

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION	FINA Administration and Finance
POLICY NUMBER	FINA 2.50
POLICY TITLE	Travel
SCOPE OF POLICY	USC System
DATE OF REVISION	August 20, 2025
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Executive Vice President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE	University Finance – Controller’s Office

PURPOSE

This policy ensures compliance with federal and state regulations for domestic and foreign travel and sets forth the process for reimbursing official University business travel expenditures incurred by employees and students. *This policy does not cover relocation.*

DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

Home Sharing: Residential property that is rented to a visitor for fewer than 30 days through a centralized online platform (e.g., Airbnb, VRBO, Roomorama, HomeAway, etc.).

Official Business: Authorized activities associated with an individual’s University duties and responsibilities that directly advance the goals, objectives, and mission of the University.

Reasonable Expense: An expense that is ordinary and necessary, not excessive or extreme, and reflects a prudent decision to incur the expense on behalf of official University business.

Ridesharing: A service that prearranges one-time shared transportation on short notice, usually arranged through an online-enabled or mobile application that connects passengers with drivers using personal vehicles (e.g., Uber, Lyft, Sidecar, etc.).

Travel Authorization: A pre-trip estimate of the total expenses, which details respective expense types (e.g., airfare, lodging, etc.) and funding sources.

POLICY STATEMENT

This policy is applicable to all travel, regardless of the source of funds used for reimbursement. Only reasonable expenses that comply with this policy and are supported by appropriate documentation will be reimbursed.

- A. Official University travel only encompasses travel more than 10 miles from the traveler’s official headquarters for the purpose of conducting business of the University. This includes, but is not limited to, attending trainings, conferences, or professional meetings. Students traveling as official representatives of the University or with an official student organization will be subject to the same policies and procedures as other University travelers, except as otherwise noted. Expenses related to official University business occurring 10 miles or less from the traveler’s official headquarters will not be eligible for reimbursement.

- B. An individual traveling on official University business is expected to exercise discretion when making travel arrangements and expenditures. As an agency of the State and/or recipient of sponsored award funding, each traveler must adhere to the following guidance when traveling:
1. Avoid excessive costs, circuitous routes, delays, or luxury accommodations unnecessary or unjustified in the performance of the official assignment.
 2. Incurred travel expenses must be supported by appropriate documentation (e.g., itemized receipts) to be eligible for reimbursement and to ensure appropriateness and allowability, as detailed in the accompanying Procedure.
 3. Transportation to and from business destinations should be by the most economical method available. When determining the most economical method, the travel time and any resulting funds used for meal and lodging costs should be considered, in addition to direct transportation costs.
 4. If rewards such as frequent flyer miles or credit card points are earned from traveling on official University business, such rewards should be used to defray the costs associated with subsequent University travel. Personal use of these rewards is prohibited.
 5. Sharing of the same bedroom or sleep space is strictly prohibited when a power differential exists between travelers. A power differential exists when one party has supervisory authority, academic authority, or other authority over another party.
 6. A Travel Authorization (TA) must be completed and fully approved before travel occurs in the following circumstances:
 - a. Individual travel expenses are expected to be \$5,000 or greater,
 - b. All foreign travel, and
 - c. All travel advances.

A separate TA must be prepared for each individual employee. However, for student travel, a group TA is acceptable.

- C. Travel reimbursement amounts may vary depending on the underlying circumstances and conditions of the department and/or trip. Available budgets and the extent to which a trip is expected to benefit the University, versus the individual, are contributing factors. Departments will determine the appropriateness of travel and the extent to which travel expenses will be defrayed by the University.
- D. Reimbursement to employees for incurred travel expenses cannot occur until after the travel is complete. The most common travel expense types, and the associated requirements for payment or reimbursement, are detailed below:
1. **Airfare:** Travel by commercial airlines must be in economy seating, except where

emergencies or availability restrictions require an exception from the University Controller. To ensure good stewardship of state funds, exceptions for business and first-class airfare must be paid and/or reimbursed from funds other than operating funds (A Funds).

When airfare is charged to federal grant or contract funds, travelers must comply with the Fly America Act, which requires the use of a U.S. Flag Air Carrier. Grants and Funds Management should be contacted for details regarding specific federal regulations and sponsor requirements.

2. **Ground Transportation:** The most economical mode of ground transportation should be used when traveling to the destination as well as to and from air, bus, and rail terminals. When air travel cannot be satisfactorily arranged and multiple individuals are traveling to the same destination, carpooling should be considered to reduce expenses when practicable. While travelers are authorized to use the methods below, public transportation and shuttle services should also be considered.

Rental Cars – When practicable, a state contracted private car rental company should be used to rent a vehicle for official University travel. Parking and Transportation Services should be contacted for further information. Travelers should be aware that state contracts provide for unlimited mileage and liability, comprehensive, and collision insurance protection, which is the responsibility of the individual when personal vehicles are used. If renting a car for foreign travel, it is recommended that collision damage waiver insurance is obtained, the charge and applicable tax for which will be submitted with the reimbursement request.

