



4.0 Travel

Introduction

University System of Georgia (USG) institutions shall be guided by general travel regulations set forth in this section when employees are required to travel away from headquarters in the performance of their official duties. These regulations, which are general in nature, are intended to provide a reasonable degree of uniformity for the various institutions within the system, and may be supplemented with such specific regulations and instructions as may be required.

In requiring certain of its employees to travel in the performance of their duties, the USG expects to reimburse them for reasonable and necessary expenses as may be incurred while traveling away from their official headquarters and places of residence. In cooperation with regulations promulgated by the State Accounting Office and the Office of Planning and Budget, the Board of Regents has adopted the following general regulations regarding travel of employees on USG official business.

Note: State travel regulations can be accessed at the following State Accounting Office web site: <http://sao.georgia.gov>. Click on **Statewide Travel Regulations** under **At Your Service**.

Reimbursement claims for subsistence (meals and lodging) are to be reported on travel expense statements by date, location, and amount for each meal and lodging claimed. An individual taking annual leave while away from headquarters on official business is not entitled to subsistence for the period of leave. With certain exceptions, reimbursement for meals within a 30-mile radius and lodging within a 50-mile radius (or the county) of a person's home office or residence is not allowable. Out-of-state travel expenses for meals and lodging may exceed the following limits for travel within the state, but they should be reasonable and any unusual amounts should be justified.

Topics in this section include:

- Definitions
- Authorization for Travel
- Reimbursement of Meal Expenses
- Lodging Expenses



- ❑ Travel by State-Owned or Personal Vehicles
- ❑ Travel by Rented or Public Transportation
- ❑ Travel by Private Aircraft
- ❑ Miscellaneous Travel Expenses
- ❑ Corporate Charge Cards and Travel Advances
- ❑ Reimbursement Procedures

Note: Non-Employee Travel is covered in Section 19.9.



4.1 Definitions

4.1.1 Agency

AGENCY means any department, board, commission, or other unit of state government that is subject to the Statewide Travel Regulations.

4.1.2 Commercial Transportation

COMMERCIAL TRANSPORTATION means any entity that offers transportation of people or goods to the public for pay.

4.1.3 County and Municipal Excise Tax

COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL EXCISE TAX means the local taxes charged by hotels/motels for lodging. This tax is separate from the state sales tax.

4.1.4 DOAS Vehicles

DOAS VEHICLES means the statewide vehicle motor pool that is operated by the Department of Administrative Services' Motor Vehicle Services Division.

4.1.5 Employee Travel Expense Statement

EMPLOYEE TRAVEL EXPENSE STATEMENT means the accounting document used to reimburse a state employee for travel expenses incurred while on official business.

4.1.6 Federal Per Diem Rate

FEDERAL PER DIEM RATE means the maximum reimbursements allowed to federal employees who are on travel status. The available rates only include locations within the continental United States. Separate per diem limits have been established for foreign travel.

4.1.7 High Cost Area

HIGH COST AREA means any area within Georgia within which meal expenses may be reimbursed at a higher amount than the limits that otherwise apply to travel within Georgia. High cost areas are limited to the following counties: Chatham, Cobb, DeKalb, Fulton, Glynn, and Gwinnett counties.

4.1.8 Lodging

LODGING means a hotel, motel, inn, apartment, or similar entity that furnishes lodging to the public for pay.



4.1.9 Per Diem for Meals

PER DIEM FOR MEALS means the cost of a meal including applicable taxes and tip.

4.1.10 Miscellaneous Travel Expense

MISCELLANEOUS TRAVEL EXPENSE means a necessary and reasonable expense incurred by a state employee while traveling on official business. This term does not apply, however, to meals, lodging, mileage or transportation costs.

4.1.11 Normal Commuting Miles

NORMAL COMMUTING MILES means the miles traveled on a regular, usually daily, basis from an employee's residence to the location most frequently associated with work performed outside of that residence, generally at a "headquarters." This should be a standard distance that does not change from one reimbursement request to the next.

4.1.12 Personal Motor Vehicle

PERSONAL MOTOR VEHICLE means a motor vehicle that is owned or leased for personal use by an employee. Personal motor vehicles include automobiles, motorcycles, and aircraft.

4.1.13 Point of Departure

POINT OF DEPARTURE means the beginning location used to calculate state-use miles traveled in a personal vehicle. For the normal workweek, the point of departure will be either the employee's residence or headquarters, whichever is nearer to the destination point. During weekends and holidays, employees should use the actual point of departure to calculate travel mileage.

4.1.14 Travel Advance

TRAVEL ADVANCE means any payment to an employee for travel expenses that will be incurred for a scheduled, future trip.

4.1.15 Travel Advance Authorization Form

TRAVEL ADVANCE AUTHORIZATION FORM means the form used to document approval of cash advances by an Institution head or his designee and to document receipt of the cash advance by the employee.

4.1.16 Travel Exception

TRAVEL EXCEPTION means written authorization for travel reimbursement of expenses generally not allowable under the Statewide Travel Regulations.



4.1.17 Travel Expenses

TRAVEL EXPENSES means meal, lodging, mileage, transportation, and miscellaneous expenses.



4.2 Authorization for Travel

4.2.1 General Provisions

Subject to the provisions outlined in these travel regulations, the State Accounting Office and the Office of Planning and Budget have authorized travel reimbursement for the following expenses:

- Meals associated with overnight lodging and in certain circumstances where there is no overnight lodging;
- Lodging expenses;
- Mileage for use of personal vehicle or aircraft;
- Transportation expenses, including parking and toll fees; and
- Certain miscellaneous expenses associated with travel.

The specific policies regarding the reimbursement of travel expenses, as well as expense limits and required documentation are outlined in the following sections.

4.2.2 Exceptions to Travel Regulations

Situations may arise in the course of performing job duties that may require employees to incur travel expenses that are generally not reimbursable. The State Accounting Office and the Office of Planning and Budget are authorized to grant one-time exceptions for unusual circumstances.

