UNT SoPHI/CLASS Step-by-Step Travel Guide (Faculty)

Step 1: Create a travel plan

Where are you going and what for?

Is this for a conference, research, a workshop, etc.? Are you traveling in the state of Texas, somewhere else in the U.S. or internationally?

If you are traveling internationally, you will need to complete this form from Risk Management before proceeding to the next step. Please, consult the International Travel website for further details.

How do you plan to get there?

Are you flying, driving your own car, renting a car, using public transportation, etc.? Think about every portion of the trip. How are you getting around the destination city? How are you going from the airport to your hotel and vice versa?

When do you plan to leave and return?

When are your conference or workshop dates? Do you need to leave a day earlier to make it there on time? This would be a good time to look up a flight itinerary and see what flights are available to help you form a more concrete plan. *If you plan to have any personal travel days on your trip, please indicate those dates on your travel request form. UNT requires we declare personal versus business dates.

How will this trip be funded?

Will you be using department funds, a personal chartstring, or a grant? This is a good time to check-in with your department admin and ensure the funding is in place and ready to be used for your trip. Some grants are *very* picky about how they can be used, so please work with your department admin and/or grant coordinator to double-check the goals of your trip align with the grant's policies.

Step 2: Complete a VPAA-150 (faculty only) and a Request for Travel Funds (RTF) form

You can find both forms on the history website under the Forms tab>Faculty Forms. Once completed, submit these forms to the Administrative Coordinator for processing. On the VPAA-150, it will almost always be considered leave with pay, so you will check the "Other" box and state the reason for your leave (i.e. conference, research, etc.). Here are some important things to note when completing the Request for Travel Funds (RTF) form:

- Use the purpose box to explain every detail about your trip. Include the name of the conference/meeting/workshop you are going to, if you are presenting or just attending the conference/meeting/workshop, what you are researching during the trip, etc. **Approvers and auditors are looking at this box to see if the purpose is a valid use of UNT and grant funding, so be sure to be specific!**
- The expenses are *estimates*, so if you think you will need something, go ahead and account for it. It is always better to ask for more and need less than to ask for less and need more. Do consider the amounts that School travel funds policy allows.

- ❖ Per diem refers to the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) reimbursement rate for meals. It gives you a flat reimbursement rate for each meal during the day, regardless of how little or much you spend, opposed to an exact reimbursement for your meals based on receipts. It is most commonly used for state funded projects (such as grants), but you can claim per diem on local UNT funds as well. If this is something that interests you, please indicate that on your request for travel form.

Once you have completed your portion of the VPAA-150 and RTF, you will submit them to the Administrative Coordinator for processing. The School Director or AC will reach out about the awarded amount within a couple of weeks after submission. The AC will then generate a system pre-travel request in Coupa and email the faculty member to review and submit when ready.

Do not book *anything* until your request has been *approved* by your department. This keeps you from having possible cancelation fees if your request were to be denied

Completing an RTF and system pre-travel request is a *REQUIREMENT* by UNT and the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences travel policy. Failure to complete this step could result in you receiving *no UNT or grant funding for your travel*

Step 3: Complete and confirm your registration and bookings (if applicable)

Once your request has been submitted *and approved* it is time to register for your conference and book your flights, hotels, rental cars, etc. If you checked "Yes" on the "Do you plan on using Coupa to book any accommodations using Deem?" line, communicate with the travel coordinator what you booked, including the details of your flight, hotel, etc. If you are booking travel on your own, please keep a few things in mind:

- ❖ **Flights** will be reimbursed at the economy rate with standard fees. If you need to upgrade your flight in any way for a business or health reason, please let your department know *prior* to booking, so you can receive proper reimbursement.
- ❖ If you are attending a conference, the conference **hotel** will almost always be the best choice due to how cost-efficient it is.
- ❖ Airbnb's are allowed but not recommended. They do not always meet UNT travel policy requirements, so book one at your own risk! You may not receive the full reimbursement!
- ❖ Avoid 3rd party travel sites such as Expedia, Travelocity, or Booking.com. While they offer great deals, they often do not itemize expenses properly, and they often have very harsh cancellation policies. If you must use one, Expedia is the least egregious offender of UNT policy, BUT it is always better from a records standpoint to book directly with the airline or hotel.
- ❖ **Memberships** for organizations hosting conferences, often coinciding with conference registration, cannot be reimbursed without prior approval from UNT, so you must submit a UNT Membership Request Form and submit the approval to the Admin processing your travel request

Once everything is booked and confirmed, you are ready to go on your trip!

