

Business Travel Frequently Asked Questions

The following frequently asked questions are supplemental to [1501 – Policy on Business Travel](#).

Authorization

Q: Is pre-travel approval required for a University business trip?

A: Pre-approval is required for all travel which includes airfare, lodging, and/or meal per diem, per State policy. All Faculty and Staff must submit for pre-approval in Concur Request.

Q: When employees are traveling on a trip that includes both University business travel and personal elements, who confirms the nature of the travel as business?

A: The employee's supervisor or designated department person confirms travel as being business in nature.

Q: How do I document my manager's confirmation that the trip is primarily for business?

A: The employee's supervisor or designated department person should include their approval in the comments section in Concur Request. If your department has an established travel form that shows managerial approval, that form may be uploaded into Concur Request as an attachment.

Q: What are examples of acceptable proof that a trip is primarily for business?

A: Examples of suggested language that is acceptable in the comments in Concur Request:

- This business trip is attended by a member of staff yearly and this year [INSERT EMPLOYEE/FACULTY NAME] represented our department.
- This trip is required for UNC-Chapel Hill to maintain certification or accreditation.
- The primary purpose of this trip is for [INSERT FACULTY NAME] to attend this conference, which contributes importantly to [INSERT FACULTY NAME]'s research agenda.
- I am mandating this trip by [INSERT EMPLOYEE/FACULTY NAME] for the purpose of business.

Q: If I am traveling on behalf of another department, what steps should I take to make sure I am reimbursed properly?

A: Please reach out to the department that requested you to travel on their behalf. Faculty and Staff will enter the department ID for the reimbursing department on their Expense Report Header to ensure proper routing of workflow and approvals.

Q: I work for a doctor whose travel expenses to a medical conference should be paid by UNC Healthcare. May I submit the travel expense and request a reimbursement from the hospital?

A: No, UNC Healthcare has a travel process entirely separate from the University.

Q: Can you give an example of a third-party expense?

A: If someone attends a conference in which the vendor has paid for airfare, hotel and meals, this is considered a third-party expense and therefore, the traveler cannot also be reimbursed for airfare, hotel or receive a per diem from UNC, as it is already being paid for by the outside party.

Transportation

Q: I am driving my personal vehicle on university business, how do I calculate my mileage reimbursement?

A: Please visit [Travel Allowances, Mileage and Per Diem Rates](#) for current reimbursement rates.

Q: How do I submit mileage for multiple-day trips?

A: See [1504.1 – Procedure for Multiple-Day Trips](#).

Q: I am at a conference and have other business meetings, can I rent a car?

A: University travelers should use the least expensive method of ground transportation to meet their business needs. If the traveler chooses to rent a car, they may be asked to provide a justification that the total cost of the rental (including parking, gas, tolls, etc.) was less expensive than alternative options. Please visit [1501.4 – Procedure on Ground Transportation Expenses Including Mileage Rates](#) for additional information.

Q: If I am staying on-site at the conference hotel, can I be reimbursed for ground transportation expenses (i.e. rental, ride share, taxi, etc..) for non-business excursions away from the hotel?

A: No, these are personal expenses and will not be reimbursed without a written justification to explain the benefit the University derived from the expense.

Q: When I rent a car within the United States, should I add on any of the optional insurance offered by the rental car company?

A: No, as a University employee, you are covered by the State's master policy. Additional insurance costs are strictly prohibited by [state regulation](#).

Per Diems

Q: Do the meal per diems apply to out-of-country travel?

A: The answer depends upon the funding source. If the trip is to be paid from State-appropriated or Facilities and Administrative funds, the maximum per diem amount allowed for meals is set by the University (see [Travel Allowances, Mileage and Per Diem Rates](#)). Trips funded by discretionary funds are reimbursed at the out-of-state per diem rate. Some federal contracts and grants allow meal reimbursement based on the [U.S. State Department allowances](#).

Q: Do meal per diems include the tip?

A: Yes.

Q: Are we allowed meal reimbursement for day trips?

A: No. Meal per diem is only allowed when the travel requires an overnight stay.

Q: Can we receive meal per diem if the conference or workshop provides meals?

