

Travel Office Policies and Procedures

Policy Statement

This document serves to describe the means by which the Travel Office will arrange its services and the parameters that must be adhered to.

The purpose of the Travel Policy is to maximize safe, cost effective travel for University business travels that are in the best interest of the AUC Community.

Reason for Policy/Purpose

This policy aims to clarify how travel requests are handled by the Travel office, and to set clear guidelines for entitlements and duties for all AUC Community.

All travel must be done in accordance with these travel policy parameters to ensure cost effectiveness, assure service quality, facilitate work process, and secure re-imburements, if needed.

Who Approved This Policy

Executive Director, Supply Chain Management Office: Tawfik El Klisly

Executive VP for Administration & Finance: Brian MacDougall

Who Needs to Know This Policy

This policy applies to all AUC community travelers, which include staff, students, faculty members, and visitors required to travel on approved University business budgets. This includes all domestic and international travel.

Contacts

Responsible University Official: Mona Wagdy, Director of Travel and Business Support

Responsible University Office: Travel Office

If you have any questions on the policy or procedure for Travel policy, you may:

1. Call Travel Office at 02 2615 2304, or
2. Send an e-mail to travel@aucegypt.edu

Definitions

Not Applicable	

Policy/Procedures

General Travel Policy:

The Travel Office of the American University in Cairo is dedicated to supporting the educational goals of the University through business travel and providing efficient, knowledgeable, accurate and timely service.

The Travel Office is established to help faculty, administrators, staff, and students with their travel plans; whether for business or personal in Egypt or abroad.

Major Functions:

The main function of the Travel Office is to handle official business and business-related travel, and to monitor policies and procedures set by the University Administration for these types of travel.

The Travel Office also is responsible for minimizing the inconveniences experienced by faculty, administrators, students, and staff in arranging their personal travel plans through external travel agents. The Travel Office secures deals on the best terms available for its customers.

- The AUC Travel Office is located in the New Cairo Campus. It is open to the AUC community from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. every day on which AUC is open for normal business.

The Travel Office provides the following services to the AUC community:

- Flight reservations and ticket purchases for both domestic and international air travel for business and personal reasons.
- Hotel reservations both domestically and internationally for business and personal reasons.
- Arranging of holiday packages through well-known travel agencies.
- Car and bus hire in case AUC Carpool Office cannot fulfill the request.

The first priority of the Travel Office is to provide services to students, faculty and staff who are traveling on AUC business, or on trips sponsored by AUC; the second priority is to serve faculty and administrators on categories of AUC travel where use of the office is optional; and the third priority is to assist the entire AUC community in the execution of private travel plans.

Any new travel request is handled within two working days.

All business trips should be processed by the Travel Office because the overall level of discounts obtained by the Travel Office is heavily dependent upon the annual volume of its business.

Travel office team will insure competitive prices of air tickets through applying the following steps:-

1. Obtaining Best Price available from our Travel Agent.
 2. Checking the price on On-Line web-site such as Expedia.
 3. Validate all options based on our technical experience and knowledge
 4. Providing the most cost effective and at the same time most convenient to our clients.
 5. Recording all the savings done resulting from applying above method.
- Record all savings that will be made through the usage of the new American Express Card and presenting it quarterly.
 - Promoting Egypt-air tickets across the board as we have a good deal with them, by increasing our sales volume this will result in obtaining more discounts and back end incentive.

The Travel Office deals with three Agents that have an excellent rapport in the Egyptian market and to ensure transparency in our dealings the following steps will be clearly followed:- 1. Staff needs to keep records of the criteria that they distribute the work among the agent.

2. Keep monitoring the three travel agents that we choose in order to be able who is capable of taking the AUC business.

3. Keeping a log of compliments and complaints.
4. Assigning an agent who can issue for us Soto tickets from outside, we can put all the tickets that we will issue in a table to allow comparison of prices thus be able to quantify our savings.

The Travel office will be receiving at the beginning of each fiscal year from the Controller office an authorization list with names and signatures who are entitled to sign travel authorization for every department and school within the University.

The Travel office Director will be entitled to sign all hotel contracts according to the authorization matrix within the SCM department.

First Class Travel:

University policy does not provide for payment for First Class travel at the University's expense. AUC will not pay for any ticket shown on its face to be First Class through use of the code "F".

