

Requests for Exception to University Travel & Entertainment Policy

Campus Controller Review Guidance

Applicable to requests submitted under UC G-28 and/or BUS-79

This guidance provides campus departments with a clear understanding of the factors the Campus Controller considers when reviewing a Request for Exception to University Travel & Entertainment Policy. An exception request documents an expense that does not comply with University policy and seeks consideration of the specific circumstances that resulted in the deviation. Approval of an exception is not automatic and does not establish precedent for future requests.

Exception Requests Are After-the-Fact Reviews

An exception to policy is not a pre-approval mechanism. Exception requests are used when an expense or action has already occurred and does not comply with applicable University travel or entertainment policy. Departments should not intentionally proceed outside policy with the expectation that an exception will later be approved. Approved exceptions are logged, and similar future violations may not be granted an exception.

Department Responsibility Before Submission

The individual seeking reimbursement and the department are responsible for submitting a complete and supportable request. The request should identify the specific policy requirement for which an exception is sought; explain the circumstances that caused the non-compliance; describe the corrective actions taken to prevent recurrence; include necessary supporting documentation; and contain the applicable departmental and funding approvals.

What the Campus Controller Will Review

1. Specific Policy Requirement

Does the request identify the name and specific portion of G-28 and/or BUS-79 for which the exception is sought?

The Controller should be able to determine the exact policy requirement that was not met.

2. Explanation for the Deviation

Does the justification clearly explain what occurred, why the expense or action did not comply with policy, and the circumstances that led to the deviation?

The explanation should be factual, complete, and specific to the transaction.

3. University Business Purpose

Was the underlying expense incurred for a legitimate University business purpose?

A policy exception does not eliminate the requirement that the expenditure itself serves an appropriate University purpose.

4. Corrective and Preventive Action

Does the request explain what actions have been taken to prevent similar non-compliance in the future?

The Controller may consider whether the circumstances were isolated and whether the department has addressed the underlying process, training, planning, or oversight issue.

5. Supporting Documentation

Is there sufficient documentation to substantiate the expense, amount, event or travel dates, business purpose, circumstances of the violation, and requested exception?

The record should allow an independent reviewer to understand both the transaction and the reason an exception is being requested.

Examples of supporting documentation may include:

- **Airfare involving personal travel when the required comparison was not captured at the time of booking:** Include the business agenda or other documentation establishing the required business travel dates; the actual flight itinerary and receipt showing the amount paid; and a current airfare comparison for a comparable business-only itinerary. The documentation should provide sufficient information to assess whether the requested reimbursement is reasonable. A current comparison does not replace the comparison that should have been obtained at the time of booking, but it may provide supporting context for the exception review.
- **Missing or unavailable receipt:** Include available proof of payment, such as a credit card statement or transaction record, along with documentation identifying what was purchased, the business purpose, and an explanation of why the original receipt is unavailable.
- **Lodging above the applicable policy limit:** Include the hotel folio, conference or event agenda, and documentation supporting the circumstances that resulted in the higher lodging cost, such as conference hotel information or comparable lodging rates.
- **Travel dates outside the documented business dates:** Include the business agenda or other documentation establishing the required business dates, the travel itinerary, and documentation distinguishing University business travel from any personal travel.
- **Expense requiring additional context to establish reasonableness:** Include receipts, invoices, agendas, itineraries, price comparisons, correspondence, or other contemporaneous documentation that allows an independent reviewer to understand the expense and evaluate the amount requested.

These examples are illustrative and do not guarantee approval of an exception. The Controller may request additional documentation when necessary to evaluate the specific circumstances of the request.

6. Required Departmental Review and Approval

Has the request been reviewed by the appropriate department officials, including the Chief Administrative Officer and Budget Authority, as applicable?

Departmental approval demonstrates that the unit has reviewed the circumstances and supports forwarding the request for Controller consideration.

7. Funding Source and Financial Information

Is the funding source clearly identified and appropriate for the underlying expense?

The Controller may review the amount, PO/Report ID/PTA number, Chart of Accounts information, and other financial information provided with the request.

Requests proposing the use of restricted funds for an exception to policy will not be approved. The department must identify an appropriate unrestricted funding source before submitting the exception request for Controller consideration.

8. Grant-Funded Expenses

If grant funding is involved, has the Research Administrator reviewed and approved the expense for allowability under the award?

The request should include the approved scope of work showing that the activity is permitted, sponsor-level approval when the activity is not addressed in the approved agreement, or documentation supporting another applicable governing-policy exception.

9. Frequency, Prior Exceptions, and Stewardship

Has the same or a similar policy violation occurred previously?

Because approved exceptions are recorded and future exceptions for similar violations may not be granted, repeated non-compliance may weigh against approval. The Controller may also consider the reasonableness of the expense and the department's stewardship of University funds.

Controller Determination

Outcome	When It May Apply	Department Action
Approve	- The underlying expense has a legitimate University business purpose. - The exception is sufficiently justified and documented. - Required approvals are complete. - The funding source is appropriate. - The circumstances support granting an exception.	Retain the approved exception with the transaction. Address any corrective actions identified in the request.
Return for Additional Information	The request may warrant consideration, but the policy citation, explanation, supporting documentation, approvals, funding information, or corrective action is incomplete or unclear.	Provide the requested information or documentation and resubmit through the established exception process.
Deny	- The request does not adequately justify the deviation from policy. - The underlying expense is not supportable. - Required funding or sponsor requirements are not met. - The violation is repeated or avoidable. - The circumstances otherwise do not support an exception.	Do not process the expenditure as an approved exception. Consult Travel & Expense Management regarding appropriate next steps.

Common Reasons a Request May Be Returned or Denied

- The request does not identify the specific policy provision for which an exception is sought.
- The justification does not adequately explain why the policy deviation occurred.
- The underlying expense lacks a clear University business purpose (bona fide business purpose).
- The request does not describe corrective action to prevent recurrence.
- Receipts or other necessary supporting documentation are missing.
- Required departmental or Research Administrator approvals are incomplete.
- The funding source is inappropriate, or the expense is not allowable under applicable sponsor requirements.
- The employee has repeated the same or a similar policy violation without sufficient justification or corrective action.

SUBMISSION REMINDER

BEFORE YOU SUBMIT Complete the Request for Exception for University Travel & Entertainment Policy and submit it through ServiceNow using the [Exception to Policy](#) ticket. Travel & Expense Management will forward the completed request to the Campus Controller for review.

Reference:

- UC Merced Request for Exception for University Travel & Entertainment Policy (Travel & Expense Management, 4/20/2023)
- University of California [G-28 Travel Reimbursement](#)
- University of California [BUS-79 Expenditures for Business Meetings, Entertainment, and Other Occasions](#)
- [Expenditure Allowability Grid](#)