

Travel Expense Policy

May 1, 2025

The Balsillie School of International Affairs (BSIA) provides reimbursement for preapproved expenses incurred by its community members while travelling on official BSIA business, to conferences, or for fieldwork. This policy is in alignment with the travel policies of the two universities.

When considering requests for travel support to conferences or for fieldwork, approvers will consider whether the request is:

- In-line with research and/or study goals
- Able to stand up to scrutiny by the auditors and members of the public
- Properly explained and documented
- Fair and equitable (i.e. funds equally available to students across programs)
- Reasonable

Some general points to note:

1. Reimbursement claims that fail to adhere to the guidelines contained in this policy will be declined.
2. Student requests for conference funding will be considered based on return travel from the Waterloo region to the conference venue. Requests for travel funding received from students who, at the time of the conference, and due to official academic business (e.g. fellowships, internships, university exchange programs) are based outside of the Waterloo region, will also be considered.
3. Students must be in good standing in their program to qualify for funding.
4. Staff can assist with BSIA guest travel bookings, but BSIA community members should book their own travel.
5. Travel advances are not permitted. If prepaying travel expenses would present a financial hardship, please speak with your program director.
6. Travel expenses paid with a gift card, loyalty points, digital/cryptocurrency, or vouchers are not eligible for reimbursement.
7. All expenses (except for meals) must be supported with a detailed receipt and be listed on the expense claim form (e.g. check-in and check-out dates for accommodation, and starting and ending locations for flights, taxis, rail, etc.)
8. Conference travel claims must include a copy of the full agenda, showing the date and title of the claimant's presentation.
9. Students are required to disclose funding received from other sources.
10. BSIA community members are encouraged to use the most carbon-friendly mode of transit. Students must complete a carbon budget in their application for funding.
11. All travel must comply with university travel safety requirements, including registering the trip with the university.
12. All requests for travel support funding must be received and approved in advance of the travel. BSIA will not reimburse travel retroactively.

Flights

The maximum level of reimbursement should not exceed the equivalent of economy airfare for the most direct route. Airport taxes should be included as part of the cost of the airfare. Standard seat selection fees and WIFI onboard fees are also eligible for reimbursement. The purchase of flight cancellation insurance is encouraged to avoid loss of funds should the trip need to be cancelled. For long haul flights (international flights of six hours +), Premium Economy booking may be considered with preapproval but note that the total maximum allowable reimbursement does not change. Additional airfare for stopovers, and other costs not related to BSIA business, are considered to be personal expenses of the claimant and will not be reimbursed.

Lost or Excess Baggage

The ultimate responsibility for retrieving and compensating lost baggage lies with the airlines. BSIA will not reimburse travelers for personal items lost while traveling on business.

Claimants will be reimbursed for excess baggage charges only in the following circumstances:

- When traveling with heavy or bulky materials or equipment necessary for business, or
- The excess baggage consists of BSIA property.

Ground transportation

Ground travel can include personal vehicles, rental vehicles, rail, taxi, car service, busses and other ride-hailing services.

It is acceptable to use personal automobiles for round trips of less than 500km while on BSIA business. Claimants are reimbursed based on the current rate of \$0.60 per kilometer. If traveling with multiple passengers, only one person can claim the reimbursement. No reimbursement can be made for travel between a claimant's residence and the BSIA.

The BSIA insurance policy does not provide coverage for the use of personal vehicles. The compensation provided to the claimant for the use of personal vehicles for BSIA business, is intended to cover all costs, including personal insurance. In advance of travel, car owners are strongly advised to check with their insurance agents to secure appropriate endorsements to personal policies.

If renting a vehicle, the rental duration should align with the business or research purpose. Vehicle rentals during non-working or non-travel days will be considered personal use and not eligible for reimbursement. Gas expenses are eligible for reimbursement only when a rental vehicle is used.

Faculty and staff members may book an upgraded train fare class, provided the total cost is less than the cost of flying to the same destination.

Parking

Expenses for hotel parking, airport parking, and public parking are allowable, with original receipts. Where both self-parking and valet parking are available, only the rate for self-parking is eligible.

Per diem – Meals and incidental expenses

To align with our three partners, the BSIA has moved to a per diem policy for its community members while travelling on official BSIA business, to conferences, or for fieldwork. Claimants are entitled to a daily per diem allowance to cover the cost of meals, snacks and beverages while traveling. This allowance is determined based on the destination, duration of the trip, and eligibility of the meal.

Per diems are beneficial for both the claimants and the administrative team, **as receipts are not required to be submitted or retained** for per diem meal claims. The per diem rates will be reimbursed regardless of the actual meal costs.

It is recognized that meal costs vary depending on the geographic area and as such, the per diem rate chart below reflects rates for both meals within Canada and outside of Canada.

Canadian dollar amount for permitted per diems

Meal	Within Canada	Outside Canada
Breakfast	\$20.00	\$25.00
Lunch	\$25.00	\$30.00
Dinner	\$45.00	\$55.00
Maximum daily rate	\$90.00	\$110.00

The maximum daily rate includes all snacks, beverages, taxes and gratuities.

Ineligible meals include:

- Meals consumed outside of travel departure/arrival times from the airport or train station.
- Meals not consumed by the claimant.
- Meals not paid for by the claimant (e.g. included in conference registration, included in accommodation fees, included on the flight/train, or paid by another source).

For multi-day travel, reimbursement should be limited to the maximum daily rate multiplied by the number of days of travel, less all ineligible meals. Proof of departure and arrival time is required to determine if partial day allowances are submitted.

Business Meals (hosting guests on behalf of the BSIA)

Business meals with internal and/or external individuals paid for by the claimant must have prior approval from the Director. Claims for business meals must be supported by itemized meal receipts and a list of attendees with their affiliation. Alcohol is not a permitted expense for internal BSIA community members (i.e. UW or Laurier staff, faculty, students). A per diem cannot be claimed for this type of meal.

Accommodation

Accommodation for one night before and one night after an event is acceptable if the start and end times or distance merit such travel planning and are reasonable and appropriate for the type of activity.

Reimbursement for hotels and motels will be limited to single occupancy, standard room accommodation. Other lodgings (i.e. AirBnB) may be reimbursed at the lesser rate of the cost of single occupancy, standard room accommodation in hotels in the vicinity of the lodging or the cost of the lodging.

Conference Registration Fees

Conference registration fees are eligible expenses. The registration form and conference agenda are to be submitted along with the original receipts.

Membership fees for conference organizations will only be reimbursed if the combined membership fee and conference fee is less than a non-member conference fee.

Currency exchange

When submitting expenses for reimbursement that were paid in another currency, please use OANDA (<http://www.oanda.com>) to convert to the Canadian amount. **Use the date the bill was paid in OANDA when converting.**

Alternatively, a copy of your credit card statement may be submitted in lieu of using OANDA. The last four digits of your credit card, your name, and the expense lines must be visible on the copy. All other information may be redacted.

Illness and cancellations

As a general rule, we encourage purchasing flexible fares, so that a credit or a refund can be obtained in the event that a trip cannot be taken. When a non-refundable flight/hotel is booked, it may still be reimbursable, but supporting documentation regarding the non-refundability of the expense, alongside an indication there was an attempt to receive a credit or refund should be included. A request for reimbursement may be submitted to the BSIA Administrative Office.

Non-allowable Expenses

The following expenses are not permitted for reimbursement:

- Passport expenses
- Interest charges on outstanding credit card balances
- Traffic and parking fines or tickets
- Expenses for failing to cancel transportation or hotel reservations, unless cancellation was due to work requirements and occurred after the cancellation deadline
- Excess personal baggage or loss or damage to personal possessions of the traveler

- Laundry expenses, and health and beauty products
- Equivalent dollar reimbursement for non-out-of-pocket costs such as use of airline reward point or other rewards programs
- Hotel pay movies
- Expenses for attendants, family or partners unless medically required. Preapproval is required.
- Conference activities that are considered optional, e.g., golf tournaments
- Entertainment expenses (such as airline headsets, movies and sporting events)
- Political event tickets or attendance at a political fundraising dinner
- Medical insurance
- Financial penalties related to flight changes are only reimbursable if the change is made for School business reasons, not personal reasons
- Any other personal or excessive amounts