

How to get conference funding if your department won't pay!

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Over the last few years, more and more postgraduate (and some undergraduate) students appear to be attending conferences. If your department will not fund attendance, it may be useful for you to know that there are other sources of funding out there that you might like to try and utilise. These are the ones I personally used when I was a postgraduate. I attended around 25 conferences during my time as a postgraduate and my then University never paid a penny towards my attendance. So they do work!

Write to the conference organizer - On most occasions when I was a postgraduate, I used to write to the conference secretary and/or organizer(s) and ask if they could give me reduced registration fees, cheaper accommodation (e.g. a room in halls if the conference was in a hotel) and/or a "day rate" price (rather than the whole conference). My letter was always accompanied by a letter from my supervisor saying he thought my attendance would be beneficial but that the university couldn't pay on this occasion. I also used to play the "poor postgraduate" card and play on the fact that the postgraduates of today were the academics of tomorrow. I nearly always got some kind of reduction (and in one case I was given a free bursary by the organizers).

Write to one of the BPS Sections - If you belong to one of the BPS sections (e.g. Social Section, Developmental Section etc.), write to the Treasurer and say that you are a postgraduate social psychologist (if you're writing to the Social Section) and ask if they have any funds (and they usually do) to contribute towards your conference attendance. Over three years, I managed to get about £500 of funding

this way from four different sections. (I think it helps if you are already a section member - which I was)

Write to Psy-PAG (Psychology Postgraduate Affairs Group) - As you may be aware Psy-PAG has some funds available to assist towards either national or international conferences. You may not get very much, but every little helps.

Write to external organizations (British Council, British Academy) - Although this is a longer shot, it is worth writing to the British Council, British Academy and the like to see if they will sponsor you to go to a conference. In my third year as a postgraduate, the British Academy gave me £300 towards a trip to Las Vegas. All I had to do in return was write a report on my trip. You will also need referees for this process. I got an external referee to say it was a fundamental part of my academic development to go to the Las Vegas conference.

Become a postgraduate representative of a BPS Section - If you manage to get yourself elected as the postgraduate representative for one of the BPS sections, the section will normally pay for you to attend conferences (e.g., the annual section conference, the BPS Annual Conference) as these are usually the conferences where Section meetings are held.

Other tips for keeping down the cost

During my years as a postgraduate I must have slept on more floors and in more spare rooms than I care to remember. The postgraduate network is quite big now and it's nearly always possible to find other postgraduates who will accommodate you cheaply. Also, go by the cheapest transport possible. If you go by train, then use a railcard. I'm sure we could help you buy one if it meant our overall cost was cheaper.