

## **PSYCHOLOGICAL AND BRAIN SCIENCES ADMINISTRATIVE NOTES and FAQ**

Welcome to the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences at the Johns Hopkins University! Our administrative team supports the mission(s) of the faculty, staff, and students of the department – from accounting to vendor payments and everything in between! This document attempts to guide you through some of the most frequently asked questions as a means of orienting you to the way we do things here in our office as well as at JHU in general. We recognize that this information is not detailed or exhaustive, so please come to us with any questions you may have.

### **Who's Who in the Office**

Rebecca Swisdak manages the overall functioning of the administrative processes in the department. She is specifically responsible for supervision of administrative staff; HR support for lab staff; non-sponsored budget management and administration; faculty, staff, and student payroll; p-card management and administration; graduate financial aid distribution; facilities management oversight; faculty search administration; and general oversight of departmental academic affairs.

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Phone: 410.516.7057  
Email: [rswisdak@jhu.edu](mailto:rswisdak@jhu.edu)

Joe Gesa oversees, organizes, and coordinates all activities related to sponsored projects administration in the department, including: pre-award/proposal submission; maintenance, reconciliation, and reporting responsibilities during the award period; and, final close-out activities. Joe also supports proposal submissions for JHU's internal program activities (Science of Learning, etc). Joe works directly with Jim Garmon (Sr. Instrument Designer) on all of our service center's billable activity.

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Tracy Cottrell is the department's primary point of contact for all academic-related items, providing management for the department's two programs of study (B.A. and Ph.D.). She works closely with the Chair, Director of Graduate Studies, and Co-Directors of Undergraduate Studies to ensure successful oversight of the programs. Tracy is directly responsible for the graduate students from the admissions process through degree completion and conferral, and works closely with the faculty to mark the students' successful completion of the department's milestone requirements. She also works closely with departmental and university leadership to manage the

undergraduate program, offering direction, support, and advice as needed to ensure our students have a vibrant experience. Tracy is also directly responsible for managing the department's course offerings each semester, the department's experiment database (Sona Systems), and all student- or course-related data requests made of the department.

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Phone: 410.516.6175  
Email: [tcottrell@jhu.edu](mailto:tcottrell@jhu.edu)

Lisa Auchincloss works closely with Tracy to support the Department's academic programs through event management, student networking and communication, and data management. Lisa works closely with our student groups to support their activities throughout the year. She is also responsible for managing the content of the student-oriented pages on our departmental website.

Office: Ames 232F  
Phone: 410.516.5658  
Email: [lauchin1@jhu.edu](mailto:lauchin1@jhu.edu)

Julie Bullock is the department's Administrative Secretary, serving as the first point of contact for all visitors to the department's office. She provides support for financial transactions by entering the data for expense reimbursements and payments to outside vendors and purchases using the University's procurement system. She also coordinates on-campus visits by faculty candidates and other guests. Julie is responsible for the day-to-day business of making the department function: mail distribution, coordinating courier services, circulating announcements, managing the department's copiers (including the required codes), and issuing keys and J-Card access as directed.

Office: Ames 232  
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In addition to the staff who work in the administrative suite, the Department has additional staff who directly support the research and teaching missions of our programs:

Jim Garmon is the Department's Senior Instrument Designer. Jim works very closely with researchers at all ranks to develop, design, fabricate, and implement research apparatus. Jim operates a fully-functional electrical and machine shop in Ames Hall. His years of experience and his own study into the fields studied in the department have given him a depth of understanding of what our researchers need in their labs and experiments.

Office/Shop: Ames 130  
Phone: 410.516.7085  
Email: [garmon@jhu.edu](mailto:garmon@jhu.edu)

Tony Placilla and Brance Amussen support the IT needs of the department. They work to ensure that departmental and lab machines meet the specifications outlined by the School of Arts & Sciences as well as the University. Accordingly, it is imperative that they vet all equipment and peripheral purchases in advance. Brance and Tony also serve as our department's liaison to the School of Arts & Sciences IT staff network. They are our primary source of information regarding IT-related changes. Lastly, they serve as the first point of contact for local classroom/teaching spaces in and near the department (Ames 217, Krieger 110, Ames 218, and Ames 234), often liaising with the school's classroom support staff as needed to resolve technology issues in these spaces.

