

Business Expenses Policy Schedule 1 - Allowable Expenses

Schedule 1 - Allowable Expenses Guidance

(1) These schedules are not exhaustive lists. Where it is unclear whether an expense is allowable, staff must discuss with their manager prior to incurring the expense. RMIT travellers incurring business expenses must also refer to the [Travel Policy](#).

| Expense | Commentary |
|---------------------------|---|
| Gifts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As an overarching principle gifts should not be cash or cash equivalents. If gift vouchers are given, they should be specific for the occasion – not supermarket or liquor store vouchers. The exception to this is gifts used for research purposes and approved by a member of the UEC. In these cases, a full register must be maintained, noting the date of the gift, the purpose and the recipient. The register must be available for audit purposes as needed. A gift for a departing employee - the amount should be reasonable, equitable and commensurate with length of service, nature of the position and conditions of the departure. An amount of \$25 per year of service is reasonable, up to a maximum of \$250, and the gift should be arranged by the relevant people leader. In addition, a farewell function of modest value may be arranged based on sound judgement and the number of people attending, approved by the relevant people leader. Managers should contact People Connect for advice on gratuities for retiring employees. A gift to an employee for a significant professional accomplishment such as a promotion, or professional award, recognition of outstanding effort or significant personal event such as the birth of a child or death of a family member where the value is limited to \$150 (GST inclusive). A gift of modest value may be given to an individual not employed by RMIT in recognition of an event. These would most typically be to students, alumni, and friends who have provided volunteer service and leadership to RMIT. It would also include a gift to a host when traveling. Any show of appreciation should be consistent with RMIT policy and should not exceed \$150 (GST inclusive). |
| 25 Years' Service Award | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 25 Years' Service Award recognises employees who have completed 25 years of continuous service with the University. Recipients receive a certificate and a gift of their choice—typically a suitably engraved ornament, artwork, or other item of enduring value—up to a maximum of \$1,000 (plus GST). The process is initiated by the People team, and any variation to the award value must be approved by the Vice President, People and Culture. The cost of the award is charged to the relevant cost centre. The award is presented at a dedicated recognition event and is separate from any Retirement Gratuities. For further information or advice on this or other service awards, please contact the People team. |
| Reimbursements (research) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Payments (treated as reimbursements) to participants in ethics approved RMIT human research projects and activities are permitted under this policy, subject to the following conditions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> auditable records must be retained payments must remain appropriate, in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) Central Finance Operations must be consulted prior to any payments being made (note that RMIT no longer handles cash, but real time electronic transfers to Australian bank accounts can be facilitated). |

