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| Travel Guidelines & Procedures | | | | |
| Introductory  Statement  Applicability | No procedure manual can address every conceivable travel situation or question in an organization the size of VCU. The intent of this document is to provide you with a set of practical rules and guidelines deemed to be in the best interest of the university, its faculty, staff and students, while also ensuring compliance with the policies set forth by the Board of Visitors and the State of Virginia.  These guidelines apply to all VCU employees, students, and non-employees who have been authorized to travel on behalf of the University. | | | |
| Reasonable and Necessary | | VCU will reimburse individuals traveling on official University business for reasonable and necessary expenses incurred. Travel expense accounts are open to the public and must be able to sustain the test of public review. When planning and paying for travel, economy, prudence and necessity are of primary concern. The use of State [funds](https://controller.vcu.edu/training/fiscal-handbook/university-financial-structure/) to accommodate personal comfort, convenience, and taste is not permitted. VCU assumes no obligation to reimburse for expenses that are not in compliance with [VCU's Travel Policy](https://vcu.public.doctract.com/doctract/documentportal/08DA32A740D331FCBD64847B353E24EA). Travel expenses for individuals not on official business for the University are not allowed. | | |
| More Restrictive Guidelines | | Schools, centers or departments may develop additional guidelines with more control than required by VCU’s guidelines, but never less. These guidelines must not be arbitrary or capricious and must be fully documented, and equally applied. Careful consideration should be taken to minimize the loss of efficiency and additional administrative time required. Travel Services should be consulted when developing guidelines. | | |
| Sponsored Program Funds | All payments for meals, lodging, airfare, etc. funded solely from sponsored program funds are governed by the terms and conditions of the individual grant or contract. If the grant or contract is silent regarding these monetary reimbursements, the limitations set by VCU’s guidelines will apply. | | | |
| Responsibilities | | |
| Traveler | | Individuals traveling on behalf of the University must exercise good judgment with respect to incurring travel expenses and are expected to spend the University's funds prudently. Travel related expenses will be paid by the University if they are deemed to be reasonable, appropriately documented, properly authorized and within the guidelines. The traveler is responsible for understanding VCU’s travel policy and procedures, seeking pre-authorization and submitting the expense reports timely. The traveler will certify through the expense system that all expenses are true and an accurate accounting of expenses incurred and there are no expenses claimed as reimbursable which relate to personal and/or unallowable expenses. |
| Schools and Centers | | Each school must ensure that anyone traveling on behalf of the University is aware of and will abide by the University's travel policy and procedures and will assign a hierarchy of responsibility to the preparation and approval of travel pre-approvals and reimbursements based on VCU policies and guidelines. |
| Authorized Approver | | Must verify that expenses and expense reports meet the following criteria:   * the travel expense was incurred while conducting University business * the expenses were necessary and consistent with University policies * the information contained on the expense report and in the attached documentation is accurate * the expense meets any and all sponsor guidelines, if applicable |
| Fiscal Approver | | Must verify that expenses and expense reports meet the following criteria:   * expenditures are charged to the appropriate index(s) and are properly categorized * receipts provided are valid and reconciled with the claimed expenses * claimed expenses are in compliance with University guidelines and policies |

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| Definitions | |
| Authorized Approver | Should be the traveler's direct supervisor or manager with authority to expend the source of funds being used to pay the travel expense. They cannot be the individual seeking reimbursement, and must always move up the chain of command from the expense owner to prevent the situation of a subordinate approving a supervisor’s expenses. |
| Travel Fiscal Approver | Assigned by the department, documented within Banner Finance to have approval authority associated with the index(es) used on the expense report. |
| Base Point | Primary work location (home, office or building) where the traveler performs their duties on a regular basis. If the traveler works from multiple locations, the Base Point is where responsibilities are performed the majority of the time. For travel purposes, multiple base points are not allowed.Travelers who need assistance identifying their Base Point should contact their manager or HR representative. |
