



Expenses Policy

Including travel, accommodation, subsistence and other expenses

1. Scope and purpose

- 1.1. The policy sets out the rules for claiming travel, accommodation, subsistence and other expenses incurred in connection with University purposes.
- 1.2. The policy applies to all staff of the University, its subsidiary companies and to students and others employed by the University who incur expenses which the University has agreed to reimburse. The policy does not apply to staff based overseas long-term or staff with home-working contracts.
- 1.3. The policy applies to all expenditure. Please note that any items purchased with University-administered funds are University property. This policy takes precedence unless more restrictive financial limits are stipulated by the funder (for example, a research grant).
- 1.4. For the avoidance of doubt this policy supersedes any other University, College/Support Group or School/ Planning Unit guidance on travel and expenses.
- 1.5. The policy was approved by the University Executive on 15 January 2019, signed by the Combined Joint Consultative Negotiative Committee (CJCNC) on 22 February 2019 and is effective from 1 March 2019.
- 1.6. The policy will be reviewed annually on 1 December and any changes approved by the University Executive and, where appropriate, signed by CJCNC.
- 1.7. The updated policy will be communicated to staff and published on the University's website.

2. Principles

- 2.1. Responsibility for compliance with this policy rests with staff or students making claims ("the claimant") for the reimbursement of expenses and their approving line manager/budget holder or a designated Finance Manager ("the authoriser").
- 2.2. The University assumes no obligation to reimburse expense claims that are not compliant with this policy.
- 2.3. Staff who fail to comply with this policy will be dealt with under the University's disciplinary policy.
- 2.4. The University will reimburse claimants for expenses which they wholly, necessarily and exclusively incur in the course of official University purposes. Only actual costs which are incurred as part of the University's purposes will be reimbursed. Items of a personal nature (for example, toiletries urgently required on work-related travel) will not be reimbursed unless there are exceptional circumstances.



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- 2.5. For the purposes of this policy, “must” is used when expressing obligation or an unavoidable requirement, whereas “should” is more of a recommendation.

3. Individual responsibility

- 3.1. This policy ensures that staff comply with the University’s requirements, and attempts to assist claimants and authorisers to understand what can and cannot be claimed for and what is considered reasonable. In the interests of value for money and to support the appropriate use of public funds, claimants are expected to be prudent in their spending. Authorisers are required to be diligent in their review and approval of expenses to avoid the University incurring any unnecessary expense. Please note that external funder restrictions must also be met before submitting expense claims for approval.
- 3.2. Claimants and authorisers must aim to ensure that economy, efficiency and effectiveness are achieved in respect of all expenses incurred without compromising personal safety.
- 3.3. The majority of business expenditure must be incurred through University procurement routes, primarily purchase orders. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, items such as equipment, computer hardware, software, including online software, consultancy, any staff-related payments and other business expenditure including mobile contracts for work-related purposes must not be claimed on expenses. For the avoidance of doubt, personal mobile monthly contract costs must not be incurred directly by claimants and claimed on expenses and staff must access the [IS Managed Mobile Service](#). Agreed exceptions to this policy also include eBooks. Expense claims must therefore be used to reimburse incidental expenditure (personal costs incurred whilst on University business), not general business expenditure. Potentially hazardous materials and equipment must never be purchased by individuals and claimed on expenses.
- 3.4. If there are other reasons why the University procurement routes prescribed in section 3.3 are not appropriate, an application for a corporate credit card can be submitted to the Finance Department, Director Finance Specialist Services, for approval with a [business case](#).
- 3.5. Compliance with this policy will ensure that claimants, or the University, does not incur a tax or national insurance liability and that claimants need not report expenses on their tax returns. For example, any work-related mobile phone and data allowances, clothing allowances or other allowance payments to staff must be processed in the University payroll.



