

# Travel Policy

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## Approval History

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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy applies to all staff and students at the University and any person travelling with the knowledge and consent of the University and their accompanying Spouse/Partner of the University and its subsidiary companies, travelling for study or on business on behalf of the University.
- 1.2 It sets out the policy for travel within the UK (section 10) and for international travel (section 11)
- 1.3 These regulations must be read alongside related University policies that operate in conjunction with this policy, including the Expenses Policy, Financial Regulations, Finance Manual and Procurement Policy, Safety Code of Practice - COP 38 for Staff and COP 32 Fieldwork.
- 1.4 This policy supports the University Strategy, specifically considering the Sustainable Travel Principles.
- 1.5 The Travel Policy document and all related documents are reviewed and endorsed by the Procurement Board, Policy Group and, if required, the University Executive Board. Any questions concerning this policy should, in the first instance, be referred to the Director of Procurement
- 1.6 Essential Travel is defined as travel that has a justifiable reason and brings a benefit to the University. The need to travel at all should be carefully considered, including the potential for digital alternatives. See also "Business Travel Hierarchy" in section 4 below.

## 2 Travel Essential Requirements

- 2.1 The University has a duty of care to its staff and students under the Health and Safety at Work Act. To comply with the Act, we have to ensure that the University has adequate and effective management arrangements in place to protect the health & safety of its traveler's.
- 2.2 Every individual proposing to work, study or travel for business overseas on university business should give adequate and serious thought to their own health and safety as well as the conditions and situation that they are likely to encounter. It is the responsibility of each individual to actively participate and co-operate with the University in the execution of its responsibility.

## 3 Sustainable Travel Principles

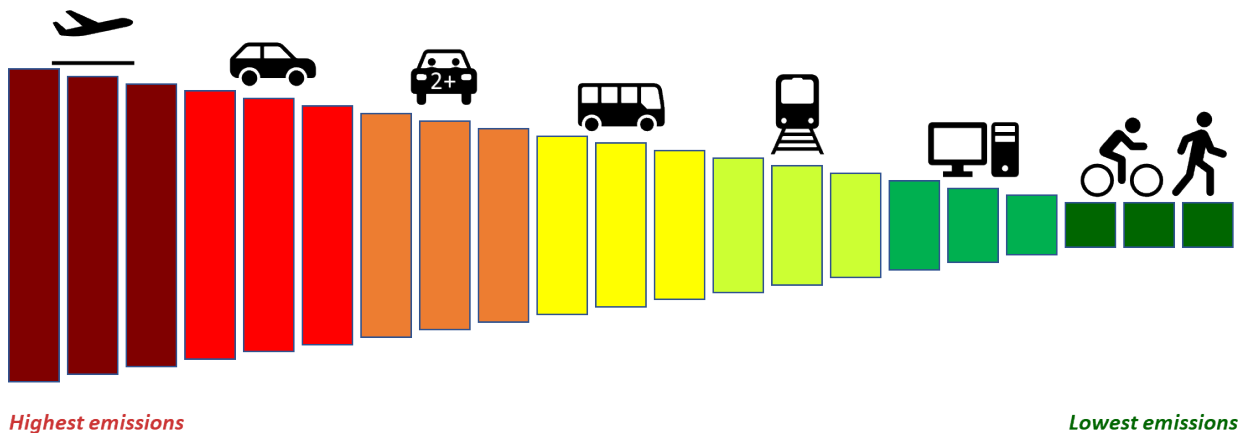
- 3.1 In Autumn 2022, the University published its Sustainable Travel Principles which aim to reduce the total amount of business travel carried out by the University and adopt a digital-first approach wherever possible. Cases for travelling should be considered carefully, following this policy and with the Sustainable Travel Principles in mind.
- 3.2 The following targets are included in the Sustainable Travel Principles:
  - 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 carbon.

- A 60% reduction in emissions for travel within Europe to be achieved by 2026.
- A 50% reduction in emissions from non-economy class flights is achieved by 2026.

## 4 Business Travel Hierarchy

4.1 The University has adopted a business travel hierarchy to help staff, students and managers make appropriate decisions about the best travel options and consider the following:

- Digital first - reducing the need for travel.
- Low carbon modes (public transport, e.g., train, bus, ferry)
- High carbon modes (Petrol/Diesel cars, flights – economy class only)



*Travel Hierarchy diagram.*

## 5 Pre-Travel Authorisation

5.1 Prior to making any travel arrangements, the traveler must obtain approval from their line manager or supervisor before making any related travel arrangements or commitments. The policy requires travelers to provide the following to their School or Function to seek official approval from their line manager or supervisor before travelling:

- Dates of period away from the University
- Purpose of the trip or expected outcomes of the trip.
- Funding source/Account code(s)
- Note of preliminary agreement from the Budget Holder; or confirmation of funding availability if the traveler is the budget holder.
- Health and safety Risk Assessment and arrangements of the proposed trip
- Insurance cover arrangements whilst away where appropriate i.e., Sanctioned countries

5.2 Traveler's should read Safety Code of Practice - COP 38 for Staff and Safety Code of Practice - COP 32 Fieldwork before making any travel arrangements. A COP relating to Student will be developed and detail of that process will be added to this policy.

