

Financial Policies and Procedures for Reimbursement

In order to provide clear and easily accessible account of university-related financial policies, the Office of the Dean of the Faculty is providing a list of Brown policies concerning those expenses about which we have received the most questions: travel, lodging, meals, gifts, office equipment, and computers. We list in bullet form the Controllers' policies on travel, lodging, and gifts, as well as a set of related FAQs. Second, we have also provided a list of FAQs to help faculty sort through questions that arise frequently, in the hope that the answers will clarify Brown financial policies and procedures on issues of concern to faculty regarding department expenses and reimbursements, with the aim of offering a general overview for faculty seeking information and decreasing the number of requests for reimbursements that the Controllers' office must send back for want of proper documentation. We have sought to provide clear and concise responses to a variety of questions on a number of subjects, including a short section on policies regarding emeritus faculty.

This summary does not supersede University policy. If there are topics that are not addressed here please consult the Controller's Office website.

For further questions, please contact the Office of the Dean of the Faculty (32313) or the Controller's Office (32716).

Transportation: Air Travel

Class of Service - Domestic

- Domestic travel includes travel within and between any of the United States and its territories and possessions. It also includes travel between the United States and Mexico or Canada.
- Travelers are expected to book coach class airfare. Travel to Alaska and Hawaii where the destination is four time zones (or more) away or more than eight hours direct flight time may be made using business class airline tickets. However, if the traveler chooses a business or first class airfare in other situations, he/she must absorb the additional cost and the rate differential must be clearly documented for reimbursement purposes. Any exception to this policy must be approved in advance of travel by either the President, Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration, or the Provost.
- If a business or first class fare is approved, the cost in excess of the coach fare must be charged to subcode 3950, Travel - Exclusions. Federal regulations prohibit the charging of business class or first class air travel to federally funded sponsored projects. They also prohibit the inclusion in indirect costs of the differential between a coach class fare and business or first class fare.

Class of Service – International

- International travel includes travel outside of North America (United States, Canada and Mexico).
- Destinations less than four time zones away or less than eight hours direct flight time require the purchase of coach class airfare. Business class airfare is allowed for international travel where the destination is four time zones (or more) away or more than eight hours direct flight time. First class air travel is not permitted unless an exception is approved in advance of travel by the President, Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration, or the Provost for a medical reason or extenuating circumstance and there is adequate funding to support the request.
- Federal regulations prohibit the charging of business class or first class air travel to federally funded sponsored projects. They also prohibit the inclusion in indirect costs of the differential between a coach class fare and business or first class fare. Therefore, whenever business or first class fare is approved, the cost in excess of the coach fare must be charged to subcode 3950, Travel - Exclusions.
- Many of the lowest priced international airline tickets have restrictions regarding use, reservation changes, and refund ability that should be understood by the traveler at the time of purchase.
- Travel to countries for which a travel advisory has been issued by the State Department is not advisable. You may access the list of current advisories through the following web-site: http://travel.state.gov/travel_warnings.html. If you have any questions regarding these advisories please contact the Office of the General Council.
- If airfare is paid with federal funds travel must comply with the Fly America Act.

Meals – (away from Brown)

\$ 50.00 Average per day including tax and tip.
Note: This is not per diem (that is, if you do not spend the maximum allowable, you should request reimbursement for the actual amount spent).
\$10.00 breakfast
\$15.00 lunch
\$25.00 dinner
\$ 75.00 Average per day for major US cities (Boston, Chicago, New York, San Francisco, and Washington, DC.) and major foreign cities. Note: This is not per diem -----\$15.00 breakfast \$20.00 lunch \$40.00 dinner.

Hotel

\$ 150.00 Average daily rate including tax.

\$ 200.00-\$250.00 Average daily rate including tax for major US cities: Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, Washington, DC.

\$250.00 - \$350.00 (New York and foreign destinations).

***Meals - Business/Hospitality
(per head, in Providence)***

| | |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| \$ 20.00 Breakfast | Maximum meal allowance |
| \$ 20.00 Lunch | " " |
| \$ 60.00 Dinner | " " |

Lodging Hospitality * \$ 75.00 Maximum gift allowance (gift of appreciation should be commensurate with length of stay). This applies when you stay with a family member, friend or acquaintance on a business trip rather than a hotel and wish to offer a “gift” to your host. It is not a thank you gift for any reason other than lodging.

If there is a need to exceed these guidelines on hospitality, it is appropriate to request an exception to the policy by contacting the Office of the Dean of the Faculty. Any requests must include 1) a rationale for the exception; 2) the signature of a senior officer (a senior Dean or Vice-President).

Gifts

University departments may incur an expense, in the form of a gift, on behalf of an employee or an employee's immediate family, for the following events:

- Recognition of a long-term employee leaving a department or retiring from the University. A general guideline is \$10.00 for every year of service. Such gifts should not exceed \$400, the maximum non-taxable limit established by the IRS, for gifts of recognition to long-term employees.
- Illness of an employee or student, requiring hospitalization (including for childbirth).
- The death of an employee or an employee's immediate family member. Memorial gifts made on behalf of an employee may include flowers or a donation to a charitable organization. In such cases Brown University should be acknowledged as the sender, e.g., "from all your friends and colleagues at (University department)." In the case of a donation to a charity, the notation should indicate the donation is from the University department. A recommended limit for this gift is \$50.00.
- Gifts in recognition of employee work-related achievement or years of service are allowable as provided through official recognition programs authorized by the Human Resources Department.

- Holiday gifts for faculty, staff, students and volunteers are **unallowable**.
- Gifts to honor an individual for personal reasons other than those indicated above (e.g. birthday, wedding, baby shower, housewarming, promotion, etc.) may not be charged to University accounts. Personal contributions among colleagues should be the method of providing such gifts.