Offices: Krieger 173 (Tony) and Krieger 338 (Brance)  
Email: [brain-it@jhu.edu](mailto:brain-it@jhu.edu)

## **All Things Accounting**

JHU uses an accounting structure that assigns several different types of numbers to each individual account. Each of these codes means something different, which can be confusing at times. Here are the basics:

### ***What is the account structure?***

Accounts are assigned all of the following types of codes:  
FUND – COST CENTER – INTERNAL ORDER – GENERAL LEDGER

### ***What do these mean?***

*Fund: a 10-digit number indicating the type of account*

There are several types of accounts: discretionary or general operating, endowment, restricted gift, and sponsored (to name just a few). Fund numbers beginning with a 9 indicate sponsored funds; fund numbers beginning with a 1, 2, or 3 indicate non-sponsored funds. When using SAP, fund numbers are automatically derived upon entering an internal order. When using a JHU online system that interfaces with SAP, you will typically be required to enter the account's fund number in order to complete the billing process.

*Cost Center: a 10-digit number indicating the department and responsible faculty member for a group of accounts; PBS Cost Centers begin with 115480XXXX*

While some divisions of JHU have opted to use Cost Centers as their primary set of accounts for billing purposes, the School of Arts & Sciences has chosen to use Internal Orders instead. For this reason, NEVER charge anything that is to be billed to one of our budgets to a Cost Center; ALWAYS use an Internal Order. This having been said, Cost Centers do provide structure for our accounts, and are important for this reason. In

PBS, we use Cost Centers as “umbrellas” under which each faculty member’s or PI’s individual accounts are assigned (both sponsored and non-sponsored).

*Internal Order: an 8-digit number assigned to each account or project*

Internal Orders, or IOs, are 8-digit numbers that the School of Arts & Sciences uses for all of its expense and revenue accounting. Internal Orders that begin with an 8 are non-sponsored; those beginning with a 9 are sponsored. Internal Orders are assigned in numerical order based upon when the account was established, thus there is no pattern to easily identify one account from another within a Fund or Cost Center. When you are asked to provide an account to be charged, ALWAYS provide an Internal Order number. If you don’t know what IO to enter, please see the staff.

*General Ledger: a 6-digit number indicating the category or type of revenue or expense*

General Ledger codes are used to categorize the various different types of revenue and/or expense transactions that occur on an Internal Order. Lab supplies, office supplies, domestic travel, major equipment, professional services, salary, etc are all types of General Ledger codes that you might see on a budget report. There are – quite literally – hundreds of General Ledger codes. Please see the staff if you have a question about which is the appropriate code to use.

***What’s the difference between a sponsored account and a non-sponsored account?***

A sponsored account is one that has been assigned based upon a funding award from an external funding agency (NIH, NSF, private agency, etc). A non-sponsored account is one that has been assigned for University funding (general operating expenses, start-up expenses, endowed or gift accounts, salary accounts, etc).

***Which account do I use?***

There are several things to consider in answering this question:

1. Are the expenses for a particular project or purpose? If so, that will help determine which account to use, particularly in the case of sponsored funds.
2. Are the expenses allowable, allocable, and reasonable?\* If so, you will likely be charging an expense to a specific sponsored project.
3. Which account have you been given permission to charge against? You and your PI need to have a discussion about which account(s) you may make purchases for. If you are ever uncertain, you need to consult with your PI for clarification.

*\* We have several outstanding resources on determining if expenses are allowable, allocable, and reasonable. These are appended to the end of this document for your reference.*

***How do I know how much I have spent/I have left to spend?***

JHU generates budget statements for each account on a monthly basis and emails them to the appropriate responsible party (typically around the 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> of each month). Administrative staff responsible for their department’s budgets use these statements to reconcile each budget every month. Additionally, PI’s are sent monthly reports to assist

in managing their funding. In PBS, Joe and Rebecca each reconcile the accounts for which they are responsible and send regular updates based on these monthly reconciliations to the appropriate faculty member. Additionally, they can perform ad hoc reporting as requested.

