

Association of Commonwealth Universities

## **COMMONWEALTH SCHOLARSHIP COMMISSION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM**

### **Finance Committee**

#### **Commission policy on Member and Secretariat travel**

##### **Overview**

The Commission's travel policy is aligned with FCDO's own travel policy; it is normally reviewed by the Finance Committee at its November meeting on a three-yearly basis.

This policy applies both to Commissioners and to Secretariat staff travelling on Commission business; although Secretariat staff must also refer to the ACU's own staff travel policy.

The travel policy will next be due for update at the CSC Finance Committee meeting in November 2025.

Changes in the attached are as follows:

1. A general tidying up and alignment of the policy with FCDO's travel policy.
2. Further consideration of the environment and the Government's sustainability objectives when planning travel.
3. When travel between England and Eurostar destinations is necessary, travel by Eurostar should be chosen by default.
4. Members should not use taxis between airports and central London, except for journeys during the hours when public transport is not running.
5. Where domestic travel is necessary, air travel between locations on mainland England, Scotland and Wales is by exception only with approval granted by Chair and Secretariat.

##### **Recommendations:**

1. That the updated travel policy should be approved, and the updated version will be posted on the Gov.UK website.



## **Commission policy on Member and Secretariat travel**

### ***Principles***

The CSC travel policy is based around the following principles:

- (a) The CSC approach, taken overall, should not be more generous than either the general approach taken by FCDO or the Marshall Commission (being the other NDPB concerned with award of scholarships).
- (b) The CSC Code of Conduct should be noted in relation to this policy:
- (c) The CSC is committed to adopting travel behaviours that support the Government's sustainability objectives. In the interests of economy and the environment travel should be kept to that which is essential for the running of CSC business and to the most environmental option available (running of CSC business includes attendance at CSC and Committee meetings and events as well as other necessary meetings). Alternatives to travel, including travel overseas should always be considered first (e.g. virtual meetings) but it is accepted that some UK and overseas travel will be necessary.
- (d) That members and Secretariat staff be expected to take advantage of all discounts and special offers that can reasonably be expected to be available and are expected to book travel in advance wherever possible.
- (e) That a case exists for distinguishing between members of the Commission – who undertake their work largely on a pro bono basis, and Secretariat staff.
- (f) That amounts claimed in no case should exceed actual expenditure and all claims must be for costs incurred in undertaking Commission business only.
- (g) That consideration be given when applying the policies set out below to where exceptions might need to be made on the basis of disability or health grounds.
- (h) All claims must be submitted and approved within three months to ensure accuracy in publishing all financial transactions over £500.
- (i) Advice should be sought from the Secretariat on any issues not covered within this policy before travel is booked.
- (j) This policy applies to Commissioners and to Secretariat staff travelling on Commission business where a claim for travel is to be made to the Commission.
- (k) Secretariat Staff should also read the ACU travel policy within the Staff Handbook; any queries should be referred to their line manager.

## ***International travel***

### All air journeys

Economy class in all cases for travel under five hours and normally for travel over five hours. For journeys over five hours, business/premium economy class can be booked only in exceptional circumstances (where strict application of the class-of-travel rules would not be cost effective, for visits within a working day, when bookings are not available in economy class and the timing or date of the journey cannot be changed, taking into account overall journey time, whether journey is taking place overnight, whether Commissioners would need to work immediately upon arrival and whether there are any health or disability considerations) with prior consultation with the Commission Chair and Secretariat. In the case that the travel is for the Chair, consultation should be with the Secretariat and Deputy Chair.

For journeys over ten hours, business class can be booked subject to prior agreement with the Chair and Secretariat.

Where travel between England and Eurostar destinations is necessary, travel by Eurostar should be chosen by default. Travel by air is by exception only with approval granted by the Chair and Secretariat. In the case that the travel is for the Chair, consultation should be with the Secretariat and Deputy Chair.

## ***Domestic travel***

### By air

Air travel between locations on mainland England, Scotland and Wales is by exception. Travel by train is encouraged for environmental reasons, but air travel can be agreed where cheaper or necessitated by journey time. Economy class must be used in all cases.

