



Seattle University's Policy Statement on Portable Telecommunications Devices

The University recognizes that cell phones have become a very common business tool for employees that frequently travel and/or work outside the office. The purpose of this policy is to define guidelines and provide a mechanism for the University to make available necessary telecommunication services to employees.

Students are not eligible to participate in the telecommunications program.

There are two methods available for obtaining a cell phone. An employee can either request a University owned cell phone be issued to them or an employee can sign up for a personal cell phone plan and be reimbursed through a payroll allowance. Many employees will be required to use a University issued cell phone. The differences in these two options are noted in this policy. The request is done by submitting the "Seattle University Cell Phone Request Form" to the Controllers office.

For tablet purchases please refer to the Tablet Approval Procedure available through the Office of Information Technology.

Determining Employee Eligibility

Employees must demonstrate that a cell phone is an integral part of their job and that they could not effectively carry out their job responsibilities without it. Only in situations where a cell phone satisfies a clear and substantial need, will an employee be issued a University owned cell phone or be reimbursed for cell phone expenses via a payroll allowance.

The four criteria that will be used to determine eligibility are as follows:

1. The employee needs to be available at all times for work-related emergencies **OR**
2. The job function of the employee requires considerable time outside of their assigned office (i.e. frequent travel) and it is important to the University that they are accessible during those times **OR**
3. The job function of the employee requires them to be accessible outside of scheduled or normal working hours **OR**
4. The job function of the employee requires him or her to work in many different locations on campus and that a cell phone is necessary as the principal means of communication.

Annually, on a fiscal year basis, Cabinet members will review the cell phone needs of each employee to determine if the employee continues to meet the eligibility requirements.

Note that misuse of the phone - using it in ways inconsistent with the University policy or with local, state or federal laws will result in immediate revocation of the employee's eligibility.

Tax Treatment

Per IRS [Notice 2011-72](#), as long as the employer issues the cell phone to the employee "primarily for non-compensatory business reasons," the employee's business use of the phone will be excluded from his gross income as a working condition fringe benefit, and any personal use will be excluded as a de minimis fringe benefit.

The non-compensatory definition is met if an employee meets one of the four eligibility requirements listed above. Since cell phone expenses are only covered for employees meeting one of these conditions, all cell phone expenses meet the non-compensatory definition and there will be no taxes associated with University-issued cell phones or payroll allowances.

Employee Eligibility Authorization Form

A "Seattle University Cell Phone Request Form" needs to be completed and routed to the appropriate parties for approval before a cell phone can be issued through the Campus Store or set up for reimbursement via a payroll allowance.

The authorization form must be approved by the employee's supervisor and Cabinet member. If the request is for a Cabinet member then the approval is given by their supervisor.

Once the appropriate approvals are obtained, the employee must submit the approval form to the Controller's Office at 1218 East Cherry. It is recommended that the employee also keep a copy of the approved authorization form.

University Issued Cell Phones

In many cases, employees will be required to use a University issued cell phone including many of the facility, CES, maintenance, and public safety employees. The University's cell phone plan is generally more cost effective than a personal cell phone plan and an employees' business needs may be best served with a University issued cell phone. Employees in other departments may have the alternative of entering into a personal cell phone agreement and obtaining reimbursement through a payroll allowance.

Alternative Method of Reimbursement

(If an employee does not qualify for a cell phone)

If an employee does not meet the eligibility criteria for a University issued cell phone or monthly reimbursement for a personal cell phone, the employee can still be reimbursed through accounts payable for his or her business usage on their personal cell phone.

To be reimbursed through accounts payable, the employee must provide the following documentation:

- 1) Submit the cell phone bill and highlight the cost of the business-related calls.
- 2) Provide the business purpose of the calls.
- 3) Provide documentation of approval by the appropriate cost center manager.

If business usage exceeds the amount of the payroll allowance received

If an employee's business use spikes, the employee may request an expense reimbursement through accounts payable for business usage that exceeds the monthly allowance. Any expense reimbursements for business usage beyond the allowance must meet the documentation requirements as outlined under "Alternative Method of Reimbursement".

University Issued Cell Phone

NOTE: The cell phone and plan are the University's property. The University pays the bill directly to the carrier.

The cell phone will be returned to the Campus Store if the employee is no longer authorized to have a cell phone or leaves the University.

The employee will be provided with technical support for the phone from the Campus Store.

1. Employee completes cell phone authorization form, obtains their supervisor and Cabinet member's signature indicating approval and submits the form to the Controllers' Office.
2. The Controller's office reviews the form and submits to the Campus Store for processing. The Campus Store orders the device for the employee and signs the employee up under the University's plan. They will contact the employee directly to issue the device.
3. Authorization for University-issued cell phones is granted for a single fiscal year. Each year, Cabinet members review the cell phone needs of each employee to determine whether the employee continues to meet the eligibility requirements for a University-issued cell phone.

Reimbursement

NOTE: The cell phone & service plan are the sole responsibility and property of the employee. The device and plan are of their own of their choosing. The employee is personally responsible for paying the bill directly to the carrier. The employee must maintain an active cell phone agreement.

The cell phone allowance is determined based on percent of business use. The University will pay up to a maximum of \$60/month. However, departments may set lower maximum allowances for their employees. In no instance will the University reimburse the employee more than the actual monthly cost of the plan.

The University will not reimburse the employee for cell phone equipment or equipment upgrades. The University will not reimburse the employee for costs associated with terminating or changing personal cell phone plans, or for lost or stolen equipment.

The employee will not be provided with technical support for the phone from the University.

1. Employee completes cell phone authorization form, obtains their supervisor and Cabinet member's signature indicating approval and submits the form to the Controllers' Office. (Must provide two most current months of their plans billing)
2. The Controller's office reviews the form and submits to Payroll for processing the payroll allowance. The payroll allowance will be paid out via the employee's paychecks. The allowance does not constitute an increase in base pay and will not be included in any calculations for increases to base pay or retirement contributions.
3. Authorization for reimbursement is granted for a single fiscal year. Each year, Cabinet members review the cell phone needs of each employee to determine whether the employee continues to meet the eligibility requirements for cell phone reimbursement.