Travel Policy: Air Travel

**Introduction**
The Air Travel Policy articulates those expenses that are reimbursable for Air Travel.

The purpose of the Travel Policies are to provide clear policies and procedures that are compliant with state and federal regulations, promote safe travel, and allow for reasonable and manageable travel expenses while maintaining the necessary controls and accountability.

This policy is organized as follows:

- **Air Travel Expenses**
- **Air Travel Charged to Sponsored Projects**
- **Travel Advances**
- **Direct Bill of Transportation Expenses**

Additional Travel Policies for the various components of travel can be found in the [Related Policies](https://www.brown.edu/about/administration/policies) section below.

**Policy Statement**
The Air Travel Policy applies those who travel on behalf of the University. University travel will be paid by the University if travel expenses are reasonable, appropriately documented, properly allocated and authorized, must be accommodated by the relevant operating budget or sponsored project funding, and within the guidelines of these policies.

Through this policy the University strives to promote safe and economical University travel while maintaining the necessary controls, accountability, compliance with applicable federal and state laws, and administrative efficiency. All University funds—including gifts, grants, and contracts, shall be used in a reasonable and prudent manner and only for activities related to Brown’s primary mission of education, research and public service.

Additionally:

- Departments may elect to impose stricter budgetary controls over travel expenditures than those required by this policy.
- Travel charged to a sponsored project should follow the guidelines set forth by this policy unless the funding agency imposes greater restrictions.
- Intentional disregard for the University's travel policy and procedures may be considered grounds for disciplinary action, and/or for prosecution in the case of fraudulent misrepresentation of travel expenses.
- The authority for determining which travel expenditures are reimbursable under a particular grant or contract lies with the [Office of Sponsored Projects](https://www.brown.edu/about/administration/policies).

**Air Travel Expenses**

Brown University reimburses employees for air travel expenses while travelling on University business.

- Travelers must purchase non-refundable, coach class airline tickets unless the trip meets the requirements for business class.
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- Business Class airfare is permissible only when:
  - The destination is four or more time zones away, or more than eight hours direct flight time, and
  - The funding department has adequate budget resources; and (3) it is clear that this form of travel is for a valid University purpose and would be the best use of the funds available.
  - First Class Tickets are not permissible unless prior written approval is received from the President, Provost, or Executive Vice President of Finance and Administration.
  - Luggage fees and early check-in fees are reimbursable.

Air Travel Charged to Sponsored Projects

Travel on non-federally funded trips require compliance with the University policy as noted above unless the sponsored award specifically prohibits use of business class.

Travelers on federally-funded trips must travel on U.S. carriers at coach rates. Airfare costs in excess of the lowest available commercial discount airfare or customary standard (coach or equivalent) airfare on a U.S. carrier are not allowed except when the lower cost transportation would:

- Require circuitous routing
- Require travel during unreasonable hours
- Excessively prolong travel or greatly increase the duration of the flight
- Result in increased costs that would offset transportation savings
- Be inadequate for the medical needs of the traveler.

If business class airfare is appropriate based on the University Policy stated in Air Travel: Permitted Expenses, then the cost in excess of the coach fare must be charged to an account other than a grant/contract.

Justification for any exception to the federal requirement must be documented in the travel expense reimbursement report.

Travel Advances

Travel advances are generally available to paid faculty, staff, and graduate students of Brown to assist in defraying out of pocket cash while travelling for an extended period of time. Travel advances are:

- Issued only for daily and per diem expenses. Prepaid items such as transportation and conference registration are processed using a travel expense report.
- Travel advances will not be issued more than two weeks prior to the scheduled departure date and must be cleared within two weeks of the completion of a trip.
  - Request for any additional payment, advance or reimbursement will not be processed for any traveler with an outstanding advance that is more than two weeks beyond the established trip return date.
  - Failure to account for a cash advance after repeated attempts to contact the traveler will result in reporting the advance to the IRS on the traveler’s W-2 and withholding taxes on the advance amount from the traveler’s paycheck.
    - Per IRS regulation, once an unsettled cash advance has be added to a W-2 it cannot be reversed – even if settled.
    - The University does not issue long-term operation advances.

Direct Bill of Transportation Expenses
Payment of airfare and train service by Brown University using the Direct Bill Form is available for faculty, staff, students, visitors (individuals’ not receiving payment by Brown) and guest speakers paid no more than $5,000.

- Guest Speakers paid more than $5,000 and Independent Contractors cannot use direct bill.
- Direct Bill of airfare for individuals not included above requires the approval of the Controller’s Office.

To request permission for direct payment of transportation, complete the Direct Billing Form and email it to Accounts_Payable@Brown.edu

- Transportation purchased using the Direct Billing Form will be paid by the Controller’s Office at the time of purchase and reallocated to the appropriate worktags at the end of the month.
- All travel must be arranged through FCm Travel Management.

