University of North Alabama

Travel Policies

I. INTRODUCTION

The travel policies of the University of North Alabama have been developed in accordance with Alabama law and Internal Revenue Service regulations and guidelines. These policies cover University employees, students and others who travel on approved, official University business.

Employees must obtain prior approval of the immediate supervisor before traveling or obligating University funds. Some types of travel require additional authorization.

When traveling at the University of North Alabama’s expense, University employees should, in all cases, seek to obtain the lowest possible fares and rates by scheduling their travel in a manner that will be the most economical to the University. Personal travel for side trips is not reimbursed. It is the employee’s responsibility to obtain proper documentation of the travel costs when seeking reimbursement for incurred expenses.

In all cases, there must be a clear, documented business purpose for travel. Excessive or unjustifiable costs are not acceptable and will not be reimbursed.

1. General

a. Travel Status - Employees are in travel status when they leave their base. Base is defined as the employees’ primary residence or work location whichever is closest to the travel destination. Work location is defined as the office location to which an employee is assigned.

b. Claim for Travel Expenses – Claim forms for In-State/Out-of-State Travel Expenses are used to record all reimbursable employee travel costs. All claims for travel reimbursement must be made on In-State or Out-of-State travel forms. These forms are located at http://www.una.edu/controller/index.html. The request for reimbursement must be submitted within sixty (60) days after completion of the trip. Original itemized receipts and other documentation of the total costs of the trip must be submitted along with the claim form. When a trip includes both in-state and out-of-state travel, the entire trip should be reported on the out-of-state travel form with actual expenditures claimed.
In cases where the cost center head does not approve payment of the entire cost of travel at the time of the initial request for reimbursement, the entire travel package, with all supporting documentation, must still be submitted to the Business Office with the initial request for partial reimbursement. If funds become available at a later date, the traveler may submit a request for additional reimbursement. A copy of the supporting documentation to the original package should also be attached to subsequent requests for partial reimbursement.

If the claim form is submitted more than 60 days after the traveler’s return, the reimbursement will be taxable income to the employee. Federal tax regulations require that substantiation of reimbursed expenses be made within a reasonable period. Under IRS safe-harbor guidelines, that period is 60 days. Tax withholding will be made from a subsequent salary payment.

The form must be signed on the line marked “Traveler’s Signature” by the employee who traveled and is seeking reimbursement. The employee’s signature acknowledges acceptance and terms of reimbursement.

Any expenses covered by a third party should be noted on the travel form and should not be included in the reimbursement request.

c. **Documentation of Costs/Approval of Travel Reimbursement** - After returning from official travel, employees are required to present original itemized receipts for all travel expenses for which a claim is made. Original receipts are required if requesting more than the University’s limit on daily meal expenses allowed without a receipt ($34/day). If using a personal credit card as method of payment appropriate supporting documentation is required for that as well.

Conference registration fees paid by a participating University employee are reimbursable following the conference. To claim reimbursement, any conference brochures or other literature documenting the expense, a registration receipt, including dollar amount and method of payment, or other proof of payment must be submitted along with the claim for travel form.

d. **Approval of Travel Reimbursement by Supervisor, Dean, Director or Department Head** - The University requires that claims for travel expenses forms be signed by the supervisor (not a designee or stamp) of the employee who is requesting reimbursement for official travel. By signing the expense report, the supervisor is certifying the expenses have been used in accordance with the University of North Alabama’s Travel Policies. Even if the traveler is the principal investigator or project
director for the account making the reimbursement, the claim for travel expenses form must be signed by his/her supervisor.

Deans and department heads may establish additional reimbursement approval policies and procedures for accounts for which they are responsible, but may not delegate approval authority.

e. Exceptions – Generally, any exception to University travel policies must have prior written authorization by the applicable functional Vice President and the President or Vice President for Business and Financial Affairs. However, rules promulgated by the State of Alabama have precedence.

2. Travel Reimbursement for Executive Officers - The President’s and Vice Presidents’ request for travel reimbursement must be reviewed and approved by the Vice President for Business & Financial Affairs. Reimbursement requests from the Vice President for Business & Financial Affairs must be reviewed and approved by the President.

