

Getting Funding

Introduction

Lack of funds is one of the key obstacles to undergraduate dissertation research on development issues.

Possible solutions:

- Choose a topic you can research in the UK
- Get further into debt
- Seek other sources of funds

Preparation

Before launching yourself into finding financial support you have to **be prepared**. Make sure that you have worked out:

- Budget
- Timetable
- Project summary

Working Out a Budget

- For most students, it is transport costs which loom large, but don't forget to budget for **all** possible costs. While this may produce a more daunting figure, it is important that you are realistic from the start and that you are able to present a suitably costed project to any funding agencies.
- Most undergraduate dissertation research will take place in the summer vacation between years 2 & 3. This is usually at peak holiday times, so flight costs go up. Try and be as flexible as you can in terms of departure dates and airports, but remember to keep the needs of the project in mind. It is no good accepting a great flight deal if it means you have to cut two weeks off your proposed trip. Shop around on the internet and campus travel stores.
- Living expenses. If you have never been to your research location then find out as much as you can about costs of living. Again, be sensible about accommodation. When it comes to a choice between safety and cost, safety should always come first.
- Internal travel. The safety factor is again important here. In many parts of the Global South, there are a range of road transport options. The very cheapest will certainly give you insights into dimensions of local life, but you will also get insights if you travel on slightly more expensive transport which may have a better safety record. Make sure you include cost of travel to the airport in the UK as well.
- Insurance. **DO NOT FORGET THIS.**
- Payment for translators & guides (see earlier session). You should also budget for gifts if appropriate.

- **Equipment.** You should not see applying for funding as a chance to get a new laptop or digital camera, but if there are small pieces of equipment that are vital, then ensure they are included in the budget. Some departments have small items of equipment (e.g. tape recorders, soil kits, tape measures) which can be lent out to students. Check with the appropriate member of staff well in advance. Don't forget the cost of batteries, tapes and film as well.
- **Miscellaneous.** Could include postage, photocopying, internet access. Think through exactly what you will be doing and what costs may be incurred.
- **Vaccinations etc.** While some vaccinations are free, you may have to pay for some. In addition, malaria tablets can be expensive depending on the brand. It is perfectly legitimate to include these in your costings.
- **Visas.** Include costs of visas where appropriate. It is not appropriate to include the cost of a new passport in an application to a funding body.
- **Contingencies.** It is always useful to have a contingency fund in case of emergencies. This could include things like changes in the exchange rate, or unforeseen expenditure. This is usually about 10% of the budget.
- Including a personal contribution (if you are able) will demonstrate to the funding bodies that you are financially committed to the project. In addition, it reflects the fact that you would have had to spend money if you had stayed in the UK rather than going on fieldwork.
- The budget plan should be laid out neatly so it is easy to read

Example Budget

Gender and Health Project, Oaxaca City, Mexico July-August 2005	
Travel & Subsistence	
Return air fare Heathrow-Mexico City	565.00
Tube: Central London – Heathrow (2 x £4.40)	8.80
Bus: Mexico City-Oaxaca City (2 x £21)	42.00
Subsistence: Mexico City (5 nights x £30)	150.00
Subsistence: Oaxaca City (35 nights x £20)	700.00
Equipment & Consumables	
Tape recorder & microphone	46.00
Batteries & tapes	22.00
Film	10.00
Photocopying (300 x 2p)	6.00
Insurance	45.00

Contingencies (10 % of budget)	160.00
TOTAL	1754.80
Personal Contribution	250.00
AMOUNT NEEDED	1504.80

Note: Costings are based on exchange rate of £1.00 to 15 Mexican pesos.

Sources of Money

It is impossible to provide a definitive list of funding sources here, but the following provides some suggestions or routes to take:

- **Departmental/ university funding.** Some institutions may have funds available. While the sums provided are rarely large, it is still worth applying.
- **Grant-giving organisations and charitable trusts.** There are many possible sources of funds within this category. To find out which funds are available, use directories such as:

Charities Aid Foundation. This publishes the *Directory of Grant Making Trusts*. It is available in hard copy and CD-ROM. Most university libraries/ careers centres should have a recent edition.

Directory of Social Change. This organisation provides support about funding for community and voluntary organisations, but is also able to provide services for individuals. They have a library in London where you can access information about funding bodies. Their website <http://www.dsc.org.uk> has more details.

The Royal Geographical Society (with The Institute of British Geographers). Provides some support for undergraduate fieldwork. The Expedition Advisory centre may also be able to provide advice about funding as well as fieldwork planning. <http://www.rgs.org>

Charity Choice: The Encyclopedia of Charities. London: Waterlow. <http://www.charitychoice.co.uk>. Provides a list of UK charities. Educational charities may provide financial support for students.

International Foundation Directory. London: Europa Publications. Provides a list of 'foundations, trusts, charitable and grant-making NGOS and similar non-profit institutions'. Again, university libraries should have a copy.

- **Industry & Commerce** It may be possible to gain financial support or assistance in kind (e.g. with equipment) by contacting businesses. Remember that large transnational corporations will get many requests for money, so don't get downhearted if your application is rejected. Try and target companies that may have particular link to the work that you are going to do.

Writing a Project Summary & Application Letter

- Do not use the same letter or summary for each application. You need to make sure that your application for funding is appropriate to the destination. While this may take more time, it is more likely to be successful.
- A project summary needs to be understandable for a non-Geography audience. Just rehashing your dissertation abstract is not enough! Try and explain and outline your project as clearly as possible. Use maps if appropriate and make sure you include the budget and timetable. If there are no restrictions on length of application this does not mean you can waffle. Keep it concise.
- Make sure that all your application documents are well presented. If you are not sure about spelling and grammar then make sure you get someone to proof-read it for you. Again, you are trying to present a professional image.
- Include a stamped addressed envelope with any speculative enquiries. You are more likely to get a reply, even if your application is unsuccessful.

Ethics in Funding

There are a number of ethical issues which you should consider when seeking funds.

- Be upfront about what the money is for. Do not try and alter your research proposal to get money and then do a completely different project.
- If you are applying to a private company, make sure that you are happy to receive funding from that company. Consider its record on environmental issues, labour rights etc. if these things are important to you.
- Participants in the research have a right to know where your funding has come from.
- Make sure you send a report to any organisation which provides financial or other support, even if this is not a condition of the funding.