4.2.3 Employee Authorization for Travel

Each employee required to travel in the performance of official duties and entitled to reimbursement for expenses incurred shall have prior authorization from the department head or other designated official for the performance of travel. Approval may be in the form of a standing authorization in the case of individuals required to travel on a regular or continuous basis, a specific authorization in the case of those individuals who are required to make occasional trips, or a specific authorization for all out-of-state trips.

Specific authorization shall be in such form as to indicate the itinerary, estimate of the cost of travel, mode of transportation, and the general purpose of travel. A copy shall be attached to the travel expense report. Travel to points just beyond the state border necessary for the accomplishment of in-state business shall not be construed as out-of-state travel for the purpose of these regulations. The design and provision of the form to properly document prior approval shall be the responsibility of each institution of the University System. It is believed that these travel practices will protect the best interest of the employee and the University System.



4.3 Per Diem Allowance for Meals

4.3.1 Per Diem Allowance for Meals Associated with Overnight Travel Within Georgia (General Rules)

Employees traveling overnight may be paid a per diem amount designed to cover the cost of meals (including taxes and tips), based on the number of meals per day for which the employee is eligible.

The daily meal limits shown below may be considered as a single daily total:

Number of Meals Reimbursed	Meals Reimbursed	Maximum Allowable Expense (1)
3 meals per day	breakfast/lunch/dinner	\$28.00
2 meals per day	breakfast/lunch	\$13.00
	breakfast/dinner	\$21.00
	lunch/dinner	\$22.00
1 meal per day	breakfast	\$ 6.00
	lunch	\$ 7.00
	dinner	\$15.00

Note 1: (1) Taxes and tips are allowable expenses. However, they should be included in the total expense for the meal.

Note 2: Meal limits applicable to employees traveling to high cost areas within Georgia, as defined in Section 4.1.7 on page 4-3, are shown in Section 4.3.2 on page 4-9.

Employees may only receive per diem for meals occurring while officially on travel status.

Employees traveling overnight are generally eligible for per diem amounts designed to cover the cost of three (3) meals per day for all days on travel status *other than* day of departure and the day of return. There are specific instances, however, in which an employee *may be* eligible for the three (3) meal per diem rate on departure/return days, as noted below:

Day of Departure

1. If an employee departs on an overnight trip prior to 6:30 am, the employee is eligible



for per diem for breakfast on the day of departure, along with being eligible for lunch and dinner per diem on that day.

2. If an employee departs on an overnight trip prior to 11:00 am, the employee is eligible for per diem for lunch on the day of departure, along with being eligible for per diem for dinner on that day.
3. If an employee departs on an overnight trip prior to 5:30 pm, the employee is eligible for per diem for dinner on the day of departure.

Day of Return

1. If an employee returns from an overnight trip after 6:30 am, the employee is eligible for per diem for breakfast on the day of return.
2. If an employee returns from an overnight trip after 1:30 pm, the employee is eligible for per diem for lunch on the day of return.
3. If an employee returns from an overnight trip after 7:30 pm, the employee is eligible for per diem for dinner on the day of return.

Meals included in Conference Registrations, etc.

If any meal is included as a part of the cost of a conference registration, etc., such meal(s) should not be considered eligible in the calculation of per diem and an employee may not receive per diem for the normally eligible number of meals. For example, if conference registration includes breakfast and lunch, the employee will only receive per diem for the dinner meal (\$15, or \$20 for high cost areas). Because most conferences, etc., accommodate a variety of dietary needs/restrictions, employees are expected to participate in such meals.

In rare circumstances, an employee may be unable to participate in a conference meal. In such a case, the employee may request the per diem amount associated with the meal purchased in lieu of that provided. If requesting such reimbursement, a receipt documenting the meal purchase must be attached to the travel expense statement, and a justification for the meal purchase must be indicated on the statement.

4.3.2 Per Diem Allowance for Meals Associated with Overnight Travel Within High Cost Areas in Georgia

In some areas of Georgia, employees may experience high costs that cause the employee to exceed the general meal limits. In recognition of this fact, certain areas, as defined in Section 4.1.7 on page 4-3, have been designated “high cost areas.” As is true with the general meal limits, the daily meal limits for high cost areas may be considered as a single



daily total. When working and spending the night in lodging in the designated high cost areas, the following meal limits apply:

Number of Meals Reimbursed	Meals Reimbursed	Maximum Allowable Expense (1)
3 meals per day	breakfast/lunch/dinner	\$36.00
2 meals per day	breakfast/lunch	\$16.00
	breakfast/dinner	\$27.00
	lunch/dinner	\$29.00
1 meal per day	breakfast	\$ 7.00
	lunch	\$ 9.00
	dinner	\$20.00

Note: (1) Taxes and tips are allowable expenses. However, they should be included in the total expense for the meal.

Employees are considered traveling in high cost areas of Georgia when their official responsibilities must be performed at a location in the high cost area. Employees who are not both working and spending the night in lodging in a designated high cost area are subject to the general meal limits.

4.3.3 Per Diem Allowance for Meals Associated with Overnight Travel Outside Georgia

Employees are considered traveling outside Georgia when their official responsibilities must be performed at an out-of-state location.

Note: Employees who are working in Georgia but spending the night in lodging in another state are not traveling outside Georgia. Travel to points just beyond the state border necessary for the accomplishment of in-state business shall not be construed as out-of-state travel for the purpose of these regulations.

Employees traveling outside Georgia should make every effort to remain within the meal limits prescribed in these travel regulations. However, employees may experience some high cost areas that cause the employee to exceed the authorized meal expenses.

Employees traveling outside of Georgia may receive meal per diem amounts up to the federal per diem rates, at the discretion of the approving agency head or designee.

Note: These meal per diem amounts will **not** include the \$3 federal “incidentals”



allowance. Reimbursement of such incidental expenses is covered Section 4.10, starting on page 4-31, of these travel regulations.

