 NORTHEAST OHIO MEDICAL UNIVERSITY	Policy No: 3349-11-70
POLICY TITLE: Travel Policy	EFFECTIVE DATE: August 6, 2013 REVISED AND UPDATED: June 1, 2026
RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT: Administration and Finance	All Employees

(A) PURPOSE


To establish a policy through which the University will pay for reasonable and necessary expenses incurred by employees and eligible guests for University-authorized business travel, regardless of the funding source. This policy is designed to ensure that all University-authorized business travel is conducted in a manner that is safe, cost-effective, and efficient. Failure to adhere to the provisions set forth in this policy may result in nonpayment of travel expenses.

(B) SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees or guests traveling on University-authorized business, including employees traveling in conjunction with a sponsored program. In circumstances where the sponsored program guidelines are more restrictive than University policy, the sponsored program rules will apply. Travel expenses that do not conform with either this policy or the sponsored program guidelines will not be reimbursed to the employee or expensed to the sponsored program.

(C) DEFINITIONS

(1) “University-approved business travel” refers to travel conducted by an employee in conjunction with the employee’s responsibilities at the University. For the purposes of mileage reimbursement, University-approved business travel includes the use of one’s personal car for transportation on university business in excess of one’s normal commute. Daily commuting to and from home/work locations is not considered business travel and is therefore not eligible for travel reimbursement. University-approved business travel includes movement on official university business from home or the primary work location to another destination and return to home or the primary work location. (i.e., the University will pay the shorter distance of (1) home to temporary business or meeting location or (2) University to temporary business or meeting location).


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(D) BODY OF POLICY

- (1) Cost. University employees should incur the lowest reasonable travel expenses and exercise care to avoid impropriety and/or the appearance of impropriety. To maintain cost-effective travel, employees must:
 - (a) Utilize the University’s travel management system to book business travel. Questions can be directed to travel@neomed.edu;
 - (b) Travel by common carrier at the lowest available rate in the chosen method of travel. Payment for first class, business class or travel upgrades is not permissible;
 - (c) Make their travel arrangements as early as possible to take advantage of lower rates. Ideally, arrangements should be made at least 30 days in advance of the trip;
 - (d) Utilize the government rate, where available, for all travel-related expenses; and
 - (e) Present a tax-exempt certificate for consideration in conjunction with all travel-related expenses.

- (2) Long-Term Travel. Costs associated with long-term travel or living arrangements resulting from professional improvement and sabbatical leaves are not generally eligible for reimbursement by the University; however, travel on official University-authorized business during such leave may be reimbursed subject to certain limitations. Authorization must be obtained from the respective departmental head prior to sabbatical or personal improvement leave.

- (3) Authorization to Travel. All travel must be authorized in advance and approved by the applicable department head. Supervisory approval of a completed Employee Expense Reimbursement form will be deemed as approval of the itinerary as well as the accuracy and reasonableness of the request for

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reimbursement. Any travel not receiving proper prior approval may be denied payment or reimbursement.

(4) Payment or Reimbursement for Travel Related Expenses. Reimbursements for travel and lodging cannot be made without submitting an original receipt.

(a) Travel arrangements made through a travel agency, web provider, or airline should be billed directly to a University P-card. If a University P-card is not available, a personal credit card may be used, and the employee will be reimbursed.

(b) Employees must submit an approved request for reimbursement and supporting documentation to the Accounting Department within 60 days of completion of the trip to obtain reimbursement for the travel expenses. Travel expenses incurred in June must be submitted by July 10th for reimbursement.


(c) Alcohol and entertainment expenses incurred while an employee is traveling on University-authorized business are not reimbursable by the University.

(5) Vehicle Use


(a) Rental Vehicles

(i) The University strongly recommends employees obtain a rental car for University-authorized business travel through one of the University’s contracted car rental agencies. When renting a vehicle using a contracted car rental agency in the U.S. and Puerto Rico, renters may decline the optional insurance as coverage is included in the negotiated rental rate.


(ii) When renting from a non-contracted car rental agency, the University requires the employee to accept the optional collision and liability insurance and purchase a damage waiver (if applicable.) This coverage will be reimbursed by the University.

