

# University of Houston Clear Lake

## MEMORANDUM OF ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY

**SECTION:** Fiscal Affairs  
**AREA:** Business Travel

**Number:** 03.A.03

**SUBJECT:** Travel Policy (INTERIM)

### I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy contains guidance for faculty, staff, and all others who travel domestically and internationally on official University of Houston Clear Lake (UHCL) business, ensuring that we make the best use of university resources while supporting activities such as professional development, research initiatives, consulting activities, recruitment events, and beneficial interaction with other institutions, organizations, businesses, and community groups; and that reimbursement for such travel is accurate, timely, and compliant with State, Federal, and University of Houston System policies, codes, statutes, and regulations; and also considers best-in-class processes that support streamlined business operations.

### II. DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Approver	The employee's supervisor is the first approver for any travel request. The department or college business administrator (DBA/CBA) must also approve any travel request to ensure that funding is available.
Blanket Mileage	A prospective pre-approval that the employee obtains from their supervisor and DBA/CBA, that they expect to incur local mileage expenses throughout the fiscal year.
Business Meal (not while traveling)	Meals taken with students, colleagues, donors, individuals or entities doing business with the University or seeking to do business with the University when specific business discussions take place.
Concur	<p>Concur is the travel management software that UHCL uses for all travel for employees, candidates, students, prospective students, university guests, lecturers, contractors, and government employees.</p> <p>It consists of two main modules: (a) the Travel Request, and (b) the Expense Report. Travelers must use both modules to request and obtain reimbursement for travel. There is an optional third feature, Travel (Booking), which provides travel agency support. However, use of this feature triggers additional, incremental transaction costs and should not be used unless the traveler has a special circumstance such as last-minute itinerary changes, emergency return travel, or health issues which impact travel.</p>

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Conference	A formal meeting on topics related to higher education, often attended by more than one or two individuals, frequently located off-campus.
Delegate	An individual the employee arranges as their travel proxy in Concur.
Domestic Travel	Travel occurring within the borders of the continental United States, or Canada, Mexico, Puerto Rico, or Hawaii (per the Fly America Act, Canada is not considered foreign).
Expense	The ordinary and customary outlay via cash or credit card, incurred while conducting UHCL business that is reimbursable. This does not include personal or non-reimbursable expenses incurred while traveling.
Expense Report	The expense report is a document generated within Concur software that captures travel expenses that have been incurred. These must be substantiated with documentation/receipts for all travel expenses to enable reimbursement. Reports must be created within 7-10 business days after the last date of travel.
Fiscal Year	September 1 – August 31
Foreign Auto Rental	Although the Texas State Comptroller provides for Hertz and Enterprise rentals in Canada and Mexico, travelers should obtain pre-approval by contacting the UHCL travel office before arranging for any auto rental via Concur.
Foreign Travel	Any travel occurring outside the borders of the continental United States, or Canada, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Hawaii (per the Fly America Act). U.S. territories and Canada are considered foreign for insurance purposes when renting a vehicle.  All foreign travel requires two specific documents uploaded in Concur: the export controls form, and the CITI certificate of course completion.
Gratuity	An amount the traveler provides voluntarily, usually for the provision of a service such as a porter, maid, or wait-person. Limited to 20%.
GSA Allowance/Per Diem	The Government Service Administration rate is provided for both meals and lodging, based on the city and county, and in the case of certain tourist locations, time of year (e.g. Orlando, Florida) where the expense was incurred. This is a pre-approved, pre-determined amount, contained within the software, that is used to calculate reimbursement for UHCL travelers. These are deemed a reasonable reimbursement of expenses incurred and are not intended to be a reimbursement of actual expenses.  <a href="https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates">https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates</a>
Incidental Expense	An expense with an allowable, valid business purpose, incurred while traveling on official UHCL business. It is NOT for meals, lodging,

