

TRAVEL AND SUBSISTENCE POLICY

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This document sets out the policy of the University of Limerick (UL) in relation to travel and subsistence. It details the principles to be applied in organising, authorising and undertaking travel and the procedures and processes to be followed. The policy aims to provide a fair and consistent enabling framework in which persons undertaking travel on behalf of the University do so with due regard to personal safety and comfort consistent with the nature and purpose of individual journeys. The policy also aims to ensure that all travel undertaken on behalf of the University provides value for money.

Travel is an integral part of working in academia, enabling research and collaboration. However, the University aims to reduce carbon emissions from travel by encouraging staff to adopt a climate conscious approach to travel.

Climate conscious travel is:

- choosing not to travel when virtual collaboration tools will adequately fulfil the purpose of travel (e.g. for meetings consider use of Teams).
- ensuring unnecessary travel is not undertaken (e.g. sending the minimum number of individuals required to fulfil the purpose of travel).
- being aware of the environmental impacts of travel and choosing a method of travel that reduces these (e.g. by bus/train rather than car or not using a higher flight class than economy).

Thinking differently about the way we travel can help reduce our environmental impact while maintaining the value of outside contact and connections.

1.2 Scope

1.2.1 To whom does the policy apply?

The policy applies to any person who incurs properly authorised and reasonable travel and subsistence expenses in accordance with the principles and provisions listed hereunder.

1.2.2 In what situations does the policy apply?

1.2.2.1 The policy applies:

a. To claims for travelling on approved University business and to travel and subsistence expenses so incurred, regardless of funding source.
b. In situations where the claimant is carrying out their duties for the University while temporarily away from their normal place of work.
c. To claims of costs incurred in the performance of University duties where the claimant may not have travelled as part of incurring the cost.

1.2.2.2 The policy outlines the University's approach in general terms and is not expected to cover every possible situation.

1.2.2.3 While equipment and supplies are generally not covered by this policy (see d. below), it is acknowledged by the University that claimants may occasionally, due to time constraints, purchase items required for fulfilling their duties. Therefore, small, infrequent purchases of equipment and supplies can be claimed via the online travel and subsistence system. If the equipment or supplies are intended for use in a laboratory, advance approval in writing must be obtained from the relevant Chief Technical Officer or the academic supervisor and attached to the claim. An upper limit of €250 will apply to the value of the item purchased. In exceptional situations where value for money can be demonstrated and items cannot be paid through the accounts payable process, the above limit can be exceeded with the advance approval in writing of the Chief Financial & Performance Officer or their nominee.

1.2.2.4 The policy does not apply to the following items:

a. Irish Residence Permit (IRP): Costs of and in relation to Irish residence permits must be borne by the employee and cannot be reclaimed. However, non-EU research students may reclaim the cost of their IRP and compulsory health insurance, where it is funded as an eligible cost by their funding body, or their PI agrees to fund the cost from overheads. The claim, where funded from overheads, must comply with current Research Ireland terms and conditions and include proof that the claimant is currently registered as a non-EU student.
b. Hospitality: Claims for reimbursement relating to hospitality should be claimed through the University's Official Hospitality Policy.
c. Alcohol: When claiming for vouched subsistence while travelling away from the University, it is not possible to reclaim the cost of alcohol other than for official hospitality and as set out in the Official Hospitality Policy.
d. Equipment and supplies: Claimants wishing to purchase such items should refer to the standard purchasing policies of the University. Specifically:
    - No member of staff will be reimbursed through the expenses system for the purchase of computers, laptops, tablets, external hard drives, printers, scanners, docking stations or similar items, regardless of cost, where a UL-contracted supplier of the product is in place. Where there is a contracted supplier, the product must be ordered via the purchase requisition system. The onus is on the member of staff to ensure that they are complying with public procurement guidelines and regulations.
    - All mobile phones must be ordered through ITD. No claimant will be reimbursed through the expenses system for their home or mobile phone bill or for the purchase of a mobile phone, regardless of circumstances or perceived value.
    - UL will not pay for home broadband internet/phone connections under any circumstances because the University cannot demonstrate sole and exclusive business use to satisfy Revenue's benefit in kind guidelines. Mobile broadband internet access is available as part of the UL corporate mobile phone package.
    - UL will not reimburse staff through the expenses system for the cost of any equipment or furniture for use in a home office.