| Expense | Commentary |
|--------------------------|--|
| Meals/Entertainment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As an overarching principle, in any business-related meal or entertainment event involving multiple RMIT staff members, the most senior staff member present is required to pay for the expenses. In all cases, a list of attendees including titles, total number of attendees, and the business purpose of the meeting needs to be provided along with the original receipts in order for the expense to be covered. Food and beverage expenses are allowable when provided for legitimate RMIT-related business reasons and are 'reasonable' based on sound judgment, nature of the event and the number of people attending. As a guide, to what would be considered reasonable, please refer to the most current Taxation Determination from the Australian Taxation Office entitled 'Income Tax: what are the reasonable travel and overtime meal allowance expense amounts for the 20XX-XX income year'. Please note that while ATO guidance sets out both the reasonable amounts and exemptions from substantiation, RMIT requires that all expenses are substantiated. Coffee or lunch meetings with colleagues are not allowable expenses unless they are attending to RMIT business and include meeting with people from another organisation. Tipping in Australia is not an allowable expense but may be necessary in some countries – use local guidelines to determine if tipping is the norm and the tip, if required, should not exceed 20% of the total value of the bill. With respect to providing food and beverages during work-related meeting, organisers of meetings should take appropriate steps to ensure that where possible meetings are not held over meal times (such as early mornings, 12 noon to 2pm or after 6pm) but if schedules require it, the cost of the meal or beverages is an allowable expense, in line with the principles of this policy – that is, it is necessary, reasonable and appropriate. If the food/entertainment is used as a reward, morale booster for colleagues or for entertaining travelling/visiting colleagues, these situations must be modest and non-repetitive in nature. As a rule, spouse/partner meals are not reimbursable. Circumstances where a spouse's (or guest's) meal would be reimbursable as a business expense would be in the rare circumstance where RMIT requires the presence of a spouse/partner to further an institutional purpose. |
| Alcohol | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When consumed with food or as part of other necessary business entertainment and the alcohol component is not the primary expenditure submitted for reimbursement. In all cases alcohol must be consumed responsibly. Gifts of alcohol given in recognition of a staff member's contribution to special RMIT events, such as planning or strategy days or speaking at a RMIT event, or for a special occasion, with a limit of \$100 (GST inclusive) are allowable. Individuals are not permitted to take alcohol home that has been purchased by RMIT funds and which isn't a gift to the individual. |
| Festive celebrations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only Christmas or festive season functions approved by a member of the UEC and within the allowance provided for the function in the annual budget. |
| Academic gown hire | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The hiring of academic dress for attendance at RMIT and/or academic related events, where such attire is required. |
| Laundry/Dry-cleaning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should be covered within the staff member's travel allowance if one is being claimed. If not, it will be approved only on business related travel where the journey exceeds 5 nights. |
| Parking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parking at approved airport or other parking stations where this is a lower cost option than taxis and when its related to RMIT business. Note: evidence may be required to substantiate the lower cost. |
| Taxi/Ridesharing service | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When travelling for RMIT business or where a function/work day ends late in the evening. Corporate cars and limousines are not authorised unless approved by a UEC member and only in exceptional circumstances. The most cost-effective means of transportation must be used while on RMIT-related activities. For the purposes of this policy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taxi refers to as a metered taxi service Ridesharing service refers to transport provided by a company that matches passengers with vehicles via websites and mobile apps (i.e., Uber or DiDi). |
| Fuel/mileage/tolls | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fuel should only be claimed where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A RMIT pool vehicle is used and the fuel card associated with the vehicle is not available or accepted. A hire vehicle in used compliance with the Travel Policy is refueled. An Employee in the course of the duties is required to use their private motor vehicle on RMIT- related business, they may be reimbursed at the 'cents per kilometre' rates set by the ATO, subject to obtaining prior approval from an executive (E1 and above) to use the private motor vehicle, and submission of a declaration stating the date, purpose of trip, number of kilometers and type of vehicle. For the avoidance of doubt, this may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Travel between RMIT campuses; or Travel from an RMIT campus to another authorised location. Not for travel between your personal residence/home and normal place of work. Toll charges may only be claimed where an RMIT pool vehicle is used for an approved business purpose; the vehicle registration number must be quoted on supporting documentation. Where a corporate card is used to pay for fuel or tolls, records must be maintained to evidence the journey and cost. Evidence must be shown that these costs are not personal expenses. |

