

Document Title:	Travel Policy
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Notes

All policies must be read in conjunction with all other School policy, procedure and guidance documents.

Printed copies of policies may not be the most up to date. Please refer to the policy pages on the SOAS external website or MySOAS for the latest version.

1. Introduction / Purpose

- 1.1. The School recognises that travel for business or academic purposes is an essential part of its operations. This purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidance to ensure all those who travel in the course of their work or study, do so safely, compliantly, sustainably and in the most cost efficient way.
- 1.2. The primary focus of this policy and its related procedures is travel that is outside the usual day-to-day business of an individual (unless significant travel outside of London is a key element of an individual's role).
- 1.3. Further specific practical guidance is provided in travel advisory documents available on the SOAS Intranet site.
- 1.4. Whilst every attempt has been made to ensure this document is comprehensive there may be situations which it does not cover. In these situations any queries should be directed to the Head of Procurement.

2. Scope of Policy

- 2.1 This policy applies to all persons travelling for business purposes on behalf of the School.

It includes:

- Meetings, conferences, working elsewhere
- Student field trips
- Research fieldwork
- Placements
- Interviews

It excludes:

- International students travelling to/from the University
- Domestic students travelling between home/the University
- Staff travelling between home/normal place of work
- Staff relocation flights

- 2.2 Exceptions to this policy will only be made for reasons of:

- Disability, health conditions or impairments
- Protected characteristics
- Impracticality
- Safety
- Emergency

- 2.3 Breach of this policy and its associated procedures may be investigated in accordance with the Schools disciplinary procedure.

3. Definitions

Data means any information which relates to the company, its operations or its staff or students.

Financial Regulations means the SOAS internal financial regulations owned by the Director of Finance and Planning

Travel Management Company (TMC) means the external agency, appointed via a compliant procurement process to deliver Travel management services to SOAS.

Travel Management Services means, the arrangement, booking and management of flights, hotels, car hire, taxi, and any other relevant transport. It also means the provision of visa and passport services

Value for Money is identified as the optimum balance between cost, quality, risk and environmental sustainability and includes the time taken by the individual to make the booking

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1. All persons responsible for or involved in booking or undertaking business travel must:

- Give consideration to whether the travel is absolutely necessary and if the purpose of the trip could be satisfied in some other way, such as virtually. Where it is required, it must be wholly and exclusively in the execution of the university's business.
- Check and adhere to the [Foreign, Commonwealth and Development office travel advice](#) prior to booking any overseas travel. Travel to high risk, sanctioned countries, and travel for over one year, must be agreed in writing, in advance.
- Assess the risk to the travel by completing the [SOAS Risk Assessment](#) and taking action as advised.
- Book travel via the SOAS designated Travel Management company (TMC) unless it can be demonstrated that this is not the most economical option. Staff should retain evidence that value for money has been achieved as proof may be required by the Head of Procurement
- Adhere to the Schools' Expenses policy
- Register any travel or accommodation costs borne by a third party (outside of research funded expenditure) on the gifts/hospitality register.

5. Traveller Responsibility

5.1 Travellers must ensure that they have the appropriate travel documents required for the travel, including an up-to-date, valid passport, and visas as needed.

5.2 All travellers must behave responsibly and with regard for local laws and customs when travelling on behalf of the university. They must take full responsibility for their own actions and behaviour

6. Risk and Insurance

6.1 SOAS holds travel insurance which covers fully all staff and students who have followed this policy. Travel Insurance insures your itinerary, planned activities and expenses in an emergency or in the event of loss.

6.2 If after completing the SOAS risk assessment, you are advised to seek further advice, you must do this, or your travel insurance may be invalidated.

7. Sustainability

7.1 Staff and students are strongly encouraged to adopt climate conscious travel behaviours and choices when undertaking University business travel.

7.2 Staff and students should consider virtual collaboration as an alternative to travel before deciding to travel in person.

7.3 The School recognises that virtual collaboration methods are not always an effective alternative to in-person interactions, and therefore some travel is essential for supporting academic, research, business and educational objectives. However, wherever possible, the number of individuals who travel should be limited to essential travellers only.

7.4 Rail travel should always be utilised over Air Travel when making a trip within the UK or Europe except in circumstances where rail infrastructure or route availability makes it unviable.

7.5 Staff and Students should use the booking tool provided by the TMC to ensure they understand all the options for travel prior to making a commitment. The tool should be used to sort travel options to consider the cheapest, fastest and most sustainable .

8. Types of Travel

8.1 Air travel (Book via the TMC). Air travel should be booked as economy class. Travel by premium economy or business class must be approved in writing in advance by the line manager of the traveller and will be normally limited to flights of 8 hours or more or where a flight segment is overnight.

8.2 Visas (Book via the TMC). SOAS will pay for visas required for university business travel. Letters supporting visa applications should be provided by the individuals line manager

8.3 Domestic Rail Travel (Book Via the TMC) Standard class fares should be booked unless where travel by first class provides better value for money, this may apply more specifically to longer journeys where Wi-Fi is required to work, or meals will be taken on the train.

8.4 International Rail including Eurostar (Book Via the TMC). Standard class fares should be booked unless travel by Standard Premier or Business Premier is cheaper or is required internationally for safety reasons.

8.5 Hotels (Book Via the TMC) Accommodation offered by the TMC has been evaluated to ensure it is appropriate and compliant with safety requirements, this enables SOAS to meet its duty of care responsibilities.

Appropriate accommodation is defined as a three star hotel in the UK and the equivalent overseas. Safety and security however are paramount and where the location requires it, accommodation to a higher standard should be selected.

Where the Traveller can demonstrate that a hotel outside of the normal three star policy represents better value for money and the Line Manager approves this, then it is acceptable to book.

Accommodation booked as part of a conference, or where a hotel offers a discounted rate for delegates need not be booked via the Travel Management Company

8.6 Bus travel may be paid for directly and reimbursed under the expenses policy.

8.7 Private motor vehicles should only be used under the following conditions:

- Where 2 or more School people travel together, so that the combined cost of their journey by public transport would exceed the cost of private vehicle usage calculated using approved mileage rates as per the Schools Expenses policy.
- For reasons specified in 2.2
- Where bulky equipment is being carried.
- Where the destination is not accessible or requires an excessively long or arduous journey by public transport.
- Where the journey takes place when public transport is not available.
- In special circumstances, where it is felt to be cost-effective and if approved by the member of staff's head of department or someone senior to their head of department.

Employees using their own vehicles must check that they hold a current valid motor insurance policy which permits "use for social, domestic and pleasure purposes and for the business of the Policyholder or the Policyholder's employer"