

Travel Policy

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Introduction

The University approved the Environmental Sustainability Strategy in 2021 which sets a goal of achieving net zero carbon and biodiversity net gain by 2035. The Strategy includes ten areas of action, each of which includes commitments. One of these areas of action is international travel, with the priority of reducing aviation emissions from University staff and student travel, and a commitment to develop a travel policy.

Travel is a difficult area to address as a global university that engages with the world through research, field trips, conferences and collaborations. While the University recognises that some travel is necessary for learning, teaching, and research, this policy is aimed at reducing the environmental impact of travel.

The Travel Policy will apply to all travel on University business from 1 August 2022.

1. Travel on University business

‘Travel on University business’ is defined as travel necessary for meeting the University’s business needs which is paid for or reimbursed by the University. This includes travel by staff, students or visitors for:

- attending meetings, conferences or to work elsewhere;
- field trips arranged by the University;
- research fieldwork;
- placements; and
- interviews.

This policy excludes the following travel:

- international students travelling to and from the University;
- home students travelling between home and the University;
- staff travelling between home and their normal place of work; and
- staff relocation flights.

Where travel is paid for by grant funding that stipulates additional travel requirements, these should be adhered to.

Considering travel

2. Sustainability

The University acknowledges the significant carbon impact of travel on University business. Flying is the mode of travel with the highest environmental impact with emissions from flying on University business estimated at 30,000 tCO₂e annually – around half the carbon emitted from all the buildings on the University estate¹.

¹ The University’s 2018/19 EMR submission estimated 30,000 tCO₂e were emitted from University business travel.

Measures to address the impact of travel include:

- annually reporting flight emissions from University business travel to track and monitor emissions;
- charging a flight levy on University business travel;
- encouraging a mode shift from flights to rail where possible;
- encouraging virtual alternatives to travel;
- supporting investment in digital technology to support reduced travel;
- reducing travel and setting a flight reduction target; and
- engaging staff and students on travel.

The flight levy will be allocated to the Oxford Sustainability Fund for implementing the Environmental Sustainability Strategy. Offsetting will be used from 2034 onwards to offset the University's residual carbon emissions and biodiversity impact to achieve the strategy targets of net zero carbon and biodiversity net gain by 2035. This approach to offsetting is in line with the Oxford Offsetting Principles², prioritising reducing emissions to minimise the need for offsets.

3. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

An equality analysis has been completed and is summarised below. Mitigation has been incorporated and positive impacts for members of the protected groups have been identified in paragraphs 4, travel prioritisation and 9, exceptions and reasonable adjustments. Equality, diversity and inclusion considerations have been incorporated in the travel prioritisation section.

4. Travel Prioritisation

Departments are required to consider and agree travel prioritisation to reduce aviation emissions taking the following into account:

- the reasons for travel
- the environmental impact of travel, particularly of flights
- the frequency of travel
- fairness of access to travel
- the equality, diversity and inclusion considerations of travel:
 - The potential impact on people with different protected characteristics as defined by the [Equality Act 2010](#), including the potential for both positive and negative impacts.
 - The potential positive impact of reduced travel through greater use of virtual and hybrid participation for those for whom travelling is limited by disability, caring responsibilities, pregnancy and maternity, working part-time, or who may be put at risk by travelling to a location due to religion, sexual orientation or gender identity, race/ethnicity, or nationality. This positive impact is only possible if virtual participation is equally well regarded and rewarded for career progression.
 - The potential negative impact of reduced travel resulting in limited in-person opportunities for career progression for those less likely to be selected for travel,

² <https://www.smithschool.ox.ac.uk/publications/reports/Oxford-Offsetting-Principles-2020.pdf>

more likely to choose not to travel, or more likely to have smaller grant funding for travel. Examples of this include early career researchers, women who are pregnant or persons with caring responsibilities, disabled persons, LGBT+ people, people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and part-time staff.

