
Staff Travel Policy



Responsible Office	Estates and Services (sustainability)
Responsible Officer	Sustainability Manager
Approving Authority	SSG
Date of Approval	June 2025
Effective Date	June 2025
Related Procedures	Financial Regulations
Related University Policies	Staff Expense Policy
Amended	
Supersedes	
Next Review Date	June 2026

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to assist staff in helping them to comply with the University's requirements, to understand what can and cannot be claimed for and what is considered reasonable.

Compliance with the policy provides staff protection from unwarranted accusations as well as helping the University achieve its sustainable travel and value for money objectives. This policy supports our Sustainability Strategy and aims to contribute to BSU's goal to become net zero by encouraging low carbon travel, and discouraging carbon intensive methods of travel.

2. Definitions

"Staff" means all employees employed by the University. "University" means Bath Spa University. "Travel Management Company" refers to Key Travel.

3 Policy Statement

This policy sets out the rules for Travelling on University Business.

Value for Money

In planning and procuring their travel arrangements staff must ensure they achieve best value. All travel arrangements should be booked in advance through the University's approved travel management company [Key Travel](#).

Sustainability

Travel accounts for a significant share of the University's carbon footprint. Consideration should be given to ensure the most sustainable option has been chosen for travel arrangements. The travel hierarchy should be utilised wherever possible, with mode of travel selected from lower on the hierarchy to reduce the impact of business travel:

Hierarchy place	Mode of transport	Emissions (gCO ₂ e) per person per kilometre
0	Active Transport (e.g. cycling, walking)	0
1	Eurostar	4
2	Coach	27
3	Domestic rail	35
4	Car (four passengers)	42
5	Local bus (not London)	123
6	Ferry	113
7	Taxi	148
8	Car (one passenger)	166
9	Long-haul flight	261
10	Domestic flight	272

*Source DESNZ/Government Conversion Factors 2024. Car refers to an averaged size car. Domestic rail is based upon a UK average of diesel & electric trains.

- Overall, the lowest carbon option is not to travel – consider whether you could use phone, email, or a virtual meeting instead.
- Ensure total journeys have been minimised, by combining trips or events.
- If travel is necessary, ensure walking or cycling is utilised where possible.
- Trains are preferable for longer journeys but where driving is considered the only practical option, consider car-sharing.
- Flying should be the choice of last resort for destinations within England, Wales and Scotland (except north of Glasgow and Edinburgh) and the area serviced by Eurostar, unless such travel is not practical due to constraints which are approved by a line manager / research supervisory team.
- The least carbon-emitting method should be used subject to the principle of economy and reasonableness where it is practical to do so, even where costs may be higher. In practice, this means that in many cases, land-based travel rather than flying is the default option.
- If travel is being funded through a research grant, consider whether your original proposal could contain low/ zero travel price and full travel price options to give funders the opportunity to fund lower-carbon projects?
- All air travel and UK rail must be booked using the University's travel management company ([Key Travel](#)) to ensure that carbon emissions can be recorded.

Further details of how the University supports sustainable and active travel choices to and from work visit the Transport section on the Sustainability pages.

Equality, Health and Safety, and Wellbeing

This policy aims to ensure that the wellbeing of staff required to travel is considered. The University has a duty of care under the Equality act 2010 to provide reasonable adjustments for travellers, including consideration for those who do not fall under the act but who have an occupational health need or other responsibilities e.g. caring. If a traveller feels that they are unable to make their travel arrangements within the constraints of this policy and that an exception should be granted, they must gain written approval from their line manager prior to making any bookings.

4. External monies

If an external grant or research funder stipulates higher financial limits, then this University policy will take precedence. If external funders stipulate lower financial limits then the external funder requirements will take precedence as this will represent the maximum they are willing to reimburse. The University receives public funds and is subject to Freedom of Information requests. It is also subject to considerable external scrutiny from funders and their auditors.

5. Travel

The University will pay for travelling expenses for staff journeys made in the performance of their duties as employees of the University. This must be booked in advance through the University's approved travel management company ([Key Travel](#)) where feasibly possible. Where not possible, prior approval must be sought.

