

FAQ's

What forms are required when I want to travel on Official University Business?

A TA (Travel Authorization Form) and TE (Travel Expense Form) must be turned in when traveling for University business. The TA should be fully approved prior to travel, especially for international travel requiring Provost approval. Please note that a TA must be turned in even if there is no cost to the University. All travel forms, as well as Mines Travel Policy, can be found on the travel website:

http://inside.mines.edu/Accounts_Payable-Travel

When am I considered to be in *Travel Status*?

An Employee's job duties require them to be away from the traveler's regular work location overnight and/or the travel includes airfare.

When is a TA required for University related travel?

A TA is required to be completed, approved and submitted to accounts payable in the Controller's Office for any travel that takes place for Mines business. Travel is defined as needing an overnight stay and/or airfare.

How can I avoid having my travel reimbursement added to my taxable wages on my W-2?

An otherwise non-taxable travel reimbursement will not be added to an employees' W-2 if the TE is properly completed, approved, and submitted to accounts payable within **60** days of completing the travel.

What happens if I submit my TE more than 6 months past the completion of my travel?

Per the Mines travel policy, a traveler may not be reimbursed for any out of pocket travel related expenses if the TE is submitted more than 6 months past the completion date of the travel. The traveler must submit the TE with an explanation as to why the TE was not completed, approved, and submitted in accordance with University policy, and request an exception to the policy. Exceptions are subject to Controller approval. If the TE is processed, any reimbursement will be added to the employee's W-2 for tax purposes.

Can I claim actual costs for meals instead of using per diem rates?

No. Per the University Travel Policy and for IRS compliance purposes, the University has elected to use a standard cost method, *per diems*, as the basis for reimbursing travelers for meals and incidentals rather than the actual cost method. Daily or individual meal per diem amounts are the maximum a traveler may request. A traveler can elect to claim less than the approved daily rates as long as that amount is a variation of a per meal rate.

Do I have to use the preferred travel agencies for booking airfare?

It depends. Per University Travel Policy, travelers are not required to use a travel agency to book airline tickets if the total airfare is less than \$1,000. A University approved travel agency is required to be used if the total airfare is \$1,000 or greater *unless the traveler can obtain a lower airfare by booking the travel on their own*. The traveler must provide an airfare quote obtained from an approved travel agency at the same time the airfare is booked to document that a lower airfare was obtained. If the appropriate documentation is not provided, the traveler may not be reimbursed for the airfare. Travelers who fly internationally on a frequent basis and are very knowledgeable of the federal airline travel requirements can request an exemption from the requirement to use an approved travel agency from the Controller. When using a University approved travel agency, the airfare shall be charged to the University's corporate liability card on file with the travel agency. Airline change fees are reimbursable to the traveler only if travel plans are changed for Official University Business reasons. The business purpose for the change in travel plans shall be included on the Travel Authorization/Expense Report. Any cancellation or change fees are the responsibility of the traveler if the charges are a result of a personal nature.

When can I get reimbursed for out-of-pocket airfare?

If the traveler chooses to book their own airfare, the traveler will not be reimbursed for the cost of the airfare *until the travel is completed*. If the traveler chooses to book their own airfare and for whatever reason, the trip is delayed, postponed, or canceled and airfare credit is received, the traveler will not be reimbursed for the airfare or any associated changes until the airfare credit is used for University Business at a later time. Airline change fees are reimbursable to the traveler only if travel plans are changed for Official University Business reasons. The business purpose for the change in travel plans shall be included on the Travel Authorization/Expense Report. Any cancellation or change fees are the responsibility of the traveler if the charges are a result of a personal nature.

What "upgrades" will be reimbursed related to airline expenses?

Seat selection charges or early check-in charges less than or equal to \$15 per segment or \$30 for a round trip are reimbursable. Expanded leg room (ex. Economy Plus) is allowable if the flight segment is greater than three hours. Business Class upgrades are allowable on international flight segments that are greater than nine hours.

May I purchase "The Works" package when flying Frontier?

The Works package contains coverage categories that are not reimbursable under Mines travel policy. The Works may not be reimbursed unless the traveler can show that the cost is less than the allowable fees for seat selection and checked baggage fees.

If I paid for airfare out-of-pocket, where do I put it on the TE?

The expense should be added to the blank lines under the "Other Expenses" section. Do not put the expense in the "Prepaid Airfare" section because it will subtract it out of your reimbursement at the end.

When am I eligible for a cash advance for travel?

A cash advance can be issued for estimated out-of-pocket expenses listed on the Travel Authorization form. There are separate fields used to request for the amount. The amount of the advance cannot exceed the estimated out-of-pocket expenses. The maximum advance allowed is \$1,500.00.

My cash advance covered all my expenses. May I keep unused amounts?

No, a cash advance is a loan from the University. If a cash advance was more than the actual expenses incurred on the trip, then the unused portion of the advance must be returned to Mines in the form of check, written to Colorado School of Mines, or cash. Please return the unused portion of the advance with your completed and approved TE.

If I requested a cash advance when will I receive it?

