



Travel Policy

May, 2010

Contents

Purpose	5
Introduction	5
Travel Officer	5
Approval of Foreign Travel	5
Travel and subsistence (T&S)	6
Use of public transport	6
Motor travel	6
Subsistence	6
T&S claims	7
Submission of claims	7
Use of private vehicles	7
Completion of indemnity form	8
Use of taxis	8
Car hire	9
Miscellaneous expenses	9
Subsistence allowances	9
Classes of subsistence allowances	10
Foreign subsistence rates	10
Accommodation	11
Extension of absence for personal reasons	11
Air travel	12
Luggage and other restrictions	12
Travel to and from airports	13
Car parking fees at airports	13
Travel costs of those not directly associated with official business	13
Review	14

NCCA travel policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the rules and procedures relating to the reimbursement of expenses incurred by persons authorised to travel on NCCA business and who qualify for the payment of travel, subsistence or other expenses.

Introduction

The NCCA will adhere to civil service procedures relating to official domestic and foreign travel and subsistence as set-out from time to time in guidance issued by the Department of Finance. The NCCA is cognisant of the need to achieve economy and efficiency in its expenditure on official travel consistent with the requirements of its strategic aims and objectives. This policy applies to all staff of the NCCA, members of Council and its sub-committees and others who are travelling on official business on behalf of NCCA.

Travel Officer

The Chief Executive will designate a Travel Officer at AP or HEO level who will be responsible for travel matters generally. In particular the Travel Officer will be responsible for monitoring adherence to the NCCA Travel Policy and carrying out assessments of value for money.

Approval of foreign travel

All proposals for foreign travel must first be discussed with the Chief Executive or the relevant Deputy Chief Executive who must determine (i) that the travel to be undertaken will support the strategic goals and work priorities of the NCCA and (ii) that the costs are not greater than the benefits to accrue to the organisation. When this approval is given, the proposal must then be submitted to the NCCA Travel Officer. The final costed application must then be approved by the relevant Deputy Chief Executive or by the Chief Executive. A form is available for this purpose.

Travel and subsistence (T&S)

Travel and subsistence allowances are paid in accordance with Department of Finance Circular 11/82 and public service rates approved by that Department from time to time. Allowances will only be paid for essential travel and the number of journeys on official business must be kept to a minimum. Travel should be planned in advance and should be by the shortest practicable routes and by the cheapest practicable mode of transport.

Use of public transport

Maximum use is to be made of public transportation options for official travel. Return tickets which are usually cheaper than two single-journey tickets should be used where applicable. For rail journeys, standard class fares will be reimbursed unless prior approval is granted by the Chief Executive or his or her nominee for first class train travel. Where it is not possible to get prior approval, the person travelling must provide an explanation on the travel claim form, outlining the reasons why first class travel was used.

Motor travel

Motor travel rates payable are computed to cover all costs associated with using a private vehicle for business purposes when public transport is not available and include costs for fuel, motor tax, motor insurance, wear and tear, maintenance etc. These rates are fixed by reference to the engine capacity (c.c.) of the vehicle and the accumulated mileage travelled during the mileage year (i.e. from January to December).

Subsistence

Subsistence allowances are intended to cover the reasonable meal and accommodation costs incurred by those travelling on official duties for NCCA. These allowances are not intended to be a source of emolument or profit, nor are they necessarily intended to meet the whole cost of subsistence when absent from home or headquarters.

T&S claims

Submission of claims

T&S claim forms for members of Council and its sub-committees and persons travelling on official business on behalf of NCCA should be submitted as soon as possible and no later than 30 days after the journey is completed. Staff claims should be submitted as soon as possible and no later than the 14TH of the following month for which expenses are claimed e.g. expenses for October are to be submitted by 14th November. Claim forms for a month will not be accepted after the 14th of the following month except in the case of sick leave or annual leave.

Use of private vehicles

Private vehicles should be used only in the following circumstances: -

- when there is no suitable public transport available
- where public transport is available only at equal or greater expense
- where the use of public transport would result in an unacceptable loss of official time.

Claims for travel expenses for the use of private vehicles must include a brief written explanation as to why public transport was not used. In the case of the use of a private vehicle where public transport could have been used, without detriment to the public interest, the amount to be allowed for in respect of motor travel allowance must not exceed the cost of public transport, (including that of passengers whose travelling expenses would be payable from public funds).

Travelling expenses will not be paid in respect of any portion of a journey which covers all or part of the usual route between home and headquarters. Where a claim is made in respect of a journey made directly from home or directly home from a meeting, the travelling allowance payable will be calculated by reference to the distance from home or headquarters, whichever is the lesser.

