

Procedures

TRAVEL AND BUSINESS EXPENSES PROCEDURES

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1.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of these procedures is to provide guidance to individuals incurring or approving travel and business expenditures, to set the levels of expenditures that will be paid by the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) with respect to travel and business expenditures, and to describe the related procedures and approval processes.

2.0 PROCEDURES

2.1 Reimbursement of Claims - General

- 2.1.1 All claims for reimbursement of non-per diem expenses must be supported by detailed receipts from vendors. The University is moving to digital document management solutions; however, until such options are implemented and finalized, hard copies of documents are currently preferred.
- 2.1.2 All requests for reimbursement of allowable travel expenses (please see below) must be submitted to Financial Services on a Travel Claim Form within 30 calendar days of travel.
- 2.1.3 Purchases made on a UNBC Purchasing Card must comply to the Travel and Business Expense Policy and these procedures. If an employee has a UNBC Purchasing Card, they must use this card and not a personal card (unless they are claiming meal per diem amounts in which case for meal expenses only, their personal card should be used). Refer to the Purchasing Card Manual for details on submitting claims for expenses incurred on a UNBC Purchasing Card.
- 2.1.4 All requests for reimbursement must include appropriate approval and/or pre-approval as noted in the applicable sections below.
- 2.1.5 Unless otherwise noted below, all dollar amounts referenced in these procedures refer to Canadian dollars.
- 2.1.6 Reimbursement of expenses permitted to be claimed under these Procedures or the *Travel and Business Expenses Policy* is always subject to the applicable Unit having the necessary budget to cover the expense. Individuals must take the necessary steps to determine whether their Unit's budget has sufficient funds to cover the expense prior to incurring an expense.

- 2.1.7 No receipts are required for the per diem allowances. In exceptional circumstances, an appropriately approved Lost Receipt Declaration may be substituted for a lost receipt.

2.1 Reimbursement of Claims – Travel Expenses

2.2.1 General Travel

- i. Travellers are strongly encouraged to weigh the benefits of the travel against the environmental costs of travel and consider the use of available technology as a substitute for face-to-face meetings and conferences where possible.
- ii. All travel must be pre-approved using the Travel Authorization Form.

2.2.2 All requests for reimbursement of allowable travel expenses (please see below) must be submitted on a Travel Claim Form within 30 calendar days of travel. Unless the expenses were incurred on an employee's purchasing card, in which case the employee should refer to the Purchasing Card Manual as to how to submit the claim.

2.2.3 A signed Travel Authorization Form must be attached to all claim forms. When the amounts claimed do not exceed the budget submitted on the form, it is not necessary to also have the supervisor/one-up's signature on the travel claim.

2.2.4 All appropriately approved and documented travel claims are subject to a two-to-three-week turnaround from the date of receipt in Financial Services for reimbursement.

2.2.5 Travel Advances

- i. It is not the intent of the University that employees be required to personally finance their travel expenses while on approved University business.
- ii. A travel advance will be provided to an employee with approval from their supervisor/one-up when needed.
- iii. The request must be made on a cheque requisition and must have a copy of an approved Travel Authorization form attached.
- iv. Requests for advances may be made no sooner than three weeks prior to the commencement of the travel and a completed

Travel Claim, with all receipts, must be submitted within 30 days of the travel to account for the disposition of the advance.

- v. All future requests for reimbursement or travel advances will be held pending the submission of the Travel Claim.
- vi. Travel advances are not available for goods and services that can be arranged through Contracts & Supply Chain Management or paid using a University Purchasing Card (e.g., air fare, car rentals). Individuals who wish to pay for these types of purchases themselves must be prepared to cover the expenditures until travel is complete.
- vii. A person who is not a University employee cannot be granted a travel advance. Budget holders wishing to provide travel funds in advance to a non-UNBC employee must take the advance in their own name. The budget holder is solely responsible for this advance and must provide the receipts attached to an approved Travel Claim form in the same manner as if they were travelling.

2.2.6 Accommodations

- i. Travellers are expected to stay in standard accommodations considered reasonable in the circumstances. Normally, accommodation expenses will not exceed the rate of a single standard room, or equivalent, unless approved by the appropriate Vice President, the President or the Board Chair.
- ii. To the extent possible, Government or CAUBO rates should be requested for travel within Canada (contact purchasing@unbc.ca prior to travel).
- iii. Private accommodation such as lodging with friends, colleagues, or relatives is an allowable expense, which can take the form of a direct payment or a reasonable gift in lieu of payment. Reimbursement without receipts may be provided at the allowance rate per night set out in Appendix 1.

