Travel Policy

Contents

1. Purpose 1
2. Scope 2
3. Principles 3
4. Approval route 3
5. Booking travel 3
6. During travel 3
7. Responsibilities while travelling ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
8. Claiming expenses 4
9. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion 4
10. Environmental considerations 5
11. Information Data Security 6
APPENDIX 1: *Duty of Care and Traveller Safety* 7
APPENDIX 2: *Tyndall Centre Travel Strategy Decision Tree* 8
APPENDIX 3: *Rating associated with different types of travel* 9

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1. Purpose

At Great British Chemicals (GBC), travel plays a critically important role in delivering our projects and programmes, building partnerships, and representing our work across the UK and internationally. There is no expectation for international travel whilst involved with *GBC* projects, yet consortium members will be free to travel to promote GBC activities and benefit their own careers.

This travel policy aligns with the ambitions for *GBC* to lower carbon emissions. This Policy is based on the UKRI travel policy, Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research and University of Sheffield staff travel policy. *GBC* aims to work towards a culture of low carbon travel as an example of best practice within the UK research and innovation sector.

This policy expands on the details provided in the University of Sheffield pages around how business travel should be plan, authorised, and managed to ensure that is safe, impactful, cost-effective, and environmentally responsible.

This policy applies to all colleagues and associates travelling on behalf of GBC. As a multi-institution programme any travel undertaken on GBC business also needs to comply with travel policies of colleague's home institutions.

In alignment with UKRI policy, our aims are to:

- Keep colleagues safe while travelling for work
- Maximise the impact of our work
- Ensure public funds are used responsibly
- Minimise unnecessary travel and environmental impacts
- Provide clear guidance on how to request and authorise travel

GBC remains committed to the safety and security of people employed and associated with the programme (APPENDIX 1).

2. Scope

The scope of this policy includes:

- All staff at all levels working on *GBC* projects and partner institutions who are required to travel on *GBC* business
- Any students working on *GBC* projects who are required to travel for learning or research purposes as part of their studies regardless of funding source
- All contractors/agents & individuals travelling solely and on behalf of *GBC*
- All recipients and/or awardees of GBC flexible funding

GBC staff travelling outside of the UK must also refer to relevant International Working Policies (from your home institution) for details of the specific requirements when working overseas.

Business travel is defined as all travel incurred while carrying out work related to *GBC* projects. It does not apply to any personal travel or commuting to and from a normal place of work.

3. Principles

Our approach to travel is guided by five key principles:

Safety first
Traveller welfare and safety are our top priority. Travel risk assessments should be completed in line with the University of Sheffield requirements.

Impact and outcomes
Travel is critically important to achieving the aims and objectives of GBC.

Value for money
All travel should be approved in advance and represent the best possible value, balancing cost, with practicality and time efficiency.

Sustainability
We encourage travel choices that minimise environmental impact, such as using trains over flights where feasible, and considering remote participation when possible.

Transparency
All travel should be properly recorded, authorised, and claimed using agreed procedures.

4. Approval route

All requests for booking travel and accommodation and for claiming any related expenses, must follow the scheme of delegation, financial regulations and supporting policies of your home institution and UKRI regulations. Please refer any queries to the Leadership Team (LT).

5. Booking travel

Once travel is approved, bookings should be made using colleagues home institutions preferred suppliers wherever possible to ensure value for money and consistent terms.

Before travelling, colleagues should check the decision tree in APPENDIX 2.

Accommodation should be modest and appropriate to the purpose of the trip (typically mid-range hotels or equivalent university rates).

Colleagues are expected to use cost-effective transport options and book in advance to secure best prices.

6. Responsibilities during travel

Colleagues travelling on business should represent GBC with:

- **Professionalism & Integrity**: Maintain professional relationships, act with honesty, transparency, and sound judgment, adhering to GBC principles, and maintain high ethical standards.

- **Equality, Diversity & Inclusivity**: Embrace character, identity and diversity. Treat everyone (colleagues, clients, locals) with courtesy, avoiding harassment, discrimination, or inappropriate behaviour.
- **Cultural & Environmental Sensitivity**: Respect local laws and customs, dress codes, holy sites, and noise levels.
- **Safety & Compliance**: Adhere to all laws (local and international), health/safety & Risk Assessment guidelines, and avoid prohibited activities.
- **Responsibility**: Be punctual, accountable, and represent GBC positively.
- **Transparency and accounting**: Retain receipts for any business-related expenses.

Understanding and managing destination risk

Travellers must understand the level of risk at their destination and identify appropriate mitigation measures using Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) country advice. Where available, travellers should use alert systems to support their ongoing safety and security.

Travel to sanctioned countries, or to locations assessed by the FCDO as high or extreme risk, must follow the advice and approval processes of the traveller's home institution before any bookings are made.

