University of Houston Clear Lake

New Travel Authorization Process Effective 9/1/2020

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. Why is the Travel Authorization (TA) form process changing?

The new Travel Authorization (TA) process is changing in an effort to expedite the travel reimbursement time.

2. How will changing the process expedite travel reimbursement?

The Travel Office will be able to process expense reports in a more timely fashion because they won't be spending time processing and encumbering TA forms.

3. Are Travel Authorization forms still required before traveling?

Yes, Travel Authorization forms are still required prior to traveling to provide approval for the travel.

4. If the Travel Office isn't processing the forms, who is?

Departments are responsible for processing, encumbering and storing the approved TAs.

5. Who fills out the TA?

The traveler or the traveler's department fills out the TA with the department filling out the "For Departmental Use Only" section.

6. What is the "For Departmental Use Only" section for?

The department enters the account code, cost center, speed type and dollar amount approved in this section for funding the travel related expenses. If more than one cost center is to be charged, it would be entered here as well. If the department is limiting the funds for travel to the dollar amount entered, the check box should be checked. No state funds should be used for Travel.

7. Will departments have to encumber funds for travel?

Yes, departments will have to encumber funds for travel. Encumbering funds for travel ensures that finances are available to the traveler and ensures coverage if needed.

8. **How will departments encumber funds?**

The CBA/DBA will determine who in the department should perform this task and seek PeopleSoft Security Access for these staff members as a "Buyer" with the role of "Creator" if they do not already have it. Instructions to request access. PS Security Access form.

The designated staff member follows the Travel Purchase Order (PO) Instructions to create a Travel PO in PeopleSoft Finance in **Business Unit TR759** based on the approved TA. The CBA/DBA reviews, approves, budget checks and dispatches the Travel PO.

9. **So, how is the process changing exactly?**

The department:

   a. Enters the Account Code on the TA form (Travel used to do this);
   b. Encumbers the funds in PeopleSoft Finance on a Travel PO;
   c. Sends a copy of the Travel PO to the traveler along with the approved TA copy;
   d. Requests the following as needed from the Travel Office:
      1. Airfare purchase (itinerary must be included);
      2. Car rental reservation and/or direct pay;
      3. Hotel TAP card;
      4. Foreign Travel assistance (required documents);
      5. Or any other special request.
   e. To be clear, the Travel Office will not encumber when any of the above requests are made. They are only handling the specific requests.

The CBA/DBA signature on the TA is optional as their official record of approval will be in PeopleSoft Finance when they approve and dispatch the Travel PO. The traveler and supervisor are still required to sign the TA. If using grant funds, OSP must sign. If Foreign travel, the President, the Sr. VP/Provost or the VP of the traveler's area must sign the TA.

10. **What if someone travels without having an approved TA on file with their department?**

This process has not changed. Traveling without an approved TA on file will require the Head of Department to send the Associate VP of Business Operations a memo/email explaining why UHCL Travel Guidelines were not followed and how the department plans to prevent this from occurring in the future.

11. **How does this new TA process affect submitting an expense report for approved travel?**

The only real change to the expense report submission process is that a copy of the approved TA and the Travel PO must be included with the expense report supporting documents and the Travel PO # instead of the old T #s is used on the expense report.

12. What if the department enters an incorrect account code on the TA? How might that affect reimbursement?

When the Travel Office audits the expense reports, they will determine appropriate accounts codes to be charged for the expenses submitted; thereby correcting any incorrect account code usage on the TA. A copy of the Travel Voucher will continue to be sent to the CBA/DBA as in the past and the CBA/DBA will share the Travel Voucher with the department. The department will see what accounts codes were actually used. They can also run a 1074 to see this information.

13. What happens if the department forgets to change the Business Unit from 00759 to TR759 when encumbering the funds?

If you realize that you mistakenly used Business Unit 00759, you will need to submit an encumbrance adjustment form to Procurement to cancel the PO and you will need to create a Travel PO in **TR759**.

The Travel Office will run the **UHS_PO_759** query weekly to determine if Business Unit 00759 was used in lieu of TR759. If the Travel Office finds any, they will notify the department that it needs to submit an encumbrance adjustment form to Procurement to cancel the PO and will need to recreate the Travel PO in **TR759**. Please note, Travel PO's will be low in number sequence in comparison with regular PO #s. For example; a Travel PO # might be 0000000895 or 0000001025 whereas the regular PO #s will be much higher, 0000044282 for example.

14. Will the traveler/department still need to submit supporting documents with the expense report if they were uploaded in PeopleSoft to the Travel PO?

Yes, supporting documents will need to be sent with the expense report as any documents uploaded to the Travel PO in PeopleSoft were based on estimates and quotes; actual expenses may vary and need to be supported. The Travel PO# should be on the expense report.

15. Do I need to enter more than one account code on the TA?

No, do not enter more than one account code on the TA. If you are using Grant funds which are not allowed for certain expenses, you would enter a second line for the additional cost center, but you would use the same account code.

When encumbering funds for travel, choose only one account code that best suits the type of travel involved: In State Per Diem 56105 or Out of State Per Diem 56113. For Blanket Mileage, use Texas Mileage 56102.

16. What amount on the TA is to be encumbered?

The amount to encumber is determined by how much the department approved to fund. The department may or may not fund 100% of the estimated expenses. That is the decision of

the department with guidance from the cost center manager and the business administrator.

The Grand Total amount on the TA includes all travel related estimated expenses entered on the TA including any amounts the department may have paid or will be paying on a P-Card, Voucher or IDT.

The Sub-Total amount does not include those amounts paid for by the department.

When deciding how much to encumber, the Estimated Expenses Sub-Total is the amount to consider. The amount decided upon should be entered in the "Funds" column in the For Departmental Use Only box on the TA. If the amount is limited, the checkbox should be checked. The **Approved Amount to Encumber** is auto calculated in the event more than one line is entered. This will be the amount to encumber on the Travel PO.

17. How will the excess funds be released back into the cost center after the traveler has been reimbursed or if the trip is canceled?

When the Travel Office audits the expense report, if there are no expenses still needing to be paid for by UHCL (airfare, car rental, hotel TAP card) the PO will be finalized and any excess funds are released back into the cost center. If any expenses still need to be paid for by UHCL (airfare, car rental, hotel TAP card) then the Travel Office will not finalize the PO until these payments have been made.

If a trip is canceled, submit an Encumbrance Adjustment form to Procurement to cancel the Travel PO and release the encumbrance back to the cost center.

18. What if an encumbrance adjustment is needed?

If an adjustment needs to be made to the Travel PO, submit an Encumbrance Adjustment form to Procurement.

Resources:

Account Code Listing
Encumbrance Adjustment Form
Food & Entertainment Related Accounts
PeopleSoft Security Access Form
PeopleSoft Security Access Instructions
Travel Authorization Process
Travel Authorization Form
Travel Authorization Instructions
Travel PO Instructions
UHCL Travel Guidelines

For any other questions, please contact the Travel Office at TravelOffice@uhcl.edu or 281-283-2270.