

University Travel Policy

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Issued By: Division of Finance & Administration
Contact: Accounts Payable/Travel, 814-393-2247

TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION

All travel must be authorized by the appropriate Department Chair, Dean, and area Vice President. All International travel must be approved by the President or her designee. Travel paperwork that is received without the appropriate signatures will not be considered authorized. Properly authorized travel is necessary in order to protect not only the University, but also the traveler. Unauthorized trips can result in an employee losing Insurance and Worker's Compensation coverage for any accidents that he/she may be involved in while on an unauthorized trip.

GENERAL

Employees shall be entitled to receive reimbursements for out-of-pocket expenses incurred while in the performance of their official duties. All reimbursements will be made in accordance with the guidelines established by Clarion University of Pennsylvania, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (Management Directive 230.10), and the Board of Governors (Policy 1986-07-A).

Reimbursements will be based on an employee's approved Request for Approval of Travel/Travel Expense Report, which is subject to audit. Employees will be responsible for payment of any expenses that are disallowed as a result of any travel audit.

Employees will not be compensated or reimbursed for using personal credits to obtain tickets for official university travel.

All travel paperwork must be approved and must contain original signatures. Paperwork that does not contain the required (original) signatures will be rejected.

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL DOCUMENTATION

All documentation (i.e. travel paperwork, export control documents, etc.) must be processed as soon as possible. It is strongly recommended that you process your travel paperwork, and supporting documents, as early as 6 months, but no later than 3 months, prior to your anticipated departure date.

Employees are responsible for reviewing and complying with all export control documentation and requirements as outlined in System Policy. The System Policy may be accessed via the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education web site; passhe.edu

AIR TRAVEL

Travelers are expected to book the lowest priced coach class airfare for domestic and international flights. **Business and first class tickets are not reimbursable.** It is not permissible to confirm a higher fare for upgrade eligibility or personal reasons.

Upgrades at the Commonwealth's expense are not permitted. A complimentary upgrade must be noted on the travel expense report.

Optional airline fees are not reimbursable, including advance seat reservation fees, internet, snacks, and any other fees offered by the airline that are not essential to air travel.

Travelers who are combining personal travel with business travel may only do so when the personal portion does not add any cost to the Commonwealth. Travel arrangements must be made to accommodate the business duties of the traveler and not personal preference.

If personal travel is combined with business travel the traveler is required to document the cost of airline tickets for the dates that the business travel is required for comparison purposes with the cost of the tickets including personal travel.

Lowest Logical Airfare

Travelers on official business must book the lowest priced coach airfare that meets their approved itinerary and Commonwealth policy. They are expected to use their best judgment to save on airfare cost.

Lower cost flights must be chosen within two (2) hours before or after the preferred flight time when the alternative flight saves \$200.00 or more roundtrip. This assumes the later time would still allow the traveler to meet the business obligations for the trip.

Connecting flights must be chosen over nonstop flights when the connection does not add more than two (2) hours to travel time and the connection saves \$200.00 or more. Travelers are not required to take a lower fare if a change of airline at the connection point is required.

Domestic flights over \$800 roundtrip must be approved, prior to booking, by the appropriate area Dean, the Provost, and/or the area VP. Alternative options may be offered.

Lower cost fares, as outlined above, that are declined must be justified and imperative to the job functions of the traveler.

Cancellations

If the ticket is refundable, the travel agency must be notified and a refund requested.

It is the traveler's responsibility to closely examine the cancellation/exchange rules and fees before purchasing.

Exchanges

Credits for cancelled tickets should be used as soon as possible. Most airlines require tickets to be exchanged and used one (1) year from original purchase. Unused tickets that are not used prior to their expiration lose their value.

It is the traveler's responsibility to use airline credits prior to expiration. Credits shall be used for their next trip if the airline serves the destination.

In the event the credit is able to be used for personal travel, when business travel is not anticipated within the year, the traveler will be required to reimburse the university for the value of the credit.

International

International travel must be approved by the President or President's Designee prior to confirming any expenses (airfare, hotel, conference fees, etc.) associated with the travel. Travelers must allow a minimum of three (3) weeks for approval through the President's Office.