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4. Claiming expenses

- 4.1. All claims must be submitted and approved for payment on the online expenses system, eExpenses. All expenses must be recorded, clearly itemised and accurately coded on the eExpenses system together with the reason the expenses were incurred. Proxy users may input expense claims on behalf of the claimant. Guidance on eExpenses can be found on the [Finance Department WIKI](#).
- 4.2. Appropriate justification for each expense item must be included in the additional information section of eExpenses.
- 4.3. Any staff expense claims submitted manually (i.e. not on eExpenses) will not be reimbursed from 1 April 2018, other than claims where cash advances are recovered. Please note that you require a staff, student or visitor registration (VRS) number (and uun) to register for eExpenses. Other claimants who cannot access eExpenses can complete the [Payment for Non-Staff/Student Expenses form](#) and send to the School or Planning Unit Finance team for checking, approval and payment via FPM (Finance Process Manager).
- 4.4. All claims for expenses should be made promptly. Claimants should submit expense claims within three months of the expense being incurred except where there is an acceptable reason for delay submitted for approval to the [Finance helpline](#).
- 4.5. Expense claims must be authorised by a more senior member of staff to the claimant, the budget holder or a designated Finance Manager. It is the authoriser's responsibility to ensure claims adhere to the University's expenses policy and are authorised as soon as possible to minimise delay in payment. Items that do not adhere to the policy must be challenged.
- 4.6. All receipts (for example, itemised bills or invoices not debit/credit card receipts) showing proof of payment must be photographed or scanned and attached to the online expense claim. Original receipts must be retained if it is a funder requirement (for example, EC research grants). It is the responsibility of staff working on externally funded projects to check the funder requirements with local finance teams. Mileage claims do not require a receipt.
- 4.7. Foreign currency payments should be converted to sterling at the nearest applicable exchange rate to the date of the transaction and claimed in sterling including any charges. Where a foreign currency payment is made using a credit or debit card, the actual cost in sterling will be reimbursed. For cash items, please use the exchange rate achieved on conversion to foreign currency plus any transaction charges. For foreign currency bank account transactions, please use the [xe.com](#) rate on the transaction date.



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- 4.8. Where a business case can be made to the budget holder, and with prior agreement of the Finance Department (please email the [Finance helpline](#) giving a minimum of two weeks' notice), an advance on expenses can be made. For advances of expenses for research grants, please contact your local Research Grants Administrator. The budget holder is accountable for managing the recovery of the advance and expenses funded from an advance are subject to the same terms of this policy. Guidance on advances can be found on the [Finance website](#) together with the request forms:
[General advances application form](#)
[Research advances application form](#)

5. Travel for University purposes

- 5.1. The University will reimburse the costs of necessary travel for University purposes between one University workplace and another temporary place of work for meetings or other purposes (on University or other premises). The University will not reimburse the costs of [ordinary commuting or private travel](#).
- 5.2. Overseas travel which gives rise to an expense claim may only be undertaken with the pre-approval of the line manager/budget holder. Where travel is within the UK or undertaken as part of a research grant, pre-approval is not required.
- 5.3. The University of Edinburgh Travel Management Service single supplier is Key Travel. The agreement provides a Business Travel One Stop Shop and offers all University business travellers online booking tools for airline, rail and hotel bookings, as well as branch bookings via telephone/email. Details are on the [Procurement website](#).
For the avoidance of doubt any nominated University of Edinburgh Travel Management Service single supplier will be subject to regular performance reviews.
- 5.4. Staff are strongly advised to use the University's Travel Management Service, Key Travel for booking any travel. For the avoidance of doubt, this is not compulsory.
- 5.5. Staff must use standard class rail travel and economy class air travel other than for the reasons detailed in section 5.6. Public transport should be used in the first instance. Where this is not practical, for safety reasons or complexity of journey, taxis can be used.
Where taxis are required within Edinburgh for University purposes (excluding ordinary commuting or private journeys), staff must use the University's contract for taxi services, Central Taxis, where practicable. A School or Planning Unit account can be set up by [application](#).
- 5.6. A non-standard class rail fare is allowable where the claimant plans to work for the duration of the journey or for disability, impairment or other health-related reasons. A sleeper is also permitted for overnight travel.



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- 5.7. Internal flights (i.e. UK mainland) are only permitted if they are cheaper than rail (lowest cost option), if rail travel is unable to get you to your destination in time but a flight can or for disability, impairment or other health-related reasons. Economy class for internal flights must be used. Business class, and first class are not allowed.
- 5.8. For overseas flights, the class of travel depends on the length of flight and where a business case can be made to the budget holder. Economy may be used for any flight duration. Business class may be allowable for longer overseas flights subject to line manager/budget holder approval, i.e. for flights over six hours, beyond Europe, if there is a need to be able to work immediately after the flight and no other cost-effective alternative is available or for disability, impairment or other health-related reasons.
- 5.9. Travelling alone by private car is an expensive option and must only be used where no reasonable alternative is available. Where staff choose to use their own private vehicle for University purposes, it is the staff member's responsibility to ensure the car has the appropriate business insurance cover.

