

## BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

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Supersedes:  
NU Travel Policy & Procedures

Related Policies:  
NU Procard Manual;  
ORAF Foreign Travel Guidelines

Responsible  
Office/Department: Office of the Chief Financial Officer

Keywords:  
Travel Reimbursement;  
ORAF; travel expenses

## Policy on Travel & Expense Reimbursement

### I. Purpose and Scope

The Purpose of this Policy is to define the requirements of, and procedures for:

1. Making travel arrangements
2. Reporting expenses incurred while on University business
3. Approving requests for reimbursement

### II. Definitions

*Next Level Supervisor* - the individual that is the superior in the reporting relationship and who also has the authority to expend funds for the cost center being charged.

### III. Policy

#### 1. Definition

It is the policy of Northeastern University to pay for or reimburse faculty, staff, and other authorized travelers for economical and practical expenditures incurred in the conduct of the University's business. Expenditures shall be made using the most cost effective method possible.

University policy is to reimburse for actual expenses incurred. It is not the intent of the policy to allow for a per diem of any amount.

According to the Professional Standards and Business Conduct Policy, the use of University assets, funds, facilities, personnel or other resources for personal, unlawful or improper purposes is strictly prohibited. Fiscal misconduct may lead to employment sanctions up to and including termination, and may subject the individual to civil liability and/or criminal prosecution. All members of the Northeastern University community are responsible for ensuring that their own conduct and the conduct of anyone reporting to them, fully complies with this policy.

NU pays for or reimburses employees for actual expenditures incurred in the conduct of the University's business. Good business practice requires that all expenditures be clearly and correctly recorded. **Itemized receipts are required for all expenditures of \$75.00 or more, and they are strongly recommended for all expenditures below \$75.** For example, if a traveler does not receive a receipt for a \$15 taxi ride, the business purpose should be documented but the expense is not required to be supported by an itemized receipt. However, for a \$95 hotel stay an itemized receipt listing the room rate, applicable taxes, and payment in full would be required since the amount is over the policy threshold of \$75.

Divisions that elect to adopt and enforce a set of requirements more stringent than the University policy may do so at their discretion. Enforcement of these requirements would be at the divisional level only. They cannot contradict or conflict with the standards set by this policy at the University level.

Authorization of expense reimbursement is the responsibility of an employee's "next level supervisor". "Next level supervisor" in this policy is defined as the individual that is the superior in the reporting relationship and who also has the authority to expend funds for the cost center being charged. By approving the reimbursement, the next level supervisor is certifying that the expense was necessary to accomplish the University's objectives and is also certifying that the request for reimbursement is in accordance with University policy. If the division desires to delegate approval authority, NU Accounts Payable reserves the right to confirm that the delegation request meets or exceeds the "next level supervisor" standards established in this document.

For your reference, below are **examples** of the hierarchy of authorized signatories for academic and administrative areas:

*Academic*

I am a	My Next Level Supervisor (with budget authority) is my
Faculty Member	Department Chair
Center Director	Dean
Department Chair	
Associate Dean	
Dean	Provost
Vice President	
Vice Provost	

*Administrative*

I am a	My Next Level Supervisor (with budget authority) is my
Support Staff/Administrator	Associate Director / Director
Coordinator	
Manager	
Assistant Director	Director
Director	Dep't Head / AVP
Dep't Head / AVP	Vice President
Vice President / Dean	SVP / President

## 2. Advance Authorization

It is strongly recommended that the employee provide a purpose of travel and an emergency contact number to their next level supervisor prior to departure.

## 3. Procedures for Making Travel Arrangements

Procurement Services has negotiated contracts with special rates and services for employees who travel on University business. Contracts are in place with travel agencies, airlines, car rental agencies, and hotels. Please go to the following website for a list of vendors and detailed information:

<http://www.northeastern.edu/travel/>.

The list contains online and full service travel agencies, airlines, car rental agencies, and hotels. It is strongly recommended that preferred suppliers be used for all travel services. Using these suppliers ensures the best overall value for the University. In addition, preferred travel agencies are obligated to provide 24/7 services and to provide the whereabouts of all university travelers at any given time.

