

**BF4002 - Purchase of Meals**

**Issued:** September 23, 2016

**Responsible Official:** Executive Vice President and Chief Operating  
and Financial Officer

**Responsible Office:** Controller

**POLICIES**

---

**Policy Statement**

---

**Policy Statement**

All hospitality and special expenses, such as meals, must withstand the test of public scrutiny. University officials authorized to approve the purchase of meals should exercise prudent judgment when determining whether an expenditure is appropriate.

---

**Purpose**

---

To provide procedures for requesting and approving reimbursement for the purchase of meals and refreshments.

---

**Definitions**

---

**Business Meals**

This applies when one or more University employee(s) purchase(s) meals or refreshments for University guest(s). These provisions for guest meals do not apply when a guest will be reimbursed under regular travel procedures for meals, which s/he purchased her/himself. Business Meals include those for both the guests and University personnel in the same party.

**Employee Meals**

This includes both regular meals and refreshments for a group of University personnel when not in travel status. The incidental presence of one or more guests will not change the classification if the occasion is primarily intended for the group of employees.

**Non-Employee Group Meal** This applies when meals or refreshments are purchased for a non-employee group, such as conference participants. The incidental presence of one or more University employee(s) will not change this classification if the occasion is primarily for the non-employee group.

**Individual Meals** The purchase of individual employee meals is not an allowable expense under this procedure.

---

## Procedures

---

**Appropriateness of the Expenditure** The following principles should be used as a guide when determining the appropriateness of the expenditure:

- The expenditure must support the mission and purpose of the University.
- If for an event, the event must be an authorized official University event.
- The expenditure should not be personal in nature.
- Expenses may be incurred only for those individuals whose presence is necessary to the business discussion.
- It should be apparent to the IRS that the expenditure is not additional compensation to the claimant.
- The amount expended should be reasonable.
- University funds may not be used for the purchase of alcoholic beverages.

The President has delegated to the Department/Activity Head the authority to approve Meal Reimbursements.

**Planning** In preparing for the purchase of a group meal or arranging an event, an individual should ensure that the expenditures comply with this policy and should secure verbal approval from the approving authority.

Group meals usually require advance arrangements with the University's food service contractor Chartwells. For on campus events, all departments are required to use Chartwells, when the cost of food exceeds \$200 for faculty/staff events or \$500 for student events. If an exception is needed an [Application for Exception to Bring Food on Campus](#) needs to be approved in advance of the event and submitted along with the reimbursement/payment request.

## **Reimbursement/Payment Request**

[The Request for Meal Reimbursement form](#) must be used for the purchase of, or reimbursement for meals., Catered meals provided by Chartwells are direct billed to the department and are excluded from the use of this form.

Requests for reimbursement must be submitted, within 30 days of the event. [Requests to reimburse employees submitted](#) more than 60 days from the event may be taxable to the [employee](#). The [Request for Meal Reimbursement form](#) should identify persons served, and where possible contain individual names. For larger employee groups, a roster or participation list may be attached, where practical or a description of the group. For example. "Controller's office staff, approximately 23 individuals. Similarly, when requesting reimbursement or payment for non-employee group meals, the request should include the identification of all persons being served, but need not necessarily include specific names. Those served can be identified, for example, as "34 registered conference participants and guests," subject to, where possible, there being available for audit a roster, registration list or other information which could be used to identify the persons being served. Payment for refreshments also does not require the listing of individual names, but does require identification of the function and the estimated number of people served. The approving official is responsible for ensuring that a clear business purpose is provided along with adequate documentation to support payment that will stand the test of public scrutiny.

**Itemized receipts or invoices** must be attached and only actual costs will be reimbursed. The itemized receipt must clearly support the dollar amount, identify the vendor, and indicate payment. Gratuities will be reimbursed at a maximum of 20% of the total cost of food and non-alcoholic beverages. Reference to the number of persons served is desirable. Individual receipts for each occasion are required. The listing of "restaurant charge" on a hotel folio will not be adequate.

Approval must be by the department / activity head or designee. The name of the employee to whom reimbursement should be made must be clearly indicated. If an employee being reimbursed is a department / activity head, that employee should sign as "claimant" and one higher authority level should approve. Expenditure Account Code 74983 should be used for these charges.

The form should be submitted to the Accounting Office. Meal reimbursements cannot be made through the Bursar's Office or through any other University petty cash fund.

**Direct Billing by Chartwells.** When the Chartwells service vendor is utilized, the vendor is authorized to direct bill the department through the Accounting Office. In this situation the Request for Meal Reimbursement form is not required. Meals for authorized University events that meet the criteria for appropriate expenses, can be ordered at <https://memphiscatering.catertrax.com/>. The order will not be accepted or approved till the following information is provided:

1. Name of employee placing the order.
2. Description of the event including date, time and attendees
3. Index/FOAPAL to be charged
4. Financial Manager of the applicable department/ORG
5. Estimate, if not exact headcount

## **Other Provisions**

**Business Meals While in Travel Status.** If business meals are purchased while in travel status, the payment for the business meal will be made under this policy. The request for payment of the business meal(s) should be submitted separately on the [Request for Meal Reimbursement form](#), along with the travel claim.

**Receptions.** In some instances, the University may be required to honor a guest or employee with a reception. Reasonable costs for these receptions, as approved by the Financial Manager, may be reimbursed.

**University Business Meetings/Seminars.** Refreshments or meals may be purchased for business related extended meetings, seminars and training sessions. In all cases, compliance with the principles of Appropriateness of Expenditures must be ensured. The University may deny reimbursements for meal expenses that lack sufficient documentation or a clear business purpose.

---

## **Related Forms**

---