The federal per diem rates and meal amounts are located at the following Internet addresses:

- Federal per diem rates for locations within the continental United States: <http://www.gsa.gov/perdiem>
- Breakdown by meal for federal per diem amounts: <http://www.gsa.gov/mie>
- Federal per diem rates for foreign travel: <http://www.state.gov/m/a/als/prdm>

Per diem rates associated with travel to high cost out-of-state areas should be approved by the agency head or his/her designee prior to the trip, in order that the employee might plan meals accordingly.

4.3.4 Per Diem Allowance for Meals Not Associated with Overnight Travel

Employees who are required to travel for their job and do not stay overnight may be reimbursed for certain meal expenses under the following situations.

1. Employees acting as an official representative for their department may receive per diem for meals that are an integral part of a scheduled, official meeting. Per diem is only authorized, however, if the meeting is with persons outside the employee's department and if the meeting continues during the meal. Employees are not authorized to receive this per diem if they leave the premises of the meeting site.
2. Employees may be reimbursed for noon meals that are part of a required registration fee that is paid by the employee.

Note: In this instance, a per diem is not authorized, since the registration fee is the basis for reimbursement.

3. Employees on State business who travel more than thirty (30) miles from home or headquarters on a work assignment, and are away for more than thirteen (13) hours, may receive per diem for the noon meal, even when there is no overnight lodging. In addition to the noon meal, employees who depart prior to 6:30 a.m. are entitled to per diem for breakfast, and employees who return later than 7:30 p.m. are entitled to per diem for dinner. Employees must meet the eligibility requirements outlined above for per diem related to the noon meal before per diem for breakfast and/or dinner will be considered.

Employees who are reimbursed for any of these circumstances are still expected to remain within the authorized meal limits.



Note: Statewide travel regulations *do not* authorize employees to be reimbursed for meals purchased during a “lunch meeting” in which the meal and the meeting are one and the same.

4.3.5 Meal Expenses Incurred While Taking Leave

Employees who take annual leave while on travel status may not be reimbursed for meal expenses incurred during the period of leave.

4.3.6 Required Documentation of Meal Expenses

Receipts for meals are not required, except as discussed in Section 4.3.1, starting on page 4-7. Times of departure (for the day of departure) and return (for the day of return) should be noted on the employee travel expense statement to substantiate meals eligible for payment of per diem. All meals included as a part of conference registration fees, etc., should be noted on travel form. Meal expenses incurred that exceed the authorized per diem amounts due to travel in high cost areas or out-of-state should be itemized separately and explained on the travel expense statement, and are eligible for reimbursement as determined by the approving official.



4.4 Lodging Expenses

4.4.1 General Provisions

Employees who travel more than fifty (50) miles (and outside the county) of their home office, residence, or headquarters may be reimbursed for lodging expenses associated with overnight travel.

Employees will be reimbursed for the actual lodging expenses, provided the expenses are reasonable. Each institution may establish its own policy regarding the maximum reasonable rates for overnight lodging.

4.4.2 Employee Responsibilities

Employees traveling overnight are responsible for ensuring the most reasonable lodging rates are obtained. To accomplish this, employees should:

- Make reservations in advance, whenever practical,
- Utilize minimum rate accommodations,
- Avoid the “deluxe” hotels and motels, and
- Obtain corporate/government rates, whenever possible.

4.4.3 Reimbursement of Lodging Expenses for Overnight Travel Outside Georgia

Lodging expenses for hotels/motels outside Georgia may exceed the maximum reasonable rates set by an institution. Employees traveling out-of-state should refer to the federal per diem rates to identify high cost areas of the United States, and to determine whether higher expenses are justified. The federal per diem rates are located at the following Internet addresses:

- For locations within the continental United States: <http://www.gsa.gov/perdiem>
- For foreign travel: <http://www.state.gov/m/a/als/prdm>

Note: The rates published by the federal government should only be used as a guide.

The institution head or his/her designee should approve lodging expenses associated with travel to high cost areas prior to the trip.

4.4.4 Lodging Associated with a Meeting or Seminar

Employees who stay at a hotel/motel that is holding a scheduled meeting or seminar may incur lodging expenses that exceed the rates generally considered reasonable. The higher cost may be justified in order to avoid excessive transportation costs between a lower cost hotel/motel and the location of the meeting.



4.4.5 Authorization for Lodging Within the 50 Mile Radius

On occasion, institutions are required to sponsor conferences, trade shows, and other functions that require personnel to work at the event. In many cases, the persons planning and coordinating the event reside or work less than fifty (50) miles from the scheduled meeting site.

Institution heads are authorized to approve overnight travel for such persons who are coordinating institution-sponsored events, provided the affected employees are required to conduct business activities at the site the following day. In addition to lodging, affected employees may be reimbursed for meals and mileage in accordance with the provisions of the Statewide Travel Regulations.

Institutions are required to keep records of all persons authorized for travel status under this provision. Such records must be maintained in a central file and must include the names of all persons approved for travel under this provision, the dates of the event, the purpose of the event, the responsibilities of the individuals approved for travel status, and the written and signed authorization of the institution head. Authorization for such travel must be done in advance of the scheduled event.

It should be noted that this provision only applies to conferences and other institution sponsored events that occur. This provision does not authorize persons to claim travel reimbursement for activities that are part of their normal responsibilities. In addition, this provision would not apply for persons who are required to attend evening meetings as part of their normal responsibilities.

4.4.6 Shared Lodging

When employees on travel status share a room, reimbursement will be calculated, if practical, on a prorated share of the total cost. When a state employee on travel status is accompanied by someone who is not a state employee on travel status, the employee is entitled to reimbursement at a single room rate.

4.4.7 Taxes Associated with Lodging Expenses

If lodging is paid directly by employee (personal credit card, personal check, or cash), state and local government officials and employees traveling within the state on official business are *exempt* from paying the *county or municipal excise tax* on lodging (“hotel/motel” or “occupancy” tax). [OCGA 48-13-51 (a)(1)(C)(ii)]. Employees *are required* to pay any state/local sales and use taxes. The exemption when paying by personal credit card, check or cash applies *only* to the hotel/motel tax.

