




Policy Name:	Travel and Expense Policy	Policy Number:	2016-1
Associated Form(s):	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Travel Pre-Approval Form 2. Missing Receipt Form 3. Employee Travel and Meal Reimbursement Form 	Book:	Finance Manual
Reviewed:	Non-Academic Policy Committee	Approved:	December 14, 2018
Approval Authority:	President 	Adopted:	February 20, 2019
Responsible Executive:	Vice President for Finance	Revised:	8/6/2018
Responsible Office:	Finance Office	Contact:	Controller

I. Policy Statement

Mercy University's (the University) Travel and Expense Policy (hereinafter "Policy") has been developed to provide employees on official University business with guidelines for cost-effective travel and ease/efficiency of recording travel expenses. "Travel Expenses" are the ordinary and necessary costs of traveling away from your home base on behalf of the University, which may require overnight stay.

A. Expenses Covered and Documentation Required Under this Policy

The general rule for the reimbursement of travel expenses (consistent with Internal Revenue Service (IRS) rules) is that it be actual, reasonable and necessary. The University is under an "Accountable Plan;" as such employees must provide appropriate substantiation (i.e. original itemized receipts) for expenses (i.e. hotel, airfare, meals, tolls, mileage, train fares, etc.). In addition, employees must provide proof of payment (evidence that the expense was paid; for example, copy of credit card statement, or receipt from vendor in which it is noted that the item has been paid). Each expense must have a direct business purpose and the benefit to the University must be clearly documented. Expenses not supported by original documentation or for which a business purpose and benefit to the University has not been identified, will not be reimbursed. For expenses below \$15, a receipt submission, though encouraged, will not be required; however, the expense must be clearly described and the business purpose and benefit to the University must be documented. The University will not reimburse for any personal expenses, without any exceptions. For guidance on travel funded by grants (government or private) please refer to section S. Grant Funded Travel below.

B. Reimbursements

Expense reimbursements are to be submitted within thirty (30) days of travel, sooner if practical, but under no circumstance after sixty (60) days. Late Expense Reports are subject to disallowance and personal tax liability. Expense reimbursements are submitted via the *Employee Travel & Meal Reimbursement Form* found in Mercy Connect.

Eligible expenses will be reimbursed upon submission of the fully completed *Employee Travel and Meal Reimbursement Form* to Accounts Payable in the Finance Office. Generally, travelers can expect reimbursement for out-of-pocket costs within ten (10) business days of receipt of all appropriate documentation by the Finance Office.

C. Required Approvals

All approvals related to this Policy are to be applied by a level of management above the requesting employee. Each employee's supervisor or manager, having first-hand knowledge of the department's activities and employee's responsibilities, must approve all expense reimbursements in consultation with the appropriate budget manager. The expenses of all staff officers are to be approved by the President or their designee. The President's expenses are to be reviewed by the Vice President of Finance for compliance with this policy and submitted to the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the University. To ensure alignment with department objectives and available budget funds, all domestic and international trips (e.g. conferences, conventions, seminars, meetings, etc.) should be pre-approved in writing before travel, by a level of management above the requesting employee. To assist the departments in their pre-approval process, the "Travel Pre-Approval Form" can be found in Mercy Connect.

It is the employee's responsibility to ensure that the travel, meal and entertainment expenses are in accordance with this Policy and to exercise reasonable fiduciary responsibility. Since the employee's direct supervisor has first-hand knowledge of the department's activities and the employee's role, in addition to ensuring that the employee correctly followed the Policy, it is also their responsibility to ensure that the travel was a budgeted and authorized activity in line with the department's mission and priorities. In reviewing the travel, meal and entertainment request, the Finance Office will confirm that the expenses incurred are reasonable, appropriately substantiated and in compliance with the Policy.

Corporate card reconciliations and *Employee Travel & Meal Reimbursement Forms* exceeding \$3,000 must be approved by a staff officer in addition to the normal required approvals.

D. Missing Receipt(s)

In the rare case that an original itemized receipt cannot be obtained, or is lost or destroyed, the University has developed the "Missing Receipt Form" found in Mercy Connect, which must be completed when reimbursement is being sought. The form requires that the employee complete an attestation statement that must be approved by the employee's supervisor and endorsed by the appropriate staff officer of the University (and dean in the case of a school). Excessive submission of missing receipt forms will result in disallowance of expenses sought for reimbursement from the University, and can result in suspension or revocation of the Mercy corporate card. The *Missing Receipt Form* is not a substitute for original receipts, it is a tool to substantiate, as noted above, in those rare cases when the original documentation cannot be reasonably obtained, or is lost or destroyed. Please note that completion of the *Missing Receipt Form* does not guarantee reimbursement and such will be at the discretion of the Vice President of Finance or her/his designee. In addition, the "Missing Receipt Form" will not be accepted for expenses exceeding \$100; unsubstantiated expenses exceeding this threshold will not be reimbursed.