Travel, Meal, and Hospitality FAQs

What if I travel to a country where credit card payment is difficult and I must pay for travel and other expenses in cash? How can I document my expenses and may they be reimbursed?

If you are forced by circumstances to pay in cash, keep a log of payments and any documentation that verifies you have visited a particular site. If possible, write an informal contract (for example, using a receipt book) in which you declare that you have paid someone a specific amount for a service. If no log and no such documentation can be provided, Brown cannot reimburse your expenses.

What does one do if receipts are lost or discarded?

For receipts over \$50, you must fill out a missing receipt affidavit with proof of credit card payment. Try to minimize cash payments and if they are necessary, keep a log of expenses and payments.

May I purchase alcohol and be reimbursed by my Brown account?

You may purchase alcoholic beverages in the context of a meal and at reasonable cost. No charges for alcohol alone are permitted. You may not charge alcohol to grants.

What forms of ticket documentation for air travel are accepted for reimbursement? For example, are on-line booking confirmations acceptable?

Proof of payment is required, though boarding passes are not. An on-line confirmations are acceptable if it specifically shows paid fare. This usually appears on the second or third page of the confirmation.

What if one wishes to give a gift to someone who is not an employee of Brown or a student of Brown University?

You cannot, unless the person in question is a recipient of “lodging hospitality.”

What are the consequences for exceeding the limits as established?

There will either be a delay in processing your request, a payment adjustment, or no reimbursement at all.

FAQs Regarding Other University Policies and Faculty Funds

Does the university set monetary limits on business-related long distance phone calls, postage, and related supplies?

Departments set rates according to budget constraints, and faculty should be informed by the Chair or Department Manager what those limits are and if they have exceeded them. It is the purview of the Chair to set monetary limits on phone and postage in accord with a department's operational budget.

Can I charge my home internet service to my Brown research account?

Home internet cable bills may be reimbursed when used for university business. The reimbursement is based on the percent time the home internet is used for business purposes. Thus, if you use the service at home for 50 hours a week, of which 30 hours are devoted to Brown-related business, you may be reimbursed for 3/5ths of your internet bill, or for 60% of the total sum. Home internet service bills cannot be charged to grants.

What is the policy regarding the purchase of a computer with Brown research or departmental funds?

You should try to buy necessary computer equipment with a Brown purchasing card. If you buy the computer with a credit card, you must include a letter to the Controller in your request for reimbursement in which you declare that the equipment belongs to Brown. If you wish to be reimbursed, you must include the original receipt. Requests that do not include the original receipt will be denied.

Moreover, the disposal policy must be adhered to for all old equipment, including office furniture and equipment. This policy is elaborated on the Purchasing Department's website.

<http://www.brown.edu/Administration/Purchasing/policies/disposition.html>

Can I pay for home office furniture using Brown funds?

IRS regulations prohibit the use of university funds for the purchase of home office furniture.

Can I charge course-related as well as research related travel to my Brown account (e.g. field trips to museums, trips to libraries for course materials?)

Yes, as long as the trip has a legitimate business purpose. Include a rationale for the trip as well as documentation in your request for reimbursement.

Are there any financial policies I should be aware of pertaining to the hiring of graduate and undergraduate research assistants?

Any expenses should be for legitimate Brown business purposes and should be documented.

May I pay wages, honoraria, or travel for others with personal funds?

Under no circumstances may a faculty member pay wages, honoraria, or travel expenses of others and request reimbursement from Brown. If you feel a person has a legitimate reason to travel with you, you must use Garber Travel to make arrangements. The only exceptions are provided for those faculty members traveling in a foreign country who need immediate assistance (e.g. language translation). You must pay for those services and report expenses in your request for travel reimbursement. Retroactive requests for personal reimbursement for someone else's travel are not allowable.

Are there different policies applicable only to Visiting Faculty or short-term postdoctoral fellows and postdoctoral research associates or are Brown's financial policies with regard to reimbursement the same for everyone?

Policies for individuals employed by Brown (receiving wages) are uniform. Policies for individuals who are not employed but are receiving "stipends" may vary. Contact the Controller's Office with any questions related to this topic.

Do the rules apply equally to endowment funds, grants, and gift funds in the control of my unit?

Yes. All policies apply equally to all types of funding.

I hold a Brown AmEx card. How does the billing process work?

The Brown AmEx card program allows someone to hold an AmEx card with no annual fee and to use it as a regular credit card. Business expenses charged to the AmEx card will be reimbursed via the usual process: you must submit receipts for legitimate expenses in the form of a travel or other reimbursement form.

Policies Regarding Emeriti

The Handbook for Academic Administration offers guidelines concerning retired faculty (HAA, 18.4):

Certain privileges for emeritus faculty as well as certain activities in which they may wish to participate are at the discretion and under the control of individual departments and divisions. There is at present no standard or consistent body of policy governing these matters; each department makes its own rules. Nevertheless each department is

required to establish written guidelines governing the policy of the department affecting retired faculty.

Guidelines developed by the department should deal with matters under departmental control such as: office and laboratory space; counseling students; teaching; departmental governance; and service on committees. It is not necessary that emeritus faculty be permitted to share in all these matters, but it is important that they be clearly informed regarding the degree to which the department permits or invites their participation.

Department chairs should keep themselves informed of the status and welfare of emeritus faculty and their surviving spouses or partners, and notify the Provost of any particular circumstances where intervention or assistance by the University's administration might be desirable.

General guidelines regarding the use of computers and space are also listed in the Handbook (18.4.1), but remain within the discretion of the department Chair.

We encourage departments to create and update their own guidelines for retired faculty according to the handbook and the faculty rules.