

SFA International Travel Rules and Guidelines

State law mandates that each travel arrangement be the most cost-effective considering all relevant circumstances.

Prior Approval for Travel

All international travel must be directly related to the university's mission and must require a duty that cannot be performed without the travel.

Official university business travel to any foreign country other than Canada or Mexico requires advance approval from the university president, regardless of the traveler's citizenship or the funding source. The travel authorization request is submitted through the online Travel module accessed through the Resources tab at mySFA. The request is automatically routed to the president by selecting an international expense code in the travel authorization. The travel authorization request must be submitted in sufficient time to be reviewed and approved at all appropriate administrative levels prior to any university funds being obligated and prior to the date of departure.

Travel to Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and other U.S. territories and jurisdictions do not require approval from the university president.

Safety and Health

U.S Department of State Travel Advisories

The U.S. Department of State issues travel advisories to inform travelers of problems at international destinations. (www.travel.state.gov). It is the responsibility of every traveler to check for these advisories prior to travel. No employee or student shall be required to travel on university business to a country that is subject to a U.S. Department of State travel advisory, or to a destination where they feel unsafe. The assessment as to whether it is safe to travel is ultimately the decision of the traveler.

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)

All international travelers are encouraged to use the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP), which is a free service of the Bureau of Consular Affairs of the U.S. Department of State. The program allows U.S. citizens and nationals traveling abroad to enroll their trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. (www.travel.state.gov/step). This will provide important information about safety conditions in the destination country and help to contact the traveler in case of an emergency.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website provides information about travelers' health, including vaccine requirements, medicines, travel health notices, and advice. (www.cdc.gov/travel). Travelers are encouraged to utilize this information.

Expense Reporting and Reimbursement

In accordance with state travel reimbursement guidelines, expenses for international travel may only be reimbursed for travel supporting university business. Any personal benefit from an employee's participation in international travel must be solely incidental to the official purpose of the travel. It is the obligation of both the traveling employee and the supervisor to ensure that all international travel conforms to this mandate.

Like domestic travel, international travel expense reporting and reimbursement is entered on the online Travel module accessed through the Resources tab of mySFA. It is the traveler's responsibility to submit a travel expense report along with supporting paid itemized receipts after the completion of travel, regardless of whether the expenses were charged to the traveler or directly to the university on a Travel Card (T-Card). Travel expenses should be submitted within 15 days after the last day of the trip. No reimbursements will be made and all prior year encumbrances will be cancelled 15 days after the end of the fiscal year.

Expenses Paid or Reimbursed by a Third-Party

Expenses that will be paid or reimbursed by a third-party source are not reimbursable.

Foreign Currency Conversion

All expenses are submitted on the travel expense report in U.S. Dollars (USD). Receipts in foreign currency must be converted to USD using the rate applicable on the date of the expenditure.

- If expenses are charged to a credit card, the converted amount will appear on the credit card bill. The applicable credit card transactions showing the USD amounts must be uploaded to the travel expense report along with the paid itemized receipts.
- When expenses are not charged to a credit card, the receipt amounts should be converted to USD using the currency exchange calculator in the international travel section of the SFA travel office website. If the calculator is used, a copy of the calculations should be printed and uploaded to the expense report. Alternatively, the traveler can prepare a conversion spreadsheet detailing each expense as follows: date, vendor, expense type (lodging, meals, etc.), expense amount in foreign currency, conversion rate, and expense amount in USD. Regardless of the method used to convert the receipts to USD, the paid itemized receipts must be uploaded to the travel expense report.

Lodging

Travelers will be reimbursed actual, locally reasonable expenses for international lodging with a paid itemized receipt.

Meals

Travelers will be reimbursed actual, locally reasonable expenses for international meals with paid itemized receipts. In lieu of providing receipts and foreign currency conversions for international meals, travelers may elect to be reimbursed at the in-state per diem rate. Tips are reimbursable only for group travel.

Transportation

The most economical means of transportation should be used when traveling on university business. The total cost of the travel and efficient use of staff time should be taken into consideration when making transportation decisions.

- **Airfare**

Airline tickets should be purchased at the lowest available standard coach/economy airfare. First class airfare and priority boarding are not reimbursable expenses. Seat upgrades for extra leg room are not reimbursable expenses except for medical or disability reasons. In these cases, an "Accommodation Request" must be submitted to the director of human resources for approval prior to the trip.