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- (iii) When renting a car in a foreign country, it is required that all local, statutory, and optional coverages, including collision damage waiver insurance, are purchased.
 - (iv) When renting a car in a foreign country, it is required that all local, statutory, and optimal coverages, including collision damage waiver insurance, are purchased.
 - (v) The University will need a copy of all signed lease agreements. Non-employees of NEOMED are not permitted to be added as an additional driver.
 - (vi) An itemized receipt is required for reimbursement of car rentals and gasoline purchases.
- (b) Personal Vehicles
- (i) An employee can choose to use a personal vehicle to conduct approved University business when such use is reasonable and authorized by the employee’s department or supervisor; however, by electing to use a personal vehicle for University business, the driver acknowledges and accepts that:
 - (a) They assume the risks associated with operating a personal vehicle; and
 - (b) NEOMED does not assume responsibility for damages, injuries, or losses beyond what may be provided under applicable excess insurance coverage.
 - (ii) The individual operating the vehicle is responsible for ensuring that:
 - (a) The vehicle is legally registered, properly maintained, and operated in compliance with all applicable laws;


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- (b) The driver meets liability insurance requirements of the motor vehicle financial responsibility laws of the State of Ohio; and
 - (c) The driver holds a valid driver’s license appropriate for the vehicle being operated.
- (iii) When driving personal vehicles, even while conducting University business, the insurance policy covering the vehicle is considered primary for both liability and physical damage. Any applicable University insurance coverage, if available, shall apply only on an excess basis and only after the limits of the driver’s personal automobile insurance have been exhausted. The University is not responsible for deductibles under a personal auto policy, physical damage to a personal vehicle (unless caused by University property), or losses not covered by the individual’s personal insurance.
- (iv) Reimbursement
- (a) The use of a personal vehicle will be reimbursed at the Internal Revenue Service’s standard mileage rate in effect on the date of travel. The mileage rate is intended to cover all expenses incurred for using a personally-owned vehicle, except parking fees and tolls. The mileage of an employee who is being paid a University car allowance will be reimbursed at a reduced rate under the Internal Revenue Service’s mileage rate for medical purposes in effect on the date of travel.
 - (b) Reimbursement must include applicable documentation (including date, business purpose, miles driven and destination). Costs such as parking fees, tolls, taxi, and

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airport shuttle fares are reimbursable on an actual cost basis.

- (c) For long distances where it may be more cost-effective to travel by air, reimbursement for use of a personal vehicle will be paid at the lower mileage allowance or accumulated airfare of coach for all individuals on approved travel status traveling in a car.
- (6) Other Ground Travel. The University may pay for or reimburse ground transportation and related expenses such as shuttle bus (between airport and hotel), taxi, rideshare services, bus, subway, tram, train, tolls, and parking. Receipts must be submitted for any of the foregoing individual transportation costs that exceed twenty-five dollars (\$25.00) per travel event. Employees being paid a monthly car allowance will not be reimbursed for taxi or airport shuttle expenses from home to the airport and back unless the travel time exceeds ten (10) days.
- (7) Domestic and International Travel not related to a Sponsored Program. University-authorized business travel must adhere to the following travel guidelines to ensure cost-effective and efficient travel:
- (a) Travel. Travel by air or other common carrier must be at the lowest available coach or economy fare consistent with scheduling needs, including the need to conserve time by selecting direct flights when available and appropriate. Employees who elect to travel on weekends in order to obtain lower fares may be reimbursed for other eligible travel expenses on the extra days if the end result reduces the total travel costs associated with the trip.
 - (b) Lodging. The University may pay for or reimburse reasonable, itemized expenses for lodging for overnight travel when the travel point is further than 60 miles from the traveler’s home or regular business location or is otherwise required by the University business underlying the travel. Travelers will be reimbursed at the single room rate and that rate should be indicated on the itemized receipt. Charges for hotel mini-bar and room

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movie charges will not be reimbursed by the University. The Employee Expense Reimbursement form must be supported by an original itemized hotel invoice showing full payment was made; a credit card charge slip is not acceptable documentation for reimbursement.

- (c) Alternative Lodging (Airbnb, VRBO, and Similar Platforms)
Employees may utilize short-term rental platforms (e.g., Airbnb, VRBO) when such accommodations are demonstrably more cost-effective or operationally necessary than traditional hotel lodging. Use of these services is permitted only when all the following conditions are met, and approval has been given by the Accounting department:
 - (i) Cost Justification
 - (a) Documentation must be provided demonstrating that a traditional hotel was not feasible or cost-effective. Acceptable documentation includes price comparisons, availability limitations, or other business justifications.
 - (ii) Entire Unit Requirement
 - (a) Only bookings for entire units are permitted. Shared spaces or individual room rentals are not allowed.
 - (iii) Host Standards
 - (a) Properties must be booked with highly rated hosts (preferred rating of 4.8 or higher). Super hosts or otherwise verified hosts are strongly encouraged.
 - (iv) Safety and Cancellation
 - (a) Listings must indicate the presence of basic safety features, including smoke detectors, secure locks, and clearly defined cancellation policies.

