

## Travel Guidelines & Process

*Updated 6/11/2026*

### UW Travel Policy Resources:

UW Travel Services: <https://finance.uw.edu/travel/homepage>

Post Award Fiscal Compliance: <https://finance.uw.edu/pafc/travel#per-diem>

Office of Global Affairs/UW Global Travel: <https://www.washington.edu/globalaffairs/global-travelers/>

UW travelers are responsible for complying with University and State policies regarding travel, as well as any additional requirements determined by the funding source (such as grants/sponsored funding). You are encouraged to reach out to department administrative staff prior to your trip with any questions so there are no issues during reimbursement.

For general pre and post travel questions: Maddy Anderson, Program Coordinator: [mra29@uw.edu](mailto:mra29@uw.edu)

For sponsored award travel questions: Contact your assigned grant manager, Sarah Robinson at [sr35@uw.edu](mailto:sr35@uw.edu) or Grace Yeung at [gmyeung@uw.edu](mailto:gmyeung@uw.edu)

### TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION

Faculty traveling on their own funding do not need to obtain travel authorization on a trip-by-trip basis, as our department maintains a [blanket chair approval](#) for all faculty travel. If a faculty member plans to use funding that belongs to another PI, they must obtain approval from that PI in advance of making travel arrangements.

All non-faculty department personnel, as well as faculty traveling on another PI's funding, should complete the [Pre-Trip Approval Form](#) and return to the administrative office prior to traveling.

Funding sources should be identified and approved pre-trip by the PI of the funding. For travel on grant/sponsored funding, the PI who authorizes travel expenditures is responsible for ensuring that the travel is allowable and that it benefits the grant. A grant benefit statement is **required** for travel on sponsored awards.

### TRAVEL REGISTRATION & INTERNATIONAL INSURANCE COVERAGE

All students and UW employees (faculty, staff, and other academic personnel such as postdocs) traveling internationally on official UW business are **required** to register their travel with the Office of Global Affairs.

Upon registration of their international travel, all students and UW employees will be eligible for enrollment in an international emergency medical and security insurance policy, referred to as International SOS and Cigna Global Health Benefits' Medical Benefits Abroad (MBA) plan. This coverage is provided at no cost to the faculty or staff traveler. There is a nominal fee for students which is charged to their UW student account.

**NOTE: You must register your travel with the Office of Global Affairs to be eligible for this international insurance coverage.**

As of January 1, 2025, this coverage includes dependents traveling with a UW faculty, staff, or student while on UW official business. Dependents do not need to enroll or register their travel separately.

Included in the coverage plan:

- \$500,000 of medical coverage for accidents, illnesses, etc.
- Evacuation/repatriation coverage for medical and security emergencies
- No deductible, no coinsurance
- 24/7 access to emergency travel assistance/pre-departure resources

**International Travel Registry:** <https://www.washington.edu/globalaffairs/global-travelers/travelregistry/>

**Official International Student Travel Policy:** <https://www.washington.edu/globalaffairs/global-travelers/student-international-travel-policy/>

**Travel Registration for UW Employees: FAQs:** <https://www.washington.edu/globalaffairs/global-travelers/travelregistry/facstaff/>

**International SOS & Cigna MBA Coverage:** <https://www.washington.edu/globalaffairs/global-travelers/global-insurance/insurance-coverage/>

## TRAVEL STATUS

The traveler is considered to be in **travel status** from when they leave their home or duty station to go to the airport (or other means of travel such as car or train). They remain in travel status until arriving back at their home or duty station at the end of the trip. While in travel status the traveler will be compensated with a per diem allowance for meals, as well as the per diem amount for nights of lodging. While in travel status, the traveler is expected to be traveling efficiently for the sole purpose of official UW business. This includes arriving as close to the start of the event as possible and departing as soon as possible after its conclusion.

## PERSONAL TIME

The primary purpose of any university-funded travel must be official UW business. If employee travel includes “personal time,” the university cannot incur any additional expenses and any personal time must be clearly defined and planned in advance. When on personal time, the traveler is not in travel status, and expenses incurred during this time (including meals, lodging, and some transportation costs) are the responsibility of the traveler and are not eligible for reimbursement.

If taking personal time while traveling, a **comparison airfare** is required to assure reimbursement at UW business cost only. The purpose of this is to show the cost of airfare for UW business travel without personal influence (arrival to/departure from closest airport to the business event,

arrival/departure dates/times consistent with the event). The comparison should be documented at the same time that airfare is purchased, to give the most accurate pricing comparison. The traveler is responsible for any overage incurred due to personal influence when purchasing airfare and will be reimbursed the *lesser* amount between the comparison airfare and the actual itinerary influenced by personal travel.

Airfare that is purchased to accommodate personal time cannot be purchased with the department Corporate Travel Account (CTA) card and must be purchased by the traveler and then reimbursed. For more information on personal time while traveling, view: <https://finance.uw.edu/travel/personal>

## **PROCUREMENT METHODS FOR TRAVEL EXPENSES**

There are some travel expenses that can be purchased using either the department CTA or one of our department credit cards (referred to as ProCards).

