GSAS Student Event-Planning Guide
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1. Introduction

The information in this guide will help you plan and execute your graduate-student group event, whether large or small. When you are planning an event, please be mindful that you represent Columbia University at all times; GSAS expects your best effort in abiding by all University policies, as well as those of any off-campus venue. Appropriate conduct is expected before, during, and after the event. GSAS and the University will be pleased to collaborate with you to ensure that your event runs smoothly.

2. Event Policies and Guidelines

This guide is intended for student organizations recognized by the Graduate Student Advisory Council (GSAC, http://gsac.columbia.edu) that are currently in good standing. A student organization that fails to meet the guidelines set forth by GSAS and/or the University may lose its official recognition and associated privileges. In addition, student organizations hosting events must agree to the terms described below.

Student groups must:
• observe all Columbia University rules and procedures, as well as all state and local government laws and regulations, in planning and carrying out the event;
• follow all University event policies as outlined on the UEM website at http://uem.columbia.edu;
• obtain necessary permissions to hold the event, and follow instructions from both within and outside the University (if applicable);
• cooperate fully with University officials assigned to the event before, during, and after the event;
• pay in full any fees incurred as a result of hosting an event.

Events with alcohol:
All GSAC student-group events that involve alcohol and take place on campus must be registered with and approved by the office of University Events Management. Please familiarize yourself with the University policies pertaining to alcohol: http://uem.columbia.edu/policies-by-subject

3. GSAS Student Group Advisor and GSAS Business Office

• Inform your GSAS Student Group Advisor about all plans for group events and meetings in a timely manner;
• Inform your Advisor about any relationship or partnership that your group may have with any Columbia University department or outside organization;
• Communicate your organization’s needs: Advisor’s signatures, planning event reviews, advocating on the group’s behalf with other Columbia University offices, resources and stakeholders;
• Direct any questions about your organization’s budget, expenditures and reimbursements, ticketing, contracts, etc. to the GSAS Student Advisor and Business Officer.

4. Planning Your Event: Items to Consider

• General event information (title, host, description, date, time, event size, etc.)
• Information for participants (invitations, tickets, guest allowances, advertising)
• Venue (on-campus or off-campus)
• Event needs (technology, music/entertainment, furniture)
• Food and beverage
• Staffing (students assisting before/during/after event)
• Set-up and aftermath (e.g., takedown, pick-up)
• Press and/or videotaping
• Budget and accounting

5. Choosing an Outside Vendor

Please check with GSAS before contracting with vendors not used in the past or for with GSAS does not have an account. GSAS can advise on the best way to make your arrangements and to ensure that your vendor is paid in a timely manner.
• A W-9 form (http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf) is required to pay individuals and new vendors. Please have this completed as soon as you decide on a vendor. You should also inform the vendor that the University is tax-exempt. An exemption certificate will be provided upon request
• Once you have chosen an outside vendor that requires a signed contract agreement, you must forward the contract to GSAS immediately. If the contract agreement is acceptable, you will be given approval to go forward. The minimum time required to process such a request is one week, but will likely take up to two weeks
• If the contract agreement contains any indemnifying language or other clauses, it will require additional review. The contract will be forwarded to the Purchasing Office or to General Counsel for review or revision; this will require up to 3-4 weeks’ processing time
• If any changes are required, the Purchasing Office or General Counsel will work with the vendor to finalize the contract agreement. The contract agreement will be signed by the appropriate authorized person at Columbia and forwarded to the vendor
• Students may never sign a contract on behalf of the University.
6. Planning Your Event: Step by Step

GENERAL EVENT INFORMATION

• Group name
• Primary contact person
• Event name
• Event description (e.g., party, meeting, lecture, show)
• Event date and time
• Event size (estimated attendance)
• Event location (on-campus, off-campus)
• Event funding
• Space reservation:
  o To reserve space in Lerner Hall, Low Library, residence halls, classrooms, or outdoor spaces: Visit the University Events Management website at http://uem.columbia.edu/
  o When planning your event through UEM, please familiarize yourself with their policies: http://uem.columbia.edu/policies-by-subject

