5. Travel Policy

Policy Statement

In accordance with the Official Code of Georgia Annotated (OCGA) Section 50-5B-5, the state accounting officer in cooperation with the Office of Planning and Budget is authorized to and shall adopt rules and regulations governing in-state and out-of-state travel and travel reimbursement. These policies should promote economy and efficiency in state government and treat employees fairly and equitably. Under the direction of the State Accounting Office and the Office of Planning and Budget, the University of Georgia has adopted these travel regulations effective October 1, 2006.

Each employee required to travel in the performance of official duties and entitled to authorize reimbursement for expenses incurred shall have prior authorization from his/her department head or other designated official for the purpose of his travel. For in-state travel each department is responsible for maintaining the approval record of employees authorized to travel. It is not necessary to prepare a travel authority request or obtain prior travel authority above the department level for in-state travel. Official travel to points outside the State, but within fifty miles of the state border, will be construed as in-state travel.

In the case of out-of-state travel, it is necessary to obtain prior approval from the appropriate dean, director, or other unit head and fiscal review by the Travel and Encumbrance Section of the University Business Office. Out-of-state travel by a dean or director requires the prior approval of the appropriate vice president. A vice president's out-of-state travel should have prior approval by the Senior Vice President or the President's Office, whichever is applicable for the individual. Travel outside of the continental limits of the United States must be approved first by the appropriate vice president and then by the Office of International Education. No out-of-state travel is to take place, and no claim for reimbursement will be processed without proper authorization as outlined above. Any travel authority submitted after travel has occurred will need to be accompanied by a letter of justification indicating that proper procedures will be followed in the future.

Travel encumbrances will now be treated the same as purchase orders. Travel funding that is encumbered and not spent before June 30 will result in the funding going into a liability account. Departments now have the option for travel that is completed by the end of the first quarter of the next fiscal year (September 30) to be encumbered from the current fiscal year funding. Travel authorities for travel occurring between July 1 and September 30 should clearly indicate which fiscal year funding should come from, either the current year (ended June 30) or the next fiscal year.

The University of Georgia does not provide travel advances. Employees traveling on University business should pay for their expenses and then seek reimbursement. Special arrangements may be made through the Bursar’s office to facilitate Studies Abroad Programs and group travel in some circumstances.

The preferred method for submitting a Travel Authorization is via the Electronic Check Request and Travel Authorization system. A link to this system is provided under the Related Information section of this policy.

Links to the Employee and Non-employee Request for Authority to Travel web forms can be found below under the Forms/Instructions section. Note: The Non-employee Request for Authority to Travel Form is a printable format only. No online data entry is available. It should be printed and submitted to the Accounts Payable department if not filled out through the Electronic Check Request and Travel Authorization system.
For more information and relevant links concerning Travel at UGA, please see the “Accounts Payable Travel Website” link found under Related Information. A PowerPoint addressing the travel regulations at UGA has also been included in Policy Appendices.

Reason for policy

The purpose of this policy is to document that the University will follow the travel rules of the State Accounting Office and comply with all Internal Revenue Service regulations. The University maintains an accountable plan for travel reimbursement. In compliance with the IRS rules for an accountable plan, travel reimbursements are not taxable income.

Procedures

Prior to traveling on an out-of-state trip, the traveler should initiate a travel authority within the Electronic Check Request and Travel Authority system. Please be sure to provide the destination/location of travel on the travel authority. The travel authorization will move through the various approval levels that have been pre-determined for the funding source. Once the authorization has been approved by Accounts Payable, funding will be encumbered for the trip. If airfare is being directly billed to UGA, the travel agency will be allowed to bill only after the travel authorization has been approved by Accounts Payable.

Alternatively, if the traveler's department is not using the Electronic Check Request system, one of the Request for Authority to Travel web forms can be completed for submission. Links to those web forms are provided under the Forms/Instructions section.

Non-employee travel having airfare direct billed to UGA must also submit a Non-Employee Request for Authority to Travel Form to cover the airfare portion only. Please note that the entire social security number of the non-employee does have to be provided on the form. Non-employee travel authorities submitted without the full social security number will not be encumbered.