## **Conducting Business**

Now that you know what your accounts look like, you need to know how to spend from them. Regardless of the purchase or the method used, the key thing to remember is that our office requires documentation for each and every expense charged to each and every account. Be sure to give us the appropriate documentation for all expenses so that we can use it to reconcile the accounts. Appropriate documentation consists of copies of invoice, receipts, packing slips, petty cash forms, or any other documents that make up the “paper trail” of an expense.

### ***How do I make purchases through the University?***

Employees who have been given access to create “shopping carts” in SAP can use their authorization to make purchases directly from approved University vendors using that feature in SAP. Each lab operates a little differently (some preferring their lab staff to have such access, others preferring to coordinate purchases through the administrative office), so be sure to discuss with your PI or the administrative office if you have this role, or if you should have this role. Account information is entered directly into SAP at the time of purchase, and that account is billed directly for the charge.

### ***How do I make purchases from vendors who aren't in SAP?***

There are several ways you can purchase necessities from vendors who are not a university vendor:

1. Some vendors are willing to issue invoices for payment. If you are conducting business with a vendor who issues invoices, please bring the invoice to the office when you receive it. Our office will process it for payment against the internal order you provide. If you are working with a NEW vendor, they will likely have to be set up in SAP before we can process payment.
2. If the vendor accepts credit cards, your purchase qualifies as an allowable purchase under the procurement card program rules, and the purchase is less than \$3,000, you can purchase the item(s) using a University procurement card. If you do not have a University procurement card, we can make the purchase on your behalf using the department's card. We will need to know which budget should be charged for the purchase.
3. You can make the purchase directly with your own personal credit card, or with cash. We can issue a reimbursement to you, provided you have the appropriate documentation for the purchase (receipt or other proof of purchase).

Remember that the University is a tax-exempt institution and, therefore, does not reimburse sales tax. You can obtain a copy of the University's tax exempt certificate from our office or the Finance Office website. Many merchants

require that you make tax exempt purchases through customer service or with a merchant-issued card that you present at the register. Be sure to check with each merchant regarding their policies prior to making your purchases.

***How do I pay research participants?***

Research participants are typically paid in one of two ways: by petty cash or by University-issued check. Petty cash payments can be requested for dollar amounts less than \$100. Payments for dollar amounts greater than \$100 must be made by check request through the University. In certain instances, the Department can work with your lab to set up gift cards that you can load and issue to participants. We typically reserve these requests for labs that test subjects who would otherwise experience difficulty in collecting petty cash from Garland Hall, or labs that issue large payments to populations who do not have reliable fixed addresses. Whichever scenario may be applicable to you and your lab, be sure to discuss exact procedures with the office in advance of issuing payments to any of your participants.

In either case, it's essential to keep records of payments, and get copies of your log or petty cash forms to Joe or Rebecca on a regular basis.

***How do I obtain a University procurement card?***

Most lab staff do have a University procurement card issued in their name. The application process requires taking an online training course and successfully passing the post-course assessment. There is an application that you will need to complete and bring to Rebecca for her approval and signature.

Having a University procurement card issued in your name makes you liable for the purchases made using that card. Do not share your card with others and be sure to keep the card in a secured location at all times. You are required to document each purchase and each credit made to that card on a transaction log. Transaction logs and supporting documentation are due to Rebecca absolutely no later than the day before the monthly deadline, but ideally you should submit them more frequently (every week or every other week).

***How do I get reimbursed for travel or business expenses?***

Employees and students who travel for professional purposes are eligible to be reimbursed for bona fide travel-related expenses, provided funds are available to support the expense. Travel expenses are reimbursed on an actual expense basis, not a per diem. Receipts and other documentation – including the checklist and mandatory travel statement – must be submitted to the administrative office not later than sixty (60) days after the last date of travel in order to be processed before the University's ninety (90)-day deadline. Travel expenses submitted more than 90 days after the last date of travel will be reimbursed in the form of a salary supplement, and will be subject to tax withholdings.