1.2.3 Who is responsible for ensuring that the policy (and any associated procedure) is implemented and monitored?

1.2.3.1 Overall responsibility for ensuring that this policy is implemented as approved rests with the Chief Financial & Performance Officer.

1.2.3.2 Responsibility for financial management is delegated through a decentralised structure with appropriate levels of authority being vested in approvers. Approvers are charged with reviewing expense claims to ensure that the expenses have been incurred wholly, exclusively and necessarily on University business and that documentary evidence is attached where required.

1.3 Definitions

1.3.1 Approver

An approver is a relevant member of UL staff in whom authority for reviewing and approving claim forms is vested. Approvers comprise such personnel as vice presidents, Chief Financial & Performance Officer, deans, divisional directors, heads of department, budget holders and principal investigators.

1.3.2 Claimant

A claimant is a person who claims reimbursement from the University for travel and subsistence expenses incurred in the performance of their duties for the University.

2 Context

2.1 Legal and Regulatory Context

In developing this Travel and Subsistence Policy, account has been taken of the following statutory and regulatory instruments:

- Code of Governance for Irish Universities 2019
- Revenue rules including 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 duty may be reimbursed on a tax-free basis.
- Tax legislation
- Relevant government circulars (refer to section 5.1 for details)

Travel and subsistence claims are subject to audit by the Office of the Comptroller & Auditor General and external funding agencies.

3 Policy Statements

3.1 General Principles for Claiming Travel and Subsistence Expenses

3.1.1 It is UL policy to reimburse claimants for properly authorised and reasonable travel and subsistence expenses incurred in the performance of their duties for the University while temporarily away from their normal place of work.

3.1.2 This policy takes account of the financial constraints facing the University.

3.1.3 Travel must be undertaken only when necessary and must be consistent with the needs of the University.

3.1.4 The University reimburses necessary travel and subsistence expenses based on a fully vouched process. The emphasis at all times is on value for money.

3.1.5 The only exceptions to the use of a fully vouched process are for external members of the Governing Authority, staff abroad on sabbatical leave, external examiners, external interview candidates and those involved in a very limited number of research activities (including visiting researchers and those visiting on fellowships) or where research terms and conditions prescribe that per diems must be used. In such cases, the prior approval of the Chief Financial & Performance Officer is required. In such circumstances, claims must include proof of travel. In the case of sabbatical leave, please refer to the University's Sabbatical Policy for further details.

3.1.6 Civil service rates are used to cover costs associated with using one's private transport on a business journey (including fuel, tax and insurance, toll charges, wear and tear, maintenance, etc.) and meals and accommodation costs while away from one's normal place of residence.

3.1.7 Items of an unusual nature should be raised with the Finance Department before the cost is incurred, and any such clearance should be attached to the subsequent expense claim.

3.1.8 All travel should be planned as far in advance as possible to take advantage of discounted air fares and other economies that may be available by advance purchasing and to afford adequate time for processing insurance, visa, etc.

3.1.9 Staff must consider alternatives to travel, such as video conferencing, Teams and other available media, where appropriate.

3.1.10 Under certain circumstances, staff may be provided with an advance for travel/expense purposes. Refer to section 4.2 for details.

3.1.11 Claims for reimbursement of expenses must be made as soon as possible and, in any event, no later than three months after the date incurred. Only in very exceptional circumstances will

claims submitted late be paid, and a clear explanation must be attached to any late expense claim. Approvers should reject claims where a detailed explanation has not been provided by the claimant. For research grants, claims must be submitted and paid on or before the end date of the project.

3.1.12 If there are two or more UL employees present when the expense is incurred (e.g. restaurant meal), the expense claim should be made by the most senior member of staff. This is to ensure that the expense claim is reviewed and approved by a more senior member of staff not present at the event.

3.1.13 The expenses of a spouse, partner, family member or other person accompanying the claimant are not allowable expenses except when the person's presence is appropriate for a *bona fide* purpose and their travel is authorised in advance by the Office of the President in writing.

