

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

6.20.23

1. What is the daily per diem for faculty or staff?

The travel must be overnight to be eligible for per diem. The easiest way to determine the rate is to work with your area's Admin Associate to enter the trip pre-approval in the Mason Finance Gateway (MFG.). Both rates below vary and are based on the lodging location.

There is a daily meal & incidentals (M&I) per diem. The first and last days of the trip are considered "travel days" and are at 75% of the standard rate. Travelers are not required to retain meal receipts.

There is also a lodging per diem rate. Mason employees/travelers are allowed a maximum "conference rate," which is 200% of the standard rate.

2. What does the per diem cover?

While traveling, the M&I per diem covers breakfast, lunch, dinner, as well as incidentals such as baggage tips to hotel staff and transportation to meals.

The lodging per diem rate covers the nightly lodging rate. Lodging taxes and fees (i.e. mandatory resort fee) are reimbursed in addition to this rate.

Local business meals may also be reimbursed up to the per diem maximum (see rates at <https://fiscal.gmu.edu/food-beverage-overview/>.) The rate is per person and includes taxes and tip (maximum of 20% of the pre-tax amount.) The faculty member must provide the list of attendees (with affiliation) and business purpose in order to be reimbursed.

3. Is a resort fee reimbursable?

Yes, with an itemized lodging receipt.

4. What happens when your conference hotel rate is above per diem?

The traveler should make all attempts to secure lodging within the conference rate (200% of the standard rate) by using a booking code for blocked rooms or looking for cheaper nearby accommodation. If this is not possible, the Admin Associate should reach out to the Budget Office for guidance.

5. What do you do when you want to add personal days?

Please work with your area Admin Associate. When adding personal days during the trip, or if leaving from/returning to a location other than home, we are required to obtain comparison flight information to determine the "business only" amount. Mason allows a maximum payment of the "business only" amount. A printout of the comparison flight must be saved/printed on the same date the actual flight is booked and must include the time stamp.

6. Can I book business class?

Business class is not allowable for domestic flights.

Business class is allowable for international flights as long as it meets certain criteria.

The most common are (1) the travel is to western Europe and the business meeting is conducted within three hours of landing and (2) the travel is for transoceanic, intercontinental trips of more than eight hours.

7. What are the rules for tipping?

The maximum allowable tip for ground transportation is 15% of the total fare, including approved charges/fees.

The maximum allowable tip for state funded local business meals is 20% of the **pre-tax** amount.

The maximum allowable tip for GMU Foundation funded local business meals is 20% of the **post-tax** amount.

If one receipt for local business meals will be partially paid by the state and Foundation, the state policy for gratuity will be in effect. We encourage faculty members to obtain a separate receipt for the meal and alcohol portion to simplify the process.

8. What purchases are allowable on our admin's p-card?

Travelers are encouraged to pay for airfare, rail, and conference registration fees via PCard.

9. When do I need an itemized receipt?

Receipts should be itemized and show proof of payment (last 4 digits of card.) A credit card statement showing the specific transaction can also be submitted as proof of payment.

Travelers should retain all itemized receipts, except from meals, to submit to the Admin Associate for the reimbursement. This includes airfare, lodging, ground transportation, parking, car rental, tolls, etc.

When not on travel, Itemized receipts are required for all expenditures such as business meals, paper submissions, etc.

10. What do I do if alcohol is on my bill?

Travelers will receive the set M&I per diem rate for the day and are not required to retain travel meal receipts.

If alcohol is purchased during a business meal when not on travel, the alcohol with applicable taxes and tip should be deducted from the reimbursement amount in the

MFG. If the business meal was with a candidate or guest speaker, the faculty or staff member may request a reimbursement through the Foundation for that amount.

11. What happens when the conference provides meals?

Meals which are provided during the flights, lodging or conferences will be deducted from the daily M&I per diem rate for that day.

For continental breakfasts or if the conference is not able to provide food due to allergy or dietary restrictions, the traveler must include a note or document how the meal did not meet their needs.

12. Can I rent a car?

Ground transportation is typically the more economical option and should be used. If there is a justification such as not staying at/near the conference hotel or needing to travel a substantial distance from the airport, travelers may request a vehicle rental as part of the pre-approval. Travelers should rent the most economical vehicle available. Non-reimbursable expenses include rental car insurance and fuel agreements (travelers should plan to fill the gas tank prior to returning the vehicle.)