

Hertfordshire Students' Union Environmental, Travel & Expenses Policy

1 Purpose

This policy sets out Hertfordshire Students' Union's (the Union) commitment to sustainability and the environment. It also sets out how employees can claim for expenses incurred in the performance of their duties for the Union. The policy covers travel, meals and accommodation and gifts. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that employees are properly reimbursed for legitimate business expenses and to ensure that these expenses are treated appropriately for tax purposes. It is also to ensure we reduce our carbon emissions as a Union. As a Union we should think about any decisions we take and the impact of those decisions on the environment. The Union already has an Amazon Not by Default Policy.

2.0 Commitments

- The Union is committed to reducing its Carbon Footprint in all its services and activities.
- The Senior Leadership Team are committed to ensuring Sustainability is in the heart of our strategy and all of our services.
- The People Team will continue to source Sustainable training for all of our staff.
- We will support our students at University of Hertfordshire to create campaigns and initiatives that fall within our sustainable goals.
- We have published our top 5 impacts on our website <https://hertssu.com/your-union/environmental-impact/> with an aim to reduce these by September 2025.
- Our sustainable staff lead will continue to calculate and publish our Carbon Footprint. They will also hold Carbon Literacy training for all staff.
- We will continue to take part in Green Impact Accreditation with an aim to improve year on year.

3.0 Travel

3.1 Principles

- The Finance team will monitor, check and approve travel within the Union for business reasons. All line managers are expected to consider travel, whether alternatives are available such as MS Teams/Zoom meetings, tele-conferencing before agreeing to travel for business reasons. At all times we should be calculating and considering our CO2 data.
- Consider alternatives – MS Teams/Zoom or other audio/video conferencing.
- You should use public transport within UK where you can.
- We will not authorise travel by air.
- If you are authorised to use your car by your line manager, then you must car share or line managers should ensure they calculate the most environmentally friendly way to travel.
- We must consider the cost to the environment before financial cost, and we should always use the most sustainable mode of travel.
- Consider the combined travel carbon footprint of attendees when decided on meeting destinations. If we are not organising the meeting, then please try and influence the organiser.

4 General procedure

- 4.1 The Union will reimburse you for actual expenditure that is incurred wholly, necessarily and exclusively in connection with authorised duties that you undertake in the course of your employment.

- 4.2 To claim for expenses, you must use submit a claim via Breathe HR. Your line manager will approve this, and Finance will pay claims for authorised expenses by BACS transfer into the same bank account into which your salary is paid.
- 4.3 Expenses will not be paid unless supporting evidence is provided when submitting the online form. This should include original VAT receipts or invoices with the date and time of the transaction unless you are claiming for mileage. When claiming for travel expenses on public transport, you should enclose the tickets showing the departure point and destination of your journey, where possible. Credit and debit card statements will not be accepted. Where you are submitting a VAT receipt, you should provide a receipt showing:
- the name and VAT registration number of the retailer or service provider.
 - the goods and services provided; and
 - the amount of VAT payable.
- 4.4 Once submitted, your line manager will be able to approve the claim form which will then be available to the finance department ready for reimbursement.
- 4.5 Expenses claims must be submitted within 30 days of the expense being incurred. If this is not practical, written approval for any extension will be required from your line manager. The Union reserves the right to withhold any payment where written approval has not been sought.
- 4.6 The Union may return an expenses claim form to you without payment if it is completed incorrectly or lacks supporting evidence.
- 4.7 The Union will pay claims for authorised expenses by BACS transfer into the same bank account into which your salary is paid.
- 4.8 Any queries in relation to this policy should be directed to the Finance Manager.

5 Methods of travel

5.1 Public Transport

- We should use public transport to minimise carbon emissions.
- You may claim for standard class rail fares only. Where possible, rail journeys should be booked well in advance to benefit from any discounts for early booking.

5.2 Taxis

You may claim for a taxi fare only in limited circumstances. These are:

- where no other reasonable means of transport is available or practicable
- where taking a taxi would result in a significantly shorter travel time than using public transport.
- where there are several employees travelling together; or
- where personal security and safety of employees is an issue.