3.1.14 In addition to complying with this policy, claims for reimbursement from externally funded research projects should comply with the eligibility requirements for reimbursement of travel and subsistence as set out in the grant agreement and/or funding rules.

3.1.15 It is the responsibility of every claimant to act in a prudent and reasonable manner when incurring expenditure on behalf of the University. Claimants must comply with this policy in all claims they submit for payment.

3.1.16 The submission of a false or exaggerated expense claim is a serious matter and may lead to disciplinary action (up to and including dismissal) being taken by the University.

3.2 Principles for Travel

3.2.1 Domestic Travel

Public Transport

3.2.1.1 When travelling on behalf of the University, public transport must be used, where feasible, and claimants should choose the most economical means of travel. Claimants must travel standard/economy class on trains.

Notwithstanding 3.3.5 below, in certain limited circumstances, credit card receipts may be accepted as proof of payment for travel by public transport or taxi (e.g. "touching in and out" on Transport for London). In determining whether such a claim is in accordance with this policy, the decision of the Finance Department will be final.

Private Car

3.2.1.2 Where the use of public transport systems is not feasible, the following criteria for private car usage will apply:

- All business kilometres must be claimed based on the shortest route, having regard to practical and safety considerations, from UL to destination (or home if closer than UL).
- The date, start point, destination, end point, kilometres travelled and purpose of the trip must be clearly outlined in the claim.
- To enable approvers to validate and approve a kilometre expense claim, an AA Route Planner or Google Maps distance calculator should be attached for claims from the University or home to locations other than the destinations listed in Appendix 1.
- Kilometres will be reimbursed at the civil service rate per kilometre. The public service kilometre rates are available on the Finance Department website.
- Kilometres from home to UL will not be reimbursed.
- Travelling expenses will not be paid in respect of any portion of a journey that covers all or part of an employee's usual route between home and normal place of work.
- Where a claimant proceeds on an official journey directly from home or returns home directly, the travel allowance payable will be calculated by reference to the distance from home or normal place of work, whichever is the shorter.
- When two or more people attend the same meeting, event or conference, arrangements should be made, where feasible, to avoid the unnecessary use of more than one car.

- Employees who incur high mileage for business reasons should submit claims on a monthly basis.
- Claimants are responsible for ensuring that they have adequate business insurance in place, which indemnifies UL against all claims arising, while using private transport, on University business. UL cannot accept liability for any loss or damage resulting from the use of privately owned transport on University business.

Car Rental

3.2.1.3 A car should be rented only when doing so represents the best value for money. The cost of car rental from a standard economy/compact range plus petrol and excess insurance waiver costs will be reimbursed upon presentation of all receipts. Claimants should take out full insurance when hiring a car as the University will not reimburse claimants for any excess.

3.2.2 Foreign Travel

3.2.2.1 UL's strategic plan specifies the development of a greater international profile for the University as a key goal. It is expected that the staff will develop international networks and contacts and significantly increase participation in international collaborations. The achievement of this goal will involve foreign travel by staff on behalf of the University. The development of international relations is mainly based on the development of relationships with key persons in relevant institutions across the world.

3.2.2.2 Expenditure on foreign travel and subsistence (whether recouped by a third party or not) should be strictly appraised, monitored and approved in advance. It is the duty of approvers to ensure that only essential travel is undertaken and that the number of persons travelling on official business is kept to a minimum, consistent with the requirements of official business.

3.2.2.3 The University recognises that an employee may be required to stay in a particular hotel/area for business reasons. Accommodation should be comfortable and safe, should include essential amenities and should always represent value for money for the University. As a general rule, 3-star hotels should be used. Four-star hotels should rarely be used. Staff should never stay in 5-star or luxury hotels unless the stay has been justified and approved in advance in writing by the Office of the President or a named nominee. Suites or mini suites should never be booked. The standard and cost of hotels used should have regard to the Finance Department's subsistence rates as specified in Appendix 2.

