



CUNY Travel Policy



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I. Purpose

These guidelines are intended to; assist employees in understanding and applying New York State and New York City travel rules and regulations, as applicable; provide instructions regarding reimbursement of expenses; and educate employees on the appropriate use of the Travel Credit Card. CUNY travel should be planned so that the best interests of the University are served at the most reasonable costs.

II. Scope

The guidelines apply to all Colleges (defined below) and include travel and related reimbursements made with New York State or New York City funds, including those funds held by the New York State Treasury in Income Fund Reimbursable (IFR) accounts and New York City's Department of Finance on CUNY's behalf.

Not included in the scope of this document are travel and related reimbursements to employees using Other Non-Tax Levy Funds (defined below) or funds of CUNY's Related Entities (defined below); however, it is strongly suggested that those entities/fund groups utilize this document as a basis to develop their own policies and procedures so that University travel and related reimbursements are relatively consistent.

III. Definitions

College - a constituent unit of the University, including without limitation senior and community colleges, graduate and professional schools, Macaulay Honors College and the Central Office.

CUNY - the established acronym for The City University of New York.

Other Non-Tax-Levy Funds - fund groups and organizations that are not legally separate from the University (e.g., the Queens College Athletic and Recreational Fund, the college associations of Hunter College, the School of Professional Studies and the Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy).

Related Entities - the Research Foundation of The City University of New York as well as the following types of entities and their subsidiaries, if legally separate from the University: auxiliary enterprise corporations, college associations, student services corporations, childcare centers, performing arts centers, and art galleries.

Travel Status - Employees are in travel status when they are more than 75 miles from both their official station and their home.

Day Trip – When an employee's work assignment is to an alternate location and begins and ends on the same day (e.g., Travel to Albany for a meeting).

Fiscal Year (FY) - The University's fiscal year for budget and accounting purposes runs from July 1 through June 30.

Official Station - The employee's usual work location. The official station is designated by the college and must be in the best interest of the University. The purpose of designating an official station is to establish when the employee is in travel status and eligible for reimbursement of travel expenses. Travel between the employee's home and official station is considered commuting and is not reimbursable. The employee's home is considered to be in the city or town in which the employee primarily resides when working at his or her official station. The employee's home generally may not be considered their official station.

Official Business - Any activity directly related to an employee's job responsibilities and/or that furthers the mission and operations of CUNY. Examples include: student recruitment, intercollegiate athletic games, and attendance at relevant professional conferences.

Traveler – Any University employee or non-employee engaging in travel sponsored or funded by CUNY.

CUNYfirst – CUNY'S Enterprise Resource Planning system of record, which supports CUNY's financial, human resources and campus solution system pillars, allowing all Colleges to conduct transactions in the same fashion.

Travel Authorization - The process of securing necessary approvals prior to travelling or booking travel. This is an automated process within CUNYfirst.

Travel Card (T-Card) – A CUNY-issued credit card under a New York State contract exclusively used for employee travel. May only be issued to tax-levy employees.

Net Card – A CUNY-issued credit card under a New York State contract exclusively used for non-employee travel. May only be issued to tax-levy employees who are charged with purchasing travel for non-employees.

Expense Report - A semi-automated process in CUNYfirst used by a Traveler to account for travel expenses and to request reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses. Expense reports can also be used for other employee reimbursements such as local travel.

GSA – The General Services Administration of the federal government charged with setting per diem rates for lodging, meals and incidental costs for official government travel.

Non-Employee – Not a tax-levy employee of the City University of New York (e.g., candidate for a job, Research Foundation employee assigned to a CUNY location, etc.).

Encumbrance – funds reserved for a specific purpose or event.

New York State Guide to Financial Operations (GFO) – A reference source for State wide accounting policies. Includes procedures of the Office of the State Comptroller related mandates for use by State Agencies.

Directive 6 – Governs expenditures for travel paid with New York City funds.

Public Officers Law, Section 17 – provides that the State, through the Office of the Attorney General, will defend State employees in any civil action or proceeding commenced in any state or federal court arising out of any alleged act or omission which occurred, or is alleged to have occurred, while the employee was acting within the scope of his or her public employment.

