

Cell Phone & Data Access Policy

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Who is eligible for a technology allowance?

First and foremost, the technology allowance is for the benefit of the University, rather than for the convenience of the employee.

Eligible employees must meet all of the following:

- *Required*, as part of their job, to be readily accessible for frequent or critical contact with the public, University administrators, faculty, staff, or students; and
- The requirement for accessibility extends to time away from campus (at home or traveling), involves on-call responsibilities, or the employee's job limits his or her access to regular land-line telephones or data/Internet access that would satisfy the required business communication needs; and
- A *strong* business case can be made that supports the University incurring the cost of the service.

Approving technology allowances are at the discretion on each department head and require approval from the appropriate Dean or Vice President or their designee.

2. What are the responsibilities of the employee in receiving a technology allowance?

University employees who qualify for and receive a technology allowance will be responsible for:

- Acquiring and maintaining their equipment;
- Paying all amounts due as agreed between the employee and their service provider;
- Providing their department head with current access numbers within five working days of activation;
- Retain an active cellular service, data service or Internet service contract as long as the allowance is in place;
- Notifying their department head within five working days of inactivation of the device. An employee is prohibited from continuing to collect a monthly allowance when the device is no longer active or needed for the performance of the employee's job responsibilities;
- Notifying their department head within five working days of the selection of a cellular phone plan at a significantly lower amount;
- Confirming in writing, by signing the Technology Allowance form, that the University has no obligation or makes no guarantees with respect to such service contracts and is not obligated to continue payment for any reason.
- For University owned equipment - Reporting to their department their personal use of a university owned phone/plan on a regular basis, as determined within the department.

3. What are the responsibilities of the employee's department in setting up a technology allowance for an employee?

The department is responsible for the following:

- Determining whether the employee's position requires a portable communication device, data plan or remote Internet service based on his or her job duties and responsibilities;
- Determining whether the employee meets all eligibility requirements defined in [Policy 9.46](#);
- Approving the Request for Technology Allowance form and attaching a copy of the employee's monthly statement for the appropriate service;
- The department head must review prior billings to confirm monthly usage for initial and on-going eligibility;
- Authorization for supplemental compensation must be reviewed and renewed at least annually and must be authorized by a Dean or VP or their designee; and
- Terminating the monthly allowance payments to the employee upon termination, transfer, device inactivation or when the device is no longer required as part of the employee's responsibilities.

4. Can technology allowance stipends be paid for on 4xxx and 5xxx funds?

No. Stipends cannot be a paid from these funds. Please see Office of Sponsored Programs for exceptions to the policy.

5. How do I determine an appropriate amount to be paid as a monthly stipend allowance?

Departments should determine the amount of the reimbursement based on the percentage usage of the device for business. If the employee currently has a departmental phone, the current cost may be a good basis for the allowance. A copy of a monthly bill must be attached to the Technology Allowance Form. Refer to the procedure document accompanying the policy at www.uni.edu/obo

6. What form do I fill out to request a technology allowance?

Department Procedure:

- Request for Technology Allowance form (paper form) must be filled out by each eligible employee (This form is located at www.uni.edu/obo).
 - The actual cost of the employee's individual plan, i.e incremental cost if on a shared plan, must be documented with a copy of the bill.
 - The plan or phone number must be in the employee's name.
 - Cell phone and Internet access request may be on the same form for each employee.
 - Submit the form to payroll at MC 0008 for processing on the next month's payroll.

7. Where can I find IRS information on employee use of cell phones?

The IRS has employee cell phone information on their web site at:

<http://www.irs.gov/Businesses/Small-Businesses-&Self-Employed/Small-Business-Jobs-Act-of-2010-Tax-Provisions#2043>

8. How will technology allowances be reported to the IRS?

The salary allowances for cell phone and data use will not be reported on the employees' W-2s and will not be subject to withholding taxes. **Remote Internet will be taxable to the employee.**

9. Can a department authorize a stipend for less than 12 months if the department wants to pay for services on a short term basis?

Yes.

10. If an employee terminates, or transfers out of the department, what should the department do?

The department should notify payroll to stop the payment of the technology allowance payments. If the employee is transferring to another department a new form should be submitted to reinstate the technology allowance. If the employee has terminated the technology allowance will be ended when the TRM PAF is processed. The department will be charged for uncollected overpayments.

