

UCD Travel Policy



Finance Office

April 2022

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All policies and policy related documents and forms are subject to amendment. Please refer to the UCD Governance Document Library website for the official, most recent version.

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1. Environmental responsibility

For obvious environmental reasons, we encourage staff to consider alternatives to travel, particularly air travel and to be aware of the following facilities available to all staff which can be used as an alternative to travel:

- [Google Hangout](#)
- [Skype](#)
- [Zoom](#)

[Instructions on how to use Hangout and Skype](#)

[Room booking](#)

2. Purpose of Policy

2.1 This policy sets out the protocols and procedures to be followed by staff when travelling on university business, including financial, environmental and safety considerations.

2.2 The travel policy has been framed having regard to the following:

- (a) the efficient conduct of university business;
- (b) the circulars issued by the Department of Finance relating to travel, mileage and subsistence rates;
- (c) Revenue requirements in relation to expenses paid to employees. Only expenses which are “wholly, exclusively and necessarily” incurred in the performance of a staff member’s duties may be reimbursed on a tax-free basis;
- (d) the effect of our travel decisions on the environment. This revised Travel Policy represents a first step on the path to rapidly reducing UCD’s transport emissions. The Policy will be revisited on an annual basis, with each revision representing a progression beyond the current policy and reflecting UCD’s highest possible ambition in reducing our carbon footprint via travel; and
- (e) the international travel approval process and the notifications required to be made to the UCD Safety, Insurance, Operational Risk and Compliance Office (SIRC) in advance of international travel. The policy also provides details of the University’s travel insurance cover in place for employees and postgraduate students engaged in approved international travel.

3. Scope of Policy

3.1 The travel policy applies to all travel undertaken on university business regardless of the budget from which travel is funded (school/unit non-pay budget, research grant or other funds).

3.2 More restricted rules may apply to expenditure chargeable to research grants depending on the terms and conditions attaching to the particular research grant. In

these situations, staff must ensure that all travel expenditure complies with the terms and conditions attaching to the particular research grant.

4. General Points in Relation to Staff Travelling on University Business

- 4.1 It is essential that all members of staff travelling on university business are familiar with this policy and with the correct procedures for claiming reimbursement of travel expenses.
- 4.2 Travel expenses should always be kept to a minimum and should represent value for money for the university at all times. Each staff member is accountable to ensure that only valid, reasonable and necessary expenses are incurred and that all unnecessary expenditure and extravagance are avoided.
- 4.3 All claims for reimbursement of travel expenses must be clearly presented, fully vouched and properly authorised.
- 4.4 All travel on university business must be approved in advance by the faculty/staff member's line manager. Additionally the (SIRC) international travel safety approval process set out in Section 6.0 of this document applies.
- 4.5 The purpose of travel on university business must be clearly documented on the claim form. Claims for reimbursement of travel expenses should be supported by documentation confirming the purpose of travel (e.g. conference programmes, delegate lists, agendas for meetings, detailed itineraries, letters of invitation, etc).
- 4.6 For staff, the costs of all travel on university business must be fully recorded and reported. Claims for reimbursement of travel expenses must be supported by itemised receipts for all expenditure claimed (apart from mileage and *per diem* subsistence claims where standard civil service rates apply).
- 4.7 For non-staff members, reimbursement of all travel on university business can only be claimed on vouched expenses (not subsistence rates). Mileage expenses can be claimed in accordance with University and Revenue policies on mileage and subject to the prior approval of the relevant School/Unit.
- 4.8 No personal travel expenditure or other personal costs should be claimed from the university.
- 4.9 Where staff extend their trip for personal reasons, it must be ensured and demonstrated that all additional costs are borne personally by the staff member. In such cases, staff must clearly demonstrate that legitimate university business is the primary purpose of travel. Any extensions for personal reasons must be recorded in staff annual leave records.

- 4.10 It is university policy to pay all claims for reimbursement of travel expenses directly to the bank accounts of staff members.
- 4.11 While credit card statements provide proof of payment, the actual detailed invoice or purchase voucher related to the credit card purchase should always be attached to the claim form.
- 4.12 When claiming accommodation costs, the invoice and proof of payment for the accommodation costs should be attached to the claim form rather than an online booking form.
- 4.13 The expense claim forms are to be used for the reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenses, hospitality expenses and minor costs. Staff must not personally purchase large items of equipment (e.g. P.C.s) and other goods and claim reimbursement through the expense claim system – all such purchases should be made through the University’s eProcurement purchasing system.

