



TITLE	Expenses Policy
VERSION	Version 5
SUMMARY	The policy sets out rules for the reimbursement of travel, accommodation and subsistence expenditure
APPROVAL	Approved by the Remuneration Committee on 1 December 2015. Effective from 1 April 2016
REVIEW DATE	March 2019

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1. Scope

- 1.1 This policy applies to all Council, Committee and Panel members, Advisers, Visitors, witnesses and employees of the General Optical Council and replaces all other instructions relating to expenses previously issued and will take effect immediately. It is designed to ensure we make the most cost efficient use of the Registrants fees.
- 1.2 In making claims for these expenses claimants must apply a test of reasonableness and use the most cost efficient means of discharging their responsibilities in line with the General Optical Council's commitment to proper accountability for the fees collected from Registrants. Expenditure which conflicts with the policy on expenses will not be authorised.

2. Responsibilities

- 2.1 All claimants must ensure expenses are submitted within two calendar months of incurring expenditure, and at the year-end (31 March) no later than 15 April. Claims after this period will be paid only in exceptional circumstances.
- 2.2 Directors and Heads of Department must ensure expenditure is directly related to and in the interest of the business, is appropriate and that expenses are claimed promptly, where possible, within the calendar month.
- 2.3 The Head of Case Progression is responsible for witness expense claims, claims for loss of earnings, reimbursement of locum fees and expert witnesses. Expenditure must be directly related to and in the interest of the business, appropriate and that expenses are claimed promptly, where possible, within the calendar month.

3. Expenses

- 3.1 The General Optical Council (GOC) does not use the services of an authorised travel agent. Except where prior authorisation has been given, all travel and hotel bookings should be made via the Facilities team.
- 3.2 This does not apply to London travel cards or underground tickets, or travel booked by necessity at very short notice. It is important to note that it is expected that the Facilities team will be given notification of the dates of overnight accommodation and travel bookings required as soon as they are known to the claimant in order to take advantage of the best available rates.

- 3.3 An emailed request should be made to the Facilities team on the form provided and they will make the appropriate arrangements. Details of how to make bookings are contained in Appendix 1.
- 3.4 Individuals who have been issued with a company credit cards should not normally use them to finance travel and accommodation arrangements. In exceptional circumstances alternative arrangements may be agreed by a Director or the Chief Executive & Registrar.

4. Travel and Subsistence Costs for Members, Advisers and Witnesses

- 4.1 It is expected that Members, Advisers, Visitors and Witnesses who live within one and a half hours travelling distance of their official destination will travel daily.
- 4.2 For travel to attend meetings of the Council or its Committees or otherwise on the business of the Council expenses can be claimed at the following rates:
- (i) actual payments for the most cost effective travel by standard class a flexible return or the cost equivalent public rail transport. We do not normally allow travel by first class;
 - (ii) travel costs are normally from the claimant's principal place of residence within the UK. Where this is not the case, the expense claimable would be the lower of the actual cost of travel, and travel from the principal UK residence. Any exceptional circumstance would need approval in advance by the Director of Resources;
 - (iii) same principles applied to rail travel apply also to air travel and again we do not normally allow travel by first or business class;
 - (iv) for travel by private car, **45 pence per mile** for the first 10,000 miles, 25 pence over 10,000 miles (or otherwise in accordance with approved HMRC mileage rates), and actual parking fees, tolls and congestion charge;
 - (v) for travel by motorcycle, **24 pence per mile**;
 - (vi) for travel by bicycle, **20 pence per mile**;
 - (vii) for travel by underground or bus including where oyster card travel is used, reimbursement of the actual fare where evidence of the journey is provided (oyster statement or ticket are the usual evidence accepted);
 - (viii) in the event of business meetings finishing more than 2 hours earlier than expected, only Council members and those not paid a daily rate may purchase a single ticket for UK travel. Any claimant paid a daily rate will be expected to fund an early return themselves;

- (ix) where a Council or Committee member holds a travel pass allowing a discount (for example the Senior Citizens pass) direct booking will be encouraged to minimise the cost to the Council.