Employees are required to submit a copy of the hotel/motel tax-exemption form when they register at a hotel/motel. A copy of this form is shown on the following page.



State of Georgia Exemption of the Local Hotel/Motel Excise Tax

CERTIFICATION - THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE LODGING OBTAINED ON THE DATE(S) IDENTIFIED BELOW WAS REQUIRED IN THE DISCHARGE OF MY OFFICIAL DUTIES FOR THE STATE AND QUALIFIES FOR EXEMPTION OF THE HOTEL/MOTEL EXCISE TAX UNDER OCGA CHAPTER 48-13, (AMENDED BY ACT 621).

Signature of Official _____ Date _____
Name of Official or Employee _____
(Name) (Title)
Agency Representing: **Board of Regents/University System of Georgia**
Accounting/Fiscal Office Contact: **Business Services** Phone No.: **(404) 656-2236**
Date(s) of Lodging _____

This exemption does not apply to employees staying at an out-of-state hotel/motel.

Employees should be able to provide proper identification to document their employment as a state or local government employee. Employees should be sure to present the hotel/motel tax-exemption form to the hotel at check-in. If the hotel refuses to accept the form at check-in, the employee should attempt to resolve the issue with hotel management before checking out at the end of their stay. Employees should review hotel/motel receipts to ensure that taxes have been applied correctly to their lodging expenses in accordance with the state tax laws and regulations. Employees should attempt to resolve any problems with the billing prior to checkout.

If the matter is not resolved by the time the employee checks out, the employee should pay the tax. The employee should explain the payment of the tax as an unusual expense on their travel statement.

The employee’s agency is authorized to reimburse the employee for the hotel/motel tax if the employee provides the agency with the following information:

- Employee name;
- Date(s) of lodging;
- Name, address, telephone number of hotel; and,
- Documentation from the hotel/motel of their refusal to omit the excise tax.

The employee’s agency should forward this information to the State Accounting Office by email to: SAO_Reporting@sao.ga.gov, or by regular mail to: 200 Piedmont Avenue, Suite



1604 West Tower, Atlanta, GA 30334.

If lodging is paid directly by the state or local government, such as by direct-bill, state credit card, or government check, the hotel/motel should not collect any taxes associated with the lodging expenses.

4.4.8 Resort and Other Fees

Some hotels include a charge for “resort” or other fees. These are not tax-exempt fees, and should be reimbursed as an eligible lodging expense.

4.4.9 Lodging Expenses Incurred While Taking Leave

Employees who take annual leave while on travel status may not be reimbursed for lodging expenses incurred during the period of leave.

4.4.10 Required Documentation of Lodging Expenses

Daily lodging expenses, including applicable taxes, must be itemized on the employee travel expense statement. Employees requesting reimbursement for lodging expenses are required to submit receipts with their expense statement.

Note: Refer to the note in Section 4.10.1 on page 4-31 for an exception to the requirement to submit lodging receipts.

Any expenses that exceed the maximum reasonable rates established by the respective institution should be explained on the travel statement. Individuals responsible for approving travel expenses should review these explanations to determine whether the higher costs are justified and allowable.

As noted in Section 4.8.5 on page 4-26, employees may be reimbursed for work-related Internet usage charges. These charges should be separately identified on the itemized hotel/motel bill, but should *not* be listed on the travel expense statement as “lodging.” Rather, these charges should be included in the “voice/data communications” section of the travel expense statement.

4.4.11 Georgia’s “Green Hotels” Program

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources has developed a program to identify and certify lodging properties that are taking significant steps to reduce their demands on Georgia’s natural resources and to act as good corporate citizens. These certified “Green Hotels” meet a stringent standard for environmental stewardship and operational efficiency. By using less toxic cleaning and maintenance chemicals, these hotels provide healthier conditions for guest and employees.

When traveling on state business and hosting meetings, state employees are encouraged to



explore opportunities to support these properties where cost-competitive. The current list of certified properties is available at the following Internet address:

http://www.p2ad.org/Assets/Documents/ci_grnhotel.html.



4.5 Travel by State-Owned or Personal Vehicles

4.5.1 General Provisions

The Legislature in its 2005 special session passed Senate Bill 1 EX, amending OCGA 50-19-7 and tying the mileage reimbursement rate for use of a personal motor vehicle to the rate established by the United States General Services Administration (GSA) pursuant to the Federal Travel Regulations Amendment 2005-01 as of July 1, 2005, or subsequently amended. These GSA rates are based on a determination of the most advantageous form of travel. Advantageous use may be determined based on energy conservation, total cost to the State (including costs of overtime, lost work time, and actual transportation costs), total distance traveled, number of points visited, and number of travelers. Documentation of the determination of “advantageous use” should be retained for audit purposes.

Note: For more information, refer to the following Internet addresses:

- General Services Administration: <http://www.gsa.gov/pov>
- DOAS Vehicle Cost Comparison Tool: <http://ssl.doas.state.ga.us/vehcostcomp/>

Employees are encouraged to utilize agency-owned vehicles, if available, for travel within the state of Georgia, and when appropriate for travel outside the state. However, if agency owned vehicles are not available, employees may choose between using DOAS or personal vehicles. Institutions may reimburse employees for the mileage incurred during the employee’s use of a personal vehicle.

The mileage reimbursement encompasses all expenses associated with the operation of a personal motor vehicle, with the exception of tolls and parking expenses, which are reimbursed separately.

4.5.2 Use of Agency-Owned or DOAS Vehicles

Institutions that maintain a fleet of vehicles should establish the necessary policies and procedures consistent with state fleet management policy for employees to request, utilize, and maintain the vehicles. Employees traveling in state-owned vehicles should purchase fuel using the state contracted fuel program credit card at fuel program network fuel stations. If the vehicle should break down while traveling, the institution responsible for maintaining the vehicle will provide for repairs and roadside assistance to the driver.