| Commuting Mileage | Round-trip mileage traveled routinely by the employee between their residence and base point (if different). *Mileage and other commuting cost incurred during commuting status are considered a personal expense and are not reimbursable.* |
| International Travel | All travel to areas outside of the 48 contiguous United States and District of Columbia to include Hawaii, Alaska, Puerto Rico and US territories and possessions. |
| Lodging | Temporary quarters, hotel, motel, house, apartment, room, hostel, etc. |
| Official Station | The area within a 25-mile radius of an employee’s designated base point. Fully remote employees that need to travel to the MPC or MCV campus (beyond 25-mile) for work related business must have VP approval for mileage reimbursement. |
| Per Diem | Specific daily allowance for meal expenses based on the travel location without receipts. |
| State Employee  Travel Management Company | Any elected, appointed, classified, or non-classified employee of the Commonwealth.  The contracted company (currently **Collegiate Travel Planners**) mandated by the university for use to book all official university business air and rail travel. |
| Travel Status | Travel on behalf of the university outside of an employee’s official station. |
| Trip  University and Academic Professionals | Any period of continuous travel between when the traveler leaves their residence or base point and returns to their residence or base point  Employees of VCU (most non-teaching and research employees) that are still considered state employees earning state service. |
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| Trip Planning | |
| Pre-Approval | A Chrome River Pre-Approval is required for trips for VCU employees in which expenses are estimated to exceed $500 or whenever booking air or rail tickets. The estimate should include lodging, transportation, per diem meals, conference registration, and any other travel costs or course fees. Costs of the trip that may be direct billed, such as conference registration, should also be included in the cost estimate. |
| Mandatory Travel Contracts | VCU faculty and staff are required to book air and rail tickets for official business using University funds through **Collegiate Travel Planners,** our contracted Travel Management Company (TMC), and paid using the university’s Agency Travel Card (ATC). Business travelers are encouraged to utilize our contracted vendors for lodging and vehicle rental as well to receive the benefits associated with VCU’s managed travel program. |
| Combining Personal & Business Travel | Travelers who include personal travel when traveling for authorized VCU business must obtain and provide for reimbursement the cost for the business travel portion only. This cost must be based on the lowest comparable economy class fare(s) obtained through **Collegiate Travel Planners**, our contracted Travel Management Company (either online or agent), and must be at the time of booking. The air and rail tickets must be purchased through our travel management company regardless. The university will not pay more than the travel cost for the business portion. (see **Documentation Requirements**)  Travel days that extend more than one day before and one day after the business dates of the trip must be fully explained and justified or are considered personal. |
| Visa & Passports | Expenses associated with required business travel may be reimbursed. |
| Registration Fees | Registration fees may be personally paid and reimbursed (after the trip) or paid using the department’s PCard. Fees that are considered tax deductible, a contribution, or fund raiser require the President’s Office approval. Sponsorships must be approved by VCU Enterprise Marketing and Communications. <https://marcom.vcu.edu/> |
| Paying for Travel | * Agency Travel Card (ATC) – All Air and rail booked through **Collegiate Travel Planners**, our mandatory travel management company, is paid on this university VISA card. * Travel Card (Individual Liability or IL) – University issued card for other travel related expenses including meals, car rental, lodging etc * Travel Cash Advance – in lieu of IL, payment issued up to 14 days in advance to help cover travel expenses. The expense reimbursement payment is processed against the travel advancement. * Personal Funds – Paying for travel expenses during travel and seeking reimbursement after returning from travel (Should only be used to pay for airfare if the airline requires or if personal travel increases the ticket cost) |

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| Transportation | | | |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Travel Routing** | Travel routing, whether by public transportation, privately-owned vehicle, State-owned vehicle or for-hire conveyance, shall be the most direct, practicable route. | | Travel routing, whether by public transportation, privately-owned vehicle, State-owned vehicle or for-hire conveyance, shall be the most direct, practicable route. | | |
| **Personally-Owned Vehicle** | Employees are permitted to use their personally owned automobile vehicle when the contracted rental vehicle is not available, or when the use of a personally owned vehicle is cost-beneficial to the university versus all other travel options. | | |
