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**Institiúid Teicneolaíochta Leitir Ceánainn**  
Letterkenny Institute of Technology

# **Business Travel & Expenses Policy**

June 2018



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## Document History

### Revision History

Date of this revision: 20/09/2017	Date of next revision: 31/8/2019
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<i>Revision Number</i>	<i>Revision Date</i>	<i>Summary of Changes</i>	<i>Changes marked</i>
1	Sept 2017	Section 2.2.1 amended and 2.2.2 added re LOA forms for budget holders and non-staff members. Section 2.3.5.6 amended similarly.	
2	Sept 2017	Section 2.2.3 amended re conference fees >€1,000 in advance	
3	Sept 2017	Section 2.4.3 amended to reflect practice where Institute gets reimbursed for costs incurred.	
4	Sept 2017	Section 2.8.5 updated to include SFC as able to authorise exceptions.	
5	Sept 2017	Section 1 updated to clarify what applies to non-Employees.	
6	May 2018	Section 2.8.6 updated to reflect change in overnight to Dublin and compliance changes in line with THEA Code of Governance 2018	
7	June 2018	Minor edits to clarify changes to overnight in Dublin	

### Documentation Location/Publication

Website – Policies and Procedures	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Website – Staff Hub	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Website – Student Hub	<input type="checkbox"/>
Order:	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Approvals

This document requires the following approvals:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Date</i>
HMG	Executive Board	15/5/2018
HMG	Governing Body	17/5/2018

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This document sets out Letterkenny Institute of Technology (“LYIT”) policy on business travel and related expenses.

The policy applies to both domestic and foreign travel by permanent and contract employees, Governing Body members, and members of ad-hoc boards and committees. Governing Body members and employees must only claim travel and subsistence allowances in respect of official travel and must not claim from more than one State body for the same journey.

It does not apply to non-employees, agency, consulting or non-payroll staff, who should be referred to their employers for guidance. In the matter of official travel and subsistence, Institutes should adhere to civil service procedures as set-out in guidance issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, either communicated directly or via the Department of Education and Skills.

This policy document is designed to ensure that LYIT employees comply with these regulations and to provide guidance to employees on the principles to be adopted, which are in keeping with public sector norms.

## **2. POLICY**

### **2.1 Broad Principles**

Principles of the Institute’s travel and expenses policy include the following:

- 2.1.1 Actual and reasonable travel and related expenses incurred by LYIT employees in the conduct of the organisation’s business will be reimbursed. Expenses are not intended to be a source of emolument or profit.
- 2.1.2 Travel and related expenses of persons who have no direct connection with LYIT and have no role in the official business being conducted will not be reimbursed. Thus, for example, reimbursement of expenses for a spouse or family member is not permitted.
- 2.1.3 Travel should be undertaken only when necessary. Journeys should be co-ordinated with other activities and, wherever practicable, travel should be planned to avoid repeated long-distance trips of short duration. Where appropriate, use of video conference and other technical facilities should be considered as an alternative to physical travel.
- 2.1.4 All official travel should be by the shortest practicable routes and by the cheapest practical mode of transport. Where public transport exists, and can be used without detriment to the business requirements, it should be utilised. Return tickets, contract, season or other low cost or promotional tickets should be used wherever a saving in travelling expense is secured.

- 2.1.5 Employees are expected to exercise good judgment and financial common sense when incurring business expenses. All expenses should be incurred in the most economic way to ensure best use of taxpayers' money.

## **2.2 Leave of Absence Form**

- 2.2.1 In advance of any trip, the person undertaking the travel may be required to complete a Leave of Absence form and submit to his/her head of function or budget holder for approval. Where a Leave of Absence form is not completed and approved in advance, the Institute may withhold payment of expenses. This requirement is at the discretion of the relevant budget holder.

- 2.2.2 Budget holders and persons who are not members of Institute staff are not required to submit leave of absence forms in advance of traveling. However travel claims must still be approved for payment by the person to whom the budget holder reports prior to payment being made.