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	transportation, personal expenses or gratuities. Typical examples include: tolls, parking, taxes (i.e. non-exempt taxes). Check with Accounts Payable/Travel if uncertain.
Itemized Expense Receipt	A document provided by the vendor that shows the vendor's name, date, detailed charges, total amount paid, and method of payment used by the traveler. For airfare and lodging the traveler's name is also required. Receipts are required for ALL travel expenses.
Limited Travel/Limited Travelers	Travel for certain faculty selected by each department where only a pre-set portion of the trip is reimbursable with local University funds. The traveler is expected to cover the remainder of the cost, should there be any, with personal funds.
Local Funds (not State funds)	Funds collected at UHCL for goods or services through non-state grants or contracts, or donors.
Local Travel	Local travel is defined as travel in Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Montgomery, Waller and Wharton counties. <a href="https://www.uhcl.edu/about/administrative-offices/travel/documents/uhcl-blanket-travel-map.pdf">https://www.uhcl.edu/about/administrative-offices/travel/documents/uhcl-blanket-travel-map.pdf</a>  Overnight <i>local travel</i> that includes lodging is non-reimbursable without prior approval from the AVP Business Operations, and is taxable to the employee.
Lodging	A commercial lodging establishment or private home such as a motel, hotel, inn, apartment, house, or similar establishment that provides lodging to the public for pay. This includes lodging provided by a governmental entity on property controlled by that entity, a religious organization on property controlled by that organization, or a private educational institution controlled by that institution.
Meals while on a trip/traveling	This term includes food and non-alcoholic beverages. Breakfasts, lunches and/or dinners included at conferences as part of the attendee package cost are not reimbursable as separate meal expenses. Likewise, snacks are included as reimbursable meals, limited by the GSA ceiling but not reimbursable if the conference includes food.
Mileage	Official mileage is the <i>shortest</i> practical route between points.
Out-Of-State Travel	Out of state travel occurs when the departure or destination location is outside the state of Texas, but still within the US or its possessions.
Personal Day(s)	Concur captures self-reported personal versus business days. Personal days are not reimbursable for domestic travel if they represent >50% of the trip days, but they are reimbursable for foreign travel expense. However, reimbursement for foreign travel where personal days occur only covers

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	<p>the travel itself (usually air) and no other expense (i.e., no lodging or meals are covered on a personal day for foreign trips).</p> <p>Each day is evaluated by the travel office during expense audit to determine whether it was business or personal.</p> <p>Generally, a day is considered a business day when the principal activity was conducting UHCL business, or the traveler was required to be present at a specific date and time for a business meeting, or travel days to and from the business destination (not including side trips), or non-working days, weekends, and holidays that fall between days in which business was conducted.</p>
Personal Expense	Any expense incurred while traveling that is not reimbursable by the university for which the traveler is solely responsible. If a personal expense is paid via travel card the employee must reimburse the university within 45 days of the last date of travel.
Snacks	Between meal snacks may be expensed, provided that conference costs do not include meals. Snacks are reimbursed as part of the daily meal GSA limit.
Travel	Travel includes all trips off campus involving airfare, rental car, and/or hotel/lodging, whether UHCL is the ultimate payor or not.
Traveler	Any UHCL faculty, staff, student, candidate, contractor, grant participant, or any other type of traveler who travels from home or work for the purpose of conducting bona fide UHCL business.
Travel Agent	The contracted separate entity that procures air travel via the Concur software platform.
Travel Card	<p>A UHCL traditional credit card, as opposed to a declining balance card, will be part of the employee's profile, which the traveler may use for all allowable travel expenses and for which they are financially responsible should their expenses be non-reimbursable. Their UHCL card number will be part of the employee's profile in Concur. This card may be used to purchase airfare, lodging, meals, rental car, registration fees and incidental expenses related to UHCL business travel.</p> <p>Cards are issued to each traveler, as needed.</p> <p>Reimbursable card transactions are charged to the traveler's appropriate cost center(s).</p>
Travel Request	Any request to travel on UHCL business submitted for approval within adequate time to obtain approval before the travel takes place. This time is longer in the case of foreign travel where the President must also approve.

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University Guest	Any individual who voluntarily and without compensation provides recognition or support to the UHCL mission. This person may be a donor, potential donor, volunteer, alumni, community, government, university or corporate official. This category does NOT include current faculty, staff, students or persons paid an honorarium or fee for contracted services.
Zero Dollar Travel Request	Travel approval is still required in advance of any trip even if that trip has no anticipated expenses.

### III. PROCEDURE – HIGHLIGHTS

**Policy** – The UHCL Concur Training Guide explains the step-by-step clicks and entries required to request and expense travel. Thus, the following items are high level policy highlights to familiarize you with operational changes and/or emphasize key points. The following information is not intended as a substitute for the detailed operating guide or user manual.

UHCL travelers seeking reimbursement for travel expenses related to conducting official UHCL business activity, which is documented as such with an “explanation of benefit” entered in our travel software (Concur), must comply with the UHCL travel policy.

**Concur** - All travel must be booked through our travel software. Any purchase of air tickets or other travel arrangements outside of Concur will be deemed non-reimbursable without exception.

