Weinberg College of Arts & Sciences
NUFinancials Expense Report Electronic Approvals
Process & Workflow Guide

Northwestern University is rolling out electronic certification and approval functionality for all employee expense reports in NUFinancials. Weinberg College employees will be going live with this process on April 1, 2015. As a result, employees and their supervisors will no longer be required to print and sign expense reports, but will instead certify them online as part of the overall expense workflow.

Below is a comprehensive summary of changes to (1) Data, Process, & Policy Guidelines and (2) Workflow.

1. Data, Process, & Policy Guidelines:

A. Expense Supervisor Data, Maintenance, & Backup Functionality. Weinberg expense supervisors have been established in FASIS and will automatically populate expense report routing options in NUFinancials. Supervisors consist mainly of active department chairs, program directors, and business administrators based on the 2-digit FASIS node for each active, paid appointment. The below matrix summarizes expense supervisors by employee type / FASIS node:

FASIS Node	Employee Type	Standard Exp Supervisor Rule	Notable Exceptions
00	Various (Position Numbers Only, includes fac/staff research appts & taxable scholarship)	Primary Dept Staff Person (in areas with business administators) or Dept Chair / Progr Dir	
01	Faculty	Dept Chair or Prog Dir	Chair or Progr Dir reports to Dean
02	Staff	Primary Dept Staff Person (in areas with business administators) or Dept Chair / Progr Dir	Business Administrator reports to Chair
93	Grad Stud Dept	Primary Dept Staff Person (in areas with business administators) or Dept Chair / Progr Dir	
97	Emeritus Faculty	Dept Chair or Prog Dir	
99	Grad Student TGS Only	Primary Dept Staff Person (in areas with business administators) or Dept Chair / Progr Dir	

Note: Those submitting reimbursements and/or proxies submitting on behalf of others should be mindful of selecting the correct supervisor at the time of submission for individuals with multiple appointments and/or supervisors. As in the past, chair and director expenses will route to Ben Polancich in the Dean's Office.

Expense supervisor data will be maintained in FASIS at the position level. Dean's Office will maintain expense supervisor data and any related changes for teaching faculty (including all tenure-line and teaching-track faculty), department chairs, program directors, and Dean-funded administrative staff. Departmental staff are responsible for maintaining expense supervisor data and any related changes for non-teaching faculty, research faculty and staff, and graduate students.

In some cases, departments who are staffed for backup support on expense approvals may use the FASIS backup functionality. Please be in touch with the Dean's Office in advance of implementing backup functionality in FASIS. Per Northwestern policy, any expenses approved by backups will require subsequent review and signoff of the expenses by the primary expense supervisor upon their return. The SC031 – Expense Report Approval Summary report should be utilized for post-approval review.
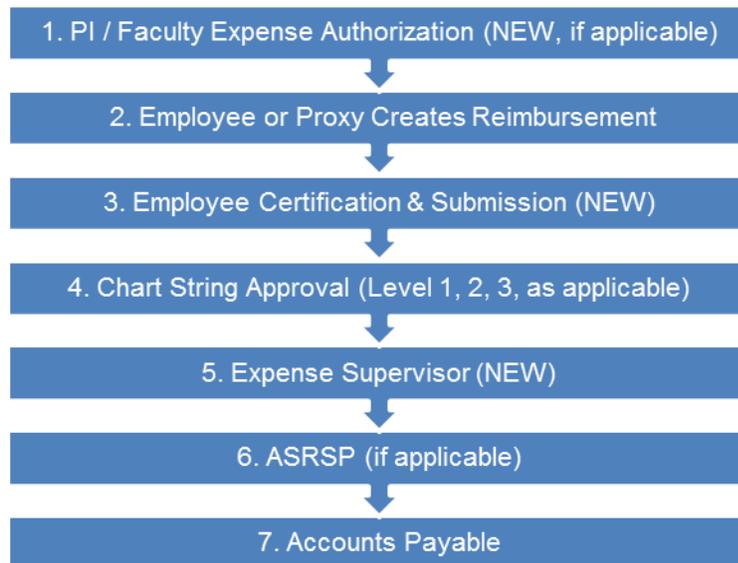
See the FASIS Training: Assigning an Employee's Primary and Backup Expense Supervisor guide for details on maintaining supervisor data in FASIS.

