

Procedure 20335b Travel Procedure - Hotel and Motel Accommodations

The university will reimburse individuals traveling on official university business for reasonable and necessary expenses incurred. Travel expense accounts are open to the public and must be able to sustain the test of public review. The following guidelines are not meant to supersede lower limits established by departmental policies, budgetary constraints or travel circumstances. The lodging limits apply to all faculty, staff and students, guests, consultants, and interviewees for whom the university may be paying travel expenses. The limits apply to the use of all university public funds including sponsored programs.

Expenses may vary with the area traveled but all expenditures must be reasonable. Most hotels/motels give a commercial discount to state employees traveling on official business. The traveler should request governmental rates when registering or making reservations. The traveler should also use the services of one of our contract travel agencies to ensure that the most economical lodging accommodations are obtained. Reimbursement for lodging expenses cannot be made to a traveler that is "negligent" in canceling room reservations for a trip he/she did not take. Direct billing of hotel bills from the hotel to the university is allowed as long as all pertinent information and receipts are provided, and all expenses meet the guidelines of the travel policy.

A. Lodging Maximum Allowable Guidelines

Domestic Lodging Guidelines: Lodging and M&IE limits for domestic travel are the CONUS rates which are maintained by the federal government. Under CONUS limits, a room **excluding** taxes and surcharges is \$110.00 unless the city or county is listed

https://www.controller.vt.edu/content/dam/controller_vt_edu/procedures/travel/20335r.pdf

Non-Domestic Guidelines:

For travel to territories not held by the U.S., departments may obtain non-domestic lodging guidelines at the U.S. Department of State's web site.

https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=184&menu_id=78

For travel to all U.S. Territories (which includes Alaska and Hawaii), departments may obtain non-domestic lodging guidelines at the U.S. Department of Defense web site

<https://www.travel.dod.mil/Travel-Transportation-Rates/Per-Diem/Per-Diem-Rate-Lookup/>

Note: Rates are subject to change each month for international locations.

Lodging Guideline Exceptions

Lodging rates up to 100% above published limits are allowable when a more economical alternative is unavailable. Each traveler is responsible for making a good faith effort to acquire lodging within the guidelines before obtaining lodging that exceeds published rates. Documentation of justification for exceptions is required in the travel reimbursement request's comments section.

Lodging rates up to 100% more than the guidelines must be approved by the traveler's authorized approver. The authorized approver's electronic approval on the travel reimbursement request fulfills this requirement.

B. Other Lodging Notes

Double Room - When two or more people are traveling on official business and staying in the same hotel room, the allowable lodging rate is the lodging rate allowed in the area they are staying, plus the cost charged by the hotel for any additional persons in the room. (Example – If two travelers share a room and the maximum lodging rate in that area is \$110.00 per night (exclusive of tax), the maximum each traveler can be reimbursed is \$55.50. If the hotel charges an additional \$10 per night for a second person to occupy the room, each traveler can be reimbursed a maximum of \$65.50 per night.) Documentation from the hotel listing additional hotel charges for each additional person, per room must be provided. As with non-shared lodging, up to 100% above the guideline rate is allowable with authorized approver approval on the reimbursement request. **Second traveler expenses**– A traveler can claim expenses for another traveler if an itemized receipt of all expenses is provided. The M&IE **cannot** be claimed for another traveler because the M&IE is not an actual expense but rather it is a reasonable allowance for meals and incidental expenses.

No cost lodging - If a traveler stays overnight with relatives or friends where no charge is incurred, an explanation should be made on the reimbursement request so that meal or lodging expenses will not be questioned. The traveler may take the host(s) to a restaurant for one meal in lieu of hotel accommodations. An itemized receipt is required, and the names of the hosts must be provided.

Apartment Rental – If a rental unit is needed for extended-stay lodging, a written request for permission must be sent to the Travel Supervisor at the Controller's Office prior to any rental commitment. This request must include a cost justification for the traveler to use the rental unit in lieu of other hotel/motel accommodations. The cost comparison statement should show the total cost for using the alternate accommodation and the length of the contract, the cost of usual accommodation, and the net savings. The Office of Real Estate Management must approve the "Waiver for University Lease Request" when the lease will be in the name of the traveler and is

for a period that exceeds six months. If the lease is six months or less, only the cost justification is required to be submitted with the travel reimbursement request. The traveler pays the lease and submits a travel reimbursement request including a receipt for rent payment and a copy of the written approval letter in lieu of hotel receipts. A lease in the name of the University will also need to be reviewed and approved by Real Estate Management regardless of the time-period for the lease.

Advance Lodging Payments – Advance payments using the HokieMart requisition form for lodging are limited to one night's lodging but are discouraged because of the additional administrative work involved with making reservations. Actual advance payments using the travel charge card, other credit cards, or personal cash payments will not be reimbursed prior to the trip.

Selecting a Meeting Site – In selecting locations for meetings, departments shall give first preference to State-owned facilities. Any public body conducting public business (meetings of policy, advisory, or supervisory boards) shall take care that public funds are expended prudently.

Sponsored Conferences – When a department is planning a sponsored conference, the Lodging and M&IE guidelines in these procedures should be used as a measure of reasonableness. Departments should follow the Department of General Services, Division of Purchases and Supply procurement guidelines and be prudent in selecting the most cost beneficial option available to the Commonwealth. Documentation supporting the procurement must justify any costs more than the guidelines based on the overall conference procurement costs (i.e., free room space or other no or low-cost amenities needed for meetings.) For reimbursements where these guidelines are used, "Cost based on Procurement Guidelines" must be clearly stated on the reimbursement request.

C. Procedures

The traveler must present claims for reimbursement on an electronic travel reimbursement request. The traveler must electronically approve the certification statement on the document and the system will route the document to his/her supervisor/authorized approver for approval. The reimbursement request should be presented for review and approval within thirty working days of the trip's completion. In all instances, the travel reimbursement must be submitted to the authorized approver within sixty (60) days after return from the business trip. The supervisor/authorized approver must electronically approve the reimbursement request within five (5) days. The Chrome River system will electronically route the request to the Controller's Office for review and payment.

Controller's Office Procedure

The name and location of each hotel or motel, along with the itemized invoice or itemized receipt for lodging, must be submitted with the travel reimbursement request. A copy of all letters whereby approval was granted for exceptions to university and state lodging procedures must be attached to the reimbursement request.