Definitions

**Domestic Travel**: Domestic travel is travel within and between any of the United States (including its territories and possessions).

**International Travel**: International Travel is travel outside of the United States (including its territories and possessions).

**Sponsored Project**: A Sponsored Project is a University project where a person or organization, including the federal government, provided funds for the project. Certain conditions on the use of the provided finds, including travel, may apply.

Responsibilities

**Controller’s Office**: The Controller’s Office ensures compliance with federal and state statutes and process transactions.

**Cost Center Managers**: Cost Center Managers ensure compliance with this and other relevant University Policies. The Cost Center Manager approves air travel reimbursements.

**Financial Coordinators**: Financial Coordinators compile relevant supporting documentation and initiates travel reimbursement transactions, including travel advance request in Workday using the Create Expense business process.

**Traveler**: The Traveler is responsible to provide all receipts and travel information to the Financial Coordinator within two weeks of completion of the trip. Additionally:

- When a Travel Advance is used the travel advance can be cleared at the time receipts and travel information is provided to the Financial Coordinator.
- The Traveler will return any unused travel advance to Brown.

The Traveler is responsible to know when they are travelling on a federally funded trip.

Procedures

**Direct Billing Request.** To request permission for direct payment of transportation, complete the Direct Billing Form and email it to Accounts_Payable@Brown.edu
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- Transportation purchased using the Direct Billing Form will be paid by the Controller’s Office at the time of purchase and reallocated to the appropriate worktags at the end of the month.
- All travel must be arranged through FCm Travel Management.

**Travel Advance Request.** Attach the Travel Advance Request form to the request initiated in Workday.

**Forms/Instructions**
- [Direct Bill Form](#)
- [Travel Advance Request](#)
- [International Per Diem Website](#)
- [FCm Travel Management](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Air Travel: Frequently Asked Questions](#)

**My trip may be cancelled or rescheduled. Can I purchase a fully refundable airline ticket?**
No. In most cases it is less expensive to pay the change fee for a rebooked ticket than to pay for a fully refundable ticket. In those cases where there is a high probability that the trip could be cancelled and the funds are not available for a future flight, the purchase of trip insurance is allowable.

**Can I upgrade my ticket?**
An upgrade at the expense of the University is not permitted and will not be reimbursed. Free upgrades or upgrades paid by the traveler must be clearly documented when seeking reimbursement.

**What should I do with my ticket if my trip is cancelled?**
Many non-refundable tickets can be used for future travel after paying a change fee. Confirm with the issuing agent or airline that the ticket can be used for future travel. It is the responsibility of the traveler to track unused airline tickets for future business use.

**I fly frequently, may I be reimbursed for an airport/airline club membership?**
No, this is not a reimbursable item.

**I purchased my ticket using frequent flyer miles. Can I be reimbursed?**
The University will not reimburse travelers for tickets purchased using frequent flyer miles. However, frequent flyer miles earned by any traveler during University business travel may be retained by the traveler for business or personal use.

**I am traveling with several other colleagues. Can I charter a private aircraft?**
Private aircraft may be used only under extenuating circumstances and with prior approval of a Senior Officer. Contact the office of Insurance & Purchasing Services for negotiations of the contract and adequate insurance coverage.

**It is essential that a family member travels with me. May I be reimbursed for the family member’s ticket?**
The travel of an employee’s spouse, significant other, friend, or family member is not reimbursable without an explicit business purpose and advance approval, in writing, from a senior officer.

**Air Travel Charged to Sponsored Projects: Frequently Asked Questions**

**How do I verify that I have secured the lowest available commercial discount fare?**
The traveler is expected to secure the lowest available commercial discount or coach airfare at the time of booking travel, whether through a travel agent or by booking travel themselves. Accounts Payable reviews all airfare transactions for reasonableness.
How do I verify whether or not I am travelling by federal funds?
The Financial Coordinator for your department Cost Center Manager has that information.

What is the consequence to the University if I do not travel under the lowest available discount fare?
If airfare is unreasonable, e.g., a flight to Florida costing two times the expected airfare, it is questioned and it’s possible that the amount reimbursed will be reduced. Though infrequent, such reimbursement reduction has occurred.

Related Policies
- Business Meals & Hospitality
- Travel Policy: Ground Transportation
- Travel Policy: Lodging
- Travel Policy: Miscellaneous Expenses
- Travel Policy: Senior Staff Travelling Together
- Travel Policy: Travel and Business Meals
- Travel Policy: Traveler and Approver Responsibilities
- Visitor Travel Reimbursement
- Human Resources: Interview Expense Reimbursements

Related Information
- American Express Corporate Card

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