

**Policy Name:** Air Transportation

**Policy Owner:** Accounts Payable & Travel

**Policy Contact:** Laura Jamison, Director of Accounts Payable & Travel

**Reviewed By:** Accounts Payable & Travel, Executive Director of Procurement and Business Services, Interim Executive Vice President of Administration and Finance.

**Policy Steering Committee Approval:** August 2025

**Policy Purpose:** This policy outlines requirements for air transportation for employees, and non-employees travelling on behalf of Georgia Tech. This policy update is to align with State Accounting Office policy and University System of Georgia - Business Procedures Manual, and in response to Department of Internal Audit findings.

**Summary of Substantive Policy Changes:**

- Page 1, Articulated the requirement to utilize Georgia Tech's travel management company for air transportation.
- Page 2 - 3 Clarified requirements and exemptions for First Class and Business Class air fare.
- Page 2 - 3, Outlined justification and documentation requirements for First Class and Business Class air fare.
- Page 5, Updated policy to align with State Accounting Policy for advance booking requirements.
- Page 6, Clarified requirements for accessing and utilizing Direct Billing for employees and non-employees travelling on behalf of Georgia Tech.
- Page 8, Clarified Expense Preparer responsibilities.



# Georgia Institute of Technology

## Air Transportation

Policy No. 6.6

Type of Policy: Administrative

Last Revised: December 2020

Policy Owner: Accounts Payable

Policy Contact: Laura Jamison, Director of Accounts Payable & Travel,  
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### 1. Reason for Policy

The purpose of this policy is to outline air transportation requirements to Georgia Tech employees and non-employees traveling on official business in compliance with University System of Georgia, State Accounting Office and Georgia Tech travel policies.

### 2. Policy Statement

Travel by an air carrier for employees and non-employees (official guests, visitors, students, and independent contractors who travel on behalf of Georgia Tech) must be in the most cost-effective manner and utilize the lowest possible coach fares consistent with scheduling requirements, unless cost exceptions meet the requirements outlined in this Policy. Air travel must be booked through Georgia Tech's travel management company.

Non-employees traveling on behalf of Georgia Tech must adhere to all applicable Institute travel policies, including requirements for cost-effectiveness, documentation, and pre-approval, where required. The use of Georgia Tech's designated travel management company is also mandated for non-employees. An exception to this requirement is allowed for official Georgia Tech student organizations when air travel is funded using Custodial Funds and the traveler is not an employee. In these cases, the use of the travel management company is not required. Units coordinating non-employee travel are responsible for ensuring compliance with all relevant travel-related policies and for maintaining documentation that supports the business purpose, cost reasonableness, and alignment with funding source restrictions.

### Justification and Supporting Documentation

A cost comparison is required for higher-class seating to ensure the most economical airfare is selected at the time of booking, unless the chosen fare meets one of the exceptions outlined in the Business Class Airfare or First-Class Airfare sections below. Justification is required when selecting higher-class airfare such as business class, premium select, business select, first class, and comfort, etc.

### **Business Class Airfare**

Business Class Airfare, using State funds or other Georgia Tech funds (unless specifically restricted) regardless of the funding source, is only permissible in the following circumstances with appropriate Spend Authorization approval:

- For international flights and U.S. routes of 10 hours or more with appropriate travel authority approvals.
- Domestic flights to Alaska and Hawaii.
- There is no other space available on the needed flight (supporting documentation from a travel agency must be included with the travel reimbursement request).
- When a Traveler has a certified medical condition that necessitates specific air travel arrangements, a licensed medical practitioner must provide documentation confirming that the Traveler's mental or physical condition requires such accommodations. It is the Traveler's responsibility to obtain and submit this certification to their unit. The documentation should also indicate the expected duration of the condition's impact on travel needs. Supporting medical documentation must be retained by the department in accordance with the University System of Georgia's records retention schedule: [https://www.usg.edu/records\\_management/schedules](https://www.usg.edu/records_management/schedules). A licensed medical practitioner certifies that because of a person's mental or physical condition, specific air travel arrangements are required. It is the responsibility of Georgia Tech officials to obtain necessary medical certifications for any employee that requires special air travel arrangements due to a medical condition. Information should also be obtained specifying the expected length of time such condition would have an impact on travel needs. Supporting documentation must be retained within the department.

These exceptions are required to be noted, approved in advance and must be reviewed and approved ~~noted~~ in the Spend Authorization.