| Expense | Commentary |
|--|--|
| Public Transport | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When travelling for RMIT-related business. |
| Hotels/Accommodation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When you are travelling for RMIT related business and booked in accordance with the Travel Policy. Where there isn't a hotel on the list for the location you are travelling to then a good guide for reasonable cost is \$300 in Australia. International locations should consider local standards when determining what is reasonable and a similar test should be considered for other offshore locations. When a conference organiser provides pre-negotiated rates for accommodation close to or at the venue the traveller may book that accommodation subject to the conditions under the Travel Policy. Airbnb or the use of other shared economy rental services without a reception desk, are not permitted but may be used in exceptional circumstances only. Conditions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> approval is sought 30 days prior to travel the travel period exceeds 28 nights duration the traveller must provide evidence to justify why staying in this property is necessary (e.g. location, availability, cost, condition of previously signed agreement) and have UEC member approval the traveller must provide a statement acknowledging that the necessary due diligence has been undertaken to ensure the accommodation is appropriate for the travel situation, meets work needs and the traveller accepts all responsibility for their personal safety, and that of anyone staying with them. In accordance with the Travel Policy, all travel not booked via RMIT Travel Management Company must be manually entered by the traveller via the International SOS MyTrips Registration Tool or via the International SOS Forwarding Itinerary functionality. (https://www.rmit.edu.au/content/dam/rmit/au/en/staff/documents/service-and-tools/MyTripsUserGuide.pdf) |
| Printing, photocopying or hotel internet | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If required for business purposes and no other option is available. |
| RMIT issued mobile devices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The cost centre manager authorises a corporate mobile device to be assigned to an employee. The mobile device remains the property of RMIT at all times. Occasional and low-cost personal use is acceptable when related to work activity (for example, when working away from the office or outside of normal working hours to confirm safe arrival or notify delay.) Unacceptable and high-cost personal use may be subject to reimbursement. It is the responsibility of the authorised user and relevant cost centre to arrange repairs on damaged devices. |
| Non-RMIT issued mobile charges | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where staff have a claim for the costs of reasonable and genuine business use of their personal mobile communication devices, they may submit a request for reimbursement to their manager via RMIT's expense reimbursement system (Workday). The claim should be limited to the business use element of the charge and must not exceed \$25 per month. |
| Professional association memberships and professional registration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where the individual is required to remain accredited in order to fulfil the responsibilities of their role and limited to one per year, unless otherwise approved by a UEC member. |
| Professional development study support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reasonable travel and accommodation related expenses relating to approved professional development and/or the maintenance of professional accreditation (as defined in the Employee Lifecycle Policy). RMIT's Travel Policy must be followed. |
| Publications and Journals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where related to the employee's responsibilities and intended to increase business or educational knowledge. Limit of one (1) modest subscription per year, of no more than \$200. Staff must allocate the expense to a research account where relevant. RMIT's Library has many enterprise-wide subscriptions to publications and must be consulted first before any new subscriptions are taken out. |
| Passport, Visa and work permit fees | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The cost of passports is generally not reimbursable. In the rare circumstance where a passport is required for the first time to enable work travel, or where an employee is required to regularly travel as a core part of their role (>5 trips per year), the cost may be covered at the manager's discretion. Any business travel related visa or permit costs can be claimed. |
| Vaccinations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vaccinations for specific RMIT related travel destinations are permitted as specified in our Travel Policy. |
| Training and conferences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As covered in work plans, where attendance has been approved by an executive (E1 and above) within the approved budget. |
| Off sites, retreat and away days | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only as approved by a member of the UEC and within the following guidelines: structured to minimise travel and accommodation costs, meal costs to be aligned with guidance provided above and modest team building activities or entertainment. Where possible, RMIT's events team should be used to identify appropriate locations and activities. Where the event is explicitly approved within the relevant budget area, further approval at UEC level is not required. |

| Expense | Commentary |
|---------------------------|--|
| Sponsorship | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sponsorship of external teams or other external groups with a value less than \$10K and with the approval of a UEC member. |
| Research expenses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any research expenses must comply with the policy. Costs must be allocated to the relevant research grant or fund and must be in accordance with any grant or funding contractual requirements. Where the grant or contract is inconsistent with this policy, advice should be sought from the Research Integrity and Governance Team. |
| Engagement of Individuals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An individual may be engaged by RMIT as a sole-trader for a variety of reasons – such as to consult or present in their field or expertise, or as an artist/musician/photographer. The appropriateness and allowability of such costs should follow the general principles outlined in this policy. Where such an engagement is to occur, staff members should refer to guidance found via the Engagement of Individual Guide for RMIT Staff, or consult with People Connect ahead of any agreement to work being completed, so as to advise on the appropriate means of payment/engagement. RMIT staff should not receive payments from RMIT other than through their salary/payroll. |

Status and Details

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Status | Current |
| Effective Date | 6th August 2025 |
| Review Date | 6th August 2030 |
| Approval Authority | University Executive Committee |
| Approval Date | 23rd July 2025 |
| Expiry Date | Not Applicable |
| Policy Owner | Fiona Notley Chief Operating Officer |
| Policy Author | Daniel Ryan Director, Central Finance Operations |
| Enquiries Contact | Central Finance Operations |