4.3 When absent from home or attending business meetings of the Council or its Committees or otherwise on the business of the Council, expenditure on subsistence will be reimbursed **against receipts** up to the following limits:

- (i) for lunch, up to **£13** per day plus VAT for absences of more than 3 hours including the period 12-2pm;
- (ii) for dinner, up to **£28** per day plus VAT for absences including a whole working day;
- (iii) for each night's absence in respect of accommodation and breakfast up to **£150** per night plus VAT in London and £120 + VAT outside London. This may not include any extras (e.g. alcohol or newspapers), which must be paid for separately by the claimant.

4.4 Expense claims may not include alcohol.

5. Carer costs or other 'reasonable adjustments'

5.1 Reimbursement of carer costs that enable participants to attend events will be made upon presentation of evidence supporting the claim. The Director of Resources would normally agree these in advance.

5.2 Where 'reasonable adjustments' are required to enable the participation in an event, the cost of making these will be reimbursed. The Director of Resources would normally agree these in advance.

6. Hotel Accommodation

6.1 All accommodation for overnight or multiple night travel will normally be booked through the Facilities team. The GOC will reserve accommodation that is clean, secure, within the overnight allowance, and within reasonable distance of the work location (generally up to 30 minutes travel from the hotel).

6.2 This will usually mean 3*- 4* accommodation or equivalent to Hilton or Marriott hotels.

6.3 Luxury hotels will not be booked unless attending a conference/seminar or where there are no alternative hotels, which are within a reasonable travelling distance of the location.

- 6.4 If there are problems or issues regarding safety or location, please notify the Facilities team immediately.
- 6.5 Travellers must contact the Facilities team or the hotel directly to cancel hotel reservations to avoid hotel charges.
- 6.6 Alternative arrangements must be discussed with the Director of Resources prior to the booking being made.

7. Insurance

- 7.1 All travel by the General Optical Council's employees and Council and Committee is covered by adequate travel and accident insurance with world coverage. Further information can be obtained from the Facilities team.

8. Airline Frequent Flyer Schemes

- 8.1 Travelling members or employees may retain frequent flyer program benefits. However, participation in these programs must not influence flight selection. The lowest proposed airfare, as defined in this policy, should be taken regardless of the traveller's airline affiliation. In addition, airline club memberships and credit card reward programs are at the traveller's expense.

9. Lost or Missing Receipts / Tickets

- 9.1 In the event of lost or missing receipts the claimant should seek duplicate receipts or produce alternative proof of payment. If no proof of payment is available, refunds will be allowable only if accompanied by a written explanation and approved by the Director of Resources or Chief Executive & Registrar for audit purposes.

10. Witness expenses

- 10.1 We will reimburse witnesses for expenses incurred as a result of attending an FTP Committee hearing at the rates specified in this policy.
- 10.2 We will not normally reimburse the cost of a non-witness accompanying you to the hearing. Exceptions can however be made, subject to advance authorisation (e.g. in respect of someone accompanying a child witness or an elderly/disabled or vulnerable witness, or where the witness has to bring a young child and needs someone to help care for that child). If you believe that you have an exception please discuss this with the **Head of Case Progression**.

10.3 You must obtain advance authorisation from the Head of Case Progression before you make any bookings / incur any charges in order to ensure that the Investigations Team are aware of your requirements and the level of costs which may be incurred. Should the GOC book travel or accommodation on your behalf, the **Head of Case Progression** will inform the Facilities Team directly of the necessary requirements.

11. Loss of earnings

11.1 Many employers will allow employees time off to attend hearings without loss of earnings. If your employer will not permit this, the GOC will reimburse net loss of earnings, depending on the period of absence, subject to documentary evidence (e.g. payslip or letter from your employer). The following maximum limits apply to witnesses (except for professional witnesses):

- £33.50 for a period of 4 hours or less; and
- £67 per day for a period exceeding 4 hours.

