

To: UOIT Research Community
From: Greg Edwards, Manager – Research and Trust Accounting
Re: Travel requirements: externally funded research
Date: September 23, 2016

A few researchers have recently asked for clarity with respect to what documentation is required to support travel claims charged to externally funded research (e.g. tri-agency grants). While the requirements are not new – it is important to have a fulsome explanation of what documentation is required and why. This memo seeks to provide that clarity. These requirements and this document are also available on the Research Accounting [website](#), which provides a significant amount of information on expense requirements.

Overall comments

The requirements to support travel claims are primarily driven by the tri-agency [guidelines](#) and UOIT [policy](#). These guidelines tend to be at a ‘high-level’ and do not provide a significant details regarding interpretation; however, UOIT (and other institutions) has engaged the tri-agency in discussions, the results of which are the bases of the clarification(s) below. It is important that researchers understand that the requirements of Research Accounting are generally based on these externally imposed requirements.

The tri-agency has recently stated that travel claims are a [high-risk](#) area. Presumably this view is based on the review, or audit, of other institutions. UOIT has not had a tri-agency audit; however, we are told to expect one in the short term. To ensure a positive result regarding travel expenses, it is critical that we have all necessary documentation. Research Accounting reviews all travel claims and will liaise with researchers to obtain any missing documentation. Part of a tri-agency audit may include interviews and discussions with researchers – which may include a discussion of the nature of expenditures.

*Please note that if you are using the Concur expense process, that you can attach supporting documentation and provide additional comments. The BMO credit card reporting system also allows claimants to provide additional explanation.

Specific requirements

The following tri-agency requirements are areas where Research Accounting often has to make additional enquiries to researchers before obtaining the required documentation.

Purpose of trip and relevance to research grant

Funders need to understand how travel relates to funded research. Researchers should provide 1-2 sentences describing the purpose and relevance of the travel to the project or research program in order to fulfill this requirement. Note that Research Accounting would, almost without exception, not question the legitimacy of travel, however that will likely be part of the tri-agency audit. For the most part the questions asked by Research Accounting are to pursue a fulsome description of purpose and relevance. For example, stating ‘conference travel’ or ‘research meeting’ is not sufficient and will result in request for additional commentary.

Example of good practice: Attended [conference name; location; dates] to present 3 posters on research supported by [name of grant ...]. This conference is the international venue to meet researchers and discuss research issues/results in the area of ...

Dates and destinations

This information is needed to understand the overall trip and validate other requirements such as meal reimbursements and accommodation. When travelling for a conference, allowable travel costs include those associated with arrival 1 day before and departure the day after the conference. The destination is usually substantiated by source documentation such as flight itinerary or hotel bill. When travel involves multiple destinations and/or multiple meetings, it is important to identify the location by date. Costs associated with extended travel for personal reasons are not eligible.

Documentation to support conference attendance and other travel

Funding agencies have asked to have on file, for conference related travel, documentation to support attendance. This may include: a conference badge, certificate of attendance, conference program or prospectus listing the claimant as a presenter/chair. This is to allow the tri-agency to verify (a) the nature of the conference, and (b) that the conference was attended.

Documentation is also required to support travel for research meetings with a collaborator. This may include but is not limited to a meeting agenda, email correspondence with the collaborator regarding the meeting.

Detailed receipts for daily expenses

Detailed receipts are required to support all daily expenses. This applies to all daily expenditures – with the exception of per diem claims (if eligible). This includes hotel invoices, rental vehicle invoices, and meal costs. The key point is that, aside from per diem claims, detailed receipts are needed– rather than just a credit card slip or ‘top copy’ that shows the total charge. Note that the [UOIT expense policy](#) discusses use and amount of per diems.

Boarding passes (where available)

The tri-agency requires the original air travel ticket receipt and boarding passes (if available). We understand that this requirement is primarily to ensure that the air travel is at the lowest rate available, which cannot exceed full economy fare. This longstanding requirement to provide boarding passes pre-dates boarding passes being sent to mobile devices.

If you have a paper boarding pass, please include it with the claim. If your boarding pass(es) is (are) sent to a mobile device or, please include it with the claim. If a boarding pass is not available, state this on your claim as an attestation that the flight was taken, otherwise Research Accounting will follow up to obtain such.

We hope that the above clarifies some of the questions regarding the requirements related to travel expenditures charged to external research grants. In addition to the requirements set out by the [tri-agency](#), the [UOIT expense policy and procedures](#) are to be applied. Questions or comments related to expenses charged to research grants should be directed to Simonette Wood (simonette.wood@uoit.ca) or Sue Brown (susanne.brown@uoit.ca).