E. Air Travel

All travel should be by the most direct, economical, and usually traveled route. Travelers should make reservations early enough to take advantage of advance purchase discounts. Travel within the United States mainland is to be economy/coach class. Business class travel is strongly discouraged, but may be allowed for international and non-US mainland destinations exceeding six (6) hours if approved by a staff officer of the University. Email approval will be acceptable. The ticket and boarding pass must be attached as part of the supporting documentation. Additional charges for seat and other upgrades are not reimbursable.

Travelers should be cautious when purchasing discounted airfares, such as non-refundable and advance-purchase fares, since the airline tickets are usually non-transferable and in most cases must be used within one year from date of flight. These tickets may become a problem if not used on the dates and times originally reserved.

If a trip is cancelled for reasons beyond the traveler's control, reimbursement shall be made to the traveler for the airfare. The airline ticket must be forwarded to the Finance Office with the reimbursement request. Expenses/fees related to changes in travel plans caused by business schedule changes, family or work emergencies and reasons beyond the employee's control will be allowed. Significant expenses/fees for airfare changes must be, documented and approved by the employee's supervisor, as well as endorsed by the Staff Officer of the University (and dean in the case of a school) for the area, and submitted with the reimbursement request for approval by the Vice President of Finance or their designee.

F. Lodging

When traveling on University business, employees should inquire about educational discounts and use the lodging rates published by the U.S. Department of State for foreign travel and U.S. General Services Administration for domestic travel as the ceiling. These rates are normally established in October of each year and may be found [here](#). The domestic rates are also known as "CONUS Rates." The itemized hotel folio must be attached as part of the supporting documentation to receive reimbursement. The cost to upgrade rooms to luxury and upscale categories is not reimbursable. In addition, personal expenses (e.g. gym fees, movies, spas, etc.) are not reimbursable. For travel with a partner organization, reimbursement shall be limited to the portion not covered by the partner organization. Please provide the documentation for the partner reimbursement to ensure a complete documentation of the trip.

If an employee attends a conference and obtains overnight accommodations at the hotel where the conference is being held (or at a hotel where the conference officials arrange for accommodations), and the rates of the conference accommodations exceed those published by the U.S. Department of State, the employee may be reimbursed for the actual cost of the room, if he/she obtains the

endorsement of the appropriate Staff Officer (and school dean if applicable). The endorsement must be submitted with the reimbursement request for approval by the Vice President of Finance or their designee.

If a scheduled trip is cancelled it is the traveler's responsibility to cancel the hotel room. Similar to airfare, if a trip is cancelled for reasons beyond the traveler's control, reimbursement shall be made to the traveler for the hotel provided the supporting documentation is forwarded to the Finance Office. Expenses/fees related to changes in travel plans caused by business schedule changes, family or work emergencies or reasons beyond the employee's control will be allowed. Significant expenses/fees for hotel changes must be documented, endorsed by a staff officer of the University (and school dean, if applicable) and submitted with the reimbursement request for approval by the Vice President of Finance or their designee.

G. Car Rental

Car rentals, including gasoline and insurance costs connected with such, are allowable when it has been determined, in advance, to be advantageous in the conduct of University business. The cost for car rental may not exceed the actual per-day cost of a mid-size car unless four or more employees are traveling. In this instance, a full-size car may be rented. See the *Mercy University Vehicle Use Policy* to ensure compliance with any other restrictions relating to car rentals. Car rentals must be approved by the employee's supervisor (or more senior manager) prior to the trip. The car rental agreement must accompany the reimbursement.

H. Rail Travel

The same regulations and procedures detailed under section 2. Air Travel, are applicable to rail travel. If a traveler prefers to utilize rail transportation instead of air transportation, the traveler must request the least expensive available fare. The original ticket and boarding pass must be attached as part of the supporting documentation. If the rail fare exceeds the cost of the prevailing air fare to the same destination, then prior written approval must be obtained from the staff officer, and school dean if applicable, and submitted with the reimbursement request for approval by the Vice President of Finance or their designee.

I. Taxi, Limousine, and Private Car Service

Reasonable charges for taxis, limousines and private car services are permitted, from the University or from home to the airport or train station, and vice versa. The traveler can contact the Purchasing Department for assistance in identifying a transportation vendor between the University or home and airport or train station. When practical and cost beneficial, the University encourages the usage of hotel shuttle buses for travel to and from airports, train stations, and downtown/metropolitan areas. Associated tips are allowable at a rate not to exceed 18%.

