

The Ledger

A Newsletter of the University Controller's Organization

Website: <http://www.controller.vt.edu>

Vol. E, No. 217

January 10, 2025

Controller's Office Website Changes Take Effect

The Controller's Office has recently updated its webpage to enhance the user experience. The most noticeable change is the redesign of our homepage (controller.vt.edu). The new homepage organizes information into a series of tiles, with each tile representing a functional area of the Controller's Office. Each tile links to a dedicated landing page that includes related procedures, forms, university systems, and other resources. Additionally, the homepage now features resources specifically related to tax compliance. All existing links and bookmarks to the Controller's Office webpages will continue to function as before.

For a complete list of email addresses associated with Controller's Office processes, visit our [Contact Us](#) page. The dropdown boxes allow users to view contact information for each functional area. If you experience any difficulties navigating the site or finding specific information, feel free to contact us directly at **540-231-6418**.

Mileage Rate for Use of Personal Vehicle

Effective January 1, 2025, the mileage reimbursement rate for round trips of **200 miles or less** increased from **\$0.67 per mile** to **\$0.70 per mile**.

The mileage rate for round trips exceeding 200 miles will remain at **\$0.53 per mile**.

Please note that Chrome River does not automatically update mileage rates. For pre-approvals created before January 1, 2025, the traveler or their delegate must manually update the mileage rate before submitting the expense report.

If you have any questions, please contact the travel team at travel@vt.edu.

Transition of Research Financials to New MicroStrategy Platform

We are excited to announce that **Research Financials**, the tool used by university researchers to view certain transactional data on sponsored projects, is transitioning to a new platform. Research Financials is moving from its outdated technology to the **MicroStrategy platform**, where it will be available as a modern, intuitive dashboard. This new dashboard is a direct replacement of the legacy tool, with all existing information fully preserved. This transition will provide an improved user experience, enhanced usability, and greater reliability.

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Parallel Availability for Transition

To ensure a smooth adoption process, the current version of Research Financials will remain accessible **in parallel with the new MicroStrategy dashboard until January 31, 2025**. This overlap allows users to familiarize themselves with the new platform while still having access to the existing system. The new version can be accessed via the [MicroStrategy Finance Menu](#), alongside other grant-related reports.

Next Steps

Training and Support: An online training resource for the new MicroStrategy dashboard is available [here](#).

Access Details: The dashboard is automatically available to users with Banner finance access, principal investigators (PIs) on sponsored projects, and financial managers on funds—no additional access requests are required.

We appreciate your patience and collaboration as we complete this transition, and we look forward to providing a better user experience on the MicroStrategy platform.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us at genactg@vt.edu.

REMINDER: 60-Day Tax Submission Requirement

As a reminder, the Controller's Office will strictly enforce the 60-day tax submission requirement for travel and non-travel reimbursement requests submitted after January 1, 2025. This change was first announced in the [November 8th Ledger Article](#). For more details, please refer to the November 8th article and [Procedure P20335F: 60-Day Limitation for Business Expense Reporting under Accountable Plan](#).

Important Note for Non-Travel Expense Reports

When completing a non-travel expense report, the **transaction date** entered in the report must align with:

- The date listed on the receipt, or
- The date listed on the supporting expenditure documentation.

Chrome River uses the transaction date entered in the expense report to calculate the 60-day requirement. **Do not enter the date the Chrome River expense report was generated unless the expenditure was incurred on the same day the report was processed.**

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Top 5 Reasons Chrome River Travel Expense Reports are Returned

The following outlines the most common reasons travel expense reports are returned. Please remember that the university's travel procedures apply to **all employees, students, and guests**. It is the sponsoring department's responsibility to ensure all guests are aware of these procedures. For any questions prior to committing university funds or booking travel accommodations, contact travel@vt.edu.

1. Cost comparisons when combining personal and business travel

Travelers must document that personal travel does not result in additional costs to the university. Attach comparable price quotes for airfare at the time of booking, reflecting the cost for business travel dates. **Historical airfare prices are not available after travel occurs**, so it is essential to secure documentation at the time of booking. Reimbursement will only cover the cost of business travel.

2. Conference travel without meal deductions

Any meals provided by a conference must be deducted from the traveler's per diem. To support a reimbursement for full per diem, attach supporting documentation such as the agenda, program, or registration details showing no meals were provided. If using a link for documentation, include the link in the **comments section for the first day of meal per diem**.

3. Itemization of hotel receipts

Hotel receipts must be fully itemized to ensure compliance with lodging per diem rates.

- If circumstances or budget justify it, the traveler's authorized approver may allow up to **100% above GSA, State Department, or Department of Defense rates** for domestic and international lodging.
- Expenses such as room service must be allocated to the **personal/non-reimbursable expense** category in Chrome River.

4. Lodging location when no lodging receipt is submitted

Per diem amounts are determined by lodging location. Even if lodging is not included on the expense report, the lodging location (city and zip code) must be included in the **comments section** to ensure the traveler receives the correct per diem.

5. Rental vehicle class above 'full-size'

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If a vehicle above the 'full-size' classification is rented (e.g., SUVs or trucks), provide a **justification for the business need** in the **comments section** of the expense report.

The UK Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA)

The United Kingdom is introducing an Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) system to enhance border security and streamline entry process for travelers. Here's what you need to know:

What is the UK ETA?

The UK ETA is a digital travel authorization required for visitors from visa exempt countries who wish to enter the United Kingdom. It allows the UK government to screen travelers before they arrive and ensures a smoother entry process.

Who needs the UK ETA?

- **Non- UK and Non-Irish Citizens:** Travelers who are not UK or Irish citizens and do not already require a visa to enter the UK.
- **Citizens of Visa-Exempt countries:** This includes nationals from countries like the United States, Canada, Australia, and EU member states.

Implementation Timeline

- **January 8, 2025:** ETA requirement begins for non-European nationals, including those from the US and Australia.
- **April 2, 2025:** ETA requirement extends to European visitors.

How to Apply for a UK ETA

- **Online Application:** Complete the application through the UK government's official platform or via the **UK ETA app**, available on the App Store or Google Play
- **Information Required:**
 - Valid passport (will need to upload or take photos)
 - Face of person applying (will need to take photo)
 - Personal details, including contact information
 - Access to your email
- **Processing Time:** Typically, decisions are provided within 3 working days.
 - Travelers are advised to apply well in advance of their trip.

Cost

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- **Fee:** £10 (GBP) per applicant (reimbursable in the trip expense report).
- **Payment Methods:** credit card, debit card, Apple Pay or Google Pay
- **Non-Refundable:** The fee is not refundable after application submission.

Duration and Validity

- **Stay Duration:** Allows stays of up to 6 months for tourism, business or family visits.
- **Validity:** The ETA is valid for two years or until your passport expires, whichever comes first.

Entry Requirements with an ETA

An ETA is not a visa. Travelers must still meet standard entry requirements, such as showing proof of sufficient funds, accommodation, and the purpose of their visit.

Exemptions

Irish Citizens: Do not require an ETA.

Existing UK Visas or Residence Permits: Individuals with valid UK visas or residence permits are exempt.

For the most accurate and up-to-date information, refer to the official UK government website: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-an-electronic-travel-authorisation-eta>