5. Authorisation of Claims for Reimbursement of Travel Expenses

- 5.1 All claims for reimbursement of travel expenses must be authorised by the appropriate budget-holder (i.e. Head of School/Unit, Principal Investigator). No staff member can authorise their own travel or expenses claims.
- 5.2 Where the budget-holder is the claimant, the claim for reimbursement should be approved in accordance with the following authorisation schedule:

Claimant	Claim to be authorised by
President	Chair of the Governing Authority
Vice-President / College Principal	President
Head of School / Support Unit	College Principal / Vice-President
Staff in a School / Support Unit	Head of School / Support Unit or designated signatory
Principal Investigator (claiming from a research grant)	Head of School / Support Unit or designated signatory
Research Staff (claiming from a research grant)	Principal Investigator

- 5.3 Staff authorising claims for reimbursement of travel expenses should be aware that, in authorising an expense claim, they are confirming that the expenses are valid, relate to university business and are reasonable in cost. Where a staff member is not satisfied that an expenses claim should be authorised, the expenses claim should be referred back to the claimant for clarification or additional information.

6. Additional authorisation required for safety and travel insurance purposes

- 6.1 The approvals process is based on the Department of Foreign Affairs Travel Advisory System.
- For low-risk travel in the UK, Switzerland, the EU and the EEA no safety authorisation is required and travel insurance can be assumed. This does not apply to travel for fieldwork purposes or group travel, including undergraduate field trips, which must be submitted to SIRC in advance to confirm travel insurance.
 - Permission from your Head of School / Unit must be obtained for any travel to a country or region which is outside of the UK / Switzerland / EU / EEA, and details of such travel must be submitted to SIRC in advance to confirm travel insurance.
 - Permission from your UMT line manager and your Head of School / Unit must be obtained for any travel to a country or region which is subject to a Department of Foreign Affairs' 'Avoid Non Essential Travel' travel advisory, and details of such travel must be submitted to SIRC in advance to confirm travel insurance.
 - Any travel that requires approval must also be risk assessed using the International Travel Risk Assessment template.
 - For travel involving fieldwork a Fieldwork Risk Assessment must also be completed irrespective of the location.
 - Authorisation is required for certain types of travel, as per table 1 overleaf.

UCD International Travel Safety & Travel Insurance Approvals Process

	College Principal / VP approval required – travel must be deemed to be essential.	Head of School / Unit approval required.	Submit travel details and International Travel Risk Assessment to SIRC Office for confirmation of travel insurance.	Submit Fieldwork Risk Assessment (where relevant) to SIRC Office .
Travel to a country in the EU or EEA or to the UK or Switzerland (subject to no Travel Advisory being in place).			Insurance cover can be assumed*	✓
Travel to a country outside of the EU, EEA (excl. UK and Switzerland) (subject to no Travel Advisory being in place)		✓	✓	✓
Travel to any region subject to an 'Avoid Non Essential Travel' advisory from the Irish government	✓	✓	✓	✓
Travel to any region subject to a 'Do Not Travel' advisory.	Subject to UMT and Insurer approval on a case by case basis.			

* This does not apply to travel for fieldwork purposes or group travel, including undergraduate field trips, which must be submitted to [SIRC](#) in advance to confirm travel insurance.

6.2 Notification to SIRC Office

When making a submission to the SIRC Office seeking confirmation of travel cover the following details must be included:

- Full travel itinerary to include dates of travel and purpose of travel.
- International Travel Risk assessment if applicable.
- Fieldwork Risk assessment if applicable.

Submissions should be made to the [SIRC Office](#) at least ten days in advance of any travel.

6.3 Covid 19 Considerations

Persons engaged in international travel may also need to consider the following:

- Will they be required to provide proof of vaccination before they travel?
- Will they be required to take a Covid 19 test before travel or upon arrival in the country?
- Will they be required to self-isolate or 'quarantine' for a period of time in their destination country, and if so, have they made arrangements to do so and be supported whilst doing so?
- Will they be required to restrict their movements upon their return to Ireland, and if so have they made arrangements to do so and be supported whilst doing so? In addition, have they agreed any such absence from the workplace with their Head of Unit / School in advance of their travel?

6.4 Travel Advisories

Before travelling abroad individuals should familiarise themselves with the current situation in the country / region of destination. This is especially important given the dynamic situation with respect to Covid 19 but is also relevant for other travel safety issues. Up to date travel advice is available from the Department of Foreign Affairs website.

7. Travel and Personal Accident Insurance

7.1 International travel must be notified to the [SIRC Office](#), as outlined in section 6.0 of [this document](#) in order to confirm that travel and personal accident insurance is in place.