2.2.7 Transportation

- i. **Air:** Whenever possible, air travel should be booked well in advance to take advantage of lower rates. If a travel agent contract is active, employees are encouraged to use the travel agent for more complex travel arrangements and to ensure the most economical price. The University generally reimburses for economy class only. An employee may book a ticket at different levels of economy to take advantage of additional features such

as checked baggage and seat selection. An employee may book premium economy only if they can prove that the fare is cheaper than the economy class fare. Business Class airfare may be allowable, with prior approval of the appropriate Vice-President, the President or the Board Chair, in any of the following circumstances:

- a. The flight is over eight hours in duration and the traveller is expected to conduct business within a few hours upon arrival;
 - b. The traveller is accompanying a donor, sponsor, or similar senior official on the trip; or
 - c. The traveller provides appropriate documentation supporting medical reasons for the higher class of airfare.
- ii. **Rail:** Travel by rail taken by the most direct route is reimbursable, keeping in mind that the cost is reasonable and comparable to booking economy airfare.
- iii. **Personal Automobile:** When an employee's personal vehicle is used in the performance of University business, mileage may be claimed at the rate indicated in Appendix 1. This allowance is intended to cover all operating costs of the vehicle, including fuel, insurance, and maintenance. Employees are responsible for ensuring that any use of personal vehicle for business purposes complies with their personal insurance requirements. However, where air service to the destination is also available, the total allowance claimed may not be in excess of the equivalent advance booking economy airfare.
- iv. **Rental Vehicles:** For reasons of economy or efficiency, employees travelling out of town may rent a small to mid-size vehicle. If a group is travelling together an upgrade is acceptable to accommodate the increased passengers. An upgrade may also be permitted depending on the purpose or geography of the trip. Government or CAUBO rates should be requested whenever possible (contact purchasing@unbc.ca prior to travel). Please note that the mileage allowance noted in Appendix 1 is available only when a personal vehicle is used.

- v. **Other Transportation Expenses:** Other transportation expenses incurred while travelling on University business, such as parking fees (away from normal work location), bridge and highway tolls, taxis, public transportation, and ferry charges are allowable upon submission of receipts.

2.2.8 Meals

- i. Reasonable meal expenses while travelling on University business are allowable when not otherwise provided (e.g. conferences, hosts, carriers). To claim meals, travel must normally begin before 7 a.m. on the date of departure to claim breakfast, begin before 12:00 noon on date of departure to claim lunch, and end after 6 p.m. on the date of return to claim dinner.
- ii. Travellers should claim meal per diem allowances without receipts, at the rates set out in Appendix 1; in limited situations, an employee may choose to submit receipts for actual meal costs instead of claiming per diem amounts. In these cases the meal amounts are capped at the per diem amounts and this request must be pre-approved by the employee's supervisor/one-up.

2.2.9 Other Travel Expenses

- i. Registration and/or conference fees paid by an employee can be claimed.
- ii. Reasonable costs of phone calls or internet fees allowing the traveller to stay in touch with their immediate family are allowable while on University business.
- iii. Dry cleaning and laundry expenses after seven days of University business travel upon submission of receipts.
- iv. Immunization costs incurred for approved foreign business travel, as recommended by the Public Health Agency of Canada.
- v. Costs of obtaining visas and other necessary travel documents (excluding passport) required for approved foreign business travel.
- vi. Additional dependent care expenses (child and elder care) incurred as a result of University travel, if unpaid alternatives are

not available, with written approval in advance from an employee's supervisor/one-up and upon submission of receipts.

- vii. Spousal/partner travel costs are allowable if it can be shown that their presence is essential and directly contributes to the accomplishment of the University's mission. In these limited circumstances, with written approval in advance of the appropriate Vice President, the President, or the Chair of the Board of Governors, these expenses are allowed.

2.2.10 Minor reimbursable items

Travellers may claim the per diem for incidental expenses without receipts when travelling for a full day (more than 10 hours), at the rate noted in Appendix 1.

2.3 Hospitality and Entertainment

2.3.1 Normally hospitality involves an external individual (e.g., guest, visitor, prospective faculty, staff or student, benefactor, or stakeholder) who supports the educational, research or service activities of the University. Hospitality may also be provided to employees and paid by the University for such activities.

2.3.2 Expenses may include, but are not limited to, food, beverages, social or recreational activities, and gifts. The most common categories of hospitality include:

- i. Meals and social functions
- ii. Work meetings
- iii. Departmental social functions
- iv. University-wide functions

2.3.3 **Meals and social functions:** Must be supported by detailed receipts, a written statement of the purpose of the social function, and the number of attendees. Names of the attendees may be requested for clarification of expense claims and reporting purposes.

2.3.4 **Work Meetings:** Meals or refreshments provided at work meetings attended solely by University faculty and staff are permitted if the purpose of the meeting is work related (such as planning, education, collaboration, etc.) and the cost per individual is

reasonable. Consumption of alcohol is not permitted. Individuals scheduling work meetings and arranging meals or refreshments must consider the business purpose, frequency, and regularity of incurring such expenses.

