

Staff with Disability Travel Support Fund - Procedural Guidance



Images (clockwise from top left corner): Image of UQ Disability Inclusion Group winning the UQ Excellence Award; Cover of the UQ Disability Action Plan 2018-2021; Amanda at International Women's Day event and; Cover of the UQ Strategic Plan 2018-2021.

Staff with Disability Travel Support Fund

1. Overview

UQ staff, particularly academic staff, may be required to undertake travel which is necessary for performance of their role and ongoing career development. Staff with disability may require additional supports or adjustments when travelling, which may not be covered by standard travel funding or allowances.

The Staff with Disability Travel Support Fund (DTSF) is intended to cover additional costs incurred by staff with disability when travelling for work-related purposes, as per the University Travel Management Policy and other relevant policies. The DTSF may be used to fund a range of reasonable supports or adjustments, including (but not limited to):

- a travelling or in-location guide, carer or assistant;
- in-location communication assistance technologies;
- a support person to assist with communication in-location;
- the difference between UQ's standard accommodation allowance and the cost of accommodation that equitably meets the specific needs of a person with disability;
- assistive mechanisms and equipment, such as a wheelchair; and/or
- hiring medical equipment in-location.

Funds may be disbursed prior to or after the travel, as appropriate to the staff member's situation and the circumstances pertaining to the travel. Applications are to be submitted and approved prior to travel.

2. Underpinning principles

The following principles underpin the DTSF:

- Staff with disability should make every effort to have additional supports or adjustments funded by the host institution, grant funding body or their School/Work Unit prior to applying for the DTSF.
- The DTSF is intended to pay for additional support or adjustments for UQ staff members who are undertaking approved, funded travel in accordance with University Travel Management Policy and other relevant policies. The fund cannot be used as a primary funding source for staff travel.
- The proposed support or adjustments are reasonable and cost-effective.
- The purpose of the travel is of benefit to both the University and the applicant's career development/progression.
- The request for financial assistance must directly mitigate barriers or challenges that may prevent the applicant from participating in the career development activity and/or reduces health and safety risks for the staff member who is travelling.
- The University's preference is that qualified, registered carers and assistants are engaged for the purposes of supporting a staff member with disability, particularly for short-duration travel.
- As a general rule, the University will generally provide funding which equates to the least expensive option to achieve the desired level of support. Where a staff member opts to engage a higher-cost option without suitable justification, they may be required to pay the difference between the least expensive option and their preferred option.

3. How to apply

The process for applying for funds, including the eligibility criteria, is outlined below.

3.1 Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for the Travel Fund applicants must:

- be a current fixed-term or continuing UQ staff member with a disability;
- be accepted into the activity they are travelling for, such as a conference, and have funding to cover their own attendance and travel, outside of any additional costs that may be incurred due to their disability;
- demonstrate that the travel is of benefit to the University and the applicant's career development/progression;
- demonstrate that they require additional financial assistance in order to accommodate reasonable adjustments to travel arrangements that are necessary because of their disability;
- demonstrate that other grants, such as funding from the School or external grant funding supporting the project, do not sufficiently cover all disability-related expenses; and
- have support from the Head of their Organisational Unit to support the activity.

3.2 Fringe benefits tax

Under Australian legislation, all forms of assistance to individual staff members will attract a Fringe Benefits Tax, which must be paid by the University, in accordance with the University's [fringe benefits tax \(FBT\) policy](#). This should be factored into any costing calculations.

3.3 Cost-benefit analysis

The University's preference is that qualified, registered carers and assistants are engaged for the purposes of supporting a staff member with disability, particularly for short-duration travel.

Where staff members opt to engage family members or friends to provide the necessary support, they must clearly explain why this is their preferred option and include a cost comparison between engaging a registered provider versus travelling with a family member/friend.

In cases where travelling with a family member/friend is the more expensive option for achieving a similar outcome, the staff member may be required to pay the difference between the less expensive option and their preferred option.

Example

A visually impaired staff member requires an in-location guide for travel at an overseas destination. The staff member provides quotes for hiring a guide in-location compared with the cost of taking a companion/guide from Australia on the trip. If the cost of the companion's travel, insurance and accommodation is lower than the cost of hiring an in-location guide, this will be the preferred option.

If approved, WD&I will consult with relevant stakeholders to ensure that all travel is booked according to UQ policies and procedures.

3.4 Application process

Eligible staff may apply for support from the DTSF at any time during the year. Generally, staff will only be able to access the DTSF once per year.

To apply for the DTSF, staff should submit an application via email to their local decision maker or to Workplace Diversity and Inclusion in situations where non-disclosure of the disability is preferred (see Figure 1) which:

- confirms their eligibility to access the DTSF;
- demonstrates efforts to secure support funding through alternative means (for example, an email to the host institution requesting funding for an in-location guide, or requesting the provision of an in-location guide);
- outlines the nature of the travel and impact on career outcomes;
- outlines how the DTSF will be used;
- includes an itemised account of intended costs;
- outlines different support options with costings for each option; and
- includes any other relevant information.

Applications should be no more than 500 words in length (excluding supporting documentation).

There is no limit on the amount of funding that can be requested, as the DTSF is designed to meet the specific individual needs of staff with disability. However, applicants must demonstrate that all other sources of funds have been exhausted.

Applications will be considered by a Funding Panel using the principles outlined in Section Two.

The application process for the DTSF is outlined below.