11.2 The maximum limits¹ are higher for witnesses within certain professions whose evidence relates to matters arising out of their profession. These higher limits apply to: pharmacists, doctors, dentists, veterinary surgeons, solicitors, barristers or accountants (if a member of the ICAEW, ICAS, CIPFA, CIMA or ACCA). If you believe that you fall within one of these categories of witnesses, you must obtain advance authorisation from the Head of Case Progression. Reimbursement will be subject to documentary evidence and the following upper limits:

- £83.50 for a period of 2 hours or less;
- £117 for a period of 2-4 hours;
- £174 for a period of 4-6 hours; and
- £234 per day for a period in excess of 6 hours .

12. Reimbursement of Locum Fees

12.1 If you are a healthcare professional your employer (or yourself, if you are the proprietor of the business) can claim for the cost of employing a locum to cover the period of your absence. You must obtain advance authorisation from the Head of Case Progression if you wish to claim reimbursement of locum fees. Any claim that has not been authorised in advance will not be paid by the GOC. The claim must be supported by a receipted invoice for the locum fees and reimbursement will be subject to an overall ceiling of the daily rate paid to members (currently £280.00).

¹ Set out in the Public Legal Services Division's "Guide to Allowances under Part V of the Costs in Criminal Cases (General) Regulations 1986

13. Expert witnesses

13.1 An expert witness is someone who has been asked to give evidence, usually opinion evidence, because of their expertise in a particular field. The GOC will agree fees, in advance, for preparing a report and attending a hearing. Expenses in relation to travel and accommodation will be reimbursed in accordance with this policy.

14. Authorisation

14.1 All claims submitted by Council/Committee Members, Advisors or staff must be authorised by two signatories from the following, the relevant Head of Department, the Head of Finance, the Executive Directors or the Council Chair.

14.2 All claims submitted by witnesses must be authorised by two signatories one of which must be the **Head of Case Progression** and one from the following, the relevant Head of Department, the Head of Finance, the Executive Directors or the Council Chair.

15. Notes

15.1 We would normally expect Members, Advisors and witnesses to pay for their own subsistence and then make a claim for reimbursement, however we do understand that sometimes this is not possible. Council/Committee Members, Advisors and staff should contact the Director of Resources to discuss ways in which the GOC may be able to assist. Witnesses should contact the Head of Case Progression.

15.2 For audit purposes receipts are required for all expense claims. Ticket counterfoils and boarding passes for airline tickets, and original receipts for all other incidental expenses should be attached to expense claims. Items not supported by receipts or other evidence will not be reimbursed.

15.3 The Director of Resources will monitor exceptions to the policy and report them to the Audit and Risk Committee periodically.

15.4 Claims for subsistence may not exceed the daily limits shown except with the agreement of the Director of Resources, for example in relation to special dietary or seating requirements (for example in the case of a disability).

15.5 Any special requirements (special diets, or other seating requirement) should be discussed with the Director of Resources.

15.6 We will not reimburse any expenses not covered by this policy.

15.7 Claims are normally paid monthly on the last working day of the month.

15.8 Claimants are asked to submit claims as soon as possible. Claims submitted after the 20th of the month will be reimbursed the following month.

16. Appendix 1: Travel and Accommodation Form

YOUR DETAILS	
FULL NAME: (AS APPEARS ON YOUR PASSPORT)	
EMAIL:	
TEL / MOBILE NUMBER:	
REASON OR NAME OF THE MEETING:	
For internal use only Cost Code:	

YOUR TRAVEL			
DEPARTURE DATE		DEPARTURE TIME	
FROM		TO	
RETURN DATE		RETURN TIME	
FROM		TO	
ADDITIONAL REQUESTS (I.E.UNDERGROUND TICKET, AIRPORT-CITY TRANSPORT, TAXI)			

YOUR ACCOMMODATION			
ARRIVAL DATE		DEPARTURE DATE	
HOTEL LOCATION		ROOM TYPE	

ADDITIONAL DETAILS	

PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR FORM TO:

FAO: FACILITIES TEAM

EMAIL: meetingroom@optical.org

Or

FAX: (0)207 436 3525

MAIL: General Optical Council, 10 Old Bailey, London, EC4M 7NG

Internal Use Only

Date Received	__/__/__	Date Processed	__/__/__	Date of Completion & sent to traveler	__/__/__
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