

Research Conference Participation

Effective Date: 01/01/2018

Amended: 26/3/2018

All members of academic staff may apply to attend academic conferences within Malaysia and/or overseas, provided attendance is in accordance with the objectives of the academic unit and the University, and with identifiable development needs of academic staff members.

1. Definitions

- (i) **Academic conference:** a meeting of researchers (not necessarily all academics), in a particular discipline or on a particular subject, during which recent research results are presented and discussed.
- (ii) **International conference:** one taking place in a country outside of Malaysia.
- (iii) **Top conference:** one that meets, as a minimum, at least **two** of the following criteria
 - (a) The organizing committee includes academics from global top 400 universities (QS rankings);
 - (b) It includes speakers and participants from global top 400 universities;
 - (c) It is **organized** and/or **sponsored** by a global top 400 university, leading professional body or learned society.

Notes:

- (i) Many conferences use leading universities as a venue, but are not directly organized and/or sponsored by that university. It is not sufficient that the conference is held at a given university; the conference must be organized and/or sponsored by the university.
- (ii) Many for-profit conference organisers exist, some of which are considered by the University as *predatory*. The University recognises some for-profit conferences may be of high quality, but staff are strongly discouraged from attending conferences organized by for-profit companies. Conferences organized by for-profit companies shall be, without additional justification as to why attendance at that conference is appropriate, automatically be rejected.
- (iv) **Asia:** for the purposes of this policy, Asia is defined as the geographic area that consists of countries that are included in the QS Asia Rankings.
- (iii) **Active participant:** one presenting an oral or written paper that has been peer reviewed by the programme committee, or is chairing a session or workshop.

- (iv) **Conference proceedings:** a collection of academic papers delivered at an academic conference that are published in a recognized format and are readily accessible by other researchers.
- (v) **Research active:** published at least one full, indexed journal article (or equivalent) in the last 12 months.

2. ELIGIBILITY

Full-time academic staff members are eligible to apply to attend conferences in Malaysia (referred to as “local” conferences) and overseas (referred to as “international” conferences), and for financial assistance to attend provided that:

- (i) They are research active.
- (ii) The conference is a *recognized* academic conference;
- (iii) The conference is directly relevant to the research interests of the academic staff members, their academic unit and the University;
- (iv) The member of staff is an active participant;
- (v) Papers presented clearly recognize the presenter’s affiliation as Sunway University;
- (vi) The papers/proceedings of the conference published and listed in SCOPUS. For disciplines such as computing where conference papers form a major part of an author’s research output, SCOPUS indexing is a requirement.
- (vii) For international conference attendance, the conference must meet the *top conference criteria*.

International Conferences

Whilst staff will, where appropriate, be supported to attend conferences outside of Malaysia (*i.e.* an international conference), **approval shall normally only be given for conferences held within Asia**. Attendance at conferences beyond Asia shall not normally be approved.

Applicants are responsible for demonstrating that the above criteria are met. Supporting evidence **must be** uploaded to the online request form.

2. CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE

The maximum number of days permissible for conference attendance is twelve (12) working days per calendar year, with or without financial assistance.

If conference attendance is requested during semester/term times, satisfactory arrangements to cover teaching and other commitments must be made and endorsed by the Dean/ HOD. The budget allocations will be notified to the Head of Department/Centre/Unit at the start of the year. Spending shall be monitored by HR and the REO, and Heads provided with periodic budget statements. Once allocated funds have been exhausted, it will not be possible to provide any further financial support for conference attendance.

Conference attendance, if approved, will be granted for the duration of the conference only, including the shortest reasonable traveling time between the place of work of the academic staff member and the conference venue.

3. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Each Department/Centre/Unit will be allocated an annual budget for conference support.

Subject to budget availability, eligible staff members **may apply for** financial assistance to attend both local and international conferences. Support will be given to attend a not more than two (2) conferences in any one year: the maximum financial assistance shall not exceed RM12000 in any one financial year. The University shall only approve such costs as it deems reasonable, and staff are expected to seek external funding to support attendance wherever possible.

3.1 Qualification for Financial Assistance

In all cases, the relevance of the conference to the academic interests of staff members and their academic unit, and the benefits likely to accrue to the University from the attendance will be taken into account.

To qualify for financial assistance to participate in an international conference:

- (a) The conference must be recognized by the University as being of significant reputational standing in the field (see definitions); and
- (b) The academic staff member attending must be an active participant of the conference (see definitions).

The academic staff member shall submit a *Financial Reconciliation Report* to the Dean/ HOD within four (4) weeks of their return from a conference.

3.2 Eligible Items of Expenditure

The financial assistance will normally only be provided for the items of expenditure identified below. The estimated amount requested for each item of expenditure will be proposed in the application form by academic staff members in consultation with the Dean/ HOD and/ or HRD.

- (a) **Travel.** All academic staff members will travel economy class in Malaysia and worldwide, with approved airlines. The University will provide a return economy class airfare to the conference venue via the cheapest reasonable route.

Mileage claims may be provided for local conferences at prevailing rates.

- (b) **Overseas Travel Insurance.** The University provides comprehensive insurance cover for academic staff members for the period they will be traveling to attend a conference. Details can be obtained from the HRD.