Shareride – a mobility service provider that matches passengers with vehicles, via websites and mobile apps (e.g. Uber and Lyft).

IV. Overview

The City University of New York sets rules and regulations for reimbursement of expenses incurred while traveling on Official Business. These rules and regulations are based on guidelines set by New York State ([OSC Travel Manual](#)) and New York City ([Directive 6](#)), as applicable.

All travel for Official Business must be in the best interest of CUNY. When travelling on Official University Business, only actual, necessary and reasonable expenses will be reimbursed. An employee must be in travel status in order to be eligible for travel reimbursement.

Travelers should use the most **efficient, safe** and **cost effective** method of transportation available.

Travelers are responsible for obtaining and providing receipts necessary to justify travel expenses.

Travel between an employee's home and official station is considered commuting and is not reimbursable. Employees working from two locations will only be reimbursed if they travel between the two locations on the same day.

CUNY reserves the right to restrict travel to locations for any reason, including but not limited to, travel bans, concerns about the safety of the destination, or limited funds.

Failure to comply with this document may result in denial of reimbursement of costs, the traveler having to reimburse the University for unauthorized expenses, restriction or suspension of travel privileges, or discipline in accordance with applicable collective bargaining agreements.

V. Travel Arrangements and Travel Agency Use

For travel booked using the New York State Travel card, travel arrangements, including airline and rail tickets, lodging, and rental cars, should be booked at the most efficient and cost effective pricing, through the New York State sanctioned travel agency. For further details see Memorandum on the University-wide Cost Savings initiative related to travel ([Accounts Payable Website](#)). The government rate should always be requested and used, if it is the most cost effective and efficient. Air transportation must always be booked in economy class; Business or First Class of service is never allowed and will not be reimbursed.

VI. Authorization to Travel

A travel authorization must accompany every expense report in CUNYfirst. Therefore, a Travel Authorization must be filed in CUNYfirst prior to each event detailing the purpose of the trip, the destination, transportation method and anticipated costs whether they are in overnight status or taking day trips. In order to optimize pricing, trips should be booked at least several weeks prior to traveling, if and when feasible. Recruiters may enter a Travel Authorization outlining anticipated trips for the month or semester.

The completed Travel Authorization will be routed to the Travelers supervisor for approval. Supervisors should review the form to ensure that the travel is for legitimate Official Business and in the best interest of the University. The supervisor must also budget check the Travel Authorization and ensure that there are sufficient funds to cover the cost of travel.

A Travel Authorization will encumber (reserve) funds in CUNYfirst which will be cleared when an expense report is submitted for the corresponding travel event in CUNYfirst.

VII. Travel Card

The CUNY Travel Card (T-Card) permits employees to pay for allowable business expenses while traveling on behalf of CUNY. It is intended to provide employees a means with which to pay for travel expenses, reducing employee out of pocket costs.

A Travel Authorization must be entered prior to using a Travel Card.

Travel Cards shall be used to pay for expenses relating to Official CUNY Business travel only.

Employees may not use the Travel Card to pay for personal expenses, even if the employee intends to reimburse CUNY for those expenses.

The Travel Card must not be used to pay for expenses that are not travel related.

All Travel Card transactions must be supported by an itemized receipt regardless of transaction amount.

All Travel Card charges must be reconciled 15 days after advance booking or the end of the travel event, whichever is sooner.

Upon separation from CUNY an employee must return any Travel Card issued to the employee and ensure that all outstanding transactions are properly reconciled prior to their separation date. If the employee fails to clear charges, CUNY may withhold the employee's final paycheck until outstanding expense reports are finalized and approved.

Further guidance for proper use of the Travel Card may be found at ([T-Card Quick Card Link](#)).

