

Noise-Canceling Headphones Policy

Harvard will reimburse for allowable, reasonable, properly substantiated expenses that are necessary and appropriate in the conduct of University business. All business expense reimbursements must meet the IRS accountable plan rules in order to be excluded from the recipient's gross income. While no policy can address every situation, the spirit of this policy – along with good judgment – must prevail.

This is written in consultation with the University Financial Policy Office, Human Resources, Facilities, and Space Planning & Design.

The purchase of noise-canceling headphones is considered an unallowable business expense for the following reasons:

- Items purchased with University funds are the property of the University, which includes but is not limited to office furniture and equipment
- Because of the nature in which it is used is considered a personal expense

Alternative Suggestions:

- Raise office space noise concerns with supervisor, Space Planning, and Facilities
- Find a quiet space to work for the day (e.g., swing space, enclave)
- Explore the option of a Flexible Work Arrangement
- Utilize personal headphones
- Consider a shared white noise machine

According to the University Financial Policy Office if the following circumstances are applicable, noise canceling headphones may be allowable on a case-by-case basis:

- 1) Documented medical reason
- 2) Work in a high-risk noise area (regulated by OSHA or EHS)
- 3) Work in an area that is temporarily being disrupted by continuous noise (e.g., construction area)

To submit a formal request, the employee's supervisor should submit the following materials along with a written statement supporting the employee's request to SEAS Finance:

- A written justification detailing the specific need from the requester
- A quote for the requested item

**If approved please note the item is the property of Harvard and must be returned upon changes in circumstance (termination of employment, office move, or is no longer needed)*

Reasonable Accommodation Requests

If #1 above is applicable due to a physical impairment that substantially limits your ability to perform the essential functions of your position, a reasonable accommodation request may be explored under the Americans with Disabilities Act. To initiate the request, please contact SEAS Human Resources.

University Disabilities Services: <https://accessibility.harvard.edu/>

*This policy applies to non-faculty personnel

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