



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Department of Finance Advice note for Departments

Guidance on International Travel

Introduction

This Advice Note provides guidance for all University staff in the area of International Travel including the booking of, and payment for, Air Fares.

In July 2010, HEFCE issued updated [“Guiding principles for international activity”](#) to all Heads of HEFCE funded higher education institutions. The four key points are as follows:-

- a. International travel should only be funded from public funds where it is relevant to publicly funded activity.
- b. Value for money should be sought from international travel arrangements and the costs of expenses such as business class flights should be weighed against the potential benefits.
- c. The environmental costs of activities such as domestic and international flights should be considered in the context of the institution’s carbon footprint.
- d. Public funding should be used only to fund travel by institutions’ employees on official business. The only exception should be where, for marketing or ceremonial reasons and with the express sanction of the chair of the governing body, heads of institutions’ spouses or partners are required to attend particular events.

HEFCE have issued this guidance because they have received allegations of irregularities in the use of public funds to support international travel. The circular letter issued is a timely reminder to HEIs of the potential reputational damage for themselves and the higher education sector from allegations of waste or impropriety. The Freedom of Information Act is being regularly used to make requests to HEIs to publish information about staff and their international travel. We must ensure that all international travel that our staff undertake is capable of withstanding public scrutiny and represents value for money.

The University of Sheffield and HEFCE's guiding principles

- a) **International travel should only be funded from public funds where it is relevant to publicly funded activity.**

Staff must consider this principle when international travel is being supported by public funds. This means those funds given to the University in support of our Teaching, Research and Knowledge Transfer activity in the widest sense, or given in relation to a specific project, such as a research grant.

- b) **Value for money should be sought from international travel arrangements and the costs of expenses such as business class flights should be weighed against the potential benefits.**

Staff should refer to the [procurement office web page information](#) in relation to Travel Agents and securing Flights.

Paragraphs 60 to 63 in the [Staff Fees, Benefits and Expenses Procedures Manual](#) cover Air Fares and the class of air ticket that is permitted.

- c) **The environmental costs of activities such as domestic and international flights should be considered in the context of the institution's carbon footprint.**

In the [University's Environmental Policy](#), we have issued a commitment to "aim to reduce business travel" and also to "reduce further all forms of pollution and noise generated from the activities of the University".

- d) **Public funding should be used only to fund travel by institutions' employees on official business. The only exception should be where, for marketing or ceremonial reasons and with the express sanction of the chair of the governing body, heads of institutions' spouses or partners are required to attend particular events.**

University funds can only be used to support international travel undertaken by **our employees** for business purposes. Staff should refer to the guidance issued on the Department of Finance web pages in relation to [Reimbursements to the University for travel/subsistence relating to the spouse or partner of a member of staff](#).

The exception listed above with respect to international travel for marketing or ceremonial reasons **only** applies to the Vice Chancellor ("head of institution") or his/her delegated representative. Express sanction from the chair of the governing body would be arranged by the Vice Chancellor's office.