

Steps For Applying For IITD Travel Grant To Attend International Conference

Congratulations! If you are reading this document, it's likely that your abstract/paper has been accepted for presentation at an international conference—Cheers!!! This document is intended to help your sojourn with IIT bureaucracy pre and post your conference. While the process may appear cumbersome and demanding, remember that IITs are amongst the very few institutions in India who generously provide international conference travel grants. What they are asking of you is proper documentation, before they can legally transfer that **1 lakh*** (as reimbursement) to your account.

Please read the document carefully (at least twice). And of course, it is still subject to institute risks!

1) Eligibility Conditions for Applying

- a. To avail an IIT travel grant, you should have **completed your comprehensive examination**.
- b. Only **Full-time** students can apply for the full 1 lakh grant. **Part-time** students can at the most apply for 20,000 which is the IIT grant, but the 80,000 component funded by IRD is not available to them.
- c. The application procedure is the same for Institute Scholars and UGC JRF/SRF Scholars.
- d. You should be presenting a **paper/poster** at the conference, and not merely attending it!
- e. Financial Arrangement: In most cases, students spend their own money to attend the conference and claim reimbursement on their return. There is a ceiling for the expenses you incur on food, accommodation, etc.—the slabs for each keep changing with time. It is a good idea to **enquire from the accounts** section about the slabs/ quota in order to **work out your finances before you leave**. You would anyway need to calculate a rough estimate of your budget under broad categories for the external grant bodies, as well as IIT, while applying for the grant. However, IIT does allow you to take an advance for expenses—you **can apply** for an **advance grant** of 60,000 at the Accounts, once your grant approval is in place.
- f. Lastly, please remember that there is a cap on the number of applicants who can be granted this travel allowance in one year, which may change with time. Also, it's best to see this procedure not as a rightful 'claim', but an opportunity provided by the Institute, subject to its rules and procedures.

2) Application Process

Documents Required

- a. **Three main forms** duly filled for:
 - i. Ex-India leave
 - ii. Sanction of 80,000.
 - iii. Sanction of 20,000.
- b. Acceptance **email** and/or invitation letter from conference organisers
- c. A cover **letter to the DRC Chair** asking for leave to attend the conference, countersigned by your supervisor. Specify dates clearly—conference dates and overall travel dates, including the dates you plan for touring purposes.
- d. While this may sound bizarre, you would need to furnish **2 rejection letters** from other travel grant funding agencies to apply for an IIT grant! The [idea behind this](#) is that IIT will only fund those who are unable to secure funding from other agencies. So, ensure that you **initiate these applications to other agencies simultaneously**, while applying for the IIT funding. Where should you apply? Details can be found in the next section. (These rejections may not be required at the beginning when you apply, but keep them carefully for the reimbursement process later).
- e. You also need an **Air India Fare Estimate** to show how much the flight would cost you approximately.
- f. In case you plan to take a flight other than Air India, you need to fill out another form—The **Air India Exemption** form.

Procedure

- a. All three forms need to be filled, countersigned by your supervisor and attached along with the conference invitation and cover letter. Submit this application in the HSS Department Office for the DRC's consideration. [**Please keep copies of ALL documents you submit at each step of your application.**]
- b. The DRC Chair / HOD signs the forms next, after your application is considered and accepted in the DRC meeting.
- c. The DRC's acceptance is noted in the **DRC Minutes**. You need to collect a copy of these minutes from the HSS office, and attach it to your now duly signed set of forms. Actually this process is done by the Office itself. But you will need to keep tabs on its getting done.
- d. This set is then sent to the **PG** section for further signatures and the Dean's consideration.

- e. Do make a note of the **serial number** that the HSS Office assigns to your set of papers (also keep another photocopy of the set), when it forwards your papers to PG. This way you can track their movement across desks and offices, if required.
- f. If all goes well, you will soon receive **two notifications** from PG section. The first will be a document approving your Ex-India leave, and the second will be a travel grant approval (80k+20k) letter.
- g. Once the approvals are in, you are ready to
 - i. apply for the **Visa**
 - ii. block or book your **Air Tickets**
 - iii. buy **Foreign Exchange**

Caveats/Extra Information

- a. Forms for leaves, grants and permissions can be procured from the PG section.
- b. *Why Ex-India form?* You will be availing duty leave approved by the institute. The general rule is that annually you can avail maximum 30 days of Ex-India leave. Stay beyond a month needs special permission through Dean, PG. Once dates are approved through PG notification, it is difficult to make changes. You will also be required to show this leave approval document at your Visa interview, so the dates need to be precise.
- c. *What is the usual timeframe to be expected for the completion of the procedure?* You can expect anything between 15 days and 1½ months! So please note that these papers should be filed well in advance, to leave you with sufficient time in hand for Visa formalities. One, so that you can book your tickets in time after you receive the Ex-India leave notification and initiate Visa processing. And second, because the DRC meets only once a month, and you need its approval to process Ex-India leave and grant applications. Initiate all 3 applications simultaneously, though generally till Ex-India leave notification arrives, grants will not be processed.
- d. *What if you have only a few days in hand to proceed?* In such urgent cases, it is possible to talk to and try to convince the DRC chair. All three forms have to be signed by the DRC chair. DRC chair can put a remark along with his/her signature, mentioning that the upcoming DRC meeting will positively consider your Ex-India leave application. This remark will allow you to negotiate and process your application at PG section without DRC MoM. Please remember though, it is still mandatory that you formally request DRC to consider your leave application and then procure the relevant MoM. Nonetheless, PG section can still withhold your 80k and 20k application till Ex-India leave is notified. So if all goes well, your approvals may come in a matter of 10-15 days.
- e. *Where do I get Air India fare estimate?* Both, 80k and 20k applications, ask you for fare estimate for air travel by Air India. One way is to get this estimate from the Air India