When applied this insurance cover extends to travel that originates in Ireland and from the time that an insured person leaves their home or their normal place of work (whichever is the latest) and ends when that person returns to their normal place of work or their home (whichever is the earliest). If personal travel is undertaken either before or after an approved travel activity then the cover will begin at the start of the day of the official business and cease at the end of day on the last day of business, whichever is relevant.

There are limitations to the extent of cover provided under the UCD Travel and Personal Accident Insurance Policy, including;

- Restrictions under the Personal Accident section of the policy, which primarily provides for emergency medical treatment such that the individual will be fit to travel home again.
- The duration of travel is limited to 12 months for any single trip, however any travel of longer than 90 days must be notified to SIRC irrespective of destination so cover can be confirmed.
- Persons who are habitually resident outside of Ireland / resident outside of Ireland for more than 12 months are not covered by the provisions of the UCD Travel and Personal Accident Policy
- Travel which begins outside of Ireland and is not part of a continuing trip may not be insured – contact sirc@ucd.ie for more details.
- Restrictions in policy coverage apply to persons over the age of 75 years – contact sirc@ucd.ie for more details.
- Persons with pre-existing illnesses or medical conditions should not travel against the advice of their medical practitioner. To do so may invalidate cover under the policy.

Further information on the cover provided under UCD's Travel and Personal Accident Policy can be found in the [UCD Travel Insurance Guide for Staff](#) and the [UCD Travel Insurance Guide for Postgrads](#).

As part of the confirmation of insurance cover the SIRC Office will provide travellers with details of the limits of cover in place and emergency contact numbers to be used for medical emergencies whilst abroad.

Notwithstanding the extension of UCD's insurance cover all persons travelling within Switzerland, the UK, the EU and the EEA are advised to obtain a [European Health Insurance Card \(EHIC\)](#). This allows access to the public health systems of countries within these areas and is free of charge.

It should be noted that in certain circumstances cover for losses related to Covid 19, such as cancellation, curtailment, self-isolation, mandatory Covid 19 tests or quarantine costs on arrival etc. will be limited and may not be recoverable from insurers.

In the event that the Covid 19 situation in the country of travel deteriorates further or the travel advisory status changes, such that return travel is impacted, insurance cover may be affected.

- 7.2 The costs of any additional travel insurance policies taken out by staff members will not be reimbursed by the University.

8. Visa and Passport Costs

- 8.1 The University will reimburse the cost of entry visas required for travel on university business.
- 8.2 The cost of passports/passport renewal will not be reimbursed.

9. Air Travel

Staff should always be aware that flying is a uniquely high-impact activity for a consumer which increases their carbon footprint. Therefore, all alternative options should be considered before booking a flight. *Should air travel still be deemed essential, then the following rules apply:*

- 9.1 (a) All air travel should be on economy class flights.
- (b) Online approval (shortly to be introduced) should be in accordance with the following authorisation schedule:

Claimant	Claim to be authorised by
President	Chair of the Governing Authority
Vice-President / College Principal	President
Head of School / Support Unit	College Principal / Vice-President
Staff in a School / Support Unit	Head of School / Support Unit or designated signatory
Principal Investigator (claiming from a research grant)	Head of School / Support Unit or designated signatory
Research Staff (claiming from a research grant)	Principal Investigator

- 9.2 Economy is our class of transport. In exceptional circumstances, business class travel can be permitted. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, requests to travel business class should not be submitted for consideration unless the criteria detailed in points (a) – (c) below are met.
- (a) Flight time exceeds eight hours;
- (b) Meetings/Events/Classes are scheduled close to arrival time;
- (c) The additional costs of business class travel can be met from existing budgetary provision – and will not be from an exchequer source except for exceptional circumstances approved by the Bursar;
- (d) All Business Class Travel requires online College Principal or VP approval plus Bursar approval. Applications for approval of business class travel submitted must

provide a clear justification for the use of business class travel in each case and detail the cost of an equivalent economy class flight;

(e) First class air travel will not be approved in any circumstances.

- 9.3 When bookings are made through a travel agency, they should be made through the Office of Government Procurement's (OGP's) appointed travel agency, currently Club Travel. Further details of this contract are available on the UCD Procurement Office website.
- 9.4 It is recognised that, for some bookings, it may be possible to book low-cost internet fares directly with airlines. In these instances, staff members may book flights directly with the airline and claim reimbursement through the staff expenses system. When claiming reimbursement for internet bookings, a copy of the electronic ticket and proof of payment must be attached to the expenses claim form.
- 9.5 Every effort should always be made to procure the cheapest possible ticket. Travel should be planned as far in advance as possible to take advantage of discounted air tickets, sale fares, etc.
- 9.6 The availability of frequent traveller points should not influence the choice of airline and any such points obtained on university flights should be used against the cost of future flights undertaken on university business.