| **Mileage Rates** | VCU reimburses at the current Standard Mileage Rate established by the IRS.  <https://www.irs.gov/tax-professionals/standard-mileage-rates>  Travelers are encouraged to use the Chrome River mileage widget powered by Google Maps. This will ensure the origination and destination addresses are documented as required. | | |
| **Air & Rail Tickets** | VCU faculty and staff are required to book all air and rail tickets through **Collegiate Travel Planners**, our mandatory travel management company, when traveling for official business and using University funds.  Generally, airline & rail travel cannot exceed the rates charged for coach class accommodations. The Authorized Approver may grant permission for above economy class travel when:   * Trips with an international destination, the international air/rail segments may be business class while domestic segments air/rail must be economy/coach.   ***OR***   * When Business class does not cost more than the lowest available coach fare.   *Upgrades and overages are allowed on local funds if approved by the department. First Class and luxury class upgrades are not allowed and will require VP approval.* | | |
| **Change Fees** | Charges for changes to tickets/reservations to accommodate personal comfort, convenience and taste are not reimbursable. Change fees must be fully explained | | |
| **Baggage Fees** | Charges for checked bags on a flight are reimbursable. Charges of $75 or more must be fully explained. | | |
| **Vehicle Rental** | Vehicle rental expenses are limited to official University business travel use only. Travelers are to utilize the Enterprise/National contract whenever this option is available. The traveler must select the most economical type of vehicle available and acquire the appropriate commercial rate or government discount when the vehicle is rented. Travelers must provide the university contract number (XZ21184) in order to receive all contractual benefits. | | |
| **Rental Insurance** | The option to purchase insurance (including LDW/CDW) offered by rental car contractors depends upon the following circumstances: | | |
|  | **If traveler is a:** | **Then** | **Notes** |
| State Employee | Decline | The Department of Treasury, Division of Risk Management, provides a Statewide Self-Insured Automobile plan for State employees.  Rental insurance will not be reimbursed. |
| Non-State Employee | Accept | Liability Damage Waiver (LDW) and Collision Damage Waiver (CDW) insurance are reimbursable expenses. |
| All International Rentals | Accept | Individuals traveling outside of the contiguous 48 States are required to purchase and will be reimbursed for LDW and CDW insurance.  *Other types of insurance offered such as trip cancellation, personal, health or life insurance are not reimbursable*. |
| **Vehicle Refueling** | Travelers must ensure that the rental vehicle is refueled before returning the vehicle to the rental contractor unless an exception is noted. Reimbursement will be based on the fuel used and receipts provided. Travelers must never authorize prepayment for fuel as there is a potential for purchasing fuel over the amount needed and rental car vendors do not return a credit for unused fuel. Receipts are required for reimbursements in excess of $75.00. | | |
| **Optional**  **Add-ons** | Proper Business justification is required for optional add-ons (GPS, toll passes,etc.). Enterprise/National charges unpaid tolls to the credit card on file plus adds an additional one-time fee for this service. | | |
| **Tolls & Parking** | Receipts are required for any individual claim of $75.00 or more. GPS, EZ Pass/Tolls pass rental charges must be placed on local funds. | | |
| **Ground Transportation** | Public transportation such as city metro services, taxis and shuttle services such as Lyft and Uber, and similar services are allowable for VCU official business travel, except as noted below. Receipts are required for reimbursements requests in excess of $75.00.  Any transportation costs for travel between and within the MPC and MCV campuses, and parking fees at VCU owned or occupied spaces are not reimbursable. | | |
| **Mileage vs. Other Transportation**  **Options** | VCU reimburses mileage at the rate established by the IRS. When travel is by personally-owned vehicle, the total cost of the mileage reimbursed should not exceed the total cost using the most economical transportation method available (air, rail or rental car). Authorized Approvers may grant an exception to this policy when justified. Comparative statements must be attached to the travel voucher for reimbursement. | | |
| **Personal Use Aircraft** | The use of personal aircraft is permitted for official state travel with the prior approval of the President or Designee. Documentation of comparable costs for other travel means must be included in the reimbursement request. The reimbursement shall be limited to the most economical means of travel available at that time. Please contact [travel@vcu.edu](mailto:travel@vcu.edu) for further guidance and instructions. | | |
| **State-Owned Aircraft** | State-owned aircraft are available on a priority basis and can be scheduled through the Department of Aviation (DOAV). Refer to the Aircraft Use Policy and Guidelines that can be found on DOAV’s website at www.doav.virginia.gov. Costs should be compared with commercial rates to determine the best air carrier travel for State travel. | | |

