

# CE-CERT Travel Reimbursement Desk Procedures and Best Practices

## *Background*

The policy and regulations governing official University travel are provided in the University of California (UC) Business & Finance Bulletin G-28: Travel Regulations (G-28). Please refer to G-28 for general and specific policy guidance. The fundamental elements of the policy are contained in Section III of G-28. This policy applies to all official UC travel, including travel funded under grants and contracts. This UC Riverside policy implements campus-wide procedures in support of G-28.

University business travelers are strongly encouraged to purchase travel services, when available, from Preferred suppliers with whom the University has strategic and collaborative sourcing primary agreements. Preferred Suppliers deliver competitive value in the range of services required by University travelers. Such Suppliers include airlines, car rental agencies, hotels, travel agencies, and online booking providers. Although it might be possible to obtain a lower cost from nonparticipating suppliers, use of Preferred Suppliers should, on average and over time, reduce the University's overall travel costs and provide the best value to the traveler.

It is the policy of the University that all official travel shall be properly authorized, reported, and reimbursed in accordance with this G-28. Under no circumstances shall expenses for personal travel be charged to, or be temporarily funded by, the University, unless otherwise noted in G-28. When a University employee travels under the sponsorship of a non-University entity, travel expenses, including advances, prepayments, or billings, shall not be charged to a University account or billed to the University; airline tickets must be obtained from the sponsor.

University employees traveling on official business shall observe normally accepted standards of propriety in the type and manner of expenses they incur. **In addition, it is the traveler's responsibility to report his or her actual travel expenses in a responsible and ethical manner, in accordance with the regulations set forth in G-28.**

## **Payment of Travel**

### **1. Prepaid Expenses and Direct Charges**

Individual travelers are prohibited from charging hotel and hotel-related expenses directly to the University. However, campuses may enter into a direct billing arrangement with a hotel for the payment of charges on behalf of travelers for room and tax charges only. Campuses should ensure that travelers are aware of such arrangements. Transportation tickets and conference fees may also be charged directly to the University if the proper controls are in place, such as a "ghost card" arrangement. Meals and miscellaneous expenses cannot be charged or billed directly to the University as these expenses must be paid by the traveler when they are incurred, and a claim for reimbursement submitted at the conclusion of the trip.

### **2. Corporate Travel Cards**

Under guidelines established by campuses, corporate travel cards may be issued to employees who travel on official University business.<sup>3</sup> Any traveler issued such a card should use the card to pay for all expenses related to official University business travel, including lodging and subsistence, except where the card is not accepted. The cardholder will be billed directly for all expenses charged to the corporate card. The cardholder is personally responsible for paying all charges on the corporate card and for keeping the card current. The University will not reimburse or pay late fee charges incurred in connection with the corporate card. Corporate travel card payment delinquencies may result in the cancellation of the traveler's card or other corrective action.

The corporate travel card is valid only while an individual is employed by the University, may be cancelled at the discretion of the University, and must be relinquished to the employee's department upon termination of employment.

### **3. Payment of Expenses on Behalf of Others**

University travelers normally shall not be reimbursed for expenses paid on behalf of other persons, except in the case of co-travelers who are sharing a room. Exceptions to this rule, such as supervised group trips, must be approved in advance.

#### **4. Cancellation of Reservations**

Travelers who are unable to honor a reservation shall be responsible for canceling the reservation in compliance with the cancellation terms established by the hotel, airline, etc. The traveler must return any refundable deposits to the University. Charges or lost refunds resulting from failure to cancel reservations shall not be reimbursed unless the traveler can show that such failure was the result of circumstances beyond the traveler's control. The traveler shall be responsible for promptly returning for a refund any unused or partially used transportation tickets.

#### **5. Domestic Travel - Travel within the United States and Its Possessions**

An official University business trip begins when the traveler leaves his or her residence or headquarters, whichever occurs last, and ends when the traveler returns to his or her residence or headquarters, whichever occurs first.

