



Sustainable Travel Policy – Students

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).

Applicability

This policy applies to all students. An equivalent policy (alike to this in all key respects) has been developed which applies to all Fellows and staff.

Scope and expectations

Travel covered by the policy includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Attendance at conferences/workshops
- Academic meetings
- Fieldwork
- Travel for a course or training
- Summer studentships and placements
- Any other travel funded by the college including through Travel Grants, Learning and Research Fund, Summer bursaries etc

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

decisions. In particular the college encourages the use of public transport wherever possible for students travelling to and from the college at the start and end of term.

In undertaking travel, students 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 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 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
- academic placements or courses that are not available in Cambridge
- key meetings to establish collaboration and trust

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

- when travelling by car is significantly more practicable, for example when 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.

Expenses

Claims may be made for additional subsistence expenses from the Learning and Research Fund (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. Students are encouraged to make a personal decision about paying for carbon offsetting costs, following university best practice.

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 student travel relative to 2018/19. The Climate Crisis Committee will procure reporting on total emissions from College travel, subject to data availability.