

MSE Student/Postdoc/Other Expense Report Guidelines

For more helpful info, visit our [Additional Resources](#) webpage. Also, **please review the COVID-19 Addendum on page 9.**

MSE Contact for Expense Reports:

MSEReimbursements@northwestern.edu

Policies/Regulations:

[Northwestern Travel, Entertainment, and Courtesy Expense Policies](#)

[Fly America Act](#)

How to Create an Expense Report:

Persons who are paid regularly by the University are able to create their own expense reports using the [NUFinancials](#) system. (If you do not have NUFinancials access due to your status as an undergraduate, visiting scholars/predocs/postdocs, or externally funded grad student, contact MSE for visitor expense report instructions.)

Please review [How to Create an Expense in NUFinancials](#) on page 6 for step-by-step instructions on preparing expense reports in NUFinancials. If you receive errors or have questions when creating an expense report, please contact MSE.

Items Needed for a Complete Expense Report:

Please email the following items to the MSE Expense Report contact. MSE will review the items and click the submit button in NUFinancials on your behalf.

- Printout of NUFinancials Expense Report (see page 6 for instructions)
- Documentation of PI approval for travel/conference/purchase/etc. and chart string
- Printout of [MSE Student/Postdoc/Other Expense Reimbursement Form](#) (see page 5)
- Scanned receipts & additional documentation (described below)

When to Submit an Expense Report:

Please submit expense reports to MSE **within 30 days** of your return date.

Detailed Guidelines for Expense Types:

Transportation

*** See Foreign Travel section for foreign restrictions**

- Airfare
 - Receipt: provide your e-ticket receipt showing all charges
 - Expense Type: Domestic or Foreign Airfare
 - Notes:
 - You may utilize Egencia to pre-pay for your flight instead of incurring out of pocket expenses – contact MSE for more details
 - Baggage Fees – select Domestic or Foreign Airfare as the expense type
- Ground Transportation (taxi, Lyft, Uber, train, car rental)
 - Receipt: provide email receipt printout, tickets, or individual receipts
 - Write a description on the receipt (i.e. taxi from hotel to airport)
 - Expense Type: Domestic or Foreign Public Ground Transportation
 - Notes:
 - Car rentals – Northwestern will not reimburse for insurance, pre-paid gas, GPS, or other additional expenses
- Personal Auto Use
 - Receipt: provide Google Maps printout showing route origin, destination, and mileage
 - Expense Type: Domestic Private Auto Mileage
 - Notes:
 - Parking – select Domestic Tolls & Parking as the expense type

Lodging

- Hotel
 - Receipt: provide final receipt showing number of nights and total amount paid
 - Confirmation of hotel booking is not acceptable
 - Expense Type: Domestic or Foreign Hotel/Motel
 - Notes:
 - If there are incidental expenses on the hotel receipt (i.e. internet fees, meals, etc), those expenses must be separated from the hotel expenses and added as individual lines with their own unique expense type (Domestic or Foreign Incidentals)
- Shared Hotel Rooms – if you cannot pay for your own portion of the hotel room separately at time of check-out, *MSE will reimburse the person who paid for the entire hotel bill*. Follow these steps:
 - The person who paid the entire bill should include:
 - Hotel receipt
 - Names of each person who stayed in the hotel room
 - Chart strings for each person who stayed in the hotel room
 - If multiple chart strings are being used, make sure you provide a justification on the **MSE Student/Postdoc/Other Expense Reimbursement Form**

