

# International Travel and Assignment Policy

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## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to set out how international travel and assignments undertaken by university employees will be managed by the University, ensuring that the responsibilities of management and the individual are clearly set out and that personal, commercial and reputational risks are minimised. All travel should be in keeping with environmental sustainability principles.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies where an individual who has a contract of employment with the Open University in the UK travels overseas to work on the University's behalf. This may be a short-term visit, or a longer term stay. This does not include anyone normally resident outside the UK. There are separate arrangements governing the engagement of individuals who are normally resident overseas. This policy excludes individuals not in receipt of a contract of employment with the University, for example those working under a self-employed consultancy contract, except for the risk assessment (see section 11 of the International Travel and Assignment Procedures).

Please note that this policy applies to university employees and workers travelling on University business who are engaged on a contract where the University is deducting/paying tax and national insurance contributions. This includes all staff, Associate Lecturers, Residential School Staff, external supervisors of Post Graduate courses, Invigilators, External Examiners, members of Open University validation panels and committees, Visiting Academics, Emeritus Professors and Research Students (this list is not exhaustive). Please refer to the business travel insurance information on the Finance and Business Services Intranet for further details.

This policy aims to ensure that all employees who travel or work outside of the United Kingdom on University business:

- are treated fairly and consistently and that their health, safety and security are given full and proper consideration before, during and after a trip overseas;
- do not suffer financial detriment, including the risk of double taxation on their income.

## 3. Long term assignments

For all long-term assignments outside the UK on University business, please refer to the International Travel and Assignment Procedures (section 17).

#### 4. Duration of overseas working

The aggregate number of days worked outside the UK by an individual will not normally exceed 183 days in any UK tax year (6th April to the following 5th April). This may be exceeded exceptionally to meet operational needs provided that overseas work is organised in order to ensure both that the individual is deemed to be UK resident under the Statutory Residence Test and the days worked in any single overseas country do not exceed the maximum allowed under the double taxation convention (Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)) agreed between the UK government and the other country.

#### 5. Travel and Covid-19 restrictions

The University's duty of care to its staff and students is paramount. As Covid-19 travel restrictions have eased in line with UK Government, and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) guidance, the University has updated its guidance for business travel.

International business travel resumed from 6 September 2021. All travel arrangements must comply with the [UK Government](#) and [FCDO](#) guidelines, including those (where applicable) for social distancing, wearing masks, personal hygiene, quarantine measures, vaccinations, and Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) tests or Lateral Flow Tests (LFT). A negative LFT result must be received before a staff member can return to any University sites.

Travellers must also comply with the requirements for the destination country. Insurance cover is linked to the Government and [FCDO](#) travel advice. Therefore, insurance may not be in place if travellers do not follow UK Government guidance. Government guidance may differ throughout the UK and is subject to change. Staff in the Nations should refer to the Government guidance for their nation – [England](#), [Wales](#), [Scotland](#), [Northern Ireland](#) and [Republic of Ireland](#). Staff travelling to the Nations should check the advice from the Nations before travelling.

Travel requests must follow the Unit's processes. Travel should not be booked until Head of Unit permission has been granted. The personal circumstances of the traveller must be considered prior to any travel. Before making any travel requests, alternative arrangements for not travelling must be discussed.

Travel **must** be booked through **Click Travel** via a departmental travel booker. It is important that travel is organised through Click Travel to ensure that the appropriate insurance is in place, and in the event that travellers are stranded, they can then provide local support and, where possible, repatriation. It is the responsibility of the traveller to ensure their current emergency contact details are correct and that these are provided to the departmental travel booker. Staff are reminded that travel should **not** be booked through personal means, for example with a personal debit or credit card, and any such booking may not be reimbursed.

#### 6. Approval for travel

All travel requests on University business must follow the Unit's processes. Travel should not be booked until Head of Unit permission has been granted. Please refer to section 5: Travel and Covid-19 restrictions above. This is in addition to the standard documentation required under normal travel conditions (see section 5 of the International Travel and Assignment Procedures).

Travel for a Head of Unit is to be approved by a member of the Vice Chancellor's Executive (VCE). An approver for VCE members is the University Secretary or the Deputy Vice Chancellor, for the Deputy Vice Chancellor it is the Vice Chancellor and for the Vice Chancellor, it is the Pro-Chancellor.

Signed forms should be kept for audit purposes. Failure to gain correct advance approval is not permitted and would be a breach of this policy, which may result in disciplinary action.

## **7. Responsibilities**

Detailed guidance in relation to the responsibilities of Heads of Unit, sponsors\* and employees in the approval process, and subsequent recording and monitoring of employees' movements is provided in the International Travel and Assignment Procedures.

\* A sponsor in this context is an individual who organises and is committed to the development of a project – this could be a line manager, a project lead or someone assigned to be responsible for or has the authority to carry out that particular project, or in the case of the International Development Office (IDO), this would be the Director of IDO or their nominee.

## **8. Travel booking**

All travel, including flights, ferries, trains, hotels and hire cars should be booked as far in advance as possible via Click Travel, the University's travel management company.

Other booking methods should only be used in exceptional circumstances, and only with the prior approval of the Head of Unit (please see International Travel and Assignment Procedures). Where the person requesting approval for exceptional circumstances is the Head of Unit, this is approved by a member of the Vice Chancellor's Executive (VCE). An approver for VCE members is the University Secretary or the Deputy Vice Chancellor, for the Deputy Vice Chancellor it is the Vice Chancellor and for the Vice Chancellor, it is the Pro-Chancellor.

The University has implemented a comprehensive travel assistance programme provided by Crisis24 to support employees travelling abroad on behalf of the University. In the exceptional circumstances where travel has not been booked via Click Travel, it is essential that the staff member's travel details are manually entered onto Crisis24's GlobalRiskManager Platform so that employees can benefit from the assistance programme (for example should the employee need medical assistance while overseas) and so that the University fulfils its duty of care to staff.

## **9. International Travel and Assignment Procedures**

To protect staff whilst they are abroad on behalf of the University, the International Travel and Assignment Procedures provide more detailed information on approvals and bookings, sponsor support, health and responsibilities, risk assessments, insurance, immigration controls and travel, accompaniment and benefits.

## **10. Equality, diversity and inclusion**

Policies are inclusive of all Open University staff, regardless of age, care experience, caring status or dependency, civil status, disability, family status, gender, gender expression, gender identity, gender reassignment, marital status, marriage and civil partnership, membership of the Traveller community, political opinion, pregnancy and maternity, race,

religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic background or trades union membership status.

## 11. Useful references

- International Travel and Assignment Contact Numbers
- International Travel and Assignment Policy
- International Travel and Assignment Approval Form
- Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO): [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice)
- [GlobalRiskManager Platform](#)
- Finance and Business Services Intranet: [Insurance](#) - business-travel-insurance
- Tax treaties between the UK and other countries: [www.hmrc.gov.uk](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk)
- Travel and Subsistence Policy
- Travel Health Operational Standard
- Travel Booking Process