Travel and Expenses Policy

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Operational owner	Director of Finance
Primary contact	Director of Finance
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Related document	Travel and Expenses Procedure and Rates Schedule

1. Purpose

This Policy sets the principles and mandatory requirements for business travel, accommodation, subsistence, hospitality and expense reimbursement undertaken on behalf of Forth Valley College.

The Policy is intended to ensure that travel and expenses are necessary, reasonable, properly authorised, supported by evidence, value for money, sustainable and compliant with tax, insurance, health and safety and data protection requirements.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to employees of Forth Valley College, including permanent, fixed term, temporary and seconded staff, and to members of the Board of Management when undertaking authorised College business.

Contractors, consultants and agency workers may only claim travel or expenses where this is expressly allowed within their contract or written engagement terms.

This Policy applies to, but is not limited to, expenses claimed through the iTrent HR system, College credit cards provided for business expenses, and the Diversity Travel booking system. If further clarification is required, guidance should be sought from the Finance team or relevant SMT members before a booking is made or expenses are incurred.

Students are covered by this Policy where travel is organised, authorised or funded by the College. Student reimbursement or support arrangements may be managed through separate student funding, trip or departmental arrangements, but the risk management principles in this Policy still apply.

Travel between campuses is detailed in the **campus travel guide** which is found on the HR SharePoint page.

3. Policy principles

- Travel should only take place where there is a clear business need and where the purpose cannot reasonably be achieved by online meetings, telephone or another lower cost method.
- The default approach is economy or standard class travel, standard hotel accommodation and receipted reimbursement up to approved limits.
- Journeys should be planned taking cognisance of the Sustainable Travel Hierarchy in the FVC Strategic Travel Plan, which supports the College's Net Zero Plan. Public transport, College electric vehicles and lower carbon travel options should be considered before use of a private car, where this is practical and safe.
- No individual should personally gain from College funded travel, hospitality, rewards, loyalty schemes or procurement arrangements beyond minor incidental benefits that do not increase the cost to the College.
- No member of staff should be required to carry unreasonable personal financial risks to undertake authorised College business.
- All claims must be honest, accurate, timely, supported by itemised receipts or approved evidence and authorised by an appropriate manager.
- Exceptions may be approved only where there is clear business, safety, equality, accessibility, welfare or value for money reasons.

4. Definitions

Term	Meaning
Business travel	Travel undertaken wholly, necessarily and exclusively for authorised College business.
Normal place of work	The employee's usual contractual FVC campus or base, unless a different arrangement has been formally agreed.
Domestic travel	Travel within the United Kingdom.
International travel	Travel outside the United Kingdom.
Extended travel	Travel that requires an overnight stay away from home.
Departmental trip	A College authorised trip, visit or excursion involving staff and students.
Subsistence	Reasonable meal and accommodation costs necessarily incurred while working away from home or the normal place of work.
Incidental overnight expenses	Personal incidental costs during overnight business travel, such as laundry, newspapers or private telephone calls, covered only through the approved overnight allowance.
Hospitality	Reasonable food, drink or related costs provided to external customers, partners or stakeholders for a clear College business purpose.
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

5. Responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
All staff and travellers	Consider whether travel is necessary, follow this Policy and the Procedure, seek approval before committing expenditure, keep receipts, submit claims promptly and disclose any exception or potential conflict of interest.
Line managers and budget holders	Confirm business need, value for money, budget availability, health and safety requirements and policy compliance before approving travel or expenses.
Directors and Heads of Department	Approve higher risk, overnight, international or exceptional travel within their area, ensuring appropriate documentation and risk assessments are completed.
Depute Principal and Chief Operating Officer	Approve international or extended travel where required and oversee institutional compliance with this Policy.
Director of Finance	Maintain the Procedure and Rates Schedule, provide guidance, monitor compliance, advise on tax and payment issues and authorise late or exceptional claims where appropriate.
Human Resources	Provide guidance on reasonable adjustments, welfare issues, occupational health referral and TOIL recording arrangements.