3.2.2.4 Where a member of staff extends 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 UL business is the primary purpose of travel. Any extensions for personal reasons must be recorded in staff annual leave records. Arriving more than one day before a conference or event commences and/or staying on more than one day after the conference or event concludes will be regarded as a personal stay unless evidence to the contrary is provided.

3.2.2.5 Approvers must be prepared to use the services of all carriers operating out of Ireland.

3.2.2.6 The University will reimburse the cost of entry visas required for travel on UL business. The cost of passports or passport renewal will not be reimbursed.

Classes of Air Travel

3.2.2.7 The terminology used to designate different classes of air travel varies between airlines and changes over time. The main relevant classes out of Ireland are described briefly in Appendix 3.

3.2.2.8 The following principles should apply in relation to the class used:

(a) It is expected that persons travelling will use economy class travel, including low-cost carrier fares for short-haul flights and that every effort should be made to seek the most competitively priced flight.

(b) Cheaper restricted fares should be used where the travel abroad is predictable and changes to travel are unlikely to occur.

(c) There is a range of fully flexible economy fares, but these should be used only where it can be shown that the flexibility provided and the extra cost of the ticket are warranted compared to the potential cancellation cost of a restricted internet/economy ticket.
(d) Premium economy class travel may be used (where available) for long-haul flights (in excess of 8 hours for a single non-stop flight) where the additional flexibility afforded is considered necessary for the effective discharge of official business and if a reasonable fare can be sourced.
(e) Business class travel carries a heavier carbon footprint and therefore should only be used for single non-stop flights exceeding 8 hours and where there are exceptional circumstances. If it is possible to fly direct from an Irish airport to the destination, the 8 hours threshold will be calculated from the Irish airport, regardless of the route actually flown.
(f) All business or equivalent class flights should be booked at least one month in advance of the departure date and within five working days of approval by the Office of the President.
(g) All requests for business class flights must be approved in advance by the Office of the President. The request must include an explanation of the exceptional circumstances and why it is necessary, the additional cost in relation to the business class flight over economy and premium economy, if available, and the official business to be conducted. In no circumstances will retrospective approval be given by the Office of the President, approval must be sought in advance. Where the business class flight is not booked one month in advance of departure date a full explanation of the circumstances must be provided when seeking approval. An approval form is available from the Office of the President.
(h) Staff travelling economy class on long haul trips (greater than 8 hours) will be given time to recover before being expected to report for work. For example, if staff are travelling from Ireland to the Far East, one day's recovery is recommended.
(i) First class travel is not permitted in any circumstance.

3.2.2.9 The University will not pay the travel costs of persons who have no direct connection with the University and have no role in the official business being conducted during a trip other than in exceptional circumstances where a specific invitation is extended for a special occasion and that attendance is in the interest of the University.

3.2.2.10 In no circumstances is it permissible to 'trade down' premium tickets to enable another person who is not a member of UL staff to travel free of charge or at a reduced rate. If, for any reason, it is decided to downgrade the class of travel, the saving must accrue to the University.

3.2.2.11 It is the responsibility of each Approver to ensure that frequent flyer points do not influence decisions taken in relation to the carriers used for official business. Any such points obtained on UL flights should be used against the cost of future flights undertaken on UL business.

3.3 Principles for Approving Claims

3.3.1 Approvers are responsible for ensuring that claimants adhere to this policy and that the regulations and procedures specified therein are strictly adhered to.

3.3.2 As a general principle and consistent with the requirements of official business, approvers are responsible for ensuring that expenditure remains within budget and that the best value for money is obtained with respect to each official trip undertaken.

3.3.3 All claims submitted to the Finance Department must be approved by the relevant Approver. The Finance Department will then process the claim provided that the claim is fully supported by the necessary receipts. In addition, the Finance Department will randomly carry out checks to ensure claims are in accordance with this policy. In determining whether a claim is in accordance with this policy, the decision of the Finance Department will be final.

3.3.4 In certain circumstances, a claim may arise for an expense that, while appropriately incurred while carrying out University duties, may not fully comply with all the requirements of this policy. In any such circumstance, the Finance Department will exercise judgement whether

or not, on balance, the claim should be approved for payment. Where there is evidence that such judgement has been exercised, the said claim will be regarded as being in accordance with this policy.

