies and processes governing student group ticket sales and payments. *These include, but are not limited to the following:*

- Any ticket sales or payments for events sponsored or funded by a group with access to a University budget code or account, or supported by a University office with such access, must be conducted through a University-managed office or via a University-managed merchant account (e.g., Ticketleap or Eventbrite).
- All groups with access to a University budget code or account must deposit any and all funds generated through student payments with a University finance office.
- Student groups must establish clear, published policies for allocating free tickets for priced events or activities (including merchandise sales).
- All student tickets and paid registration must be provided at the same rate, regardless of student group or program affiliation.
- As a general rule, only students volunteering to staff or perform at an event should receive free tickets. All exceptions must be approved by a group's advisor or financial administrator.
- Discounted tickets may be provided to incentivize early purchases, but such discounts and deadlines must be available to all students equally.
- Student groups must clearly indicate to all purchasers how any proceeds from ticket sales or payments will be used.
- All non-student tickets must be provided at a single rate and should be significantly less subsidized than student tickets for the same activity or event.
- In selected cases, tickets may be subsidized by an organization or group for members, but this subsidy must be approved in advance by advisors and clearly communicated to all purchasers at the point of sale.
- Free tickets, services, or goods valued over \$99 must be reported, in accordance with the individual payments policies.

### Using the Graduate Events Eventbrite

The Graduate Events Eventbrite account is available for use by GAPSA and other graduate student groups without access to a school- or department-managed ticketing platform or merchant account.

More information can be found in the [Graduate Student Groups section](#) of the Grad Center website.