VIII. Allowable Expenses

The following expenses are allowable and may be reimbursed:

Expense Type	Description	Examples
Lodging and Meals	Cost of overnight accommodations based on GSA (GSA) rates and per diem meals. For community colleges only if GSA is not available at the on-site conference location, the Traveler may exceed per diem up to 150%.	Breakfast and Dinner for Senior Colleges/Central Office (NYS) based on published GSA per diem rates. Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner for Community Colleges/Central Office (NYC) based on published GSA per diem rates.
Transportation	Cost of transportation and related expenses	Common carrier (bus, train, air), rental or personal vehicle, gas, tolls, parking etc.
Incidental and Miscellaneous Expenses	Costs of other business related expenses	Conference/event registration fees, business related telephone calls, internet usage charges, baggage fees, ground transportation, parking and out-of- State tax charges.

While meals are generally eligible for reimbursement, no reimbursement will be made if meals are provided to the Traveler by a third party or as part of the travel event.

IX. Long Distance Travel

A. Overnight Lodging and Meals

Travelers may choose one of two methods for expense reimbursement for overnight travel. Travelers may not combine the two methods on the same overnight trip. An overnight trip is defined as dinner, lodging and breakfast the following morning.

Community College/Central Office (NYC) employees are eligible for lunch reimbursement as part of their per diem meals.

When traveling to a professional conference, an employee may use **one** travel day either before the start of the conference or after the end of the conference, depending on conference start and end times. This benefit is limited to **one** day.

a. Method 1 – Unreceipted (Lodging with friends, family, or other unpaid accommodations)

This method provides a fixed-rate allowance for meals, lodging and incidental expenses regardless of where lodging is obtained, including lodging with relatives or friends. Rates are established based on the city or county where lodging is obtained or the location to which the employee is traveling (whichever is less expensive) as shown below. No receipts are required when using this method. Current rates are as follows:

Location	Per Diem
New York City and Nassau, Suffolk, Rockland and Westchester Counties	\$50
Cities of Albany, Binghamton, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and their respective surrounding metropolitan areas	\$40
All other locations in New York State	\$35
Out of State (this includes any of State tax on lodging)	\$50

b. Method 2 – Receipted (Lodging in hotels, motels, or other paid accommodations)

This method provides reimbursement of actual lodging costs and an allowance for meals based on the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) Standard Per Diem Rates. CUNY expects Travelers to secure lodging that is equal to or below the maximum GSA per diem rate for the travel destination effective at the time of the travel.

To determine appropriate rates, Travelers should go to the GSA Website ([GSA](#)) and using the state, city, and county of the destination and dates of travel, look up the appropriate rates.

Since GSA Meal and Incidental Expense rates include lunch and since New York State does not reimburse lunch, Senior College/Central Office (NYS) employees should refer to the State of New York published rates in the GFO ([GFO Chapter XIII.4.D.](#)) for the appropriate per diem rate.

Travelers using the receipted method are also eligible for an additional per diem for breakfast if they leave 1 hour prior to the normal start of the work day on their first day of travel, and/or for dinner if they return 2 hours after the normal end of their work day on their last day of travel. In these cases, breakfast and/or dinner will be reimbursed up to the maximum amount of the meal per diem allowance specified for the particular area of lodging.

Receipts are always required for lodging, however, receipts are not required to claim Method 2 meal per diems unless the Traveler pays for the meals using a Travel Card. Receipts are also required for expenses not included in the fixed rate allowances for meals, lodging and incidental expenses.

c. Exceeding Per Diem for Lodging

Occasionally, Travelers may be unable to find lodging at or under the GSA per diem rate. If that occurs, the Traveler must receive prior approval from their Business Office and must provide written justification to be submitted by employee with the expense report in CUNYfirst.

Community College employees may exceed the per diem rate by 150% for on-site conference location hotels, with written justification to be submitted with the expense report in CUNYfirst.

When considering a request to exceed established per diem rates for conferences, the following should be considered:

- Available lodging within the rate at a location nearby,
- Savings on early bird registrations that require the hotel be booked through the conference event,
- Transportation costs saved by staying at the conference site,
- Late evening or early morning conference events,
- Whether the attendee is an officer of the sponsoring organization, and
- Whether the attendee is a speaker or is performing other functions essential to the conference.

Maximum lodging rates exclude taxes. For travel within New York State, a New York State Hotel Tax Exemption Certificate ([ST-129](#)) should be provided to the hotel. For travel outside of New York State, state and local taxes are not included in the maximum lodging amount and will be reimbursed in addition to the per diem amount when traveling to a state that does not honor the exemption form. For more information about out-of-state travel, see the [OBF Accounts Payable website](#).