4.5.3 Mileage Reimbursement Rates for Use of Personal Vehicles

The following rates should be used for mileage reimbursement for personal vehicles.

Note: Mileage rates are changed only upon notification from the State Accounting Office and the Office of Planning and Budget via the State Accounting Office web site. New rates should not be utilized based solely on GSA updates.



1. **Tier 1 Rate.** When it is determined that a personal motor vehicle is the most advantageous form of travel, the employee will be reimbursed for business miles traveled as follows:
 - Automobile: \$0.55 per mile
 - Motorcycle: \$0.52 per mile
 - Aircraft: \$1.24 per mile
2. **Tier 2 Rate.** If a government-owned (institution-owned or DOAS motor pool, for employees in the vicinity of Capitol Hill) vehicle is available, and its use is determined to be most advantageous to the state, **OR** if it is determined (through institution policy or otherwise) that a rental vehicle (Enterprise Rent-a Car contract) is the recommended method of travel, but a personal motor vehicle is used, the employee will be reimbursed for business miles traveled at the rate of \$0.285 per mile.
3. **Tier 3 Rate.** When a government- or institution-owned vehicle is assigned directly to an employee, but that employee utilizes a personal motor vehicle, the employee will be reimbursed for business miles traveled at the rate of \$0.125 per mile.

Employees may be reimbursed for the mileage incurred from the point of departure to the travel destination. If an employee departs from headquarters, mileage is calculated from headquarters to the destination point. If an employee departs from his/her residence, mileage is calculated from the residence to the destination point, *with a reduction* for normal one-way commuting miles. For the return trip, if an employee returns to headquarters, mileage is calculated based on the distance to such headquarters. If an employee returns to his/her residence, mileage is calculated based on the distance to the residence, *with a reduction* for normal one-way commuting miles.

Exceptions include:

1. If travel occurs on a weekend or holiday, mileage is calculated from the point of departure with *no* reduction for normal commuting miles.
2. If an employee does not regularly travel to an office (headquarters) outside of his/her residence (i.e., residence is “headquarters”), the requirement to deduct normal commuting miles does not apply.

Note: This exception *does not apply* to those operating under the agency’s telework policy.

Employees may also be reimbursed for business miles traveled as follows:

- Miles traveled to pick up additional passengers
- Miles traveled to obtain meals for which employee is eligible for reimbursement
- Miles traveled to multiple work sites



Institutions should set *written* internal policies for establishing normal commuting miles/starting point for mileage reimbursement when an employee's regular business function requires the use of a personal motor vehicle for travel from residence to multiple locations in a given day, or when an employee's "headquarters" differ from day to day.

Some examples to clarify these mileage rules follow.

1. Employee's normal commute is 15 miles one way. Employee is required to travel to job site 40 miles from headquarters. Employee drives to headquarters, then to remote site, then back to headquarters before returning home. Employee's business miles traveled are 80 miles.
2. Employee's normal commute is 15 miles one way. Employee is required to travel to job site 18 miles from headquarters. Employee drives to headquarters, then to remote site, then home, which is 19 miles from remote site. Employee's business miles traveled are 22 miles, as follows: from headquarters to remote site, 18 miles; from remote site to residence, 19 miles minus 15 miles one-way normal commute.
3. Employee's normal commute is 15 miles one way. Employee leaves from home to attend a conference 200 miles from the employee's residence. At the conclusion of the conference, the employee returns directly home. Employee's business miles traveled are 370 miles (400 actual miles traveled minus 30 round-trip commuting miles).
4. Employee's normal commute is 15 miles one way. Employee leaves from headquarters on Monday for a remote work site 150 miles from headquarters. Employee acquires lodging 5 miles from remote work site. Employee returns to headquarters on Friday. Employee's business miles traveled are 340 miles, as follows: from headquarters to remote site, 150 miles; from remote site to lodging on Monday, 5 miles; from lodging to remote site and back to lodging Tuesday – Thursday, 10 miles each day (30 miles); from lodging to remote site on Friday, 5 miles; from remote site back to headquarters, 150 miles.

4.5.4 Prohibited Mileage Reimbursements

Employees are not entitled to mileage reimbursement for:

- Travel between their place of residence and their official headquarters, or
- Personal mileage incurred while on travel status.

4.5.5 Reimbursement for Parking Fees and Tolls

Institutions may also reimburse employees who incur parking and toll expenses while on official travel for the institution. These expenses are reimbursable for travel in both state-owned and personal vehicles.



While there are no maximum limits for parking, employees are encouraged to utilize low-cost, long-term parking to minimize the cost.

4.5.6 Required Documentation of Mileage, Parking, and Toll Expenses

All requests for reimbursement of mileage, parking, and toll charges must be documented on the employee travel expense statement.

Employees traveling by personal vehicles and requesting reimbursement must record the actual odometer readings on the expense statement. Personal/commuting mileage is then excluded to determine the actual state-use miles. Employees should claim mileage based on the most direct route from the point of departure to the destination. Deviations from the most direct route (i.e., due to field visits, picking up passengers, etc.) should be explained on the travel expense statement.

Requests for reimbursement of parking fees and tolls paid should also be recorded on the travel expense statement. Employees are expected to obtain receipts for these expenses. If it is not possible to obtain a receipt, then a written explanation should be included on the expense statement.

Employees who share a state-owned or personal vehicle with another employee and do not claim reimbursement for mileage should indicate the name of the person they rode with and the dates of the trips on the travel expense statement.

Instances in which employees utilize state-owned aircraft should also be noted on the travel expense statement.



4.6 Travel by Rented or Public Transportation

4.6.1 General Provisions

State employees are encouraged to travel by state-owned or personal vehicles when feasible and cost-effective. However, when commercial transportation is necessary, employees may be reimbursed for the expenses incurred. Employees will be reimbursed for actual expenses incurred, provided the appropriate steps were taken to obtain the lowest possible fare or cost.

