Faculty Guide: Entering Expense Reports (ERs)

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When to submit ERs on your own?

You will want to submit these on your own:

- Simple or straight-forward expense reports like books, office supplies, short trips, etc.
- Expenses that will be charged to your discretionary account
- Expenses that require an exception such as missing receipts, no itemized receipt, date of expense over 90 days old, etc. You can enter these ERs, but instead of hitting "submit," send the ER # to Steven with a note about what kind of exception is needed.

You will still want to submit these to Steven:

- Expenses that will be charged to the department
- Travel expenses for which you received a cash advance

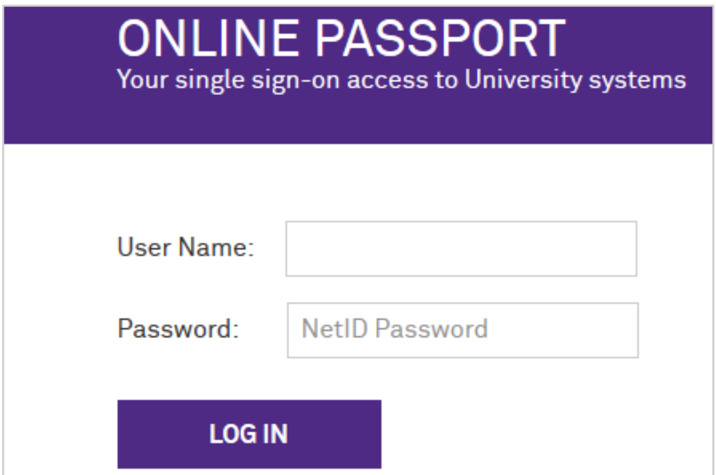
Hint: We are able to see any expense reports you begin in the system. If you start an expense report, then have questions or encounter problems, save your progress and contact Steven. We can either complete the report or help you troubleshoot.

Step-by-step Guide

1. Logging in

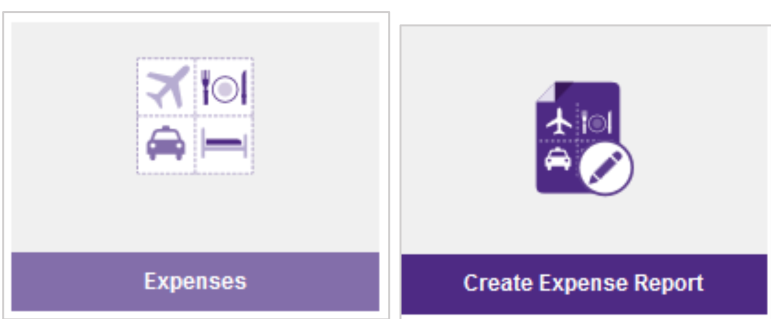
Go to NU Financials here: https://nufin.northwestern.edu/ps/signon.html.

Log in using your net id and password.



2. Create an expense report

In the Employee Self-Service, click the tile **Expenses** then **Create Expense Report.**



3. Fill out **General Information**

a. Select the corresponding **Business Purpose** from the drop-down menu:

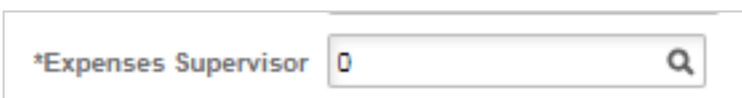
Hint: This is really just meant as a general category—you won't find a perfect fit here, but that really doesn't matter. Mostly, we use either **Site Visit** for travel or **Professional Development** for everything from conferences to office supplies.

b. Then enter a description, to serve as the title of this expense report. Be as descriptive as possible within the character limit.

Hint: For example, don't just enter **Conference** or **Books**; instead write **CAA Conf. Present** or **NY Archive Goya** or **Book Btw Wrdl Traylor** (one title that differentiates this ER from other book ERs). If you have to look up expenses later, seeing a list of ERs titled **Books** won't be very helpful.

c. Leave **Default Location** and **Reference** blank.

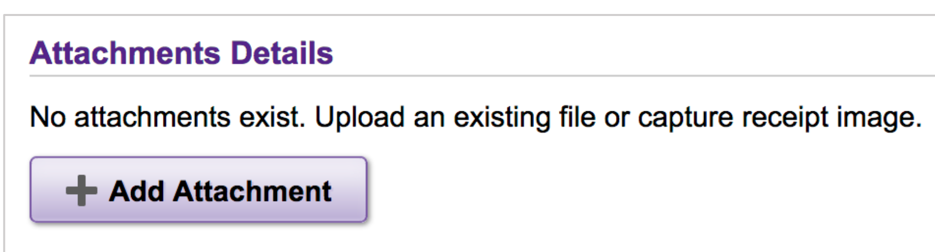
d. Select your **Expense Supervisor** from the drop-down menu:



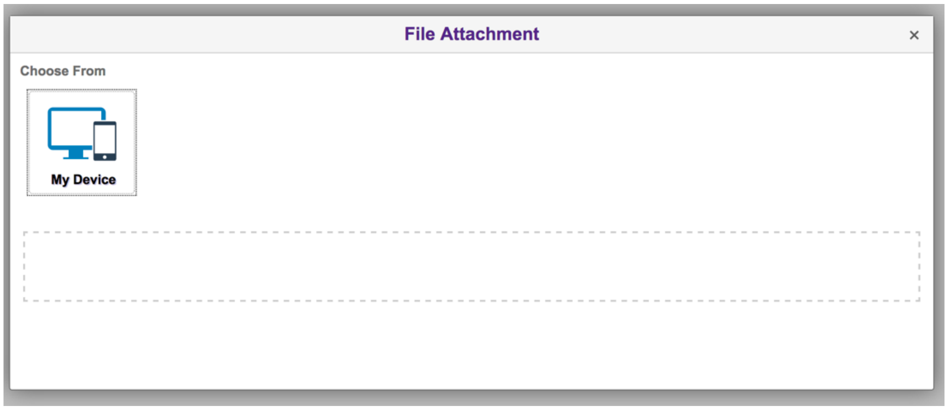
Hint: You may have more than one appointment listed here. It doesn't matter which one you pick, as long as the department is correct. For example, picking your professorship or your chairship doesn't matter, but selecting your affiliate status position with another department, for example, will change how your ER is approved.

e. Click **Attach Receipt**.

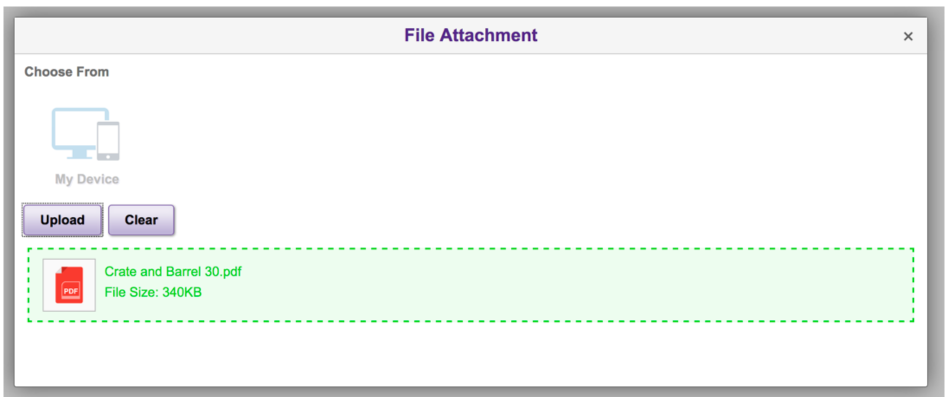
f. Then click **Add Attachment.**



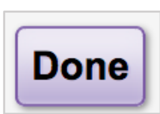
You can either drag a file into the box outlined with a dotted line or click the **My Device** button to browse for the file on your computer. The system only accepts PDFs.



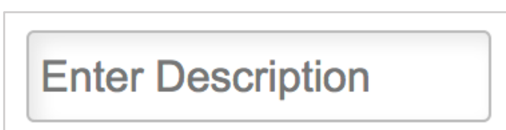
The file will appear in green, then click **Upload**.



Click the **Done** button that appears in the upper left-hand corner of the box.



A new field will appear for you to enter a description (like "Receipt").



Click **Done** in the upper left-hand corner again.

Hint: You must to use the department coversheet, located here for art history and here for classics. Receipts should be listed and attached in order by date, with a number corresponding to the ER coversheet line. Since the ER has to be approved by multiple people, this makes it easier and faster for them to review. Everything should be attached as a singe PDF.

For a guide on how to combine PDFs into one file in Adobe Acrobat, go here: https://helpx.adobe.com/acrobat/11/using/merging-files-single-pdf.html.

For a guide on how to combine PDFs in Preview, go here: https://www.chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/combine-pdfs-in-5-seconds-with-macs-preview/49675.

You can add jpg or png files to a pdf using the same steps indicated in the links.

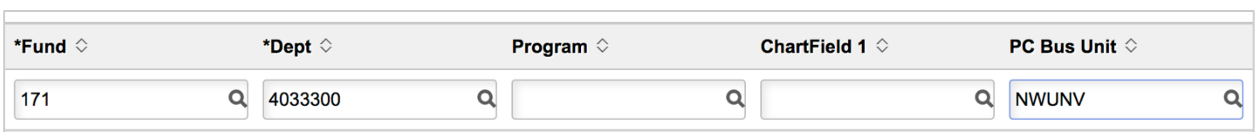
If you have any receipts that are hard to read or confusing, you may want to highlight the expense total to make it easier for the financial office to verify. This can either be done before receipts are scanned, or by using the highlighter tool in Acrobat.

g. Click **Accounting Defaults.**

Click the tab **Show All**.

