Business Meals, Hospitality and Amenity Policy

Frequently Asked Questions

Business Meals (Account 60553)

1. Do we still need original, itemized receipts?
   • An itemized receipt is required for a business meal or hospitality, as required by the IRS. A scanned, electronic copy is acceptable.

2. Do I have to have a non-UVM attendee for a business meal to be reimbursable?
   • No, a business meal can be conducted with UVM employees only. However, there must be a clear business purpose and the meal is incidental to the meeting or activity. Indicate the business purpose on the expense report or purchasing card journal.

3. I lost my receipt for my business meal. How do I get reimbursed?
   • Contact the vendor to obtain an itemized receipt.

4. My receipt is not itemized. How do I get reimbursed?
   • Contact the vendor to obtain an itemized receipt.

5. Can departmental / college business meal policy differ from the University policy?
   • Yes, a unit’s policy can be more stringent.

6. Should tax and tip for a business meal be entered on a separate line in PeopleSoft?
   • No, the tax and tip are part of the business meal and should be entered on the same line as the meal in PeopleSoft.

7. Is there a daily maximum for a business meal?
   • No, but prudence is required. If in travel status, the business meal is included in the daily maximum.

8. Do I need to list attendees at a business meal?
   • Yes, business meals are always attended by two or more individuals. Names can be directly entered into a PeopleSoft Expense report.

Business Meals and Travel (Account 60553)

9. Can I have a business meal while on travel status?
   • Yes, the primary purpose is the discussion of a business topic, the meal is incidental. The clear business purpose must be indicated on the expense report or purchasing card journal.

10. Does the business meal amount count toward my daily travel meal maximum?
    • Yes, the cost of the business meal is counted toward the daily maximum reimbursable amount. Include the itemized receipt of the business meal and any other required documentation.

Student Activities

11. Can I purchase snacks for the students in my classes?
    • Yes, an occasional snack for student is permissible. Weekly snacks or meals are not. (Account 60556)

12. I want to host an academic end of year picnic for student I advise. Is this OK?
    • Yes, reasonable costs may be incurred at year end for this type of student activity. (Account 60558)
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13. I teach a nutrition class and purchase fresh ingredients at the grocery store. How is this classified?
   - This type of expense would be considered instructional supplies. (Account 60091)

 Guests

14. Can I bring a guest to a business meal (Account 60553), to accompany me or the UVM guest’s spouse?
   - Yes, you can bring a guest, but UVM may not pay for the meal. UVM payment will be permitted only when there is a substantial and legitimate business reason for that person’s attendance. The IRS does not permit tax-free treatment when the spouse or other person is present merely for social or personal purposes.

 Gifts, flowers and cards

15. Can I buy gifts from unrestricted funds?
   - Length of service and retirement gifts may be charged to general funds or discretionary gift funds if available, at the discretion of the dean or appropriate vice president. (Account 64101)
16. Is there a dollar threshold for buying a gift?
   - See the Awards, Prizes and Winnings policy: http://www.uvm.edu/policies/acct/prizes.pdf
17. Can I buy gifts using discretionary funds?
   - Discretionary funds may be used to purchase gifts for length of service and retirement gifts. (Account 64101)
18. What is the dollar limit for a gift I’m bringing to a host family for an international trip?
   - While there is no stated dollar maximum, gifts to host families should be of modest means as to prevent embarrassment to the host family. (Account 64102)
19. Can I buy flowers or gifts for non-UVM individual?
   - No, flowers, greeting card or other gifts are unallowable for either UVM employees or nonaffiliated individuals.
20. My co-worker’s parent passed away and we want to send flowers. How do we make this happen?
   - According to the policy, this is an unallowable expense. You will have to take up a collection.

 Other Employee Activities and Gatherings

21. What kind of employee morale activities can I provide to my departmental personnel?
   - In addition to University-wide activities, one annual gathering per year is allowable, when hosted by the chair, director, etc. There is a maximum of $50 per employee allowable on general funds or discretionary gift funds. (Account 60556 or 60558)
22. Can I host our annual holiday party?
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- Yes, if the gathering is paid for personally. The Business Meals policy clearly states that holiday parties are unallowable; therefore no University funds can be used.