Meals

- Restaurants
 - Receipt: MUST provide itemized receipt for meal
 - Tips are reimbursable – submit the final itemized receipt including the tip
 - If you lose the itemized receipt, <\$40 fill out the MSE exception form, >\$40 fill out the MCC exception form. Please see MSE.
 - Expense Type: Domestic or Foreign Breakfast, Lunch, or Dinner
 - Notes:
 - Only pay for your portion of the meal. **Do not pay for other traveler's meals.**
 - If meals are included in the registration fee, you will not be reimbursed for outside meals
- Per Diem – *must be approved by your PI via email prior to your trip*
 - Receipt: no receipts – provide a printout of your destination's per diem rate and a printout of your PI's approval
 - <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>
 - Expense Type: Domestic or Foreign Per Diem
 - Notes:
 - Create individual lines in your expense report for each day of your trip
 - Reimbursement rates:
 - First and last days: 75% per diem rate per day
 - Remaining days of trip: up to 100% per diem rate per day
 - You need to prorate your per diem allowance if meals were included in the registration fee
 - Per Diem Example:
 - You went to LA for 4 days to present at a conference
 - Steps:
 - Look up the GSA per diem rate

Meals & Incidentals (M&IE) Breakdown ⁱ



Use this table to find the following information for federal employee travel:

M&IE Total - the full daily amount received for a single calendar day of travel when that day is neither the first nor last day of travel.

Breakfast, lunch, dinner, incidentals - Separate amounts for meals and incidentals. M&IE Total = Breakfast + Lunch + Dinner + Incidentals. Sometimes meal amounts must be deducted from trip voucher. See [More Information](#)

First & last day of travel - amount received on the first and last day of travel and equals 75% of total M&IE.

Filter Results...

Primary Destination ⁱ	County ⁱ	M&IE Total	Continental Breakfast/Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Incidental Expenses	First & Last Day of Travel ⁱ
Los Angeles	Los Angeles / Orange / Ventura / Edwards AFB less the city of Santa Monica	\$66	\$16	\$17	\$28	\$5	\$49.50

- The full rate is \$66/day, first/last day rate is \$49.50/day
- Your reimbursement will be:
 - Day 1: \$49.50
 - Day 2: \$66
 - Day 3: \$66
 - Day 4: \$49.50

Foreign Travel

- Airfare
 - If you're traveling internationally, *ask MSE for help* prior to booking flights
 - Foreign-based airline carriers are restricted on grants
 - Select a US airline carrier when using grant funds to purchase flights
 - It does not matter if a foreign-based carrier is less expensive
 - Please see the [Fly America Act](#) for more information or *ask MSE for help*
 - If code sharing, your payment must ultimately go to the US carrier, meaning your ticket must be issued by the US carrier not the foreign carrier
 - There are only a few exceptions, *ask MSE for help*
 - If you book incorrectly you run the risk of not being reimbursed
 - Business, First, or Premium Economy Class for travel <12 hours (including layovers and flight changes) will not be reimbursed
- Foreign Transactions
 - Include a foreign currency conversion for every expense incurred in foreign currency
 - If the conversion is on your credit card statement, providing the statement is sufficient
 - Otherwise use the Oanda [Currency Converter](#)

Traveling to a Conference/Professional Meeting

- If you are traveling to attend a conference or a professional meeting, you MUST:
 - Include a printout of the conference agenda, including times when meals were provided
 - Include a copy of your conference ID badge
 - If you presented, include the conference schedule noting your presentation
- If your conference registration was prepaid by Northwestern or an outside source, the documentation above is still required to be submitted with your expense report

Traveling to Argonne

- If you are traveling to Argonne for the day for beam time:
 - You can be reimbursed for your transportation costs
 - See **Transportation** section above for documentation
 - Include a printout showing your scheduled beam time
 - Log into My APS Portal

- Click My ESAFS
 - Click Generate Report
 - Print the report
- If you are traveling to Argonne and staying overnight:
 - You can be reimbursed for your transportation, meals, and lodging costs (guest house)
 - See **Transportation, Meals, and Lodging** sections above for documentation
 - Include printout showing your scheduled beam time (see above)

Mixing Personal and Business Travel

- If you extend your trip duration for personal reasons you **MUST** provide a flight comparison with your expense report
- The flight comparison **MUST** show the exact dates and locations as if you only traveled for business
 - This means you need to perform the flight comparison prior to your departure date
- You will only be reimbursed for the portion of airfare that is business related (i.e. amount of the flight comparison)
- You will only be reimbursed for meals during the portion of your trip that is business related
- Example flight comparison:
 - You are going to LA to present at a conference. The conference is July 15-18. You extend your trip duration to take a vacation, so instead you travel July 15-23.
 - You need to provide your flight receipt for July 15-23 showing the actual amount that you paid (example: \$600)
 - You need to provide a flight comparison for the exact dates you would have traveled for business (July 14-18)
 - Your flight comparison will show the total amount it would have cost to travel for business only (example: \$500)
 - In this example, you will be reimbursed \$500 and will need to pay \$100 out of pocket

Multi-Purpose Business Travel

- If you have a trip that is all business but multi-purpose (for multiple projects), you **MUST** provide a flight comparison with your expense report in order to split expenses between different sources of funding
- The flight comparison **MUST** show the exact dates and locations as if you traveled separately for each business purpose
- Example flight comparison:
 - You are flying from Chicago to Geneva for a DOE conference, driving to Zurich to attend an NSF meeting, then flying from Zurich back to Chicago
 - You need to provide your flight receipt showing the actual amount paid
 - You need to provide TWO flight comparisons: one round trip to Geneva for dates specific to the DOE conference and one round trip to Zurich for dates specific to the NSF meeting
 - MSE staff will use the comparisons to allocate the correct percentages of the actual amount paid to the DOE and NSF chart strings

Other Reimbursements

- Student Groups
 - Provide itemized receipts
 - Provide list of attendees for meeting/event
 - Taxes will not be reimbursed
 - Contact MSE prior to purchase for one-time tax exemption form
- Other Purchases
 - Supplies for computer or lab work will require a receipt and PI approval.
 - Taxes will not be reimbursed.

MSE Student/Postdoc/Other Expense Reimbursement Form

TRIP INFORMATION

Traveler:		Dates of Entire Trip:	
Destination(s):			
Business Purpose:	Please provide a thorough business purpose explaining what this reimbursement is for and why it relates to this chart string/grant. <i>Example:</i> Reimbursement for attending the 2019 MRS conference to present my research about developing materials for energy storage. The DOE grant is funding this reimbursement and the grant's purpose is to develop materials for energy storage.		
Chart String(s) for Traveler:			
If multiple chart strings are being used, provide a justification for how you are splitting the cost:			

DID THIS TRIP INVOLVE PERSONAL TRAVEL?

Yes No

If yes:

Dates of Business Travel:		Dates of Personal Travel:	
Business Destination(s):		Personal Destination(s):	
If personal travel was involved, you must provide a flight comparison. The flight comparison must be prepared prior to your departure date. Without a flight comparison, you will not be reimbursed for your airfare. Please ask MSE staff for help if needed.			

DID THIS TRIP INVOLVE MULTI-PURPOSE BUSINESS TRAVEL?

Yes No

If yes:

Dates of Destination 1:		Dates of Destination 2:	
Business Destination 1:		Business Destination 2:	
If multi-purpose business travel was involved, you must provide flight comparisons. The flight comparisons must be prepared prior to your departure date. Without a flight comparison, you will not be reimbursed for your airfare. Please ask MSE staff for help if needed.			

DID THIS TRIP INVOLVE FOREIGN TRAVEL?

Yes No

If yes: See the **Foreign Travel** section of the [MSE Student/Postdoc/Other Expense Report Guidelines](#) for restrictions and details

DID THIS TRIP INVOLVE A CONFERENCE OR PROFESSIONAL MEETING?

Yes No

If yes: See the **Traveling to a Conference/Professional Meeting** section of the [MSE Student/Postdoc/Other Expense Report Guidelines](#) for documentation requirements

DID THIS TRIP INVOLVE A SHARED HOTEL ROOM?

Yes No

If yes: See the **Lodging, Shared Hotel Rooms** section of the [MSE Student/Postdoc/Other Expense Report Guidelines](#) for documentation requirements

If yes: Were you the traveler who paid for the room?