- 2.2.3 For conferences or other events where there is a conference fee, the conference host will normally accept a purchase order issued by the Institute and LYIT will make payment on receipt of an invoice from the host. Price discounts are often offered for early bookings and these should be availed of wherever possible. Where conference fees exceed €1,000 and are to be paid significantly in advance, the Institute will endeavour to ensure that a substitute attendee will be permitted where necessary.

## **2.3 Travel and Subsistence Claim Form**

- 2.3.1 A claimant should complete a Travel and Subsistence Claim Form upon returning from travel. The following details should be entered:

- Standing details:
  - Name
  - Address
  - PPS Number
  - Position (or Grade)
  - Car registration number
  - Engine cc
  
- Basic trip details:
  - Date of travel
  - Departure time and arrival time
  - Starting location and destination
  - Purpose of trip
  - Mode of conveyance
  
- Other trip details (number of kilometres, travel cost, subsistence allowance) may be entered by the claimant if readily available. Otherwise these details will be entered by Finance office staff.

- 2.3.2 In certain cases, for example when travelling abroad on educational tours, the Institute may have paid for accommodation directly, in advance. Where LYIT has paid separately, or will pay separately, this should be noted on the claim form.
- 2.3.3 Travel costs are generally chargeable to the cost centre to which the person travelling is attached. Where an alternative cost centre is to be charged (e.g. research project, Masters Programme or travel on behalf of the Development Office etc.), this should be made clear on the claim form and the claim form should be approved by the appropriate budget holder.
- 2.3.4 Any relevant receipts should also be attached to the form. Any lost or missing receipts are an exception to policy and must be fully explained when the claim is made. Employees may retain copies of receipts for their own records.

#### 2.3.5 *Approval and Payment*

- 2.3.5.1 Claim forms should be approved by the appropriate head of function and then forwarded to Finance for processing and payment.
- 2.3.5.2 Responsibility for ensuring bills are accurate and expenses meet the policy requirements (as outlined here) rests with the employee incurring the expense.
- 2.3.5.3 The approving person is responsible for determining the legitimacy and accuracy of the expense claim.
- 2.3.5.4 Finance staff are responsible for processing approved expense claims. Finance will check policy compliance on a sample of expenses each month and will report any findings of non-compliance to the approving person. Claims will be amended in line with policy where appropriate. Subsequent claims may also be adjusted to account for overpayments in prior claims.
- 2.3.5.5 Self-approval of expenses is not allowed.
- 2.3.5.6 When submitting claim forms to Finance, the Leave of Absence form must be attached to the claim form where applicable.
- 2.3.5.7 The Institute requires claim forms to be submitted within one month of the date of travel. The Institute reserves the right not to pay any claim that is submitted late.
- 2.3.5.8 Finance endeavour to pay travel claims within two weeks of receipt where there are no queries.
- 2.3.5.9 Claims are paid by electronic transfer direct to the claimant's bank account.

## 2.4 **Subsistence**

- 2.4.1 For both domestic and foreign business trips, subsistence allowances are payable, on an un-receipted basis, in accordance with the rates published by the Department of Finance.
- 2.4.2 Where employees require hotel accommodation, LYIT will generally pay a standard subsistence rate in line with rates approved and published by the Department of Finance, see also section 2.4.5 below. If an employee is not required to stay in a particular hotel for business reasons, the standard of hotel used should not be extravagant e.g. three to four star hotels should be used.