23. Can I host a gathering at my home? And serve alcohol?
- Yes, employee morale activities can be hosted off-campus, if the gathering is pre-approved by the controller. (Account 60556 or 60558)
  i. Alcohol cannot be personally purchased and reimbursed, nor purchased with a purchasing card.
  ii. Official off-campus functions where alcohol is served must be carried out by a vendor holding a valid liquor license. All vendors serving alcohol are required to meet the University’s standard insurance requirements and carry $1,000,000 per occurrence in liquor liability insurance. Off-campus providers must name the University as additional insured.

24. Can we celebrate our office birthdays during our departmental meeting?
- Yes, individual birthdays can be acknowledge, but not using any University funds. (Account 60551)

25. We have monthly meetings. Can we charge refreshments to the budget?
- This practice is discouraged.

26. I am hosting a holiday gathering and purchased toys for my staff’s children. How can I be reimbursed for this?
- You will not be reimbursed for this expense, nor should you use your purchasing card. This is an unallowable expense, regardless of the fund type or mechanism of purchase.

27. Can I hire my family members to provide services for a UVM gathering I’m hosting at my home?
- Gathering at one’s home requires pre-approval of the Controller.
- Hiring family members is in direct violation of the Conflict of Interest policy, http://www.uvm.edu/policies/general_html/conflictinterest.pdf. In addition, such payments would be considered IRS 1099 Misc reportable and therefore payments cannot be reimbursed on a PeopleSoft expense report.

28. How much can I spend on my staff for an annual gathering?
- The maximum is $50 per employee for annual staff appreciation gatherings. (Account 60556 or 60558)

29. My department is working through lunch, can we order a meal for the staff?
- The meal must be incidental to the meeting. The primary purpose of the gathering is the meeting agenda. The business purpose must be supplied, as required by the IRS. (Account 60553)

Alcohol

30. Can I buy alcohol for our event?
- University employees will not be reimbursed for alcohol purchased at a liquor store, grocery store or similar venue.

31. What are the requirements for the purchase of alcohol?
  a) The purchase of alcohol may only be paid for with discretionary gift funds or non-student agency funds, and the expense must have prior approval, in writing, of the Provost or appropriate Vice President.
b) Alcoholic beverages are never allowable on federal sponsored projects, and are generally unallowable on non-federal awards.

c) Payment for services of a bartender for a cash bar (individuals paying for their own Beverages) must have prior approval, in writing, of the Provost or appropriate Vice President.

d) University employees will not be reimbursed for alcohol purchased at a liquor store, grocery store, or similar venue.

e) All attendees consuming alcohol at an event where alcohol is being served must be of legal drinking age.

f) See the full Business Meals policy for additional requirements.

32. Is preapproval of alcohol purchase for a business meal required?
   - Yes, the expense must have prior approval, in writing, of the Provost or appropriate Vice President.

33. Can we go out for drinks without a meal?
   - No, the purchase of alcohol only does not constitute a meal.

Other Beverages

34. Can my department have a water bubbler / cooler?
   - Water bugglers / coolers cannot be paid for with UVM funds, unless serving the public, such as Admissions. Departments that do not have access to drinking water may be granted exceptions while they await installation of the necessary plumbing. UVM Water Fountain Requests and Water Bottle Refill Station Inquiries (Account 60556)

35. Can I buy water for my office water cooler?
   - Richard Cate emailed the Deans, Directors and Chairs list on January 18, 2013 regarding the end of the sale of bottled water. Included in this was a statement indicating that departments should transition away from the use of water coolers.

Last, but not least

36. Entertainment – entertainment expenses are not allowable on federally sponsored projects, per OMB Circular A-21.

37. How quickly do I need to submit my expenses?
   - All request for reimbursements must be submitted within 60 calendar days.