Airport Parking – travelers will be reimbursed for parking at a rate equal to the Extended Parking rate. Hourly parking (for pick-up and/or drop off) will be reimbursed at the actual ticketed parking rate. Travelers parking at a location other than the Pittsburgh International Airport will be reimbursed the least expensive of the two (extended parking rate or off site parking location). **A receipt is required in all instances.**

GROUND TRANSPORTATION

Rental Vehicle

Enterprise is the university's preferred car rental company; employees should contact the University Purchasing Office for necessary information on securing a vehicle through Enterprise. Rentals should be used when it is determined that renting a car is the most economical form of transportation. Rental rates do not include fuel and travelers must decline optional fuel offerings. In addition, travelers **MUST** make sure that their rental vehicle is returned with a full tank of gas, or the fuel level noted by Enterprise when they picked up the vehicle. This information is provided on the rental agreement. If the vehicle is not refueled and the university is charged a Fuel Surcharge, the traveler will be responsible for reimbursing the university the full amount of the surcharge. Reimbursement will be in the form of a check (payable to Clarion University of Pennsylvania) or the traveler's reimbursement request will be reduced by an amount equal to the fuel surcharge.

Travelers who are 21 years or older and have a valid driver's license may operate vehicles under the agreement. For 15 passenger vans the minimum age is 25.

Approved car rental sizes are economy, compact, or intermediate (midsize) including hybrids. Other vehicle types require business-related justification.

Personal accident and personal effects coverage is optional and not reimbursable.

The rental receipt must be included with reimbursement submission of receipts.

Shuttles and Public Transportation

Employees who are traveling by air or train should use shuttle services or public transportation when such options are available and less expensive than other means of ground transportation.

Train

Coach class is the only approved service when traveling by domestic Amtrak train. Amtrak is encouraged when traveling to/from Harrisburg, Philadelphia, New York City and Washington DC and a cost savings is realized. Other cities served by Amtrak should be considered when there is a savings.

Amtrak tickets must be reserved directly through Amtrak at www.amtrak.com or telephone and paid for with a personal card. Amtrak passes are available for frequent trips.

Personal Vehicles

Mileage Reimbursement Rate – the University's mileage reimbursement is equivalent to the rates established by the U. S. General Services Administration (GSA). The current rate can be found on

the GSA web site (www.gsa.gov) under POV Mileage Reimbursement. The Commonwealth's reimbursement rate changes when the GSA reimbursement rate changes.

The mileage reimbursement rate includes depreciation, fuel, insurance, fees, licenses, oil, repairs, tires, and all accessories.

Mileage Reimbursement Calculation

Mileage traveled between an employee's residence and their official headquarters is considered commuting mileage and is not reimbursable.

Each claim for mileage reimbursement must include a "from" and "to" street address or location specific enough for an auditor to validate the distance traveled via an online mapping application such as Google Maps or Map Quest.

When an employee travels to a work site other than their official headquarters, either the distance from their residence to their temporary work site, or their headquarters to their temporary work site – whichever is shortest – will be used to calculate their mileage reimbursement. Local travel while at the travel destination must be documented if requesting reimbursement.

If there are multiple routes to a destination, the shortest reasonable distance should be used to calculate reimbursement. Routes which appear to be longer must be justified by the employee.

Board of Governors and Commonwealth policies state the most economical means must be used when traveling on Commonwealth business.

If an employee is required to work on a holiday or scheduled day off, the employee may be reimbursed for mileage from their residence to a point of public transportation or designated worksite, other than their headquarters. An employee may never be reimbursed for mileage between their residence and headquarters.

The use of ground transportation at a higher cost will require justification and may result in an audit review. Employees will be responsible for any expenses disallowed as a result of any audit.

When using a personal vehicle for business travel, the employee's own insurance is primary, in all cases.

LODGING

Lodging Expense

Travelers should expect services and accommodations that are safe and comfortable, not lavish or extravagant.

Employees traveling on university business are allowed lodging expenses when their destination is located more than 50 miles from their headquarters. Written pre-approval from the area Dean/Vice President must be obtained when lodging is required within this 50-mile radius. The Dean's/Vice President's approval must be submitted with the traveler's receipts when requesting reimbursement. Employees will be personally responsible for paying hotel expenses that are not pre-approved.

Lodging expenses are reimbursed at actual cost within travel policy limits. Detailed receipts, showing a zero balance, are required from the hotel.