Where feasible, when more than one person is travelling to the same area, and travel by public transport is not feasible, arrangements should be made to pool cars in order to avoid the unnecessary duplication of the use of private vehicles and to minimise costs to the NCCA. Those travelling should, however, be mindful of any restrictions in the

driver's motor insurance policies which may be applicable. Where separate cars are used when car pooling could reasonably have applied, a written explanation should be provided, outlining the reasons why car pooling was not put in place.

It is the responsibility of the employee to ensure that his/her vehicle is maintained in a roadworthy condition and is fully taxed and insured.

Completion of indemnity form

Those who of necessity use private transport on NCCA business are required to indemnify NCCA and the State against loss or damage resulting from the use of private transport on official business. A form for this purpose is provided. The NCCA does not accept liability for any loss or damage resulting from the use of privately owned transport on NCCA business.

Use of taxis

Taxis should be hired only when no suitable public transport is available or where the use of public transport is not feasible. As a general rule, taxis should not be used for travel to or from airports or rail stations. Public and private coach services should be used for such journeys wherever possible.

Staff members or others attending meetings abroad should use public transport to/from the airport to their hotel or meeting centre. Taxis may be used where there is a perceived risk to personal safety (e.g. when arriving/departing at unsociable hours), where there is a likelihood of missing a flight due to a delayed meeting, where it is not practical to use public transport due, for example, to the location of the hotel or meeting room, or where a significant amount of luggage is to be carried.

Where taxis are necessarily used, the reason(s) for using the taxi should be indicated on, or appended to, the travel claim form submitted, accompanied by receipts. Where a taxi is used, every effort should be made to ensure that the vehicle is shared with colleagues from the NCCA or other Government Departments to minimise the overall cost to the Exchequer.

Car hire

Car hire should be used exceptionally and generally only where it is either the only practical means of transport or it is clearly the cheapest method.

Miscellaneous expenses

Where those travelling necessarily incur other reasonable travel-related expenses (e.g. car parking fees, commission on currency exchange) in the performance of their official duties, these expenses will be reimbursed on the basis of vouched receipts accompanying the claim. Claims for miscellaneous expenses will not be paid in the absence of receipts.

Road tolls may be paid where they constitute an expense necessarily incurred in the performance of official duties. Where different toll charges apply depending on the time of usage (e.g. the Dublin Port Tunnel), the amount the NCCA will refund will normally be limited to the lowest off-peak charge for a car at that toll, regardless of the time of travel.

The NCCA will not pay the cost of fines or fees incurred through breaches of bye-laws, negligence or failure to comply with any regulations set by local or regulatory authorities (e.g. parking fines).

Subsistence allowances

Subsistence allowances are payable at the rates determined by the Department of Finance from time to time. Separate rates are set for domestic travel and foreign travel.

A day allowance is payable in respect of an absence on official business of five hours or more. However, this allowance will not be payable for an absence at any place within five km (3.11 miles) of home or headquarters. Time spent at headquarters or on journeys to and from home to headquarters will not reckon towards the qualifying period of five hours. Separate day allowance rates are payable in respect of:

- absences of five to ten hours (the “five-hour” rate)
- absences of ten hours or more (the “ten-hour” rate).

An overnight allowance is payable with the prior approval of the Chief Executive or his or her nominee in respect of each night necessarily spent away from home or headquarters on official business. The allowance is not payable for an absence at any place within 48.27 km (30 miles) of home or headquarters. The allowance covers a period up to 24 hours from the time of departure from home or headquarters, as well as any further period not exceeding five hours. An additional day allowance will be paid at the appropriate rate if the last period of 24 hours is exceeded by five or more hours.

Any accommodation or meal costs incurred which are higher than the subsistence rate available will be at the expense of the person travelling. No overnight subsistence will be paid where accommodation is provided at no cost to the claimant (e.g. hotel accommodation provided by a conference organiser).

The time occupied on a journey for which the fare covers the costs of meals and an accommodation cost is not incurred, will not reckon for the purpose of the payment of subsistence allowance. However €10 for incidental expenses may be claimed under civil service regulations.

Classes of allowances

Domestic subsistence allowances are payable at Class A and Class B rate, depending on civil service grade and scale of salary, as follows:

Class A Payable to the grade of Assistant Principal, equivalents and higher grades in NCCA including Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive and Director, Curriculum and Assessment.

Class B Payable to all others including members of Council and its sub committees.

Foreign subsistence rates

Subsistence allowances for foreign travel are laid down by the Department of Finance for various destinations and are reviewed regularly. The rates vary according to the country and city of destination and are normally expressed in local currency. In certain countries or cities, vouched expenses, rather than flat-rate subsistence, are payable.

Accommodation

As a general principle, the standard of accommodation used by persons travelling on behalf of the NCCA should not be extravagant. Three or four star hotels should be used unless it is necessary to stay in a particular hotel for business reasons.