Personal Vehicles – Travelers may use their personal vehicles for official University travel provided the University will not incur added expenses above that of other forms of available transportation, or if it is determined by the approver to be a reasonable alternative for other reasons. When a personal vehicle is used for official University travel, the traveler will be reimbursed up to the current Internal Revenue Service (IRS) standard mileage rate for mileage incurred, as detailed in the accompanying Procedure. Approvers reserve the right to confirm the reasonableness of claimed mileage. When traveling to and from the airport for an out-of-town trip, mileage in excess of normal commuting mileage is eligible for reimbursement. No reimbursement will be made for fines related to moving or non-moving violations (e.g., speeding, driving without a seatbelt, etc.).

Ridesharing – Travelers may utilize and be reimbursed for ridesharing services provided that appropriate receipts are submitted, as detailed in the accompanying Procedure. Surcharges and fees may be reimbursable if the total cost is comparable to other ground transportation alternatives. There is no guarantee of safety when using such services.

Car Allowance or Courtesy Car – University employees that are provided a car allowance or courtesy car as part of their employment, which occurs in rare instances, will be reimbursed up to the current IRS standard mileage rate less depreciation, as detailed in the accompanying Procedure.

3. **Meals:** While traveling domestically on official University business, which includes South Carolina, all other U.S. territories, and Canada, employees will be reimbursed for meals based on the standard per diem rates, as detailed in the accompanying Procedure. Meal per diem is only reimbursable when travel includes an overnight stay. Eligibility for reimbursement of specific meals on the first and last days of travel depends on the specific time of departure and return. If registration fees include any meals, the employee is not eligible for reimbursement for those meals.

For international travel, only the maximum daily rate established by the federal government for meals and incidentals can be claimed, as detailed in the accompanying Procedure.

4. **Lodging:** Lodging arrangements and deposits are the responsibility of the traveler and will be reimbursed upon completion of the trip. No reimbursement will be made for overnight lodging within 50 miles of the employee's official headquarters or residence. Actual lodging expenses, as reflected on the receipt, will be reimbursed up to a maximum base per day, as detailed in the accompanying Procedure. Moderately priced accommodation should be selected when an option is available. Beginning with fiscal year 2020-21, the maximum base per day will be adjusted annually on July 1st by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics All Urban Consumer Price Index, as detailed in the Procedure. Exception may be granted as necessary by the University Controller.

Home Sharing – Travelers may utilize and be reimbursed for home sharing accommodation provided that appropriate receipts are submitted, as detailed in the Procedure, and separate bedrooms or sleep spaces are provided for in the travel plan. Travelers are encouraged to verify that the necessary receipts are available before booking through these services.

Sharing of the same bedroom or sleep space is strictly prohibited when a power differential exists between travelers. A power differential exists when one party has supervisory authority, academic authority, or other authority over another party.

5. Miscellaneous expenses may also be reimbursed if directly related to the official University business and occurring while the individual is in travel status, as detailed in the accompanying Procedure.
- E. Request and approval for travel reimbursements occurs electronically. As such, the required approvals and attestations for reimbursement under this policy are accomplished through the use of the PeopleSoft Finance electronic workflow, which routes requests to the appropriate parties based on supervisory assignment and funding source.

While departments may employ stricter approval requirements, any supplemental requirements cannot be less restrictive than the University policy. Applicable Department Heads should be contacted regarding any additional departmental requirements.

- F. This policy does not apply to travel reimbursements for non-University employees. If non-employees travel for official University business, the respective contractual agreement

governs the reimbursement allowances and methodologies. However, in the absence of an agreement, the University policy can be used to provide guidelines for appropriate reimbursement to non-employees.

PROCEDURES

The accompanying procedure provides additional details on the administration and management of this policy and references to training and resources. The procedure can be found here:

[Policies and Procedures - Office of the Controller](#)

RELATED UNIVERSITY, STATE, AND FEDERAL POLICIES

[FINA 1.00 Chart of Accounts](#)

[FINA 2.12 Accounts Payable](#)

[FINA 2.14 Acquisition and Payment of Goods and Services](#)

[FINA 2.15 Accounts Payable Payment Schedule](#)

[FINA 2.51 Relocation and Moving Allowance](#)

[FINA 3.00 Sponsored Awards](#)

[IT 3.00 Information Security](#)

[UNIV 2.10 Prohibited Consensual Relationships](#)

[SC Disbursement Regulations](#)

[SC Code of Regulations 19-101.19](#)

HISTORY OF REVISIONS

DATE OF REVISION	REASON FOR REVISION
August 9, 1991	New Policy Approval
October 18, 2006	Substantive Revision
December 15, 2010	Substantive Revision
March 26, 2015	Moved from BUSF policy division to FINA policy division.
October 19, 2017	Policy revised due to change requested by Audit and Advisory Services regarding individual travel reimbursements and to comply with changes on deferral regulations.
September 6, 2018	Policy revisions to add additional language about reasonable expenses as noted in Section I, to revise Travel Authorization section to comply with the implementation of Travel and Expense module in PeopleSoft and to add information or means of travel, meals and lodging.
December 17, 2019	Policy revisions to update lodging daily base rate to \$350 per day and to provide direction on annual escalation adjustment by the Consumer Price Index.
November 12, 2024	Language, content, and formatting updates. Formerly policy FINA 1.00
August 20, 2025	Include Canada in per diem reimbursement for meals