

Procedure 20335e: Air Transportation

Rules and procedures for the purchase of air travel services, both on public carriers and charter aircraft, are based on the requirement that all university expenditures must be necessary and reasonable, and that the mechanism of payment must be in accordance with state and university procedures.

Airfare Overview

Domestic Airfare

Domestic airfare is defined as travel within the continental United States. Economy class tickets must be reserved for all domestic flights.

Note: The Controller's Office does not recommend the purchase of 'Basic Economy' tickets. 'Basic Economy' tickets may not allow for residual value or services such as carry-on bags, seat assignments prior to check-in, or flight changes or refunds. 'Basic Economy' travelers are often the last to board the plane. As each airline may have a different name for this ticket class, refer to the airline's website for additional information.

International Airfare

International airfare is defined as travel outside of the continental United States. Economy class tickets must be reserved for all flights with an in-air travel time of less than eight (8) consecutive hours.

Premium economy class tickets may be reserved for flights with an in-air travel time that exceeds eight (8) consecutive hours.

Business class tickets may be reserved for long-haul flights with an in-air travel time that exceeds ten (10) consecutive hours when there is also a business meeting conducted within three hours of landing.

Reimbursement for first class travel is strictly prohibited.

Note: The term "consecutive hours" applies to one flight from take-off to landing. The traveler may not combine in-air travel times on a multi-leg itinerary to meet the requirements for the purchase of premium economy or business class tickets.

If these requirements for premium economy or business class are not met, ticket upgrades are only allowable under the following circumstances:

- A cost analysis is obtained at the time of booking demonstrating no additional expense to the university.
- The traveler pays for the additional cost with personal funds or accumulated travel rewards.
- The cost is covered by non-university resources.

Alternative Airports

Travelers with a base point of Blacksburg, VA or Roanoke, VA may elect to fly from any airport within 300 miles without a documented cost comparison. This allows travelers to select flights from a number of airports based on lower overall cost, scheduling convenience, better flight availability, and decreased overall travel time. Airports within 300 miles include but are not limited to:

- Charlotte International Airport
- Piedmont Triad International Airport (Greensboro)
- Raleigh-Durham International Airport
- Richmond International Airport
- Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport
- Ronald Regan Washington National Airport
- Washington Dulles International Airport

Baggage Fees

Airlines may charge for baggage fees (carry on or checked). A receipt is required for any baggage fee. An explanation for the business necessity for more than one (1) checked bag per traveler must be included on the Chrome River expense report. Refer to the airline's website for information on baggage size restrictions and costs.

Cancelled Airline Tickets

Cancelled tickets usually hold some residual value depending upon specific airline policies and restrictions. The traveler should contact the airline or contract travel agency prior to cancellation to inquire about refunds or credits. Future use(s) of credit must align with the fund

source used for the initial purchase. Travelers purchasing their ticket with personal funds may not be reimbursed for cancelled tickets and any credit would be considered for personal use.

Combining Business and Personal Travel

Business Travel and Vacation Leave may be combined if approval is obtained from the authorized approver. In such cases, reimbursable air transportation expenses will correspond with a round trip to the designated area of official business. Reimbursement will be appropriate only for the time during which official business is conducted. If the traveler leaves the designated area after business is concluded, there will be no reimbursement from that moment on, except for those expenses relating to the second half of the round trip. The university will not be responsible for any expenses related to accident or injury while the employee is not on official business.

A cost comparison is required to document the cost of air transportation for official business travel when combined with personal travel. The cost comparison should document the cost of airfare for only the business days of travel taking into consideration travel times to/from the official business location. Since historical airfare prices are not available after a flight has occurred, the cost comparison **must** be completed at the time of booking. The cost comparison should be attached to the Chrome River expense report.

If the cost of an airline ticket including personal travel is more expensive, reimbursement will be at the amount reflected on the cost comparison. If the cost of the ticket including personal travel is less expensive, the full amount of the ticket may be reimbursed.

Fly America Act

When scheduling international travel that is reimbursed from federal or federal flow-through awards, researchers must ensure that all flights are scheduled on U.S. flag air carriers or on foreign air carriers that code share with a U.S. flag carrier. For any travel that is federally funded and not on a U.S. air carrier, the traveler must complete and attach the *Fly America Act Exception Form* to their travel authorization, PCard reconciliation, and/or Chrome River expense report. For additional information, visit the Office of Sponsored Programs website at <https://www.research.vt.edu/osp/resources/fly-america-act.html> and review [Procedure 40002](#).

Insurance - Emergency Medical and Safety Insurance:

Emergency medical and safety insurance for faculty, staff, and students is required for international travel per [Global Travel Policy 1070](#).

Virginia Tech emergency medical and safety insurance can be purchased via HokieMart, P-Card, or personal funds through the Office of Risk Management and Insurance. For additional information, visit <https://risk.vt.edu/insurance/international.html>

- Select the Travel Accident Tab
- Complete the enrollment process
 - Note: Enrollment for study abroad programs will be completed by the Global Education Office

Insurance - Travel Protection

Travel protection insurance, also known as travel insurance, is not an allowable expense.

Private Aircraft

The use of personal aircraft is permitted for official state travel with prior approval from the Dean or Vice President of the appropriate area.

