



Travel Policy

POLICY No.:

Responsible Executive:

Responsible Office: Finance & Support

Effective: November 12, 2018

Revised:

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for traveling on University business.

SCOPE

This policy affects all departments of the University. Travel charged to a sponsored project should follow guidelines set forth by this policy unless the funding agency imposes greater restrictions.

DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this policy, travel is considered to be any authorized trip for University business purposes requiring reimbursement for business related expenses.

Overnight stay travel – Travel exceeding 12 hours in length round-trip, and requiring overnight lodging

Extended day travel – Travel exceeding 12 hours in length round-trip but not requiring an overnight stay

Same day travel – Travel that is up to 12 hours in length round-trip

POLICY & PROCESS

Reimbursable Expenses

- The University provides for reimbursement of reasonable business-related expenses for authorized business travel in accordance with the guidelines set forth in this document. Reasonable expenses are those that reflect moderation and defensibility to an impartial observer and are supported by adequate documentation.
- The University reimburses reasonable expenditures for lodging, airfare, vehicle rental, parking, tolls, and gasoline for rental vehicles; meals and incidentals are reimbursed up to a maximum daily limit (meals and incidental (M&I) ceiling) which varies based upon the length of travel and the destination.
- The employee should use good business judgment in incurring travel expenses for which reimbursement will be requested. Reimbursement for expenditures determined to be excessively expensive or not of a business nature will be denied.

While certain allowable expenses may be eligible for reimbursement by the University, in some cases schools, departments, or other funding sources may impose further restrictions for compliance or budgetary constraints.

Lodging

The University will reimburse for lodging expenses when the following criteria are met:

- The stay is required in order to further a business purpose of the University, and
- In the case of a multi-day trip, the traveler is at least 50 miles from the campus location or home, whichever is closer, making traveling home daily impractical;
- In the case of a single-day trip, the traveler is at least 50 miles from the campus location or home, whichever is closer

Travelers should book standard room accommodations at non-luxury, moderately priced hotels. The University offers reimbursement for a single occupancy room for faculty or staff traveling on University business regardless of budgetary or other considerations. However, if faculty and/or staff traveling on University business choose to share lodging accommodations, they will be allowed to do so with the following exception: In all situations, faculty and/or staff are prohibited from sharing a room with a student.

Meals and Incidentals (M&I) Ceiling

The University will reimburse for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and incidental expenses such as gratuities for drivers, baggage carriers, etc., incurred while traveling on University business, subject to the following specific restrictions based on the nature of the out-of-town trip:

- ✓ **Overnight Stay Travel**- meal and incidental expenses will be subject to a ceiling of \$60 per day, including all gratuities. A *suggested* breakdown is: \$13 for breakfast, \$15 for lunch, \$27 for dinner, and \$5 for incidentals; however, it is the responsibility of the traveler to ensure that all meals and gratuities combined are within the limit.
 - ✓ **Extended Stay Travel** – meal and incidental expenses will be subject to a ceiling of \$45 per day.
 - ✓ **Same day Travel** – If less than 6 hours round trip, no meals and incidentals will be reimbursed; if between 6 and 12 hours, meals and incidentals will be subject to a limit of \$20 per day.
- Travel meals and incidentals exceeding the daily maximums will not be reimbursed except in the following case: an employee is traveling to an area where the federal per diem meal limit exceeds Wilkes's daily ceiling of \$60, and the employee provides a printout from <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates> with their travel

reimbursement form to validate the increased amount. The reimbursement will not exceed the government approved per diem for the location.

- Alcoholic beverages consumed while traveling will not be reimbursed.

Personal Expenses

- Items of a personal nature charged to food, lodging or other receipts are not reimbursable. Examples of personal expenses include in-room movies at a hotel, airline upgrades, laundry services, and vehicle violations.
- Employees accompanied on official business travel by family or friends should separate business and personal expenses. Travel accommodations that include family or friends at no additional cost to the University (e.g. double-occupancy room rates which are the same as single-occupancy room rates) will be reimbursed as valid business expenses. Where a marginal cost is added for a family member or friend, the marginal cost will be considered a personal expense and will not be reimbursed.
- Certain expenses may require allocation between personal and business purposes. In this case, the employee should use a systematic and rational allocation method that fairly states the business portion of the expense.

Air Travel and Ground Transportation

The University will reimburse for air travel and ground transportation subject to the following:

- The University will reimburse the cost of coach class tickets and baggage fees. Any upgrades, enhancements, or travel insurance are considered personal expenses and will not be reimbursed by the University. Exceptions for special circumstances must be approved by a University Vice President. Cancellation fees will only be reimbursed by the University in the event the cancellation is due to circumstances beyond the traveler's control.
- Pre-purchased airline tickets reimbursed or paid for by the University will be considered Travel Advances and will be subject to the requirements of Travel Advances detailed in this policy (see below). Air travel will be charged to the fiscal year in which it occurs, regardless of when tickets are purchased.
- The cost of ground transportation (train, bus, rental vehicle, taxi, ride sharing service) is subject to reimbursement. Use of a private sedan or car service will be

reimbursed only if the cost is less than other available modes of transportation or if a valid, documented business reason precludes the use of a more economical mode of transportation. Limousine service is reimbursable only with Vice President Approval. All gratuities are subject to the daily M&IE ceiling.