ATTENDEES/PARTICIPANTS

• Which populations are eligible to attend this event?
  o General public
  o All Columbia graduate students
  o Only GSAS students in Arts & Sciences programs
  o Only Ph.D. students
  o Only M.A. students
  o A more targeted group
• How will attendees be invited?
• Will there be ticketing?
  o What type of advanced ticketing or attendance-keeping will be necessary?
  o Will you be charging for the event?
    • If you will be using the CU Box Office, contact the Tickets & Information Center (TIC, http://artsinitiative.columbia.edu/about/contact).
    • An example of an alternative ticketing method is EventBrite (www.eventbrite.com). A few tips on using EventBrite:
      ▪ Enter information about the organizing group under “My Organizer Profile.”
      ▪ You can put public contact information under “Account Information” and select email preferences under “My Account.”
- Set up the payment options under My Events > Manage > Payment Options.
- It is important to verify the Order Confirmation settings. EventBrite will automatically send people tickets; uncheck this option if you are providing tickets yourself.
- When you set up a new event, you can simply click “Create Event” (top right) and fill in the form.
- There are many other settings that you can adjust; the ones listed above are the most important.

• Will you have a guest list?
  - If your event is in Lerner, your advisor must send a guest list (i.e., for non-University ID holders) in advance to the Lerner Welcome Desk: welcomedesk@columbia.edu. No more than 30 guests can be listed. For more than 30 guests, refer to TIC.

• Do you need to track RSVPs?
• Do you attendees need to sign in?
• Will there be any VIPs, or security issues?
  - If yes, notify CU Public Safety.

EVENT LOGISTICS

Setting Up the Space
• How should the space be configured?
  - Tables, chairs, lecterns, props, decorations, linens, etc.
  - Floor plan, furniture layout, count of pieces needed
• Will A/V or technical support be required?
  - Screen, projector, laptop, microphone, switcher, cabling
  - On-site assistance from CUIT or Lerner A/V

Music / Entertainment
• Will your event feature music or another form of entertainment?

Food, Beverages, Alcohol
• Will your event include food?
  - Purchased or catered
  - If using the Graduate Student Center’s Seminar Room (302 Philosophy Hall), the required caterer is Nous Espresso Bar
  - All other locations: You may use your choice of CU-approved vendors
• If you plan to serve alcohol:
  - All events serving alcohol must be registered
  - Read the University alcohol policies: http://uem.columbia.edu/policies-by-subject
• Will you be charging for food?

Press or Media Coverage
• Will your event include outside press or media coverage?
  - If so, this must be approved at least two weeks in advance (consult with your advisor)
Event Review

- An event review with UEM and Public Safety will be required if your event has the following elements:
  - presence of press/media (invited or otherwise)
  - advertised beyond Columbia’s campus
  - high attendance/capacity
  - serving of alcohol
  - potential for significant disruption
  - security concerns
  - furniture rentals and room set-up, extra signage, decorations, lighting, A/V

ADDITIONAL SERVICES (for events held on campus)

Technical Services

- Technical Services orders must be made 5 business days in advance of the event
- To make an A/V Tech request, go to https://ems.cuit.columbia.edu/VirtualEMS/
- Late orders are not guaranteed depending on equipment and personnel availability
- Cancellations must be made more than one full business day in advance in order to avoid charges
- Late cancellations will be subject to personnel charges and any rental equipment fees, if applicable

Furniture Services

- Furniture requests must be made 5 business days in advance of the event
- To make furniture requests for events in Lerner Hall, go to https://ems.cuit.columbia.edu/VirtualEMS/
- If furniture requirements exceed inventory, you will incur fees for the cost of renting additional furniture

Facilities Support

For Facilities support outside of Lerner Hall (furniture rental, labor services for special event set-ups and breakdowns, electrical support, etc.):

- Visit http://facilities.columbia.edu
- Click "Request a Service" and "Submit a New Request"
- Log on using your UNI and password
- For event services, click on "Special Event Support Services"
- Complete the form and submit. A valid department and project number must be provided at the time the request is submitted

* Online service requests must be submitted more than 5 business days prior to the event date. If your event date is within 5 business days from the service request, please contact the Events Administration Office at 212-854-8607 or facilities-eventsadmin@columbia.edu

* For events held outside, you may either rent furniture from Facilities in advance or provide your own
For events held in classrooms, furniture is already set in the spaces; for any special additions, you must coordinate with the Student Events office.