3. Contract and Grant Travel Reimbursement - Travel reimbursement from contract and grant funds require a claim for travel expenses form be signed by the principal investigator or project director officially responsible for the contract or grant account; this person may not defer this responsibility to anyone else. In addition, the travel expenses form must be signed by the investigator’s or project director’s supervisor.

If a University employee’s travel is funded by a contract or grant, that employee should obtain guidance from the Controller’s Office. Reimbursement will be subject to the University’s travel policies, unless the contract or grant prohibits reimbursement of certain expenses.

4. Travel During Faculty Professional Development Leave - With prior approval from the Provost, travel expenses incurred during a faculty professional development leave period may be reimbursed if they are connected with official travel in the performance of University duties.

5. Travel Expenses Advancement - The University does not advance funds for travel expenses to its employees.

6. Multiple Reimbursements/Third Party/Other Organizations - No employee may be reimbursed by both the University and another organization for the same travel expenses.

7. Prohibited Expenses – The University does not reimburse employees for the following:
   a. Purchases of alcoholic beverages
   b. Travel expenses incurred by spouses or other family members.

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c. Cost of passports (unless pre-approved by the appropriate divisional VP), safe charges, mini bars, in-room movie, valet services, recreational activities (even when such activities are part of a business meeting or conference) and excursions.

d. Charges for traffic or parking violations, or other expenses incurred such as lost keys, keys locked in vehicles, GPS systems, maps and atlas.

e. Medical expenses incurred during travel may not be reimbursed as travel costs.

f. Charges for internet/telephone usage may not be reimbursed unless business related and specifically approved by the employee’s supervisor.

8. **Special Travel Requirements**-If an employee has special travel requirements that are not covered by the above policies, contact the University’s Controller’s Office prior to travel for approval.

9. **Early Arrival/Early Departure** - If an employee chooses to arrive early for a conference or meeting to take advantage of reduced airfare, the employee must reconcile the standard economy airfare with the reduced airfare, the additional hotel and meal expenses, and other expenses that were incurred because of early arrival. This reconciliation should be submitted with the claim for travel expenses form.

10. **Interrupted Travel** - The employee assumes all additional costs associated with deviating from the official travel itinerary if the employee interrupts the official travel for reasons of personal convenience.

11. **Cancellation of Trip** – Please contact the Controller’s Office at ext. 4232 or via e-mail when an official trip has to be cancelled to prevent potential reimbursement problems.

II. **TRANSPORTATION EXPENSES – MODE OF TRAVEL**

1. **Air** – Only coach/economy fares are reimbursable when traveling on commercial airline for official University business. An original receipt, including method of payment must be attached to the travel reimbursement form. Employees should plan well in advance and obtain the most economical fare available. Airfare may be purchased using the University Purchasing Card with prior approval of the Director of Procurement or the Controller.

2. **Taxi** – A taxi may be hired for transportation when no other economical public transportation is readily available. If a taxi is hired for any trip except traveling to and from the airport, a written explanation must accompany the claim for travel expenses form.

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3. **University-Owned Vehicles** - University-owned vehicles are available on a first-come, first-serve basis to properly licensed employees of the University. A valid current driver’s license is required. A request for use of University vehicle(s) can be found on the Controller’s webpage at [http://www.una.edu/controller/pdf/RequestUNAvehicleForm.pdf](http://www.una.edu/controller/pdf/RequestUNAvehicleForm.pdf)

A completed form must be submitted to Controller’s Office before a vehicle(s) assignment can be made. Except in extreme circumstances, vehicle keys will not be issued earlier than 24 hours prior to the trip.

University-owned vehicles may not be used for personal use.

4. **Privately Owned Automobile Transportation** - Employees who use their own automobiles for official travel will be reimbursed at the current federal mileage rate. The University makes reimbursement for the round-trip mileage traveled from the employee’s base (see “Travel Status” of page 1) and destination or for the actual miles traveled from origin to destination and back, whichever is less. The mileage between an employee’s residence and official travel station is not reimbursable. Current mileage rates are available from the Controller’s Office.

When two or more passengers travel in one private automobile on official University business, only one employee may claim reimbursement for mileage.

When University-owned or private automobiles are used for official travel, any parking/or toll charges incurred are reimbursable.