When making air travel arrangements it is important to allow as much lead time as possible prior to departure so that savings can be maximized.

### *Problems/Complaints*

Should you experience any problems while making travel arrangements or during your trip, please contact the booking agent. Procurement Services is responsible for administering travel services and should be notified if problems arise and are not expeditiously addressed by the University's preferred travel agencies.

### *Personal Vacation Travel*

Many of our preferred vendors, including airline, rail, and hotels allow discounts or use of our negotiated contracts for personal travel, for more information go to the Procurement Services webpage <http://www.northeastern.edu/purchasing/>. You may be required to produce proof of affiliation with the University (e.g., Husky Card) to receive the discount. Vendor relationships are subject to change at any time; it is advisable to check the website prior to personal or business travel to confirm discount eligibility. Any personal travel booked via a preferred vendor must be paid by the traveler.

## 4. Travel and Expense Reimbursements

Travel and expenses to be paid or reimbursed must be properly accounted for on the applicable form, with the business purpose stated for each expense item and proper supervisory approvals obtained. The Travel & Expense Reimbursement Form should be used and it can be located at <http://www.northeastern.edu/ap/forms/index.html>.

Requests for reimbursement and settlement of costs in advance of travel (e.g., conference registration, airfare) should be submitted on an approved Travel and Expense Reimbursement Form accompanied by the required receipts, within 30 days, as should all reimbursement requests. Incomplete or inaccurate requests will be returned to the approver with a list of required actions to bring the reimbursement request up to standard.

All expenses not paid via procard must be documented on the travel form. **The lone exception to using the reimbursement form is if a procard is used to pay all travel costs during a single trip.** In this instance receipts should be retained and reconciled with SmartData in accordance with the pro-card

procedure. For more information please reference the NU Procard website at <http://www.northeastern.edu/ap/procard/>.

The University is exempt from state sales tax in the following states. The University is not exempt from other local taxes.

Arizona*	Missouri	North Carolina
Colorado	New Jersey	Ohio
Connecticut	New York	Rhode Island
Florida	North Carolina	Tennessee*
Idaho	Ohio	Texas
Illinois	Maine	Utah
Kanas	Michigan	Vermont
Kentucky	Minnesota	West Virginia*
Maine	Mississippi	Wyoming
Michigan	Missouri	<b>*These states honor Massachusetts tax exempt forms</b>
Minnesota	New Jersey	
Mississippi	New York	

It is the employee's responsibility to obtain the point of contact and to submit a tax exemption certificate. Please note that exemption from sales tax may not qualify the University for exemption from other taxes, such as hotel occupancy taxes. **The University will not reimburse employees for state sales tax paid on the purchase of goods.** For more information, and for sales tax exemption forms, please visit Accounts Payable's website at <http://www.northeastern.edu/ap/taxexemptforms/index.html>.

## 5. Other Reimbursable Expenses

Other reimbursable expenses include:

- Gratuities (paid in accordance with local custom)
- Telephone, FAX, and internet (limited to business purposes and reasonable personal calls)
- Taxis, shuttles, and parking
- Airline baggage check fees

## 6. Business Meals

Employees are expected to exercise good judgment when ordering meals when traveling on University business. Recognizing that there are regional differences in meal costs, specific dollar guidelines have not been provided in this policy. It is the responsibility of the next level supervisor to review these charges for reasonableness prior to granting approval of the request. Employees are always required to provide the business purpose and the names of all attendees on the Travel & Expense Reimbursement Form for meals.

*The purchase of alcohol, while not specifically prohibited by University policy must always comply with all funding requirements and in all circumstances must be limited to reasonable and responsible consumption.*

## 7. Air Travel

All personnel should travel Economy (or on special reduced fares, when available), except for the following situations:

- For Research grants (5xxxxx Fund/index) please consult the regulations of your funding organization. In most cases, first class/ business travel is not allowed except in special circumstances. Consult your specific award or contact your representative in the Office of Research Administration and Finance (ORAF) for additional assistance.
- First Class Travel (and Business Class in the case of international flights) is not reimbursable unless authorized in advance by the President and/or the responsible member of the Senior Leadership team for extended flights. Travelers with medical conditions that require the next class of service above Economy must have documentation from a physician certifying the condition.