Travelers are expected to exercise good stewardship of funds when traveling on official business. Any expenditure disallowed by UGA is the responsibility of the employee. Travelers must always obtain receipts except when meal per diem travel allowances are claimed. Not all receipts must be submitted with a Travel Expense Statement but may later be requested for verification or audit. Travel Expense Statements may be selected for audit at any time, and all required receipts must be retained by the traveler for three years after the travel date if not attached to the travel expense report.

Travelers should complete a Travel Expense Statement at the conclusion of travel. The Travel Expense Statement and applicable receipts should be uploaded to a check request within the Electronic Check Request and Travel Authorization system. A link to the Travel Expense Statement can be found under Related Information. The check request will move through the various approval levels that have been pre-determined for the funding source.

By approving the Travel Expense Statement, the approver is attesting that he/she has thoroughly reviewed each transaction and the supporting documentation and has verified that all transactions are allowable expenses. The approver is the “check” in the expense reporting process to identify potential or actual errors in expense reporting and is equally accountable for all expenditures. The approver role should be assigned to an individual who can judge the business appropriateness of each expenditure. The approver must verify that the correct funding sources are charged, in keeping with proper fiscal stewardship. Under no circumstances should an individual approve his/her own expense submission.

Forms/Instructions

Employee Request for Authority to Travel Form
Non-employee Request for Authority to Travel Form

Travel Expense Statement

Additional contacts
Patricia Sims, Travel & Encumbrances Supervisor
Phone Number: (706) 542-2786

Responsibilities

Responsible University Senior Administrator: Vice President for Finance & Administration
Responsible University Administrator: Associate Vice President & Controller
Policy Owner: Accounts Payable
Policy Contact: Jennifer Dunlap
Phone Number: (706) 542-2786

Responsibilities of the Traveler: Travelers are expected to exercise good stewardship of funds when traveling on official business. Any expenditure disallowed by UGA is the responsibility of the employee. Travelers must always obtain receipts except when meal per diem travel allowances are claimed. Not all receipts must be submitted with a Travel Expense Statement but may later be requested for verification or audit. Travel Expense Statements may be selected for audit at any time, and all required receipts must be retained by the traveler for three years after the travel date if not attached to the travel expense report.

Responsibilities of the Supervisor/Approver: By approving the Travel Expense Statement, the approver is attesting that he/she has thoroughly reviewed each transaction and the supporting documentation and has verified that all transactions are allowable expenses. The approver is the “check” in the expense reporting process to identify potential or actual errors in expense reporting and is equally accountable for all expenditures. The approver role should be assigned to an individual who can judge the business appropriateness of each expenditure. The approver must verify that the correct funding sources are charged, in keeping with proper fiscal stewardship. Under no circumstances should an individual approve his/her own expense submission.

Record Retention

Research Grant Records
Number 0472-09-006
These records relate to funded research grant proposals and research activity associated with grant funded projects. Examples of records include: supporting statistics, demographic data, draft proposals, suggested revisions, final proposals, forms, protocols, applications, research/activity reports, progress reports, and summary reports.
Retention: Final research report is permanent. All other records: 7 years after the end of the grant period.

Accounting Records
Number 0472-03-001
This series includes bank statements, purchase requests, purchase orders, requisitions, financial reports, accounts payable and receivable records, write-off records, discrepancy, payment schedules, operating statements, year-end projections, reconciliation and expenditure reports, cancelled checks, check stubs, moving expense records, cost accounting reports, refund/disbursement request records, returned checks, deposit slips, travel records, credit voucher requisition records, cash balances and reconciliations, sales and cash reconciliation records, journal entries, outstanding obligations, refund/disbursement requests, receipts and invoices.
Retention: Monthly and quarterly reports: 1 year. All other records: 5 years.

Credit Card Administration Records
Number 0472-03-013
This series documents administration of credit cards and P-cards issued to institutional staff and units. Records may include: applications, master monthly billing statements, individual card holders’ statements, billing summaries, printouts including vendor analysis by code, number of charges and stores, and use summaries. Retention: 7 years.

Policy Appendices
Travel Regulations at UGA, Training & Development Course Powerpoint

Related information
Electronic Check Request and Travel Authorization System
Accounts Payable Travel Website

Policy Dates
Effective Date:
Date Last Updated: 05/11/2017
Date of Last Review:
Date of Approval:
Previous Version of Policy: