Coronavirus (COVID-19) Travel Advisory

FAQ

Boston University’s [COVID-19 resource page](https://bu.edu/coronavirus/) has updated information, including FAQs, to address some of the most pressing coronavirus issues facing the University community.

As outlined in President Brown’s letter on March 11, 2020, for the period from [March 16, 2020 through April 13, 2020](https://bu.edu/coronavirus/), the University will not hold any non-academic gatherings or meetings; only activities for research with fewer than 10 participants will be permitted. In addition, all domestic and international travel supported by funds administered by the University is suspended.

In response, Travel Services has outlined some common questions and answers, along with a resource guide to address any other questions you might have. These will be continuously updated as new information becomes available.

If you have an immediate question, please submit a [ticket](https://bu.edu/coronavirus/) to Sourcing & Procurement and we will make sure it’s routed to the appropriate contact.

Business Travel

1. What current travel and airline restrictions should I be aware of?

   For additional information from WorldAware, including real times alerts and travel advisories, please visit the [SARS-COV-2 and COVID-19 Intelligence Center](https://bu.edu/coronavirus/).

   Location Specific Advisories:  [Travel Restrictions](https://bu.edu/coronavirus/)

   Airline Specific Advisories:  [Airline Restrictions](https://bu.edu/coronavirus/)

2. I need to make contact with one of BU's preferred travel agencies.

   **Short’s Travel Management**
   
P: 617-353-1700
   
E: travelbooking@bu.edu

   **The Travel Collaborative**
   
Reilly Millett, Branch Director

P: 800-370-7400

E: info@travelcoll.com

**Partners Travel Management**

Robert McCoy, Travel Manager

P: 904-320-1455 or 844-445-3330

E: BUtravel@partners-travel.com
3. **A conference I was attending has been cancelled due to COVID-19. What do I do?**

   In most cases, the conference host will provide specific information on how registration fees will be handled, including any refunds.

   If you were flying, please check the airline’s website for updated information on policies concerning change fees and/or flight cancellations. Most airlines are waiving or reducing change fees, and some will allow you to cancel with a full refund. If you need further help, email [travelbooking@bu.edu](mailto:travelbooking@bu.edu) or call 617-353-1700.

   Contact the host hotel immediately to cancel any room nights (assuming host has not already done this on your behalf). Most hotels allow free (or significantly reduced) cancellations with 24-48 hour notice. Specific policies will apply by property.

4. **I have planned and booked business travel but I do not feel safe traveling. Should I cancel?**

   Please remember that all domestic and international travel by faculty, staff, and students, supported by funds administered by the University is suspended through April 13th. If your planned travel is outside this window, Boston University wants all faculty and staff to feel safe when traveling for business. In fact, any business travel that is not critical is strongly discouraged. Other alternatives should be considered, such as remote/virtual participation or postponing travel to a later date.

5. **Can I get a refund on my paid airfare?**

   If you booked through BU’s preferred travel agency, Short’s Travel (or Concur), please contact them directly for assistance.

   Email [travelbooking@bu.edu](mailto:travelbooking@bu.edu) or call 617-353-1700.

   If you did not book through Short’s, please contact the company used to book the travel to discuss available options. You may contact Short’s for general information, but they likely will not be able to service or take action on your issued ticket.

   **Airline specific updates**

   - [American Airlines](https://www.americanairlines.com)
   - [JetBlue](https://www.jetblue.com)
   - [United Airlines](https://www.united.com)
   - [Emirates](https://www.emirates.com)
   - [Delta Airlines](https://www.delta.com)
   - [Southwest Airlines](https://www.southwest.com)
Updates are changing almost daily due to the coronavirus, be sure to check for the airline’s latest travel notice. For additional information, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website for travel-related advisories.

For travel to or within the European Union, under EU Regulation 261/2004, passengers are likely entitled to compensation for cancelled flights. For more information on how to claim compensation, click here.

6. I still need to travel, so is there a preferred booking method that provides more flexibility?

You should first make sure travel is allowed based on restrictions in place through April 13th. If so, nearly all tickets purchased through Short’s (or Concur) automatically include a one-time change free of charge, and many flights have a refundable status. These options provide much needed flexibility, especially given the uncertain travel landscape due to COVID-19. If you have specific questions, please contact Short’s Travel at travelbooking@bu.edu or call 617-353-1700.

7. My cancelled trip was being charged to a federal grant. Are cancellation fees, including change fees, allowable costs to be charged?

Unless you receive explicit permission from the funding agency, in writing, these costs are generally not allowed to be charged to a grant and are considered unallowable. This also applies when the reason for cancelling grant funded travel is elective and not due to a broader cancellation by the conference/event host. We will communicate any broad travel directives from the federal government, or specific funding agencies, as needed which may impact this position.

If you have specific questions related to this please contact Post Award Financial Operations at pafo@bu.edu.

8. Have there been any updates for Amtrak passengers?

The following Northeast Corridor schedule changes have been announced:

Due to track and infrastructure improvements being performed along the Northeast Corridor, as well as customer demand, schedule changes will affect Acela and Northeast Regional trains beginning Mar. 16, as outlined below.

Washington, New York and Boston:

• Scheduled departure and arrival times of Acela and Northeast Regional trains may change by 3 to 15 minutes in both directions between Boston, New York and Washington, D.C.
• All Acela trains will depart Washington, D.C., 10 minutes before the hour except 2124, 2126, and 2128, which will depart 10 minutes after the hour.
• Weekday Northeast Regional trains will increase stops at Westerly, RI and Mystic, CT.
• On Fridays only, Acela Train 2151 will not run between Boston and New York. Acela Train 2157 will be a new mid-morning Friday only departure from Boston at 8:00 a.m.
We appreciate your patience as we complete important track and infrastructure work. For the most up to date schedule information and reservations, visit Amtrak.com, use our free mobile app, speak with station personnel or call 800-USA-RAIL (1-800-872-7245). Thank you for traveling with Amtrak.

Events

1. **My department is trying to cancel an event that is booked with a third-party property. Can I get help?**

   Sourcing & Procurement will work with you and the property on the issue to determine the best available options. This could include cancelling the event entirely, or working to reschedule and putting a new contract in place.

   As a first step, the department is encouraged to have an initial discussion with the host to talk through any available options. Some points to consider include:

   - What does the contract say? Do we have termination rights?
   - Have we paid any fees or deposits already? If not, it’s prudent to hold back on any payment until the matter is resolved.
   - Could you refer to President Brown’s message about no business travel / no events?
   - Ask “what flexibility are you willing to provide given the circumstances?”
   - Consider the “bigger picture” partnership host has with BU, and could this be a factor?
   - If event will be rescheduled, can you commit to future business?

   Sourcing & Procurement is more than willing to advise on discussion points and actions steps. Please submit a ticket to Sourcing & Procurement and we will get back to you within 24 hours.

2. **My department is working to schedule an event with a third-party property. How can I make sure I get as much flexibility as possible?**

   Assuming the event is allowed based on restrictions in place through April 13th, Sourcing & Procurement is experienced with negotiating these types of contracts and we can help you negotiate more favorable terms which provide flexibility in the event of an unexpected cancellation (e.g. due to COVID-19).

   Please submit a ticket to Sourcing & Procurement and we will get back to you within 24 hours.

3. **How should my department communicate to event attendees of meeting cancellation?**

   When cancelling room block or booked reservations, ask the hotel to hold off on sending out room cancellation notice until your department had the opportunity to communicate event cancellation to all parties.