The traveler may drive a personal automobile to and from the airport or train station and park there while on business. However, reimbursement shall not be made for these expenses (i.e. tolls, overnight parking fees, mileage) if the expense of driving the personal vehicle is greater than the cost of other direct round-trip transportation from the University or the traveler's residence, as applicable. The traveler is expected to use the least expensive transportation, without consuming excessive travel time. Similarly, if an employee is driven to and from the airport or train station by a relative/friend, mileage and toll reimbursement to the employee is allowed.

J. Personal Car Usage

Employees will be reimbursed for mileage, tolls, and parking when they use their personal vehicle for Mercy business outside of their normal commute to their assigned/regular work location in accordance with the IRS' published [rate](#). The specific normal travel pattern will determine the exact amount of the reimbursement; hence, it is important to outline the logistics to ensure the employee is reimbursed accurately. So that an assessment on the reasonableness of miles claimed may be made, employees are to provide substantiation of the miles traveled which can be obtained from a variety of sites (i.e. *MapQuest*, *Google Maps*). Note that since IRS' published comprehensive rate is inclusive of gas, reimbursement for gas is not permitted.

Intercampus travel guidelines apply to all Mercy University employees (faculty, administration and staff). If you work at more than one Mercy University campus during a single day, you are entitled to reimbursement for travel *between* University campuses. The University's approved mileage between campuses has been calculated and published in the *Intercampus Mileage Reimbursement Table* which can be found in Mercy Connect. Note that the Tarrytown Offices are considered an annex of the Dobbs Ferry campus and there are shuttles that run between the locations; as such, travel between Dobbs Ferry and Tarrytown is not reimbursable.

Under this Policy, employees will be reimbursed for amounts exceeding their normal daily commute. For example, if you normally work at Dobbs Ferry and attend a mid-day meeting at the Bronx campus returning to Dobbs Ferry, you are entitled to reimbursement for the round trip between the Bronx and Dobbs Ferry campuses. As another example, if you work at the Yorktown campus and you stop at the Dobbs Ferry Campus for a meeting on route to the Yorktown campus, you will be reimbursed for the miles in excess of your normal commute.

If an employee is part of the University's Collective Bargaining Unit (i.e. is a union employee) he/she may be subject to additional mileage reimbursement rules. Employees in the Collective Bargaining Unit should consult the most recent agreement.

K. Meal Allowance for Business Travel

The actual cost of meals for business travel is reimbursable when the employee travels overnight. For meals on both domestic and foreign travel, the University will use as a guide the per diem rates published by the U.S. Department of State, which can be found [here](#). The U.S. Department of State daily per diem rates are based on location, and provide a breakdown based upon meal type (breakfast, lunch and dinner). These rates are considered the ceiling for reimbursement for Mercy University. Please note that snacks consumed by an employee while traveling on University business are not reimbursable. Only breakfast, lunch and dinner are reimbursable. Meals and snacks for traveling between Mercy campuses are also not reimbursable. Alcohol is not reimbursable except as provided in section 9. Entertainment Expenses below.

To receive reimbursement, conference brochures, emails or invitations must be submitted to support the validity of these expenses, along with the itemized meal receipt and proof of payment (i.e. the credit card slip alone is not sufficient). In addition, meals included in hotel folios also require itemized receipts. Reasonable amounts for tips are reimbursable and are not to exceed 18%.

L. Entertainment Expenses (Including Lunch and Dinner)

In certain circumstances, the University will reimburse an employee for entertainment expenses, including lunch and dinner. In such cases, the business purpose of the meal and/or expected benefit to the University must be provided. Meal participants must be specifically identified; with the name, title and company affiliation outlined. Alcoholic beverages, while generally not reimbursable, may be reimbursed if an employee is entertaining a potential donor, dignitary, or other official and the amount consumed is reasonable. Note, however, that entertainment expenses, including alcohol, are never reimbursable under a grant or donor fund, even if there is a donor, dignitary or other official participant.

M. Catering and Events

Within the established budget allocation, the appropriate staff officer to the President may approve department/school or University purchase of food and beverage for certain events, meetings, receptions, etc. that primarily involve members of the University community. In the case where a large group is hosted, the list of participants, event flyers, invitation list, rsvp list, sign-in sheets or similar documentation may be provided to substantiate the event. The University food service vendor has the right of first refusal for events held at the Dobbs Ferry and Manhattan campuses. At the Bronx campus, use of the University food service providers is strongly encouraged as these vendors have been vetted by the University. The Yorktown Heights campus may utilize local food vendors that are reasonably priced.

Although alcohol is not normally permitted at University functions, there are some alumni, employee and recruiting events where such may be permissible. A staff officer to the President must approve the alcohol for the event and such should be reasonable. Alcohol purchases for University events should be coordinated through the Purchasing Department.

N. Registrations

Registration fees for conventions, workshops or official meetings are reimbursable. Original receipts must be submitted with the corporate card statement, or *Employee Travel and Meal Reimbursement Form*, whichever is applicable, for the traveler to be reimbursed. Conference brochures, meeting plans, etc. must be submitted as substantiation.

O. Corporate Card

Whenever feasible, the traveler is expected to use the University corporate card to pay for expenses such as registration fees, air/rail travel, lodging, car rental, and other allowable expenses as detailed in this Policy. Cardholders are responsible for attaching original itemized receipts and obtaining approval from their supervisor and the budget owner, if necessary, for the charges. The credit card statement is to be submitted with the *Credit Card Charge Form*, with original itemized receipts and other required substantiation adhering to this Policy, to the Finance Office within ten (10) business days of statement receipt.

The corporate card cannot be used for personal spending and cash advances. In addition, cardholders are to adhere to established credit limits. If a personal expense is inadvertently charged on the corporate card, immediate reimbursement to the University must be submitted via check or money order along with the *Credit Card Charge Form*, for that billing cycle. Disallowed expenses must be immediately reimbursed to the University or will be offset against any monies owed to the employee.

Failure to adhere to this Policy and untimely submission of corporate card reconciliations (i.e. *Credit Card Charge Form*) may result in revocation of the corporate card or dismissal from the University. Please refer to the *Corporate Credit Card Policy* in section 11.13 of the Finance Manual (located in Mercy Connect), for further details, including the application process and what to do in the event of a lost or stolen card.

P. Expenses Related to Meetings, Events and Other University-Related Activities Including Entertaining

It is preferred that tickets for University-sponsored events (i.e. sporting events, Broadway plays, etc.) be purchased with the assistance of the University's Purchasing Department. However, the

University acknowledges that many venues prefer the use of credit cards and that tickets be paid for at the point of sale. Purchase of tickets for events must be approved in advance by the appropriate staff officer. In addition, the business purpose/benefit to the University must be clearly documented along with the participants of the event.

Expenses related to events held at the University (i.e. performance acts, flowers, balloons, etc.) should also be procured with the assistance of the Purchasing Department. In the case that an employee must procure these items directly, the expense should be adequately documented as stated throughout this Policy.

Q. Common Reimbursable Expenses

Expenses that are commonly reimbursable/allowed by the University to the traveler when incurred for University-related business include:

- Air freight/overnight delivery
- Lodging
- Conference Fees
- Baggage Fee
- Gasoline for rental cars or Mercy owned vehicles
- Tolls
- Parking
- Telephone calls (business)
- Telephone calls (personal - one per day)
- Facsimile/Computer Services
- Tips, not exceeding 18%
- Car rental insurance
- Flight protection insurance

R. Non-Reimbursable Expenses

Employees will not be reimbursed for expenses personal in nature or deemed unallowable by the University such as:

- Upgrades to hotel rooms (see section 3 above)
- Upgrades for airfare (see section 2 above)
- Alcohol (unless allowable under sections 9 and 10 above)
- Toiletries (i.e. deodorant, shampoo, etc.)
- Movies
- Health and beauty spas

- Physical fitness fees (i.e. gym fees, tennis/racquetball courts)
- Golf or green fees
- Fines or court fees (i.e. parking violations, moving violations)
- Travel expenses of family members
- Pet kennel fees
- Babysitting fees
- Credit card finance charges or delinquency fees
- Laundry/dry cleaning for trips shorter than 7 days
- Travel life insurance
- Payment of personal services (i.e. employee pays a speaker)
- Any other charge that at the discretion of the Vice President of Finance or their designee Deems is not in the spirit of this Policy

S. Grant Funded Travel

Normally travel funded through grants, whether government (federal, state, local) or private, will follow this Policy. However, grant personnel must familiarize themselves with the terms of the award agreement/contract and the Grantor's policies as those terms and policies will supersede this Policy in the event that they are more conservative. Conversely, if the terms of the agreement/contract are more liberal than the University's policy, this Policy is to be adhered to.

T. Deviations from Policy and Fraudulent Expenses

Providing falsified receipts or intentional submission of personal expenses by an employee can result in termination of employment. Any deviation from the Travel and Expense Policy must be evaluated and approved by the Vice President of Finance of the University or their designee.