## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Impact Assessment

**Title of Policy, Procedure, or Function:**

Guiding Principles of Sustainable Business Travel

**School/Directorate:**

Estates & Facilities/Senior Vice-Principal’s Office

**Author/Position:**

Heather Crabb, Senior Governance & Executive Support Officer

**Date created:**

27 June 2022

**1. Aims and purpose of Policy, Procedure, or Function:**

Business travel (both domestic and international) currently underpins a cross-section of University activities, including education, research and student recruitment. However, the environmental impact of travel, particularly in relation to carbon emissions, has required us to consider the travel associated with all aspects of University activity, including these essential elements of our core business. Therefore, the Sustainable Development Committee established a Sustainable Business Travel Working Group to develop recommendations on the institutional approach to business travel in future.

The Group submitted its report outlining its findings and recommendations to the Sustainable Development Committee on 25 May 2022. The Group also proposed a suite of Guiding Principles of Sustainable Business Travel (i) to inform individual actions and decisions regarding business travel, and (ii) to encourage buy-in from the University community in relation to enhancing the future sustainability of business travel. To support individuals and line managers in reaching decisions relating to business travel that support business critical activity and the University’s commitment to achieving net zero carbon emissions, the Group also encouraged the widespread adoption of the principles of a Travel Hierarchy.

The Senior Management Team endorsed the Group’s findings, recommendations and proposals on 9 June 2022 and agreed that they should be implemented upon the conclusion of the internal governance process. As part of this process the report, Guiding Principles and Travel Hierarchy were considered by the University Management Group and PNCC. They were highlighted to Finance & Resourcing Committee (as part of the Expenses & Benefits Policy update) and the Chair of the Working Group discussed the key elements with Senate at the November meeting ahead of them being formally launched to the wider University community.

**2. Stakeholders:**

* Members of staff who travel on University business
* Postgraduate Research students who travel on University business
* Members of Sustainable Development Committee (policy monitoring/evaluation responsibilities)
* University’s Travel Provider
* Individuals from external organisations undertaking work for the University (to enable them to reflect on the validity and proposed mode(s) of their travel to Aberdeen.

**3. Additional Consultation/Involvement**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Organisation/person consulted or involved** | **Date, method, and by whom** | **Location of consultation records** |
| Sustainable Business Travel Working Group | Held 7 meetings between September 2021 and March 2022. | Governance & Executive Support Team |
| Sustainable Development Committee | Received regular updates at each meeting from SBTWG Chair who also presented the final report. | Governance & Executive Support Team |
| All staff and PGR students | Survey (December 2021) | Governance & Executive Support Team /Estates & Facilities |
| Opportunity to contribute ideas and opinions on sustainable travel via a dedicated email address (December 2021) | Governance & Executive Support Team |
| Focus Group participants | December 2021 | Governance & Executive Support Team /Estates & Facilities |
| UMG | 29 June 2022 | Governance & Executive Support Team |
| PNCC | 25 August 2022 | HR Office |
| Finance & Resourcing Committee (included in Expenses & Benefits Policy revision) | 15 September 2022 | Governance & Executive Support Team |
| Senate | 2 November 2022 | Governance & Executive Support Team |

a) **Brief summary of results of consultation indicating how this has affected the Policy, Procedure, or Function**

The Group met on 7 occasions between September 2021 and March 2022. Regular progress updates were provided by the Chair to the scheduled meetings of the Sustainable Development Committee.

In recognising the diverse views on business travel across the University community, the Group undertook a wide-ranging consultation process to gather as many perspectives and views as possible to inform the development of its recommendations. The consultation process comprised:

* a **survey** issued to staff and Postgraduate Research (PGR) students in both Aberdeen and Qatar (which attracted 223 responses) to (i) gauge views and attitudes across the University towards the role and importance of business travel and (ii) identify what incentives or other measures could be introduced to reduce the emissions impact of that travel, without undermining core activities;

* **Focus Groups** which considered the following themes:
  + - Incentives to Travel Less or to Travel via Sustainable Modes;
    - Hybrid Conferencing;
    - Equitable Travel;
    - Tackling Internal UK Flights; and
    - Authorisation and Management of Travel.

The in-depth Focus Groups comprised four sessions of 90 minutes each and were open to all staff, with a further two allocated for the views of Early Career Researchers (ECRs) and two for PGRs. They were attended by 22 participants – 15 staff members and 7 PGRs – with a broadly equal gender balance. The aim of the Focus Groups was to explore attitudes, ideas and strategies for sustainable business travel in depth.