5.3 Failure to obtain approval prior to arranging travel may result in the traveler not being covered by the University's travel insurance and render them ineligible to claim any expense incurred. Failure to obtain approval prior to arranging travel is a breach of the policy and

may be addressed under the University's disciplinary procedures.

## 6 Health & Safety Risk Assessment

- 6.1 The appropriate risk assessment must be completed, and full approval given prior to the travel being booked. Time must be allowed to ensure that this happens in plenty of time. Forms to be completed are as follows:

International staff travel

- In line with CoP38, staff risk assessment [TRA1](#) must be completed and signed by appropriate person depending on the level of risk identified.
- Overseas Travel Form must be completed.

UK staff travel

- UK Travel –
  - Form [TRA2](#) is available and can be used ,
  - Line managers should be notified of travel.

Student Travel

- Students must complete the School Risk Assessment and form on RISIS.

Field trips

- Field trip risk assessment must be completed as per COP 32.

## 7 Sanctioned Countries

- 7.1 Traveler's must ensure that they have read and understood the Financial Sanctions Policy, completed the Sanctioned territories referral questionnaire and submitted it to the Insurance Team a minimum of 30 days prior to travel to ensure Insurance cover is in place. Any additional Insurance premium will be borne by the School, Function or Traveler if required.

## 8 Insurance

- 8.1 Traveler's must ensure they are familiar with the University's Insurance arrangements and obtain the appropriate visas for travel. Information about our travel insurance and making a claim can be found on the Travel & Insurance – Webpage.

## 9 Access to IT in high-risk countries

- 9.1 Access to some services may be restricted in high-risk countries, e.g., access to Wikipedia and social media sites may be prevented; there may be government monitoring of communication services like Skype; Wi-Fi services may not be trustworthy; VPN usage may be restricted; and hotel staff and government officials may access devices left in hotel rooms.
- 9.2 You should always check the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office advice before travelling.
- 9.3 Our advice is as follows:

Good:

- Travel with only the files you need.
- Use encrypted laptops but be prepared to decrypt them at border crossings.
- Make sure mobile devices are secured.
- Wipe and re-install devices on your return

Better:

- Take a newly installed, encrypted loan laptop but be prepared to decrypt at border crossings.
- Use loan mobile devices that you won't need to use again.
- Where possible use the University's VPN when connecting to services
- Use Outlook on the Web to check email

Best:

- Take a newly installed loan laptop with no encryption.
- Don't store any data on the device that isn't publicly available.
- Don't take mobile devices like iPhone, iPads and USB storage devices
- Where possible use the University's VPN to help secure your network connections
- Don't check emails or remotely access any other services that store University data.

Also note that some software and data may fall within the UK's export control procedures. See [Export Controls \(reading.ac.uk\)](https://reading.ac.uk/export-controls) further information.

## 10 Travel Bookings

- 10.1 If International travel is required, this must be booked via the Travel Management Company (TMC) or the appropriate contracted supplier. If you are unsure of the contracted supplier in place, contact Procurement. UK train travel can be booked directly using a purchase card or claimed back on expenses.
- 10.2 It is encouraged that in order to ensure the correct approvals are in place, that travel is approved and signed off a minimum of 30 days prior to travelling. Where possible more time should be given
- 10.3 If the individual is paying for more than 50% of the travel they can book it directly. All other processes within this policy must be followed.

## 11 Travel in the UK

- 11.1 Air travel is not permitted in mainland UK.
- 11.2 UK train travel can be booked directly using a purchase card or claimed back via expenses.
- 11.3 Where staff or students are travelling by car, taxi or bus, mileage or ticket costs can be claimed back via expenses.

## 12 International Travel

- 12.1 If you are travelling internationally for destinations reachable within 8 hours by train from London St Pancras, you must travel by train. If there is a reason/s why this is not possible this must be signed off as an exception prior to booking. Exceptions are covered at Sect 26

- 12.2 Recognising the increased journey time of some train journeys, the use of sleeper trains will be permitted for long-distance transportation, as well as recognising reasonable time should be allowed on arrival to refresh and prepare for the planned activity.
- 12.3 Similarly, the potential need for some rest following a long plane journey is recognised and again, reasonable time may be allowed on arrival to refresh and prepare for the planned activity.
- 12.4 International train travel must be booked via the TMC. Local train travel can be booked directly using a purchase card or claimed back via expenses.
- 12.5 Where staff or students are travelling by car, taxi or bus, mileage or ticket costs can be claimed back via expenses.

### **13 Air Travel**

- 13.1 If you need to travel by air, you must travel economy. Exceptions are covered at Section 26.
- 13.2 The University intends to introduce an internal carbon levy on flights. This will apply at a School/Function level rather than on individual travel bookings and further details will be published in due course.

### **14 Accommodation**

- 14.1 International hotel bookings must be booked through the TMC, and where possible hotels should be sustainable accredited hotels. The only exception to this is when booking for a conference where this can be booked directly or longer-term accommodation. Hotel bookings in the UK, if required, can be booked via the TMC or directly.
- 14.2 For accommodation of longer duration, approximately 3 weeks and over, there are options for temporary accommodation in serviced apartments or other types of properties. In most cases these types of requirements can still be arranged through the TMC. However, in some cases you will need to consider other options. Advice can be provided by Procurement.