The mileage allowance in section 5.10 covers insurance costs of adding business cover to personal motor insurance policies. Please note that personal car insurance for business use will not be reimbursed. Guidance on vehicle use and vehicle hire can be found at on the [Estates website](#).

- 5.10. Where business mileage is being claimed, the start point, destination and number of miles must be included on the expense claim prior to authorisation together with the reason for travel. Approved mileage rates for cars, vans, motor cycles and bicycles, and additional passenger rates for expense claims can be found at the [HMRC website](#). Please note that electric or hybrid car rates are currently approved by HMRC at the mileage rate for cars and vans. Please note that fuel costs can only be claimed for hire cars and that HMRC mileage rates must be claimed for use of private vehicles for University purposes.
- 5.11. The use of private cars for long journeys (i.e. over 100 miles for a return journey) is not normally economic. Exceptions are where there are a number of passengers (university employees), heavy, bulky or fragile equipment or items are carried, there are multiple destinations, public transport is impractical or it can be demonstrated that there is a significant saving in staff time by the use of a private car. The reason must be stated on the eExpenses claim.
- 5.12. Payment for mileage claims for travel from home to the workplace is only payable in exceptional circumstances when approved by the claimant's line manager or budget holder and with prior approval from the Finance Department ([Finance helpline](#)).



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Specific agreements can be written and agreed with the Head of College/Support Group for staff who have contracts to work from home. These approved home to work journeys should be processed via payroll as PAYE and NI contributions are deducted.

- 5.13. Passport costs will not be reimbursed unless the claim is for the additional fee for a 50-page passport or if a second concurrent passport is required for University frequent travellers. Travel visas, booking fees and carbon tax levies will be reimbursed. The University will reimburse claimants for costs associated with vaccinations and other necessary medical requirements for overseas University travel. The University's Occupational Health Unit offers a [range of vaccines](#) that are charged to Schools or Planning Units through internal charging.
- 5.14. The University has a travel insurance policy for employees and students who are required to travel for University purposes. Cover is free to applicants with the exception of some high-risk destinations which may require a fee payable by the budget holder. Cover is not automatic and must be arranged with the Insurance Office for all foreign travel by applying online. If travel within the UK involves a trip by air or an overnight stay, the University's travel insurance cover is recommended. Personal travel insurance policies will not be reimbursed.
- 5.15. A travel risk assessment may be required before overseas travel is undertaken. A risk assessment must be completed before any trip is undertaken with students. The Insurance Office will advise you if a risk assessment is required. The assessment is completed in consultation with the Insurance Office ([Finance helpline](#) or +44 (0)131 651 5151 (option 1)).
- 5.16. The University is committed to reducing its overall impact on the environment and has set challenging but achievable carbon reduction targets around University business travel which can be found in the Climate Strategy 2016-2026, [Zero by 2040](#). As University business travel accounts for a significant proportion of the University's carbon emissions, all travellers can contribute to achieving these targets by considering the alternatives. Please consider whether the journey is necessary. Could video conferencing be used? Or can you use the train as an alternative to air travel? Further details on video conferencing can be found on the [IS website](#).
- 5.17. A companion may travel with a University employee on a trip for University purposes. The companion can use the University's business travel insurance policy but the companion's travel costs must be paid for privately.
- 5.18. Combining travel for University purposes and personal travel is acceptable where the traveller meets all of the costs relating to the 'personal' element of the trip and the primary reason for the trip is for University purposes.



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- 5.19. Where it is no longer possible to take a University business trip, the traveller is responsible for notifying Key Travel or cancelling other travel bookings. This must be done as soon as possible to avoid cancellation charges.
- 5.20. The University's guidance on business travel including booking travel, insurance, protecting your health and personal safety whilst travelling for University purposes, sustainable travel, visas and information in case of emergencies can be found on the [Business Travel](#) webpages.

