

ECU Travel
Frequently Asked Questions
July, 2011

Question: The IRS has announced an increase in the mileage reimbursement rate, effective July 1, 2011 to \$0.555 per mile. Will ECU increase the mileage reimbursement rate?

Answer: Yes. A “new” travel claim is on the Purchasing web site. If you are preparing your claim for travel from June, use the “old” form. If your travel takes place after July 1, 2011, use the “new” form. The “new” form has a footer that states: “Updated, 6/2011” and the mileage rate is changed to .555.

EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2011, ONLY THE REVISED TRAVEL CLAIM FORM AND THE REVISED PRE-APPROVED TRAVEL FORM AND ESTIMATE WILL BE ACCEPTED BY THE PURCHASING DEPARTMENT.



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Question: What amount for lodging do I include on the Pre-Approval Travel Form?

Answer: As noted on the *Pre-approval Travel Estimate & Request Form* “Lodging amount is GSA-mandated and does not include local and state taxes or other surcharges which should be added to “Other” if known.” It is fine to estimate taxes and other charges when completing the pre-approval form. Use the GSA-mandated amount for lodging (www.gsa.gov). When completing your actual travel claim, follow the guidelines listed below:

- If you are staying in a designated hotel, enter the full amount for lodging (room rate and taxes) on the travel claim. Attach a copy of the conference brochure and highlight the section that lists the designated hotel(s).
- If a hotel has not been designated, print the applicable GSA (www.gsa.gov) state rate page and attach to the travel claim. If the room rate is less than the GSA rate, include the full amount for lodging.
- If a hotel has not been designated and the room rate is more than the GSA rate, you will be allowed to claim the GSA rate plus pro-rated taxes.
 - For example: If the GSA rate is \$77 and the non-designated hotel charged you \$77 plus tax, you must calculate a pro-rated tax amount.
 - $\$77 / \88 is 92%. If the taxes were \$12, you would be able to claim \$11.04 ($\$12 \times 92\%$). Add the \$11.04 to \$77 (room rate allowed) and enter the total.

ECU Travel Frequently Asked Questions

Question: On my last business trip to Tulsa, I had to drive to two different locations and the mileage was actually further than what was listed on the Oklahoma State Mileage table. Am I allowed to claim the extra miles?

Answer: Yes, if you check your odometer and record the actual miles driven (please do not estimate). The additional miles can be listed in the column labeled VIC (this stands for vicinity miles). Under the MAP column, use the mileage from the Oklahoma mileage table. **For any vicinity miles, you will need to justify. Remember that you will only be paid for the most direct route.**

When completing the *Pre-approval Travel Estimate & Request Form*, it is acceptable to estimate the vicinity miles, however, use your odometer reading when completing the actual travel claim.

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ECU Travel Frequently Asked Questions

Question: How do I determine my per diem if I am traveling out of state?

Answer: The GSA per diem link is now on the web site. You can find the Purchasing pages by clicking on Administration tab. Scroll to Purchasing and click. Per Diem Rates should be close to the top of the page.

Note: The Federal government changes their fiscal year on October 1st, therefore, the GSA link automatically displays current data. If you are preparing a travel claim for September, be sure to change the fiscal year so that you are accessing the correct rates.

ECU Travel Frequently Asked Questions

Question: I have expenditures for two trips, one in September and one in October – is it acceptable to include both trips on one travel claim?

Answer: The Office of State Finance (OSF) states: “claims for reimbursement of travel expenses shall not cover periods of over 31 days.”

For the above example, it would be best to prepare two travel claims.

Other examples of filing separate travel claims:

- During the same month, you have travel for both in-state and out-of-state – prepare two claims. Note: If you are driving to OKC to catch a plane to Washington, D.C. – include your mileage in the out-of-state column.
- If your job requires you to travel on a daily or weekly schedule, prepare one weekly or monthly claim for mileage. If during the month, you attended a

conference which required an overnight stay, prepare a separate travel claim for that particular meeting.

ECU Travel Frequently Asked Questions

Question: How can I be sure I am using the most current travel claim?

Answer: The bottom left-hand corner of the travel claim should have a footer that states: "Updated 6/2011". If your form does not show this, you are not using a current form.



ECU Travel Frequently Asked Questions

Question: May I purchase my airline tickets online?