### **First Class Airfare**

First Class air-travel, regardless of the funding source, is only permissible ~~if approved~~, in the following circumstances:

- There is no other space available on the needed flight (supporting documentation from a travel agency must be included with the travel reimbursement request).
- ~~When a Traveler has a certified medical condition that necessitates specific air travel arrangements, a licensed medical practitioner must provide documentation confirming that the Traveler's mental or physical condition requires such accommodations. It is the Traveler's responsibility to obtain and submit this certification to their unit. The documentation should also indicate the expected duration of the condition's impact on travel needs. Supporting medical documentation must be retained by the department in accordance with the University System of Georgia's records retention schedule: [https://www.usg.edu/records\\_management/schedules](https://www.usg.edu/records_management/schedules). A licensed medical practitioner certifies that because of a person's mental or physical condition, specific air travel arrangements are required. It is the responsibility of Georgia Tech officials to obtain necessary medical certifications for any employee that requires special air travel arrangements due to a medical condition. Information should also be obtained specifying the expected length of time such condition would have an impact on travel needs. Supporting documentation must be retained within the department.~~
- The Commissioner of Public Safety certifies that specific air travel arrangements are necessary for security reasons.  
~~For international flights with appropriate travel authority approvals (please see First/Business Class Airfare – International Travel section below).~~
- Occasions may arise when airlines overbook, change, delay or cancel flights, thereby imposing travel inconveniences on their passengers. In these instances, airlines often offer the affected passengers indemnification for these inconveniences. Examples of indemnification that may be offered by an airline include vouchers for meals or lodging, upgrades to non-coach travel to include First Class, and credits toward future flight costs. State employees

are authorized to accept such indemnification if the travel inconvenience was imposed by the airline and there is no additional cost to the state.

These exceptions are required to be noted, approved in advance and must be noted reviewed and approved in the Spend Authorization.

#### **~~First / Business Class Airfare – International Travel~~**

~~In certain circumstances, Georgia Tech Foundation (GTF) funds, Georgia Tech Research Corporation (GTRC) funds, Georgia Tech Applied Research Corporation (GTARC) funds or sponsored funds may permit reimbursement or direct payment of first/business class airfare for international travel, with appropriate travel authority approvals, that is not reimbursable with State funds.~~

#### **~~Business Class Airfare with Georgia Tech Foundation (GTF) Funds~~**

~~Business class airfare for international flights that are pre-approved by the appropriate unit officer in accordance with Georgia Tech's Authorization of Travel policy may be processed through Georgia Tech using GTF funds. An expense report is used for reimbursement with appropriate receipts and approvals. Direct billing is available through the Georgia Tech's travel management company.~~

~~Direct reimbursement through the Georgia Tech Foundation is an exception that must be approved by the President, Executive Vice President for Administration and Finance, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs or Executive Vice President for Research.~~

#### **~~Business Class Airfare with Georgia Tech Research Corporation (GTRC) or Georgia Tech Applied Research Corporation (GTARC) Funds~~**

~~Business class airfare for international flights that are pre-approved by the appropriate unit officer in accordance with Georgia Tech's Authorization of Travel policy may be processed directly through Georgia Tech using GTRC, GTARC, or sponsored project funds, if these funds specifically allow the use of business class airfare for international travel. Direct billing is also available through the Georgia Tech's travel management company.~~

#### **Airline Frequent Flyer Programs**

Travelers may retain loyalty and frequent flyer program benefits. However, participation in these programs must not influence flight selection, which would result in incremental cost to Georgia Tech beyond the lowest available airfare, as defined in the policy. Georgia Tech does not reimburse for the value of any rewards or benefits used by Travelers from loyalty programs.

#### **Payment of Airfare**

Travel expenses are reimbursed upon completion of the trip and submission of an approved expense report. Airfare can be direct billed to Georgia Tech through

Georgia Tech's travel management company. In either case, an itinerary showing the dates of travel, seat assignment, method of payment, including purchase price and receipt must be presented when submitting an expense report. Airfare reimbursements involving study abroad, student group travel and extended research/employment assignments may be reimbursed prior to the trip under certain circumstances. ~~Requests to be reimbursed prior to the trip must include the following documentation:-~~

~~Explanation for using a travel agency other than Georgia Tech's travel management company; and~~

~~Price quotes from Georgia Tech's travel management company and the travel agency from which the tickets were purchased.—~~

### **Advance Booking**

Once travel dates have been confirmed, when practical all flights should be booked at least 14 days, but no more than 30 days in advance. Flights booked within 30 days of travel help manage cash flow and reduce the risk of potential change fees and administrative costs related to any subsequent change in travel plans.