Yes No

If yes: Fill out this chart

Names of Others Involved	Chart Strings for Others Involved	Chart String Justification

If no: Name of traveler who paid for the room [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

How to Create an Expense Report in NUFinancials

Step 1:

- Log into [NUFinancials](#)
- Select “Create Expense Report”

Step 2:

- Fill out “General Information”

General Information

*Business Purpose	<input type="text" value=""/>
*Description	<input type="text" value=""/>
Default Location	<input type="text" value="DO NOT USE"/>
Reference	<input type="text" value="DO NOT USE"/>
*Expenses Supervisor	<input type="text" value=""/>

- Business Purpose:
 - Click drop down menu and choose the appropriate option
 - For conferences select Professional Development
- Description:
 - Enter the name of the conference/meeting
 - Example: MRS Conference in Boston
- Default Location:
 - DO NOT USE
- Reference:
 - DO NOT USE
- Expenses Supervisor:
 - Click on the magnifying glass
 - Select your supervisor

Step 3:

- Fill out “Accounting Defaults”

Attach Receipt >
Accounting Defaults >

- Click “Accounting Defaults”
- Click “Show All”
- Enter the chart string that these expenses will be charged to

*Fund	*Dept	Program	ChartField 1	PC Bus Unit	Project	Activity
<input type="text" value=""/>	<input type="text" value="9999999"/>	<input type="text" value=""/>				

- Only fill in the following:
 - Fund: first 3 digits of the chart string
 - Department: next set of 7 digits of the chart string (MSE=4735000)

- PC Bus Unit: NWUNV
- Project: last 8 digits of the chart string
- Activity: 01
- Click “Done” on the upper right hand corner
- Click “Update Details” to start adding expenses

Step 4:

- Add Expenses

*Date 

*Expense Type 

Description

*Payment

*Amount 

*Billing Type

 Accounting

- Date:
 - Date of the expense
 - (i.e. date airfare was purchased, not date of the flight)
- Expense Type:
 - Click on the magnifying glass
 - Select the appropriate expense type
- Description:
 - Optional
 - Enter information about the specific expense
- Payment:
 - Click on the drop down menu
 - Select Cash or Personal Credit Card
- Amount:
 - Enter amount of expense
 - Meals – include tax and tip
- Click “Save” in the upper right hand corner
- Click “Add” to continue adding expenses
- Click “Review and Submit” when you are finished

Step 5:

- Click “View Printable Report”
- Print the report
- DO NOT HIT “SUBMIT”
- Take the printed report, **MSE Student/Postdoc/Other Expense Reimbursement Form**, and backup documentation to MSE
- MSE Expense Report Contact will review the documentation
 - Additional questions will be asked if necessary

- MSE will submit the expense reimbursement on your behalf via NUFinancials
- You will receive a notification email requiring approval
 - Approve ASAP
- You will receive a notification email once your report has reached final approval

Reminder:

- Check in with MSE if you have any questions before, during, or after travel

COVID-19 Addendum

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we ask that you review COVID-19 guidance issued by Northwestern University prior to planning travel or other activities. Helpful links to key policies can be found [here](#).

If you are seeking reimbursement from a sponsored account for non-refundable expenses related to COVID-19 cancellations, you may be asked to complete a [Justification Form for Sponsored Charges Impacted by COVID-19](#).

If you are planning MSE-related travel, please follow these steps:

1. Please review the University's [travel expectations](#) to ensure you are in compliance.
2. Work with your PI and their Research Administrator, as well as the MSE Expense Report Contact, to complete an internal [MSE Travel Approval Form](#). This will need to be signed by the Chair prior to your travel and later should be included in your reimbursement request documentation.

For virtual conferences, please submit the following items:

1. If you presented: An abstract or invitation
2. Documentation of your participation (e.g. email from conference organizers)
3. Documentation of PI approval for attendance and chart string (e.g. email from PI)
4. MSE Expense Report Cover Sheet (fill in "N/A" for travel-related questions)
5. NUFinancials Printable Expense Report
6. Receipt for your conference registration payment