

# COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HEALTH PROFESSIONS

## POLICY ON AUTHORIZED ABSENCE FOR PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

**Effective date:** August 21, 2017

**A. Purpose:** To identify parameters for authorized absence for professional activities, including activities that involve domestic or international travel.

**B. Rationale:** Faculty and staff are expected to be on campus Monday through Friday as part of their regular assignment. This authorized absence policy is intended to ensure that authorized absence for professional activities is consistent with the mission of the University of Florida, while simultaneously meeting State of Florida regulations, enhancing the public's confidence in the University's stewardship of resources, and ensuring equity in faculty availability for on campus responsibilities.

**C. Qualifying Days and Activities:** There are two general categories of approvable professional leave: Standard Professional Leave and Dean-Directed Travel. Standard Professional Leave includes non-grant related activities as well as most grant-related activities as described in section D; Dean-Directed Travel includes professional leave for activities directly funded by a specific grant or contract for data collection and/or training of personnel required by the grant as well as professional leave conducted on behalf of the department/college and assigned by the chair or dean. Authorized absence requires the approval of the chair and/or dean or their designees.

**D. Standard Professional Leave:** Faculty, chairs, and other employees with administrative positions may be granted up to 20 business days of authorized standard leave for professional activities, such as conference participation, teaching, and mentorship, as per the approval policy of their department or unit, as long as no honorarium is being received. Grant-related activities paid for by a grant are also counted in Standard Professional Leave EXCEPT data collection and training that are required by the grant and paid for by direct costs. Examples of Standard Professional Leave include, but are not limited to, travel to present data at conferences, meet with other grant personnel or collaborators, and attend annual meetings and conferences regardless of whether these are covered by direct costs of a grant. In addition to the 20 business days for authorized leave, 8 additional transit days per year may be approved to accommodate travel for multiple domestic and/or international trips.

**E. Dean-Directed Travel:** Dean-directed Travel is not included in either the standard of up to 20 business days or up to 8 additional transit days per year. Faculty, chairs, and other employees with administrative positions may seek approval for authorized absences in the category of Dean-Directed Travel for the following professional activities:

1. Grant funded or contract activities: Activities that are paid for by **direct** costs from a research grant or contract, are required by that grant or contract, AND involve data collection and/or training of or by professionals, students, and other constituents identified in the grant or contract. These activities must be necessary to carry out the functions of a grant/contract. (Authorized absences supported by **indirect** costs are counted in the 20 days of standard professional leave as noted above.)

2. Grant reviewer for any national grant funding agency
3. Accreditation site reviewer for a health care system or professional/scientific organization
4. Professional activities conducted on behalf of the department or college as assigned by the chair or dean and approved by the dean.

**F. Contingencies of All Authorized Absences:**

1. The number of days authorized is based on the calendar year, January 1 to December 31.
2. For each authorized absence of domestic travel, a maximum of two days is allowed for direct travel (i.e. transit days), one day immediately prior to the event/activity and one day immediately after the event/activity. Annual leave must be used for more extended travel plans. Domestic travel requires approval of the chair.
3. For international travel, a maximum of four days (i.e. transit days) are allowed for direct travel, two days immediately prior to the event/activity and two days immediately following the event/activity. Annual leave must be used for more extended travel plans. International travel requires approval of the chair and dean.
4. Faculty returning on weekends may not use authorized absence for the next business day after return. They are expected to return to work unless annual leave is approved.
5. If required, a *Disclosure of Outside Activities and Financial Interests* form must be completed by the employee and signed by the approver(s) prior to the employee's formal acceptance of a professional activity. A *Disclosure of Outside Activities and Financial Interests* form is required for activities involving direct monetary and/or nonmonetary compensation. Examples of the latter include, but are not limited to, waiver of conference fees and coverage of/reimbursement for food and/or travel.
6. Employees are required to use annual leave if they receive monetary compensation for their professional activities (see section G).
7. A minimum of 10 business days prior to domestic travel, employees must submit appropriate documentation (including the signed *Disclosure of Outside Activities and Financial Interests* form, if applicable) to their department chair/designee based on departmental policy for travel authorization. Please note, department chairs may set more restrictive policy regarding the number of days required for submission of professional leave requests prior to travel (i.e. increased days).
8. A minimum of 10 business days prior to international travel, employees must submit a PHHP Travel Authorization Request (TAR) with all appropriate documentation (including the signed *Disclosure of Outside Activities and Financial Interests* form, if applicable). Please note, department chairs may set more restrictive policy regarding the number of days required for submission of professional leave requests prior to travel (i.e. increased days).
9. If an employee travels without having submitted a travel request by the deadline (10 business days prior to travel), the employee will not be approved for professional leave with the exception of truly extraordinary circumstances and dean approval. Without this approval, the employee will have to use annual leave for the entire trip. Annual leave status prohibits reimbursement for professional expenses.
10. Regardless of the funding source, PHHP and UF travel policies and procedures must be followed in all cases.

**G. Compensation for Administrative/Professional Leave:** Faculty, chairs, and other administrative personnel will receive full pay for approved leave. Professional leave will not be granted for activities for which the employee receives direct monetary compensation. (This does not apply to travel, food or other reimbursements for which the faculty member does not receive direct compensation. This also does not apply to monetary compensation received when serving

as a grant reviewer for a federal agency such as NIH or NSF.) If outside activities for which the employee receives monetary compensation are completed during the business work schedule of Monday-Friday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, annual leave must be used for any and all 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 pm hours/days missed. Some examples of outside activity include (though not a complete list): receiving an honorarium in excess of travel expenses, paid consulting, serving as an expert witness (this requires an additional review by the HSC Self-Insurance Program Office 273-7006 prior to approval), and being a visiting professor or an invited speaker at another institution or organization (whether for-profit or not-for-profit) for which the employee receives an honorarium. Please note that if an employee offered an honorarium donates that entire honorarium to the department or college, he or she will be eligible for professional leave.

**H. How to Code Days on the Travel Authorization Request (PHHP-TAR):** Days coded on the PHHP-TAR fall into one of six categories. These are:

**1. Standard Professional Leave:** professional activities for which you travel that are part of the 20 allowable days (refer to section D).

**2. Dean-Directed Travel:** grant data collection or required training covered by direct costs, grant or accreditation review, and professional leave approved by the chair and dean that is not included in the 20 days (refer to section E).

**3. Transit Day:** actual day(s) of travel (1 day immediately before and after domestic events and 2 days immediately before and after international events). It is up to you how you code the following:

- a) If you are at work 4 or more hours (e.g. at least 8 am to noon) on the same day you travel, you can take either a transit day or regular work day (your choice).
- b) If you travel on the same day that your conference/other professional activity begins or ends, you can claim either a transit day or a professional leave day (your choice).

Please note: You are not required to travel on the same day your conference or meeting ends. You are allowed the transit day(s) 1 day immediately following domestic events and 2 days immediately following international events.

**4. Weekend:** travel or professional activities falling on a weekend. If you travel for a professional event or attend a professional event on Saturday and/or Sunday, you will code the day as a weekend. This day will not count in any of your authorized absence totals.

**5. Work Day:** regular work day. You can use this code if you have been on site at work 4 or more hours before you travel that same day for a professional event.

**6. Annual Leave:** You must use this code if you accept an honorarium (see section G.). You must also use this code if you travel more than one day prior to or after a domestic professional activity or 2 days prior to or after an international activity. The annual leave day applies to the day(s) you are not traveling.

Example 1: You travel on Monday but your conference, held in the United States, does not begin until Wednesday (a professional leave day). You will need to take a transit day on Monday and a vacation day (annual leave) on Tuesday. Even if you do some work on Tuesday, UF will not reimburse you for anything on Tuesday. UF will reimburse you for Monday's expenses. However, you will have to pay the difference in air fare if it cost

more to fly on the day you traveled (Monday) compared to the day immediately preceding the conference (Tuesday). Similarly, you will have to pay the difference in hotel and any extra meals that would not have been necessary if you traveled on Tuesday. The only exception is when you can demonstrate ahead of time that leaving early would cost UF less money than if you waited to leave on Tuesday. This is called a comparable, and you have to get actual quotes for the hotel and airfare before you leave. The airfare quote should be acquired at the time of booking.

Example 2: Your conference ends on Friday and you travel home on Monday. You will claim Saturday and Sunday as weekend days and Monday as your transit day. UF will not reimburse you for either Saturday or Sunday. They will reimburse you for the Friday night hotel and Monday travel expenses but you still need to submit a comparable for the flight (Saturday vs. Monday) before taking the trip. You have to demonstrate ahead of time that it was cheaper to fly on Monday to be fully reimbursed for your flight and any extra meals on Monday.

Example 3: Your conference ends on Thursday and you travel home on Saturday. You will code Friday as annual leave and Saturday as a weekend (so you basically save one of your transit days). You will not be reimbursed for anything on Friday. You will need a comparable to be fully reimbursed for Saturday's expenses.

#### **I. Reminders for Travel Reimbursement:**

1. UF reimburses economy/coach flights for the most direct travel.
2. UF does not reimburse first class travel.
3. UF only reimburses business class travel if the flight time shown on the purchased ticket is more than 9 hours.
4. UF does not reimburse for meals and hotel of extended stays or for the difference in air fare incurred as explained in the examples in the Annual Leave section above.
5. Contact your business manager for additional guidance.