College of Science Employee Travel Quick Guide

This guide provides a summary of key policies from the University's **Travel, Meals, and Entertainment Manual**.

I. Travel Expenses

1. **Trips expecting to exceed $1,000:**
   A **formal Travel Authorization** must be approved through MFG **before making any travel arrangements.**
   a. Trip cost calculation must include all expenses (transportation, lodging, meal per diem, etc.)
   b. Applies to both **out-of-pocket** and **P-Card** charges
2. **Personal time:**
   Including personal (non-business) time on trips requires **specific pre-trip documentation** to ensure only the business portion is reimbursed. P-Card restrictions on airfare/rail purchases may apply.
   a. Notify your Department Purchasing Support as soon as possible when adding personal time to a business trip or when departing from/returning to a location other than base location (e.g., home city)
   b. Review the Personal Travel with Business Travel guide for more information
3. **Airfare, rail, and conference registration fees:**
   a. Should be paid via **P-Card** whenever possible
   b. Airfare can be direct-billed through Covington Travel. Covington administrative fee **cannot** be charged to grants.
   c. Travelers may pay **out-of-pocket** and request reimbursement (**discouraged**)
4. **Airfare and rail travel:**
   a. **Economy class** is the highest allowable fare for **domestic travel**
   b. **Unallowable:** Comfort, Economy Plus, Preferred Seating, Business, First Class, Acela Trains, or any class above economy. Exceptions apply under specific circumstances.
   c. **International flights** funded by **federally sponsored projects** (20XXXX fund) must use a U.S. Flag Air Carrier in accordance with the Fly America Act (FAA). Exceptions apply but must be approved prior to travel.
5. **Lodging:**
   a. Reimbursable up to **200% of the maximum nightly rate**, depending on location
   b. Use of alternative lodging (e.g., Airbnb) is discouraged but may be permitted if all requirements are met
   c. Lodging within **25 miles** of an employee's workplace or official duty station is **not eligible for reimbursement**
      i) Exceptions may be granted for extenuating circumstances but must receive approval before travel
   d. Lookup rates:
      i) Domestic Lodging Rates
      ii) International Lodging Rates
6. **Meals:**
   a. Reimbursed at **daily per diem rates**, depending on lodging location
      i) Travel without an overnight stay is not eligible for per diem meal reimbursement
   b. First and last days of trip are considered travel days, and only eligible for up to 75% of total
   c. **No-cost meals** provided by the conference must be deducted from the meal per diem
   d. Lookup rates:
      i) Domestic Meal Per Diem Rates
      ii) International Meal Per Diem Rates
7. **Taxis & Rideshares:**
   a. Maximum **15% tip**, based on total fare including eligible charges/fees
   b. **Unallowable:** Uber XL, Premier, Select; Lyft Preferred, Priority Pickup, or other upgrades
8. **Personal vehicle use:**
   a. Reimbursed per mile at the current IRS published Business Use Rate
   b. **Commuting mileage** (round-trip mileage routinely traveled between residence and workplace by the employee on a workday) is not reimbursable and must be subtracted from total mileage claimed
   c. **Mileage exceeding 280 miles/day** is reimbursed at the **lower fleet rate of $0.246/mile**, with limited exceptions. Contact your Department Purchasing Support for guidance
9. **International Travel Restrictions:**
   a. **Mason laptops & equipment** cannot be taken to export-controlled countries (e.g., China) without prior approval
      i) Visit the Export Control International Travel for details of the affected countries and requirements
   b. Travel to Hazardous Areas and Countries Under Comprehensive Economic Sanctions may require additional approvals and precautions

10. **Pre trip:**
    a. Determine all **estimated trip costs**
        i) If **over $1,000**, submit a formal **Travel Authorization** in MFG
    b. Arrange transportation (airfare, train, rental car, etc.)
        i) Airfare and train should be paid with a P-Card
    c. Arrange lodging
        i) Must be within per diem limits
        ii) **Paid by the traveler** and reimbursed
    d. Obtain necessary pre-trip approvals (e.g., international travel restrictions, Fly America Act exceptions, personal/business trip mixing exceptions, and other exceptions)

11. **Post trip**:
    a. **Collect receipts** for reimbursement
        i) **Itemized hotel receipt** (showing room rate breakdown and proof of payment)
        ii) **Taxi/ground transportation receipts** (required for expenses over $75/charge)
        iii) **Car rental itemized receipt** with proof of payment
        iv) **Airfare, rail, and/or conference registration receipts** with proof of payment (**if paid by traveler**)
        v) **Meal receipts not required** - reimbursed via a per diem
    b. **Submit expense report** in MFG for reimbursement:
        i) Submit receipts to your Department Purchasing Support for processing in MFG
        — OR —
        ii) Attach all receipts to Travel Reimbursement and submit directly in MFG

12. **Unallowable Travel Expenses –** *not all-Inclusive*
    a. Higher-class tickets (Acela, Comfort, Plus, Preferred Seating, Business, First Class). Some exceptions apply.
    b. Airfare seat selection fees
    c. Travel or rental car insurance
    d. Expenses paid with rewards points (e.g., airfare)
    e. Travel between lodging and meal locations (included in the incidental daily per diem)
    f. Ground transportation upgrades (e.g., Uber XL, Premier, Select; Lyft Preferred, Priority Pickup, etc.)
    g. Fuel purchased at the rental facility
    h. Rental car upgrades only allowable with a valid business reason; must be submitted along with request
    i. Mason parking fees for GMU employees
    j. Personal telephone calls or laundry expenses
    k. Service fees and tips (e.g., for baggage handlers or hotel housekeeping; included in per diem incidentals)
    l. Lost or stolen items

II. Mason Finance Gateway

Mason Finance Gateway (MFG) is Mason's expense management system. All Travel Authorizations, Travel Reimbursements, and other reimbursements must be submitted through MFG.

- Employees* and GRAs/GTAs must complete the Mason Finance Gateway Navigation Training to access MFG.

Approval Flow
Employee* Travel Authorization and Reimbursements are approved in MFG in this order:
Traveler → Traveler's Supervisor → Department Approver(s)** → OSP (if applicable) → Travel Office

**Faculty, staff, Post-Docs, Adjuncts, and non-student wage*
***Department Approvers are typically the **Department Chair or Center Director** and the **Finance or Research Administrator**.*

Guides:

1. About Mason Finance Gateway
2. Getting Started in MFG
1. Submitting Receipts
2. Expense Tile Guide
3. Approving a request
4. Delegating approval of a request
5. Lodging Reimbursement Demo Video
6. Flight Comparison Example
7. Pay For Travel
8. Personal Travel with Business Travel
9. Frequently Asked Questions

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