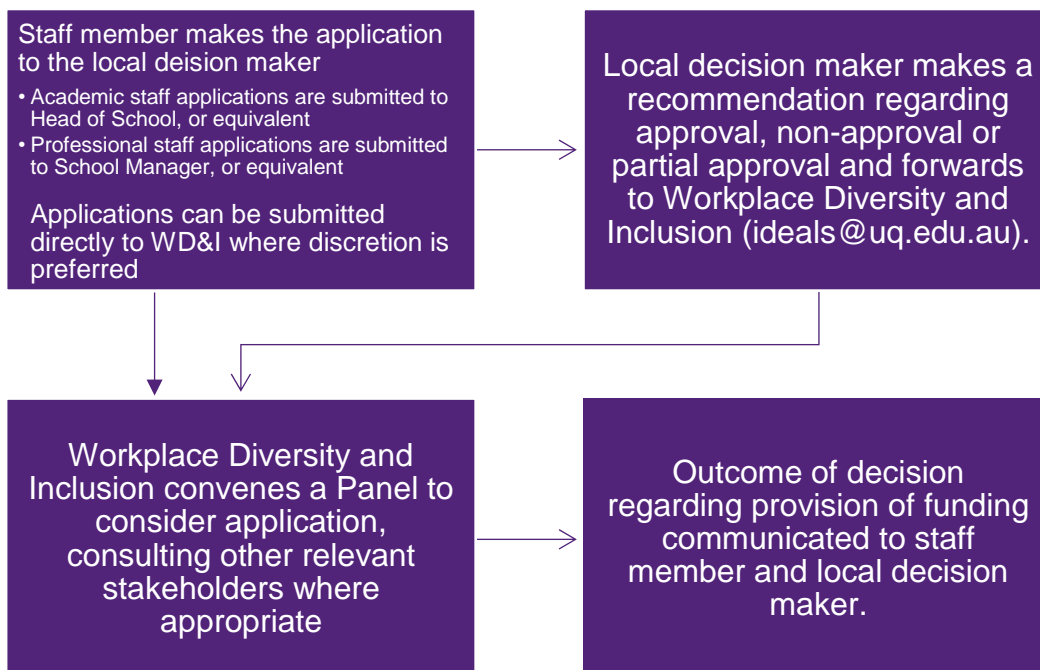


Figure 1: Overview of the application process for the DTSF

4. Funding Allocation Process

Funding Panel membership will include the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Office of the Provost, the Chair or nominated representative of the Disability Inclusion Group (Committee) (DIG) and the Chief Human Resources Officer, or nominee/s. Where appropriate, the panel may consult internal and external parties to

ensure an informed decision is made. Applicants may be asked to provide medical certificates and/or complete a risk assessment to support their application.

The Panel will endeavour to convene to consider requests within three weeks of receiving an application for the DTSF.

The Panel will assess applications for the DTSF using the following criteria:

- applicant meets the eligibility for the fund;
- the purpose of the travel is of benefit to the University and the applicant's career development/progression;
- the applicant has been unable to source support funding through other means;
- request for financial assistance mitigates barriers that may prevent the applicant from fully or safely participating in the career development activity;
- the proposed mode of travel and adjustments are reasonable and cost effective; and
- any other considerations as relevant to the individual's situation.

If approved, it may be necessary to inform other parties of the outcome, including (among others) Campus Travel and UQ Governance and Risk. In these cases, the privacy of the applicant will be upheld as much as is practicable in the circumstances.

Where the application involves support for a carer, it is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the carer is insured to perform the agreed tasks.

5. Additional considerations when engaging family, friends or other non-registered persons as guides, carers or assistants

UQ's preference is that support for staff with disability is, to every extent possible, sourced through a registered organisation or agency who provides appropriately qualified and insured staff for this purpose. Where the staff member elects to engage a non-registered provider, including family members or friends, there are additional considerations which must be factored into the application and approval process as follows.

Engaging non-registered individuals to provide support

- Academic staff may be able to access inexpensive in-location support through hiring non-registered individuals (for example, PhD students) as guides or assistants in the location of travel. Where informal arrangements are made with non-registered providers, the UQ staff member incurs any risks associated with the arrangement.
- The amount paid to a non-registered individual (for example, a PhD student) should be reasonable, in consideration of the acceptable payment levels for a service of this nature in the location where the service is provided. As a general guide, payment should fall within the hourly range of a casual UQ HEW2 – HEW5, excluding FBT.
- The University has no employment or contractual relationship with non-registered persons, including family and friends, engaged by a UQ staff member for the purposes of providing individual support.
- Payment to a non-registered guide or assistant must be substantiated via a simple invoice and receipt (an example can be provided by WD&I) raised by the person undertaking the service. The University's preference is that the invoice is paid in cash by the UQ staff member and claimed through reimbursement. Both methods require an invoice and receipt, and will incur FBT.
- Standard UQ procurement processes apply when accessing support through a registered business or agency.

- The staff member who engages a family member or friend to support their travel incurs all risks associated with that arrangement.
- A family member or friend engaged to provide support to a staff member with disability cannot be paid by the University. In some circumstances and where cost-efficient, a per diem allowance may be considered to cover meals and incidentals. If sought, the cost of the per diem allowance plus FBT (based on the University's existing rates for domestic and international travel allowances) must be factored into the costing calculation as part of the application process.
- Wherever possible, travel for the guide, carer or assistant is to be booked through UQ travel systems at the same time as the staff member's travel is booked, to reduce costs and ensure alignment of the bookings.

6. Questions and feedback

Please contact Workplace Diversity and Inclusion if you have any questions or concerns on ideals@uq.edu.au or 07 334 60402.

Contact details

Workplace Diversity and Inclusion

T +61 7 334 60402
E ideals@uq.edu.au
W uq.edu.au

CRICOS Provider Number 00025B