Business Class Travel + Upgrade:

A. International Travel

Business Class travel is allowed to certain employees as per their AUC contract of employment.

- AUC President
- Deans
- Associate Vice Presidents Associate Provosts
- Chief Technology Officer

B. Domestic Travel within the United States

All travel that originates (i.e. is not a connecting flight to a flight originating from Europe or Cairo) and ends in the United States shall be undertaken in Economy Class unless both of the following conditions are met:

- The scheduled flight time exceeds four hours
- The traveler is a First Category or Second Category traveler (i.e. international travel rules will apply).

Economy Class:

- All other employees (i.e. those not defined in the Business class section) will be flown to their international destinations on the cheapest, best available Economy Class with convenient connections.

- In the case that the traveler would like to reserve a seat in a higher economy class, they may upgrade their ticket to business class. AUC will cover only the cheapest available economy rate, and the traveler must cover any additional cost.

Types of Travel

First Arrival Travel:

- Area Head or the Provost's Office provides the relocated-hire and qualifying dependents with a one-way ticket from the point of origin to Cairo.
- The Travel Office will issue first arrival tickets based on the cheapest, best available, convenient economy fare for all faculty and staff, and on business fare for entitled employees mentioned earlier.
- If the traveler prefers a specific route, airline, or class that costs higher than the offer provided by the Travel Office, he/she has the option of selecting this preference and paying the differential amount.
- In the case of reimbursement of the ticket's cost, the University's liability shall not exceed the cost of the cheapest best available option provided by the Travel Office. On the condition that he/she provides the following:-
 - Copy of the ticket
 - Boarding pass
 - Payment receipt
 - Travel Office offer that is higher in price than the actual one.
- Under no circumstances can the University reimburse for travel whose cost is not documented/receipted by the carrier and proof of travel in the form of a boarding card.

Business Travel:

- All Business Travel must be purchased through the Travel Office.
- Each travel request must be supported by a Travel Authorization form, showing the approval of the relevant Dean or Area Head (Deans obtain the approval of the Provost and Area Heads obtain the approval of the President).
- The request should be sent to the Travel Office with as much lead time as possible before the date of travel. It is essential to give not less than three weeks' notice of intent to travel, and longer notice is preferable during peak periods.
- The Travel Office cannot be responsible for failure to reserve seats on flights that are already fully booked. In such situations the University will not pay for the cost of upgraded tickets, should seats still be available in a class higher than that to which the traveler is entitled.
- As a general policy, the Travel Office strives to reserve seats on the cheapest, most convenient route / airline. However, the traveler might have other preferences such as:

specific route, airline, ticket class, or extended travelling dates. If this cost differential exceeds the cheapest offer for the original business trip, destination and dates, provided by the Travel Office, the traveler has the option of selecting the preferred airline and paying the differential amount.

- Exceptionally, the Travel Office may approve purchase of a ticket for Business Travel other than through the Travel Office if it is confirmed that the traveler can procure the ticket at a price cheaper than that available to the Travel Office. Because the overall level of discounts obtained by the Travel Office is heavily dependent upon the annual volume of its business, this is discouraged.
- In cases of reimbursement, the traveler must provide the below to the Controller's Office to get his/her money back:
 - Boarding pass
 - Ticket
 - Proof of payment for the ticket
 - Offer provided by the Travel Office that is higher in price than the actual ticket
- There will be no exceptions to the above mentioned procedures.

Faculty Support Grants Travel:

- Faculty members apply to the Office of the Provost for Faculty Support Grants. Successful applicants for Faculty Support Grants will receive a letter from the Provost Office with their entitled amount for the air ticket.
- The Office of the Provost liaises directly with the Travel Office to obtain a quotation for the cost of travel. Quotations are provided using the cheapest best available rate.
- The Travel Office will provide the traveler with the best available, convenient offer on economy class for the granted destination and dates identified in the grant letter. In the case of any additional preference, the traveler should pay the difference in price.
- Faculty traveling under sponsored programs must complete a Travel Authorization form.
- Travel dates of the conference that should be covered by the University are one day before the starting day of the conference and one day after its completion. Any extension before or after that will be covered by the traveler if there is any price change.
- Conference grant travel can be reimbursed at 100 percent of actual cost based on purchased tickets given that the traveler managed to get a cheaper ticket than that was offered by the Travel Office. He/she should provide the below to process the reimbursement:
 - Boarding pass
 - Ticket
 - Proof of payment for the ticket
 - Offer provided by the Travel Office that is higher in price than the actual ticket
- There will be no exceptions to the above mentioned procedures.