Institution personnel must approve travel by rented or public transportation prior to the date of travel. When considering such a request, institution personnel should consider the distance to be traveled, the travel time, and the cost.

4.6.2 Commercial Air Transportation

Employees should utilize commercial air transportation when it is more cost-effective and efficient to travel by air than by vehicle. Under such circumstances, institutions may reimburse employees for expenses incurred for air travel, provided these expenses were approved prior to the date of travel.

Note: Employees who choose to travel by personal vehicle, when air travel is more cost-effective, should only be reimbursed for the cost of the lowest available airfare to the specified destination.

Employees who require air travel should obtain the lowest available airfare to a specified destination, which may include the use of the Internet, a travel agency, or the State airfare contract. The State Purchasing office of the Department of Administrative Services has contracted with airlines for various travel destinations. Employees should refer to the statewide contract when making travel arrangements. Airfares included in this contract may be accessed at the following Internet address:

http://ssl.doas.state.ga.us/PRSapp/PR_StateWide_contract_menu.jsp.

Employees who utilize the state airfare contract may purchase their tickets directly through a travel agent, or may pick up their tickets in person at a ticket office or at the airport. Tickets may be purchased using a state-issued corporate charge card, state purchasing card, personal credit card (on an as-needed basis with prior approval of employer), or through invoicing by a travel agent.

Many travel agencies now charge small fees for issuing tickets. These fees, if reasonable, are part of the cost of travel. Employees may, therefore, be reimbursed for such costs, regardless of whether the airfare tickets were purchased through the state airfare contract or not. **However, employees are strongly encouraged to use the Internet in order to**

**avoid travel agency fees.**

Travel agencies used for making travel arrangements should not be related to the employee making, authorizing, or approving the arrangements. The travel agencies should also not be related to the employee actually traveling. A "related" party would include any members of the employee's family or any organizations in which the employee or his/her family members have a financial interest. The purpose for not using such travel agencies is to maintain the State's integrity in financial matters. It is important that the actions of all State employees be above reproach.

It should be noted that employees are not required to use the statewide contract when lower fares can be obtained through another airline. The contracted airline should, however, be offered the opportunity to meet the lower fare. Employees are also not required to use the statewide contract if the contracted flight is not non-stop and the contracted flight would cause the employee undue hardship or would conflict with the employee's schedule.

In general, it is the state's policy that state officials or employees traveling by commercial air carrier travel in the most cost-effective manner and utilize the lowest possible coach fares. Officials or employees traveling by commercial air carrier will not be reimbursed for the portion of non-coach (first class, business class, etc.) airfare that exceeds the cost of the lowest, available fare on the same flight unless:

- There is no other space available on the needed flight;
- A licensed medical practitioner certifies that because of a person's mental or physical condition, specific air travel arrangements are required; or
- The Commissioner of Public Safety certifies that specific air travel arrangements are necessary for security reasons.

It is the responsibility of institution officials to obtain the necessary medical certifications for any employee who requires special air travel arrangements due to a medical condition. Institution officials should also obtain information specifying the expected length of time such condition would have an impact on travel needs. Institutions should maintain such information in a manner that would enable the auditors to readily determine who is subject to these special travel provisions.

4.6.3 Upgrades to Non-Coach Travel

State officials or employees may, at any time, use personal frequent flyer miles or similar programs to upgrade to non-coach travel. In addition, nothing in this policy shall preclude a state official or employee from personally paying for an upgrade to non-coach travel.

For purposes of conducting official state business, state officials or employees may negotiate or arrange for upgrades to non-coach travel with individual commercial carriers if:



- The flight is international and over five hours in duration; and,
- The carrier agrees not to charge any additional cost to the state.

4.6.4 Indemnification Received Due to Travel Inconveniences Imposed by Airlines

Occasions may arise when airlines overbook, change, delay or cancel flights, thereby imposing travel inconveniences on their passengers. In these instances, airlines often offer the impacted passengers indemnification for these inconveniences. Examples of indemnification that may be offered by an airline include vouchers for meals or lodging, upgrades to non-coach travel, and credits toward future flight costs. State employees are authorized to accept such indemnification if the travel inconvenience was imposed by the airline and there is no additional cost to the state.

4.6.5 Recent Changes in Airline Ticketing Policies

Most airlines charge an additional fee for changes in flights. Employees should make every effort to avoid changes, but if an additional fee is imposed for rescheduling, this becomes part of the travel expense and is reimbursable. The reason for the change must be documented. If the airline ticket is not used at all for reasons beyond the control of the employee, the employee may be reimbursed (with the approval of his/her supervisor), but this would not be considered a travel expense. The reason for the ticket not being used must be documented.

Most airlines also charge a fee for paper tickets that could be electronically ticketed.

Employees are strongly encouraged to avoid this fee by using the Internet. If there is a valid reason for a paper ticket and a fee is charged, it becomes part of the travel expense and is reimbursable.

4.6.6 Rental of Motor Vehicles

The use of commercially leased vehicles will be left to the discretion of institution personnel responsible for authorizing travel. Employees requiring the use of commercially leased vehicles may obtain their vehicles through the state contracted rental agency according to the conditions of the statewide contract issued by the State Purchasing office of the Department of Administrative Services. This contract is available through the statewide travel regulations on the Internet. The contract can also be directly accessed at the following Internet address:

http://ssl.doas.state.ga.us/PRSapp/PR_StateWide_contract_menu.jsp.

Employees are also encouraged to contact travel agencies to identify the lowest available rates. Employees who are able to obtain lower rates through other companies should use these other companies to rent their vehicles.

Employees traveling on State business in a rented motor vehicle are covered by the State's



liability policy. Therefore, liability coverage should be declined when renting a motor vehicle. Loss Damage Waiver/Collision Damage Waiver (LDW/CDW) insurance is included in the statewide contract at no additional cost. Contact DOAS Risk Management Services for more information.