Full compliance requires the traveler or his/her delegate to enter an initial travel request in Concur outlining the estimated costs, purpose, and benefits of the trip. This request must be approved by the traveler’s supervisor and CBA/DBA. Additional approvals are required for international travel. The request must be approved prior to travel for reimbursement to be processed. Travelers with a limited allowance, provided by their department, will be reimbursed only up to that limit. Any excess cost(s) will be borne personally by the traveler if additional university funding is unavailable.

**Least Cost** - As stewards of UHCL resources, travel should always be planned and selected based upon the most economical route for that trip, irrespective of personal day activities embedded within the excursion. Exceptions may be granted in the event the traveler has special circumstances, such as a health or safety issue, that requires an alternate itinerary.

**Taxation** - The UHCL travel policy rules stated herein conform with federal IRS rules regarding accountable plans. Under those accountable plan rules, expense reimbursements are not considered taxable income to the traveler, thus reimbursement is not generally included on the traveler’s W-2 unless the traveler submits their reimbursement request late (see infra, Expense Report Timing).

**Non-Reimbursement** - Any expenses deemed non-reimbursable to the traveler, which have been paid by UHCL traditional travel card, shall be repaid to UHCL within 45 days of the last date of travel.

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Should the traveler not repay UHCL timely, or in full, then UHCL will report the traveler to the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts as a vendor on hold.

Further, any expenses deemed non-reimbursable to the traveler, paid by the traveler (*cash, check, personal credit card, etc.*) shall be considered personal non-business expenses for that traveler.

**Alcohol** - Alcohol is generally non-reimbursable, subject only to an approval exception granted by the President and/or his designee.

**Conference** – Documentation for conference requests and reimbursement must contain an agenda indicating all daily conference events, including meals and refreshments, and the promotional flier advertising the event that memorializes the dates and location. Meals offered during conference events will not be reimbursed as separate expenses should the traveler opt to dine on their own, independent of the conference.

**Expense Report Timing** - Based upon Texas fiscal management and subtending regulation and UHCL accounts payable bank charge reconciliation, the traveler must submit their expense report 7-10 days after the last date of travel, not including personal days added at the end of their trip.

On-time bank payments enable UHCL to maintain a favorable credit rating and also assure travelers that reimbursements are processed promptly.

Moreover, under Texas regulation, any late submission of expense request (>60 days) automatically transforms the presumed non-taxable reimbursement into taxable income for the traveler, unless the expense is just for mileage alone. Mileage expense submission is always non-taxable.

After completion of travel, the traveler must complete an expense report and upload all receipts for all expenses into the UHCL travel software, ideally within 10 business days. These will be processed and reviewed by the accounts payable staff before reimbursement is processed through our accounting platform in PeopleSoft.

Travelers with successive back-to-back trips should plan ahead and time their expense reporting accordingly.

**Late Expense Report Submission** - The travel card account will be closed for 6 months for any traveler who fails to submit expense reports timely since this exposes the university to unnecessary financial risk; we will be obliged to pay our bank for travel charges incurred but will lack proper and complete documentation of such expenses.

**International Travel** - International travel requires Presidential, Provost, or Vice President pre-approval, depending upon the position title of the traveler. The traveler should obtain the highest rank approval within his/her academic or administrative division. Vice Presidents and Provosts require Presidential approval. In addition, this type of travel requires uploading of two separate forms during travel pre-approval: Export Controls form, and the completion certificate for the Collaborative Institute of Training Initiatives (CITI) course.

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**Meals** – The GSA daily rate (one for meals, one for lodging) is a data feed to Concur that assigns an allowable cost based on the city, county, and in some cases season. This rate determines the amount that is reimbursable for these two expense costs. Meals can include snacks.

**Mileage** - Travel may consist of mileage alone. Enter mileage detail into Concur to request reimbursement for local and out-of-town mileage, parking and tolls. The software calculates mileage automatically when you enter departure and destination addresses.

**Official Business** - Business required to perform the duties of the UHCL position held, in accordance with the legal responsibilities of the university. Official university business must relate to and benefit teaching, research, affiliations and alliances, and/or community service at the university.

**Overnight Local Travel** - Overnight local travel that includes lodging is non-reimbursable without prior approval from the AVP Business Operations, and is taxable to the employee.

### IV. **REVIEW AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Responsible Party: Associate Vice President Business Operations

Review: Every five years

#### APPROVAL

*/Mark Denney/*

Vice President for Administration and Finance

*/Richard Walker/*

President

Date: May 12, 2023

### V. **REVISION LOG**

Revision Number	Approved Date	Description of Changes
#1		New policy for UHCL

### VI. **REFERENCES**

- IRS Pub 463
- MAPP 04.02.01B
- SAM 03.A.03