Employees who purchase supplies/materials or pick up the tab at a business meal are eligible to be reimbursed for those expenses, provided funds are available to support the expense. The same is true for these types of expenses as is true for travel expenses: there is a window of time after which expenses will be reimbursed as taxable salary (90 days), and the same documentation is required.

Extensive information on travel and business expenses and the relative policies can be found on the University's Accounts Payable website. You can also ask Julie or Rebecca for additional information.

### **Facilities Management**

You will find as you work here that while your lab space may be new (or new-ish), the building in which you work (Ames, Krieger, Dunning, etc) is an old(er) shell with aging parts. As with all buildings, the parts do not always function optimally and things sometimes break.

#### ***Who do I call if there's a facilities problem?***

Requests for non-emergency service can be made using the Facilities Department online service request form. Faculty and staff are permitted to place requests using this form. We suggest that you place non-emergency service requests yourself *only if you are reasonably certain* that (a) you will be present when the Facilities crew arrives in order to give them access to the space and also to sign off on the work order and (b) you can discern the difference between a routine and a billable request. Otherwise, we suggest that you let the administrative office know what the problem is and we will place the request on your behalf.

#### ***What constitutes an emergency?***

Any incident that threatens the safety of JHU students, faculty, and staff and interferes significantly with the ability to provide educational and support services should be considered an emergency or crisis situation that requires immediate attention by school administrators.

There are two simple guidelines to follow in the event of an emergency:

- If the danger is outside, stay inside the building
- If the danger is inside, leave the building immediately

In the event of an urgent life-threatening emergency (e.g., fire or explosion), all persons should immediately evacuate the premises. If possible, call Campus Security (x67777), sound a fire alarm, and warn fellow occupants of the building.

For non-life-threatening, but still serious, situations contact the department administrative office (x67055, x67057, x66175, or x68135) during business hours or

Security (x67777) after hours. Avoid the area. If the area impacted is your lab, be sure to alert the members of the lab to the nature of the situation.

***What is the difference between a billable and a routine request?***

Each division of the Facilities Department maintains their own parameters for what is billable and what is routine. When in doubt, ask the department office or review the [Facilities website](#) for more information.

***What can I expect in terms of custodial support?***

Routine custodial support includes weekly trash removal from office spaces, daily trash removal from labs and common spaces (kitchenette, common hallway bins, bathrooms), bathroom cleaning, and common area cleaning (hallways, stairwells, etc). Custodians are instructed not to clean obstructed work surfaces. If you find that your area is not being maintained on a routine basis, contact the department administrative office. Be prepared to give detailed information on the service(s) that is not being performed, the location, and for how long the space has been unattended.

***Why is it so hot/cold?***

Ames, Dunning, and Krieger are aging buildings. While the indoor temperature remains fairly consistent for most of the year, there are times when some spaces can be either very warm or fairly cool. This typically happens when there is a wide swing in the outdoor temperature (when we have an unseasonably warm or cool day for any particular time of year). The best piece of advice that we can offer is to have a fan and a sweatshirt/sweater handy. If the atypical indoor temperatures persist for more than two days OR if it will adversely impact your testing, let the department office know. We can place a call to Facilities.

**Being an Employee**

Here's a summary of basic employee-related information. As always, do not hesitate to contact the department office if you have any questions.

***When will I be paid?***

Johns Hopkins University pays its employees on a semi-monthly schedule. We are paid on the 15<sup>th</sup> and last day of each month. If either of those dates falls on a weekend or University holiday, we are paid on the last full working day prior to the 15<sup>th</sup> or last day of the month.

***Am I required to complete tax forms?***

In a word: yes. You should have received information on completing the tax withholding information from Human Resources or Student Employment at the time you were hired. You may review or update withholding information via the Employee Self Service portal on my.johnshopkins.edu.