B. NUFinancials Security. All employees now have automatic access to expense entry/inquiry and expense approver (as designated in FASIS); FFRA security requests no longer need to be requested for these roles. Security requests are still required for proxy expense entry access and for non-employees (including temps) who need these roles. Security forms are available on the FFRA Security website. Once signed by a department chair or primary staff administrator, forms should be e-mailed to Joshua Dorfman (joshua-dorfman@northwestern.edu) for WCAS approval.

C. Reporting & Reconciliation. The SC026 – Expense by Submission & Workflow Status report can be used to track where expense reports are at in the workflow process. The SC031 – Expense Report Approval Summary provides relevant details about paid expense reports, including which supervisors it routed to and who applied the Supervisor approval.

D. Departmental Processes & Record Retention. Departments with paper-based internal processes prior to submissions in NUFinancials workflow may want to reassess practices to determine how to maximize efficiency with this updated procedure. NUFinancials will retain printing functionality of expense reports for departmental administrators and expense supervisors who wish to use paperwork for their review and subsequent action, but online certification within NUFIN will now serve as the system of record for authorization. Now that certification, upload of full support documentation, and approvals will be handled online, full imaging of expense report documentation will be maintained centrally, which fulfills the University's record retention policy for this process. Departments should plan on keeping backup paper or electronic copies of support documentation for at least three months following approval to ensure that expenses can be reconciled and retrieved in the event of any uploading errors; WCAS recommends keeping this backup documentation for one year. See University Records Retention Schedule for additional guidelines in this area.

2. <u>Workflow:</u>

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1. PI / Faculty Expense Authorization (NEW, if applicable)
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2. Employee or Proxy Creates Reimbursement
                        ↓
3. Employee Certification & Submission (NEW)
                        ↓
4. Chart String Approval (Level 1, 2, 3, as applicable)
                        ↓
5. Expense Supervisor (NEW)
                        ↓
6. ASRSP (if applicable)
                        ↓
7. Accounts Payable
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A. New Steps:

Step 1: Preauthorization will be required for PI or faculty-authorized in cases where the designated travel approver in NUFinancials is not the person who authorized the expense. In most cases, this will apply to graduate students, postdocs, and research staff being reimbursed from faculty-managed sponsored and discretionary sources of funds. Preauthorization notification should be in the form of an e-mail or letter written by the faculty member or PI with approval authority, with authorization of the employee being reimbursed, travel dates, destination, purpose of travel, and any other stipulations for the reimbursement. We suggest the WCAS [preauthorization template](#) be utilized for this purpose along with the signed printable expense report cover page (signed by the employee and the employee's supervisor/PI), if no internal processes are in place. Notification should then be uploaded into NUFIN with the reimbursement along with other required support documentation. Designated expense supervisors should refer to these preauthorization notifications to reconcile that appropriate personnel have authorized expenses.

Note: Some Undergraduates do not have the ability to submit expense reports, depending on their FASIS appointment. In an effort to process these expenses consistently, we ask that **all** Undergraduate reimbursement be submitted as visitor's expense reports vouchers. They will need to be added to the vendor table (in the Vendor Add/Maintenance tab in NUFIN) prior to submitting payment.

Step 3: New certification step in NUFinancials will act as the electronic signature for the individual being reimbursed. If a proxy enters an expense report, the individual being reimbursed will receive an email with a link to review and certify (approve) in NUFinancials.

Step 5: Designated Expense Report Supervisor will also electronically sign the expense report in NUFinancials (Step 5) after it has routed through financial chart string workflow. (Note that this step has shifted to a later part of workflow to minimize the amount of sendback activity that would require a supervisor to reapply approval).

Job Aid: Employee Approval (Employees being reimbursed, Staff handling proxy entry)
Job Aid: Supervisor Approval (Department Chairs, Program Directors, Business Administrators)

B. What will NOT be changing: The process for including 90 day memos, policy exception forms, and general support documentation / receipts is unchanged with this new process. This documentation should continue to be completed as necessary and uploaded into NUFIN. Existing Weinberg description prefixes (A, AE, B, BE, C, CE), which assist in guiding expenses through the correct workflow, will continue to be required on all expense reports. All aspects of Financial Workflow (level 1, 2, & 3) will remain unchanged by this process.

Additional Resources:
Accounts Payable: Expense Approval Roles & Responsibilities
FFRA Website: Expense Report Electronic Approvals
FFRA Training Courses & Related Materials