Fly America Act

Federal travelers are required by 49 U.S.C. 40118, commonly referred to as the "Fly America Act," to use U.S. air carrier service for all air travel and cargo transportation services funded by the U.S. government. One exception to this requirement is transportation provided under a bilateral or multilateral air transport agreement ("Open Skies Agreements"), to which the U.S. government and the government of a foreign country are parties, and which the Department of Transportation has determined meets the requirements of the Fly America Act. The U.S. government has entered into several air transport agreements that allow federal funded transportation services for travel and cargo movements to use foreign air carriers under certain circumstances. Information on the four Open Skies Air Transportation Agreements (U.S. Government Procured Transportation) and other specific country agreements may be accessed via the [Department of State's website](#).

Use of Personal Vehicles/Rental Vehicles

- The University will reimburse the employee for business usage of personal vehicles at the then current rate per mile approved by IRS, and within budgetary limits. Anyone who plans to travel more than 100 miles in a single day is encouraged to consider using a rental vehicle. The University currently maintains a business relationship with Enterprise Rental which provides guaranteed pricing. The University will reimburse for an intermediate size car (mid-size sedan) unless a business justification is provided for a larger vehicle.
- Reimbursement for mileage on personal vehicles must be calculated using the distance from the Wilkes University Wilkes-Barre campus location to the business destination.
- The employee should use judgment in choosing the use of personal vehicle, rental vehicle, or air travel so as to minimize cost to the University.

Requesting Business Related Expense reimbursement

In order to be reimbursed for meals and incidentals incurred while traveling, the employee must remit to Accounts Payable:

- *Employee Travel Reimbursement Request and Cash Advance Reconciliation Form* with receipts attached.
- Printout from gsa.gov showing per diem rate (ONLY REQUIRED if claiming an amount over \$60/day)

Reimbursements will be subject to a one-week turnaround time provided that all forms are filled out properly and all required receipts are attached. Incomplete/inaccurate forms will be returned to the employee and will result in processing delays.

Travel Advance

Faculty and staff members traveling on University business may obtain an advance in the amount of estimated travel expenses if they meet the conditions described below. This advance is a University service to employees for the purpose of covering out-of-pocket travel expenses that are expected to be subject to reimbursement following completion of the trip. Wherever possible, PCARDS should be used in lieu of travel advances. Travel advances are reserved for employees who have not been issued a University PCARD, or for instances where employees with PCARDS are unable to use their card in certain circumstances/locations due to merchant restrictions. The minimum for a travel advance request from accounts payable is \$200. Travel and non-travel advances between \$50 and \$199 must be obtained via Petty Cash Advance from the Bursar's Office. Advances under \$50 are not available; eligible expenses will be paid for on a reimbursement basis by the University.

Who may Receive Travel Advances from Accounts Payable?

- Faculty and staff members who are supervising student groups traveling on University-sponsored activities.
- Faculty and staff members traveling to a foreign country. Mexico and Canada are considered foreign travel.
- Faculty and staff members who are on domestic travel extending at least seven consecutive days. Hawaii and Alaska are considered domestic travel.
- Admissions Office staff whose primary job responsibility is off-campus student recruiting.

Other situations involving requests for travel advances must be approved by the Vice President of Finance and General Counsel.

Advances will not be allowed for grant-funded expenses unless pre-approved by the Office of Sponsored Programs.

[Requesting an Advance/Approval of Advance](#)

An advance request must be submitted to the Finance Office (Accounts Payable Department) a minimum of 10 days before the advance is needed. Requests must be submitted on an *Employee Advance Request/Release Form* and signed by the Budget Manager or next higher level. No employee may approve their own travel advance.

Form of the Travel Advance

A travel advance will be presented in the form of a check to the individual or ACH direct deposit if the employee has signed up for this service.

Report of Travel Advance Business Related Travel Expenses

- Travel expenses must be substantiated on an *Employee Travel Reimbursement Request and Travel Advance Reconciliation* form within 30 days of the trip’s end date.
- The Form must be accompanied by substantiating receipts for all transactions. An exception is allowed for incidentals such as baggage carrier and driver gratuities where the employee is not able to obtain a valid receipt; however, the expenditure must be detailed and included on the form.
- The Form must be signed by the employee and the Budget Manager for the department funding the travel expenses.
- In order to receive reimbursement for personal use of vehicle, the employee must document the mileage by attaching a supporting copy of google maps, mapquest, or equivalent.

EXCEPTIONS
None
FORMS
<i>Employee Travel Reimbursement Request</i> <i>Travel Advance Reconciliation</i> <i>Employee Advance Request/Release Form</i>
RESPONSIBILITY
<i>The Finance Office is responsible for the establishment and oversight of this policy.</i>
RESOURCES