

POLICY STATEMENT ON PAYMENT OR REIMBURSEMENT OF BUSINESS MEALS

5e. BUSINESS MEALS (Excerpt from approved [travel policy](#))

From time to time, it is necessary to the interests of the University to host or provide meals to University guests such as job candidates, visiting scholars or donors. Likewise, a meal may be an essential or important part of an event, such as a conference or workshop, which is conducted by the University. All meals, other than those provided to an individual travelling on University business, must qualify as a “business meal” under the requirements of this section, in order to be provided or reimbursed by the University.

As a public agency, the University has an obligation to students, taxpayers and benefactors to use all of its funds as prudently as possible. Therefore, all employees and individuals with authority to request, control or approve University funds, including but not limited to travelers, shall use their best judgment in applying those funds towards business meals only when justified with a business purpose and a clearly identifiable benefit to the University. The act of requesting, using or approving a business meal constitutes an individual’s official determination that, to the best of such individual’s knowledge, the expense was actually incurred, is justified by a business purpose, and serves the best interests of the University.

The University’s policy of paying or reimbursing for business meals is subject to the following general rules:

1. University employees are generally responsible for paying for their own meals when they are not traveling.
2. University funds may not be used for meals at social functions, such as parties or summer outings, attended entirely or primarily by University employees and/or their personal guests.
3. The number of University-affiliated persons (employees and spouses, where appropriate) attending business events (including meals) with University guests should be limited to those essential to the University’s business.
4. University funds may not be used to purchase alcoholic beverages.
5. In most cases, business meals may not be charged to sponsored awards (the responsible OVPR, SPS Grant Manager may provide more information or grant exceptions where appropriate). See section 1g.

See also the University’s policy re: “Use of University Funds for Gifts, Social Functions, Sponsorships & Donations.”

Meals between faculty/staff and students, while allowable when there is a business purpose, should be infrequent. In addition, Departments may purchase group business meals when a group meal is essential to the effectiveness and efficiency of the meeting. This is especially the case when multiple Departments are called together for a substantial meeting, or when stopping the meeting to allow employees to leave for a normal meal would be disruptive and inconvenient for the University.

For the avoidance of doubt, this policy shall extend fully to business meals that are paid for by interdepartmental transactions, such as meals purchased through **Dining Services**.

While the University does not require written pre-approval for business meals, University staff are strongly encouraged to obtain written departmental approval before incurring any business meal expenses. Individuals who incur business meal expenses without the approval of their departments bear the risk that their expenses will not be reimbursed.

For all business meals, including group meals, organizers should limit attendance to essential guests only. Without proper justification, the University will not reimburse expenses for spouses, partners or non-essential guests. Further, the number of University-affiliated persons (employees and spouses, where appropriate) attending business events (including meals) with University guests should be limited to those essential to the University’s business. Under no circumstances may the cost of the meal for each guest (including taxes and tip) exceed three times the appropriate GSA or U.S. Department of State Per Diem meal amount for the location.

Updated March 23, 2022

GUIDELINES:

Examples of Permissible Business Meals:

1. When a meeting takes place over an extended period of time (over two hours) and the agenda includes a working meal and the purpose of the meeting is business related.
2. A meeting where there is a scheduled speaker during the meal period.
3. A meeting where an out-of-town official, consultant, private firm or other party is in attendance and there is a documented business purpose to the business meal.
4. A meeting where the participants work through the meal period; and circumstances where it would be too time-consuming or disruptive for participants to take a meal break away from the meeting location.
5. A meal with an interview candidate and the interview committee.
6. Light refreshments (pizza, sandwiches, pastries, cookies, etc.) for recruiting, receptions, lectures, and other special events focused on students.