Where this is not possible the most economical method of transport should be used taking into account efficient working practices. Staff are encouraged to use public transport where ever available/appropriate, in line with the travel hierarchy as above. This will be standard class rail travel, and economy class air travel or hire/private car but this will depend on the destination and the number of people travelling.

6. Business Travel

The University will only reimburse the costs of necessary business travel. This is defined as travel from one workplace to another on University business, enabling staff to perform their work duties.

Payment for the cost of travel between home and the workplace (including weekends and evenings) is only payable in exceptional circumstances when approved by the claimant's line manager/budget holder on advice of the Finance/HR Business Partner. Approved home to work journeys are a taxable benefit so should be claimed via the payroll department as a "claim for repayment through payroll of taxable expenses".

The University will not fund the costs of partners accompanying staff unless the partner is assuming an official University role, such as hosting official receptions, and the line manager's approval has been obtained prior to travel. If a member of staff wishes to extend an overseas visit into a holiday, and/or take family members with them, all non-University business costs must be borne in full by the member of staff.

Air miles and similar reward scheme benefits earned through official travel may be used to "purchase" enhanced facilities on University business travel such as seat or facility upgrades or to obtain access to facilities such as priority booking or departure lounges. They must not be used for personal benefit.

7. Public Transport – Rail, Coach and Bus Travel

Wherever possible rail travel should be booked in advance through the University's approved Travel Management Company ([Key Travel](#)).

Travellers should book well in advance and wherever possible take advantage of saver or super-saver tickets.

Timed returns should always be booked unless it is not possible to estimate with certainty your time of return, in which case open-returns may be booked.

Travellers are expected to travel **standard class**, however, first class rail travel may be booked where this is cheaper than published standard class fares for timed arrivals and departures (i.e. not open ended standard class returns) which can be the case depending on the date.

The circumstances that can apply to staff travelling other than standard class are:

- where there is a demanding work schedule e.g. a short time between rail travel and the commencement of University duties or where there are multiple trains over an extended period being taken;
- where a funding sponsor permits higher classes and will reimburse the full cost
- medical and/or disability grounds;
- where it is cheaper or the same price to travel by train at a higher grade, including first class.

If circumstances warrant rail travel other than standard class the following apply:

- Any rail travel, other than standard class, requires the prior approval of the member of staff's line manager/budget holder;
- First class is only permitted if the cost is fully reimbursed by an external funder or sponsor.

Wi-Fi costs will be reimbursed if this is used for University business.

8. Sea travel

For crossings over 6 hours, standard cabin accommodation is permitted.

9. Air Travel

Please refer to the University Travel hierarchy (above) before booking air travel. All staff air travel should be booked in advance as early as possible through the University's approved Travel Management Company ([Key Travel](#)) to take advantage of any possible reduced advance fares. Staff are expected to fly economy class, and for travel by air to be avoided wherever possible. However, in certain circumstances it is permitted to fly in other classes based on the following guidelines:

Flight Duration	Any Flight Duration	Over 5 Hours and up to 9 Hours	Over 9 Hours (Subject to Prior Approval)	Not Permitted
Class	Economy	Premium Economy	Business	First Class

The circumstances that can apply to staff travelling other than economy class are:

- where there is a demanding work schedule e.g. a short time between a flight landing and the commencement of University duties or where there are multiple flights over an extended period being taken;
- where a funding sponsor permits higher classes and will reimburse the full cost
- medical and/or disability grounds;
- where it is cheaper or the same price to fly at a higher grade, including first class.

If circumstances warrant flying other than economy class the following apply:

- Any flight, other than economy class, requires the prior approval of the member of staff's line manager/budget holder;
- First class is only permitted if the cost is fully reimbursed by an external funder or sponsor.

There is usually a premium for air travel extras if not booked in advance. Acceptable costs for air travel extras are seat reservation fees and baggage charges if booked in advance. Unacceptable costs are excess baggage charges made at check in if these charges could have been avoided at the time of making the booking.

Travel Expenses Process

The process to claim expenses is detailed in the Staff Expenses Policy. Further details of rates, allowable charges, terms, conditions, and exceptions are detailed in the Staff Expenses Policy.