

Travel Policy



Responsibility for policy: Chief Operating Officer

Approving authority: Vice-Chancellor

Last reviewed: April 2024

Next review date: April 2029

Application

1. This policy applies to all staff of the University of Waikato and members of the University of Waikato Council.

Scope

2. This policy does not apply to travel undertaken as part of research and study leave, which is subject to the [Research and Study Leave Policy](#).

Purpose

3. The purpose of this policy is to:
 - a. set out the principles to which staff must adhere when planning and arranging travel on University business
 - b. seek to minimise the environmental impact of travel on University business
 - c. outline the processes to be followed with respect to arranging and approving travel and approving associated expenses
 - d. ensure sound financial management and accountability associated with University expenditure on travel, and
 - e. ensure that the University fulfils its obligations with respect to duty of care for staff undertaking travel on University business.

Related documents

4. The following documents set out further information relevant to this policy:
 - [Financial Authority Policy](#)
 - [Financial Ethics Policy](#)
 - [Office of the Controller and Auditor General: Controlling Sensitive Expenditure: Guidelines for Public Entities](#)
 - [PCard Policy](#)
 - [Procurement Policy](#)
 - [Purchasing and Sensitive Expenditure Policy](#)
 - [Research and Study Leave Policy](#)
 - [Safety and Wellness Policy](#)
 - [Staff Code of Conduct](#)
 - [Sustainability Plan](#)
 - [Vehicle Use Policy](#)

Definitions

5. In this policy:

‘avoid non-essential travel’ area means a part of the world where there are sustained safety and security concerns that pose a high risk to the safety of travellers according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT); MFAT

advises against non-essential travel to 'avoid non-essential travel' areas through its [travel advisories](#)

'best fare of the day' means the most cost-effective fare identified by the University's travel management company (TMC) at the time of booking

'do not travel' area means a part of the world where there is conflict, warfare or ongoing violent civil unrest or where there is a health threat that poses an extreme risk to the safety of travellers according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT); MFAT advises against all travel to 'do not travel' areas through its [travel advisories](#)

domestic travel means travel in New Zealand

emergency travel arrangements means travel and associated arrangements (including arrangements required as a result of a natural disaster) to ensure the personal safety of the staff member or as a result of the staff member experiencing serious personal tragedy (including serious injury or death of a close family member)

long-haul international travel means travel to international locations outside Australia and the Pacific

net zero carbon means human-caused greenhouse gas emissions balanced by human-driven greenhouse removals over a specified period; net zero greenhouse gas emissions must be achieved at the global level to stabilise temperature increase and limit warming to 1.5 ° C and requires steep reduction trajectories

personal expense means an expense that is not directly relevant to the University business being undertaken and unless otherwise specifically provided for in this policy includes, but is not limited to, an expense associated with personal grooming (e.g. hairdressing, spa treatments), dry-cleaning, clothing (including hire), entertainment and recreation (including in-room movies and video rentals), luggage and briefcases, excess baggage charges for personal items, parking and traffic fines, towing fees, tipping within New Zealand, passports, postage of personal mail, any domestic matters as a consequence of being away on University business (e.g. child-care, lawn care, care of pets), or any private travel undertaken in conjunction with University business

preferred supplier means a supplier that has been awarded 'preferred supplier' status for the supply of specified goods, services and/or works following a competitive tender process which has resulted in a procurement contract; unless in an emergency situation or where an exemption has been approved, where preferred suppliers for the provision of specific goods, services and/or works have been determined those suppliers must be used to purchase those goods, services and/or works

short-haul international travel means travel to Australia and the Pacific

travel management company (TMC) means the University's travel management company which has been awarded the status of preferred supplier for travel and accommodation services following a competitive tender process

University business means any activity that a traveller is expected to undertake during the course of their work.

Circumstances where travel expenses may be incurred

6. Staff may incur travel expenses on behalf of the University only under the following circumstances:
 - a. where they have been authorised by their line manager to conduct business on behalf of the University or to attend an event as a representative of the University
 - b. where the travel is undertaken as an integral part of a research project, regardless of whether the project is funded by the University or through an external funding source, or
 - c. where they have been authorised by their line manager to attend training, professional development or a conference.