Home Leave Travel:

- All foreign faculty members, and their dependents, that are entitled for home leave tickets need to complete and submit the Home Leave form in which the applicant confirms dates and destination of travel, eligibility for home leave and the point of origin stated in his/ her letter of appointment.
- Children above 21 years old are not entitled for home leave tickets except the ones who are full time students with a maximum age of 25 years old.

- The deadline to submit this form is mid-May in order to be able to get the best available, cheapest, convenient options.
- Home Leave requests for relocated faculty and administrators are approved by the relevant Dean of his/her school.
- The Dean's Office will review options for confirming and tracking Home Leave destinations.
- Those eligible for Home Leave, including qualifying dependents, are entitled travel only to their designated Home Leave city.
- All home leave tickets, except for entitled employees, should be issued on the cheapest, best available, convenient economy class option.
- In case the traveler needs to change destination, route, airline or upgrade ticket's class, AUC will cover the cost of the cheapest, convenient economy cost to their original home leave destination only. Any additional cost will be paid by him/her.
- Any change after the ticket issuance should be paid by the traveler unless it is justified by the University.
- All home leave tickets should be issued via the Travel Office.
- Cash payment in lieu of tickets will not be offered.
- If the traveler elects to book outside the Travel Office, She/he must present:
 - Ticket
 - Boarding pass
 - Proof of payment
 - Offer from the Travel Office that is higher in price than the actual one.
- There will be no exceptions to the above mentioned procedures.

Sabbatical Travel:

- Faculty entitled to Sabbatical Travel must complete a Travel Authorization form and submit it to the Provost's Office for approval.
- The Travel Office then purchases tickets that comply with the authorized travel schedule, normally using the cheapest available, convenient option.
- For relocated faculty, sabbatical travel will be combined with home leave. In case of full-year leave, the relocated faculty member will select to have his/her combined travel at the beginning or end of his/her sabbatical, and will inform the Provost in writing of his or her decision before the beginning of the sabbatical.
- For one year sabbaticals, tickets are purchased on the basis of the cost of a one-year return ticket.

Final Departure Travel:

- The Area Head or the Provost's Office provides the relocated-hire and qualifying dependents with a one-way ticket from Egypt to his/her country.
- The Travel Office will issue first arrival tickets based on the cheapest, best available, convenient economy fare for all faculty and staff, and on business fare for entitled employees mentioned earlier.

- If the traveler prefers specific route, airline, or class that costs higher than the offer provided by the Travel Office, he/she has the option of selecting this preference and paying the differential amount.

Sponsored Grants Travel:

- Faculty traveling under sponsored grants must complete a Travel Authorization form. If the traveler is subordinate to the Principal Investigator of the grant, the form must be approved by both the Principal Investigator and the Grants Manager in the Controller's Office. If the Principal Investigator is traveling, the form must be approved by both the relevant Dean and the Grants Manager in the Controller's Office.
- All tickets that will be paid from grant money should be refundable tickets.
- Refund and change penalties are not paid by the grant cost unless it is justified and approved by the Grant's Office.
- Sponsored Grants travel is bound by the rules and regulations for such travel contained in the grant agreement. In the absence of any such rules and regulations, the traveler is subject to the conditions applying to Business Travel with the following additional restrictions and points to note:
 - No Business Class travel will be permitted without the prior written authorization of the granting agency.
 - The cost of travel must not exceed the budget stipulated in the grant agreement (a cost overrun is permitted up to the ceiling normally permitted by the granting agency in question and subject to the transfer of funds from other budget lines. If no such flexibility is permitted, any anticipated excess cost must be approved in writing by the granting agency prior to the date of travel).
 - If the traveler is able to procure the ticket at a price cheaper than the best price obtained by the Travel Office, the traveler may purchase from such alternative source and seek reimbursement from the University upon submission of a valid receipt, copy of the ticket, and boarding pass.
 - Travel dates of the conference that should be covered by the University are one day before the starting day of the conference and one day after its completion. Any extension before or after that will be covered by the traveler if there is any price change.