- The potential risk of departments being reluctant to authorise travel for disabled staff and women, especially if pregnant or breast-feeding, or caring for a young child, or any person who wishes to avoid certain travel routes, modes or destinations where they are likely to be at risk, if they perceive their travel to be more expensive or less sustainable. Examples of this include requesting to fly or to drive their own car to reduce complexity and fatigue, or to reduce time away from home, or to be accompanied by a companion or child carer, to travel in premium rather than economy seats or to avoid certain travel routes, modes or destinations.
- Departments should monitor and record their decision-making to enable equality analysis and reporting and, in case of queries or complaints, to be able to assess whether their decisions are fair and equitable and whether they have any unintended adverse consequences.

5. Travel Hierarchy

All persons travelling on University business should consider this travel hierarchy when contemplating travel with the aim of reducing the environmental impact. Reasonable adjustments and exceptions for the protected groups may be applicable.

Avoid travel - consider whether travel is necessary

- Consider [virtual alternatives](#)

Reduce your travel – consider these possibilities

- Combine trips
- Take fewer trips
- Choose less distant conference locations
- Minimise the size of the group

Travel without flying – consider alternatives for travel within the UK, to Europe, or within other countries:

- Rail (including sleeper trains)
- Coach
- Ferry
- Car(share)

Fly when there are no alternatives - and consider the

- Route - flying direct is usually less carbon intensive
- Class of flight - economy class has the lowest emissions due to using less space

Class of travel	Emissions compared to economy class
Premium economy	1.6 times
Business class	2.9 times
First class	4 times

Use this decision tool when considering national and international travel.



TRAVEL HIERARCHY

1



Avoid Travel

Consider whether travel is necessary. Is virtual attendance a viable option?



When travel is unavoidable

2



Reduce Travel

Consider these possibilities:

- Combine trips
- Take fewer trips
- Choose less distant conference locations
- Minimise group size

3



Travel without Flying

Consider alternatives for travel within the UK/Europe:

- Rail (including sleeper trains)
- Coach
- Ferry
- Car(share)

4



Fly

When alternatives are not possible, direct economy class flights are the least carbon intensive.

LEARN MORE

<https://staff.admin.ox.ac.uk/travelling-for-work>

6. Travel Safety

The safety and security of staff, students and visitors is important to the University. The following must be considered before travel:

Category	Guidance
Health	The University's Occupational Health Service (OHS) offers travel health risk assessment services for individuals and groups. Advice is tailored to individual needs and can include assessment of any underlying health conditions and specific health needs, type of destination, circumstances of travel, accommodation and whether additional measures such as travel vaccinations and/or other medications are needed. Requests for services should be submitted six weeks before departure. Find out more about the OHS travel service , travel information leaflet and the travel health assessment form.
Visas	Check the government's latest foreign travel advice for entry visa requirements to countries to which you are travelling. Obtain the necessary visas before travel. The preferred travel provider can provide visa services. If you are a sponsored migrant worker, contact the Staff Immigration team for advice about travelling outside the UK for University business.
Travel Insurance	The University provides travel insurance for employees, students and volunteers travelling worldwide on University business. Cover is not automatic and must be applied for through the Travel Insurance Application and Travel Registration System (TIRS). Insurance cover includes emergency assistance. Full details of cover, eligibility and how to apply can be found on the Insurance website .
Risk Assessment	A suitable risk assessment should be undertaken for activities away from the University. The level of detail required depends on the risk involved and personal circumstances, eg pregnant women, staff with disabilities and/or long-term health conditions. For example, a day trip to Reading would not require a written risk assessment, whereas more extensive fieldwork-related travel would. For overseas travel and fieldwork please refer to the Safety Office advice, complete a risk assessment and obtain appropriate departmental approval. Any relevant fieldwork safety training courses should be attended. The Safety Office runs several courses. Check government advice on travel to your destination. Travelling against FCDO (UK Government) advice If travelling to a country (or parts of a country) to which the government advises against all travel, or against unnecessary travel, the department must submit a detailed written risk assessment to the University's Safety Office for review. The travel must be approved by the Head of Department in accordance with the University's Health and Safety Policy on Overseas Travel.