Principles

7. The University understands the environmental impacts of travel and promotes virtual collaboration and the use of low carbon methods of transport where possible.
8. The University aims to minimise carbon emissions generated through travel and is committed to a net zero carbon trajectory.
9. All travel on University business must be essential and beneficial to the functions and strategic objectives of the University.
10. University expenditure on travel is subject to the standards of probity and financial prudence that are expected of any New Zealand public entity.
11. University expenditure on travel and associated activities must be able to withstand Parliamentary and public scrutiny.
12. The Office of the Controller and Auditor General sets out [guidelines for controlling sensitive expenditure for public entities](#); the University recognises that expenditure related to travel and accommodation is a particular focus of those guidelines and expects them to be followed.
13. Staff must ensure that expenditure incurred while travelling on University business is conservative, reasonable and in accordance with this policy.

Travel management company (TMC)

14. The University has a preferred supplier arrangement with a TMC which assists the University to fulfil its duty of care in relation to travel.
15. Subject to clause 47 of this policy, staff must not book travel on University business (including airfares, accommodation, shuttles and rental vehicles) other than through the TMC, whether the travel is domestic or international, for themselves or for visitors to the University, and regardless of the source of the funding for the travel unless they have obtained the explicit prior approval of the Chief Operating Officer or the Vice-Chancellor to do so. The booking method for all domestic and short-haul travel bookings is through the TMC's online tool and the preferred booking method for long-haul international is via the TMC consultants.

Approval of travel

16. Staff who wish to travel internationally on University business must develop a proposal for consideration by their line manager which sets out the intended outcomes of the travel and a reasonable estimation of the likely costs prior to seeking pre-trip approval through the TMC's online tool.

17. A proposal by a staff member to travel on University business is subject to approval by the staff member's line manager; before approving such a proposal, the line manager must be satisfied that
 - a. the travel is appropriate and justifiable
 - b. the associated costs to the University are appropriate
 - c. the associated costs can be met within the relevant budget, and
 - d. the environmental impact of the travel has been considered.
18. Travel to areas identified by the TMC or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade as [‘do not travel’](#) or [‘avoid non-essential travel’](#) areas requires the specific prior approval of the Vice-Chancellor in accordance with clause 52 of this policy.
19. Under no circumstances may staff members approve their own travel and associated expenditure.
20. Under no circumstances may staff members authorise the travel and associated expenditure of staff who are more senior than them in line management terms.
21. As a condition of all international travel, staff must:
 - a. obtain appropriate travel insurance from the University’s travel insurance provider, [Chubb](#), in accordance with clauses 85 to 91 of this policy, and
 - b. download and register the [Healix Travel Oracle](#) app; the app provides targeted warning messages and alerts to travellers based on their travel location and the ability to raise an alert for emergency assistance where necessary.
22. The approval of travel may be subject to audit.

Travel by Council members on University business

23. All travel on University business and associated expenditure by Council members must comply with this policy.
24. Travel on Council business by the Chancellor and other members of Council (except the Vice-Chancellor) is subject to the approval of the Council Secretary.

Travel by the Vice-Chancellor on University business

25. Long-haul international travel on University business by the Vice-Chancellor, including the airfare class of travel, is subject to prior approval by the Chancellor.
26. Domestic and short-haul international travel by the Vice-Chancellor on University business is not subject to prior approval by the Chancellor, but must be reported by the Vice-Chancellor to the Chancellor and the Health & Safety, Risk and Assurance Committee on a six-monthly basis.

Booking travel

27. Staff may book travel only where prior approval has been granted under clause 17 and, where relevant, clause 18 of this policy.
28. Staff booking flights must book the 'best fare of the day' in an appropriate airfare class of travel (as set out in clauses 34 to 41 of this policy) as highlighted in the TMC’s online tool or as advised by the TMC consultants.
29. Staff who wish to book flights other than the 'best fare of the day' in an appropriate airfare class of travel (as set out in clauses 34 to 41 of this policy) must provide a justification for doing so to the relevant line manager.
30. Subject to clause 47 of this policy, staff who wish to book domestic accommodation, including with third party providers, must do so from the list of

available suppliers provided by the TMC through their online tool or as provided by the TMC consultants.