- i. CONUS Travel. For travel assignments of less than 30 days within the continental United States (CONUS), the reimbursement of daily subsistence expenses shall be based on the actual amounts incurred for lodging and meals and incidental expenses. The M&IE cap for CONUS travel under 30 days shall not be treated as a per diem.
- ii. OCONUS Travel. Travel within Alaska, Hawaii and U.S. possessions (OCONUS) shall be reimbursed in accordance with the non-foreign locality per diem rates published by the Department of Defense
- iii. For domestic travel assignments of 30 days or more within the continental United States, the per diem allowance authorized for subsistence expenses is based on an estimate of actual daily expenses. Reimbursement of such expenses shall be limited to a daily amount of up to 100% of the applicable federal per diem rate (published by the General Services Administration) established for travel within CONUS (see Appendix B). Actual costs paid for lodging taxes, which are not included in CONUS per diem rates, may be reimbursed as a miscellaneous expense.
- iv. For travel within Alaska, Hawaii and U. S. possessions the actual lodging and subsistence expense incurred shall be reimbursed, limited to 100% of the non-foreign locality per diem rates

#### **6. Foreign Travel**

- i. Assignments of Less Than 30 Days Foreign travel shall be reimbursed in accordance with the Federal Maximum Travel Per Diem Allowances for Foreign Areas published by the Department of State. Travelers should only claim actual travel expenses (e.g. subsistence and lodging) up to the per diem rate. If actual expenses that are greater than the per diem are claimed due to special or unusual circumstances, the traveler must document such circumstances by submitting a written explanation with the travel expense claim. The amount reimbursed, however, may not exceed 300% of the applicable federal rate established for the location of travel.
- ii. For assignments of 30 Days or More, the per diem allowance authorized for long-term travel is actual costs up to 100% of the applicable federal per diem rate. The traveler is expected to seek long-term accommodations when staying in one location for 30 or more consecutive days but less than one year.

#### **7. Travel Less than 24 Hours**

When the entire length of a trip is less than 24 hours, M&IE shall not be reimbursed unless the travel includes an "overnight stay" as supported by a lodging receipt. If the traveler is unable to provide a receipt, he or she must include a statement with the travel expense claim explaining why a receipt is not available (e.g., the traveler lodged with a friend or relative, stayed overnight at the airport, or took alternative transportation that required the traveler to be away overnight). An exception to the overnight-stay requirement may be allowed when a traveler incurs a meal expense in connection with a business meeting.

**For more specific travel regulations and details, please refer to BUS G-28**

#### ***Requirements to become a travel coordinator***

The Travel Coordinator's role is to review the travel planning/ travel expense reports for appropriateness and scan the necessary documentation. This role provides several rights and obligations. Every iTravel expense report must, at a minimum, be reviewed by a travel coordinator. Even if travelers have entered all their own information, travel coordinators are responsible for scanning in the original receipts and other backup documentation into iTravel and

then submitting the reviewed travel expense reports for approval and ultimately reimbursement by Accounting.

Intended coordinators must complete Travel training provided by Accounting, as well as attend iTravel user group meetings when available. Users of any financial application must have taken and passed 1) the on-line Enterprise Accountability and 2) the on-line Full Accounting Unit (FAU) training. There is an expectation that the assigned Coordinator and Approver be familiar with the various UC policies governing the particular travel reimbursements they are processing. Although the system and this support site attempts to guide the Coordinator and Approver in certain areas, it is the Coordinator and Approver's responsibility to ensure the travel reimbursement complies with policy (this may require some research depending upon the different types of travel within your unit).

Upon completion of travel training, the Department SAA will assign the Travel Coordinator role via EACS and establish which travelers each coordinator will be responsible for.

## ***Roles and Responsibilities***

### **Traveler's Responsibilities**

Individuals who travel on University business should be assigned this role by the department SAA. This role provides various options to travelers:

1. Travelers have access to customize their travel profiles. (Optionally, travel coordinators may enter traveler profile information.)Travelers have access to the optional Planning function, which allows them to:
  - a. Request approval for future travel
  - b. Request that travel coordinators make their travel arrangements
  - c. Request cash advances
  - d. Insert comments
  - e. Submit data and all original receipts to the Travel Coordinator
    - i. Travelers may make their own travel arrangements and may not use the travel planning function at all, or perhaps only in part
    - ii. Travelers can enter detailed and itemized travel expenses once they are incurred. Some travel coordinators may enter the detailed itemizations into iTravel on travelers' behalf from paper worksheets and/or original receipts.
    - iii. Travelers can electronically approve their travel expense reports after their Travel Coordinators have reviewed and/or created them. (Travelers may also provide written signature authorization rather than electronic)
    - iv. Travelers may add comments at this stage.
    - v. Travelers can withdraw travel expense reports for trips that have been cancelled.
    - vi. Travelers can view the status of travel expense reports to determine their location in the review and reimbursement process.