***Am I required to have direct deposit?***

No, you are not *required* to have direct deposit, but the department strongly encourages everyone receiving a paycheck from the University to sign up for direct deposit. You can sign up for direct deposit on the Employee Self Service portal on my.johnshopkins.edu. Employees who opt not to have direct deposit are required to pick up their paycheck from the Arts & Sciences Human Resources Office in the Wyman building (6<sup>th</sup> floor) on pay day between the hours of 10:00am and noon.

***How can I find information on employee benefits?***

Benefits enrollment information is given to new faculty and staff at the time of hire. For information on benefits available to faculty and staff, visit the [Benefits Office website](#). Information on postdoctoral benefits is emailed at the time the appointment letter is issued, and is also available on the [Postdoctoral Resources website](#). Graduate student benefits information can be found on the [Graduate Student Resources website](#).

***What is a PERNR and where can I find mine?***

PERNR is short for personnel number. Each employee has a unique PERNR assigned to his/her payroll record. Employees who hold more than one type of position in the University will have multiple PERNRs associated with their master payroll record. You can find your PERNR on your electronic pay stub, which is accessible through the Employee Self Service portal on my.johnshopkins.edu.

***Where can I park?***

Parking registration is managed through the University's [Parking and Transportation](#) office. You can register for a parking permit online. Monthly fees for parking permits are pre-tax deductions from your paycheck.

***What if I don't drive to campus? – How can I find information about the Hopkins shuttles?***

Hopkins offers several shuttle routes, connecting the various campuses. Information on specific routes and schedules can be found on the [Parking & Transportation website](#).

***How do I account for my time?***

The E210 is the University's employee timesheet system for salaried staff. Hourly paid employees do **not** use this system to record their time. Salaried employees use the E210 to record time and attendance codes for the work days in each month. Exempt employees must enter time and attendance before the end of each month so that supervisors can easily approve the timesheets as early as the first of the next month. Non-exempt employees must enter their time each week so that their supervisors can review for overtime accrual.

***How do I use vacation or sick time that I have accrued?***

Vacation and/or sick time cannot be taken in advance of being accrued. E210 records show vacation and sick time accruals, tallied on a monthly basis (displayed under the

monthly timesheet). Vacation and sick time must be recorded as such on the appropriate dates. Non-exempt employees may take accrued time in increments of a quarter hour; exempt employees may take accrued time in half-day increments only. In all cases, employees must report their absence to their supervisor in accordance with established policy in that lab or office.

***How can I find out what the University holidays are?***

The University's holiday schedule is posted

online: <http://hrnt.jhu.edu/documents/University%20Holiday%20Calendar.pdf>

Employees who must work on a University designated holiday are encouraged to make arrangements with their supervisor for an alternate day off. The department office is always closed on University holidays.

***Is overtime or comp time available?***

Only non-exempt employees are eligible to receive overtime pay for hours worked in excess of their scheduled hours. The University is not permitted (by law) to allow employees to accrue comp time for hours worked in excess of their regular schedule. Overtime must be approved by the employee's supervisor *in advance*. Employees who work overtime without prior approval may be subject to disciplinary action, but are still eligible to be paid for the time worked.

Situations where a non-exempt employee knows that s/he will need to work in excess of the standard 7.5 hours per day should be discussed in advance with the appropriate supervisor and Rebecca. (The supervisor is typically the person who manages your employment performance, but it could also be the person responsible for a specific grant, project, or line of research.) Hours must be recorded on the E210 prior to the weekly submission deadline.

***How is my job performance reviewed?***

Staff performance is evaluated on an annual basis (January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup>) by direct supervisors, who provide written reports to the department office and, eventually, the Arts & Sciences Human Resources Office. New staff hired into their position prior to September 1<sup>st</sup> are eligible for at least a pro-rated salary increase, depending on their performance.

***What is effort reporting and what do I need to do with it?***

Periodically you will be asked to Certify an Effort Report. These reports verify the time spent on projects funded by the sponsored and non-sponsored accounts that make up your salary, and are used for mandatory reporting to the Federal government if you are paid from a sponsored award. Faculty and senior staff certify these reports every six months; everyone else certifies them every three months.