Flights booked with less than 14 days advanced purchase are more expensive and require that a written explanation for the booking delay be provided to the spend authorization approver.

Learn more about advance booking here:

[https://procurement.gatech.edu/faq?field\\_category\\_target\\_id=13](https://procurement.gatech.edu/faq?field_category_target_id=13)

### **Access and Direct Billing of Airfare for All Travelers**

~~Georgia Tech has an agreement with a travel management company (Travel Inc.) to arrange for the prepayment of air travel for Travelers. Travelers must obtain approval to direct bill prior to reserving airline tickets. Applicable forms are located on the forms webpage of the Procurement & Business Services website at <https://procurement.gatech.edu/travel/forms>. Please refer to the Travel web page located on the Procurement & Business Services website for further details.~~

Georgia Tech has Direct Billing payment arrangements with the Georgia Tech's travel management company~~State of Georgia contract travel agency.~~

~~Use of the State contracted travel agency is required mandatory. Employees and non-employees (official guests, visitors, students, and independent contractors who travel on behalf of Georgia Tech) must book the most cost-effective airfare, via the State contracted travel agency.~~

~~The state~~State-contracted travel agencyGeorgia Tech's travel management company ensures Georgia Tech travelers receive the best-most cost effective rates through exclusive discounts. Employees must request access to Concur, Georgia Tech's travel ~~agency platform~~management company platform, by submitting the [Concur Travel Access Form](#) and [Recurring Direct Bill Airfare for Employees Form](#) via [ServiceNow-Expenses](#).

~~Non-employees do not have access to Concur directly. The department coordinating the travel arrangements is responsible for booking travel on their behalf through the Georgia Tech's travel management company~~State-contracted travel agency. The [Single Trip Direct Bill Airfare Form](#) is required for non-employee travelers.

Contact information for ~~the Georgia Tech's travel management company current state-contracted travel agency~~ can be found at: [Travel Resources](#).

### **Direct Billing of Airfare for Students/Visitors**

~~The direct billing of airfare is available for official guests, visitors, students, and independent contractors who travel on behalf of Georgia Tech. The department is to contact Georgia Tech's travel management company to make the travel arrangements for the direct billing. Approval to travel must be obtained prior to booking reservations for any airline ticket. Please refer to the Travel web page located on the Procurement & Business Services website for further details.~~

### **Refunds**

Travelers must not accept refunds for airline tickets unless they have personally paid for the tickets. Refunds for tickets issued by Georgia Tech's travel management company and charged to Georgia Tech must be refunded directly to Georgia Tech. A credit will be applied to the original department's account used to purchase the ticket. Travelers that receive payment or reimbursement for air-fare from a third-party, sponsor, or conference, must not seek reimbursement for airfare from Georgia Tech. If the Traveler is reimbursed for an airline ticket after the Traveler has been reimbursed by Georgia Tech, the Traveler must write a personal check (made payable to Georgia Tech) in the amount of the ticket reimbursement and send it along with a copy of the expense report summary sheet to Accounts Payable, Mail Code 0253. Accounts Payable will deposit the funds back into the appropriate department account.

### **Private Aircraft**

The use of aircraft owned, rented, or operated by a traveler on Georgia Tech business is strongly discouraged. If it is determined that the use of this type of aircraft is advantageous to Georgia Tech, an explanation must be noted in the comments section of the expense report. The use of private aircraft is subject to prior approval by the Dean, Director, or Department Head and must be specifically noted on the

spend authorization. In the comments section of the Employee Travel Expense Report the employee should add the following comment "traveled by private aircraft" and provide the registration number of the aircraft and mileage as calculated from U.S. Department of Transportation website.

Transportation expenses for the use of private aircraft will be at the mileage reimbursement rate determined by the U. S General Services Administration (GSA). Mileage rates are only changed upon notification from the State Accounting Office. New rates are not applied based solely on GSA updates.

Lodging and meal expenses en route will not be reimbursed if the expenses are a direct result of the decision to take a personal aircraft, rather than commercial aircraft.