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(v) Documentation Requirements


(a) Employees must retain and submit supporting documentation, including:

(i) Screenshots or quotes comparing lodging rates (hotel vs. rental); and

(ii) Listing details, including ratings, host status, and justification of cost savings or business need (e.g., estimated savings).

(d) Meals. The University will pay for or reimburse all approved meal expenses on overnight travel or travel that is more than 60 miles from the employee’s home or primary work site up, to the federal General Services Administration per diem rates per city. According to the Federal Travel Regulation, employees are entitled to seventy-five percent (75%) of the prescribed meals and incidental expenses for one day's travel away from their official work site if the travel is longer than 12 hours. (www.gsa.gov/fttr). Multiple-day travel that starts prior to 7:00 am on the first day or ends after 9:00 pm on the last day will be considered a full day for travel per diem reimbursement.

(i) If a meal is served and is included in the cost of transportation, conference or meeting fee, the per diem rate must be reduced based on the provided meal. Reimbursement requests for meal per diems while attending conferences must include a copy of the conference itinerary showing what meal times were provided with the conference. Meal receipts are not required when using per diem rates; however, conference itineraries showing dates, location, and meals provided are required when requesting meal reimbursements while attending conferences.


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(ii) Business meals constitute an exception to the federal per diem rates. Expenses may be reimbursed for properly documented business meals while on travel status (see Attachment A). The primary purpose must be a business discussion during which:

- (a) At least one non-university employee, whose presence is necessary for the business discussion, must be present;
- (b) Expenses will be reimbursed only for those individuals who are necessary for the business discussion;
- (c) Documentation of the time, date, place, business purpose and attendees, in addition to an original itemized receipt is required (in accordance with Internal Revenue Service guidelines); and
- (d) Gratuities cannot exceed 20% of meal costs for business meals.

(8) Domestic and International Travel related to a Sponsored Program. Principal investigators and others traveling on sponsored funds are to be familiar with the allowable cost provisions of their sponsored program. Original itemized receipts are always required for expenses charged to sponsored program. Expenses for any travel and lodging arrangements, car rentals, ground transportation, conference registration or fee, or any meals to be charged to a sponsored program should be reviewed prior to purchase to ensure that such expenses are allowable under the terms of the sponsored program. In addition to the terms of the sponsored program, investigators should note that:

- (a) sponsored programs that allow meal reimbursement require original itemized receipts. Most sponsors, however, including the federal government, do not allow business meals under the provisions of their sponsored program.

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- (b) commercial air travel on certain sponsored programs must use U.S. Flag Air Carrier service in order to comply with the Fly America Act (with some limited exceptions). Travelers using federal grant funds must verify that the chosen commercial carrier is in compliance with this Act.

- (9) Conference Registration and Fees. Registration and conference fees should be prepaid and paid using a University P-card. If a University P-card is not available, a personal credit card may be used, and the employee will be reimbursed. A copy of the conference itinerary should accompany the payment request for the conference and the employee travel reimbursement. Cost of entertainment activities for conferences and/or meetings will not be paid or reimbursed. Example activities are golf outings, fun runs, amusement parks, tours, sporting events, etc.

- (10) Vacation in Conjunction with Business Travel. Travel will only be paid when expenses are incurred at locations specific to the business purpose. Travel expenses to and from alternate vacation destinations while on business travel are not eligible for payment. If vacation time is added to a business trip, any cost variance in expenses such as airfare, car rental and/or lodging must be clearly identified and documented.

- (11) Guest Travel. The University may approve travel expenses to be paid for or reimbursed to guests of the University. Examples of these guests may include lecturers, consultants, prospective faculty, staff, and students. Only actual expenses up to the federal per diem rates will be reimbursed to the guest. All reimbursements must be accompanied by an itemized receipt and are subject to all other restrictions contained in this policy. Travel expenses for spouses, companions, dependents or other family members of University faculty and staff are not eligible for reimbursement unless the individual has a bona fide University purpose for engaging in the travel or attending the event. Documentation of the business purpose is required.

- (12) Accommodations. Disability-related travel accommodations that result in additional expenses must be approved in advance through Human Resources in accordance with the University’s Disability and Accommodation Policy.