X. Foreign Travel

Official Business may require travel outside of the United States. Foreign travel has the following special requirements:

- Reimbursement rates are governed by the maximum per diem allowances established by the U.S. Department of State ([USDOS](#)).
- When submitting a Travel Authorization in CUNYfirst, expenses incurred by the Traveler must be converted to US currency based upon the exchange rate in effect on the transaction date. This can be done using a currency converter ([Currency Converter](#)).
- Foreign travel rates provide for lodging costs up to a maximum amount and an allowance for meals and incidentals.

Before making any arrangements for foreign travel, the Traveler should check The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs for travel advisories in effect for their country of destination. Travel Advisories are based on a four-rating system that describe the risk and provide clear actions U.S. citizens should take to help ensure their safety.

XI. Other Miscellaneous or Incidental Expenses

Travelers may incur miscellaneous business travel expenses during their trip. In all cases, in order to be considered reimbursable, these expenses must be reasonable, actual, and directly related to the trip.

To be reimbursed, original receipts for miscellaneous expenses must be submitted with the Travel Expense Report. If a receipt cannot be provided due to the nature of the expense (e.g. coin-operated parking meter), the Traveler may provide a statement outlining the costs incurred in lieu of a receipt and should be employed on an exception-only basis.

XII. Non-Reimbursable Expenses

Certain expenses are not eligible for reimbursement including, but not limited to: parking or traffic/ moving violation fines, alcohol, personal insurance for airfare and rental vehicles, laundry service for domestic travel, mini-bar costs, expenses for someone other than the Traveler, seat upgrades, New York State lodging taxes, and personal charges.

XIII. Local Travel

When an employee is assigned to work at an alternate work location which is less than 75 miles from either his or her home or Official Station, the employee is not considered to be in travel status, but rather is considered to be traveling in the proximity of his or her official station.

The employee should use mass transit for local travel whenever feasible and if not an unnecessary burden. However, CUNY may reimburse transportation expenses such as a taxi or rideshare if:

- The transportation expenses between home and the alternate work location exceed the cost between home and the work location.
- No form of public mass transit is available.
- When travel is outside of normal operating hours of public mass transit.
- The employee is required to carry very large, bulky and/or heavy materials from their home to the first work location.
- The employee is required to carry very large, bulky and/or heavy materials from their last work location to home.

Transportation expenses incurred while commuting between an employee's home and any primary work location or from the last work location and home are generally not reimbursable.

A. Day Trip Meal Reimbursements

The University describes Day Trips as Local Travel and, therefore, employees are generally not eligible for reimbursement of expenses related to lodging, meals or incidentals.

XIV. Transportation

A. Transportation by Common Carriers

The most efficient and cost effective method of transportation when traveling is typically to use a common carrier such as a train, subway, bus, airplane, taxicab, or shareride and this is what Travelers should select when arranging transportation. When choosing the method of transportation, Travelers should consider several factors, such as distance traveled, time to travel this distance, number of Travelers, number of locations to be visited, and the type of transportation available. New York State contracts should be used whenever possible; for both Senior and Community Colleges.

In all travel instances, it is the Travelers' responsibility to secure the most efficient, safe and cost effective method of transportation available. The use of mass transit should be used whenever feasible and when not an unnecessary burden. For additional information regarding Travel Management Services available through CUNY, refer to the Office of Budget and Finance website. ([AP Travel](#))

B. Transportation by University, Rental or Personal Vehicle

NOTE: This section should be read in conjunction with the CUNY Vehicle Use Policy.

(http://policy.cuny.edu/policyimport/manual_of_general_policy/article_iii_fiscal_affairs/policy_3.07_vehicles_use_and_operation_of/document.pdf).

