

Creating a substitute approver for SAP FI transactions

Online approval processes and electronic workflows are powerful tools for improving business processes. These approval processes and workflows are essentially based on the official organizational structure of the University and existing policies regarding financial authority. Those policies and procedures are maintained by the various financial offices, such as Comptroller, Procurement Services, and Financial Planning.

The SAP FI system does offer the capability of delegating or substituting one approver for another. Typically used as a temporary measure during employee absences (e.g. vacation leave), activating such delegation is a two-step process requiring action by the SAP user and by the SAP Security team. Users in the SAP FI system can create, activate, and de-activate a forwarding process so that work items will be forwarded to a substitute. The Security team must make changes to the substitute's authorizations in order to allow the delegate to act upon the forwarded items. The following procedure has been adopted to ensure that relevant financial practices are not compromised when substitutes are authorized to approve financial transactions.

- Requests to modify user authorizations for a substitute approver must be initiated by the staff or faculty member that is officially responsible for the account(s) in question. Delegating approval authorization to a substitute does not change official responsibility for the financial activity that occurs within the account(s). Please note that in most cases involving grant funds approval of financial transactions by the named principal investigator is a legal requirement that cannot be delegated to a substitute.
- Substitutes may be created for a period greater than two weeks if an appropriate position is referenced, such as substitution of a "business manager" whose specific duties include management of financial activity. Requests of this duration must be approved by the divisional Vice-President.
- Substitutes created for temporary absences of two weeks or less, such as during vacation leave; do not require approval at the Vice-Presidential level. However, only staff or faculty at the same organizational level or higher can be authorized to approve financial transactions on a temporary basis. In these short-term situations the best practice would be having these items forwarded to the next level upward in the hierarchy: e.g. from a department head to the appropriate Director, Assistant Vice-President, or Dean. Exceptions to this practice, such as forwarding items to a subordinate position, do require Vice-Presidential approval.
- Requests to authorize a substitute approver should be submitted as a SAP General Security Service Request at it.nku.edu/itsc. The service request must be submitted either by the supervisor asking for a substitute approver (two weeks or less) or by the Divisional VP if this is to be a permanent substitution. Be sure to include the time frame in the service request.
- Users must take steps within their personal SAP Business Workplace to activate the forwarding process. A work instruction has been created and posted under the link General Support (prism.nku.edu) to assist you in creating and activating your substitute approver.