### By rail

Standard class travel only should be booked unless there are exceptional circumstances e.g., illness, disability or where First-class facilities are essential for working while traveling. The only exception is the sleeper train in the UK where it is permitted to undertake first class travel as it's no longer possible to pay a supplement for solo occupancy in standard class.

### Taxis

Staff should travel by the most efficient means of transport, bearing in mind the operational requirement (where they have to be, and by what time, to carry out their duties) and the need to secure value for money. Public transport (train, bus, or underground train) should be used whenever possible. Members should not use taxis between airports and central London, except for journeys during the hours when public transport is not running. Members and Secretariat staff should avoid taking taxis on official business unless necessary but will be permitted discretion on the use of taxis, taking into account the following principles which include those stated in the FCDO's travel policy:

- availability of other reasonable forms of public transport to the destination
- relative effectiveness and cost of other transport forms
- requirement to carry heavy or bulky items (not simply personal luggage)
- impact on the time of the person involved

- safety issues – for example travel before 7am and after 9pm
- where disability or health considerations prevent the use of public transport

### By car

Members and Secretariat staff should note that FCDO's travel policy discourages the use of private cars in most circumstances and stating that no liability will be accepted for any accident, damage, injury, or death beyond that which would have existed had the journey been by public transport.

In cases where cars are used, the Commission will apply the following rates in line with FCDO's policy:

- 25p per mile where public transport is available but travel by private vehicle has been considered the best option.
- 40p per mile where public transport is not available (up to a cumulative total of 10,000 miles; 25p per mile over 10,000 miles)

### ***Accommodation in the UK***

Overnight accommodation can only be reimbursed if a Commissioner or member of staff cannot reach home the same day after concluding Commission business. Hotel accommodation will be reimbursed at a maximum rate of £115 per night in London, £75 per night in a major UK city and £70 per night elsewhere in the UK. £15 can be added to each rate if breakfast is also booked. Receipts must be presented for reimbursement. Similarly receipts for meals and non-alcoholic drinks at a reasonable rate associated with an overnight stay will be reimbursed. If travel or accommodation is cancelled for any reason, a refund should be sought from the provider in the first instance.

The Secretariat can assist with booking accommodation within London.

### ***Accommodation overseas***

Where members of Commission staff are travelling overseas, and on other issues, members should consult the Secretariat. The Secretariat will refer to FCDO's travel policy and HMRC's list of recommended rates for the country being visited.

### ***Claiming expenses for travel***

Receipts **must** be submitted along with a travel claim form for reimbursement for all use of public transport. Where a private car has been used, a claim form must be submitted with full details of journey and number of miles travelled.

Commissioners and Secretariat staff can claim for 'reasonable' costs for meals and non-alcoholic drinks when travelling on Commission related business in the UK. Receipts must be submitted for all such expenditure. The reasonableness factor applies to all claims for expenses. Claims should represent expenditure that would not have been incurred at the normal workplace (i.e. they are expenses that are necessary and are additional to normal daily expenditure at the workplace). Further guidance can be sought from the Secretariat where necessary.

Per diems **cannot** be claimed by Commissioners or Secretariat staff travelling on CSC business for travel either in the UK or overseas.

### ***Travel insurance***

The Commission does not provide travel insurance for Commissioners. Commissioners must have their own private travel insurance to ensure that they have full cover for the visit and should seek reimbursement from the Secretariat for the cost.

Secretariat Staff should note the section on insurance within the ACU Staff Handbook.

### ***Risk assessment***

All overseas travel should be assessed for risk before taking place. It is the responsibility of the Commissioner travelling to undertake this assessment in consultation with the Secretariat. Secretariat staff should follow ACU procedures.

### ***Visas***

Members and Secretariat Staff should make sure in good time before they travel that they satisfy any visa or similar requirements of the country they are visiting. Information on visa requirements by country can be obtained at [www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel)

### ***Inoculations and other health matters***

It is the responsibility of Commissioners to ensure that they have all vaccinations needed for the country to which they are travelling. Necessary arrangements will need to be made in good time before travel. For example, where a course of malaria tablets needs to be commenced some time before departure.

The ACU provides an internal guidance document on travel overseas for Secretariat staff.

### ***Possible exemptions***

Consideration will be given to exemptions to the above policies where disability or health concerns arise.

*October 2022*