Before planning an Official Business trip that involves a vehicle, the Traveler should determine whether a University pool vehicle is available and appropriate for the trip. If not, the Traveler may use a rental vehicle or a personal vehicle, whichever is less expensive. To assist in determining the most economical mode of transportation, the Traveler should use the trip calculator on the Office of General Services website ([Trip Calculator](#)).

a. University Vehicle

Reservation of a University vehicle must be done through the designated fleet manager at the College. When using a University vehicle, the Traveler must follow all applicable requirements of the CUNY Vehicle Use Policy, including without limitation restrictions on use of the vehicle, completion of vehicle use logs, and the prohibition on transporting passengers not involved with Official Business. (Refer to [CUNY Vehicle Policy](#)).

b. Rental Vehicle

Generally, when transportation by rental car is necessary, travelers should use vehicle rental agencies who have currently established New York State Contracts. In all instances the vehicle rental must be the most appropriate and economic method of transportation.

Whenever possible, payment of the rental vehicle should be made with the Travel Card. Paying with a Travel Card means that the Traveler and CUNY will be protected by full damage waiver and liability coverage for the rental, if in the US. If the Travel Card is not used, the University is not protected from responsibility for damage. Consequently, when using a personal credit card or other method of payment and not a Travel Card, the Traveler must ensure existence of collision damage waiver.

When renting a vehicle, optional services such as pre-paid fuel, GPS, etc., are not reimbursable.

When renting a vehicle, the Traveler must pick up the vehicle no earlier than after 5 p.m. on the day before travel and return the vehicle as soon as possible. Vehicles should not be rented over weekends. CUNY will not reimburse the cost of weekend rentals unless the Traveler has provided adequate justification. Pre-Approval from the Business Office is required.

If more than one employee will be driving the vehicle, the additional drivers must be listed on the rental contract; the maximum number of drivers per vehicle is two. The College should not pay additional charges for these drivers. No one other than the listed drivers may drive the vehicle.

c. Personal Vehicle Use

Personal vehicles may only be used instead of a rental when the cost of taking a personal vehicle is less than or equal to the cost of a rental vehicle or when the use of a rental vehicle would prove an unnecessary burden. In the event that a Traveler wishes to use a personal vehicle, they should evaluate the costs of taking a personal vehicle using the mileage [calculator](#) available on the Office of Budget and Finance website. The calculator compares standard IRS per mile mileage costs against the cost of using a rental vehicle. Charges for gasoline, oil, accessories, repairs, depreciation, anti-freeze, towing, insurance and other expenditures will not be allowed. These are considered operational costs and are covered in the mileage allowance.

Pursuant to the CUNY Vehicle Use Policy, Travelers who are permitted to use their personal vehicles for Official Business must maintain the minimum statutory automobile liability limits as required by the state in which the vehicle is registered, and must provide evidence of such insurance to the University upon request.

CUNY, the State or the City will not cover costs related to: uninsured or underinsured motorists, personal injury protection, medical payments, comprehensive or collision losses, or liability to other persons, including passengers in the Traveler's vehicle, etc. which should all be covered by the Traveler's own automobile insurance policy.

In the event of an accident, the New York State Attorney General may grant defense and indemnification of CUNY employee under Public Officers Law, Section 17, if the employee driving their personal vehicle was acting in the course of employment, the act was not malicious or intentional, the lawsuit is more than the employee's personal coverage, and the employee notifies the New York State Attorney General, in writing within five days of the notification of the lawsuit.

XV. Interviews for Employment

The College shall designate responsible official(s) who may authorize reimbursement for travel expenses necessarily incurred by candidates attending interviews for positions for which there is a shortage of qualified candidates. Reimbursement will be allowed to candidates who reside over 75 miles from the location of the interview in accordance with the rules detailed in these guidelines. Reimbursable expenses may include transportation, food (up to per diem based on receipts), and lodging.

XVI. Non-Employee Travel Expenses

Travel costs incurred by Non-Employees traveling on Official Business may be reimbursed up to the rates that are available to employees and must follow all travel rules and guidelines for employees. However, **Non-Employees are not eligible for meal per diems, actual meal receipts are required.**

Travel reimbursements to Non-Employees are processed through a CUNY Non-Employee Travel Reimbursement Form (CUNY Non-Employee Travel Reimbursement). Both the Traveler and person serving as the authorizer for the travel expense must sign the Form. The payee or department must complete the Expense Report to specify the exact purpose for the payment and include documentation that explains the nature of the visit and its benefit to the University (e.g. flyer, itinerary, agenda), as well as dates of the activity. All original receipts should be attached to the completed Non-Employee Travel Reimbursement form and forwarded to College's Accounts Payable office for processing.