11. If an employee qualifies for both a cell phone and Internet access can the approval for both be processed on one Request for Technology Allowance form?

Yes.

12. Who may approve the Request for Technology Allowance form?

The employee's department head must approve the form, along with the respective Dean or VP or their designee.

13. Do eligible employees have to complete a new Request for Technology Allowance Form every year?

Yes, the approval is only valid through December of the first year and should be resubmitted each year in December for the next 1 year period.

14. Will the employee be responsible for acquiring and maintaining the equipment?

Yes.

15. Are there any circumstances where an employee may be reimbursed for the cost of the equipment for a cell phone or PDA?

Departments may make a one-time taxable payment to the employee through the payroll system not to exceed the actual documented cost of the cellular device only. When applicable, these types of reimbursements may not be made more than once every two years. In all cases, the employee assumes ownership and all maintenance responsibility for the equipment. Lost or stolen phones will not be reimbursed. Additional equipment such as batteries, holders, memory and charges are not normally allowable.

16. How does the department address a situation where an employee traveling with personal cell phone on UNI business wants reimbursement for minutes used conducting UNI business? The minutes used did not cause the employee to exceed their monthly minute plan. What does the department do if the employee wants reimbursement for a percent of their personal bill?

The University can only reimburse the employee for additional documented costs incurred by the employee in making such calls. In such cases where the monthly minute plan is not exceeded no reimbursement is due.

17. Can the amount of the allowance be “grossed up for taxes”?

No.

18. Does remote access apply to Internet service purchased during travel situations?

No, this policy does not apply to that situation. Such reimbursement should be treated as travel expenses and sought at the same time as other travel expense reimbursement.

19. If an employee is not eligible per the policy to receive a stipend, can they still be reimbursed for business calls?

Employees who do not qualify for the supplemental compensation may submit a reimbursement request for occasional, incremental business expenses. Incremental business expenses are those calls that result in additional costs that are above and beyond the employee's normal calling plan (e.g., excess minutes, roaming charges).

When requesting reimbursement, the telecommunication expenses incurred by employees must be additional (incremental) costs, and must be substantiated and documented with a copy of the bill in accordance with University policy and applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

An example of a bona fide policy exception would be occasions where employees are traveling for University business and make calls to work that involve roaming charges. The University may reimburse those employees for their additional out of pocket roaming charges.

20. How is this policy beneficial to the employee?

Employees, who typically carry two communication devices, one for personal and one for business, can now eliminate the second device and should save money on their personal plan. The employee does not need to keep track of the personal versus business calls.

21. How is this policy beneficial to the University?

The IRS has recently changed its position on how cell phones are treated. This policy should align our institution with the IRS regulation related to communication device usage. In addition, the amount of paper work and audit of communication device usage will be decreased from a monthly review and payment, to an annual process.

22. If the individual has a family plan, is the cost determined by dividing the total plan cost by the number of phones.

The stipend should be based on the amount of expense incurred for the employee's line.

23. Are there any exceptions to this policy for staff using the communication device or internet for 100% business, i.e. will the University pay 100% of the related cost?

No, there are **no** exceptions for 100% business usage.

24. With the contract we currently have, it includes email and text messaging. How do those expenses "fit in" with the policy regarding reimbursement?

If text messages are required by the employee's position, you can make a case that the cost should be considered as part of the stipend.

25. Are there restrictions on the type of equipment that may be purchased that would qualify for reimbursement? For example, could a staff member purchase an iPhone and be reimbursed even though it provides other uses beyond being a cell phone?

iPhones are an allowable device through the technology allowance policy.

26. Can the department pay for the data service on PDA's or Smartphones directly?

Data only service for PDA's, Smartphones and iPads are covered by this policy and should be converted to a stipend for the employee.

27. If for any reason the department decides during the two-year contract that the staff member no longer must carry a cell phone for business, can the department pay any penalties incurred by the staff member when he either 1) decreases his monthly minutes for lack of the business requirement or 2) cancels his contract all together.

The University is not responsible for the penalties incurred in either of these situations.

28. Can accessories and insurance be part of the stipend or be reimbursed?

Monthly insurance is the personal choice of the employee and cannot be paid for by a stipend or reimbursed.

Accessories are the personal responsibility of the employee and cannot be paid for by a stipend or reimbursed.