The University has negotiated discounted airfares that are only available when making reservations through preferred agencies. These discounts are available for all University related travel. Business trips which also include travel for personal reasons will be reimbursed only for the business portion of the trip, based on accommodations actually used for business purposes. Legible copies of the itinerary covering the routing of both the personal and business portions of the trip should be attached to the Travel & Expense Reimbursement Form.

## 8. Automobile Rentals

The Traveler should take the lowest rate available. If traveling domestically do not opt for the collision damage waiver (CDW) coverage because:

- The Procard and American Express Travel Card include CDW coverage, or
- If you are paying with a personal credit card, using an NU rental contract includes the CDW, regardless of the credit card used.

The corporate discount numbers and preferred suppliers can be found at <http://www.northeastern.edu/travel/travel/all-savants-transportation-llc/>. If using a Preferred Agent (Egencia or Travel Collaborative) the auto rental rates are loaded in their system as well.

Renting a vehicle for personal use under NU's preferred rates is encouraged. These costs are not reimbursable by the University, but they are significantly lower than what the employee can expect to receive on their own. Please note that for personal use under the University's contract the CDW is not included. It is up to the employee to secure this coverage on their own, if desired.

**International travelers please note:** Our preferred auto rental agency CDW is limited to domestic travel. Therefore, if are renting internationally purchase CDW coverage.

Travelers on personal travel: You are eligible to use the NU preferred rates when traveling personally, but please note that CDW coverage does not apply to personal travel.

## 9. Personal Automobiles

Employees required to utilize personal vehicles for business travel will be reimbursed based upon the mileage traveled. The current rate is provided in the Travel & Expense Reimbursement Form. The form is located on Accounts Payable's website <http://www.northeastern.edu/ap/forms/index.html>. The reimbursement per mile rate is based on IRS guidelines. Employees will not be reimbursed for both the IRS rate and fuel, since the reimbursement rate includes fuel. The number of miles reimbursed is equal

to actual miles driven. Properly documented parking fees and toll charges are allowed for travel with either a personal or a rental car.

Fines or other expenses incurred as a result of traffic violations on University business are the personal responsibility of the violator.

#### **10. Rail**

The University has negotiated discounted rail fares that are only available when making reservations through preferred agencies <http://www.northeastern.edu/travel/travel/travel-agents/>. These discounts are available for all University related travel. The passenger receipt is required for reimbursement.

#### **11. Lodging**

The University has many contracts with preferred hotels. They can be booked by using a preferred agency or through self-booking. For more information about preferred hotel suppliers go to the Procurement Services webpage located at <http://www.northeastern.edu/travel/travel/hotels/>. Travelers should check with Procurement Services for pre-negotiated, long-term extended stay rates and attention should be paid to restrictions (cancellation policy, etc.).

Accommodations should be at a reasonable cost, comfortable and convenient to the place of business. Cost of lodging should be listed daily on the expense report and should begin with the day of registration. ***The hotel folio that details day-by-day charges (e.g., lodging, meals, taxes, incidentals) and that indicates proof of payment must be submitted.*** For extended residence, the employee should attempt to obtain accommodations on a weekly or monthly basis at reduced rates. Charges incurred for items such as health clubs, movies, etc. are personal expenses and are not eligible for reimbursement. Laundry reimbursement is permitted for business trips exceeding four consecutive days.

#### **12. International Travel**

***Using Sponsored Funds for Travel:*** Many external sponsors require that each trip abroad be approved in advance. The traveler must complete and submit a Notification of Foreign Travel to Research Administration and Finance in advance of their trip. The University policy & procedures on foreign travel in connection with sponsored research must follow the guidelines stated on the ORAF's website at <http://www.northeastern.edu/research/raf/policies-guidelines/>. In addition, there may be other restrictions when using sponsored funds and for more information please contact your ORAF representative.