31. Subject to clause 47 of this policy, staff who wish to book international accommodation, including with third party providers, must do so through the TMC [consultants](#).
32. Staff who are required to travel on University business commencing and ending at the University of Waikato must use a University pool vehicle whenever one is available, rather than using a rental or private vehicle; University pool vehicle booking forms are available through the [University Fleet Management website](#). Further information may be obtained by emailing: fleet@waikato.ac.nz. Staff who wish to book domestic rental vehicles must do so through the TMC's online tool or consultants, and in accordance with the University's [Vehicle Use Policy](#).
33. Staff who wish to book rental vehicles internationally must do so through the TMC consultants; use of an international rental vehicle must be specifically authorised in advance by the relevant line manager.
34. Staff who wish to book domestic or international rental vehicles other than an economy or compact model must provide a justification for doing so to the relevant line manager.

Airfare class of travel

35. Economy class (or equivalent) is the standard for all staff travelling on University business.
36. Where a standard economy class booking (or equivalent) has been made through the TMC, staff are not permitted to accept any seating or service upgrades if they attract an additional cost to the University.
37. Staff may upgrade their class of travel at their own personal cost through the TMC.
38. Applications for travel in premium economy class (or equivalent) are subject to the prior written approval of the Vice-Chancellor (for direct reports) or the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor or equivalent, and will normally only be considered for long-haul international flights.
39. Subject to clause 40 of this policy, applications for travel in business-class (or equivalent) are subject to the prior written approval of the Vice-Chancellor on the recommendation of the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor or equivalent.
40. Subject to clause 41 of this policy, under no circumstances will the University meet the costs of first-class travel (or equivalent).
41. Business-class or first-class travel (or equivalent) will be approved where evidence is provided that the cost of travel is being covered by an external party and that party has stipulated that business-class or first-class (or equivalent) is permitted.
42. Staff may redeem rewards (e.g. airpoints) to upgrade their class of travel provided no additional cost is incurred by the University.

Downgrading

43. Staff are not permitted to downgrade their class of airfare, accommodation or rental vehicle in order to receive a personal benefit; such action may be viewed and treated as fraud.

Method of payment

44. The payment of travel costs must be managed through the TMC wherever possible.

45. For payment of travel costs other than airfares (e.g. accommodation, rental vehicles, shuttles, meals) incurred on behalf of the University while undertaking domestic or short haul travel, staff must use one of the following authorised purchasing systems, in the following priority order:
 - a. TMC charge back
 - b. PCard
 - c. purchase orders
 - d. staff claims.
46. For payment of travel costs other than airfares (e.g. accommodation, rental vehicles, shuttles, meals) incurred on behalf of the University while undertaking long haul travel, staff must use one of the following authorised purchasing systems, in the following priority order:
 - a. PCard
 - b. purchase orders
 - c. staff claims.
47. Staff may use staff claims only for expenses where it has not been possible to charge them back to the TMC or to their PCard.

Conference accommodation

48. Staff planning to attend a conference must check with the TMC to ensure that the accommodation available through the conference organiser is a cost-effective option.
49. Provided it has been confirmed by the TMC as a cost-effective option, staff attending a conference may arrange accommodation through the conference organiser rather than through the TMC.

Staying privately while on University business

50. Provided that the relevant line manager has agreed, a staff member may choose to stay privately while travelling on University business.
51. Unless special contractual provisions apply, expense claims in respect of staff staying privately while travelling on University business will be considered by the staff member's line manager on an actual and reasonable basis.

Travel warnings and advice

52. Staff planning to travel on University business should refer to the Government's official travel advisories published by the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade](#).
53. Through its TMC, insurers and other information sources the University is also made aware of potential and confirmed [‘do not travel’ or ‘avoid non-essential travel’](#) areas around the world.
54. Travel to areas identified by the TMC or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade as [‘do not travel’ or ‘avoid non-essential travel’](#) areas requires the specific prior approval of the Vice-Chancellor via pre-trip approval through the TMC's online tool.
55. It is recommended that staff travelling to [‘do not travel’ or ‘avoid non-essential travel’](#) areas [register](#) their travel with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade through its [SafeTravel](#) website.
56. The University has a preferred supplier agreement with [Chubb](#), a global medical and security assistance company, who will provide staff with [comprehensive, up-to-date and relevant safety information related to their travel](#); the [Healix Travel Oracle](#)

app and the TMC app and website also provide targeted warning messages and alerts to travellers based on their travel location.

57. At the time of booking travel with the TMC, staff will receive relevant documentation and advice about the services of [Chubb and the Healix Travel Oracle app](#).

Change of travel arrangements

58. If staff wish to change a travel arrangement that has already been booked, even if there is no additional cost to the University in doing so, they must advise their line manager.
59. If staff wish to change a travel arrangement that has already been booked and the change will create a consequential cost to the University, they must obtain prior approval from their line manager.
60. Before approving a request to change a travel arrangement under clause 57 of this policy, the line manager must take account of the consequential costs to the University.
61. Staff making changes to travel previously booked through the TMC must also make the changes through the TMC.
62. Staff must personally meet the costs of any changes to arrangements that have not been approved by the relevant line manager under clause 57 of this policy.

Emergency travel arrangements and assistance

63. A staff member who needs to make emergency travel arrangements while travelling on University business must do so through the TMC utilising the advice and guidance of [Chubb](#) (see clause 55 of this policy).
64. Subject to approval by the relevant line manager, the University will meet any costs under clause 61 of this policy; otherwise they must be met personally by the staff member.
65. General emergency assistance is available through the [Healix Travel Oracle](#) app.

PCards

66. The University requires all staff travelling on University business to have a [PCard](#), unless approved otherwise by the Chief Financial Officer on the recommendation of the relevant Head of School, Director or equivalent.

Per diem payments

67. A staff member wishing to apply in advance for a per diem payment must make a case in writing for consideration by their line manager in advance of the travel.
68. A line manager may only approve a per diem payment in exceptional circumstances, such as travel to a country (typically a less developed country) where it is difficult to charge back costs to the University or obtain receipts.
69. A line manager intending to approve a per diem payment under clause 66 of this policy must consult the Chief Financial Officer for relevant advice before doing so.

Invoices/receipts for expenditure

70. Wherever possible, staff must obtain itemised invoices for expenditure in accordance with the [PCard Policy](#), or in support of a staff claim for reimbursement.

Personal expenses

71. The University will not meet any personal expenses (as defined under clause 5) incurred by a staff member travelling on University business.

Private travel in conjunction with University business

72. Staff who wish to undertake private travel in conjunction with travel on University business must seek prior written approval to do so from their line manager.

73. Any expenses incurred during private travel are treated as personal expenses.

74. Annual leave must be booked for any private travel undertaken in conjunction with business travel.

Communications while undertaking travel on University business

75. The University will meet the costs of telephone, [mobile phone](#) and internet use required for business purposes while a staff member is travelling; staff must ensure that modes of communication are as cost-effective as possible for the University.

76. The University will meet reasonable costs of communication with family for staff travelling on University business; higher than normal communication costs will be met by the University only in emergency situations.

77. Authority to approve the costs outlined in clauses 73 and 74 of this policy rests with the relevant line manager.

Provision of hospitality on University business

78. Staff who wish to provide hospitality while on University business must do so in compliance with the [Purchasing and Sensitive Expenditure Policy](#).

Airline lounge membership

79. The University will not pay for membership of airline lounges (e.g. Koru Club), except where

a. it is specified as an entitlement in the staff member's employment contract

b. it is funded under the terms of an external contract, or

c. prior approval is granted in writing by the Vice-Chancellor (for direct reports) or the relevant Head of School, Director or equivalent; approval will be granted only where the staff member is expected to undertake a considerable amount of air travel as part of their normal duties.

80. Under no circumstances will the University pay for lifetime memberships or spouses' memberships of airline lounges.

Airline, accommodation and general travel loyalty schemes

81. The University will not pay for membership of any loyalty or reward programmes.

82. Staff must not allow personal memberships of any loyalty or reward programmes to influence their business decisions.

83. Staff may retain rewards (e.g. airpoints) generated by travel on University business and redeem them for personal use.

Documentation for travel

84. Staff are responsible for ensuring that they have all relevant documentation for overseas travel, including passport, visas and re-entry permits where required,

before attempting to travel on University business; this can be managed through the TMC at the time of booking.

85. The cost of a passport is a personal expense, and will not be met by the University; however the University will meet the cost of any documentation other than a passport if it is required for a particular business trip.