In the ***Fund** field, enter **171**.

In the ***Dept** field, enter for art history **4033300** and for classics **4033700**.



Scroll to the right. In the **PC Bus Unit** field, enter **NWUNV**.

In the **Project** field, enter your personal discretionary project number. (Steven can provide this if needed.)

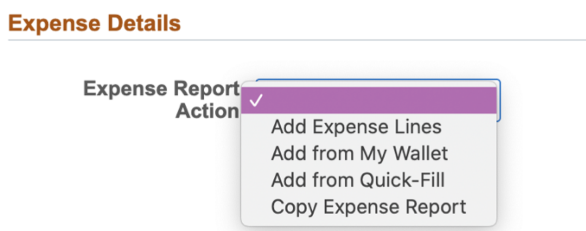
In the **Activity** field, enter **01**.

Then click **Done** in the upper left-hand corner.

Hint: You must enter these numbers in order, from left to right. Otherwise, you will receive an error message. Do not forget this step of entering the **Accounting Defaults.** If you move onto the next step of **Add Expenses** before entering the **Accounting Defaults**, you may have to redo the expense report.

4. Adding Expenses

a. Click the dropdown menu **Expense Report Action** and select **Add Expense Lines**.



Then hit the button on the upper right that says **Update Details.**

On a new screen you will see fields to enter a **New Expense**. Adjust the **Date** to the day the expense occurred (per your receipt).

b. Enter the **Expense Type**.

Hint: There are only certain categories available to choose from. You can enter the expense type in one of two ways. First, you can click the magnifying glass in the field, then click the **All Types** tab in the resulting pop-up window, then scroll through the list and select the closest category. Or you can type in a category, but you have to type the category as it begins (for example **Domestic Airfare** does not show up if you start typing **Airfare**, only if you type **Domestic** first).

For travel expenses, type in either **Foreign** or **Domestic**, and a list of options will appear in a drop-down menu:

- **Airfare**
- **Breakfast** (up to $13)
- **Dinner** (up to $65)
- **Hotel/Motel**
- **Incidentals** (like bottles of water, coffee, or luggage fees)
- **Lunch** (up to $27)
- **Meal – Group**
- **Per Diem**
- **Private Auto Mileage**
- **Public Ground Transpo** (taxis, Uber/Lyft)
- **Rail**
- **Rental Vehicle**
- **Tolls & Parking**
- **Mtg & Conf Fee** (registration fees)

The other non-travel categories I frequently use:

- **Books**
- **Computer Equipment & Supplies**
- **Mailing and Postage**
- **Membership Dues**
- **Moving & Storage**
- **Office Supplies**
- **Printing** (we usually use this for image rights fees)

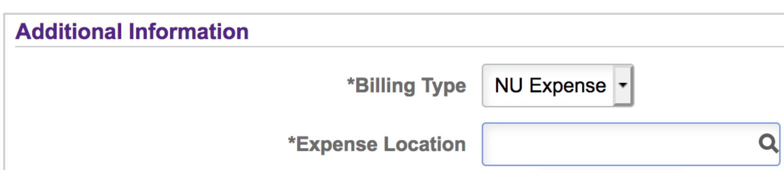
Note that you are selecting the closest category. It may not be a perfect fit. Do not use the following categories, as they will cause the ER to be sent back: **Other Expenses**, **Professional & Consulting Svcs**, **Professional Development**, **Used for Advances**.

c. From the ***Payment** drop-down menu, select **Cash or Personal Credit Card**. All expenses have to be entered in USD, even if they were charged in a different currency (if they were charged in a different currency, you need to attach a separate conversion for each expense, in step 3f, using this site: https://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/).

d. Enter the amount of the expense into the ***Amount** field.

Hint: Make sure that domestic purchases of office supplies and books do not include tax. Shipping fees are allowed.

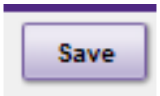
e. If earlier in the **Expense Type** section you selected **Domestic Per Diem**, you have one additional field populated on your screen: **Expense Location**. In that box, type the name of the city you visited.



Hint: If the city does not show up as you type, it may not be in the system (the location is too small or uncommon). Instead, try the name of a larger city near your destination.

When looking up the per diem rate, you are looking for the **M&IE rate**, not the **Maximum Per Diem**. Don't forget that travel days should be 75% of the per diem rate of your destination.

f. Click **Save** in the upper right-hand corner.



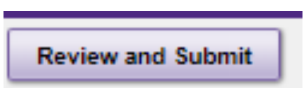
Hint: Make sure to do this after every expense entry so you never lose any work.

g. Continue adding expenses by repeating steps 4a–f until you have added all your expenses.

