University of Glasgow

GUIDANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS TRAVEL FOR STAFF AND POSTGRADUATE RESEARCHERS

WORLD CHANGING GLASGOW

THE AWARDS 2020
UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR

SCOPE

This guidance lays out recommendations and actions to reduce carbon emissions from the University of Glasgow's business travel.

By business travel, we mean all travel associated with our work, including for research and for recruitment and teaching.

The guidance supports the University's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, Glasgow Green.

The guidance does not include actions to reduce emissions used by commuting but colleagues are encouraged to use active travel and public transport and follow advice in the University's Strategic Transport and Travel Plan.

It should be read in consultation with the University of Glasgow Policy for Overseas Business & Study Travel Safety which covers risk assessment and planning, travel and insurance booking, pre-travel information, advice and training, in-trip traveller communications, support and monitoring, emergency support, care and extraction, incident reporting, recording and post-trip debriefs.

THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

In 2015, in the United Nations Paris Climate Agreement, 195 countries agreed on the need to keep global temperature increases this century to well below 2°C, while pursuing efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C.

In 2018 the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) demonstrated that limiting global heating to 1.5°C would require 'net zero' carbon emissions by around 2050. Allowing global heating to increase by 2°C would risk many more potentially catastrophic impacts in many parts of the world, including drought, floods, extreme heat, and poverty for hundreds of millions of people around the world.

This means that sustainability is an increasingly prominent issue in higher education: some research funders (for instance, the Wellcome Trust) are now including environmental impact criteria in grant conditions, including asking grant-holders to minimise travel as far as possible.

THE UNIVERSITY CONTEXT

We have made public commitments to reduce our carbon emissions:

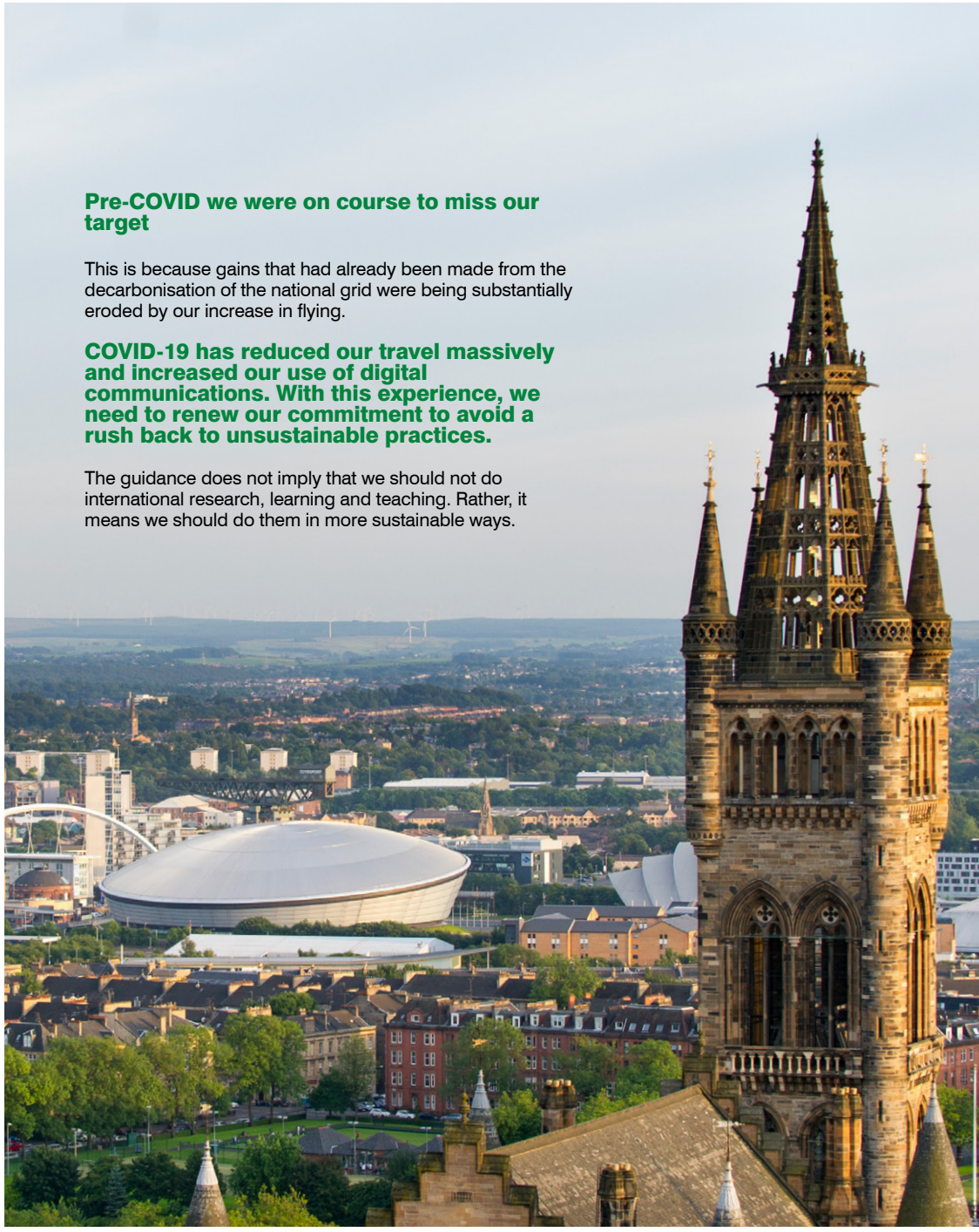
THE UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW'S COMMITMENTS