- Documentation of comparable costs for other travel means must be included in the expense report. The reimbursement shall be limited to the most economical means of travel available at that time.
 - For example, if it is less costly to travel by commercial carrier, the reimbursement shall be limited to the lowest cost commercial carrier ticket available.
- Airplane nautical miles (NMs) should be converted into statute miles (SMs) or regular miles using the formula (1 NM equals 1.15077945 SMs). As of January 1, 2025, the airplane mileage rate is \$1.75 per regular mile

Contact the Office of Risk Management (540-231-7439 or riskmanagement@vt.edu) for insurance requirements.

Purchasing Public Carrier Tickets

As required by the Commonwealth of Virginia, university departments may use any of the following payment methods to purchase airline tickets for business travel.

- Travel Agencies (Contract & Non-Contract)
- Bank of America (BOA) Visa Corporate Purchasing Card (P-Card)
- Traveler's (BOA) Visa Travel Card
- Personal Funds

The use of university contracts and the BOA Visa charge cards are restricted to university business travel. No personal travel reservations may be arranged through these university procurement means.

Airline tickets may be purchased up to 90 days before the travel occurs. If it can be documented that there are substantial savings made by purchasing the ticket earlier, or if there is reason to believe seats could become unavailable, an exception to this policy may be granted.

University departments who are responsible for group travel, such as study abroad groups, are encouraged to utilize one of the university's contract travel agencies.

Contract Travel Agencies

The following vendors are on contract with the university to provide travel management services:

AAA Corporate Travel

Phone: 540-553-8678; 1-800-354-4514

Web Page: www.aaacorporatetravel.com

Email: corporatetravel4@aca.aaa.com

Deem Online Travel Booking Tool: Accessed through OneCampus

Covington Travel

Phone: 1-888-747-7077

Web Page: <http://www.covingtontravel.com>

Email: vatech@covtrav.com

Whether booking directly with an agent or through the Deem Online Travel Booking Tool, a HokieMart PO or requisition # is required to complete the booking. This is generated from a HokieMart Travel Agency Authorization. The estimated cost of the ticket may be used when creating the requisition. It is not necessary for the amount entered on the requisition to be an exact match of the final ticket cost.

P-Card

The BOA Visa Corporate Purchasing Card (P-Card) may be used for the purchase of airline tickets for business travel. Efforts should be made to obtain the lowest cost airfare and prudent judgment should be used when choosing an Internet travel service site. The receipt for the purchase must be retained and included with the cardholder's reconciliation for that statement period.

Note: The P-Card cannot be used for any other travel expense (ex: lodging).

Bank of America (BOA) Travel Card

Travelers may use their BOA Visa travel card (Travel card) for the purchase of airline tickets for business travel. Efforts should be made to obtain the lowest cost airfare and prudent judgment should be used when choosing an Internet travel service site.

The traveler must provide receipts/documentation showing the total cost, confirmed service, and ticket class (ex: economy, business) in their Chrome River expense report. The traveler **cannot** be reimbursed for the cost of the ticket until after the trip occurs.

Travelers receive \$500,000 in business travel accident insurance and \$5,000 in baggage insurance when they use their BOA Visa Corporate travel card to purchase airline tickets.

Personal Funds

Travelers may elect to use a personal credit card for the purchase of airline tickets for business travel.

Efforts should be made to obtain the lowest cost airfare and prudent judgment should be used when choosing an Internet travel service site.

The traveler must provide receipts/documentation showing the total cost, confirmed service, and ticket class (ex: economy, business) in their Chrome River expense report. The traveler **cannot** be reimbursed for the cost of the ticket until after the trip occurs.

Seat Selections

Seat selections (aisle, middle, window) at no cost may be selected at time of booking. If seats at no cost are not available at time of booking, seat selections will be assigned by the airline at time of check-in for the flight. Charges for seat selections, unless required by the airline as part of the booking process (ex: Allegiant Air), are not an allowable or reimbursable expense.

Sponsored Funds

Certain sponsors may have travel regulations that are more restrictive than the university's travel procedures. It is the responsibility of principal investigators and department administrators to understand and comply with the expenditure guidelines outlined by that sponsor. In cases where guidelines are unclear, faculty and staff are encouraged to contact their post-award manager in the Office of Sponsored Programs before purchasing a ticket. Departments will be responsible for any travel expenditures that are deemed unallowable by the sponsor.

State or Chartered Aircraft

The University has a Citation Excel and a Citation Sovereign aircraft available for air transportation. The Citation Excel seats a maximum of eight passengers, while the Citation Sovereign seats a maximum of nine.

- In accordance with university policy, there is a three-passenger minimum for all flights. Exceptions to the three-passenger minimum requirement must be submitted in writing through the ATS Director of Aviation to the Assistant Vice President, Business Services for approval.
- For availability and rates, contact the Air Transportation Services Flight Operations Manager at 231-2636.
- State aircraft may be used on official university business, however the use of state or chartered aircraft for university related air transportation requirements must be approved and scheduled by Air Transportation Services.

Travel Accommodations

Certain medical needs may require a travel accommodation. Requests for travel accommodations should be directed to [ADA and Accessibility Services](#) within the Office for Civil Rights Compliance and Prevention Education. If a travel accommodation is approved, type 'travel accommodation' in the Chrome River description associated with the airline ticket purchase. The travel accommodation will be confirmed with the Office for Civil Rights Compliance and Prevention Education.

Upgrade/Change Fees

Charges for changes to tickets/reservations to accommodate personal comfort, convenience or taste are not allowable or reimbursable. An explanation for the business necessity for upgrade or change fees must be included on the Chrome River expense report. Receipts for change fees or upgrades are required.

Wifi

An explanation for the business necessity for Air Wifi must be included on the Chrome River expense report. A receipt is required for the purchase.