- 2.3.5 **Departmental Social Functions:** Generally, departments may incur reasonable costs of up to two employee social events per calendar year. Examples of social events include holiday receptions, employee picnics, BBQs, etc., but exclude retirement functions and University-wide functions which are addressed separately below. Alcohol, if available, must be paid for personally and University funds must not be used for this purpose.
- i. To ensure a social function is not considered a taxable benefit, events must be open to all employees in a department and the primary purpose cannot be team building, recognition for completing a task or project, or thanks for a job well done, as these reasons are considered by CRA to be employment related compensation.
 - ii. In the event that an employee hospitality function is not open to all employees in a department or the primary purpose is to enable team building or celebrate the completion of a task/project or thanks for a job well done, the cost per employee is considered a taxable benefit and must be included in the employee's taxable earnings.
- 2.3.6 **Retirement Functions:** Departments may use University funds to subsidize retirement functions for faculty and staff over and above the limit of two employee social events as described above, provided costs are reasonable. Alcohol, if available, must be paid for personally and University funds must not be used for this purpose.
- 2.3.7 **University-Wide Functions:** The University may sponsor a variety of social functions where the University is considered to be the primary beneficiary. Examples include, but are not limited to, Employee Recognition Awards, Convocation Luncheons, and retirement functions. These events are generally organized by Human Resources, the Office of the President, or other central group. A modest amount of alcohol may be provided in appropriate circumstances

2.4 Expenses while on Sabbatical Leave

2.4.1 Eligible expenses while on sabbatical leave must be pre-approved by an employee's supervisor/one-up.

2.5 Donations

2.5.1 Generally, University funds are not used for donations to other charitable organizations or to UNBC.

2.5.2 In limited circumstances, a donation may be permitted. As a registered charity, UNBC can only make donations to qualified donees. Generally, a qualified donee is a registered charity; organizations such as registered Canadian amateur athletic associations, registered Canadian municipalities, the United Nations, and other various registered organizations may also be considered qualified donees.

2.6 Gifts, Awards, and Recognition

2.6.1 The following sections provide general guidance regarding gifts, awards, and recognition. The taxable status of gifts is ultimately subject to acceptance by CRA. Guidance regarding the taxable status of gifts and awards is provided in the CRA publication T4130 Employers' Guide to Taxable Benefits and Allowances and additional information may be found [here](#). If you have questions regarding gifts, awards, and recognition, please contact Financial Services at finance@unbc.ca prior to making an expenditure.

2.6.2 Gifts, awards, and recognition to non-employees

- i. Modest gifts given to external individuals as a result of the normal exchange between persons doing business together are acceptable provided that ethical and proper business practices are not compromised.
- ii. Cash and near-cash (gift certificates/gift cards) gifts are considered taxable income by the CRA and therefore should not be used.

2.6.3 Gifts, awards, and recognition to employees

- i. This section is not intended to discourage the use of personal funds to contribute to the cost of gifts to employees if that is part of the culture within a department.

- ii. For employees, cash or near-cash (gift certificates/gift cards) received is treated as taxable earnings from employment, regardless of the value and must be reported to Payroll by December 1 in the calendar year in which the gift is provided.
- iii. In certain circumstances and special occasions, non-cash gifts or awards may be purchased from University funds. University funds cannot be used for gifts of alcohol. The following occasions are examples of when a non-cash gift may be acceptable:
 - a. a wedding or birth of a child
 - b. retirements
 - c. long service awards

2.7 Cell phone and other mobile device plans

2.7.1. Employees requiring a mobile device for their work must generally enroll in a UNBC plan, which is paid directly by the employee's unit or other appropriate University funding source.

2.7.2. With written approval in advance from the appropriate Vice-President or higher level of authority, employees may be reimbursed for the use of a personal plan. If approved, the University reimburses up to a maximum of the lowest negotiated voice, data and long-distance rate plans, upon submission of receipts, on a quarterly basis.

2.8. Non-allowable Expenses

2.8.1. Non-allowable expenses include, but are not limited to:

- i. interest charges on overdue personal credit card balances;
- ii. fines, e.g., library, parking, traffic;
- iii. personal entertainment including, but not limited to, movies, mini-bar charges, and sightseeing trips;
- iv. airport lounge access fees;
- v. alcohol, when not included as part of a meal;
- vi. extra costs incurred when accompanied by family/friend;
- vii. passport expenses;
- viii. penalties from failure to cancel reservations, except in circumstances where timely cancellation was not possible; and

- ix. political donations, including donations to any federal or provincially registered party or to any candidate standing for federal, provincial, or municipal election.