3.3.5 Receipts must show details of purchase and proof of payment. Credit/debit card receipts should be included to support payment claims for audit purposes. Please note that credit and debit card receipts on their own are not acceptable – the actual itemised receipt must be attached. Order acknowledgements or invoices showing a balance due will not be accepted without proof of payment.

4 Related Procedures

4.1 Methods of Claiming Travel and Subsistence

4.1.1 All expense claims from staff members should be entered electronically into the Agresso financial system. A paper-based claim form can be submitted by claimants who are not UL employees. This form is available on the Finance Department website.

4.1.2 Full user guide instructions on how to complete a travel and subsistence claim are available on the Finance Department website. A summary of the procedure is set out below:

- Staff must register themselves onto Agresso. The registration form is available on the Finance Department website.
- Once registered, staff should log onto Agresso and enter the details of their travel expenses online. Expense claims are processed online through an automated workflow approvals framework.
- Claimants must submit all supporting receipts and documentation with respect to each travel and subsistence claim. These should be attached to the expense claim electronically and matched to the relevant line of the claim.
- Claimants must enter a separate transaction line for each date, currency, and expense type**.**
- Claimants do not need to submit original receipts, but it is recommended that they retain them in case the scanned copies are illegible.
- Claimants whose receipts are in foreign currency may enter their claim in the foreign currency and accept the Euro conversion rate used by Agresso at the time they enter the claim, or they may enter their claim in Euro to reflect the actual exchange rate incurred on their debit/credit card. However, if the claim is submitted in Euro, the claimant should attach evidence of the exchange rate used (e.g. credit card statement, rate on bank receipt for the purchase of foreign currency, etc.). Bank transaction charges associated with specific foreign currency transactions can be claimed, and the supporting bank/credit card statement should be attached to the claim.
- The authorised signatory on the Cost Centre or Project Code will receive an email notification that an expense claim is on the system awaiting approval.
- Once the electronic approval process is complete and received in the Finance Department, the expense claim will be processed for payment provided it is in accordance with this policy.
- Expense payment runs are completed on a weekly basis by the Finance Department and remittance advices are emailed to the claimants.

4.2 Travel/Expense Advances

4.2.1 Staff may apply for an advance payment by submitting a travel/expense advance payment request claim. Supporting documentation to demonstrate why the travel/expense advance is necessary must be provided for all advance payments (hotel booking confirmations,

conference registration fees, quotes etc.).

4.2.2 Travel/expense advances must be appropriately authorised in line with the terms of this policy. When the trip/purchase is complete, a final expense claim to clear the advance claimed and the balance due for reimbursement (if any) must be submitted for the entire cost.

4.2.3 Receipts are required to be submitted within two weeks from the return/purchase date. Any delay in submitting a final expense claim will delay payment of subsequent claims.

4.3 Purpose of Travel

4.3.1 The purpose of travel should be clearly stated on each claim. For example, the name and date of the conference or purpose of the meeting should be given.

4.3.2 General purposes such as "business trip" will not be accepted.

4.4 Conference Fees

4.4.1 Fees for UL staff attending conferences with a monetary value of €2,000 or less must be paid by the individual staff member and reclaimed through the travel and subsistence scheme. Claimants may, if they wish, reclaim conference fees above €2,000 through this process.

4.4.2 Backup documentation, such as a flyer, booking documentation, conference agenda or invitation to attend, is required when claiming conference fees.

5 Related Documents

5.1 External Documents

- Public Procurement Guidelines for Goods and Services
- Revenue's Employee Expenses information
- Government Department of Public Expenditure and Reform circulars:
  - Circular 04/2025 Domestic Subsistence Allowances
  - Circular 07/2017 Subsistence Allowances Abroad
  - Circular 25/2000 Official Hospitality
  - Circular 16/2022 Revised Motor Travel Rates
- DPE126-020-2015 Financial Procedures (relating to staff of a public service body incurring expenses arising from work undertaken on behalf of another public service body)

5.2 Internal Documents

- Official Hospitality Policy
- University of Limerick Sabbatical Policy
- Guide to Staff Expense Entry and Approval