**CONDITION OF SPACE**
- Student groups are responsible for leaving spaces in the condition found
- If furniture in a room must be rearranged, students should restore the room to its default configuration following an event
- Failure to comply with this regulation will result in additional charges

**GUEST LISTS**
- Lerner events: If your event is open to non-University ID holders, you must submit a guest list to your advisor for approval. Upon approval, your advisor must submit your guest list to the Lerner Welcome Desk (welcomedesk@columbia.edu) at least two business days in advance of your event (The guest list must be in alphabetical order by last name.)
- Lerner guest lists cannot exceed 30 people; if more than 30 people, refer to TIC
- If you are ticketing for your event, contact TIC Manager

**CANCELLATIONS FOR EVENTS RESERVED THROUGH UEM**
- Student groups may cancel online through Virtual EMS if the event will not happen
- If you have any issues canceling online, contact UEM
- Please provide 5-business-days’ notice for small events such as rehearsals, meetings, movie nights, or study breaks
- For large-scale events such as performances and productions, please provide 10-business-days’ notice
- Cancellations for reasons other than those outside of an organization’s control may impact future booking status. Student groups are allowed three cancellations without notification before reservation privileges will be affected. On both the first and second times a group does not show up for a scheduled event without notification, the group will receive a warning. After a third incident, the group will lose the privilege of reserving space in Lerner Hall, classrooms, and residence hall lounges for 14 academic weeks
- The University reserves the right, without penalty, to cancel or relocate an event with at least 3-business-days’ notice

**7. Reserving Space in the Graduate Student Center**

**SEMINAR ROOM - 302 PHILOSOPHY**
To submit a request to reserve the Graduate Student Center’s Seminar Room (Room 302, Philosophy Hall), email Ann Madigan at alk1@columbia.edu or visit https://studentcenter.gsas.columbia.edu/node/2

**Seminar Room Policies:**
- Only graduate-student groups of no more than 24 persons are allowed to reserve this room
• If you would like Nous Espresso Bar to cater your group meeting, all requests must be made at least three days in advance. Group orders require advanced planning and preparation. Nous is unable to accommodate requests made on the day of your meeting. (Your group members are welcome to stand in line at the Nous counter, order for themselves, and bring their food/coffee into the room.)

• If you have ordered catering, please let the Nous staff know when your meeting is over, so that they may clear the catering and reset the room.

• To request Nous catering, email info@nousespresso.com

• With or without food, groups should always remember to clear and reset the room so that the space is clean for those following them.

GRADUATE STUDENT CENTER LOUNGE - 301 PHILOSOPHY
To submit a request to reserve the Graduate Student Center lounge (Room 301, Philosophy Hall), email Ann Madigan at alk1@columbia.edu or visit https://studentcenter.gsas.columbia.edu/node/2

GSC Lounge Policies:
• Use is limited to:
  o Official GSAC activities (6:30-11:30 p.m. on weekdays)
  o Recognized GSAC student groups in good standing (8:00-11:00 p.m. on weekdays). These groups also need approval from the GSAC Steering Committee and the GSAS Office of the Dean

• The event must follow these guidelines:
  o An event proposal must be sent to alk1@columbia.edu or submitted through the online reservation system (https://studentcenter.gsas.columbia.edu/node/2) at least three weeks in advance
  o The group size is limited to 50 participants
  o The Graduate Student Center will not be closed to other graduate students during your event. Therefore, you should expect other people to be in the room during your event; they will be allowed to continue talking
  o The event cannot last more than three hours

• Catering is available from Nous Espresso Bar
  o No outside food may be brought into the Graduate Student Center
  o Catering must be arranged at least one week in advance by emailing info@nousespresso.com

• Furniture set-up:
  o Tables may not be moved
  o Chairs may be rearranged for the event

• Alcohol:
  o If you intend to serve alcohol, this must be arranged through UEM at least three weeks in advance.
  o Intention to serve alcohol must be clearly stated in the event proposal

• Clean-up:
You must clean up after the event (e.g., place all waste in the waste bins, return chairs to their original positions, and wipe up any major spills that may have occurred)

If your event requires significant cleanup, your group will be charged for Facilities’ service

• Use of A/V equipment:
  o A/V needs must be confirmed with CUIT at least one week in advance

• Attendees:
  o Indicate who will be attending the event in your event proposal
  o If you plan to invite non-CUID card holders, this must be approved in advance. Provide the names of any outside guests, guest speakers, or VIPs

• Inspection:
  o Staff from GSAS or Nous will inspect the space during and after the event to ensure that the space is properly cared for

8. Payment and Reimbursement Procedures

GSAS BUSINESS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

GSAS Finance and Administration, located in 109 Low Library, provides the business support for all GSAC-recognized student groups. They oversee student-group accounts, process all financial transactions, and distribute monthly breakdown reports. Staff contacts are:

• Rebecca Hirade, Associate Dean for Finance and Administration, rhirade@columbia.edu, 212-854-3789
• Harold Ansah, Finance Manager, hansah@columbia.edu, 212-854-6726

All financial transactions for GSAC student groups must be routed through this office. Procedures for paying expenses vary, depending on the type of expense involved. General instructions for the most common expense types are included below.