Reimbursement for round trip mileage cannot exceed the cost of a roundtrip flight. The employee will be reimbursed at whichever is lowest, the current mileage rate or the lowest discounted airfare. This is called airfare-in-lieu of mileage.

If a personal vehicle is used to drive to an airport for a flight or to pick up an official University guest, the traveler will be reimbursed at the current effective mileage rate.

Employees traveling within the Florence city limits should submit a claim for travel expenses form to claim reimbursement. However, for frequent local travel, claims should not be submitted on a per-trip basis. Rather, employees who make frequent local trips should keep a mileage log and submit claims at appropriate intervals. The mileage log must be submitted with the claim for travel expenses form. The claim for travel expenses form must include the date, destination, and reason for the trip, along with the recorded mileage. Employees may not be reimbursed for travel to their work location.

Under normal circumstances, employees will not be reimbursed for intra-campus travel when a personal auto is used. However, if extenuating circumstances exist, documentation of these circumstances must be submitted with the claim for travel expenses form.

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NOTE: The interval of claims must be less than 60 days. Any expense turned in for reimbursement more than 60 days after the expense was incurred is treated as taxable income subject to withholding per IRS regulations.

5. **Rental Vehicles** – Generally, the University does not accept sight-seeing, transportation to and from the airport, or to and from meals as justification for renting a vehicle.

If renting in the Florence area, please contact the Procurement Office for information on vehicle rental. This will insure obtaining a contracted price and appropriate insurance coverage.

Except in special circumstances, requests for reimbursement for a vehicle rental cannot exceed the actual mileage at the current effective mileage rate.

When renting a vehicle, the primary driver should waive collision insurance as this is covered under the University’s current insurance plan.

The University carries liability insurance to protect the University. Drivers may want to carry an expanded rider on their own policy to cover themselves.

Employees should remember the following when renting a rental car:

a. When renting locally from an approved vendor, use a UNA purchase order to ensure all appropriate contract language exists

b. Waive CDW coverage at time of rental

Prior to leaving the rental car location, the vehicle must be inspected and any damage is to be noted on the rental agreement and acknowledged in writing by a representative of the rental car company. When returning the vehicle, the vehicle should be inspected and if any damage was sustained while in the possession of the renter, an accident report should be filed with the rental car company and a copy provided to the Procurement Office.

III. **IN-STATE TRAVEL**

**Reimbursement for Travel** - The guidelines for In-State travel reimbursements are governed by the Code of Alabama 1975, 36-7-20 through 36-7-23, as amended.

Requests for reimbursement for employee travel must be submitted on a travel claim form found at [http://www.una.edu/controller/pdf/IN%20STATE%202011.xlsx](http://www.una.edu/controller/pdf/IN%20STATE%202011.xlsx). Travel claim forms must be filed within 60 days of travel. Travel reimbursements submitted subsequent to 60 days after the completion date of the trip will be treated as income.

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according to IRS regulations. Tax withholding will be made from a subsequent salary payment.

1. Travel within the State of Alabama for official University business is reimbursed on a per diem basis for expenses at the current effective rate as approved by State law. Receipts for items covered by per diem do not need to be submitted with the claim for travel expenses form. Overnight per diem allowance covers lodging, meals and gratuities.

2. When an employee's official travel requires an overnight stay, the per diem reimbursement for each day or portion of a day will be at the current per diem rate which is currently seventy-five dollars ($75) per day.

An overnight stay is required to receive a daily per diem allowance. Under no circumstances will an employee be paid an overnight travel allowance at the official station, base or primary residence. If state business requires the traveler to be away from the base or official station on weekends or holidays, the traveler will be entitled to reimbursement for travel those days.

3. No travel allowance shall be paid for a trip of less than six hours duration. For travel that does not require an overnight stay, the traveler shall be paid a meal allowance. No meal allowance will be paid if the traveler remains in the city where his/her home or base is located.

4. An employee who does not wish to be reimbursed for meal expenses incurred while traveling should attach to his or her claim for travel expenses form a signed statement waiving the meal allowance.

5. Only an employee may decide to waive per diem. A University department may not force an employee to waive per diem.

6. When an employee's travel expenses are less than the per diem allowance, the employee may choose to be reimbursed for the actual cost of travel. In this case, a signed statement waiving the per diem allowance should be included with the claim for travel expenses form.