Employees requiring the use of commercially leased vehicles will be reimbursed for gasoline purchases associated with the business use of such vehicle, provided appropriate receipts are included.

4.6.7 Travel by Railroad

Institutions may reimburse employees for the actual cost of rail transportation, provided the appropriate personnel authorized the travel expense in advance. Employees traveling by rail are encouraged to obtain the lowest possible fare. There is no statewide contract for transportation by rail.

4.6.8 Travel by Mass Transportation, Taxi, or Airport Vans

Employees officially on travel status may be reimbursed for necessary costs of transportation by bus, taxi, or airport vans for the following situations:

- Between the individual's departure point and the common carrier's departure point;
- Between the common carrier's arrival point and the individual's lodging or meeting place; and,
- Between the lodging and meeting places if at different locations.

It is expected that airport vans will be utilized when available, when arrival or departure is during daylight hours, and when they are the lowest cost alternative.

4.6.9 Reimbursement for Baggage Handling Services

Employees may be reimbursed for expenses associated with baggage handling services (portage) when an expense is actually incurred in moving luggage into or out of lodging places, common carriers, and/or airports, when such expense was necessary. Employees should not be reimbursed for such expenses when they choose to use baggage-handling services as a convenience to them.

4.6.10 Required Documentation of Expenses

All travel by rented or public transportation must be recorded on the employee travel expense statement. Employees requesting reimbursement must submit receipts for travel by commercial air carrier or railroad and for the cost of rented vehicles. Although receipts are recommended, employees are not required to submit receipts for travel by mass transportation, taxi, or airport vans. However, a point-to-point explanation is required for each item reimbursed. All transportation expenses should be itemized on the employee travel expense statement.



4.7 Travel by Private Aircraft

Employees may be reimbursed for the use of a private aircraft. Reimbursement will be at the same rate as mileage reimbursement for travel in a personal vehicle, as noted in Section 4.5.3 on page 4-18. Reimbursement is made for the most direct route via highway miles from the employee's residence or headquarters to the destination point(s), whichever is nearer.

Employees utilizing private aircraft should document the expense on the employee travel expense statement. In the Comments section, the following comment should be added: "Traveled by private aircraft, registration number Nxxxx; mileage calculated from the official highway map."



4.8 Miscellaneous Travel Expenses

4.8.1 Telephone/Telegraph/Fax Expenses

Employees may be reimbursed for expenses incurred for work related telephone, telegraph, and fax messages. Employees must document these claims on the travel expense statement, and indicate the location from which each call was made, the person contacted, and the reason for the communication. Personal calls made while on travel status are not reimbursable.

4.8.2 Stationary/Supplies/Postage Expenses

Reimbursement for stationery, supplies, stenographic, or duplicating services may be reimbursed, provided the expense is directly associated with a work related project and the cost is reasonable. In addition, work related postage expenses may be reimbursed. Employees requesting reimbursement for these expenses must document actual expenses on the travel statement and explain the purpose for these expenses. Receipts/invoices should accompany the travel expense statement.

4.8.3 Registration Fees

Registration fees required for participation in workshops, seminars, or conferences that an employee is directed and/or authorized to attend will be allowed when supported by a paid receipt or a copy of the check showing payment. Any part of a registration fee applicable to meals will be reported as a meal expense, and not as a registration fee, if the costs can be separately identified.

4.8.4 Internet Usage Charges

Employees may be reimbursed for work-related Internet usage charges. These charges should be separately identified on the itemized hotel/motel bill, but should *not* be listed on the travel expense statement as “lodging.” Rather, these charges should be included in the “voice/data communications” section of the travel expense statement.

4.8.5 Visa/Passport Fees

When travel required by an employer necessitates the use of a passport and/or visa, and the employee does not currently possess such valid document(s), the related visa/passport fee is eligible for reimbursement when documented by a receipt.

4.8.6 Unallowable Expenses

The following expenses are not reimbursable unless specific legal authority has been established:

- Laundry



- **Note:** Laundry expenses are allowable when overnight travel exceeds seven (7) consecutive days.
- Tipping for hotel concierge or maid services
- Valet services for parking, when self-parking options are available
- Theater
- Entertainment
- Alcoholic beverages
- Visa/passport fees, except as noted in Section 4.8.5 on page 4-26
- Bank charges for ATM withdrawals



4.9 Corporate Charge Cards and Travel Advances

4.9.1 General Provisions

OCGA 45-7-25 and 45-7-26 authorize the payment of travel advances to employees of all state agencies, commissions, and authorities. State law also charges the Director of the Office of Planning and Budget with the responsibility for developing the necessary rules, regulations, and procedures to govern travel advances and to provide for proper and timely accounting of state funds advanced to employees once the employees have returned from travel status. The Office of Planning and Budget issued the OPB Policy Memorandum No. 1 (Revision 2) in 1989 to address travel advances. The information provided in this section summarizes this policy statement.

In general, each institution is authorized to set specific policies and procedures regarding travel advances, provided the policies and procedures do not conflict with any regulations addressed in the remainder of this section.

4.9.2 Purpose of Travel Advances

The purpose of travel advances is to minimize the financial burden on employees while traveling on behalf of the state. This objective can be accomplished either by the issuance of corporate charge cards or by cash advances to the employees.

4.9.3 Corporate Charge Cards

Corporate charge cards may be issued to eligible employees upon approval by the Institution head or his designee and the company issuing the corporate charge card. Corporate charge cards are beneficial because they:

- Reduce the employee's and the institution's cash flow by minimizing the need for cash advances;
- Reduce the frequency of reimbursements for travel expenses;
- Require no annual membership fee or finance charges if paid within the terms of the agreement;
- Provide emergency cash to the employee;
- Eliminate the need for the institution to direct pay airline tickets, travel agencies, and car rental agencies;
- Provide guarantee for hotel rooms and other services requiring a deposit; and,
- Provide the institution with various financial reports regarding employee travel expenses.