Booking travel

7. Cost

Travel costs should offer value for money. Value for money is the optimum balance between cost, quality, risk and environmental sustainability.

To meet the flight reduction targets of this policy it is permissible to spend more when:

- travelling by rail for domestic journeys;
- travelling by Eurostar to Paris and Brussels.

8. Travel Authorisation

Each department shall determine the appropriate persons and processes to authorise international travel as necessary travel prior to booking. Premium economy and business class flights require pre-approval by departments. First class flights are not permitted.

9. Exceptions and Reasonable Adjustments

The University recognises the legal duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled staff (which may also include staff with long-term health conditions). Reasonable adjustments for disability could include adjustments to the mode of travel, class/comfort, route, use of public transport, or being accompanied by a companion/guide. For further guidance see: edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/support-for-disabled-staff.

The University recognises that departments may need to make exceptions and accommodations on the basis of an individual's protected characteristics³ to take account of the needs and safety of the person travelling or to avoid direct or indirect discrimination.

Accommodations could include adjustments to the mode of travel, class/comfort, route, use of public transport, travelling with a child, or bringing a companion to help care for a child, additional safety provisions to address specific needs of individuals from protected groups.

Exceptions may also be valid in cases due to medical conditions which do not amount to a disability (eg a short-term impairment such as a broken leg), where the requirements of the policy are impractical, in emergency situations, and in other exceptional circumstances.

10. Book travel through the University's Preferred Travel Supplier

The contract with the University's preferred travel supplier is actively managed by the University to provide feedback on the service received and to identify service improvements. It is strongly

³ Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

recommended that the following travel is booked through the [University's preferred travel supplier](#), currently Key Travel:

- Flights
- Hotels
- UK rail
- Eurostar

The preferred travel supplier offers the University cost, convenience, safety and sustainability benefits of:

- Cost
 - Access to academic fares, not publicly available, with average 30% saving
 - Price match promise for airfares
- Convenience
 - No requirement for personal payment and reimbursement with invoiced booking
 - An online booking facility for direct bookings; and
 - An offline booking facility using a travel agent for more complex bookings
 - Travellers can capture airline loyalty scheme points
 - Single point of contact for changes and refunds
- Safety
 - 24-hour emergency support
- Sustainability
 - “Greenest” search option available
 - Comprehensive carbon emissions reporting

It is recommended that the University's [preferred taxi hire company](#), currently Royal Cars, be used for travel in and around Oxford.

11. Flight Levy

A flight levy will be recharged to departments for all flights paid for, or reimbursed by, the University to compensate for the carbon emissions of that flight. The levy will be allocated to the Oxford Sustainability Fund (OSF) for implementing the University's Environmental Sustainability Strategy.

The flight levy will commence at £30/tCO₂e for all flights. The flight levy rate will be reviewed every two years. Estimates of [flight levies payable](#) are available. The flight levy will be recharged to departments monthly after flights have been booked or reclaimed through expenses.

12. The Flight Reduction Target

The University has set a target of reducing emissions from flights by 35% by 2035 against the 2018/19 travel baseline, as follows:

- a 20% reduction by 2024/25
- a further 10% reduction by 2030/31
- a further 5% reduction by 2034/35.

To reduce flights, unless exceptions or reasonable adjustments are applicable,

- rail should be used for all domestic journeys under 7 hours. Exceptions include flights to Northern Ireland, the Shetland Islands or the Outer Hebrides. Flights are also permitted to the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.
- Eurostar should be used for all journeys to Paris and Brussels
- First class flights are not permitted
- Premium economy and business class flights require pre-approval by departments, with evidence retained.

All departments will be expected to meet this target considering:

- prioritisation: determining travel that will be prioritised
- carbon emissions: selecting flights with the lowest emissions
- cost: balancing cost and carbon emissions
- distance: reducing long haul flights responsible for the bulk of emissions
- ticket count: reducing number of trips
- class: encouraging economy class flights which have the lowest carbon emissions.