Head of Estates	Advice on travel risk assessments, Driving for Work requirements and risk controls for departmental trips and international travel.
Members of Board of Management	Ensure any Board related claims are necessary, reasonable and submitted through the agreed governance approval route.

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, the College is required to ensure that all work-related travel is safe, planned and risk assessed in advance of travel commencing and is approved by the relevant line manager. FVC has a duty of care for all staff whilst travelling overnight or overseas on College business, and reasonable controls must be in place to minimise risk. The individual employee also has a responsibility to adhere to College procedures regarding overseas travel and should take reasonable steps to avoid potential risks.

Travel security advice and other relevant information can be found for many countries and cities, by accessing the FCDO website. The College also has access to Travel Apps from our travel company, Diversity Travel and from our insurers, Aviva. These are available for all staff travelling out with the UK.

6. Normal place of work and hybrid working

An employee's normal place of work is deemed to be their usual base FVC campus as stated in their contract of employment. Travel between home and the base campus is ordinary commuting and is not an allowable business expense.

If you have a hybrid working arrangement, you will agree with your line manager which days you work on campus and which days you work from home. If you are asked to come into campus on a day you would normally work from home, this remains ordinary commuting and costs cannot not be claimed.

Where an employee leaves directly from home to attend an external business meeting or employer visit, you can only claim mileage if the journey is longer than your normal commute to campus, and only the additional mileage or cost beyond the normal home to campus journey may be claimed.

7. Authorisation and approval

- Travel and accommodation should be authorised before booking.
- Expenses should be approved by the employee's line manager or another authorised budget holder who has sufficient knowledge of the business purpose.
- An individual must not approve their own expense claim.
- Claims by Board members must be approved through the agreed Board governance route as per the Financial Regulations.
- Any travel or expense that falls outside this Policy must be declared as an exception and approved in line with the Procedure before payment is made.

8. Travel classes and accommodation

Rail travel should be standard class by default. First class rail may only be used where it is cheaper than standard class at the time of booking, required as a reasonable adjustment, or approved in advance for a one way journey normally exceeding four hours where productive working is expected and value for money can be demonstrated.

Air travel should be economy class by default. Premium Economy, additional leg room or equivalent may be approved for international flights where the total flight time, including onward connections but excluding stopover time, exceeds seven hours, or where required as a reasonable adjustment.

Accommodation should be a standard room or equivalent and should normally be booked within the limits set out in the Rates Schedule. Upgrades, premium rooms and personal additions are the responsibility of the individual unless approved in advance for a business, safety or accessibility reason.

9. Private car use, mileage and driving

Private car use may be approved where public transport, online participation or College vehicles are not practical, safe, time efficient or cost effective.

Employees using a private vehicle for College business are responsible for ensuring that they hold a valid driving licence, that the vehicle is roadworthy, taxed, MOT compliant where applicable and insured for business use. The College may request evidence of this to ensure compliance with the Driving for Work policy.

Mileage rates will follow the HMRC approved mileage rates in force at the date of travel, unless the College approves a lower internal rate. Passenger supplements may only be claimed for Forth Valley College passengers carried on the same authorised business journey.

10. Subsistence, hospitality and alcohol

The College will reimburse reasonable, necessary and receipted subsistence costs up to the limits in the Rates Schedule. The limits are internal maximum caps, not entitlement to spend.

Alcohol will not be reimbursed as part of subsistence and should not be claimed by staff as a personal meal expense.

External hospitality may be claimed only where there is a clear business purpose, external attendees are named, and the cost is reasonable. Alcohol for external hospitality is permitted only where modest, itemised, not funded from restricted funds that prohibit it, and approved in advance where the threshold in the Procedure is exceeded. Alcohol must not be claimed for internal staff events or student related activity.

11. Extended, international and higher risk travel

All extended, international and higher risk travel must be planned, authorised and risk assessed before travel is booked or undertaken. The level of risk assessment must be proportionate to the destination, duration, activity, traveller profile and any student involvement.