In the case of both domestic and foreign travel, if meals are provided with the accommodation at no cost, deductions must be made from the subsistence claimed as follows: -

- where breakfast is provided, half the relevant five hour rate is to be deducted
- where lunch or dinner is provided, the relevant five hour rate is to be deducted
- where both lunch and dinner are provided, the relevant ten-hour rate is to be deducted.

Where necessary the NCCA will cover the cost of hotel accommodation if the cost could not reasonably be covered by the normal overnight rate. The NCCA from time to time will also directly cover the cost of accommodation for those attending meetings, seminars, networks and events organised by the Council.

Extension of absence for personal reasons

If the person travelling does not return directly to home or headquarters following an absence on official business, but remains at the destination or continues to a different destination for personal purposes, subsistence allowances will be paid only to the point at which official business is deemed to have ended (e.g. the end of a meeting). No subsistence costs will be paid by the NCCA on the basis of notional journeys to home or headquarters in such instances. The question of travel costs for the return journey in such cases should be checked with the NCCA Travel Officer in advance of making travel arrangements.

If the person travelling intends to combine personal travel with official business in any other circumstances (e.g. travelling to a business destination earlier than required for personal purposes), the Travel Officer should similarly be contacted in advance of making travel arrangements to establish entitlement to travel and subsistence expenses in respect of the official business to be conducted.

Air travel

Air travel may be used for an internal or external journey where it is the most effective use of time for a particular journey. While the nomenclature used to designate different classes of air travel varies between airlines and changes from time to time, the following principles will apply: -

- it is expected that those travelling on official business for NCCA will use economy class travel including internet low-cost carriers' fares for short-haul flights
- cheaper restricted fares should be used where the travel is regular and predictable and changes to travel are unlikely to occur
- flexible economy fares should be used only where it can be shown that the flexibility provided and the extra cost of the ticket are warranted compared to the potential cancellation cost of a restricted internet/economy ticket
- premium economy class travel may be used for long haul flights where the additional flexibility afforded is considered necessary for the effective discharge of official business
- business class travel should be confined to limited situations where the Chief Executive is satisfied that the additional cost can be justified in relation to the length of the flight and the official business to be conducted
- as a general rule, first class travel should not be used; if it is considered that there are very exceptional circumstances where first class travel is justified, the written permission of the Chief Executive or the Chairperson should be obtained beforehand and the reasons justifying its use should be recorded.

Luggage and other restrictions

Most airlines charge for the carriage of luggage. In general, it is significantly cheaper to have the luggage charge pre-paid when booking a flight, rather than at the airport check-in desk. If it is necessary to check luggage at the check-in desk, an explanatory note should accompany the travel claim form. Other restrictions and requirements, such as baggage weight, may also be introduced from time to time by airlines. The onus is on those travelling to check all such restrictions and requirements related to their flight booking in advance of travelling. These costs should also be indicated on the application for foreign travel.

Travel to and from airports

As outlined previously, wherever possible, public transport (including coaches operated by private operators) should be used when travelling to an Irish airport. If it is necessary to use a private vehicle to travel to the airport in exceptional circumstances (e.g. an exceptionally early departure from home), the principles set out elsewhere in this policy will generally apply. Travelling expenses will not be paid in respect of any portion of a journey which covers all or part of the usual route between home and headquarters en route to/from the airport and the travelling allowance payable will be calculated by reference to the distance from home or headquarters, whichever is the lesser.

Car parking fees at airports

In the event that it is necessary to take a private vehicle to the airport and park at the complex, parking fees will be reimbursed to the value of the cheapest long-term car park fee available to the public. Those travelling should therefore familiarise themselves with the rates offered by the various providers of airport car-parking services. Receipts should be obtained when paying for airport car parking and these receipts should be submitted with the travel claim.

Travel costs of those not directly associated with official business

The NCCA will not pay the travel and subsistence costs of persons who have no direct connection with the Council and have no role in the official business being conducted during a trip, other than in the exceptional circumstances where a specific invitation is extended by a host for a special occasion and the Chairperson has certified that attendance is in the public interest.

In no circumstances is it permissible to “trade down” a fare of any class to enable another person who is not a member of staff or associated with NCCA official business to travel free of charge or at a reduced rate. Nor is it permissible to “trade” the cost of a fare to facilitate personal travel arrangements. If for any reason it is decided to

downgrade the class of travel or fare type (e.g. fully flexible fare to restricted fare), any savings realised must accrue to the NCCA.

Review

The Travel Officer will keep this policy under review and update it in line with guidance issued from time to time by the Department of Finance. The Travel Officer will also monitor the effectiveness of the policy.