7. When an employee's lodging is paid for by a third party, the amount paid should be deducted from the amount of per diem due to the employee.

IV. OUT-OF-STATE TRAVEL

Reimbursement for Travel - Requests for reimbursement for Out-of-State employee travel must be submitted on a Claim for Out-of-State Travel Expenses within 60 days of

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Travel reimbursements submitted subsequent to 60 days after the completion date of the trip will be treated as income according to IRS regulations.

1. **Lodging** – Itemized original receipts must accompany the Claim for Out-of-State Travel Expenses form when an employee presents documentation requesting reimbursement for lodging expenses. **Credit card receipts alone are unacceptable.**

   Dates of occupancy, number of nights claimed for reimbursement, and the total amount charged for lodging must be recorded on the Claim for Out-of-State Expenses form.

2. **Meals** – Employees traveling Out-of-State on official University business are reimbursed for actual expenses up to $34 per day (meals and tips) without receipts. If actual expenses exceed $34 per day, reimbursement up to $60 per day may be requested, with itemized receipts for the entire amount. Meals for persons other than the individual on travel status should be submitted in accordance with the University’s Meals and Entertainment policies.

3. **Gratuities** – Gratuities in excess of 20% for food service will not be reimbursed. Tips to food servers, taxi drivers, and room cleaning staff are reimbursable when they are at acceptable levels and deemed to be reasonable and necessary.

4. **Baggage Handling** – Only baggage handling expenses incurred when traveling to or from the place of lodging or when traveling to or from the airport or train station will be reimbursed.

   Baggage fees charged by airlines may be reimbursed for up to two bags each way unless there is an approved business reason for carrying additional bags.

   The claim form for Out-of-State Travel expenses may be found at [http://www.una.edu/controller/pdf/OUT%20OF%20STATE%202011.xlsx](http://www.una.edu/controller/pdf/OUT%20OF%20STATE%202011.xlsx)

V. **INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL** – Travel is considered international when it occurs anywhere outside the United States or its territories.

1. **Travel Claim Forms** - Requests for reimbursement for international employee travel should be submitted on the Claim form for Out-of-State travel expenses. All costs listed on the travel claim must be recorded in U.S. Currency and the exchange rate stated on the claim form.

   Currency exchange fees may be claimed only when you are required to convert to/from U.S. currency. You may not claim reimbursement for losses due to currency conversion.

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Note: American Express Corporate Card charges are converted by American Express to U.S. dollars and cents and the exchange rate noted. Other major credit card companies convert foreign currency charges to dollars and cents but don’t always show the exchange rate.

Request for reimbursement for travel expenses must be filed on the Claim for Out-of-State Travel Expenses form within 60 days of travel. Receipts and other documentation of the total costs of the trip must be submitted along with the travel claim form. Documentation must include information detailing meals included in a registration fee. This might be the conference registration information or the daily meeting schedules. Any expenses paid by a third party should be noted on the Claim for Out-of-State Travel Expenses form.

2. **Travel Approval** – Before using federal contract or grant funds to travel internationally, employees must gain prior approval from the sponsoring agency unless originally approved in the contract or grant.

3. **Reimbursement for International Travel**

   Actual lodging expenses will be reimbursed up to the maximum federal rate allowable in each city. Receipts are required.

   Meals and incidental expenses will be reimbursed at the current federal M&IE rate for the destination. Receipts are not required.

   The U.S. State Department Office of Allowances publishes foreign per diem rates for lodging and M&IE. Current rates may be viewed at the following website address: [http://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=184&menu_id=78](http://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=184&menu_id=78)

4. Reimbursement for insurance for international travel or medical coverage must have prior approval from the traveler’s divisional Vice-President.

All other guidelines governing Out-of-State travel reimbursement also govern international travel reimbursement.

VI. **NON-EMPLOYEE TRAVEL**

1. **Independent Contractors** – Those individuals and companies that have contracted with the University to provide professional services as defined by IRS regulations are independent contractors (IC). If the agreement with the IC provides for a fee plus travel expenses, reimbursement is made according to the contract signed by the parties but may not exceed the limits stated in the Out-of-State travel policies.
2. **Volunteers** – Individuals who perform services for The University of North Alabama without receiving compensation for those services are considered volunteers.

   a. **Eligibility Requirements** - Volunteers are eligible for actual travel expense reimbursement when they meet all of the following conditions:

      • A properly approved University Volunteer form is on file with the Office of Human Resources. Blank forms may be obtained from that office.

