

## **Travel Authority (TA) FAQ's to support page 10 of the June 2020 "[Return to Campus Guidelines for Faculty and Staff](#)"**

### **Travel:**

- Non-essential travel of any kind is currently prohibited for USG employees.
- During the pandemic timeframe, UGA faculty and staff are limited to essential business travel only, as deemed appropriate by their supervisor. Travel will require the completion of a Travel Authority (TA) as a pre-approval for all essential travel (in-state and out-of-state) regardless of cost, level of reimbursement, or funding source. Blanket authorizations (for up to one fiscal year) are available for employees with frequent and reoccurring in-state essential travel.
- Any prospective traveler must justify that the proposed travel, whether domestic or international, is essential by documenting the consequences of not traveling. The justification must be included in the TA and approved by the employee's immediate supervisor.
- Research-related travel must be part of an approved Research Resumption Plan (RRP) under the [Office of Research Guidelines](#).
- In the comments section of the TA, include RRP approval date and approver name.
- Because of the shifting epidemiology of the coronavirus, a destination considered relatively safe now may not be considered safe this fall and vice-versa. Faculty, staff and students who travel on University business or as a part of a University program to an area of significant activity should realize that they will be required to quarantine upon return to campus.
- Faculty, staff and student traveling on non-University related travel are strongly encouraged to follow relevant CDC and GPHD post-travel quarantine guidance and may be subject to quarantine requirements.
- Detailed travel information will be available via a centralized training module available in late June.

## FAQ's:

### **Why is it necessary during the COVID-19 pandemic to complete a Travel Authority for in-state travel when historically UGA travel policy only called for a Travel Authority for out-of-state or international travel?**

Non-essential travel of any kind is currently prohibited for USG employees. During the pandemic timeframe, UGA faculty and staff are limited to essential business travel only and the Travel Authority (TA) process can document pre-approval of the essential business travel whether it be for in-state or out-of-state travel. While this may feel overly cumbersome for in-state travel, using the TA process during the pandemic timeframe is a standardized, institution-wide approach to support the essential travel requirements:

- the existing TA process supports electronic approval routing to supervisors and provides official documentation which is accessible institution-wide;
- the TA process supports a confirmation statement by the traveler reminding them that travel to “hot spots” or other high-risk areas may present individual health risks and may require a quarantine period upon return,
- the TA process supports a Fiscal Year Blanket Authorization and reduces or eliminates the need to process multiple in-state TAs; and
- data on the TA can potentially support any Georgia Department of Health contact tracing in the event a traveler tests positive for COVID-19, or alerts to travelers recently visiting hot-spots, etc.

### **How long will the Travel Authority requirements for all essential travel (regardless of cost, level of reimbursement, or funding source) be in effect?**

These requirements will be in effect until the non-essential travel restrictions are lifted for USG employees. During the pandemic timeframe, all USG employees are limited to essential business travel only which requires the completion of a Travel Authority (TA) which serves as UGA's official pre-approval of the in-state or out-of-state essential travel.

### **What is the travel pre-approval process? Is a traveler checking the “Essential Travel Confirmation Box” the pre-approval?**

When the traveler selects the Submit button to “check the Essential Travel Confirmation box,” the TA enters the approval workflow and moves to the traveler's Report To/Supervisor. Once the TA has been approved by the traveler's Report To/Supervisor and the departmental Expense Manager, the TA is “approved” and the COVID-19 pandemic essential travel pre-approval process is complete.

### **Will an in-state travel authority be required for traveling within the county or to a bordering county of an employee's home base?**

**Example #1:** Employee is home-based in DeKalb County and travels to multiple locations/counties in the Atlanta area to conduct trainings, attend meetings, etc.

**Example #2:** Employee is home-based at the Athens or Tifton campus and drives to a UGA or non-UGA location in the same or bordering county as the employee's home base for a business purpose.

Travel authorities are not necessary if the traveler moves within the same county as their work home base or within a county which borders the county of their work home base.

A traveler should complete a TA or a Fiscal Year Blanket Authorization for in-state travel, if their trip extends to a Georgia county which does not border their work home base. A traveler's work home base is the UGA address of their assigned office or primary work location.

**I am required to routinely travel for essential work all over the state of Georgia (or within 50 miles of the Georgia border). Will I have to do a travel authority for each individual trip?**

Departments have the ability to create Fiscal Year Blanket Authorizations for employee travel. These blanket authorizations can be for multiple in-state locations. Travel authorization initiators will need to select one destination from the "Travel To" drop down selection and then add the remaining destinations in the "Notes" field on the TA. It is recommended that departments begin with fiscal year 2021 blanket authorizations; due to the timing of the issuance of this guidance in late June 2020 it is not reasonable or feasible to create fiscal year 2020 blanket authorizations for the remainder of FY20.