Externally Funded Travel (Sponsored Programs)

- This refers to the travel costs which are paid for or reimbursed by a sponsoring agency or grantor. Such travel is subject to the rules and regulations imposed by both the grantor and the University.
- Faculty traveling under sponsored programs **MUST** complete a Travel Authorization form; the Travel Office will **NOT** process requests **NOT** submitted using a duly signed Travel Authorization form.

- It is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to indicate clearly on all Travel Authorization forms submitted if the travel service requested is externally funded by a sponsored program or not.
- All Travel Authorization forms prepared for non-local travel service (outside Egypt) **MUST** be approved by the Principal Investigator, the relevant Dean (for Faculty PIs) or VP (non-faculty PIs) and the Grants Manager in the Controller's Office.
- The signatures of the Dean or the VPs are not required for local travel services unless the service will be rendered to the PI.
- Externally funded travel is bound by the rules and regulations for such travel contained in the grant agreement. In the absence of any such rules and regulations, the traveler is subject to the conditions regarding to AUC Travel policies, with the following additional restrictions and points to note:
 - **FEDERAL** travel follows different guidelines from the University's. Air travel must be on US carriers.
 - No Business Class travel will be permitted without the prior written authorization of the granting agency.
 - The cost of travel must not exceed the budget stipulated in the grant agreement. A cost overrun is permitted up to the ceiling normally permitted by the granting agency in question and subject to the transfer of funds from other budget lines allowed in the Award Summary distributed by the Office of Sponsored Programs. If no such flexibility is permitted, any anticipated excess cost must be approved in writing by the granting agency prior to the date of travel.
 - Travel services **NOT** purchased through AUC Travel Office will **NOT** be reimbursed.

Requesting an External Funded Travel Service

- 1- The **PI** will contact the Travel Office by e-mail to request an estimated cost of the service required. The **PI** shall include in the email relevant dates, type of service requested, destination, etc.
- 2- The **Travel Office** will provide the estimated cost of service requested by the **PI**.
- 3- In case of group travel, group names and a rooming list must be provided with the Travel Authorization form.
- 4- PI fills a Travel Authorization form (attached).
The Travel Authorization form must clearly indicate the following:
 - a. Estimated cost of service obtained from the **Travel Office** as per Point #1 above.
 - b. Type of funding: AUC funds or externally funded (Federal or Non-Federal)
 - c. WBS numbers
 - d. SAP trip number
 - e. Itinerary
 - f. Duration of the travel
 - g. Personnel name and number
- 5- The PI shall route the completed Travel Authorization form for approvals. Signatures are required in the following order:
 - a. **PI**

- b. The relevant Dean (for Faculty **PIs**) or VP (non-faculty **PIs**). *The Signatures of the Dean or the VPs are not required for local travel services unless the service will be rendered to the PI.*
 - c. Director, Grants Accounting, in the Controller's Office. Required minimum time of Time span: one working day
- 6- The PI shall submit the completed Travel Authorization Form to the **Travel Office**

- 7- The **Travel Office** shall send to the **PI** a confirmation of the service requested within two working days

Note:

- The Travel Office will **NOT** process requests **NOT** submitted using a duly signed Travel Authorization form.
- Travel services **NOT** purchased through AUC Travel Office will **NOT** be reimbursed.

Student Travel

Tickets for student travel whose costs are covered in full from University funds must be purchased through the Travel Office. At least two weeks prior to the intended date of travel, the responsible department or unit must notify the Travel Office in writing of the dates of travel, the planned itinerary, and the planned number of persons traveling. All travelers should provide passport copies.

When travel costs are covered only in part from University funds, the responsible department or unit is free to solicit quotations from airlines or authorized travel agents of its choice. The following procedures, however, must be observed:

- a) All student trips should be organized through the Travel Office.