Upgraded accommodations that are an additional charge are not allowed. A complimentary upgrade must be noted on the expense report.

Booking

When booking a hotel, travelers are required to request the hotel's state/government rates. If state/government rates are not requested, resulting in a higher rate, the traveler will be responsible for reimbursing the university for the difference between the state/government rate and the rate that was paid.

If state/government rates are requested but not available the traveler should document that it was requested and declined.

Travelers are not required to stay in tourist class properties to obtain a lower rate.

Tax Exemption

(42 Pa C.S.A. 8522) The Commonwealth is not subject to hotel occupancy or sales taxes imposed by local or county governments. The Commonwealth is subject to state hotel occupancy tax, which is 6% (72 P.S. 7210). Travelers will be reimbursed for this 6%.

Travelers must present the completed REV1220 form for tax exemption to the hotel upon check-in. These tax provisions apply only to lodging within Pennsylvania as lodging outside of Pennsylvania is not tax exempt and all taxes are reimbursable.

Cancellation

Travelers should avoid nonrefundable rates. It is the traveler's responsibility to understand the cancellation rules of the room confirmed. Nonrefundable rates cannot be changed or cancelled; therefore, the traveler is accepting the risk of a non-reimbursable cancel fee.

Travelers must cancel lodging arrangements according to the property's cancellation policy. No-show charges and penalties will not be reimbursed when the traveler does not cancel reservations within the allotted time.

In the case of an emergency or last minute business travel plan change, when all efforts have been taken, and a fee is still charged, an exception must be requested from the Vice President for Finance and Administration in order to have the cancellation fee reimbursed.

Conference Lodging

Conferences are not always confirmed at the lowest rate or a government rate. Travelers are required to attempt to find lower cost lodging when the conference rate is higher than the maximum allowed rate. Efforts to obtain lower cost lodging shall consist of attempting to obtain a lower rate at the same property

When the conference does not have an official hotel, travelers are required to obtain a property within reasonable proximity to the conference at or below the maximum allowed rate, using preferred properties when possible. Additional transportation cost, if not staying at the conference headquarters, should be considered in the evaluation.

When a conference/event requires an attendee to stay at a particular property and/or confirm their accommodation through the organization, the traveler's Request for Approval of Travel form **must** include documentation (such as the registration form and/or instruction sheet). Failure to provide documentation may result in a reduction in the traveler's reimbursement request.

SUBSISTENCE

Allowances for subsistence are not flat rates and employees should only claim amounts that were actually spent during their travel. Reimbursement is subject to the limitations set forth in this section.

Reimbursement for alcoholic beverages is prohibited.

Reimbursement Amounts

Employees who are not in travel status should refer to their collective bargaining agreements for guidelines with regard to when and at what rates subsistence reimbursement may be available.

Employees who are not in a bargaining unit classification may be reimbursed for a meal up to \$8.00, if they are 50 miles or more from their residence and headquarters and work more than two hours past their regular shift.

Employees in overnight travel status while on official business may be reimbursed for meals, including tax and tips; the maximum reimbursement is not to exceed maximum GSA overnight subsistence allowances for a 24-hour period. The 24-hour period begins upon departure from home or headquarters, whichever is applicable.

Subsistence allowances include tips and tax.

Employees who are provided meals during the course of their travel **must** deduct a corresponding meal rate from their subsistence reimbursement claim for each meal provided: the appropriate deduction may be found in the university travel regulations.

Meals include those provided by hotels, meetings, conferences or any other source. Meals classified as continental breakfast do not need to be deducted.

Tip Allowances

Meals - 20% or less for the total cost for the meal

Baggage - \$1.50 per piece of luggage

High Cost Area

Increased subsistence allowances are available in locations designated as high-cost areas. Subsistence allowances for these areas follow the GSA Meals and Incidental Expenses table (www.gsa.gov). The Commonwealth will only reimburse the meal portion of these allowances and will not reimburse the incidental amounts as defined by the GSA. Incidental amounts are defined on the GSA web site.

Meetings

Luncheon or dinner meetings sponsored by the Commonwealth will be paid under contract; therefore, no claims for such expenses may be presented on the travel expense report.