Per UGA Travel Policy:

Fiscal Year Blanket Authorizations are available for units using the functionality of the travel authorization for in-state travel. All blanket travel authorizations must be for a single individual and cannot be for an entire department or unit. Fiscal Year Blanket Travel Authorizations are allowable and available for frequent in-state travel activities that meet the following requirements:

- Travel activities are consistent with the employee's job duties
- Travel business purpose is consistently the same for each travel event
- Travel activities are to the same location(s) based on employment activities
- Travel activity is for the same individual identified on the Travel Authorization
- Blanket Travel Authorizations are renewed on a fiscal year basis and end each year on June 30

Expenses incurred under the blanket travel authorization must comply with the UGA Travel policy. Fiscal Year Blanket Authorizations are not allowable for out-of-state or international travel.

A sample fiscal year blanket authorization for in-state travel might utilize the following template:

*As the XYZ Position in the Department Name, I am required to complete essential travel during FY2021 for the following required tasks: Insert list of approved essential travel tasks here. These tasks are deemed essential because: insert reason for essential travel and consequences for not traveling here. These tasks require me to travel primarily to Insert Location(s) here which are already known but travel could include other locations within the state of Georgia as new or existing client needs dictate. As those new locations are determined, they will be documented insert here how those are documented and will be available if contact tracing is necessary. If these essential travel circumstances as documented in this TA change, I will work with my supervisor on my essential travel requirements and issue a new FY2021 blanket authorization.*

**What if I am unable to submit a TA prior to traveling due to extremely short notice of the essential travel? Requesting approval for essential travel and fully processing a TA through the system may not be possible to complete prior to the travel timeframe.**

The approval process for in-state travel authorizations requires approval by the traveler's Report To/Supervisor and a departmental Expense Manager; therefore, the speed at which a TA is approved is a function of the TA initiation and the timeframe of the departmental approvals. To the extent possible, the TA should be initiated by the traveler and approved by the Report To/Supervisor prior to the travel start date.

If essential travel is on such short notice that the TA cannot be reasonably initiated by the traveler and at a minimum approved by the Report To/Supervisor prior to the traveler's return date, traveler's should request an email or other document from their Report To/Supervisor dated no later than the travel start date approving the essential travel and that notice of/timing of the essential travel did not permit completion of a TA in the normal manner. The traveler would then forego completion of a TA and instead attach the alternate approval document to their expense report in lieu of the approved TA. If there is no reimbursement associated with the trip, the traveler should maintain in their files (for 12 months) the alternate approval document as justification of the essential travel.

These recommendations are exceptions to the TA approval process for time constrained situations and may not be routinely applied.

**Can internal tracking procedures currently used by departments for in-state travel continue to be used as opposed to submitting a TA for in-state travel?**

Units/Departments that maintain tracking procedures for in-state travel approvals may continue to utilize those systems for internal purposes but these internal systems cannot be a substitute for processing a TA in the university's Travel Authority system of record. Units/Departments can satisfy this requirement by either preparing a TA for an individual trip or completing a 2021 Fiscal Year Blanket Travel Authorization for the in-state travel requirements expected of the employee during the 12-month period of July 2020 – June 2021.

**Are there any specific research-related travel guidelines?**

Research-related travel must be part of an approved Research Resumption Plan (RRP) under the [Office of Research guidelines](#). In the note section of the TA, include RRP approval date and approver name.

**Is it possible to revise a TA once it has been fully approved?**

No, the ability to revise a TA after it has been fully approved does not exist. Each TA submission is certifying that a particular trip/destination or blanket authority (for in-state travel) is essential travel. During the COVID-19 pandemic timeframe, it is also important for travelers and supervisors to understand and acknowledge that COVID-19 hotspots and related travel risks can change and might impact self-quarantine measures. When travel authority circumstances change, a TA for the new travel circumstances also serves as a travel risk reminder for the traveler and the supervisor.

For situations where routine or recurring in-state essential travel is required, travelers can use the Fiscal Year Blanket Authorization to list various in-state destinations where travel is expected to occur during the 12-month period of July 2020 – June 2021.

**What if I have essential travel but do not plan to submit a travel expense report, do I still have to submit a TA?**

Yes. During the COVID-19 pandemic timeframe USG employees may only travel on essential business and to document approved essential travel and help support potential COVID-19 contact tracing, travelers must submit and receive authorization for their essential travel prior to traveling. As outlined in the [Return to Campus Guidelines for Faculty and Staff](#), a travel authority serves as official pre-approval regardless of destination, cost, level of reimbursement, or funding source. Justification for the proposed travel being essential must be documented with the consequences of not traveling. The TA serves as official approval documentation for the trip.