If a Traveler opts to use a personal aircraft when use of commercial aircraft would be the most economical and cost effective for Georgia Tech, the Traveler will be reimbursed up to the value of the commercial airfare (lowest coach fare) as quoted by Georgia Tech's travel management company.

#### **Transaction Fees / Service Fees**

The transaction or service fees associated with booking airfare are authorized items for reimbursement. [Learn more via the Miscellaneous Travel Expenses Policy.](#) ~~Additionally, baggage fees, change fees, etc. associated with official business are reimbursable.~~

#### **Fly America Act**

[All air travel reimbursed from federally funded awards must comply with the Fly America Act \(49 U.S.C. § 40118\), as well as applicable provisions in 2 CFR 200.475 – Travel Costs. The Fly America Act requires that travelers use U.S. flag air carriers for both domestic and international air travel funded by federal grants, cooperative agreements, or contracts. A U.S. flag air carrier is defined as an airline that holds a certificate under 49 U.S.C. § 41102 and is authorized by the U.S. Department of Transportation to provide scheduled air service under its own code.](#)

[This requirement applies to:](#)

- [• Any individuals whose air travel is paid with federal fundsU.S federal employees,](#)
- [• Grant and contract recipients,](#)
- [• Subrecipients, cConsultants, and other contractors, and subrecipients,](#)
- [• U.S federal employees.Any individuals whose air travel is paid with federal funds.](#)

[All federally funded travel must comply with the U.S. "Fly America Act" \(49 U.S.C. 40118\). The Fly America Act mandates the use of U.S. flag carriers for federally](#)



~~funded international travel to / from the United States. This includes United States federal employees, their dependents, consultant, contractors, and others.~~

### 3. Scope

This policy applies to all employees (students, faculty, and staff) and non-employees (students, official guests, and visitors) travelling on behalf of Georgia Tech.

### 4. Enforcement

Travelers who are in violation of this Policy are at risk of not receiving reimbursement for travel expenses.

### 5. Responsibilities

#### **Traveler**

The Traveler is responsible for ensuring appropriate travel authorization, supporting documentation and appropriate approval is obtained prior to the first day of travel.

Travelers are also responsible for verifying appropriate travel class is reserved, and for ensuring any personal or external professional activities have been excluded from the reimbursement.

#### **Expense Preparer**

An expense preparer may book travel reservations on behalf of the Traveler and is responsible for ensuring appropriate spend authorization and all required supporting documentation is obtained prior to the first day of travel. ~~The expense preparer is also responsible for ensuring appropriate travel class is reserved and for ensuring the traveler excludes any personal or external professional activities from the reimbursement.~~

#### **Approvers**

Managers and supervisors, or their delegates, are responsible for:

- Verifying the business purpose of the trip;
- Verifying the trip is allowable;
- Verifying the reasonableness of the cost of the trip;
- Verifying the travel class is compliant with Georgia Tech and USG policies;
- Verifying all required supporting documentation is submitted.

## 6. Related Information

Resource	Link
Georgia Tech Travel Authorization Policy	<a href="https://policylibrary.gatech.edu/business-finance/authorization-travel">https://policylibrary.gatech.edu/business-finance/authorization-travel</a>
Georgia Tech Travel	<a href="http://www.procurement.gatech.edu/travel/forms">http://www.procurement.gatech.edu/travel/forms</a>
USG Policy 7.6 Travel	<a href="https://www.usg.edu/policymanual/section7/C466">https://www.usg.edu/policymanual/section7/C466</a>
USG Business Procedures 4.6 Air Travel and Other Public Transportation	<a href="https://www.usg.edu/business_procedures_manual/section4/C1189/#p4.6.1_air_travel">https://www.usg.edu/business_procedures_manual/section4/C1189/#p4.6.1_air_travel</a>
USG Business Procedures Manual	<a href="https://www.usg.edu/business_procedures_manual/section4/">https://www.usg.edu/business_procedures_manual/section4/</a>
State Accounting Office	<a href="https://sao.georgia.gov/state-travel-policy">https://sao.georgia.gov/state-travel-policy</a>

## 7. Policy History

Revision Date	Author	Description
TBD	Accounts Payable	Policy updated to require use of travel management company, clarify justification and documentation requirements, and responsibilities.
May 2025	Accounts Payable	Interim policy updates
December 2020	Accounts Payable	Updated to align with Workday implementation.
October 2017	Accounts Payable	Policy Updates.