Hint: Every receipt requires a separate added expense. You cannot lump all ground transportation expenses into one line, for example. This is also true for per diem: it needs to be added a separate line per day. However, if you purchase 5 books in one order, you only need to add the total amount of that order into one line.

5. Submitting

a. Once all the expenses have been entered, click the **Review and Submit** button in the top right-hand corner of the page.



b. On the next page, you will see a **Report ID**. Copy this number for your records.

Hint: If you ever have any problems with an ER, this number will help us find the right report and troubleshoot problems.

c. Verify the **Due to Employee** amount is correct.

Hint: Make sure you have the funds to cover your expense report by checking your current balance in NU Research Portal:

Go to https://researchportal.northwestern.edu/.

Log in with your net ID.

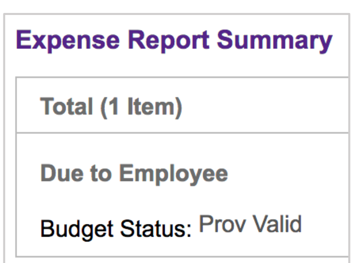
Centered under your name, there are three boxes, labeled Sponsored, Non-sponsored, and Pending. Click on the Non-sponsored box.

A snapshot of your account will appear below. On the right, under **Net Position Balance**, are the funds you have remaining. You may click on any of the listed rows for more detail about that account, however, the screen this opens up can be confusing. On this screen, the funds you have remaining are indicated as **Net Balance** (not Expense Budget Balance, not Net Budget).

Please note: there is no failsafe in the system to keep you from overdrawing your account. If you do overdraw your account, you will be required to reimburse the University, which can be an arduous process.

d. Under **Additional Information** click **View Printable Report**. This will open up a new tab where the whole ER is easy to review (and can be downloaded if necessary). Verify no expenses are missing, duplicated, or incorrect. If you find any errors, close the printable report tab, and click the **Update Details** button on your original tab. This will return you to the **Add Expense** page.

e. If everything is correct, click the **Budget Validation** button in the upper right-hand corner. A spinning wheel will appear in the center of the screen. After it goes away, watch the **Budget Status** on the left side of the page. It should change from **Not Chk'd** to **Prov Valid**.



Hint: <u>Do not</u> press submit <u>before</u> you see the **Budget Status** change to **Prov Valid**, or you may get an error with your report. This kind of error can usually be fixed either by re-pressing the **Budget Validation** button or by logging out and then back in.

f. After you see this change, press **Submit**.

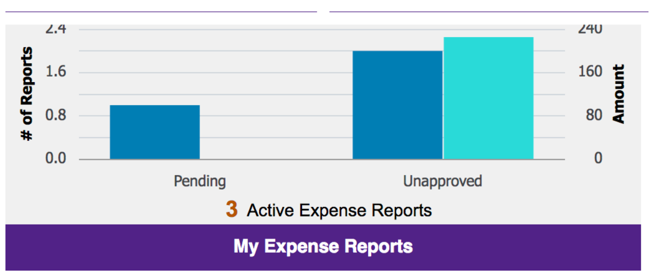
g. A pop-up certification window will appear. Press **Submit** again.

Checking Your ER Status

To check the status of an ER after submission, go to NU Financials: https://nufin.northwestern.edu/ps/signon.html.

Log in using your net id and password.

In the Employee Self-Service, click the tile **Expenses** then **My Expense Reports.**



On the left side of the page, there are five categories:

Returned: These are reports that have been sent back from someone in the approval process. ERs are usually returned if it needs additional information or a correction. Comments in red explain the problem. To fix the problem, click the report line then follow one of the instructions below:

> If you need to upload additional support documents, click the pencil button on the upper left side of the screen, then the **Attachments** button. Follow the instructions in the above guide to attach the additional document.
>
> If you need to fix one of the expense entries, click the **Update Details** button. After making the appropriate changes, the report can be resubmitted following the instructions in the above guide.

Not Submitted: These are reports that are started, but not yet submitted. To continue working on this report or to submit it, click the report line to reopen the ER. Then follow the necessary instructions from the above guide.

Awaiting Approval: These reports are submitted, and going through the approval process. To see where the ER is in that process, click the report line. On the right side of the new screen, under **Approval Status** you can see who has approved the report so far and who still needs to approve. If you see **Pending Approval** above your own name, you need to approve the report so it can advance to the next approval. After reviewing the status, if you have any concerns please contact Mel.

Pending Payment: These are reports that have made it all the way through approvals and are now queued for payment. You should see a deposit in your account soon.

Mel Hint: Paid ERs no longer appear on this screen. If you submit an ER and do not see the report in this screen a week or so later, it is possible that payment was already made. Check your bank account to verify.