



SEATTLE UNIVERSITY

Policy and Procedures for Business Travel Expenses

The University recognizes that employees may be required to travel while conducting University business. When this occurs, the employee shall be reimbursed for reasonable travel expenses in accordance with this University policy and consistent with Internal Revenue Service (IRS) regulations. This Policy will be known as the “Seattle University Travel Expense Policy.”

A. WHAT IS TRAVEL?

According to Internal Revenue Service definitions, you are on travel status when you are conducting University business 35 miles or more from your normal place of work for no more than 30 consecutive days. (Travel over 30 consecutive days is considered long-term travel. Contact your supervisor, Dean, or Vice President to determine travel guidelines.) University employees are eligible for reimbursement of necessary and appropriate travel expenses incurred during authorized travel.

B. WHAT TO DO BEFORE PLANNING TRAVEL?

Before planning your travel, please become familiar with any policies or procedures relating to business travel that your academic unit (school/college) or your administrative department may have adopted to supplement this policy.

C. WHAT TO DO BEFORE TRAVELING?

1. Become familiar with this policy.
 - a. Contact Accounts Payable with any questions or concerns.
 - b. Obtain appropriate travel approval from your supervisor.
2. Notify Accounts Payable in a timely manner of any expenses you wish to have prepaid.
 - a. To request a travel advance, complete a Travel Advance Form and submit it to Accounts Payable at least seven (7) business days prior to the date you need the funds.
 - b. Employees may submit check requests for direct payment to a vendor for travel expenses such as conference fees, hotel deposits, and airline tickets. To request prepayment of expenses, complete a Travel Advance Form with vendor names, addresses, and telephone numbers and submit it to Accounts Payable at least seven (7) business days prior to the date you expect to prepay the expenses.

D. WHAT IS A TRAVEL ADVANCE?

A travel advance is the University’s means to provide an employee with funds to pay for approved travel expenses in advance of travel. Please note that Vice Presidents and Deans may establish specific guidelines that govern or limit travel advances. Employees estimate the travel expenses to be incurred and request necessary funds through an approved and

completed Travel Advance Form (see Section E.). The travel advance may be up to the anticipated total cost of travel less any prepaid expenses. Travel funds are taken from the appropriate University account and issued in the form of a check payable to the employee. At the end of travel, the employee must submit an itemized accounting of travel funds on a Travel Expense Report Form (see Section I).

Travel advances may be issued only to active University employees. Travel advances will not be issued to an employee who has a travel advance outstanding. If a travel advance is not settled prior to a termination of employment, the amount owed to the University will be considered reportable income to the employee and will be reported to the IRS on the employee's W-2.

E. HOW TO OBTAIN A TRAVEL ADVANCE

1. Requests for a travel advance are made on a Travel Advance Form available in the Controller's Office, USVC 203.
2. Requests for a travel advance should be submitted as early as possible prior to travel and at least seven (7) business days prior to the date the check is needed. Accounts Payable will issue travel advance checks between one (1) and five (5) business days prior to the travel date.
3. Accounts Payable will notify the employee at his or her campus office when the check is ready for pick-up at the Controller's Office, USVC 203.

F. WHAT ARE ALLOWABLE TRAVEL COSTS?

1. **Transportation:** An employee will be reimbursed for the most direct and economical means of transportation to and from the destination(s).
 - a. Public transportation: The University will reimburse for the following modes of transportation: airline (coach/economy class), train, bus, car rental (see below), taxi (or town cars if more economical) and ferry. Receipts are required for reimbursement.
 - b. Personal automobile expenses: When using a privately-owned vehicle for University business, the employee must have a valid driver's license and carry automobile liability insurance. The University will reimburse employees for the mileage driven in association with travel for University business. The current mileage rate can be found at <http://insite.seattleu.edu/controller/policies> and is based on the IRS's allowable rate. The reimbursement of mileage driven is allowed for in-state/out-of-state travel by way of the most direct, regularly-traveled route computed by odometer readings. Out-of-state mileage reimbursement will be the lesser of the actual miles driven or comparable airfare (coach/economy class) to the same destination. Employees will not be reimbursed for gasoline purchases. Parking expenses are allowable when paying for parking is more economical than using another form of transportation (e.g., parking at the airport rather than incurring shuttle or cab fare).