### **15 Student Travel**

- 15.1 Student Placement Travel linked to the Students University courses can be booked through the TMC, but this is optional. Students should provide travel information on all the relevant Risk Assessment forms.
- 15.2 Student Group Travel, along with other forms of student travel such as student field trips, placements, study abroad, will adopt the same approach as Business Travel for each member of the group.
- 15.3 Student Group Travel must be booked through our student travel providers or an agreed alternative with Procurement.

## 16 Taxis

- 16.1 Public Transport should be used in the first instance but if due to safety reasons a taxi is required this is permitted and should be claimed back via purchase card or expenses.

## 17 Postgraduate Research Travel/Grant Funded Travel/Third-party Funded Travel

- 17.1 In order to remain in line with the University's sustainability principles, it is expected that Postgraduate Research/Grant Funded/Third-Party Funded Travel should follow the same rules as staff travel and these are defined in Cop 38.

## 18 Carbon Budget/Offsetting

- 18.1 Annual maximum carbon budgets will be allocated to all Schools and Functions, with each business unit managing its own financial and carbon budget, enabling local decisions to be made on which travel to authorise/priorities.
- 18.2 Offsetting - the University will consider its approach to carbon offsetting at an organisational level and travelers should therefore not select offsetting options with their travel booking.

## 19 Emergency Contacts

- 19.1 In order for the University to identify and manage any risks associated with overseas travel, traveler's must inform the University of their overseas travel plan and emergency contact details using the international travel risk assessment (TRA1) form.
- 19.2 It is a mandatory requirement for travelers to provide their overseas contact details to the University through the University's official travel agent or other appointed supplier. In addition to their School/Research Institute/Professional Unit, travelers should also ensure that they have their up-to-date contact details on the University HR system, TRA1 form and RISIS as appropriate.
- 19.3 In an event of an emergency incident, the University will contact travelers in the country where an emergency incident occurs. Traveler's must respond to the University's text or email and confirm their safety as soon as they practically can.

## 20 Non-compliance

- 20.1 Non-compliance with this policy may result in action being taken in accordance with the University's disciplinary procedures for staff and students.

## 21 Expense Claims

- 21.1 When claiming expenses relating to travelling ensure the Expenses, Gifts and Hospitality Policy is complied with.

## 22 Inoculations and vaccinations

- 22.1 Traveler's must ensure that they have the appropriate vaccinations necessary for the trip.



Any fees incurred in obtaining other vaccinations for business travel can be paid by the University.

## 23 Personal Health

- 23.1 Existing medical conditions are covered by Insurance as long as a medical practitioner has deemed you fit to travel. If unsure, please speak to the Insurance Team

## 24 Travelling with companions

- 24.1 Normally, the University will not meet any costs relating to the spouse, partner or child of a traveller who accompanies the traveler on a business trip. If a traveler chooses to take a family member with them on a trip, if appropriate, the booking for the staff and family member can be made by the TMC so that you sit/stay together but all costs and expenses for the family member must be paid directly to the TMC and cannot be charged to the University and then reimbursed. If a companion is required for specific reasons, such as supporting a traveler with a disability, a specific exception must be agreed in line with the exceptions approval process set out in this policy.

## 25 Roles and Responsibilities

- 25.1 The table below outlines the roles and responsibilities of different parties related to travel.

Role	Responsibility
Head of School/Function	Approval of travel and exceptions Manager of School/Function carbon budget
Traveler	Awareness of Codes of Practice Completion of international travel risk assessment TRA1 Booking Receipt your travel order in the eMarketplace
Insurance	Retain the TRA1 forms. Provide guidance in the event of a Travel claim
Travel Management Company	Booking Payment on behalf of the University Assistance in an emergency
Procurement	Advice on policy Queries about travel booking
Human Resources	Advice on exceptions
Finance	Assistance with budgets Approval of high value orders
Sustainability Services	Monitoring/reporting on School/Function-level carbon emissions

## 26 Exceptions

- 26.1 All exceptions to this policy should be documented in writing with full approval to the Head of School/Function who, if in doubt, should contact the Director of Procurement for advice.

- 26.2 Exceptions can be considered in the following areas:

- For journeys to locations out with mainland Great Britain, including to islands such as

Shetland or the Outer Hebrides, as well as to Northern Ireland.

- To connect with an onward flight to a location which is outside mainland Britain. For example, flying from Edinburgh to London Heathrow to connect to a flight to Dubai.
- For relevant disability or other health-related reasons.
- Where childcare or other caring responsibilities mean that flights are the only viable option to ensure the wellbeing of traveler's and those they care for.

In these limited exceptions, approval is required from the traveler's Head of School or Function prior to booking travel.

- 26.3 The traveler must advise the TMC that an exception has been approved but personal details and circumstances should not be divulged. The TMC will then note this and provide management information to the University of exceptions at an institutional level. The university will review these and take action where appropriate.