Step 4: TRIP TIME

It's trip time, so that means it is also _receipt_ time! From a travel policy perspective, your one goal during the trip is to keep and record your receipts. It's important to know that not all receipts are created equal, and some do not have all the information we need for reimbursement. The two most important things a receipt must contain are:

1. **Itemization**- a list of everything purchased and a breakdown of all the fees incurred
2. **Proof of payment**- a line showing the payment method and the balance being paid

There are a few other details a receipt might need depending on the expense, but typically if it has those two, it will have everything we need. Here are some tips to help you get the right receipt for specific expense types:

- **Hotels** typically call their itemized receipt a "folio" receipt. A correctly itemized hotel receipt will show the room rate for each night. **If you are traveling within the State of Texas, you will need to complete and provide the Texas Hotel Occupancy Tax Exemption Certificate when you **check-in** to your hotel. As an educational institution, we are exempt from Texas state occupancy taxes.*
- When you are eating a **meal** at a **hotel** and they charge it to the room, ask for an itemized meal receipt. Otherwise, the meal will only be on the hotel receipt without *any* itemization of the individual items purchased during the meal.
- For **meal** receipts, make *extra* sure the receipt you keep is itemized. A lot of times the "customer copy" only shows the subtotal, tax, tip, and confirmation of payment; but it does not show the individual items purchased during the meal which is required by UNT policy.
- For **any expense** that involves a **tip**, UNT will reimburse tips up to 20%. You are welcome to tip more, but you will not be reimbursed past 20%. **If you are using state or grant funding, however, you will **not** be reimbursed for tips due to state policies.*
- For **business meals** that involve paying for more than just yourself, a *business purpose* and *guest list* must be provided in addition to a proper meal receipt.
- It is ***highly*** recommended to take a picture of *every* paper receipt you get as soon as you get it. It is great for record keeping, and an expense might even require multiple receipts to get every bit of necessary information to reimburse you. For example, sometimes **meal** receipts will have their itemization on one receipt and the proof of payment on the other. If you did not keep both receipts in this situation, you will have a far harder time getting reimbursed. You will likely submit your paper receipts by taking a picture of them anyway, so you are saving yourself time and effort by doing so!
- If you are claiming **per diem**, you do not need to keep meal receipts; however, you *will* need to keep track of what meals were provided to you by the conference or event. If a meal is provided as part of your registration fees, the mealtime will be excluded from your per diem

reimbursement. *Even if you did not participate in the meal provided, it will be excluded from your per diem reimbursement amount.*

- If you drive your **personal car**, you will be reimbursed based on your **mileage**, *not* the money you spent on gas. Your "receipt" for mileage is a document with every address you visited during your trip.

If you are unable to receive an itemized receipt with proof of payment, gather as much documentation as you can and provide a thorough explanation by filling out a Lost Receipt Affidavit and submitting the completed form to the administrative coordinator processing your reimbursement.

For further information about receipt requirements, you can review the Receipt Requirements Packet located on the history Forms website.

Step 5: Turn in receipts to your department administrator

Once you return from your trip, the final step in the travel process is to submit your receipts to your department administrator. You should submit your receipts within **two weeks** of your final travel day. **DO NOT WAIT!!!** If the reimbursement has not been fully processed *and approved* within **60 days** of the final travel day, it will be considered taxable income. Processing and approvals can take upwards of 30 days, so, again, **DO NOT WAIT!** Additionally, the more organized and well-documented your submission is, the faster it will be processed! Here are some tips to help you organize your receipts:

- Keep each receipt as a separate file unless there are two or more receipts for one expense
- Title the file what the expense is (for example: Hotel, Airfare, 1-15-25 Lunch, 1-16 Uber Airport to Hotel, 1-17 Lyft Conference to Lunch, Parking, etc.)
- When dealing with a receipt type (like meals and ground transportation), date them with the date of purchase
- If you have a multitude of receipts, use a spreadsheet or document detailing what each receipt is for, the date it occurred, and any additional information for unusual situations.

Contact your department admin for any further clarification. Once you have submitted your receipts, the travel coordinator will reach out if they have any questions or need any additional information from you. *We will do what we can to prevent the reimbursement from taking 60 days, so please do your part by being responsive when you are contacted for more information.* The admin will email you when your trip reimbursement is ready for your review and submission. Once everything has been submitted, processed, and fully approved, **you are DONE!** Accounts Payable processes reimbursements weekly, so once your report reaches the "Payment Confirmed" status, check your bank statements to make sure the reimbursement went through.

Travel Resources

UNT Travel Guidelines
International Travel
Coupa Resource Page

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