

Sustainable Travel Policy – Principles

General

1. The primary objective of the Sustainable Travel Policy is to reduce the University's carbon emissions, in line with the University Strategy.
2. Our aim as a University, and as responsible individuals, should be to reduce the total amount of travel to help achieve this objective. This includes adopting a digital-first approach as an alternative to travel wherever possible.
3. In prioritising the University's efforts to reduce its travel carbon footprint, the University will actively seek efficiency savings by reducing its overall travel budget.
4. Travel will be prioritised based on need and potential benefit to the University, its staff and its students. Cases for travelling should be considered carefully to determine the business need versus financial, carbon and human costs. The University will systematically capture reasons for travel in its booking and approvals process.
5. In implementing this change of approach, University leaders and managers will ensure that staff health and wellbeing remains a fundamental consideration and that the duty of care is safeguarded.
6. The University will actively champion diversity and inclusion in the implementation of the Policy, ensuring equity of opportunity.

Business Travel for Staff and Students (including Teaching, Learning and Research)

7. All business travel is required to be booked through the University's Travel Management Company.
8. The University will adopt a Business Travel Hierarchy to help staff, students and managers make appropriate decisions about the best travel options.
9. At the outset of travel planning, staff and their line managers should consider if videoconferencing, or another digital option, is a viable alternative to travelling in person. Digital alternatives to travel will be actively encouraged as the preferred option.
10. If in-person travelling is required, staff should choose the lowest carbon option wherever possible.
11. Recognising that air travel is disproportionately responsible for generating carbon emissions, air travel for University business to destinations within the mainland UK and many western European destinations will not be authorised. The University's Travel Management Company will ensure that the option to fly is not made available for these routes. Where flights are necessary (and being mindful of 15 below), this will be by economy class, irrespective of distance, as this presents the lowest carbon cost.
12. An air travel levy will be introduced. Funds gained will be used to fund carbon reduction efforts.
13. In planning travel, considerations should be given to the human impact and wellbeing of the traveller, and factored-in accordingly. This should include options such as the use of sleeper trains for long distance ground transportation; allowing additional time on arrival at a destination following a flight before staff commence business, etc.

14. Due consideration should also be given to transport options on arrival at a destination, with staff encouraged to choose lower carbon options wherever possible, while recognising that staff safety is of paramount importance.
15. The University is committed to equity of opportunity. As a consequence, individual consideration in the implementation of this policy will be given to staff with disabilities, with caring and/or family responsibilities, with physical restrictions, and with recognised medical conditions, supported by the Occupational Health Service where appropriate. Disclosures and claims for dispensation will be treated in strictest confidence.
16. Some research grants specify the need for travel in their conditions. In such instances, staff should follow the requirements of the research contract while still complying with the University's Sustainable Travel Policy. Staff should specifically factor low carbon travel options into research bids (where relevant).
17. Student Group Travel, along with other forms of student travel, will adopt the same approach as Business Travel. Schools and Departments will have local decision-making autonomy to approve/prioritise student trips and maximise opportunities and benefits.

Commuting

18. The University's Travel Plan includes an overarching requirement to reduce single occupancy vehicle travel to its campuses.
19. Reading is a campus university and staff need to commute onto campus to work when required. While recognising that staff will choose to commute in different ways, the University will actively encourage staff to reduce their commuting travel emissions through the continued promotion of its Commuting Travel hierarchy.
20. Alternatives to single occupant car travel are prioritised by hierarchy in terms of their carbon costs as follows:
 - a. Reducing the need for travel (including between campuses);
 - b. No carbon modes (walking and cycling);
 - c. Low carbon modes (public transport, e.g. train and bus);
 - d. Car sharing and responsible car use (including lower emission vehicles);
 - e. Removing the need to travel at peak times.
21. The University recognises that staff should not be financially disadvantaged for using lower carbon modes of transport. Therefore, we will seek to help make alternatives to driving to campus no more expensive than commuting by car. This commitment will further support the University's commitment to equity across its diverse staff base.
22. The University will provide a package of support to encourage lower carbon commuting to reflect the hierarchy, including:
 - a. Maintaining the Cycle2Work scheme;
 - b. Lobbying local authorities to create additional and improved routes and crossings for cyclists and pedestrians;
 - c. Lobbying local transport providers to improve the number and frequency of bus routes to campus locations, notably Greenlands;
 - d. Additionally, the University will explore subsidised public transport options;
 - e. Installing EV and hybrid charging points on campus;
 - f. Sourcing an appropriate EV salary sacrifice scheme for staff;
 - g. Providing priority car parking spaces for car sharing.
23. Communications will be used to inform staff of low carbon transport options with participation encouraged. This will include improved signage on campus to encourage use of pedestrian routes, cycle paths, car sharing and lower emission vehicle charging points.

Management

24. The Sustainable Travel Policy is a University-wide policy intended for consistent implementation by School/Function/department/service.
25. In managing carbon reduction, the University is committed to identifying and implementing good quality offsetting/insetting for the carbon emissions of the travel it undertakes.
26. To deliver Net Zero, we will develop a carbon budget for each School/Function. The policy will be managed locally, with each business unit managing its own travel budget and accompanying carbon budget, enabling local decisions to be made on which travel to authorise/prioritise.
27. Travel carbon usage will be a measurable Key Performance Indicator on the performance scorecard of each business unit.
28. Marketing, Communications and Engagement will support a low carbon travel culture across the University through the regular communication of key elements of the Policy and the celebration of carbon reduction successes and stories.

Targets

29. The aim of the policy is to deliver reduced business travel emissions of at least 30% by 2026 (compared to pre-COVID levels), and 50% by 2030, our target date for reaching net zero.
30. A 60% reduction in emissions for travel within Europe to be achieved by 2026.
31. A 50% reduction in emissions from non-economy class flights is achieved by 2026