- b) In case the department receives a better offer from an agent outside of the Travel Office, they can proceed with it directly in case under the supervision of the Travel Office to secure our Students rights .
 - b) The request for a quotation shall be sent in writing to each selected airline or agent from whom a quotation is requested no less than one month before the anticipated date of travel,
 - c) Requests for quotation shall be sent to no less than three agents or airlines.
 - d) The Travel Office must be one of the parties requested to provide a quotation.
 - e) The request must specify that the quotation is to be submitted in writing.
 - f) The request must specify the deadline by which the responsible department is to receive the quotation.
 - g) If, upon receiving quotations, the responsible department wishes to enter into a further round of price negotiation, each company that provided a quotation must have the opportunity to revise its quotation (the revision must be in writing), and the same revised deadline must be given to each company.
 - h) The responsible department will be expected to choose the cheapest quotation. If the cheapest quotation is not acceptable, a memorandum of justification for selecting another quotation must be submitted to the Business Office.
 - i) When presenting the Manual Warrant for payment through the Controller's Office, all quotations received should be attached, together with the initial requests for quotation including the one they got from the Travel Office. If the quotation selected was not the cheapest, a copy of the justification should also be attached. If the Travel Office offer was not included, it is the responsibility of the Controller's Office to stop the payment.
 - j) If the quotation selected was not the one provided by the Travel Office, a written justification should be provided to the Controller's Office otherwise the payment will not be processed.
- For every 15 paid participants, the cost of 1 chaperone only **MUST** be fully covered by the Travel agent including accommodation and airfare (except for Visa fees, which can be covered by AUC)
 - The rate for all trips **MUST** be calculated and paid to the Travel Agent in Egyptian Pounds (EGP). The university will not pay in any currency other than EGP, using the official bank exchange rate for purchases denominated in other currencies.
 - Accommodation **MUST** be in at least a 3 star hotel in a safe area with good reviews.
 - A WBS **MUST** be created for each trip if students are paying partial or full cost of the trip.
 - Hotel stay **MUST** be in Single/Double (Twin Beds), or Triple rooms (no Quadruple rooms or 1 King size bed in Double rooms is accepted).
 - Travel Insurance and Visa Costs can be calculated separately for each trip.
- k) In case of force majeure, in origin or destination countries, a full refund shall be given by the travel agency.

For payment, Travel agent will be paid as follows:

1. **40%** of total trip cost will be paid upon contracts signatures along with the following documents:
 - **Copy of pro-forma invoice including the cost and the offer presented.**
 - **Original Travel authorization**
 - **Original signed contract**
 - **In the case of new vendor, a photocopy of the Tax Card and Commercial Register.**

2. **40%** of total trip cost will be paid upon receiving visas on passports, in case of international trips, or 10 days before the travelling date, in case of domestic trips.
 - **Copy of travel authorization**
 - **Copy of signed contract**
 - **Copy of pro-forma invoice**

3. **20%** remaining trip cost will be paid after arrival along with the following documents:
 - **Original stamped invoice**
 - **Copies of all payment receipts from students**
 - **Copies of travel authorization, air/train tickets, visas, and hotel confirmation voucher**

Personal Travel:

- Faculty, administrators, students, and staff are kindly requested to send an e-mail to the Travel Office specifying their travel needs, names, dates, and other pertinent information.
- The Travel Office will check the request and prepare alternative reservations and prices of flights, cruises, guides...etc. so that well informed and convenient choices can be made.
- The Travel Office will send their response via e-mail within 2 working days upon receiving the request.

Payment for Personal Travel:

- Credit and debit cards are accepted in the Travel Office with an extra 2% bank charge.
- The Travel Office is not permitted to handle cash.
- If the customer prefers to pay in cash, he/she is kindly requested to follow the following steps:
- Deposit the full price of ticket in CIB and submit the payment receipt to the Travel Office.
- In case of any emergency, the amount will be charged to the individual's receivables and followed up for collection or deducted from the following month's payroll.
- There will be no exceptions to the above mentioned procedures.

Combining of Business Travel & Personal Travel:

- An employee on Business Travel is free to add travel on their personal account to the trip, provided appropriate approval has been obtained for such additional absence from the University.
- In respect of such personal travel, the Travel Office will seek payment from the employee for the difference between the cost of the business trip ticket and the actual cost that he/she prefers.