10. Public Transport

- 10.1 Travel by public transport (rail, bus, taxi) will be reimbursed where supported by a valid receipt / travel ticket. Staff attending meetings in Cork, Limerick, Galway, Belfast and other locations within Ireland should, where possible, travel by bus/train with a view to keeping travel and mileage costs to a minimum.
- 10.2 Taxis should only be used when strictly required and the relevant claim form should always detail the journey involved and the reason for use/event involved.

11. Car Rental

- 11.1 Car rental should only be undertaken when it represents the best value for money for the university in respect of the trip in question. The model selected should be the most economical bearing in mind the number of staff to be transported, and the rental period should always be kept to a minimum. Care should be taken to ensure adequate motor insurance is in place. UCD does not extend motor insurance to hired vehicles.

12. Mileage

- 12.1 Staff using their private car on university business may claim mileage at the appropriate civil service mileage rate. The current mileage rates for cars and bicycles are available on the Finance Office website.
- 12.2 Staff using their private car on university business must ensure that their private motor insurance policy covers business usage and are required to confirm that such insurance cover is in place when submitting a claim for mileage.
- 12.3 The following points should be noted in relation to mileage expenses:
- (a) Staff should only use their private car on university business where no suitable public transport is available;
 - (b) The mileage rate covers all expenses associated with the use of a staff member's private car on university business (e.g. fuel, motor tax, insurance, maintenance, etc.);
 - (c) External car parking charges and tolls will be reimbursed where supported by the necessary receipts;
 - (d) No reimbursement will be made for parking fines or clamping fees;
 - (e) Mileage cannot be claimed in respect of any portion of a journey which covers all or part of the claimant's usual route between home and normal place of work;
 - (f) Where a staff member travels to a location direct from home or returns home direct, the mileage payable will be calculated by reference to the distance from home or normal place of work, whichever is the lesser;
 - (g) All claims for mileage must be supported with full details of all journeys taken including the departure point, the destination, the finishing point, the purpose of the journey, and the number of kilometres travelled;
 - (h) The University does not reimburse the cost of UCD campus parking permits.

13. Subsistence

- 13.1 It is preferable that expenses should be claimed by reference to vouched costs but, where applicable, Department of Finance rates may be used as a basis to recover subsistence costs (accommodation and meals). A full listing of current subsistence rates is available on the Finance Office website.
- 13.2 When claiming expenses based on subsistence rates, the following should be noted:
- Subsistence should only be claimed up to the level of actual expenditure incurred. No element of profit/excess over the actual amount of expenses incurred should be claimed.

- Prior to travel, staff members should review whether subsistence rates are available for their intended location. Where no subsistence rate is listed by the Department of Finance for a particular location, the claim must be based on actual vouched costs. Claims should not be submitted based on subsistence rates for the nearest city or location for which a subsistence rate is available. In some cases, the subsistence rate available will be a combination of vouched accommodation costs plus a flat-rate meal allowance.
- It is important to note that subsistence rates are the maximum rates which can be claimed for a location and, if the actual costs incurred are lower than the maximum rate, the lower figure should be claimed.
- Care should be taken to ensure that no double claiming of subsistence takes place i.e. if hotel bills include the cost of breakfast or if conference fees include the cost of lunches/dinners, the rate of subsistence claimed should be reduced accordingly.
- Subsistence should not be claimed for flight times and should only be claimed from time of arrival in a destination to time of departure.
- The calculation basis for any subsistence claimed should be clearly detailed on the claim form.
- Subsistence rates reduce after one month to 75% of the listed rates for months two and three, and to 50% for months four to six. Special arrangements are in place for staff undertaking long-term sabbaticals/research leave and these should be separately confirmed in advance with the Finance Office.
- In cases where a 24-hour subsistence rate is available and a claimant submits a claim based on vouched accommodation expenses plus a daily subsistence rate for meals, the claim should not exceed the 24-hour subsistence rate available for the location. The 24-hour rate should be taken as the maximum amount which can be claimed on a *per diem* basis subject to the exception below.
- It is recognised that, on occasion (e.g. where there may be a requirement to stay in a particular hotel for business reasons), the 24-hour rate available may not be sufficient to cover the actual hotel and meal costs and, in such cases, a written statement from the Head of School/Unit confirming that the cost represented the best possible value for money must be provided.