Office itself, which is located next to the Jor Bagh metro station. They charge a fee of about 250-300 Rs. for issuing this (keep the receipt for this too, you can get it reimbursed). Often this estimate will be less than what you actually pay by the time you book the ticket—if you choose Air India—but that is okay. Another way is to approach Ashok Tours and Travels (ATT) office at IITD (this is a Govt. of India PSU). They will generate and email you the fare estimate for travel by Air India free of cost. The ATT office is behind the IITD reception room located next to the Seminar Hall on the ground floor of the Main Building. You can print this fare estimate from ATT and attach it with your grant applications.

- f. *Can I split this grant to attend multiple conferences?* In a financial year, 250 applicants are granted international travel grant on a first-come-first-served basis (as per present rules). It is worth mentioning here that the applicant cannot apply for 80k or 20k for utilizing these funds at separate times. So, this is a **one-time grant** offered during the 5 years of your studentship at IITD. Whether you claim and utilise it for expenses of 1 rupee or 1 lakh—you can only utilise it only once. Of course, one is also eligible for applying for a sum total of 20k in each year, for attending **national conferences**—this can be split multiple times.

3) Alternative Funding (And Rejection!) Sources

Yes, IIT grant application rules require the formality that you receive rejection letters from at least 2 other places that provide Financial Assistance, such as [ICSSR](#), [ICPR](#), [DST](#), [CSIR](#), [ICHR](#), [INSA](#), [DBT](#), [UGC](#), [TATA Trust](#), [ICMR](#), [IBRO](#) etc. Follow the hyperlinks to explore eligibility conditions for application. **Please note** that if any of these agencies agree to fully or partially fund your conference expenses, you are not eligible to apply for the IIT grant. So, in effect, you **can't club** an external agency grant with IIT grant e.g. ICSSR gives you airfare grant, then you can't claim IIT grant for other expenses like registration fee or accommodation, etc.

Applications for these funding agencies must ideally be sent off at least **3 months in advance** of the date of your conference (since these bodies meet very few times in the year, even though you may not hear from them even after three months!). Each of these agencies have their own procedures and forms with required **attachments and signatures** (some specific ones from HOD, Deans, Registrar, etc.). Unless there is an online portal to submit travel grant application, the best way is to personally submit the applications at their respective offices and retain a 'received' copy of the same, or send your application via India Speed Post, and retain its **receipt**. In case, you do not hear back from any of these funding agencies, you can use these receipts as proof of your application (and rejection).

You could also choose to sincerely try to obtain the funding provided by these agencies, and reserve your IIT funding for a later conference. In that case, apply more formally, with a fully prepared paper, to make a strong application. Preferably, go in person and submit your applications, and get a copy of the application duly stamped/signed by the receiving authority.

4) Air Tickets: Things to Know Before Booking

- a. *What is the best stage to book Air Tickets?* This is a bit tricky. Ideally, you would book tickets after approvals from IIT as well as getting your Visa. Yet, this may leave you very little time, and in the meanwhile the flight may get booked out. And the ticket prices will shoot up, and you will end up spending most of your 1 lakh quota on the ticket itself. So, begin the application processes in time so that you can book the ticket at a reasonable price. You could choose to opt for a [flight itinerary](#), instead of booking your seat. Or you could book a refundable ticket, if that is possible.
- b. *Can I book my tickets online?* IITD official rules mandate that you will only be reimbursed your travel fare if you book your Air India ticket through Air India office counters, Air India online website, or Ashoka Tours and Travel at IITD. Third party websites like Makemytrip are a big NO! You could also book your ticket through the [IRCTC Flight](#) website.
- c. *Can I take my flight from a city other than Delhi?* No!
- d. Make sure you collect **payment receipts** for tickets booked at Air India office or ATT. You will have to submit this receipt at the time of reimbursement. In case you booked your tickets online through Air India or IRCTC website, preferably make payment through your own internet banking account. This will allow you to produce the printout of your **bank statement** for reimbursement purpose. Using credit or debit cards to pay is also fine (your own or borrowed from family/friend), provided you are able to submit credit card statement at the time of reimbursement.
- e. **Air India Exemption**
 - i. *Can I travel by airlines other than Air India?* Technically, no. The only way you can justify non Air India travel is by showing proof that Air India fare is too costly for the destination you wish to travel, compared to other private carriers. The cost difference has to be minimum of **5000**.
 - ii. *How to procure the Air India exemption:* A special form (available at PG section) seeking permission for 'Non Air India travel', is processed at IITD Director's office. The cost difference proof can be obtained by requesting ATT to provide a fare estimate for Air India and Non Air India flights (for the same date and destination). Alternatively, you can generate this estimate through the IRCTC website, and take a printout. It takes 8-10 days to receive the requisite permission. Use tracking number, if you have less time, to liaison with the Director's secretary. However, if you discover at the actual time of booking that despite receiving exemption, the Air India flight is cheaper in the end, you can safely book an Air India flight. **Again to reiterate, non Air India flight tickets should only be booked through ATT office at IITD or IRCTC website, or else you lose your claim to reimbursement.**