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| Lodging | |
| *Lodging may be reimbursed when an individual is traveling overnight on official business outside their official station. Lodging expense reimbursement varies with the travel destination, but all expenditures must be necessary and reasonable.* | |
| Lodging Rates | Reimbursement for lodging is limited to actual expenses incurred up to 100% over the CONUS and OCONUS rates, plus taxes and surcharges.  CONUS and OCONUS rate tables  <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates> |
| Conference Lodging | Exceptions may be granted should the conference lodging rate exceed the 100% overage allowance. Conference documentation is **required**. |
| Non-Canceled Reservations | Communicate travel plan changes as soon as possible when a confirmed reservation is being held. Since charges may be incurred for non-canceled reservations, these charges willnot be reimbursed if the traveler is negligent in canceling reservations. |

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| Per Diem - Meals & Incidental Travel Expenses | | |
| *Meals and certain incidental travel expenses are paid on a per diem basis (not actual expenses) for* ***overnight*** *official business travel outside the traveler’s official station. The applicable M&IE per diem is payable to the traveler without receipts.* | | |
| Per Diem Meals | | Travelers must follow the meal limits published on the Government CONUS AND OCONUS travel charts for the travel destination. The M&IE per diem must correspond to the location of overnight lodging.  <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates> |
| Incidental Allowance | | The incidental allowance is to cover typical gratuity associated with travel. Reimbursement of these expenses as separate items is not permitted when claiming per diem. |
| Miscellaneous Expenses | | Miscellaneous business related expenses that are not covered by the incidental allowance are reimbursable. Receipts are required for any individual claim of $75.00 or more. |
| Proration and Reductions | | 1. On a travel departure or return day, 75% of the M&IE is reimbursed. 2. The reduction is based the location per diem where the night was spent as follows: 3. Departure Day: Where the traveler spent the night before leaving. 4. Return Day: Where the traveler spent the night beforereturning home.   When meals are provided, the applicable meal per diem (breakfast, lunch, dinner) must be reduced by the amount shown for the applicable meal on the Government CONUS AND OCONUS travel charts  When meals are provided on a travel departure or return day, the full day’s per diem rate is reduced by the full amount of the appropriate meals, followed by prorating the balance by 75%. | |
| Travel Reimbursement Requirements | | |
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| Travel Expense Reimbursement Request | | Travelers should submit the Travel Expense Reimbursement request to the Authorized Approver within 30 days after completion of the trip. In the case of continuous travel, the traveler should submit the reimbursement request to the Authorized Approver within 30 days of the last day of travel for which reimbursement is requested.  In all instances, the travel reimbursement must be submitted to the Authorized Approver within 60 days. Expenses submitted after 60 days must be fully explained and may be subject to taxable income.  [IRS Pub 463)](https://www.irs.gov/forms-pubs/about-publication-463). |
| Documentation Requirements | | Although **not all-inclusive**, the following information is **required** for expense reimbursements:   * Business purpose for travel * Receipt for each expenditure of $75 or more * Itemized receipt for lodging (regardless of dollar amount) * Itemized receipt for car rental (regardless of dollar amount) * Business purpose for unusual fees (e.g. change fees, phone calls) * Personal & Business travel – Collegiate Travel Planners (CTP) documentation in the form of the OBT search page result or agent email or “Airtinery” showing the cost of the business portion only and must reflect and be from the same date the trip is booked. |
| **Missing Receipts** | | If a receipt is missing, the traveler must provide proof of payment in the form of a redacted credit card statement or copy of cashed check. |
| Disallowed Expenses | | Although **not all-inclusive**, the following expenses are not reimbursable:   1. Lost or stolen articles 2. Damage to personal vehicles, clothing, or other items 3. Services to gain entry to a locked vehicle 4. Movies charged to hotel bills 5. All expenses related to the personal negligence of the traveler, such as fines 6. Towing charges and tickets for violations 7. Expenses for children, spouses, and companions while on travel status (car seats, cribs, etc.). 8. Interest on credit cards 9. Parking for employees attending meetings /training in a VCU owned or occupied space. 10. Mileage between Monroe and MCV campuses. 11. Mileage from home (base location) to campus (Monroe or MCV) |
| **Exceptions** | | **Any** exceptions must be paid with local funds and approved by the Vice President, Provost, Dean, or Executive Director. |