In October 2017, we signed the Sustainable Development Goals Accord, which committed us to combating poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, and promoting peace and justice.

In May 2019, in response to a call from the Environmental Association of Universities & Colleges, we made a formal declaration of a climate emergency and committed to achieving carbon neutrality. Given our commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals we will continue to deliver reductions in carbon emissions from each of the sources highlighted in Figure 1 (see next page).

Our next publicly stated target is a 20% reduction in emissions to 55,500 tCO_2e by 2020/2021.

A consultation with the University community to set the University on a course to net zero emissions showed that staff and students clearly expect UofG to play a leading role in tackling climate change. They supported action on a range of measures, including reducing emissions associated business travel by staff and postgraduate research students.



Pre-COVID we were on course to miss our target

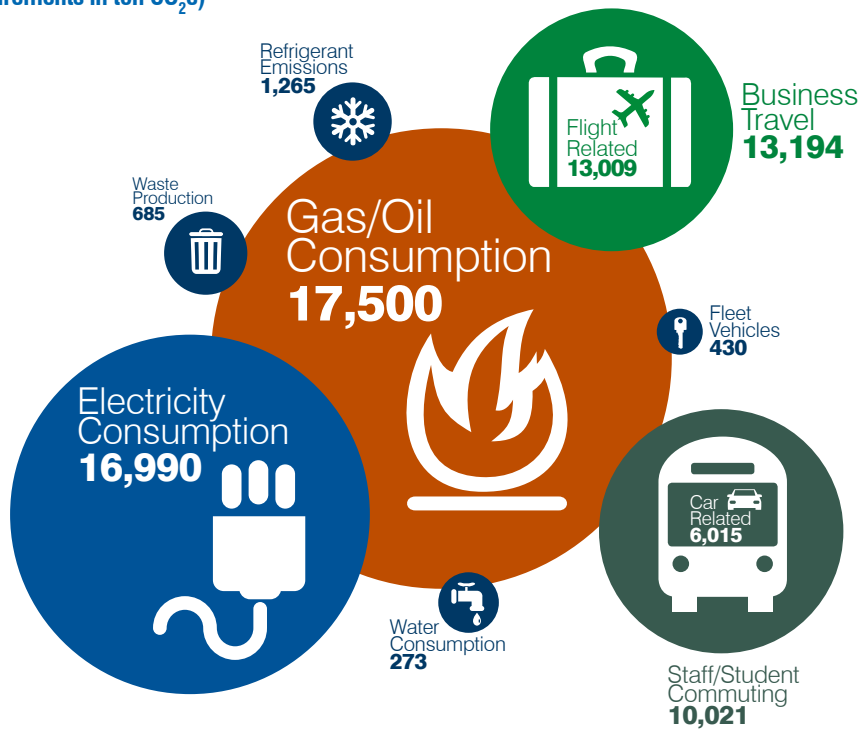
This is because gains that had already been made from the decarbonisation of the national grid were being substantially eroded by our increase in flying.

