

University of Washington Bothell Policy Statement
FOOD PURCHASE
POLICY – 3.1

OVERVIEW

The Washington State Office of Financial Management State Administrative and Accounting Manual, sections 70.10.10-40, outlines the rules and oversight for the use of University funds to purchase meals and light refreshments. Based on these rules, the University of Washington created a policy for the purchase of meals and light refreshments for employees, students, and official guests. In turn, UW Bothell administration provided clarifications that, together with the UW rules, comprise the UW Bothell Food Purchase Policy. This policy is provided to ensure that all food expenses charged to University budgets are allowable and appropriate for the funding source.

To assure appropriate time for approval the Food Approval Form (FAF) should be submitted at least seven days prior to the event. Forms submitted after the event may be the financial responsibility of the purchaser. FAFs are not required for food purchases on discretionary funds or grant funds where the purchase of food has been authorized as part of the grant proposal.

POLICY

The following rules pertain to allowances for meals and light refreshments on non-discretionary budgets:

The FAF must be approved by the unit head and then submitted to Fiscal and Audit Services, based on the following:

- The meal or light refreshments must be an integral part of an official University meeting or formal training session, including student orientations.
- Attendance by the individuals must be advantageous to the UW.
- The cost of meals or light refreshments must be expensed in the appropriate approved and funded budget.
- The meeting or formal training must be conducted at a location away from the place where the employee normally performs his/her work (such as the employee's desk or cubicle). Acceptable locations include meeting and conference rooms.
- Employee meetings or trainings must be 2.5 hours or more in length for light refreshments to be provided. The 2.5 hour minimum is waived for meetings or trainings that primarily engage participants who are external to UW Bothell, students or faculty/leadership search candidates. Light refreshments are limited to \$5 per person (UW Bothell clarification).
- Employee meals are justified only when a meeting is 3.5 hours or more in length and extends over a meal period. Breakfast is only provided if the employee meeting begins at 7 a.m. or earlier. Dinner is only provided for an employee meeting that ends at 7 p.m. or later. The 3.5 hour minimum and 7 a.m. start and 7 p.m. end times are waived for meetings or trainings that

primarily engage external participants, students or faculty/leadership search candidates. (UW Bothell clarification).

- Light refreshment service for one-hour or longer meetings are allowed for high-level meetings (signified by director and above attendance) with external participants at the discretion and approval of the vice chancellors/chancellor and where such service might be expected in the conduct of official UW business (UW Bothell clarification).
- Dining at restaurants is permissible for meetings only if there is a documented business purpose or business agenda, and must include a participant who is external to UW Bothell unless approved by a vice chancellor/chancellor (UW Bothell clarification).
- Meals for spouses/partners and family members are not allowed (UW Bothell clarification).

Cost per Meal

The meal expenditure or reimbursement may not exceed the travel per diem limit for the meal (including taxes, gratuity, utensils, catering fees, etc.). Amounts over per diem may be reimbursed using a discretionary funding source only when approved by a dean or vice chancellor (or by a director, chairperson or administrator with written delegated authority).

Recognition Events

The event must include the formal presentation of a recognition award to one or more employees or students. Only light refreshments may be served at the event. A documented recognition policy must be on file-

For recognition of employees, the total amount expended per recognition award, including light refreshments, is limited to the monetary level authorized in RCW 41.60.150 (\$200 per individual or group receiving recognition). For example, if members of a team are being recognized, the amount expended for the light refreshments is limited to \$200. Food served at a recognition event is restricted to light refreshments unless the actual recognition award is a meal.

If a meal is a recognition award, the amount of the meal per individual(s) being recognized is not limited to the per diem rate. However, only the meal expense for the individual(s) being recognized may be paid using University funds; the cost of meals for other attendees not being recognized must be charged to a discretionary funding source.

The following food purchases may only be made using a discretionary budget:

- Food to support normal daily business of university employees, regularly scheduled meetings, open houses, or receptions for new employees can only be purchased using discretionary funds (64-XXXX budgets). Purchases of alcoholic beverages or over per diem amounts for food may only be purchased with discretionary funds.
- Food for hosting or entertaining may be purchased with discretionary budgets or on gift budgets with food flags.
- Food for graduation events must be paid using discretionary funds, or gift budgets with food flags if allowed by school or college policy. Food purchases for a legislator or governmental official or for elections or election celebrations are *ever permitted* on any University funding source, including discretionary funds.

UW Operating Policy Used to Administer Discretionary Fund Budgets:

With the best interest of the University as the basic premise, prudent judgment and reasonableness will govern the general range of allowable expenditures from discretionary funds. Without limiting the scope thereof, discretionary funds may be expended:

- For all purposes allowed by the University of Washington policies and regulations covering public funds generally.
- For such purposes that are objectively determined to be ordinary and necessary to the prudent and resourceful conduct of the program for which the fund was established, but which are otherwise not allowable expenditures from public funds and therefore must be paid from non-public discretionary funding sources.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR QUESTIONS

UW Bothell Fiscal and Audit Services: uwbfdapp@uw.edu

RELATED LINKS

[OFM SAM sections 70.10.10-40](#)

[RCW 40.03.050\(3\)](#)

[UW Food Policy](#)

[UW Operating Policy Used to Administer Discretionary Fund Budgets](#)

[UW Bothell Fiscal and Audit Services Forms and Guides](#)

Revisions reviewed by:

Vice Chancellor for Planning & Administration
UW Bothell Administrator's Council