6. Accommodation

- 6.1. Staff are strongly advised to use the University's Travel Management Service, Key Travel for booking any reasonably priced accommodation. For the avoidance of doubt, this is not compulsory. Please also consider location, convenience and safety as well as value for money when booking accommodation. Further information and contact details for Key Travel can be found on the [Travel Booking and Management Services](#) webpage.
- 6.2. The actual costs of personal incidental expenses such as newspapers, private calls, laundry, non-alcoholic drinks, etc. can be claimed provided that the total amount spent on such items amounts to no more than £5 per night (where the night is spent in the UK) or £10 per night (where the night is spent outside the UK). Receipts are required. This is not a round sum per diem allowance claimed for nights away from home.
- 6.3. Staff cannot claim expenses for arranging private accommodation with friends or relatives while away for University purposes as this would be a taxable benefit under HMRC rules. Please note that providers such as Airbnb are not regulated so please follow the advice on the [Finance website](#).
- 6.4. Where staff or third party stakeholders require accommodation in and around Edinburgh, University provision via Accommodation, Catering and Events (ACE) should be used. Details can be found on the [ACE Visitors webpage](#).

7. Subsistence for University purposes

- 7.1. Actual subsistence costs incurred can be claimed and itemised bills and proof of payment must be provided. Please note that per diem rates must not be claimed. Reasonable gratuities, tips and sustainability fees not exceeding 15% can be claimed as part of a meal.

Subsistence costs cannot be claimed when attending meetings or events at University of Edinburgh premises unless they are student events approved by the line manager/budget holder.



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- 7.2. Overseas subsistence rates are based on actual expenditure (i.e. cost of accommodation and meals) and must be evidenced by itemised bills and proof of payment.
- 7.3. Working lunches or dinners with University colleagues, held away from University premises must not be claimed. Light working lunches and dinners with University colleagues held on University premises and staff events (section 9.3) are claimable. The meal must be taken in the place where the meeting is held (i.e. a break in the meeting). [Edinburgh First](#) (or where appropriate [EUSA](#) or NHS and on-site exclusively contracted providers in other non-University buildings) should be used for on-campus catering.
- 7.4. Necessary costs of meals taken whilst away from University premises will be reimbursed when staff are working away from the University on University business. This hospitality is treated as taxable staff entertaining for the University unless external examiners, visiting speakers or lecturers, external collaborators on research or other projects, potential or actual sponsors or donors, government officials, or other publicly-funded organisations are present.
- 7.5. The cost of alcohol consumed as part a meal will not be reimbursed unless entertaining (see Section 8 Entertaining for University purposes).

8. Entertaining for University purposes

- 8.1. The University recognises that there may be occasions when it is appropriate to provide hospitality to external customers or other important stakeholders of the University. On these occasions it is expected that the purpose of entertaining is to foster new business, provide a documented benefit to the University or to continue existing academic or business contacts. Hospitality is an accepted courtesy of an academic or business relationship however the University must avoid a situation whereby the hospitality may be deemed to have influenced a decision or lead to allegations of a conflict of interest.
- 8.2. Where University staff are being offered gifts or hospitality they should refer to the guidance within the University's [Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy](#) which provides clear guidance on accepting gifts and hospitality.
- 8.3. All entertaining detailed in section 8.1 must be authorised by the Head of School/Planning Unit before it is incurred unless there are acceptable unforeseen circumstances.
- 8.4. Necessary costs of entertaining academic or business contacts will be reimbursed on production of receipts. Reasonable tips that do not exceed 15% paid to reward good service are claimable as part of the meal. Expenditure must be incurred wholly, necessarily and exclusively for the entertaining of academic or business contacts. Academic or business contacts do not include other employees of the University of Edinburgh or of any organisation or company associated with the University.



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Staff in attendance must be proportionate with the number of visitors with a maximum ratio of three University employees to every one visitor. The maximum ratio of 3:1 University employees to external guests is a critical factor in determining whether such expenses are tax allowable for the University.

The following information must be shown on the claim:

- 8.4.1. the name(s) of attendees;
- 8.4.2. the organisation which they represent; and
- 8.4.3. the purpose of the entertainment.