COVID-19 has reduced our travel massively and increased our use of digital communications. With this experience, we need to renew our commitment to avoid a rush back to unsustainable practices.

The guidance does not imply that we should not do international research, learning and teaching. Rather, it means we should do them in more sustainable ways.

WHY ARE WE FOCUSING ON FLYING? THE BACKGROUND

FIGURE 1
UofG carbon footprint 2018-19 (measurements in ton CO_2e)



Total **60,358**

Our footprint equates to the annual carbon cost of producing the food for **22,999 meat eaters, 43,403 vegetarians,** or **57,220 vegans***

*based on Scarborough, P., Appleby, PN., Mizdrak, A. et al. Climatic Change (2015) 125: 179-192

INCREASED EMISSIONS FROM BUSINESS TRAVEL

Pre-COVID business travel accounted for 22% of the University's total carbon footprint (Figure 1). Most of our travel-related emissions come from flying, and both domestic and international flights have increased sharply in recent years (Figure 2).

FLIGHT-RELATED EMISSIONS ARE UNEQUALLY DISTRIBUTED

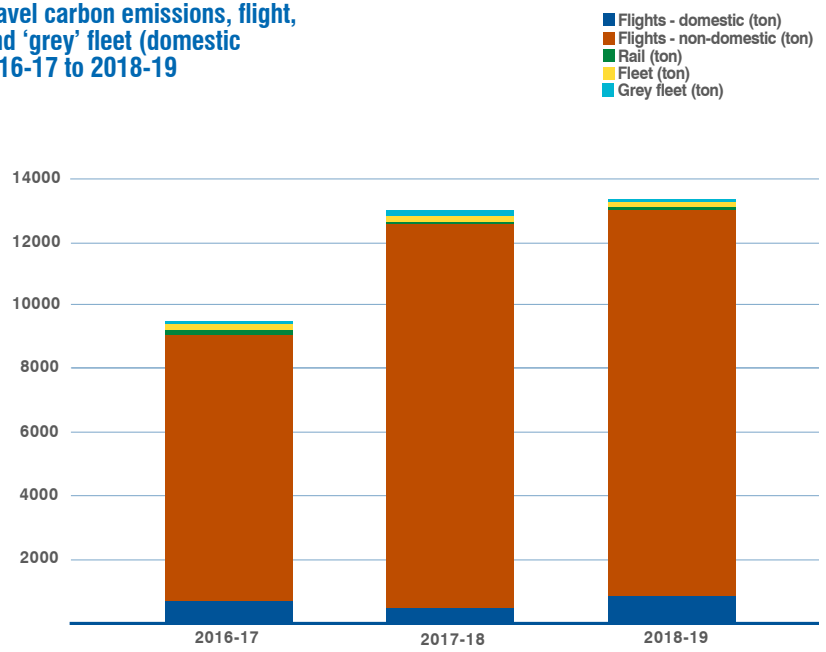
Current data do not allow a breakdown of air travel by seniority at the University of Glasgow. Evidence from other universities suggests that the use of flights for business travel is unequally distributed among academic staff, with a small proportion of individuals accounting for most emissions.

For example, a 2012 survey of staff at the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research found that 20% of individuals were responsible for 55% of flight-related emissions, and seniority was a strong predictor of flights. Beyond the UK, similar results have been shown in studies at the University of British Columbia (where 25% of individuals were responsible for 80% of emissions), the University of Maine, and of attendees at various academic conferences.

In the Tyndall Centre survey seniority, geographical location, and flying for personal reasons were significant predictors of flying for business. Similarly, the UBC project and other research has found that seniority is associated with much higher flight-related emissions.

The unequal distribution of flight-related emissions means that those who travel most – the most senior staff – can do most to reduce the University's emissions. Simultaneously, the benefits of travel for career development may vary across career stages or for those based in the Global South. In planning to achieve targets, senior staff can take this into account in decision making.

FIGURE 2
Business travel carbon emissions, flight, rail, fleet and 'grey' fleet (domestic car use) 2016-17 to 2018-19



TARGET FOR REDUCING BUSINESS TRAVEL EMISSIONS

Maintaining reductions in emissions from business travel that we have experienced since COVID will support the University of Glasgow's commitment to its net-zero emissions target. We have set an important target, taking into account that it must be achievable in the context of our vital international collaborations.