**All research-funded requests for travel reimbursement must be approved by ORAF before being routed to Accounts Payable for processing.**

***Using Sponsored Funds for Air Travel:*** Fly America Act and Open Skies Agreement: In accordance with the [Fly America Act of 1974](#), commercial air travel and movement of cargo on Federally funded grants must comply with the requirement that U.S. flag air carriers be used to the maximum extent possible when traveling between the U.S. and a foreign country or between foreign countries. The [Open Skies Agreement](#), however, allows for the use of foreign air carriers under certain circumstances. All travelers must comply with the Fly America Act unless exceptions in the Open Skies Agreement pertain. For more information, please contact Research Administration and Finance.

***Air Travel:*** International air travel should adhere to all policies as specified in Section 7. However, due to the complexity of some international travel the University ***strongly*** recommends that travelers and travel arrangers contact our preferred full service travel agency when booking international travel.

**Car Rentals:** If renting a car internationally the collision damage waiver (CDW) should be purchased and will be reimbursed by the University.

**Additional Documentation:** Foreign Currency: When a payment is made using a foreign currency, the receipt must be converted to US dollars by the traveler prior to reimbursement. Documentation supporting the exchange rate <http://www.oanda.com/currency/live-exchange-rates/> used must be attached to the expense report or other payment mechanism. A tool that may be helpful is located on OANDA's website at <http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter>.

Foreign Language: Vendor documentation and / or receipts printed in a foreign language must be translated to English before submitting for reimbursement. A tool that may be helpful for doing so is Google Translate at [www.translate.google.com/](http://www.translate.google.com/).

**International insurance coverage, policy and procedures:** Employees are covered by multiple layers of insurance while traveling abroad. These policies are already in place and automatically cover all benefits-eligible employees without the need for a specific enrollment process. This ensures that our umbrella of coverage applies regardless of geography. It is important to understand how these various coverages protect you during travel.

Personal Health Insurance: While abroad, the traveler's personal health insurance remains the primary medical coverage. Health insurance purchased through the University offers unlimited worldwide coverage for emergency medical care for injuries and illnesses. However, routine visits are not covered and should be scheduled when the traveler returns home if possible. NU's current carrier, Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS), has a worldwide list of in-network of providers available. Standard out-of-network overages apply to non-affiliated providers.

In some circumstances, such as when payment is required in advance, under BCBS the employee must cover the costs and submit a translated, itemized bill to BCBS for reimbursement.

Travel Assistance: Two resources, SOS International and The ACE Group, are available to employees when traveling internationally on University business as part of our Travel Assistance package.

SOS International is a service provider with access to global medical and security advice, assistance and evacuation services 24/7. To access these services, contact the Office of Risk Services or visit our website at: <http://www.northeastern.edu/travel/international-travel/international-sos/>

The ACE Group University Foreign Liability policy provides coverage for: medical assistance services, personal and legal assistance services, travel assistance, emergency political evacuations, and country specific security and health information. ACE provides the insurance coverage for the services referred by SOS. For more information, please contact the Office of Risk Services or visit our website at: [http://www.northeastern.edu/risk\\_services/index.php](http://www.northeastern.edu/risk_services/index.php)

**Mobile Communications Usage:** Mobile device tips for traveling abroad:

- Each individual is responsible for contacting their assigned cellular service provider to activate or deactivate international voice and data service plans.
- See contact information for AT&T, Sprint , and Verizon Wireless here:  
<http://www.northeastern.edu/travel/international-travel/cellular-sevice-abroad/>
- Failure to activate an international service plan may result in no voice or data service at your destination or excessive voice and data roaming charges.
- To avoid excessive data usage while traveling turn off your mobile device or switch to “airplane mode” until you reach your final destination.

**13. Travel Accident Policy**

Northeastern University provides \$250,000 per trip Travel Accident Coverage (life insurance) for all full-time salaried employees of the University (except truck drivers and their helpers) while they are traveling on official business for the University. This is life insurance coverage for the period of official travel and will be in effect from the time employees leave their residence or regular place of employment, whichever occurs first, until the employee returns.

**IV. Contact Information**

For reimbursement questions, please contact the Director of University Disbursements, Non Payroll at 617-373-4085.

For procurement or preferred supplier relationship questions, please contact the Director of Procurement Services at 617-373-5883.