You must obtain a receipt with details of the date, place of departure and destination of the journey.

5.3 Air

Due to the impact on carbon emissions air travel makes, the Union will not permit travel by air for its staff. The only person who authorise this is the CEO, or in the case of the CEO the Chair of the Board. A key consideration is whether or not the flight is the most cost-effective for the Union, unless there is a valid business reason for taking an alternative flight.

6.0 Vehicle Use

6.1 Use of your own car

6.2 It may be appropriate and cost-effective to use your own car when travelling on business, for example if you are travelling with several employees or, where there is limited public transport to your destination, or the journey time is significantly shorter than using public transport. Any use of your own car on business is subject to you:

- holding a full UK driving licence;
- ensuring that your car is roadworthy and fully registered; and
- holding comprehensive motor insurance that provides for business use.

6.3 Prior authorisation should be sought from your line manager before using your own car on business.

6.4 The Union accepts no liability for any accident, loss, damage or claim arising out of any journey that you make on business unless caused by the Union's negligence. The Union will not pay for the cost of any insurance policy on your own car.

6.5 To claim for petrol expenditure, you should set out the distance of the journey undertaken on your expenses claim form. The Union will pay you a mileage allowance of 45p per mile for the first 100 miles of any journey and 35p per mile for the remainder of the journey.

6.6 The Union will pay for tolls, congestion charges and parking costs incurred, where applicable.

7.0 Meals/accommodation

7.1 As a guideline for business travel, you should book accommodation equivalent to three-star standard or less. It is your responsibility to ensure that any hotel reservations are cancelled within the required cancellation period if they are no longer required.

7.2 If you are required to be away from home on business, you may claim up to:

- £5 for breakfast (if this is not included in the hotel room rate);
- £5 for lunch;
- £15 for dinner;

7.3 The maximum amounts above are inclusive of drinks.

7.4 You should supply receipts and invoices for all hotel and meal expenses

8.0 Gifts

8.1 Any gifts, rewards or entertainment that you receive from clients or suppliers or other business contacts should be reported immediately to the Chief Executive. In certain circumstances, it may not be appropriate to retain such gifts and you may be asked to return gifts to the sender, for example, where there could be a real or perceived conflict of interest.

As a general rule, small tokens of appreciation, for example flowers or a bottle of wine, may be retained by employees.

8.2 If you wish to provide gifts to suppliers, clients or other business contacts, you must seek prior written approval from the Chief Executive. Please also see Bribery policy.

9.0 Expenses that will not be reimbursed

8.1 The Union will not reimburse you for:

- the cost of any travel between your home and usual place of work
- the cost of any travel undertaken for personal reasons;
- the cost of any travel for your partner or spouse;
- any fines or penalties incurred while on business for whatever reason, including penalties for not paying for a rail ticket in advance of boarding the train and penalties or fines associated with motoring offences, including speeding or parking fines, clamping or vehicle recovery charges;
- any expenses incurred for personal benefit or to improperly influence or reward a business contact; or
- cash advances or withdrawals from an ATM machine.

10.0 False claims

10.1 If the Union considers that any expenditure claimed was not legitimately incurred on behalf of the Union, it may request further details from you. The Union will thoroughly investigate and check any expenses claim as it sees fit. It may withhold payment where insufficient supporting documents have been provided. Where payment has been made to you prior to the discovery that the claim was not legitimate or correct, it may deduct the value of that claim from your salary.

10.2 Any abuse of the Union's expenses policy will not be tolerated. This includes, but is not limited to:

- false expenses claims;
- claims for expenses that were not legitimately incurred;
- claims for personal gain;
- claims for hospitality and/or gifts to induce a client or other business contact to take improper action; and
- receipt by you of hospitality and/or gifts from business contacts that may be perceived to influence your judgment.

10.3 The Union will take disciplinary action where appropriate and, in certain circumstances, may treat a breach of this policy as gross misconduct, which may result in your summary dismissal.