5) Travelling

Travel Insurance

It is highly recommended that you purchase a basic Travel Insurance Plan to cover untoward expenses on your trip. You can buy one such basic inexpensive plan, covering the period of your travel and stay. Private Agencies such as Bajaj Allianz, HDFC, ICICI Lombard, Reliance, etc. provide these packages and they can be bought online easily, once Visa is processed. IIT reimburses this purchase of Insurance.

Records/Documents/Tickets you need to retain/maintain

- a. Please preserve all your **original flight boarding passes** and **travel and food bills**. You will have to submit these to the Account section for reimbursement claim.
- b. Keep **bills and receipts** for all expenses and payments, **physical and electronic**. For instance, download the online receipts of Visa payment, Conference Registration, Forex Purchase, etc. Keep taxi bills, restaurant bills and bills for all other such expenses. You will also need to show **bank statements/Forex card records** for online/card payments.
- c. Also, collect or arrange to receive **proof of Paper Presentation** at the Conference. This is essential for claiming expenses later.

About Forex

- a. If possible, use a Forex card for transactions like paying registration fees, booking accommodation etc, to save on **costly bank charges**. Alternatively, debit or credit cards too are accepted internationally, though bank charges vary.
- b. **Forex rates vary** from bank to bank. The usual route is to obtain the required amount from the SBI branch on campus (they might not have the required currency though, so don't leave this to the last minute). Another efficient way is to buy it from online Forex websites that have tie-ups with dependable banks, and usually offer lower rates. Also, it is advisable to not carry all currency in cash, but opt for a **mix of cash and electronic money** on Forex card. Enquire from the bank/ site about charges on cash withdrawal abroad, and procedure for topping up the card while travelling.

6) Reimbursement Process

- a. IIT rules require you to apply for reimbursement within **15 days** after return from the conference. The main form for this process is the [Travel Allowance Form \(TA Form\)](#).

- b. All **enclosures and bills** have to be properly assembled, category-wise (food/stay/travel), pasted on A4 sheets and the sheets to be self attested by the student. It is advisable to use a separate A4 sheet, **tabulating** all the enclosures/attachments with page numbers, for easy navigation of the Accounts personnel. Attachments should include:
- i. Conference **Participation Certificate**
 - ii. Ex-India **leave** and 80k & 20k **grant approval** notification
 - iii. **Rejection letters** from the two other sources/Speed Post receipts in case you have failed to receive a response from them
 - iv. Both your **original boarding passes** for onward and return (and connecting) flights
 - v. Original/Printed **receipts and bills** for registration fees, visa fees, flight tickets, travel insurance, accommodation, food, local travel, etc.
 - vi. **Forex bill, along with SBI exchange rate chart** for the date of purchase. This can be obtained from the SBI branch on campus after return from travel, even if you have not bought Forex from SBI. Or you can print out the relevant foreign currency exchange rate from the [RBI website](#).
 - vii. For any card or online transactions, furnish printed **copies of your bank/card statements** that show payments made electronically, along with the online receipts. Highlight the relevant transaction.
- c. Make sure you furnish bills that apply only to your **conference dates**, plus perhaps a day on either end, at the city of your conference/landing. If any additional personal leave has been taken exceeding conference dates, even if they have official sanction, no bills of those dates or venues will be considered (except the return travel).
- d. Again, positively take **photocopies** as record and backup, for every **form, bill and attachment**, before you submit these to the PG or Accounts sections.
- e. In the TA bill Form, some expenses would be mentioned directly in **INR** and those made in **other currencies** need to be mentioned in that currency and then converted to INR and written alongside, along with the exchange rate.
- f. Once fully prepared, the form is signed by you, your supervisor, and countersigned by the HoD. HSS office duly sends it to accounts section with a tracking number (yes, note this down to track your form's progress). As soon as it reaches the Accounts, check with the relevant Accounts person and **sit down with him** to check that he is satisfied with all the attachments and proofs. You would not want your form to get stuck because of some minor point overlooked on your part, or some new rule that you are unaware of. Delays

will happen regardless of these too, of course, but avoid any inadvertent mistakes on your part.

- g. It takes around 1 month, from the date filing of your reimbursement form, to receive money in your account. Best way to get it done is, track and resolve.

With all this preparation and a steely resolve, you can definitely get through all this daunting process and make the most of the travel grant opportunity. :)

Wish You a Hassle-Free Journey and a Stimulating Conference Experience!

*All currency figures are in INR.