6 Document Control

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Distances from UL

Kilometre distance (one way) from University of Limerick to:

Belfast City	359
Cork Airport	109
Cork City	102
DCU	202
Drogheda	243
Dublin Airport	204
Dublin City	193
Dundalk	275
Galway City	118
Maynooth University	181
NUIG	118
Shannon Airport	36
TCD	194
UCC	103
UCD	201
Waterford	128

Appendix 2: Subsistence Rates

References to overnight allowance, vouched accommodation, 10-hour and 5-hour rates have the following meanings:

- Overnight allowance: Used for a 24-hour absence and includes the cost of accommodation and three meals.
- Vouched accommodation: The rate formerly referred to as the conference rate has now been renamed the vouched accommodation (VA) rate. The VA rate covers the vouched costs of accommodation plus the rate listed in the 'VA Rate' column. The VA rate should not normally be used because the overnight rate should be sufficient for accommodation and three meals.
- Day rate (10 hours): Used when the absence is for 10 hours or more and two meals are being claimed.
- Day rate (5 hours): Used when the absence is for between 5 and 10 hours and one meal is being claimed. Note that this is not claimable where the distance from home/UL is less than 8 km.

Subsistence rates within Ireland (from 29 January 2025)

Check the Finance Department website for up-to-date allowance rates as rates are updated by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform from time to time.

Overnight rates			**Daily rates**	
Normal rate (1st 14 nights)	Reduced rate (next 14 nights)	Detention rate (next 28 nights)	10 hours or more*	5 hours but less than 10*
€205.53	€184.98	€102.76	€46.17	€19.25

*Not payable in cases where distance from home/UL is less than 8 km

VA domestic subsistence rates (for use in Dublin only):

Vouched Accommodation ("VA") Rate	Accommodation		Meals
VA Rate	Vouched cost of accommodation up to €205.53	plus	€46.17

Subsistence rates within Ireland – distance restrictions

An overnight allowance will not generally be payable in respect of a necessary absence on official business that is within 100 km of the claimant's home or UL (whichever is the shorter distance). However, in exceptional circumstances and where an operational need exists, an overnight allowance may be paid for an absence on official business at any location within 50 km to 100 km from home or UL (whichever is the shorter distance).

UK subsistence rates

City	Currency	24-hour rate (overnight)
London	Stg£	199.29
Northern Ireland	Stg£	118.70
Elsewhere	Stg£	139.71

Subsistence rates outside of Ireland are available on the Finance Department website.

Subsistence rates for some main destinations

City	Currency	24-hour rate (overnight)
Amsterdam	Euro €	222.00
Berlin	Euro €	239.50
Paris	Euro €	316.00
Rome	Euro €	260.00
Stockholm	SEK	2,857.00
Boston	US$	336.50
New York	US$	318.50
Washington DC	US$	268.50
Beijing	China – Renminbi	1,950.00
Toronto	Canadian Dollar	332.50

Appendix 3: Travel Classes

While terminology can vary from country to country, the travel classes provided by airlines can generally be categorised as:

1. First class
2. Business/executive class
3. Premium economy
4. Economy class

1. First class is always the premier deluxe cabin on the aircraft. This class generally seats a limited number of passengers. No airline currently offers first class on flights out of Ireland. For the avoidance of any doubt First class travel is not permitted under this policy.

2. Some aircraft offer business/executive class – a level between first class and economy business class (executive class). This class generally offers a greater checked baggage allowance, lounge access, premium on-board service, choice of menu and last on/first off. Some airlines call their business/executive class by different names, such as:
    - Business Elite – Delta
    - Business First – Continental
    - Premier – Aer Lingus
    - Envoy – US Airways

    These are some of the transatlantic carriers operating out of Ireland with a business class. Flights operated by Aer Lingus within Europe/UK are all at economy class.

3. Some airlines offer premium economy – a level between business and economy. This class generally provides a bigger seat than in economy but offers the same menu, the same ratio of attendants to passengers and no lounge access.

4. Economy class is generally the most economical way to travel. It is more restrictive, offers less on-board service and is associated with longer check-in times, etc.