- **Important Note about Air Travel Funded by U.S. Government Grants**

The Fly America Act (49 U.S.C. §§40118 et seq.) requires travelers using federal funds to travel "to use United States air carrier service for all air travel and cargo transportation services funded by the United States Government. One exception to this requirement is transportation provided under a bilateral or multilateral air transport agreement ("Open Skies Agreement"), to which the United States Government and the government of a foreign country are parties, and which the Department of Transportation has determined meets the requirements of the Fly America Act." Travelers whose airfare will be paid or reimbursed by grants funded by the U.S. Government should contact the SFA Office of Research and Sponsored Programs for complete information prior to obligating funds for air travel.

- **Ground Transportation**

Travelers will be reimbursed actual expenses for ground transportation (e.g., train, bus, and taxi fares) with a paid itemized receipt. Tips are reimbursable only for group travel.

- **Travel to U.S. Airports**

As with domestic travel, mileage reimbursement is limited to the lesser of miles incurred from the departure point or the employee's "official duty point."

Airport Parking

It may be more cost-effective to drive a rental vehicle to the airport and drop it off there than to use a personal vehicle and pay airport parking fees. The university's contract provisions with Enterprise Rent-A-Car include no additional charge for picking up a rental in Nacogdoches on Saturday (or after 4 pm on Friday) for travel beginning on Sunday, and no drop fee for one-way rentals in Texas. A link to SFA's rates with Enterprise is available on the travel office website. The vehicle cost comparison calculator, found on the travel office website, compares the auto rental cost vs. the personal vehicle reimbursement cost. Travelers are encouraged to utilize the calculator to determine which mode of travel is better.

Additional Expenses

Travelers will be reimbursed actual, reasonable expenses for incidental costs with a paid itemized receipt. Examples include baggage fees, currency conversion fees, transaction fees, tips if in a

group, costs of required vaccines or immunizations not covered by health insurance, and required visa fees. Fees for passports, Global Entry, and TSA Pre✓® are not reimbursable.

Telephone Calls, Text Messages and Data Usage

With an itemized receipt, travelers may be reimbursed for fees associated with business-related data usage and placing or receiving official telephone calls and text messages. The itemization should include the business purpose of data usage and telephone numbers called or texted. Except in unusual circumstances and upon approval of the budget manager, reimbursement for these expenses will be limited to \$60.

It is the travelers' responsibility to make arrangements with their cellular plan carriers in advance of the trip if business-related telephone calls, text messaging and data usage are anticipated. Travelers must make every effort to minimize the amount of these expenses and to utilize the most cost-effective international rates and/or plan considering all relevant circumstances.

Usage of Frequent Flyer Miles or Loyalty Award Points

A traveler may choose to utilize personal frequent flyer miles or loyalty award points to buy or upgrade services such as airline tickets, seat upgrades, hotels, car rentals, and amenities. Reimbursement is not allowed for such items that are provided free of charge. Any charges related to redemption, purchase, or use of frequent flier or loyalty points are not reimbursable.

Travel Card (T-Card)

Employees utilizing a T-Card are advised to notify the card issuer of travel plans prior to the trip. The card issuer's telephone number is on the back of the card. The traveler may wish to place the telephone number in a separate location in case of lost card or other issues while traveling. In addition, the traveler must be aware of acceptable and unacceptable purchases to prevent the card from being declined. This information is found in the T-Card Program Guide on the travel office website.

Export Control Regulations

Travel outside the U.S. can present export control issues for SFA employees. International travelers are responsible for complying with university and government regulations that affect:

- Taking items on a trip necessary to conduct business or work, such as:
 - Laptops
 - Encryption products
 - Data/technology
 - Blueprints, drawings, schematics
- Supplying certain technologies/data at a "closed" conference or meeting (not open to all technically qualified members of the public, and attendees are not permitted to take notes)
- Money transactions and the exchange of goods and services in certain countries
- Travel to sanctioned/embargoed countries
- Doing business with certain people or entities

A license could be required from the Departments of Commerce, State, or Treasury, depending on which country or countries a traveler is going to and whether the traveler is providing a *defense service** to a foreign person. While travel to most countries does not usually constitute export control problems, if a license is required or an exception or exemption is obtained for travel, documentation and records must be kept for five years.

For more information about Export Control Regulations, see the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) website.

**A defense service means the furnishing of assistance (including training) to foreign persons in the design, development, engineering, manufacture, production, assembly testing, repair, maintenance, modification, operation, demilitarization, destruction, processing or use of a defense article. A defense service also includes furnishing to foreign persons any technical data which is required for the design, development, production, manufacture, assembly, operation, repair, testing, maintenance or modification of defense articles.*