- 2.4.3 Subsistence allowances may not be claimed where an employee is hosted (costs are paid by another person/organisation) or where meals are provided as part of a conference, seminar, airline flight etc. unless there is an approved arrangement in place whereby the Institute will be reimbursed by the host person/organisation. Where this is the case it should be made clear on the claim form by the claimant.
- 2.4.4 Where some meals are provided (for example, lunch but not dinner on an overnight stay), standard deductions must be made from the daily subsistence rate; these rates change from time to time in accordance with the Department of Finance guidelines.
- 2.4.5 The following rates of subsistence apply:
- *24-hour rate*: This allowance is designed to cover the cost of accommodation (B&B) plus two meals, all on an un-receipted basis, for a period exceeding 24 hours from the time of departure as well as any further period not exceeding 5 hours. Employees must travel at least 250km from base and be required to stay overnight on LYIT business.
  - *10-hour rate*: This allowance is designed to cover the cost of two meals (lunch and dinner). Employees must travel at least 5km from base and be absent from base for 10 hours or more.
  - *5-hour rate*: This allowance is designed to cover the cost of one meal (lunch or dinner). Employees must travel at least 5km from base and be absent from base for five hours or more.

An employee may claim only one of the above rates in any 24-hour period.

## **2.5 Travel by Car**

- 2.5.1 Employees are required to use the most economical form of transport available. Where feasible, and where this can be done without detriment to the business requirements, bus and train (standard class) are preferred modes of transport rather than taxis or own car.
- 2.5.2 An employee who is required to travel on behalf of LYIT will be authorised to use his/her own car on official business in the following circumstances:
- Where no suitable public transport (train or bus etc.) is available consistent with the requirements of the travel
  - Where public transport is available only at equal or greater expense
  - Where the use of public transport would result in the loss of official time which it is necessary to avoid.
- 2.5.3 An employee who is authorised to use his/her own car while travelling on official business will be paid the appropriate mileage rates issued from time to time by the Department of Finance.
- 2.5.4 Where more than one employee is travelling to the same location, arrangements should be made to avoid unnecessary duplication of the use of the employees' own cars. See also section 2.8.5.

2.5.5 Parking charges will be reimbursed. Where a parking charge is less than or equal to €15, a receipt is not required. Where a parking charge exceeds €15, a receipt must be provided.

2.5.6 Traffic and parking fines will not be reimbursed.

## **2.6 Car Hire**

2.6.1 Cars may only be hired when no suitable public transport is available.

2.6.2 A smaller car must be used unless business requirements indicate otherwise (transport of equipment, more than four people etc.).

2.6.3 Employees should always return the car with a full tank of fuel to avoid paying excessive refuelling premiums. The cost of additional fuel may be reclaimed when supported by receipts.

2.6.4 Additional car insurance should not be purchased. LYIT's rates include all the relevant insurance.

## **2.7 Overseas Travel**

2.7.1 Advances may be requested in advance of overseas travel. Staff members undertaking overseas travel are advised to consult with Finance in advance to ensure that questions regarding receipts and foreign exchange etc can be addressed.

2.7.2 Where foreign currency is used, employees should provide evidence of the exchange rates claimed; this could be by means of a bank currency exchange receipt, a credit card bill with rate displayed, or the tourist foreign exchange rate as quoted by one of the Irish banks. In the absence of such evidence LYIT will determine the exchange rate to be used.

2.7.3 When undertaking foreign travel in respect of Enterprise Ireland (EI) funded projects, approval is required from EI in advance.

2.7.4 For air travel, employees must avail of the most economic option, including Internet fares. All air travel should be booked well in advance to obtain the most attractive fares. All employees must use the lowest available fare, if this is possible within the required business timeframe. An employee seeking to use his / her credit card for advance purchase of airline tickets should have prior approval of the appropriate budget holder and the Finance Manager.

2.7.5 The standard class of air travel for all employees is economy class. Business class air travel should only be used in exceptional circumstances and requires pre-approval from the President and Secretary/Financial Controller. Frequent flyer points should not influence decisions taken in relation to the carriers used for official business.