### **Travel Coordinator Role**

The Travel Coordinator's role is to review the travel planning/ travel expense reports for appropriateness and scan the necessary documentation. This role provides several rights and obligations:

- a. Every iTravel expense report must, at a minimum, be reviewed by a travel coordinator. Even if travelers have entered all their own information, travel coordinators are responsible for scanning in the original receipts and other backup documentation into iTravel and then submitting the reviewed travel expense reports for approval and ultimately reimbursement by Accounting.
- b. Travel coordinators have the ability to input travel planning information on behalf of travelers.
- c. Travel coordinators can update or create traveler profiles for anyone within their accountability structure.
- d. Travel coordinators can enter itemized details into travel expense reports.
- e. Travel coordinators can approve or reject information entered by travelers and they can enter comments, which are mandatory for rejected reports.
- f. Travel coordinators can amend any travel expense reports in their organizational structure's work in progress queue.
- g. A Travel coordinator can by-pass a traveler's electronic expense report approval by scanning in the associated travel expense voucher signed by the traveler for forwarding on to the pre-approver/final approver

### **The Pre-Approver Role**

This role is optional. The establishment of this role for a department is dependent upon approval requirements associated with an individual traveler. Pre-approvers cannot approve their own travel expense reports. Pre-approvers have the same access and rights to the travel system as travelers. Additionally:

- a. Pre-approvers can scan additional documents as part of packets.
- b. Pre-approvers can approve or reject any travel expense reports submitted by travel coordinators who are in their accountability structure. (Rejected reports go back to the travel coordinators in the pre-approver's accountability structure)
- c. Pre-approvers can add comments, which are optional for approved travel expense reports, but mandatory for rejected ones.

### **The Final Approver Role**

A final approver is the last person to review a travel expense report before it routes to Accounting for reimbursement. The final approver's role access and rights are identical to those of a pre-approver, except that no additional approval is necessary.

- a. Final approvers can scan additional documents as part of packets.
- b. Final approvers can approve or reject any travel expense reports submitted by travel coordinators who are in their accountability structure. (Rejected report goes back to the travel coordinators in the pre-approver's accountability structure)
- c. Final approvers can add comments, which are optional for approved travel expense reports, but mandatory for rejected ones.

## **CE-CERT Departmental Notes to Coordinators for efficient processing**

A Pre-Approval Travel Request form should be provided to the coordinator from the traveler noting the fund source and PI authorization, or an email indicating authorization will suffice. This is required prior to processing.

Note if all payment receipts show proof of purchase.

### **1. Transportation Tab**

#### **a. Airfare**

- i. Establish if the fund being used is a federal fund and if so, confirm that the air carrier used is a U.S. air carrier as per the Fly America Act. If not, determine if use of a U.S. carrier would extend travel time, including delay at origin, by 24 hours or more. Increase the number of aircraft changes outside the U.S. by two or more; or extend travel time by at least 6 hours or more; or require a connecting time of 4 hours or more at an overseas interchange point.
- ii. City Pairs Search <https://cpsearch.fas.gsa.gov/> is used to determine if a foreign carrier was the best way to travel and attached to final travel.
- iii. If there is a seat selection charge on the airfare bill, exceptional approval is required and attached to final travel for approval.

#### **b. Vehicle and other transportation**

- iv. If other items are listed on Transportation Tab, confirm & correct if In State, Out of State or Foreign is incorrectly listed.
- v. Receipts for vehicle rentals must be attached

### **2. Meals & Incidentals Tab**

- a. Expenses not in US Dollars, and no exchange rate is offered by the traveler, Oanda <https://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/> is used to determine exchange rate.
- b. Copy and attach the page/s showing the exchange rates to travel reimbursement expense form.

### **3 Lodging**

- a. Actual cost of lodging, not to exceed the applicable federal per diem rate. Refer to [https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per\\_diem.asp](https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp)
- b. Receipt must show proof of purchase.
- c. Oanda Currency Converter is use if total is not in US Dollars. Attach lodging receipts and Oanda page

### **4. Other Tab**

- a. Receipts and proof of purchase is required for business expense & conference & event fees.
- b. Attach all required receipts.
- c. Proof of attendance such as badge, agenda or thank you letter, shall be attached to final travel.

### **5. FAU Tab**

- a. Confirm with PI and/or financial officer if foreign travel is approved for accompanying FAU.
- B. Attach copy of approval. .