When asked to certify your effort, it is a two step process:

1. Verify the Report is Correct

The form should list all the accounts used to pay you during the certifying period. If you are paid entirely from one account, there will only be one entry, but if you are split between, say, a sponsored and a non-sponsored account, with 50% of your salary coming from each, that will show in your form. If everything looks correct, click at the bottom on "PROCEED"

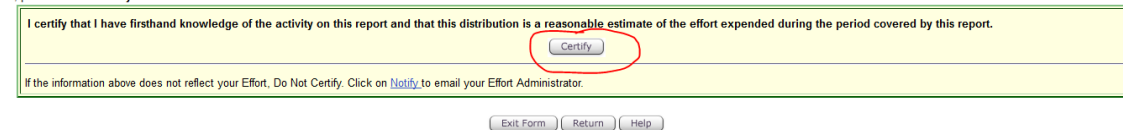
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viewer. If the percentages are correct, click on **Proceed** button to continue.



2. Certify the Report

You will be taken to a new screen, which is the final certification. Click on "CERTIFY" to finalize the form. You're done until next time!



## Costs on Sponsored Awards: Can I charge this to a grant?

Note: When you are unsure where to charge something, please come talk to the grants administrator (Joe). His job is to know this stuff so that the researchers in the department can draw on that knowledge.

There are three major considerations to whether you can pay for something from grant funds (an account whose Internal Order number starts with **900\***)

- Is it **Allowable**?
  - The entity, whether the Government or a private agency, that funded the grant is allowed to set rules for what we can spend their money on. **Ask:** Is the item or service something the funder permits? Some funders will restrict some types of costs, for example, foreign travel. So if that was restricted, we would not be able to use that grant fund to pay for any foreign travel. There are also specific items that can be restricted – the canonical example is alcoholic beverages. There are occasions where federal funds can be used for beverages, but the Office of Management and Budget specifically leaves alcohol out – so alcohol is an unallowable expense if you are using federal funds.
- Is it **Allocable**?
  - **Ask:** Is the item or service something that specifically and traceably benefits the award to which it is being charged? For instance, if you buy a piece of equipment on a grant, it needs to be used for the experiments funded by that grant, and work for that grant should take up significant time, and be given priority over any other usage. (note that this doesn't mean equipment bought for one grant project can't be used for anything else). Further, allocable items are direct costs necessary to do the work on the award that are not otherwise provided as part of a standard lab set up. (I'll address that further below.) Also worth noting, we can split costs if they are allocable to more than one place – let Julie or Jenny know if you need to do that.
- Is it **Reasonable**?
  - Simply a test of whether the price and need for the item is justified. This is a protection so that no one can charge the government or other funder more for a good or service than they would charge anyone else. For instance, if your salary is being paid by a grant, it is at the same rate that it is when the University pays it; we can't give people "raises" by charging more salary on the grant than they would otherwise make. It is also a test of whether the item is appropriate for the use. If your project budgeted for item X and you want to buy item X2000 Platinum Edition, you'd have to show a reason why you needed the more expensive option.

Now, sometimes items that would generally not be chargeable to a grant can be, with a documented justification – which was why you may be asked for a justification for an expense. A justification might be something like “We have to buy alcohol with grant money because our project studies the effect of alcohol on rat behavior, so it is a necessary supply,” then we could buy something that otherwise wouldn’t be allowable.

And finally, these three considerations of **Allowable**, **Allocable**, and **Reasonable** apply to **Direct Costs**, or things that we buy on the budget number for the grant directly. There are also **Indirect Costs**, which you will see on the monthly reports. Indirect costs is a catch all term for things that are necessary for research to take place, but not necessarily **allocable** to specific grants, or are in such small fractions that tracking them would be an undue burden. Indirect costs include things like office supplies, that are needed but for which we aren’t going to sit around saying “this pen is only to be used for grant-X and this pen is for grant-Y.” Indirect costs also include things like electricity, maintenance, office administrative staff, etc. For sponsored awards, these are paid at a rate generally set in the award notice. The **total cost** of a grant is the **sum of the direct + indirect costs**.

Also, remember that once you have ordered something and charged it to a sponsored award, give Joe a copy of the packing slip when it comes in!