## **2.8 Other Matters**

Further guidelines and requirements regarding travel are as follows:

- 2.8.1 Public transport should be used whenever possible to keep expenditure to a minimum.
- 2.8.2 Where no alternative public transport exists, taxi costs may be claimed as part of an expense claim. Details of the event attended must be included in the claim.
- 2.8.3 Mileage is based on the distance from LYIT or home to the destination, whichever is the lesser.
- 2.8.4 Mileage paid is calculated on the distance between two locations based on the AA Roadwatch website. Standard mileage distances are applied for many destinations e.g. round trip to Dublin 483 km, round trip to Galway 502 km.
- 2.8.5 Where more than one staff member from LYIT is travelling to the same event or location arrangements must be made to share transport in order to keep Institute costs to a minimum. Details of other employees travelling with the claimant must be included on the face of the claim form. Only in exceptional circumstances, which must be notified to and approved in writing by the Head of Function and SFC or Finance Manager in advance of the travel, will exceptions to this be permitted. When these requirements are not adhered to, travel claims will be adjusted appropriately without reference to the claimant.
- 2.8.6 LYIT does not pay overnight allowances for single day trips to destinations less than 200 km from home or LYIT (see exception below), whichever is the lesser. For destinations more than 200km and less than 250km LYIT will pay for an overnight allowance, up to the maximum limits permitted by the circular in force at the time, provided a vouched expense receipt for accommodation is provided and that the total time away exceeds the 24 hours as required by the Department of Finance circulars. For destinations beyond 250km, unvouched overnight allowances are payable for single day trips provided always that the total time away exceeds the 24 hours as required by the Department of Finance circulars. If the claimant wishes to travel the night before to a destination within the 200km limit, the Institute may agree to pay an overnight allowance plus public transport rates where this costs less than mileage only or mileage plus the normal subsistence allowance for the relevant destination.
- 2.8.7 The entitlement to subsistence is based on the length of time you are away beginning with departure at what is deemed to be a reasonable time to allow you to reach the required destination by the appointed time. If the claimant believes there is a reason to leave earlier than the expected time for an exceptional reason, this should be notified to Finance for approval in advance. Where this is not adhered to, the Institute reserves the right to pay based on the expected journey time as per AA Roadwatch.
- 2.8.8 Circulars issued by the Department of Finance providing the rates in force for travel and subsistence allowances are available on the Department of Finance website.

2.8.9 In circumstances where an expense is incurred by a group of staff, the highest-ranking person should incur and claim reimbursement of the expense.

2.8.10 Where meals and/or accommodation are provided, subsistence or meal allowances cannot be claimed.

2.8.11 Office of Government Procurement (OGP) tenders / framework agreements for travel should be used where appropriate and where this provides the best Value for Money.

*2.8.12 Insurance declaration form*

An insurance declaration form must be made before claiming travel expenses. A similar type of declaration is contained on each claim form to remind staff of their obligation to have appropriate insurance in place. Note that by signing a claim form for travel expenses, claimants acknowledge responsibility for having all necessary insurance cover in place, fully indemnifying the Institute for use of personal vehicles.

*2.8.13 Queries*

Persons undertaking travel on behalf of the Institute are encouraged to consult with Finance staff in advance of travelling if they have any queries about procedures for travel claims. This will avoid queries and payment delays arising when seeking reimbursement for travel claims.

2.8.14 Certain expense types are dealt with through an alternative procurement process and have specific guidelines. The Business Travel and Expenses Policy must not be used to circumvent procurement procedures. The Institute will reimburse expenditure incurred for items other than travel and subsistence, only in strict accordance with Institute procedures and with written approval in advance from the Secretary / Financial Controller or Finance Manager. Examples include reimbursement of fees incurred for Education courses approved by Human Resources, credit card purchases where advance approval was sought from the FM/SFC and no alternative was available, etc. Such instances are considered on a case-by-case basis and are made entirely at the Institute's discretion.

### **3. EXCEPTIONS TO POLICY**

3.1 Expenses which are exceptions to the policy set out in this document can only be authorised by the President, Secretary/Financial Controller or Finance Manager.

3.2 In the case of a member of the Governing Body, including the Chairman, overnight allowances may be paid even where the destination is less than 250km from home. This is an exception to 2.8.6 above.





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