International travel must include a review of current Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office travel advice, entry requirements, local laws, health risks and insurance cover. Travel must not proceed where the risk is unacceptable or where insurance requirements have not been met.

The VPN access to the College is by default restricted to UK and Ireland IP addresses. To comply with cyber security protocols access from outside the UK and Ireland must be agreed and risk assessed in advance with the IT department.

A medical declaration should be required for international travel, student trips involving overnight or higher risk activity, and any trip where the risk assessment identifies a health or welfare need. It should not be required for routine low risk UK overnight travel unless there is a specific reason.

12. Insurance, emergency arrangements and health cover

FVC has liability insurance to cover all its employees, students and activities, provided the activity is authorised and within FVC policies and procedures. College insurance cover is subject to the terms, conditions, exclusions and notification requirements of the relevant insurance policy. Travellers must not

assume that all activities, destinations, personal travel or medical circumstances are automatically covered.

Compliance with this policy will ensure that the College insurance is valid. Please contact the Finance Manager for a copy of the insurance policy prior to any international travel.

For travel in Europe, staff should hold a valid EHIC or GHIC where eligible. This is not a substitute for travel or medical insurance and does not remove the requirement to follow College insurance and risk assessment processes.

For international, extended or higher risk trips, managers must ensure there are emergency contact arrangements and appropriate means to meet urgent authorised costs without placing an unreasonable financial burden on the individual traveller. It is also important, for business continuity and travel security reasons, that line managers are always aware of travel locations and meeting venues.

13. Equal Opportunities

The College recognises that individuals may have specific additional needs, and these will be taken account of whenever possible. Any identified need in relation to business travel should be discussed with an employee's line manager and/or HR Business Manager.

14. Data protection and confidentiality

Travel arrangements may require personal data such as passport details, date of birth, nationality, emergency contact details and, where necessary, health information. The College will process such information in accordance with UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and College information governance requirements.

Only the minimum information necessary should be collected, shared only with those who need it for the authorised travel purpose, stored securely, retained only for as long as required and then destroyed securely. Medical and other special categories of information must be handled confidentially and with restricted access.

15. Time Off in Lieu and Overtime

Travel time outside normal working hours may qualify for Time Off in Lieu only where it meets the criteria in the Procedure and is agreed in advance with the line manager. TOIL must be recorded using the agreed departmental record and should normally be taken within three months unless a different arrangement is approved.

Overtime worked during a trip must be approved and claimed in line with the College working practice agreements and HR guidance.

16. Compliance, audit and recovery

- The Finance team and HR payroll team will carry out sample checks of travel bookings, claims, receipts, authorisations and exceptions.
- Non-compliance may be reported to the relevant Leadership Management Team member, the Depute Principal and Chief Operating Officer and, where appropriate, Audit Committee or internal audit.
- False, misleading or unsupported claims may result in repayment, withdrawal of claiming privileges and disciplinary action taken in line with the College disciplinary policy and procedure.
- The College reserves the right to recover overpayments, duplicate payments or non-compliant payments through future expense claims or salary deduction, subject to normal payroll requirements.

17. Related documents

- Travel and Expenses Procedure and Rates Schedule - Travel and Expense Procedure and Rates Schedule 2026.pdf
- Financial Regulations – Finance - Forth Valley College Financial Regulations FINAL 2026.pdf - All Documents
- Strategic Travel Plan – Strategic-Travel-Plan
- Driving for Work Policy - Forth Valley College Driving for Work Policy.docx
- Health and Safety risk assessment procedure - Risk Assessment Procedure.doc
- Working Practice Agreements - College Information - College Documentation - HR

18. External reference points

This Policy has been drafted to align with the following external reference points, as applicable:

- HMRC approved mileage rates
- HMRC incidental overnight expenses
- NHS GHIC and EHIC guidance
- FCDO foreign travel advice
- UK data protection guidance