Frequent Flyer Miles:

- Travel Office is willing to use Frequent Flyer miles as a means of procuring tickets for personal travel, although it is not normally appropriate to use this means of settlement for acquisition of tickets required in connection with Business Travel.
- An employee on business travel has the right to use Frequent Flyer Miles for the procurement of the required ticket(s), but the University will not be liable to reimburse the employee a sum greater than the cheapest best available economy class ticket.
- In case the cost of the upgradable economy class is higher than the cost of the cheapest economy class, the employee must pay the difference between what the University will pay and the amount charged for the upgradable classes in order to upgrade his/her ticket using his/her frequent flyer miles.
- There will be no exceptions to the above mentioned procedures.

Ticket Refunds:

- The Travel Office will negotiate ticket refunds only in respect of tickets that have been purchased through the Travel Office.
- Depending on the fare basis under which a ticket was issued, it should be noted that an unutilized ticket, or travel segment, may not necessarily give rise to any refund from the airline.
- It should further be noted that obtaining reimbursement for unutilized tickets can be a lengthy process; one should normally count on receiving credit after months, rather than weeks, from the date of application for refund.

Travel Budgets and Fiscal Year End:

- The University's fiscal year runs from July 1st to June 30th. Generally accepted accounting principles require that expenses be recognized in the period in which they are incurred.
- Any business trip that will be during the second half of July will be counted towards the budget of the new-year with the exception of Home Leave travel, first arrival travel and final departure travel, and faculty support grant travel.

Meet and Assist Service:

- Meet and assist service is provided for faculty, administrators and staff, as well as nonEgyptian students coming to Cairo airport.
- Meet and assist service is not provided for travelers who hold Egyptian passports.
- The department has to contact the Travel Office that will act as a focal point between the agent and the department.
- Payment for business meet and assist request, fund reservation will be done and an original signed Travel Authorization form should be handed to the Travel Office.
- For personal meet and assist service, payment will be arranged by cash deposits in the bank or bank transfers then submitting the receipt to the Travel Office.
- This service is provided only upon first arrival; that is to say, non-Egyptian students who subsequently leave the country and return to resume their studies are not eligible to be met.

Transportation:

- Transportation requests should be submitted to the Carpool Office via this e-mail: carpool@aucegypt.edu
- In case the Carpool Office cannot fulfill the service, the request can be directed to the Travel Office to be handled.

Travel Office New System:

- A traveler profile should be filled once by the traveler to make sure that all data are accurate and updated.
- This new automated system will be the only tool for submitting all personal and business travel requests.
- All signatures that are currently obtained on a hard copy of the Travel Authorization form will be automated. Once the person authorized to sign the Travel Authorization form approves the offer, it will be automatically sent to the Travel Office for completion.

Per Diem:

- Per Diem is the money given to all staff members as they travel on business trips to cover their hotel and/or food expenses. This will be announced as a circular by the Provost Office at the beginning of every academic year. This will help staff to know their entitlement for money in each country.
- Per Diem checks for all business trips are handled through the Controller's Office.

Forms/Instructions

To submit any travel request, please use the following link:

<https://www4.aucegypt.edu/travelrequest/>

Related Information

Home Leave Form: <https://forms.aucegypt.edu/provost/homeleave.html>

[International Per Diem Rates](#)

[Local Per Diem Rates](#)

Appendices *(optional)*

The Process that the Travel and Business Support followed in qualifying the University Travel Agents:

- 1- A market study was done in the process of searching for the best Travel Agents available.
- 2- Our criteria was both professional services and cost effectiveness.
- 3- A short list was done including the best clearing agents.
- 4- Short list candidates were then asked to submit a portfolio in order to be checked in terms of the top clients that they deal with.
- 5- A cross reference check was done to contact their clients and take feedback on their quality of service.
- 6- Based on this feedback, we decided to choose three travel agents for a trial period of three months before putting a contract in place.
- 7- The work load was distributed between those agents to check their performance using a log for three months.
- 8- After this trial period, we had a staff/ Management meeting for final evaluations of shortlisted travel agents.

- 9- Based on the above process, we decided to move forward and sign contracts with the three based on the best and cost effective services they provided.
- 10- The contracts will be valid for one year. Before renewal, we will evaluate the performance by doing a survey with all our clients to hear their feedback about the services offered to them.
- 11- Based on this survey, we will decide whether to renew the contract or not.

History/Revision Dates

Origination Date: October, 2011

Last Amended Date: December, 2016

Next Review Date: December, 2017