**Conference/Event Registration** – this expense can be purchased using a department ProCard.

**Airfare** – If the trip is for the sole purpose of UW business, airfare can be purchased using the department CTA. If taking personal time during the trip, this airfare cannot be purchased with the department CTA, and must be purchased by the traveler and then reimbursed (comparison airfare required).

**Lodging** – Lodging is an expense that we are unable to purchase with a department account/card. This expense must be paid for out-of-pocket by the traveler and reimbursed once this expense has been paid in its entirety. Deposits and partial payments cannot be reimbursed.

- If booking through AirBnb or VRBO, full payment is required in advance. This can be reimbursed pre-trip once it has been paid in full.
- Hotels typically require payment upon check-out. This expense can be reimbursed post-trip.

Please contact Maddy Anderson ([mra29@uw.edu](mailto:mra29@uw.edu)) for booking travel arrangements with a department account/card.

## **PRE-TRIP REIMBURSEMENT & TRAVEL ADVANCES**

Reimbursement can be issued to travelers prior to their trip for any expenses they incur before their travel dates. Airfare, event registration, and AirBnb/VRBO lodging are common examples of expenses that are typically paid in advance, and these can be submitted for a pre-trip reimbursement. If the traveler cancels their trip and does not end up traveling, they may be responsible for repayment of funds reimbursed to them pre-trip.

Expenses incurred during the trip can be submitted separately for reimbursement post-trip. This includes meal per diem, ground transportation, and hotel lodging.

For some travelers, paying out-of-pocket for meals and lodging expenses incurred during their trip may be a hardship. Travel advances may be issued under certain circumstances, and requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Please contact Maddy Anderson (mra29@uw.edu) to discuss travel advance requests.

### TRAVEL ITEMS FOR SPECIAL CONSIDERATION

- Please note these **non-reimbursable examples** on the UW Travel Services website. Common non-reimbursable expenses include expenses purchased with reward programs, upgraded Lyft/Uber rides, exchange of funds between travelers, and expenses related to negligence. <https://finance.uw.edu/travel/nonreimbursable>
- Car rentals have additional restrictions and complex compliance requirements. Travelers are encouraged to reach out to the administrative staff to review these before booking.
- International airfare if using sponsored funding (see **Airfare on Federally-Sponsored Funding** section below).

### AIRFARE

When booking and paying for your airfare, there are policy regulations at both the University level and federal level (if traveling on federally-sponsored awards) that must be followed. UW's established travel policies do not supersede the federal regulations for airfare when traveling on federal awards. Travel purchases found to be out of compliance can result in reimbursement complications or non-reimbursable altogether.

### Airfare on Federally-Sponsored Funding

- Airfare must be Economy Class (Main Cabin), and must be the lowest logical cost itinerary available. This should be the lowest cost airfare available which would be practical for the needs of your trip.
- Airfare must be compliant with the **Fly America Act**. This requires the use of a U.S. flag air carrier for federally-funded travel. US Flag Air Carriers include Alaska Airlines, American Airlines, Delta Airlines, and United Airlines, among others. There are some exceptions to the use of US flag carriers, such as when two airlines "codeshare" a flight, when traveling internationally to a EU country, or when a US flag carrier is unavailable. Please read these policies carefully before purchasing airfare with federal funds. <https://finance.uw.edu/travel/airfare>  
<https://www.gsa.gov/policy-regulations/policy/travel-management-policy/fly-america-act>
- It is best practice to purchase **fully-refundable economy airfare**. Restricted airfare (not fully-refundable) is allowable as long as the ticket is used. If the restricted ticket is not used, then the cost of the ticket is unallowable on federal awards. Unused restricted airfare is ineligible for

reimbursement, and repayment may be required if the traveler was reimbursed for this expense pre-trip. [https://finance.uw.edu/pafc/travel#Commercial\\_Air](https://finance.uw.edu/pafc/travel#Commercial_Air)

- Travel dates must take place between the start and end dates of the Award. The cost of any airfare purchased during the budget period for travel but will take place after the budget period is unallowable.
- For international travel time in excess of 14 hours, the traveler can request prior Chair approval for a foreign layover directly en route or at the final destination for brief rest period (not to exceed 24 hours). Email Maddy Anderson if you will be traveling for 14 hours or more and would like to request approval of a rest period. **MUST OBTAIN PRIOR APPROVAL.**

### **Airfare on Non-Sponsored Funding**

Airfare must be Economy Class (Main Cabin) and must be the lowest logical cost itinerary available. This should be the lowest cost airfare available which would be practical for the needs of your trip. There are certain exceptions to this:

- Our blanket chair approval for faculty travel allows purchased coach seat upgrades (premium seat selections) for international flights and domestic flights longer than four (4) hours. **NOT ALLOWABLE ON SPONSORED AWARDS.**
- For international travel time in excess of 14 hours, the traveler may request **prior Chair approval for a business class upgrade**. Travel time is calculated as the one-way from origin airport to destination airport including flight time and layovers. Documentation must be provided with itinerary showing flight times. Email Maddy Anderson if you will be traveling for 14 hours or more and would like to request a business class upgrade. **NOT ALLOWABLE ON SPONSORED AWARDS.**

### **RECEIPTS & DOCUMENTATION**

Receipt documentation must be provided for all travel expenses (except for food/meals – see per diem section) for which you are claiming reimbursement. They must be clearly **itemized** and show **proof of payment**. Receipts must be translated if foreign. In addition to itemized expenses and proof of payment, documentation with additional information is required for the following expenses:

- Airfare – itemized itinerary with arrival/departure times, seat class
- Train Tickets -- itemized itinerary
- Hotel – hotel folio (unless the hotel stay was pre-paid)
- Car rental – FINAL rental agreement, with the following information:
  - Name of driver/additional drivers
  - Car class charged
  - Pick-up/Drop-off information

- Itemized charges
- Itemized insurances

Purchasing travel package deals through 3<sup>rd</sup> party booking websites (Expedia, Travelocity, etc.) is not recommended. The receipt documentation provided to the traveler may not be itemized and often does not provide the level of detail needed for required travel expenditure documentation. This lack of clarity in the documentation can result in reimbursement complications, non-reimbursement, or non-allowance on federal funding that the traveler is relying upon for expenses.

For travel reimbursements for non-faculty department personnel, the [Pre-Trip Approval Form](#) should be submitted at time of reimbursement if not already provided earlier by the traveler.

## **PER DIEM**

Per diem is a daily amount for meals and for lodging that UW travelers are eligible to receive for their time in travel status. Domestic per diem rates are determined by the US General Administrative Services, and foreign per diem rates are established by the US State Department. These rates will vary trip-by-trip, depending largely on the destination city and the time of year the travel takes place.

<https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates?gsaredirect=perdiem>

[https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content\\_id=184&menu\\_id=78](https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=184&menu_id=78)

## **Meal per diem**

The only travel expense for which the traveler does not need to provide receipts for is food/meals during the trip. The full GSA per diem rate for meals will be issued post-trip for the time in which the traveler is in travel status. Meal per diem is a daily amount that is broken down by the WA state requirement of 24% allotted for breakfast, 28% for lunch, and 48% for dinner. The per diem allowance may be pro-rated depending on start/end of travel status. For example, if the traveler leaves for the airport and begins travel status at 10am, the amount for breakfast will not be reimbursed for that day.

Meals provided by the event/conference are deducted from the daily per diem amount, regardless of whether the traveler participated in the meal. There are some exceptions to this:

- UW business prevented you from participating (must provide documentation to support this)
- Could not participated due to a disability (must have an accommodation letter from the UW Disability Services Office)

Travelers must provide a copy of the event agenda when seeking post-trip reimbursement and notify us of any meals that were provided for them on their trip.

All Pharmacology department personnel traveling on UW business are entitled to receive meal per diem reimbursement. It is not at the discretion of individual labs or PIs to determine their own process.

The only exception to this is if a PI is traveling on their own funding, they may choose not to claim meal per diem reimbursement for their own travel. They cannot, however, deny meal per diem reimbursement to others traveling on their funding. This policy is to ensure equity across the department and all employees.

### **Lodging per diem**

Unlike meals per diem, lodging per diem is NOT a set allowance that the traveler can claim for the time they are in travel status. The lodging per diem rate works instead as a **maximum allowable amount** to be spent on lodging. Receipt documentation is required for reimbursement, and the traveler is eligible only for the amount they spent on lodging (up to the per diem amount).

There are exceptions to the lodging per diem which would allow the traveler to go over the per diem amount for lodging, **if they can be properly documented/justified**. While there are several exceptions which would allow exceeding the lodging per diem amount, nearly all per diem overages incurred by department personnel will fall under the following exception:

- **Conference Hotel:** Hotel is the official conference location, a recommended hotel by the conference, or within 5 miles of the conference location.

Lodging accommodation must be considered a commercial lodging facility. Hotels, AirBnb, and VRBO all qualify as commercial lodging facilities. Reimbursements for lodging at private residence not supported by a tax ID number or a rental listing are not allowed under State and University policies.

### **POST-TRIP REIMBURSEMENT**

For reimbursement for travel expenses post-trip, please send the following to Maddy Anderson via email:

- Name of event attended and PDF of event program/agenda
- Receipts and required documentation for travel expenses (please see the Receipts & Documentation section on page 5).
- Please state if any meals were provided by the event, and if so, which meals were provided
- Funding source to be used for reimbursement. If using sponsored funding, please also include a grant benefit statement.
- Pre-Trip Approval Form, if not provided earlier by the traveler (non-faculty)

Expenses should be submitted for reimbursement in a timely manner (within 60 days) upon returning from travel.