Inoculations

86. The University will meet the costs of inoculations prior to travel to particular countries if they are recommended by the TMC or a registered medical practitioner.

Insurance

87. The University will not allow staff to travel internationally on University business without appropriate insurance cover.
88. Details of the University's international [travel insurance](#) scheme are available in on the University's website.
89. Travel insurance with the University's insurance provider, [Chubb](#), is automatically provided when international travel is booked through the TMC; under no circumstances are staff permitted to arrange travel insurance for travel on University business through other insurers.
90. If international travel has not been booked through the TMC, staff must email insurance@waikato.ac.nz with the details of their travel to trigger a travel insurance booking.
91. Standard insurance for international travel on University business is arranged by the University at no charge to the staff member's cost centre.
92. Where travel on University business to a high-risk destination is required (i.e. for travel to '[do not travel](#)' or '[avoid non-essential travel](#)' areas) there is no cover for cancellation or disruption of travel, or for evacuation.
93. Staff who elect to undertake private travel in conjunction with travel on University business are able to obtain cover from [Chubb](#) on the same conditions as their business travel by emailing insurance@waikato.ac.nz; personal travel insurance is charged at the University rate. Staff may also obtain [Chubb](#) travel insurance for family members travelling with them by emailing insurance@waikato.ac.nz.

Travel insurance claims and excess for lost or damaged personal belongings

94. Travel insurance claims can be lodged by email to travelclaims.nz@chubb.com or via the [Chubb Claims Centre](#); staff seeking further information regarding claims should email insurance@waikato.ac.nz.
95. The University's international travel insurance policy carries an excess (the first part of any loss or damage which the insurer will not pay in the event of a claim).
96. Where an insurance claim arises from a staff member's international travel on University business, the excess will be covered by the staff member's School or equivalent, subject to clause 96 of this policy.
97. Where a staff member is travelling internationally on University business and incurs loss or damage which is less than the excess (and therefore insurance may not be claimed), the staff member's School or equivalent will cover the cost of the replacement or repair, unless clause 96 of this policy applies.

98. If loss or damage is the result of demonstrable negligence by the staff member concerned, they will be required to pay either the excess, or the cost of replacement or repair if the amount is less than the excess.

Transport

99. Where ground transport is required as part of University business, staff should use the most cost-effective and safe form of transport available.

Gifts

100. Staff who wish to purchase items to be given as gifts as part of their travel on University business may only do so in accordance with the [Purchasing and Sensitive Expenditure Policy](#).

101. Gifts accepted by staff members while travelling on University business must be declared to the staff member's line manager on return and, where the value of a gift is estimated by the relevant line manager to exceed \$200, recorded in the University Gift Register, as set out in the [Purchasing and Sensitive Expenditure Policy](#).

Meals and alcohol

102. Any food or drink to be paid for by the University must be mid-range.

103. Alcoholic drinks charged to the University must be limited to one small bottle of beer or one glass of mid-range wine (or equivalent) per day.

104. Unless special contractual provisions apply, claims for meals and non-alcoholic drinks purchased while travelling on University business will be authorised on an actual and reasonable basis; the University will not meet the cost of any mini-bar items (with the exception of water), which are considered to be a personal expense.

Tipping

105. In overseas locations where tipping is the usual practice, a reasonable rate of expenditure on tipping will be met by the University.

106. A restaurant bill must be annotated by a staff member to show any tips at the time the bill is paid.

Friends' or family members' travel

107. The University will not pay for costs associated with friends or family members accompanying a staff member travelling on University business.

Waivers and variations

108. Only the Vice-Chancellor, or Chancellor in respect to the Vice-Chancellor's travel, has authority to waive or vary the provisions of this policy in individual cases.

109. The Chief Operating Officer must report any waivers of the provisions of this policy annually to the Health and Safety, Risk and Assurance Committee.

Responsibility for monitoring compliance

110. Line managers are responsible for ensuring that staff who report to them comply with this policy.

111. The Director of Campus Operations and Risk Management is responsible for monitoring compliance with this policy and reporting any breaches to the Chief Operating Officer and Vice-Chancellor.

112. Breaches of this policy may result in disciplinary action under the [Staff Code of Conduct](#) and/or the repayment of costs.

Note

The term 'School' in this policy includes Faculties and the term 'Head of School' includes Deans.