Honorarium Payment Guide

An honorarium is a one-time payment for a special, non-recurring activity or event for which a fee is not legally or traditionally required. There is no contract, the fee is not set or negotiated by the recipient, and the honorarium may not be paid to a third party (corporation, business or partnership). If payment is negotiated and agreed upon, it is considered a contractual agreement and should be processed as a payment for personal services, not an honorarium.

Non-Honoraria Examples

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Traditional Honoraria

A traditional honorarium is paid to an individual, who is not a Mason employee or current Mason student. Traditional honoraria are typically paid to persons of scholarly or professional standing with the intent of showing good will and appreciation for giving a speech. A speech is a public address, oration, or other form of oral presentation (including participation in a panel, seminar or debate).

Allowable Traditional Honoraria:

- Payment to a guest speaker. A guest speaker is someone who possesses advanced knowledge of a particular subject area and speaks about that subject area to a group or organization with which he or she is normally not involved. *May not be a current Mason employee or student.*
- Payment for participation as a judge in a writing or photo contest.
- Payment for participation in a panel discussion.

Determine if the payment is a traditional Honoraria

| 1. Is the individual a business, corporation or partnership? | Y | N |
| 2. Was the payment amount negotiated between the University and the individual? |   |   |
| 3. Is there a contractual agreement? |   |   |
| 4. Are the individual’s services recurring? |   |   |
| 5. Is the individual an employee or student? |   |   |
| 6. Did the individual set the price? |   |   |

A “Yes” answer to any of the above questions means the payment does not qualify as a traditional honorarium. The individual performing the work may not be paid by honorarium. To determine if the individual should be categorized as an employee or independent contractor please complete the Independent Contractor Evaluation Form ([https://fiscal.gmu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/IndependentContactorEvaluationForm.pdf](https://fiscal.gmu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/IndependentContactorEvaluationForm.pdf)).

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Operational Honoraria

An operational honorarium is paid to an individual, **who is not a Mason employee**, for an activity that supports Mason operations. Operational honoraria are typically paid to individuals (including current Mason students) with the intent of showing appreciation for participation in university education, research or public service activities.

Allowable Operational Honoraria:

- Payment for participation as a volunteer judge for the Patriot Games.
- Payment to a volunteer swim official for community swim event.
- Payment to a cooperating teacher for a College of Education and Human Development program.

Process an Honoraria

Honoraria payments for less than $2,000 are exempt from eVA procurement and may be processed through Accounts Payable with the Honorarium Payment Request. Honoraria payments for $2,000 or more must be submitted through eVA purchase requisition (PR#) and approved by a buyer in the Purchasing Office. The individual receiving the honorarium must have a Mason G#. If the individual does not have a G#, a new substitute W-9 must be completed and sent to papadmin@gmu.edu before a payment can be processed. Use the G# lookup prior to requesting the substitute W-9 from the individual. (VPN access is required for G# lookup.)

All traditional honoraria payments, regardless of the dollar amount, to visitors who are U.S. citizens or Permanent Residents must be reported to the Internal Revenue Service. U.S. citizens and Permanent Residents will receive an IRS Form 1099-MISC. Non-U.S. citizens will receive an IRS form 1042-S and a thirty percent (30%) tax may be withheld from all payments unless the individual is eligible to claim a tax treaty exemption. The unit should consider the thirty percent tax when calculating the total payment amount of the honorarium. In some cases it may be appropriate to increase the honorarium payment to absorb the tax assessment.

**Required Documentation for U.S. Citizens/Permanent Residents**

1. Substitute W-9, if individual does not have a G#
2. Completed the Honorarium Payment Request form
3. Letter of invitation (if any)
4. Justification letter (may be requested)
5. For payments over $2,000, attach the Honorarium Payment Request form to the eVA order

**Required Documentation for Foreign Nationals/Non-U.S. Citizens**

1. Detailed instructions are available at Honorarium Payments to Foreign Nationals
2. Completed the Honorarium Payment Request form
3. IRS Form W-8 BEN, Certificate of Foreign Status of Beneficial Owner for United States Tax Withholding
4. Letter of invitation, stipulating the date and purpose of the activity and the amount of honorarium to be paid.
5. Justification letter (may be requested)
6. Copies of the recipient’s immigration documents or the Statement for Services Performed Outside of the U.S., for details see Procedures for Honorarium Payments to Foreign Nationals.
7. For payments over $2,000, attach the Honorarium Payment Request form to the eVA order.
8. A copy of the eVA purchase requisition (PR#) and supporting documentation should be sent to the International Tax Coordinator at inttax@gmu.edu for review and appropriate tax withholding calculation.
9. The International Tax Coordinator will submit the request to Accounts payable after processing.

For assistance with honorarium requests please contact Account Payable at acctpay@gmu.edu or ext. 3-2580. For foreign national tax questions please contact the International Tax Office at inttax@gmu.edu.

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