Documentation

Travellers are responsible for ensuring that all required documentation is valid and up to date, including passports, visas, GHIC, travel insurance and itinerary documents, and that any required vaccinations are completed well in advance of travel.

7. Claiming expenses

Expense claims must be submitted according to the policies of your home institution. Claims must include itemised receipts for all costs. Records should be kept of quotes for purchasing and expense requirements.

Non-allowable expenses include:

- Alcohol or personal entertainment
- Costs incurred by family or companions
- Unapproved travel or accommodation upgrades

Core Academic Team consortium members cannot claim expenses directly from another institution. This includes any travel and expenses incurred whilst attending GBC events, conferences or meetings. Any and all expenses must be claimed through your home institution and included in the quarterly reporting cycle.

8. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

We will ensure that the application of this policy does not have the effect of discriminating, directly or indirectly against staff, students or agents acting on behalf of *GBC* on grounds of any protected characteristics as outlined in the Equality Act 2010.

GBC is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all members engaging in activities with the centre.

Therefore, the following EDI principles will apply to this policy:

- Business travel for travellers who have a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial negative effect on their ability to carry out daily activities, may make alternative arrangements than the ones outlined in this policy with prior approval of your home institution and notifying the Leadership Team.
- Any person possessing a protected characteristic which may negatively impact on their ability to travel may make alternative arrangements than the ones outlined in this policy, with prior notification to the Leadership Team.
- Consideration must be given to early career stage development in relation to travel. Attending conferences is an important part of research and such attendance is encouraged.
- Open rail tickets can be booked to allow for flexibility in travelling to accommodate personal circumstances e.g. where having timed tickets would limit ability to receive or undertake caring needs.
- Where a carer or personal assistant (PA) is required to support a traveller with a disability during the period of travel then provision should be made for the carer in terms of travel, subsistence and accommodation. Approval for costs associated with carer/PA travel must be sought in advance of the travel from your home institution.

9. Environmental considerations

As part of global efforts to minimise carbon emissions, *GBC* is committed to reducing its carbon footprint. Colleagues are asked to:

- Prioritise virtual or hybrid options wherever possible
- Choose direct routes and avoid unnecessary flights
- Consider sustainability when booking accommodation and transport

Below is a code of conduct created by the Tyndall Centre and subscribed to by *GBC* for members **to support a low-carbon research culture:**

- **Monitor and reduce**. I will be aware of the carbon emissions of my professional activities and set personal objectives to reduce them in line with, or larger than, my country's carbon emissions commitments.
- **Account and justify**. I will justify my travel considering the location and purpose of the event, my level of seniority, my health, and the alternative options available. Please see APPENDIX 2 for guidance.
- **Prioritise, prepare and replace**. For activities that I organise, I will choose the location giving high priority to a low carbon footprint of travel of the participants, and I will encourage, incorporate and technically support online speakers and webcasts to reduce unnecessary travel.
- **Encourage and stimulate**. I will resist my own "fear of missing out" from not attending everything and work towards sensitizing others to the need of the research community to take positive action on climate change.

- **Reward**. I will work with my peers, *GBC* and Funders to value alternative metrics of success and encourage the promotion of low-carbon research as a realisable alternative to a high-carbon research career.[1]

10. Information Data Security

Staff must always maintain compliance with data protection and information security policies whilst travelling.

11. FlexFund Activities

The scheme actively encourages the use of low-carbon transport by awardees where possible and will seek to prioritise applications that consider ways in which the carbon footprint of travel might be reduced.

APPENDIX 1: *Duty of Care and Traveller Safety*

GBC recognises that business travel is important to maximise the impact and collaborative opportunities arising from the programme. However, the safety, security, and wellbeing of our consortium members is the highest priority, outweighing any business need.