Corporate charge cards are issued directly to the employee, and all expenses charged to the corporate charge card are paid by the employee. Therefore, there is no liability to the state or an institution, even if the employee defaults.



Employees who are issued corporate charge cards are authorized to use the charge cards for business purposes only.

4.9.4 Authority to Advance Cash for Travel

Since corporate charge cards are now available to employees, institutions should minimize the use of cash advances. However, institution personnel should still consider issuing cash advances for the following circumstances:

- For justifiable reason(s), the employee has not received a corporate charge card;
- For employees who generally do not travel and are making a one time trip; or
- For special exceptions approved by the institution head.

The head of each institution, or his/her designee, is authorized to advance state funds to employees traveling on behalf of the state. Funds may be advanced for anticipated subsistence (meals and lodging), as well as for mileage and other transportation costs that are reimbursable under these travel regulations. Travel advances are not required by state law or by these regulations, but are left to the discretion of each institution head.

4.9.5 Approval of Cash Advances for Travel

Institution heads, or their designees, are required to specifically authorize each cash advance made to an employee. The written authorization for a cash advance should be included on the Travel Cash Advance Authorization form. This form should also be signed by the employee to document that the cash advance was received.

4.9.6 Amount of Cash Advance

Each institution may establish its own policies regarding cash advance limits. Institutions should consider the nature and probable duration of the travel when determining cash advance limits. The amount of a cash advance shall be related to the estimated cost of travel, as outlined on the travel authorization form, but shall be held to a minimum and allowed only when the institution head determines that an advance is warranted.

4.9.7 Employee and Institution Accountability of Funds Advanced

Each employee receiving a cash advance shall sign and date the travel advance authorization form acknowledging receipt of the funds. All employees are fully responsible for funds advanced to them and shall account for the funds in accordance with the statewide travel regulations. Employees are liable for any advanced funds that are lost or stolen.

Neither state law nor these regulations, however, in any way relieve the institution head from the responsibility of accounting for all funds expended for travel purposes.



4.9.8 Recovery of Cash Advances Made for Specific Trips

When the actual travel expenditures reported on the travel expense statement exceed the amount of the cash advance, the employee shall be reimbursed for the additional travel costs incurred. Cash advances for specific trips shall be recovered under the following **three** circumstances:

1. When the actual travel expenditures reported on the travel expense statement are less than the amount of the cash advance, the employee shall reimburse the Institution for the difference. This reimbursement shall be made at the same time that the travel expense statement is submitted.
2. In the event of cancellation or indefinite postponement of authorized travel, any cash advances that were made shall be refunded immediately.
3. Outstanding travel advances should be recovered from terminating employees. Each institution head shall establish procedures to ensure that terminating employees do not have outstanding cash advances and have turned in their corporate charge cards.

4.9.9 Recovery of Cash Advances for Continuous Travel

For cases in which an employee is in a continuous travel status and has been given a blanket routine travel authorization, the full recovery of any cash advance is not required until the employee is removed from continuous travel status. Both the employee and the institution head shall be responsible for ensuring that the cash advance does not exceed the expected travel expenses for one pay period. Travel expenses incurred during each pay period shall be reported on the travel expense statement and submitted at the end of the period. Any reimbursement of funds to the employee must not increase the outstanding cash advance above the authorized amount.



4.10 Reimbursement Procedures

4.10.1 Required Documentation of Travel Expenses

Employees requesting reimbursement for travel expenses are required to submit their claim to authorized personnel on the employee travel expense statement. This statement shall be the standard form approved for use in units of the University System. Any deviations from this form are to be approved by the Vice Chancellor for Fiscal Affairs.

Requests for reimbursement should include the following information:

1. Itemized expenses for authorized meals, lodging, mileage, transportation, and miscellaneous expenses;

Note: The types of expenses that are authorized and the allowable limits are discussed in Sections 4.3 through 4.8.

2. Explanation of any expenses that exceed the established limits and of any unusual expenses;
3. Explanation of the purpose for the trip; and
4. Description of the type(s) of transportation used.

Employees are required to sign their travel expense statement, attesting that the information presented on the form is accurate. Employees who provide false information are subject to criminal penalty of a felony for false statements, which is subject to punishment by fine of not more than \$1,000 or by imprisonment for not less than one (1) or more than five (5) years.

Employees are also required to submit receipts for the following expenses, with an exception noted below:

- Meals purchased in lieu of those provided at conference/training
- Lodging
- Airline or railroad fares
- Rental of motor vehicles
- Gasoline purchased for rental vehicles
- Supplies
- Registration fees
- Visa/passport fees

Note: Employees are encouraged to use the Internet to make reservations for lodging and transportation. However, on-line services do not always provide traditional receipts. If a receipt is not provided, it is the employee's responsibility to provide adequate



documentation of payment. This could include a printed confirmation and a copy of the cancelled check or a copy of the credit card statement showing the charge.

Receipts for parking, tollway, mass transit/taxi/airport vans, and communications expenses are recommended. However, if receipts are not available, employees are required to include an explanation of the expense on the travel expense statement. Receipts for meals are not required, except as noted above.

4.10.2 Frequency of Reimbursement

Institutions should reimburse employees for travel expenses at least semi-monthly. If an institution elects to reimburse on a monthly basis, the institution should have a provision to immediately reimburse any claim that exceeds \$200. Otherwise, the institution should allow the employee the right to obtain a travel advance if requested by the employee.

4.10.3 Institution Responsibility

Responsibility for appropriate audit, approval, and reimbursement of travel expense statements shall be vested in the appropriate officials of the institution. Claims should be reviewed to ensure they are reasonable, accurate, and only cover expenses that were actually incurred by the employee. Claims that exceed the established limits should be reviewed more closely to ensure the explanations are sufficient to justify the higher expenses. Employees should not assume that all expenses that exceed the authorized limits and are explained on the travel expense statement will be automatically approved.

Institutions may impose additional requirements, such as absolute limits for meals and lodging, at their discretion.