* + an opportunity to contribute ideas and opinions on sustainable travel via a dedicated email address.

The outputs from the consultation mechanisms (December 2021) were considered by the SBTWG and informed the development of the findings, recommendations, Guiding Principles and Travel Hierarchy which were produced between January and March 2022.

In considering the parameters of its work, the Group identified the importance of ensuring equity in the approach adopted across grade boundaries and protected characteristics, including caring responsibilities. The following recommendations make specific reference to equality, diversity & inclusion matters:

* + Recommendation 7 – “Policies to encourage sustainable business travel should be bespoke to institutional circumstances and consider the specific challenges (and potential opportunities) associated with Aberdeen’s geographical position, key business critical activities and their impact on individuals.”
  + Recommendation 8 – “It should become the norm that prior to decisions being reached on business travel, all staff and Line Managers reflect on the Guiding Principles and Travel Hierarchy to reach an informed view that takes account of the requirements to (i) conduct business-critical activity efficiently and effectively, (ii) be cognisant of specific individual circumstances in relation to travel mode (e.g. disabilities, caring responsibilities), and (iii) the need to reduce travel where it is possible to do so.”
  + Recommendation 19 – “Rail travel should be considered the norm for all journeys which would take under 6 hours, unless there are exceptions for clearly defined extenuating circumstances.”

**4. Monitoring**

**a) Detail method of monitoring of the Policy, Procedure or Function and by whom**

The Guiding Principles of Sustainable Business Travel and the Travel Hierarchy will be reviewed by the Sustainable Development Committee on an annual basis as part of its routine business.

**b) Detail how monitoring results will be utilised to develop the Policy, Procedure, or Function**

Monitoring results will be reported to the Sustainable Development Committee as part of routine reporting. The Report highlights the importance of senior leaders across the University and for the Sustainable Development Committee to regularly monitor the consultation and implementation processes required to take forward the actions arising from both the report and the Guiding Principles and to ensure that positive change is embedded and sustained. If, as part of this monitoring, any negative EDI impacts are highlighted this will be reported to the Sustainable Development Committee for action.

c) **Timescale of monitoring including proposed dates**

The Guiding Principles of Sustainable Business Travel and the Travel Hierarchy will be reviewed by the Sustainable Development Committee on an annual basis.

**5. Impact assessment**

Select what impact there will be on each group:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Characteristic | Positive Impact | No Impact | Negative Impact | Not Applicable |
| Race |  | X |  |  |
| Disability (impact may differ according to physical, cognitive, and mental health conditions and impairments): |  | X |  |  |
| British Sign Language (BSL) |  | X |  |  |
| Neurodivergent |  | X |  |  |
| Gender |  | X |  |  |
| Age |  | X |  |  |
| Sexual Orientation |  | X |  |  |
| Religion, Belief or No Belief |  | X |  |  |
| Gender Reassignment |  | X |  |  |
| Non-Binary |  | X |  |  |
| Marriage and Civil Partnership |  | X |  |  |
| Pregnancy and Maternity |  | X |  |  |
| Parents and Carers |  | X |  |  |
| Care Experienced or Estranged |  | X |  |  |
| Socio-Economic Group |  | X |  |  |

**a. For each negative impact identified above, please state your mitigating actions below with timescales.**

There are no negative impacts as the Guiding Principles represent a framework within which individuals can make informed choices about what travel is required, and the way in which it is undertaken.

**b. How does this Policy, Procedure, or Function contribute to eliminating discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and advancing equality of opportunity?**

The Guiding Principles clearly state that the University’s business travel procedures will be underpinned by a fair, transparent, inclusive and accessible process that takes account of the needs of the individual, teams and the University.

**c) How is the Policy, Procedure, or Function likely to promote good relations between people with different protected characteristics?**

The explicit commitment to fairness, transparency, inclusivity and accessibility ensure that good relations within and across the University community can be promoted in relation to sustainable business travel.

**7. Publication**

1. Provide details of arrangements to publish assessment:

The assessment will be published on the [Governance and Policy webpage](https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/working-here/governance-policy-and-guidance-13323.php#panel13403).

**8. Review Date:**

**Author (Name and Position):**   
Heather Crabb, Senior Governance & Executive Support Officer

**Authors signature:**

**Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Team member (name):**

**Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Team member signature:**

**9. Date of submission to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee:**

**Approval** Yes No