A: No. University employees cannot be reimbursed for meals that are paid for or provided by a conference, workshop, or seminar.

Q: May I claim my actual expense for meals if I keep my receipts?

A: No, meal expense is an allowance and may not exceed the per diem amounts as determined by the NC General Assembly.

Q: Why does the OSBM publish a lodging allowance?

A: To inform all employees of the State what the State will cover for their lodging. All employees should request State rate when reserving lodging. If it is not possible to obtain clean, safe lodging within a reasonable proximity of the business site, an exception will be made and the entire receipt will be reimbursed with appropriate written justification. See [1501.5 – Procedure on Per Diem Rates](#) under Excess Lodging Expenses.

Travel Advance and Reconciliation

Q: How do we submit a student travel request?

A: Complete the Student Non-Employee Travel Agreement and submit it to the appropriate card office (P-Card or T&E Card) to request permission to use the payment card for student travel costs.

Q: The conference is offering sightseeing tours of areas of interest at a huge discount if I include the payment with my registration fee. May I pay for this on my T&E Card or Departmental P-Card?

A: No. These are personal expenses and will have to be paid for with your personal funds.

Q: May I pay for my own conference registration and seek reimbursement afterward?

A: As per [1501.2 – Procedure on Travel Advances](#), employees should either pay on their T&E Card, work with their department to pay via P-Card or pay the vendor directly if the vendor is set up in Accounts Payable. Employees must provide a justification for paying with their own monies if they wish to receive a reimbursement for the costs for the registration.

Airfare

Q: What if I am leaving from or returning to an airport other than the one closest to my primary workstation?

A: You will need to submit both the actual cost of the airfare plus any additional transportation costs required to/from travel to the airport and the comparable airfare which is closest to your duty station. The University will pay the lesser.

Q: If I book a flight outside of the University's [Authorized Travel Agencies](#), can I be reimbursed booking fees?

A: The University strongly discourages booking flights outside of the University's Authorized Travel Agency. When this occurs, the University is unable to reimburse until after the trip, per state policy. Booking fees incurred from other travel agencies will not be reimbursed without an approved exception.

Q: Can I book a bundled package of flight, hotel, and transportation?

A: It is recommended that you book them separately. If you do choose to purchase a bundled package, make sure the details are itemized and the receipt reflects how much the flight, hotel or transportation cost separately.

Q: How are fees charged by commercial airlines reimbursed?

A: Fees charged by commercial airlines, including baggage fees, main cabin seats within the coach class section, or airport service charges are allowable charges and may be paid/reimbursed as a part of air transportation expenses. However, the number of bags should be reasonable in relation to the business purpose. For example, if the number of bags checked exceeds two (2), the purpose of the trip should justify the additional bags. Other fees, such as early/priority boarding or extra leg room are personal and will not be reimbursed.

Q: If a flight is canceled and the traveler used personal frequent flyer miles, can I get the amount reimbursed?

A: No. If personal frequent flyer miles are used to purchase a flight, the fare is not reimbursable if the flight is canceled. We recommend booking with the University's [Authorized Travel Agency](#) instead of using personal frequent flyer miles.

Q: Is economy plus, main cabin plus, premium economy, or preferred seating allowed?

A: No, UNC will only reimburse main cabin; all other preferred seating will be considered as personal charges.

Q: I have a medical condition that causes me extreme discomfort when I sit for long periods. May I be reimbursed for upgraded airfare?

A: Yes, if you provide a doctor's note to your [EEO ADA office](#) for workplace accommodation and the medical document is no more than two years old for upgraded travel requests.

Q: If I am traveling out of the country and my flight is over eight hours long, can I upgrade my seats?

A: Yes, if the nonstop international segment is eight or more hours. If you have a connection(s), any segments which do not exceed eight hours should be booked as main cabin.

Q: My flight was canceled, and the airline company would only give me credit for a future flight. Can I have the University reimburse me?

A: Yes, but the traveler must use the credit toward a future university business trip. We recommend booking with the University's [Authorized Travel Agency](#) as they can assist with managing the credit provided by the airline.