



Sustainable Travel Policy – Fellows and Staff

Introduction

The College has committed to take steps to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to net zero before the UK Government's target date of 2050, with a steep reduction by 2030.

As part of this commitment, the College is seeking to minimize its 'Scope 3' carbon emissions. Travel forms an important part of the Scope 3 emissions, and emissions from air travel constitute the bulk of this.

In 2018/19 for example (the last normal pre-Covid year), travel directly funded by the College contributed 248,000 kg of carbon emissions, the vast majority (98.8%) being due to air travel. This is broadly consistent with the University for which emissions from air travel makes up 95% of all business travel emissions. Flying is a very carbon-intensive activity (one return flight from London Heathrow to New York emits around 2,700 kg CO₂e, which is approximately half the average annual per capita emissions in the UK). Aviation is also a hard-to-decarbonise sector, with currently no low carbon alternatives to fossil fuels being available. Low or zero carbon flights are unlikely to be available before 2050 and there is therefore no alternative but to seek to reduce flying, whilst using offsetting for unavoidable travel.

This sustainable travel policy sets out the College's approach to reducing emissions from travel, with a particular focus on reducing emissions from air travel. This can be achieved through both a reduction in travel and also by choosing lower emitting modes of travel (particularly avoiding flying where possible and practicable).

This policy relates only to environmental impacts of travel. Readers are also referred to the College's Expenses and Benefits Policy that sets out guidelines regarding financial aspects of travel.

Applicability

This policy applies to all Fellows and staff. It does not apply to students for whom a separate policy has been developed.

Scope and expectations

Business travel for the College includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Attendance at conferences/workshops
- Academic meetings
- Fieldwork
- Delivering a talk or lecture
- Delivering or receiving a course or training
- Business meetings
- Alumni relations and fundraising activities
- Travelling for student admissions interviews

The policy does not include travel to and from work, or for students travel from home to the college, although staff, fellows and students are expected to be aware of the guidelines and are strongly encouraged to follow the travel guidelines when making travel decisions

In undertaking business travel, Fellows and staff are strongly encouraged to adopt 'climate conscious travel' behaviours and choices. The term 'climate conscious travel' was first adopted by the University of Edinburgh, and means travel choices being informed by the environmental impact they have, and preference being given towards virtual collaboration and lower carbon travel modes. In climate conscious travel, the environmental cost of travel is prioritized over the both the financial cost and individual convenience, but not safety.

In order to foster a climate of climate conscious travel, the College will:

- Facilitate, through investment in high quality video conferencing facilities and other investments, the ability to attend meetings and conferences etc. virtually rather than having to attend in person
- Facilitate people who need to travel, to do so via more sustainable modes.

The College recognizes that virtual engagement is not always an effective alternative to in-person interaction and therefore some national and international travel is essential and beneficial in supporting academic, business and alumni relations/fundraising objectives. However, to help in assessing whether travel, and the particular mode proposed, is well-justified, those contemplating travel are asked to pose themselves the following questions:

- Is the travel essential or could you achieve your goals using virtual methods?
- Can the travel be undertaken by using a low-carbon mode?
- Can fewer people travel?

Essential travel

Travel that is essential might well include:

- fieldwork/lab-work/research/study trips that cannot be carried out locally or virtually
- presenting and promoting work/research at conferences/meetings/workshops, particularly for early-career academics
- key meetings to establish collaboration and trust
- sensitive negotiations
- public outreach/engagement
- meetings with alumni or potential donors where in-person interaction is significantly more likely to result in a positive outcome

When it is essential to travel, when available and where practicable:

- the mode of travel that has the lowest carbon impact should be chosen
- for local and national travel, public transport should be chosen over car use
- for national travel, train and/or other public transport should be chosen over air travel
- train travel, including Eurostar and other international rail, should be chosen over air travel for travel to European destinations that can be reached within 6 hours from a London terminal
- travel should be consolidated into fewer longer trips where possible

There may be occasions where it is not possible or appropriate to follow the above principles e.g.

- where the extra time that would be involved in using lower carbon travel modes is disproportionate and excessive
- where there are safety considerations: in some countries or regions, public transport may not be sufficiently safe or the journey might require changes of transport late at night
- where the journey would involve travel during a significant portion of the night which might be detrimental to the ability to engage effectively on College business the following day
- when travelling by car is significantly more practicable, for example when travelling to do a presentation with display boards/AV equipment or where the trip involves visiting multiple locations over a short space of time
- where the individual has caring responsibilities, where a longer time away might mean the individual is unable to make the trip
- where following the guidelines would be detrimental due to disability or health conditions.

Business Class, and to a lesser extent, Premium Economy air fares are responsible for greater emissions than economy bookings due to the allocation of more space on the plane. The policy regarding class of air travel is as set out below [*N.B Note this is the existing policy as set out in the Expenses and Benefits Policy*]:

- Economy class service should generally be used and is the default class of travel
- Subject to the approval of the person authorising the trip, travel may be permitted in Premium Economy on flights of more than 6 hours and under 9 hours, or Premium Economy or Business Class for flights of more than 9 hours or involving an overnight flight.
- Approval for travel in classes other than economy may also be given when flying in economy would be detrimental due to disability or health conditions.

Expenses

Claims may be made for additional subsistence expenses (accommodation, food and drink, etc.) when travelling by a less carbon-intensive mode necessitates more travel time. In addition, if additional expenses are incurred to facilitate working whilst traveling by a less carbon-intensive mode (e.g. roaming charges, internet connection charges), these may be claimed as an expense.

Offsetting

The College is considering options regarding the offsetting of carbon emissions from essential travel. Given that there is little prospect of carbon-free flights for the foreseeable future, offsetting of carbon emissions from flights is the only way to achieve net zero in air travel. Fellows are encouraged to include in any grant proposals that involved air travel, a request for funding of offsetting costs, where this is possible.

This policy will be updated in due course as plans for offsetting develop.

Target and reporting

The target of this policy is that the College would achieve by 2024/25, a 25% reduction in carbon emissions from business travel relative to 2018/19.

The Climate Crisis Committee will procure reporting on total emissions from College business travel, subject to data availability. In due course the College may appoint a preferred travel agent and if this is done, this should facilitate reporting on emissions from travel.