9. Other business expenses

- 9.1. Personal membership subscriptions to professional bodies will not normally be reimbursed. The Head of School/Planning Unit can agree to meet the cost of an annual subscription or membership to a professional body from University funds where it can be demonstrated that an individual's membership results in wider benefit or savings to the University, for example reduced conference fees that exceed the cost of membership. Personal membership subscriptions for staff with training contracts will be reimbursed. The professional body must be listed in [HMRC's professional bodies approved for tax relief](#). For other professional memberships, individuals are entitled to obtain tax relief on professional subscriptions they fund themselves if the professional body is on HMRC's qualifying professional bodies.
- 9.2. Gifts up to £50 can be claimed if they are related to staff welfare or recognise a staff member's personal circumstances for reasons of ill health or bereavement but not in recognition of any other life event. Gifts cannot be a cash or voucher exchangeable for cash but vouchers exchangeable for goods or services are acceptable.
- 9.3. If there is a business reason for staff events and the business agenda is a substantive part of the day, the costs of reasonable non-alcoholic refreshments for work-related staff training events, away days and team building events will be reimbursed.
- 9.4. Costs of regular annual events such as Christmas parties can be reimbursed and are not taxable for the individual if the event is open to the whole School or Planning Unit, not limited to a research team or other unit in a School or Planning Unit.
- 9.5. The University has a [policy of reimbursing visa and associated fees](#) and [EU settlement scheme fees](#) incurred by new and existing staff whose employment it sponsors. .
- 9.6. Authorised removal and relocation costs are met by the University. Details are contained in the [Relocation policy](#) administered by Human Resources.



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- 9.7. Additional childcare costs can be claimed if required for the HMRC definition of “work-related training”, i.e. conferences and research visits. Any other work-related childcare costs must be reimbursed via the University payroll.

10. Audit and review

- 10.1. The Finance Department will review claims for compliance with the Expenses Policy. The responsibility of the claimant and the authoriser is to ensure that, to the best of their knowledge, the claim is compliant with this policy. Any unusual or significant items will be referred by Finance to Internal Audit for investigation.
- 10.2. The University is a charity and receives public funds. All University spend is subject to scrutiny and audit by government agencies, internal and external auditors, funders and their auditors and other sponsors.
- 10.3. University expenditure is also subject to scrutiny under FOI requests that can include the reporting of anonymised details of staff expense claims. All claimants and authorisers must ensure that any claim made is justifiable, legitimate and will not risk the University’s reputation.
- 10.4. The University is committed to the prevention of bribery and to observing the provisions of the Bribery Act 2010, and will not tolerate bribery or other improper conduct either inside the UK or abroad, by staff or other individuals or organisations who perform services for or on behalf of the University.
- 10.5. Staff who knowingly submit a false or inappropriate claim will be dealt with under the University’s disciplinary policy. In the University’s [Disciplinary Policy](#) (June 2017), theft, fraud or deliberate falsification of records, e.g. expense claims, is one of the examples given of a potential gross misconduct offence.

11. Taxation

- 11.1 Expenses incurred by employees, which are reimbursed by their employer are taxable payments unless they are incurred wholly, exclusively and necessarily in the performance of their duties of employment. Some business travel expenses are covered by exemptions.
- 11.2 Travel and certain other expenses may be made as non-taxable payments under a HMRC PAYE Settlement Agreement (PSA). Some business travel expenses are covered by exemptions. The University has to satisfy HMRC that no tax would be due in respect of the payments and benefits covered by the agreement and that the University operates good control systems ensuring payments are within the terms of the Agreement.



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HMRC has to be satisfied that the expenses covered by the Agreement only reimburse employees for expenses incurred on University business.

- 11.3 All expenses must be recorded, clearly itemised and accurately coded on the eExpenses system together with the reason the expenses were incurred. This ensures that Value Added Tax (VAT) can be reclaimed on specified items of business expenses.

12. Support

Please contact Finance.helpline@ed.ac.uk or 0131 651 5151 (option 1) for further information.

Please contact Finance.helpline@ed.ac.uk if you require this policy in an alternative format.

13. Equality and diversity

The Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and addresses any equality and diversity impacts of this policy.

14. Useful Links

[Finance Policies and procedures](#)



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16. Approval and review

Date policy approved	15 January 2019
Final approval by	University Executive (& CJCNC sign off 22 February 2019)
Consultations held	Staff; HR Policy Development Group
Date of commencement of policy	1 March 2019
Date for review of policy	1 December 2019
Policy review by	Senior Financial Controls Accountant
Policies superseded by this policy	Expenses policy v1.0

Version control

Version	Amendment made	Approval date	Approved by
1.0	First version	26 September 2017	Central Management Group
1.1	First review & update	15 January 2019	University Executive