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW'S TARGET FOR SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS TRAVEL

To reduce emissions from Business Travel from 13,194 ton CO_2e in 2018-19 to 5597 ton CO_2e in 2029-30.

This equates to a reduction of 7.5% year on year, and is in line with recent advice from the United Nations' Environment Programme.

ACHIEVING OUR TARGET

HOW TO ACHIEVE THE TARGET?

Four main actions will enable every member of staff, at every level of seniority, in every Service, School and Institute to contribute to achieving this target. The Sustainable Business Travel decision aid at the end of this document is designed to facilitate these actions, with suggestions for each stage and links to useful resources.

1 **Avoid travelling where possible.** Use alternatives instead, such as teleconferencing and videoconferencing. We now have a lot of experience of that.

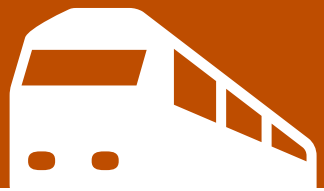
2 **Identify opportunities to fund and use technological solutions for virtual working in grant proposals** – especially to support partner organisations which do not have access to high-quality virtual working technologies.

3 **Choose public transport (such as trains or buses) when travel is required.** The University's expectation is that:
   a Travel by train and other forms of public transport will be the default option for travel within the UK, with domestic flights only taken where there is specific justification, as discussed with your line manager, eg, for a person with caring responsibilities or as a reasonable adjustment for people with disabilities.
   b This principle applies even where taking the train is more expensive option.
   c Staff and postgraduate research students will avoid taxis unless there is specific justification (such as safety).
   d Line managers will support staff in taking sustainable travel options even when this requires more time and cost. Train travel can offer opportunities for off-line working.

4 **Maximise the value of any given travel episode,** for example, by combining opportunities for further research links when attending a conference.

TO SUPPORT THESE ACTIONS, THE UNIVERSITY WILL:

- Ensure that guidance and policies on reducing carbon emissions from business travel are proportionate, fair, and equitable, seeking to redress existing inequalities within the sector (eg by gender, career stage, global inequalities of opportunity, caring responsibilities, disability and other protected characteristics).
- Adapt promotion criteria so that staff who reduce or eliminate international travel are not disadvantaged.
- Build on staff experiences of working from home during the COVID-19 crisis to prioritise the use of videoconferencing facilities accessible to all staff, with appropriate guidance and support on their use.
- Support and promote the use of alternative means of disseminating research and interact with peers, collaborators and stakeholder, such as social media, including advice on how to gather and evaluate social media "reach".
- Ensure good communication with line managers to prioritise low carbon travel for all staff in decision making about travel.
- Seek to obtain discounts for low-carbon travel where possible, through the bulk purchasing of season and other tickets from travel providers and developing sustainability discount agreements with, eg NextBike, ScotRail with the University's travel agent providing lower carbon travel options at the time of travel requests. See here for current benefits.
- Ask applicants for internal grants to comment on sustainability/ environmental footprint on all internal grant applications.
- Advocate for changes in travel patterns throughout the higher education sector, in collaboration with other HEIs and funding bodies, e.g. ensuring advice and support for grant application budgets seeking to include sustainable travel, eg for grants built around international collaboration.

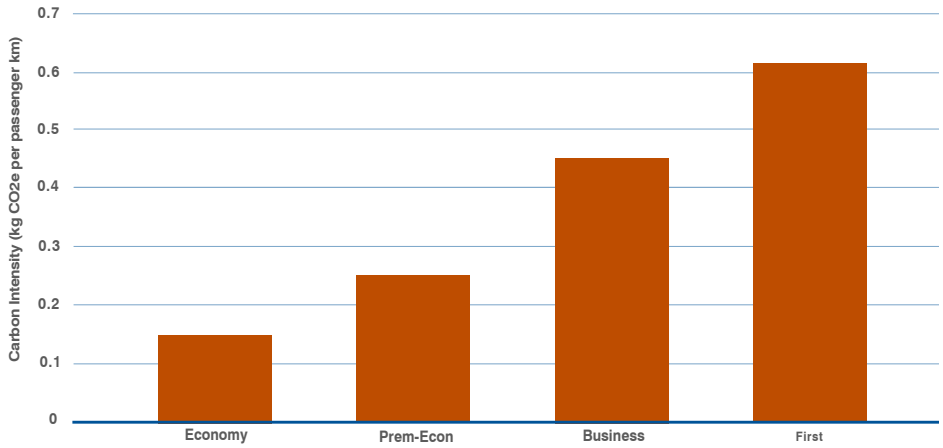


TO SUPPORT THESE ACTIONS, STAFF CAN:

- Use the decision aid in this guide to support decisions for every episode of travel.
- Ensure that grant applications consider (and include budget items where appropriate) for technological alternatives to travel, increased costs of domestic and continental European travel by train (including time commitments) and the distribution of travel amongst team members. Alternatives to travel should be particularly emphasized when all partners have appropriate technologies to support virtual working while support for technological infrastructure (eg hardware, software, mobile data) should be considered for applications with partners where virtual working is not currently a feasible option. Advice on the eligibility and suitability of including various travel alternatives in funding applications is available from GCID, RSO, and the relevant funding body.
- Promote the use of alternatives to travel (including remote access) among their teams, with partner institutions, and in planning for events and conferences.
- Avoid domestic flights and business/first class flights (especially for shorter international flights) unless there are specific justifications (such as reasonable adjustment for people with disabilities). Figure 3 shows that business and first-class flights carry considerably higher carbon costs.

FIGURE 3

Carbon intensity of long-haul flights



EXAMPLES

The examples below illustrate how simple changes to travel plans can help contribute to meeting our target:

A large three-year research project with

EXAMPLE 1:

COLLABORATING IN TANZANIA

A research project with collaborators in Tanzania involves ten UofG staff. Joint meetings are held annually and each time all ten collaborators attend. Next year, to reduce carbon emissions, the group plan a few things to reduce emissions.

- To buy data for the Tanzanian colleagues from UofG-held funds.
- The PI will join remotely, but ECRs and the operational manager will attend, with plans on what to do if links break down.
- The PI will carefully plan the meeting and good meeting etiquette to ensure full participation for all participants.

EXAMPLE 2:

FELLOWSHIP AWARDS INTERVIEWS IN LONDON

A Professor is a member of a Fellowship Awards Panel which meets to interview candidates in London. Instead of flying on an early flight and returning on a late one, he takes the sleeper, showers in Euston Station, and takes a late afternoon train back to Glasgow. He takes a late start the following morning if needed. He also advocates for further interviews to be digital, given the experience of COVID that it can work very well.

EXAMPLE 3:

PLANNING FUNDING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

A Professor is chair of a funding committee for a panel in UKRI which meets three times a year. She suggests the panel has one face-to-face meeting each year, arriving in time for lunch and networking, which enables same-day travel. The other two meetings will be held on Zoom, which allows recording for checking minutes and actions, screen-sharing, and breakout room facilities. Because the committee members have become familiar with using Zoom during COVID-19, everyone is happy to be at home and uses this tool with confidence.

EXAMPLE 4:

NECESSARY INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL 1

A member of SMG is travelling for a Universitas21 meeting in Singapore, having consulted the guidance with their line manager and decided that the prospect of a major collaboration with a new country partner required in-person attendance. They combine the meeting with an invited lecture at a local university, having negotiated to bring the date of the lecture forward by six weeks to enable the two to be combined in the same trip.

EXAMPLE 5:

NECESSARY INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL 2

A lecturer travels to China to deliver teaching to 100 undergraduate students as part of the undergraduate degree offered in partnership with the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China (UESTC). Recognising that this partnership means that his students can study locally, he sees this as necessary travel. His teaching will last for one week, but he arranges extra meetings with colleagues at UESTC in support of a joint grant application they are writing.

EXAMPLE 6:

CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE

A PI normally attends an annual conference, where she introduces colleagues to new early career researchers and PhD students in her group. She also usually has dinner with her group at the conference – a time for informal interaction in a new setting. In 2021 she decides to forego conference attendance as she has already attended multiple other meetings that year. Instead she has one of her post-doctoral research associates who is presenting take responsibility for introducing new members of her group to colleagues at the conference. She organises a Glasgow-based social for informal interaction.