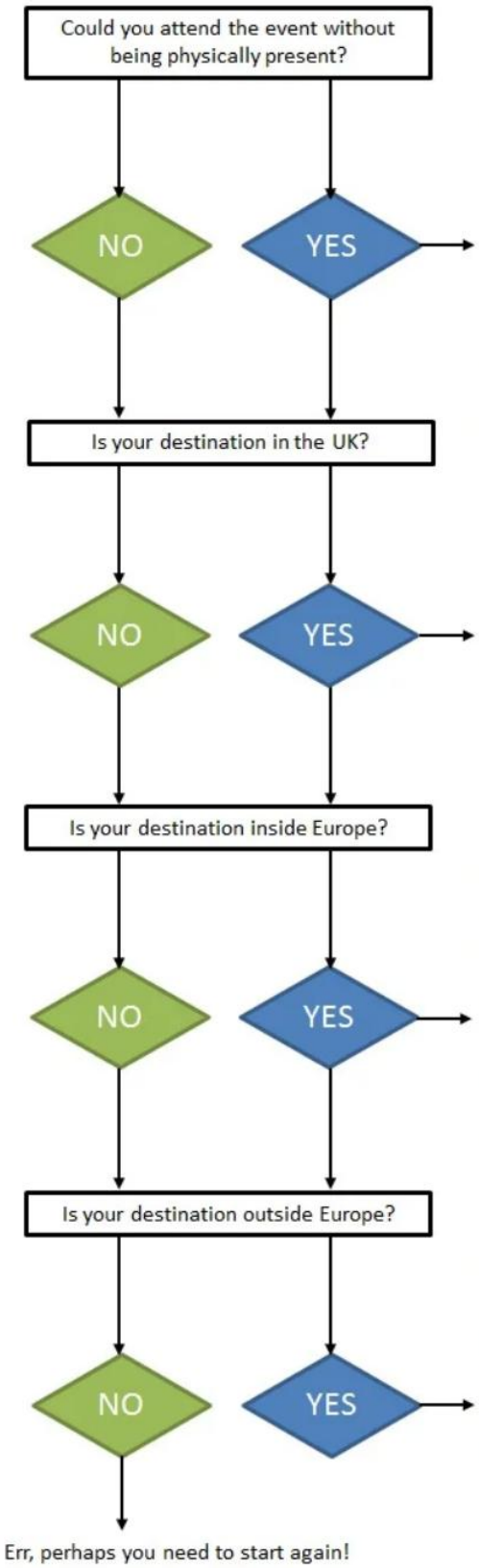
No consortium members are expected to travel if doing so would cause distress, harm or complications to / arising from personal circumstances.

Traveller safety is a collaborative effort. To ensure *GBC* can deliver an effective Duty of Care, all consortium members should:

- Use approved channels for booking travel
- Stay informed: review destination risk and maintain active communication channels

Report incidents: immediately notify your line manager (and *GBC* secondly) of any safety concerns or incidents encountered during your trip.

APPENDIX 2: *Tyndall Centre Travel Strategy Decision Tree*



Points to consider:

Why are you attending the event? Are there other methods of obtaining the information which don't necessitate travelling? Could you have a virtual presence at the meeting/workshops/conference instead? Have you considered using Researchgate or Mendeley to work online?

Do you need any support from Tyndall or your University to participate in a different format? Do any of the attendees in your field have established links with Tyndall that could be used for an introduction outside the event? Are you able to download podcasts of the event, or follow live tweets? Have you got access to software that will allow you to take part in teleconferences?

You may be surprised how little time and money is saved by flying - you should consider how long the journey will take, including time spent at the airport waiting for the flight as well as any difference in cost before choosing your mode of travel.

For many destinations within Europe, the train is a feasible alternative to flying. There are online resources, such as www.seat61.com and www.loco2.org that will help you to calculate the length of your journey by train and plane. Consider any difference in price and whether any colleagues have made a similar trip who can offer advice.

It is unlikely that you have any other option but to fly, however could you combine this trip with other work-related activities - could you spend time working at another institution to maximise the benefit of this trip? Consider whether the trip is worth the impact on the climate and time out of the office.

APPENDIX 3: *Rating associated with different types of travel*

By reflecting on career stage, meeting aims & objectives and which form of travel is most appropriate, this table helps to justify GBCs blended approach to networking and events. Example activities are provided for different career stages to reflect the evolving nature and importance of in-person collaboration.

Rating	Justification	Example Activites
1	Well justified emissions, for example: Conduct field work. Travel informs directly policy on climate change and global sustainability (e.g. IPCC). Travelling to meet contractual engagement (e.g. from research grants), with no alternative options available.	*Stage 1*: Present and promote own research. Establish contacts. Attend and present work at project meetings.
2	Useful but with potential for using alternative options.	*Stage 1*: Attend a workshop not directly related to own research. *Stage 2*: Travel to present own work and promote own research. *Stage 3*: Travel to explore new topics. Could lead to important research or funding for own or group/institute research. Travel acts to move projects or significant collaborations forward.
3	Less well justified with much potential for using alternative options. Good value mainly for low-emissions travel.	*Stage 3*: Travel to present own work and promote own research. Travel to establish or maintain own collaborations. Invited guest lectures.
4	Poorly justified emissions. Good value only for low-emissions travel. Travel to keep up to date or renew connections with colleagues. No results presented. Little pre-travel arrangements made to optimize the usefulness of the meeting.	All *Stages*

We refer to research stages as follows: Stage 1: Early Stage Researchers (for example up to 2 years after PhD); Stage 2: Intermediate Stage Researchers (for example, up to about 10 years after PhD); Stage 3: Established Researchers (for example, in permanent positions with over 10 years since PhD).