Entertainment FAQ

Our CoLA OOEFP policy is to supplement the university’s entertainment policy. It is not meant to be inclusive of all scenarios, but to focus on common compliance issues.

An “official occasion” is defined as a reception, luncheon, dinner, or similar event that is sponsored and funded by The University of Texas at Austin and is often hosted by an administrative officer. Events are allowable as long as there is a clearly stated business purpose and benefit to the university.

Overall policy clarification

Does this policy change if we use the procard or direct bill?

No, the policy applies to all entertainment purchases regardless of billing method.

What should be included in the Purpose of the Event field?

Please supply a brief explanation of the purpose of the event.

University examples:

- “Refreshments were provided at meeting to discuss joint research projects between UT Austin, Texas A&M, Texas Tech, and Motorola.”
- “Buffet was provided at reception for graduate students to meet new faculty members in the department.”
- “Lunch was provided to people attending all day meeting of the department’s visiting committee.”

What should be included in the Benefit to the University of Texas field?

Please supply a brief explanation of how this event is expected to benefit the university or the benefits already derived from the event.

University examples:

- “To further the relationship between higher education and industry in the area of microchip research. Motorola has entered into an agreement to provide funding for 3 years to the research consortium between the universities.”
- “The visiting committee provides the department with guidance in the direction the department should be going with respect to educational issues.”

Alcohol

Is alcohol allowable at a dinner with a guest lecturer?

Yes, as long as the meeting has a business purpose and benefits the university but cannot be more than 50% of the bill.

What is a developmental purpose?

This includes fundraising, research, and community outreach meetings.

What makes a donor event?

A donor event is one that is focused on stewardship and future fundraising. This is not any event where one donor is present.

Administrative/Business Meetings

What are examples of administrative/business meetings?

- Monthly meetings for faculty and/or staff to discuss departmental operations.
- Chair or Director taking out staff for lunch to encourage collaboration and discuss UT business.
- Chair or Director has a meeting with faculty member to discuss UT business.
- Chair or Director meeting with donors to promote stewardship and further future fundraising.

Can we still hold our monthly faculty-graduate student events?

Yes, you may still hold monthly faculty-student events as long as there is a business purpose and benefit to the university.

Recruitment/Visitors
Is it possible to invite more than 3 UT employees to a meal with a distinguished guest or recruit?

No, the limit of UT affiliates at a meal with a distinguished guest is 3. However, if you have 2 distinguished guests, 6 UT affiliates may attend. Note: Under special circumstances we can allow flexibility for up to 4 UT affiliates, however these requests should be limited. For consideration, you must submit an OOEF for preapproval.

Does this policy apply to graduate student recruitment as well?

Yes, the policy applies to all recruitment events.

What is an example of a distinguished guest?

Examples include an annual lecturer or senior faculty member.

Does this policy of 3 UT employees apply to recruitment receptions as well?

No, this policy is to reduce the costs associated with a sit-down meal for numerous people as a means of recruitment. Receptions for a larger group with hors d'oeuvres or a light lunch (ex. sandwich trays) are still allowable within this policy.

Employee/Staff Celebrations

Are we allowed to have holiday or annual events?

Yes, you can continue to host events per the university rules stated in HBP 9.1.1.

Can we still host semesterly departmental welcomes?

Yes, you can continue to host events per the university rules stated in HBP 9.1.1.

Food for Organized Classes

Can I purchase ongoing food/snacks for my class?

No, food may not be routinely (more than 1-2 times per semester) purchased for organized classes. Examples of infrequent occasions include: hosting a guest lecturer and end of the year presentations.

Can I be reimbursed for an end of semester event or meeting with my students outside of class?

Yes, you may be reimbursed for an "end of semester wrap-up", "coffee meeting", or light lunch with students.