EXAMPLE 7:

EUROPEAN COST ACTION GRANT

A PI is leading a European COST Action Grant, which normally involves partners from across the EU meeting regularly. All the members of the consortium are well-equipped with video conferencing facilities, so the application includes a reduced number of in-person meetings and several virtual meetings. For the in-person meetings that do take place, the meeting locations are chosen to facilitate train travel by participants and the group develops a project-wide commitment to avoiding air travel where possible.

EXAMPLE 8:

POST-DOCTORAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATE DOING FIELDWORK IN LONDON

A post-doctoral research associate has face-to-face fieldwork in London. To avoid another night away from home, in discussion with her PI, she books a solo-use ‘classic room’ sleeper train. She arranges a face-to-face meeting with a colleague she met on twitter to make most use of the time in London before heading back on the sleeper for work the next day.

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

This guidance will not work unless we pay careful attention to implementation and monitoring. Implementing the guidance will be the responsibility of the Sustainability Working Group.
To support implementation:

- Monitoring will take place at School/Institute/Service level. To allow this the Procurement Unit, together with sustainability staff, will provide data on carbon emissions from business travel twice a year (once in each semester) to each School, Institute and Service. So that equality impact can be considered, feedback will include carbon emissions for travel by type of travel, gender and grade of staff. *We will not be able to monitor travel paid for by other organisations – staff are asked to consider using the guidance in making decisions in these cases.*

- Each School, Institute and Service is asked to implement sustainable travel practices from January 2021. They may consider:
  - A working group to include members of staff at every level of seniority to support the relevant Sustainability Champion;
  - A plan for sustained communications;
  - Noting and evaluating every action to offer learning about successful initiatives to other Schools, Institutes and Services.

School/Institutes will be asked to report bi-annually to their College Management Group/Professional Services Group and the Sustainability Working Group will report progress bi-annually to SMG.

SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL DECISION AID

This decision support aid is designed to help you identify low-carbon travel alternatives and maximise the benefits of your travel emissions. It is adapted from the Tyndall Centre Travel Strategy and the Alliance for Sustainability Leadership in Education (EAUC) Travel Better package, which offer more detailed decision support for those wishing to review their travel.

1. DECIDING WHETHER TO TRAVEL

WHAT DO I WANT TO ACHIEVE?

- Why am I attending this event and how will it benefit my work, the University, or society more broadly?
- What specific benefits will in-person attendance provide?

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF NOT TRAVELLING?

- Could time/money for travel be better spent on other means of dissemination?
- Can other ECR or PGR colleagues benefit more from attending?
- Can my decision support others to take more sustainable choices eg through leadership or improved logistics?
- Does high-carbon travel affect my reputation – especially if working in areas such as environment, health, social justice? See article here for example.

2. WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES?

- How many people from my team really need to travel – could another colleague represent me, and how could we share learning from event?
- Is it feasible to attend remotely (tele/videoconference)?
- Can I request that these options are provided, if not already? Find out more about low-carbon conferencing.
- Could I use alternative means of dissemination and networking? See Social media guidelines for research staff and Getting started on social media.

3. ALTERNATIVES TO FLIGHTS

Trains and ferries are a feasible alternative for many destinations, especially in the UK and Europe. They are often more suitable for working and go directly to city centres. Within the UK, travel times are often similar to flying once you account for travel to the airport, passing through security, etc. Seat61 is useful for planning train journeys worldwide.

Options to consider:

- Using sleeper trains.
- Combining with meetings in intermediate cities to break journey eg London, Paris.
- Using travel as dedicated time for a suitable piece of work eg others have used them for 'writing retreats' and pre-conference meetings.
- Budget in grants for technology to support remote working eg laptops, dongles, Bluetooth headsets.

4. MAXIMISING THE VALUE OF TRAVEL

- Can I combine this trip with other meetings, fieldwork, or visits to another institution which would otherwise require additional travel?
- What are my specific objectives for networking?
  - What relationships do I want to create/build?
  - What difference will they make to my work?
  - Can I contact key individuals beforehand to arrange introductions or 1:1 meetings?

EXAMPLES OF MORE AND LESS JUSTIFIABLE PURPOSES FOR HIGH-CARBON TRAVEL, WITH CAREER STAGE WEIGHTING

Adapted from Tyndall Centre Travel Strategy:
https://tyndall.ac.uk/sites/default/files/tyndall_travel_strategy_updated.pdf