Cash advances are issued up to seven days in advance of departure. The traveler will receive a check that can be picked up from the Controller's Office or direct deposit if the traveler is setup to receive funds that way. The traveler will get a phone call when the check is ready for pickup. In order to ensure the Controller's Office has sufficient time to issue the check, please submit a TA at least 10 business days prior to your planned departure. Ten business days does not guarantee that a check can be issued because of the possibility for additional signatures. The sooner the TA comes in, the more likely the cash advance can be completed.

Can I be reimbursed for travel costs incurred prior to the completion of the travel?

No. Per University Travel Policy, a traveler will be reimbursed for approved out-of-pocket travel costs, including registration fees for conferences, only when the travel is completed and the traveler has submitted an approved TE. Exceptions may be granted by the Controller.

What do I do if my destination city is not listed in the per diem rates on the website?

For domestic travel:

If the destination city is not listed, look up the county and see if it is listed. If neither the city nor the county is listed, then the per diem amount automatically defaults to \$51 per day.

For international travel:

If the destination city is not listed, then it automatically defaults to the "other" amount listed at the end of every country's per diems.

What should I put in the itinerary fields on the TE?

Each day of travel should show the city in the itinerary. The name of the conference, college, laboratory, etc. should be in the description.

What should I put in the "title" section on the TA and TE?

This section is meant to describe how a traveler is affiliated with the University (i.e. Grad Student, Dept. Head, Interviewee etc.) Please do not put Mr. or Mrs. In this field on the TA/TE.

What is the difference between a prepaid expense and an out-of-pocket expense?

Prepaid expenses are those paid directly by Mines. For example, if a traveler books through one of the Preferred Travel Agencies, and the airfare was charged to the University's Ghost Card, then that is a prepaid airfare. Likewise, if travel is charged to a CSM Event Card or CSM One Card, it is considered a prepaid expense. If the traveler books airfare on their own, and pays for it directly with their own money or with a CSM Travel Card, then that is an out-of-pocket expense. This needs to be documented correctly on the TE in order to process an accurate reimbursement.

If I plan on renting a vehicle at my destination, am I **required** to use a Mines Travel Card?

Yes. Per the University Travel Policy, the employee must use a Mines Travel Card to pay for the car rental. Mines travelers must also decline the LDW, CDW and extra insurance at the counter because these expenses are NOT reimbursable. An exception to this rule exists for international car rentals only. While that rental still needs to be paid for with a Mines Travel Card, because of international liability issues, the traveler is encouraged to accept the LDW or CDW insurance on international car rentals and it will be reimbursed.

What dates should I use when printing my currency conversion?

Currency conversion needs to be printed and attached to the TE as of the Monday of the week of the expense. For example: If a traveler stayed at a hotel abroad for a two week period, and paid for the room on the last day there, currency conversion needs to be done as of the Monday of that week. On the other hand, if a traveler had to put down a deposit on one day, and pay for the room on another, currency conversion needs to be printed for the respective Mondays because the transactions were done on different occasions.

If a third party is paying my airfare, can I still upgrade my seating based on our travel policy? If it is international travel, do I need to use the approved travel agent to complete the upgrade?

You may upgrade your seating based on University single segment travel time requirements. You do not need to use the University-approved travel agent to upgrade on international flights.

Why should I apply for a Mines travel card?

Using a Mines-supplied travel card automatically provides liability coverage when renting vehicles domestically, in addition to the coverage provided by using the state contract numbers with approved rental agencies. Travel policy requires that you use one of the Mines travel cards for auto rentals. Failure to comply with rental car regulations can result in the traveler being personally liable for any damage to the rental car. Vehicle rentals that are out of compliance with Mines travel policy will be brought to the attention of the Controller.

Why do I need to attend training to use Mines credit cards?

All Mines credit cards require certain documentation to backup and justify charges. The user must also be aware of charges prohibited under Mines policy, as well as allowable charges. Credit card

training will ensure that you are aware of all requirements when using a University credit card and spending University funds.

What are the various accounts I should be using for travel?

The most common accounts in use for travel expense reporting and reimbursement include:

- 5502 In-State Travel – includes airfare and associated charges, rental car, lodging, parking, taxi fares and per diems.
- 5507 Out of State Travel - includes airfare and associated charges, rental car, lodging, parking, taxi fares and per diems. NOTE: if you are traveling out of state, parking at DIA or taxi to the airport are charged to 5507.
- 5511 International Travel - includes airfare and associated charges, rental car, lodging, parking, taxi fares and per diems. NOTE: if you are traveling internationally, parking at DIA or taxi to the airport are charged to 5511.
- 5501 Mileage – use of a personal vehicle for travel entitles the Mines employee or student to a mileage reimbursement at the current rate. Per IRS rules, this is ONLY for an employee owned vehicle, and cannot be applied to vehicles loaned to the employee by family or friends. Please see the University Travel Policy for more details. Mileage reimbursement is intended to cover fuel, insurance, and wear and tear on the vehicle. You will not be reimbursed for fuel separately.
- 5470 Fuel – used to pay for fuel for rental vehicles only. There is never a mileage reimbursement on a rental vehicle.
- 5532 Registration Fees – fees for registering for meetings and conferences. If the fee is charged on a personal credit card, it will *not* be reimbursed prior to the conference.