XVII. Expense Reimbursement Process

After travel is completed, the Traveler or designated proxy must complete an Expense Report in CUNYfirst and attach all receipts and supporting documentation (e.g. lodging receipt and event agenda).

The supervisor of the Traveler shall review the Expense Report and confirm that the expenses are actual, necessary and reasonable.

Travel Expense Reports must be routed to the College Accounts Payable office within fifteen days after the earlier of advance booking or the end of the travel event, but in no event later than 30 days.

After supervisor approval, the Accounts Payable office will review the Expense Report to ensure compliance and either send the expense report back requesting additional information, or approve and submit the expense report for payment.

CUNY will not reimburse travel expenses after the expiration of the Fiscal Year during which the travel occurred.

XVIII. Employees on Leave

An employee on leave status is not entitled to reimbursement of travel expenses unless:

- The travel occurred while on active status.
- An approved application for a fellowship award included a travel component.

XIX. IRS Requirements

The Internal Revenue Service generally requires withholding and W-2 reporting for the following types of travel reimbursements:

- Per Diem amounts paid in excess of the rates allowed by the federal government that are not supported by receipts.
- Meal allowances paid for non-overnight travel or day trips.
- Mileage reimbursements in excess of the maximum federal rate.

XX. Responsibilities

A. Travelers

- Enter a Travel Authorization in CUNYfirst for every instance of travel.
- Know CUNY, State and City travel rules and regulations.
- Know CUNY's policies and procedures.
- Know your official station and its effect on your eligibility for travel reimbursement.
- Obtain necessary approval for travel, including method of travel.
- Secure the most economical and efficient method of travel in the best interest of The City University of New York.
- Obtain all necessary travel documents, tax exempt certificate, vouchers, etc.
- Maintain an accurate record of expenses including departure and return times, and mileage.
- Obtain required receipts or documentation (must be readable and itemized).
- Claim reimbursement only for actual allowed expenses within reimbursement rates.
- Submit an Expense Report within 15 business days after the earlier of advance booking or the end of the travel event.
- Ensure that your Expense Report is submitted within the Fiscal Year that it occurred.

B. Supervisor

- Ensure that a Travel Authorization is submitted and approved in CUNYfirst.
- Know CUNY, State and City travel rules and regulations.
- Know CUNY's policies and procedures.
- Know your staff's official station and its effects on their eligibility for travel reimbursement.
- Ensure that there is sufficient budget to cover the travel.
- Approve requests for staff to be in travel status only when necessary.
- Review Traveler's itineraries to ensure the most economical and efficient method of travel is used in the best interest of CUNY.
- Verify that all required documentation is attached.
- Review and certify Traveler's Expense Report.
- Forward all Expense Reports to the Accounts Payable Travel Unit within 15 days of the earlier of the advance booking/payment or the end of the travel event.

C. Accounts Payable Travel Unit

- Review completed Travel Expense Reports to ensure that they are in compliance with State, City CUNY and College policies and procedures.
- Approve Expense Report and submit them for payment.
- Serves as a resource for travel-related questions.
- Develop and/or maintain forms and other resources to assist the University community with complying with travel requirements.
- Manage the official travel records in CUNYfirst.
- Conduct reviews of travel-related expenses and assist with audits and other internal and external reviews of travel records.

XXI. Failure to Comply

Failure to comply with this document may result in disallowance of reimbursement request, the Traveler having to reimburse the University for unauthorized expenses, restriction or suspension of travel privileges, or discipline in accordance with applicable collective bargaining agreement.

XXII. T-card Compliance Training

The University is developing an online compliance training program for the proper use of the Travel Credit Card (T-Card). The compliance program contains all rules and regulations surrounding the use of the T-Card and instructs on the proper reconciliation of T-Card charges. All T-Card holders will have to complete the compliance program within 30 days of card issuance and be required to revalidate training on a yearly basis.