Examples of Non-Permissible Business Meals:

1. Social events such as office parties, birthdays, retirements, funerals, holiday parties, graduations, student or employee recognition
2. Alcohol beverages will not be reimbursed.
3. A meeting consisting solely of one or more university faculty or staff employees having breakfast, lunch or dinner together, unless one or more of the conditions above are met.
4. Local meals with colleagues are considered a personal expense and are not reimbursable.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION: *(failure to provide the required documentation will result in non-reimbursement)*

- A clearly substantiated business purpose
- The date of the expense and the name and address of the location of the meal
- The names of individuals/groups/committees and their business relationship with the University
- Itemized receipt with proof of payment

METHODS OF PAYMENT:

1. Reimbursement to faculty/staff member through the University's [Concur system](#)
2. Prior to using the University's sponsored [Travel Card](#) make sure that the meal is an allowable meal in accordance with University Policy and if deemed not allowable, travel card holder will be required to reimburse the University promptly.
3. [UConn Catering Services](#)
4. [UConn Procurement \(HuskyBuy\)](#)

Frequently Asked Questions: Business Meals

1. I am interviewing a candidate for a position on campus, is it permissible for me to take them out to lunch and seek reimbursement?
 - a. Yes, the policy allows a business meal with interview candidates.
 - b. Make sure you clearly state the business purpose of the meal including the candidate name when requesting reimbursement in Concur.
2. I have a guest speaker in town presenting to a group of students. Am I allowed to purchase pizza for the students?
 - a. Yes, refreshments such as pizza, sandwiches, pastries, cookies, etc. is allowed for student held events.
 - b. We suggest you first contact [UConn Catering](#) Services to host the event.
3. Can I take a guest speaker out to dinner after they present to the group of students and seek reimbursement?
 - a. Yes, it is permissible to take the guest speaker to dinner as long as there is a documented business purpose for the dinner.
 - b. Include the business purpose and name of guest speaker when requesting reimbursement in Concur.
4. I would like to take my graduate student to lunch for a job well done, is this a permissible business meal expense?
 - a. No, this would be considered a personal expense and not reimbursable.
5. I am meeting my colleague for lunch at a local restaurant, is this considered a permissible meal expense?
 - a. No, this would be considered a personal expense and not reimbursable.
6. I have scheduled an annual meeting for all staff before the semester begins to discuss University business. The meeting will run for several hours through lunch, is it permissible for me to have University catering provide a meal?
 - a. Yes, when a meeting takes place over an extended period of time (over two hours) and the agenda includes a working meal and the purpose of the meeting is business related.
 - b. We suggest you first contact [UConn Catering](#) to provide the meal.
7. One of my staff member is retiring, can I take them out to lunch and get reimbursed by the University?
 - a. No, this would be considered a personal expense and not reimbursable.
8. Can I use my UConn Foundation funds for business meals?
 - a. Meals during business hours between employees may be reimbursable provided there is a business purpose and it is disclosed on the RFD
 - b. Staff/Faculty wishing to use Foundations funds should seek pre-approval from the Foundation prior to commitment.

9. I used my T-Card to pay for a meal and the meal does not meet the requirements of the Business Meal Policy. What do I do?
 - a. The charge on your University sponsored T-Card will be considered a **personal expense** and you must personally reimburse the University immediately.
 - b. Notify your fiscal office of the non-compliance and contact travel@uconn.edu on how to reimburse the University.

UConn's Catering Services

1. Do I have to follow the Business Meal Policy and Guidelines for UConn catering?
 - a. Yes, you must follow the Business Meal Policy and Guidelines and attach as much information to the catering request to confirm allowability.
2. Can University Funds be used to purchase alcohol for a UConn catered event?
 - a. No, university funds cannot be used to purchase alcohol and the department will be required to provide their Foundation account or use personal credit card or personal funds for payment.

QUESTIONS?

Questions about the Business Meal policy or guidelines provided below? Reach out to UConn Travel and Expense Reimbursement Staff at travel@uconn.edu or Dan Warren, Director of Accounts Payable & Travel at daniel.warren@uconn.edu.