Employees on official business attending luncheon or dinner meetings, not sponsored by the Commonwealth, are entitled to receive reimbursement for actual costs incurred. Provided that:

1. The luncheon or dinner meeting is planned in advance and includes persons not employed by the Commonwealth.
2. The meal is an integral part of the meeting.
3. The meal is served at the same establishment that hosts the meeting.
4. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss business and the nature of the business is stated on the travel expense report.

Employees and members of boards, commissions, and councils who are required to attend non-Commonwealth-sponsored luncheon or dinner meetings will have actual costs reimbursed. **Detailed receipts and justification are required and must be attached to the employees approved travel paperwork when submitted for final reimbursement.**

TRAVEL CREDITS

Ethics

The Governor's Code of Conduct, 4 PA Code 7.151, and the State Ethics Law, 65 PS401, prohibit the acceptance, retention, or use of personal travel/products/services by Commonwealth employees and appointed officials of promotions and offers including; but not limited to, frequent flyer credits, discount car rentals, hotel promotions, award certificates, bonus flights, reduced fare coupons, denied boarding compensation, cash, merchandise, or gifts obtained in the course of official Commonwealth business.

REIMBURSEMENT

Employees are expected to exercise good stewardship of funds when traveling on official university business. Any expenditure disallowed by the university will be the responsibility of the employee.

Individuals traveling on official business will receive reimbursement of actual expenses incurred in the performance of their duties within prescribed maximums. Travelers will only be reimbursed the smaller of actual expense or the maximum allowed.

Reimbursement Claim

Upon completion of their travel, employees must submit their completed Travel Expense Report, with the required documentation, within 15 business days following the completion of their travel. Incomplete travel documentation and/or insufficient funds will delay a traveler's reimbursement.

Employees are responsible for ensuring that expenses claimed in the travel expense report are proper, accurate, and incurred in official university business. A traveler who knowingly presents a false or fraudulent claim may be subject disciplinary action and/or to penalties under criminal statutes.

Supervisors must review and approve travel expense reports submitted by employees to ensure the necessity, propriety, and accuracy of the travel expense. Supervisors should ask for receipts, when necessary. Failure to exercise care in the review and approval of travel expenses may result in disciplinary action.

Receipts

Travelers must always obtain receipts. Not all receipts must be submitted with a travel expense report, but may be requested for verification or audit. Itemized receipts **must** include:

1. Name and address of the vendor

2. Date of service
3. Description of service
4. Amount paid for each individual item

Travel expense reports may be selected for audit and all receipts must be retained by the traveler for one year after the travel date.

Receipts are **required** with the travel expense report for:

1. Any expense of \$35.00 or more,
2. Any hotel expense.
3. Any commercial transportation, except for taxis, local bus, or subway under \$35.00.
4. Any rental car expense.
5. Gasoline for rental and state vehicles.
6. Excess baggage fees.

The Declaration of Missing Receipts (Exhibit 1) form should be use when it is impossible to obtain a receipt (i.e., vending machine subsistence, parking meters, or unmanned tollbooth expenses when a receipt is not provided).

AUDITS

Travel and Subsistence expenses are subject to audit by:

As part of the audit process, travelers may be asked to provide additional documentation/justification for claimed expenses.

MISCELLANEOUS EXPENSES

Baggage

Baggage handling and gratuities are limited to reimbursement of \$1.50 per piece.

Fees for baggage check with airlines will be reimbursed at the actual expense and are limited to the first checked bag. Any additional baggage is conditional on a traveler's job function and less expensive alternative avenues of transportation (such as sending the supplies ahead via shipping). A receipt and explanation is required with the travel expense report.

International Travel

With proper documentation, justification, and approval the university will reimburse:

1. Commission for currency conversion or traveler checks when deemed necessary.
2. Services of guides, interpreters, packers, or drivers when deemed necessary.

NON-REIMBURSABLE ITEMS

Parking Fines/Traffic Citations – Pennsylvania Code §39.95 (f) states “Operators of state automobiles shall be responsible for the immediate payment of all parking and traffic violations.” This extends to parking fines and traffic citations received while using a personal (or rental) vehicle while in the pursuit of University/Commonwealth business.

Provided Meals/Lodging – employees are not eligible for reimbursement for meals, or lodging, that is provided (without charge) by friends, relatives, or any other source. Meals and lodging that are provided at no charge must be noted on the employees Travel paperwork.

Alcoholic beverages – reimbursement for alcoholic beverages is strictly prohibited.