14. Accommodation

- 14.1 Accommodation should be comfortable and safe with essential amenities and should always represent value for money for the university. As a general rule, staff should not stay in 5-star or luxury hotels and standard rooms rather than superior rooms should be booked. Suites or mini-suites should never be booked.

15. Time Limit on Claims

- 15.1 All claims for reimbursement of travel expenses should be submitted as soon as possible following completion of travel and must be claimed within twelve months.

For research grants, the claim must also be submitted within twelve months. Where the research project has an end date prior to the twelve month limit, the claims should be submitted before the end date of the project. If in doubt, please contact the Research Finance Office for advice.

16. Advances

- 16.1 Staff may request a travel expenses advance by completing and submitting an Advance Form. In requesting an advance, the proposed travel dates and expected costs to be incurred should be detailed on the form. The amount payable is limited to 75% of the expected costs of the trip. When submitting an advance claim, there is no need to submit additional evidence or vouched receipts, but a fully vouched settlement claim must be submitted within two weeks of completion of travel.
- 16.2 Staff advances are closely monitored and should be kept to a minimum at all times. Requests for advances should reflect the likely level of expenditure which will be incurred within the short-term rather than providing a long-term float for a staff member.
- 16.3 Advances will normally be issued up to two months before a trip but requests for longer term advances will be considered in some cases. On occasion, it may be more appropriate to make a number of smaller advance claims rather than one claim covering a long period.
- 16.4 In cases where an advance is issued but the planned trip does not take place, the funds should immediately be returned to the Finance Office.
- 16.5 Expenses claims will not be processed for payment where a staff member has an outstanding advance in place.
- 16.6 E-mail reminders will be sent each month to staff who have advances outstanding past the settlement date and no further expenses will be paid until such advances are cleared.
- 16.7 The Finance, Remuneration and Asset Management Committee has confirmed that unsettled advances can be recovered as a deduction through the university payroll. It is expected that this measure will be used as a last resort and that all advances will be settled on a timely basis.

17. Submission of a False or Exaggerated Claim

- 17.1 The submission of a false or exaggerated expenses claim is a serious matter which may lead to disciplinary action being taken by the university.

17.2 The university auditors, under the Criminal Justice (Theft & Fraud Offences) Act, 2001, are required to inform An Garda Síochána of any cases of fraud, irrespective of value, which come to their attention.

18. Freedom of Information

18.1 Details of expenses payments to university staff may be released in response to requests received under Freedom of Information legislation.

19. Version History

1	Oct 2013	Policy introduction	J Kenny
2	Mar 2020	Introduction of S1 on Environmental Responsibility & revision of S8 on air travel	D Kelly
3	Nov 2021	Adjustment of S4 points on pre-approval, non staff mileage & support for accommodation costs. Introduction of new 4.13 and 4.14 on back-up for accommodation costs and use of claim forms. Adjustment to 5.2 & 8.1 to add “designated signatory” to authorisation schedule. S11 confirmation on the no reimbursement of the campus parking charge. S14 adjustment to the time limits on research expense claims. Revisions to appendix to reflect the email submission of expense claims.	J Kenny
4	Apr 2022	Merger of the Bursar’s Office Travel Policy with the SIRC’s Policy on International Travel Safety and Travel Insurance. New Sections 6,7 and new text in 2, 4.4.,9.2 (business class travel). Previous 4.8 (non employee travel),4.10 and 9.8 (trade downs) removed. 4.6 and 4.7 revised.	J Kenny/S Carry/D Kelly

APPENDIX

Procedure for Claiming Reimbursement of Travel Expenses

1. Staff should complete the appropriate expense or advance claim form. Expense claim forms are available for download from the Finance Office website <https://www.ucd.ie/finance/financeoffice/staffexpenses/forms/>
2. The expense claim form should be fully and legibly completed, ensuring that (1) the purpose of travel, (2) details of all costs being claimed and (3) the cost centre or project code against which the claim is being charged are all recorded.
3. Receipts for all vouched expenditure should be attached to the expense claim form and should be presented in an organised manner which facilitates review by the Finance Office. Expense and advance claims should be submitted by email to expenses@ucd.ie with the claimant's name and UCD personnel number detailed in the subject line.
4. Documentation confirming the purpose of travel and proof of attendance should be attached to the expenses claim form.
5. The expense claim form should be authorised by the budget-holder and in accordance with the authorisation schedule set out in the UCD Travel Policy (Section 5.2).
6. Incomplete expense claim forms will be returned to the claimant by email.