Answer: Yes, however you will need to obtain a quote from an approved travel agency. Approved travel agencies (w/ transaction fees) for our zone (as designated by the Department of Central Services) are:

Travel Haus/McClure Agency (\$25)
P O Box 917
Alva, OK 73717
1-800-281-3213

C. Price Comparison (Required if Vendor is NOT State Contract)	
State Contract	\$305.00
Date of Quote	07/21/06
Vendor: (\$295.00)
Travelocity	
Date of Quote	07/21/06
Savings	\$10.00

ECU Travel Frequently Asked Questions

Question: If I am traveling to Tulsa or Oklahoma City for training, does the 24 hour rule still apply.

Answer: The State travel guidelines require that: **Employees traveling on official business for the state are expected to exercise the same care in incurring expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business. Excess costs, circuitous routes, luxury accommodations and services unnecessary or unjustified in the performance of official business are not acceptable and should be avoided. Therefore, you will not be reimbursed for the full 24 hours.**

ECU Travel Frequently Asked Questions

Question: If I am traveling at the end of June and the last day to turn in a travel claim is before my travel date, how do I make sure that my travel is paid?

Answer: Travel must be paid in the same budget year that the travel took place. (NO EXCEPTIONS) To ensure that travel can be reimbursed and reimbursed from the same budget year, you must send a copy of the Pre-Approval Travel Estimate & Request Form to Purchasing before the last day to turn in travel claims. This will ensure that the funds can be encumbered so that you may be reimbursed from the funds in the same budget year that the travel occurred.

When you return from your training, complete the travel claim as soon as possible and take to Purchasing.

ECU Travel Frequently Asked Questions

Question: Where can I find the ECU travel forms?

Answer: ECU travel forms can be found on the ECU website – follow these links:

ECU website
Administration
Purchasing Office

ECU Travel Frequently Asked Questions

Question: When does my per diem start and stop?

Answer: In general, the Office of State Finance provides for a standard 24-hour travel rule: *“Reimbursement for meals and lodging expenses shall not extend more than 24 hours before and/or more than 24 hours after the date/time the object of travel (e.g., meeting, workshop, conference etc.) began and/or ended*

As with most rules, there are some exceptions. The following scenarios should further clarify the “24-hour travel rule”.

Jane Doe is attending a conference that begins on Tuesday at 8:00 am and ends on Friday at 5:00 p.m.

- Jane leaves Ada at 1:00 p.m. on Monday in order to catch a 4:00 p.m. flight – Jane’s per diem would start at 1:00 p.m. on Monday (w/in the 24-hour time frame).

- Jane was unable to secure a flight for Friday evening, so she left Saturday morning at 8:00 a.m. and arrived back in Ada at 4:00 p.m. – Jane’s per diem would end at 4:00 p.m. on Saturday (w/in the 24-hour time frame).
- Jane was able to secure a flight for Friday evening, but decided to stay over and fly home Sunday afternoon. Jane’s per diem would end on Saturday at 5:00 p.m. (24 hours after the end of the conference).
 - **Exception: If Jane determines that the airfare for weekend travel would save the university funds, the State of Oklahoma has a special 48-hour extended rule (72-hours if a holiday weekend is involved):**
 - **The extra day of travel must be a weekend day.**
 - **The claim must include a detailed cost comparison of additional meals, lodging and other expenses versus the saving on air fare. The air fare rate used in comparison must come from the same travel agent (or on-line vendor) as where the airline ticket was purchased. Printed documentation from the agent/vendor must be attached.**
 - **Total reimbursement for meals and lodging and the cost of the airplane ticket shall not exceed the amount of reimbursement that would have been allowed for travel under the normal 24-hour rule plus the related air fare cost available at that time.**

Airfare for Friday night flight:	\$1,250	Airfare for Sunday Morning flight:	\$300
		Additional Lodging (Fri and Sat):	\$150
		Additional Per Diem (Sat and Sun):	<u>\$120</u>
		Total	\$570

The university actually saves money by the employee staying over until Sunday. The 48-hour extended rule must be pre-approved and cost comparisons submitted prior to travel taking place.

*The above exception shall NOT apply where travel is by privately-owned automobile in lieu of coach class airline fare, regardless of any direct savings that may be demonstrated.

NOTE: A pre-approval travel request form must be completed prior to **ANY** travel. **OVERNIGHT** travel for employees in Administration and Finance and Student Development requires VP approval (signature). **OVERNIGHT** travel for employees of Academic Affairs requires approval (signature) from the immediate supervisor and budget director.