



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Human Resources Directorate
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FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0849-14

Thank you for your email of 31 August asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

- 1) *Details of your organisations travel policy with regards international flights, specifically what class can departmental staff travel and under what circumstances?*
- 2) *What is your policy on air miles earned by staff in travelling on official business*

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed the search for the information which you requested. I can confirm that the FCO does hold some information relevant to your request.

Question 1) The FCO has over 260 posts worldwide so has comprehensive travel policy guidance for both staff going overseas to take up postings as British Diplomats, and for official duty travel. We are committed to ensuring that travel is as cost effective as possible. Where possible and appropriate, we encourage video-conferencing around the FCO network in a further effort to reduce the number of flights needed. However, face-to-face meetings are a vital part of diplomatic work and this necessarily involves travel. Ministers and senior civil servants are expected to undertake a heavy work load of travel to help promote UK interests throughout the world. Attached below are the relevant elements of our travel policies, as requested.

Our Duty Travel policy states:

FCO policy is that all staff should travel by the most appropriate means and class of travel according to the demands of their job and to ensure maximum efficiency, remembering that it is public money being spent. Staff should also consider if the journey is necessary and

their aims can be achieved by other means such as video conference, teleconference, or WebEx facilities as alternatives to travel.

Staff should not book or incur any travel costs without first obtaining approval from their line manager, Resource Management Unit, or Budget Holder/approver as applicable, and the appropriate medical clearances.

Staff are expected to book the lowest fare available – if there are other more expensive fares available staff must provide a reason explaining why the lowest fare was not booked

Flying Time	Class of Travel
Up to 5 hours	All journeys at public expense: Economy
Over 5 hours	All journeys at public expense: Economy (but see * below)
Over 10 hours	All journeys at public expense: Up to Business (subject to agreement with budget holder)

* Subject to the authority of Directorates the next higher class (but not first class) may be used

- where strict application of the class-of-travel rules would not be cost effective
- for short duty visits out and back in a working day - staff are not entitled if they stay overnight
- when bookings are not available in the lower class and the timing or date of the journey cannot be changed
- if staff will be required to work immediately on arrival
- on disability/medical grounds recognised by HR.

Our Overseas Postings Policy states:

Staff posted overseas by the FCO are entitled to a travel package to pay for their, and their qualifying dependants, travel during a posting. The travel package is based on a set number of fare paid journeys which an officer is entitled to over the course of a posting. The travel package is designed to allow staff to travel how and when they wish while overseas, within the ceiling of the fare paid journeys and subject to the rules of travel package policy.

Class of travel derives from the published flying time excluding any transits between London and Post on the approved route.

Flying Time	Approved Route - Class of Travel
Up to 5 hours	All Staff: Transfer and annual leave/additional journeys: Economy
Over 5 hours	All Staff: Transfer journeys: Business (or Premium Economy/Economy if Business not available on aircraft)

	Annual leave/additional journeys: Economy
Over 10 hours	All Staff: Transfer and annual leave journeys: Business (or Premium Economy/Economy if Business not available on aircraft) Additional journeys: Economy

Question 2) The accrual of air miles is covered under the FCO Gifts, Advantages and Hospitality guidance that states:

Gifts, Advantages and Hospitality is governed by the Civil Service Code which sets out the framework within which all Civil Servants should work, and the core values and standards of behaviour they are expected to uphold. The Civil Service Management code sets out further principles on this and makes Government Departments and Agencies responsible for defining the standards of conduct they require of their staff and for ensuring that these fully reflect the Civil Service Code, incorporating any additional rules necessary to reflect local needs and circumstances. The FCO does this through The Diplomatic Service Regulations and Home Service Regulations and in the Terms and Conditions of Service of members of Local Staff. These, plus the principles laid down by the Committee on Standards in Public Life and provisions laid down in the Bribery Act 2010, highlight the importance of adhering to this Policy.

Our policy on air miles specifically states:

Air Miles, discounted or free tickets or upgrade vouchers which have accrued through travel which has been paid for from public funds may not be used for personal journeys. However, they may be used for Official Travel.

Air Miles are the most commonly accumulated benefit. If you are unable to use them for official travel and they are transferable, you may pass them to your Resource Management Department, who will seek to use them for official travel. If you are unable to use them for official travel and they are not transferable you may, if appropriate, donate them to a charity of the travel operator's choice.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the Freedom of Information Act, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless it is exempt. The information we have supplied to you may now be published on our website together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context.

Yours sincerely,

Human Resources Directorate



We keep and use information in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. We may release this personal information to other UK government departments and public authorities.