- (c) **Airport Transfers.** Airport transfers will be paid in full by the University, based on official receipts as part of the financial allocation. Academic staff members are reminded to keep all receipts for reconciliation of accounts.
- (d) **Conference Registration.** Conference registration fees are fully paid for by the University based on the official announcements by the conference organizers. Academic staff are required to submit a copy of the official brochure indicating the registration fee. If the registration fee is a package payment including accommodation and meals, then the University will not provide financial assistance for those items for the period of the conference. Academic staff member is to file the official registration fee receipt upon return.
- (e) **Accommodation.** Academic staff members are expected to stay in hotels/ motels/ housing recommended by the conference organizers. Academic staff members will select lower to medium range accommodation arranged for the conference. Academic staff members are required to submit a copy of the Conference Brochure with information on accommodation rates. Extra costs associated with upgrading of hotel rooms will be borne by staff themselves.

The University will pay/ subsidize the accommodation of the academic staff member at single occupancy rate only and will not pay for additional expenses incurred by accompanying family members or others.

If academic staff members opt to stay with relatives or friends while attending conferences, the University will not reimburse any cost for accommodation. Cost of internal traveling associated with staying outside of the conference venue may be reimbursed subject to availability of approved funds and the cost of travel being no more than the cost of the lowest hotel rate offered by the conference organizers.

- f) **Subsistence Allowance.** Subsistence allowance may be claimed and, where approved, will always be paid in Malaysian Ringgit. The subsistence allowance rates vary depending on the region in which the conference is held. Details can be obtained from Travelling on Company Business policy.

If the registration fee is a package payment which includes meals/ some meals, the University will not provide subsistence allowance for those meals already paid for.

Meal allowances are normally not provided before and during flights but will commence on arrival at the conference locations. Wherever possible, academic staff members are requested to submit, together with their applications, official

conference programmes to facilitate calculation of subsistence allowances before departure. Normally, it is not required for academic staff members to present receipts for subsistence allowances on return.

Other items of expenditure are not normally reimbursable, unless there is a demonstrated benefit to the University and have received prior approval from the Provost or his/her representative and the HRD.

An advance in Ringgit (calculated at prevailing exchange rates for international travel), up to the maximum amount approved, may be requested before departure. Academic staff members are expected to file a *Staff Business Related Reimbursement Form* via eClaim System with official receipts attached to reconcile all money advanced to them except subsistence allowances.

4. APPLICATION PROCESS

Academic staff members who wish to apply for conference attendance and/ or financial assistance must complete the appropriate application form via the eLead System and provide all details as specified in the form.

The completed application form, with all supporting documents attached, must be submitted as early as possible to allow time for processing of the application. The supporting documents required are as follows:

- (a) Application for conference attendance only: supporting documents must include (i) a copy of the official conference brochure or link to the official website; (ii) a copy of, or link to, the proceedings of the previous conference in the series (if applicable); and (iii) the letter of invitation to participate in the conference from the Conference Organizing Committee, letter of acceptance of the paper and/ or registration form, where applicable.
- (b) Application for conference attendance and financial assistance: supporting documents must include (i) all the documents stated in paragraph 4(a); and (ii) supporting evidence listed in Section 2.

Note: applicants must provide appropriate evidence that demonstrates that the conference and the applicant meets the eligibility criteria. Applications which fail to provide sufficient and compelling evidence will be rejected.

On receipt of the completed form, the HOD shall check the eligibility of the academic staff members to apply for conference participation. They will complete the HOD section of the form including, in the case of international conferences, evidence that the conference meets the criteria as a “leading conference” in its field (see Definitions).

The application will then be forwarded to the Dean. If the application is for conference attendance only (i.e. no financial support is requested), such attendance may be granted by the Dean, subject to the condition that the maximum number of days of conference (12 working days per year) shall not be exceeded.

If the application includes an application for financial assistance, the Dean shall forward the application with his/her comments and recommendations to the Provost. The Provost will consider the Dean's and HOD's comments before making his/her decision. The Provost will communicate the decision to the HRD. The decision of the Provost shall be final.

If the application is approved by the Provost, the HRD will be responsible for checking the eligibility of the staff member and compliance of the application with this policy. The HRD will liaise with academic staff member on this, particularly in verifying the estimated costs of attendance. The HRD will work with the academic staff member and the Financial Services Department to facilitate all necessary arrangements, financial and non-financial, for the conference participation.

If the application is not approved by the Provost, the HRD will inform the academic staff member immediately.

Within four (6) weeks of returning from the conference, academic staff members must file the *Staff Business Related Reimbursement Form* via the eClaim System with official receipts (except subsistence allowance), to reconcile all money advanced to him/ her. Reconciliation of an account in foreign currency will be made at the exchange rate of the day the travel claim is made. The Staff Business Related Reimbursement Form will be forwarded to HRD for final verification. The approved Staff Business Related Reimbursement Form will then be submitted to the Financial Services Department to make reimbursements to the academic staff member or for the academic staff member to return excess money advanced to him/ her.

5. OTHER CRITERIA

5.1 Attendance at the Conference

Staff are required to attend for the full duration of the conference, and must provide a documentary record of attendance when filing the *Staff Business Related Reimbursement Form* (see above).

5.2 Presentation

Staff in receipt of conference support must also give their conference presentation at Sunway University. Presentations, will be arranged at Faculty/School/Centre level. Unless otherwise approved by the Dean/Head of Centre, the presentation must be delivered prior to filing the *Staff Business Related Reimbursement Form* (see above).

5.3 Institutional Repository

In accordance with Sunway Institutional Repository Policy guidelines, the academic staff member must submit to the Library, through the Research

Office, the permitted version of the paper presented at the conference prior to filing the *Staff Business Related Reimbursement Form* (see above) or within ten (10) days of the end of publisher's embargo period, if applicable.