- c. **Car rental:** When traveling from Seattle, employees should contact the Department of Public Safety to check the availability of University vehicles or vehicles available through vendor rental agreements. An employee may rent a vehicle when the rental is advantageous to conducting University business, not when the rental is simply convenient for the employee. The size of car should be appropriate for the number of passengers. Expenses incurred for gas will be reimbursed. Because an employee's use of a rental car for University business is covered by the University's insurance, an employee renting a car for business purposes should decline insurance offered by the car rental agency. Except in emergency circumstances, only University employees may drive cars rented for University business.
2. **Lodging:** An employee will be reimbursed for commercial lodging when travel exceeds 35 miles from the employee's normal place of work. If attending a conference, employees are required to stay either in the designated hotel with which the conference has negotiated a reduced lodging rate, or in a nearby hotel where the rate is comparable to or lower than the rate of the designated hotel. The original lodging receipt showing the establishment's name, street address, telephone number, the actual dates of lodging, and daily room charges is required for reimbursement.
3. **Meals:** An employee may use the following two methods when requesting reimbursement for expenses for meals. Travelers may combine the "actual costs" and the "per diem" method, but not within the same day (i.e., Monday meals can be reimbursed with the per diem method, Tuesday with the actual costs method).
 - a. **Actual Costs:** The employee is required to submit original receipts that itemize expenses for meals consumed (a credit card receipt or monthly statement is not adequate). The actual costs of meals must be reasonable and may include reasonable consumption of alcoholic beverages at dinner and reasonable tips (not to exceed 20%). If persons other than employees are included in the meal, the costs of the meal are not treated by the IRS as travel expenses, but are treated as business or entertainment expenses and must meet the requirements set forth in the "Policy for Business Expenses."
 - b. **Per Diem Meal Rate:** The per diem meal rate is a flat-rate allowance established by the University to reimburse the employee for the cost of daily meals. Under the per diem meal rate, the employee is not required to substantiate the cost of the meals. The current per diem rate can be found at <http://insite.seattleu.edu/controller/policies>. The employee cannot claim per diem for meals that are purchased by others (e.g., conference meals and vendor-sponsored meals).
4. **Incidental expenses:** Incidental expenses are miscellaneous expenses incurred while traveling for University business. Examples of incidental expenses include laundry, internet access fees, metered parking, local bus fare, emergency phone calls, business phone calls, reasonable fitness/gym fees (if not included in the room fee) and reasonable tips for room service. The University will reimburse the employee for the actual, reasonable expenses if receipts are provided or will reimburse the employee \$3.00 per day without receipts.

G. WHAT EXPENSES ARE NOT REIMBURSABLE?

Expenses that are not reimbursable are personal in nature and not directly associated with University business. The following are examples of non-reimbursable expenses: costs for personal life insurance bought while traveling, travel expenses for family members, movie rentals, movie/event tickets, and travel expenses going to and from personal excursions (e.g., movies or theatre events). Purchases of alcoholic beverages are also not reimbursable unless (i) they occur with dinner, or (ii) the employee is using the per diem method for meals, or (iii) they qualify for reimbursement under the Policy for Business and Entertainment Expenses.

H. WHAT TO DO AFTER TRAVEL

Within ten (10) business days after the completion of travel, you must either:

1. Submit original, out-of-pocket expense receipts to Accounts Payable with an approved and completed Travel Advance Form; or
2. If you received a travel advance, submit an approved and completed Travel Expense Report Form to Accounts Payable.

I. HOW TO SUBMIT A TRAVEL EXPENSE REPORT FORM

1. Travel Expense Reports are available in the Controller's Office, USVC 203, or at <http://insite.seattleu.edu/controller/forms/sharedocument/index.asp>. The employee submits the completed form to the Controller's Office. An incomplete or unsubstantiated Travel Expense Report Form will delay reimbursement of expenses.
 - a. If travel expenses exceed the amount of the travel advance, submit an approved and completed Travel Expense Report Form to obtain reimbursement. A University check will be issued payable to the employee. The employee will be notified at his/her campus telephone when the check is ready for pick-up in the Controller's Office.
 - b. If travel expenses are less than the amount of the travel advance, submit an approved and completed Travel Expense Report Form to Accounts Payable with a check payable to Seattle University. If unspent funds are in the form of cash, deposit the funds into the appropriate University account with the cashier at the Controller's office. Attach the cash receipt to the Travel Expense Report Form and submit the form to Accounts Payable.
 - c. If travel expenses equal the amount of the travel advance, submit an approved and completed Travel Expense Report Form to Accounts Payable to reconcile and account for the advance. Travel advances will not be issued to an employee who has a travel advance outstanding.

J. HOW TO REQUEST AN EXCEPTION TO THIS POLICY

1. Whenever expense reimbursement policies are mandated by the IRS, no exceptions can be granted. If you have questions, please contact the Office of Finance & Investments.
2. Whenever expense reimbursement policies are mandated by University policy, Accounts Payable will process an exception request on receipt of written approval from the President, Executive Vice President, Provost, Deans or any Vice President (or designee) of the University.