      • They are traveling at the specific request of the University on official University business.

      • They do not receive compensation from any source for performing this service for the University.

      • They are not employees of the University or of any other state entity that would subject them to state per diem regulations

   b. **Reimbursement for Volunteer Travel** – Requests for travel expense reimbursement for volunteers should be made on the requisition claim form and signed by the department head for which the service was performed.

      • The service performed by the volunteer should be described in detail and the volunteer's eligibility for reimbursement established on the disbursement requisition form. It should be clearly stated on the claim form that no fee for services is being paid.

      • An itemized record and all original receipts for the actual transportation, lodging, meals, and miscellaneous expenses incurred by the volunteer should be submitted with the disbursement requisition form.

VII. **FACULTY AND STAFF RETREATS**

Departments planning retreats must contact the Controller at 765-4232 for detailed instructions regarding retreat planning and expenditure approval.

**Agenda and Participant List** – A retreat agenda, along with a list of all retreat participants and speakers/trainers, must be included with the reimbursement form(s). This information serves as documentation of group expenditures.
Reimbursement for Retreats – Travel expenses, including the actual cost of transportation, lodging, meals, and miscellaneous expenses, incurred by employees while participating in a University of North Alabama retreat are considered reimbursable employee travel expenses.

1. **In-State Retreats** – Travel expenses for In-State retreats will be reimbursed in the same manner as other In-State travel expenses if participants incur out-of-pocket expenses for food, lodging, and gratuities. If the University pays for some, but not all retreat expenses, the employee is entitled to per diem minus the amount paid by the University.

Reimbursement for lodging, meals, and other services will not be made to retreat participants when all expenses and gratuities are paid directly by the retreat organizer to the vendors furnishing the accommodations, meals, and services. In such cases, participants are not eligible for per diem reimbursement.

2. **Out-of-State Retreats** – Travel expenses for retreats conducted out of the State will be reimbursed in the same manner as other Out-of-State travel expenses if participants incur out-of-pocket expenses.

   a. **Family Travel with Employee** – The University does not reimburse employees for travel expenses incurred by their spouses or other family members.

   b. **Retreat Expenses not related to travel** – Expenses, such as class materials or conference room fees are not subject to State per diem restrictions and may be claimed for reimbursement.

   c. **Employee Stay with Family** – The University does not reimburse family for employee stays.

### VIII. STUDENT TEAM AND RECOGNIZED STUDENT ORGANIZATION TRAVEL

Depending on the circumstances, there are two methods for paying for team travel. One is to reimburse each student separately. The other method advances money to the coach or advisor with that person responsible for reconciling expenses after the trip.

To obtain advanced funds for student team travel:

1. **At least 10 days prior to travel** the coach or advisor must submit a voucher (payable to the group advisor) to the Controller’s Office for a team travel advance. List the travelers (students and advisors), the purpose of the trip, the

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itinerary and the budget. The advance should be enough to cover all anticipated expenditures. A check will be prepared.

2. **Within 10 days after completion of the trip** submit a detailed reconciliation (expense report) with authorized signature to the Controller’s Office. This should include itemized receipts for all expenditures. Follow the University's guidelines for expenditure limits.

   **For team travel only**, you may choose to give students a cash meal allowance rather than submit receipts for individual meals. In such cases, students must sign a verification slip that they have received the funds. If the advisor pays for meals for the group, attach appropriate receipts. A University purchasing card may be used for some charges. Refer to the University’s Purchasing Card policy for what is allowed.

   Lodging and transportation follow standard University policies.

3. The Accounts Payable Office will review trip reconciliation and receipts. If less than the amount advanced is spent, the remainder should be returned with the reconciliation. If the amount spent exceeds amount advanced, a request for travel reimbursement form for the difference should be sent with the reconciliation.

University of North Alabama funds can be used for student field trips only if:

1. the trip is an integral part of the lesson plan in a course for academic credit -or-

2. the student is paying a fee (above and beyond normal tuition fees) to participate in the trip (e.g., SGA sponsored spring break trip where student pays trip expenses through the SGA.).