Payments and Reimbursements

GSAC funds student groups through Student Initiative Grants, which are administered through GSAS. More information about the grant process can be found on the GSAC website.

GSAC and GSAS do not normally hold funds or maintain accounts for student groups; instead, student groups often work with departments to hold their funds. While most of the policies described herein apply to accounts held outside of GSAS, it is best to confirm policies with the business officer responsible for overseeing the account.

If GSAC or GSAS has awarded your group a Student Initiative Grant, the funding is provided on a reimbursement basis through payment of an invoice/check request from an outside vendor, payment to a University account, or reimbursement to an individual.
Invoices
Please alert GSAS if an invoice is being mailed or faxed instead of emailed. All invoices from individual GSAC Student Groups need to be accompanied by the GSAC sponsorship letter or award prior to submitting for processing.

Check Requests
Generally, checks will be limited to two types of expenses: 1) goods and services provided by vendors who require prepayment and who do not invoice clients, or 2) reimbursement to individuals who are not affiliated with the University. All check requests must include appropriate GSAC approvals or sponsorship documentation. For check requests, the following are required:
• an invoice made out to Columbia University, describing the goods or services to be provided and price itemization
• a description of business purpose, or a flyer for the event

Expense Reports
For reimbursement of occasional cash, credit, and debit card purchases, Travel and Business Expense Reports (TBERs) must be filled out by individuals associated with Columbia University. The TBER form can be supplied upon request.

To be reimbursed for payments made directly by an individual, on the TBER form you will need to provide all of the following:
• the name, home address, and signature of the person to be reimbursed
• a description of the overall business purpose of the expenses
• an original receipt and credit/ debit card statement showing proof of payment for each expense item

It is important to show all receipts for your expense report. Groups should tape the receipts to plain white 8.5” x 11” paper. All expense reports must be signed and completed by the payee.

Please observe the following guidelines to facilitate your reimbursement:
• DO NOT pay expenses by personal check. You cannot submit for reimbursement until you receive your canceled check and attach the original to the expense form
• DO NOT pay for purchases and orders out of pocket. It is best to order directly from customary University suppliers with whom we have accounts. These vendors are aware that the University is tax-exempt and often offer a discount. We always advise that group members wishing to make purchases consult with GSAS first to decide on the best payment method
• DO NOT reimburse anyone personally. The University will not honor third-party reimbursements. ALWAYS have the individual submit an invoice or reimbursement request directly to the University. This includes lecturers, performers, and other group members
In accordance with the Travel and Business Expense policies and Supplemental Approval policy, expenses must be submitted by the payee within 120 days of the expense/trip return. Expense reimbursements submitted beyond 120 days are considered taxable income.

**Interdepartmental Invoices**
Interdepartmental invoices are automatically charged to the account given for goods or services provided by Columbia University offices. Some of these offices include Audio/Visual, Facilities, Columbia Catering, Faculty House, and Printing Services. Please ask for estimates whenever possible to ensure that you are aware of the liability and have available funds to cover the expenses.

**Internal Transfer**
If a group wishes to co-sponsor an activity with another Columbia group outside of GSAS, the preferred method is via an internal transfer (direct payment). Internal transfers may cover club support/participation dues, purchasing supplies and materials, paying invoices, and/or reimbursing out-of-pocket travel or other business-related expenses.

To process a direct payment to another Columbia student group, a memo is required with the following information:

- a description of the event you are supporting, the amount you are pledging, and the account number of the non-GSAS group involved
- the contact name, phone number, and email address of the financial staff responsible for overseeing that account (e.g., at a school or institute at Columbia), so that GSAS may contact them. (Note: Barnard College is considered an external group; Barnard payments require a check request.)

Send the information above to GSAS. If you are unsure about providing funds for another group’s event, contact GSAS before entering into an agreement.

**Check Deposits (Funds to be Credited to an Account)**
Checks should be made payable to Columbia University. Please submit all checks to Harold Ansah, GSAS Finance Manager, 109 Low Library, with a photocopy of all checks. A memo describing the source and purpose of the credit must accompany the checks at the time of submission. The funds will then be deposited into the specified account and will be reflected on the account balance sheet.