

Title: Meal and Entertainment Policy

Responsible Official: Senior Director, Accounts Payable & Business Operations

Responsible University Office: Procurement and Distribution Services

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Case Western Reserve University

Meal and Entertainment Policy



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1. Overview

Meal and entertainment expenses are permissible when they are required to advance the work of the University. Expenditures of University funds must further or directly relate to the University's educational and research missions. In addition, a clear business purpose must exist for such expenditures. Members of the University community must ensure that the expenses incurred represent legitimate, necessary, and prudent use of University resources.

Faculty, staff, and students who will be reimbursed through federal awards should consult applicable regulations and guidelines prior to incurring expenses. In general, to be eligible for reimbursement through federal awards, these expenses must be authorized specifically in the grant or contract, or by agency policy, and only to the extent so authorized. Questions regarding allowable charges to sponsored accounts should be directed to the Office of Sponsored Projects Accounting at http://ora.ra.cwru.edu/ospa/PreAward_Services/index_postaward.cfm.

Each school or administrative unit has primary responsibility to ensure faculty and staff compliance with the applicable policies. Schools, departments, and administrative units may enact more restrictive policies at their discretion.

This policy applies to all sources of funds, including gifts, endowments, externally sponsored funds, and discretionary funds. The allowable expenses listed in each category below describe the most common meals and events that support the University's goals and meet standards of reasonableness. The expenses listed as unallowable represent inappropriate uses of University resources and will not be allowed. The University reserves the right to review any expenditure presented for payment or reimbursement and to judge its conformity with this policy.

2. Business Meals in Northeast Ohio

The University allows reimbursement for local meals under limited circumstances. In the case of a meal involving only University personnel, the meal must represent a necessary and integral part of a business meeting, not simply a matter of convenience. To establish that the meal is part of the business function, it should be part of a meeting that takes place over an extended period of time with an agenda that requires a working meal. Business meals with University colleagues that are frequent and reciprocal are prohibited.



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When only University personnel are present, the following details should be included on the receipt: University business purpose, attendees and their affiliation, agenda, and justification for the meal as an integral part of the meeting.

Meal expenses for bona fide business purposes that involve individuals not affiliated with the University are generally reimbursable. The meal must represent a necessary and integral part of the business meeting. Inclusion of University personnel at these meals should be kept to a minimum. If business meals are necessary, the costs should be kept to a reasonable level.

Supervisors who occasionally require their employees to work past regular work time – for example, two or more hours after normal business hours – may purchase an on-campus meal for those employees. These meals should be modestly priced. The University reserves the right to refuse payment or reimbursement of meal expenses deemed to be frequent or excessive.

3. Business Meals Outside Northeast Ohio

Expenses for meals incurred while traveling outside of Northeast Ohio on University business are governed by the University's travel policy (<https://case.edu/travel/travel-resources/travel-policy>).

4. Departmental Meetings and Other Functions

The University will not reimburse or pay for individual memberships in airline clubs. Providing refreshments or modest meals at University meetings or student gatherings is permissible provided those sessions are important to the business of the University. Such expenses must be approved in advance by the school or department responsible for funding the event. The costs for such gatherings or events must be kept to a moderate level and should be appropriate to the situation. In general, food purchased on a frequent or continual basis – such as regular consumption within an office or classroom – should not be paid for from the University funds.

Expenses for a modest meal or light refreshments for functions relevant to employee morale – such as picnics or holiday gatherings – also may be reimbursed, provided the frequency and cost of such events are reasonable and appropriate. For additional guidelines regarding meals provided on campus, please see the University's catering policy (<http://www.case.edu/bizpolicies/caterin/cater.pdf>). The standard of modest cost is equally important for events off campus.



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The cost of light refreshments may be reimbursed for receptions held in connection with conferences; meetings of a learned society or academic organization; fundraising events; meetings of student organizations or groups; employee recognition, length of service awards, or retirement presentations; or at student events, such as commencement. The costs for such gatherings must be kept to a moderate level and should be appropriate to the situation.

In addition, a department or group may sponsor a lunch to recognize the departure of a long-standing employee who provided excellent service or to celebrate extraordinary departmental or group accomplishments. University funds cannot be used to sponsor a gathering or function for employees in recognition of birthdays or other similar social, non-business occasions.

5. Business Entertainment Expenses

Expenses for entertainment must be related directly to or associated with the active conduct of University business. When a University employee acts as an official host, the occasion must serve a clear University business purpose, with no monetary or other substantial personal benefit derived by the employee. In addition, participants must be actively engaged in University business during the entertainment, or immediately before or after the event. Policies regarding the reporting, purchasing, and serving of alcohol must be followed.