



Guidelines for Philosophers for Business Travel

It is generally agreed by world governments that global temperature rises need to be limited to 2 degrees Celsius, better still 1.5 degrees, in order to avoid catastrophic climate change. But meanwhile carbon emissions from air travel have continued to rise (53% between 1990 and 2011), with business travellers, including academic researchers, producing a substantial amount of emissions in the U.K. HEFCE imposed the requirement upon English universities to report their business travel emissions and implement strategies to reduce them and the Office for Students continues to expect carbon reductions from the providers it funds (HEFCE 2012, OfS 2018-19).

The BPA acknowledges and welcomes the fact that some Universities have introduced their own guidelines for reducing emissions for business travel. However, we would like to ask that our own discipline plays its part by signalling to our institutions, our fellow academics, and our students that we are willing to adopt environmentally responsible guidelines for university business travel.

These guidelines for environmentally responsible university business travel are intended to reduce overall the air travel amongst the community of philosophers working in the UK. We do not recommend an elimination of air travel because we recognise that presenting at international conferences and undertaking international collaborations are part of the job description of academics and institutional-lead expectations for both junior and senior academics. We also believe that fact-to-face exchanges are an important part of intellectual life. In addition, we recognise that people have different accessibility needs, and responsibilities at work and at home, that have to be accommodated while allowing them to take full part in professional life. **But we also believe that if we think intelligently and creatively about the matter we can collaborate and exchange ideas in a way consistent with lower emissions.**

Thus, we propose a set of guidelines that do not prohibit or discourage university business travel *per se* but seek to optimise the use of air travel where it is the most effective route to collaboration or the communication of ideas whilst avoiding excessive air travel to no great academic purpose.

We do not expect that it will always be possible to forego air travel, because we recognise that it will sometimes be the case that undertaking air travel is the best option or only viable option. This might apply to those travelling far, or to those with caring responsibilities, or with disabilities. We also recognise that there is pressure for staff to travel to establish or maintain an international profile. And we recognise that because some institutions will not be willing to support their academic staff making environmentally responsible decisions about business travel, that avoiding air travel may not be feasible for them.

We therefore propose that philosophers working in the UK, including organisers of philosophy events, should agree to a policy of responsible environmental travel, especially with respect to air travel as a notably energy intense form of consumption, as follows:

When attending or organising a philosophy event, philosophers should consider, in light of their circumstances (which may include accessibility issues and caring responsibilities), whether it is a practical or feasible option to do any of the following:

- avoid air travel and single occupant car travel in favour of rail and coach travel
- avoid short stay, single purpose high emissions travel
- maximise the academic value of high emissions travel (where unavoidable) by taking longer and multiple purpose trips
- consider using a carbon offsetting scheme where air travel is unavoidable
- make use of video-conferencing, video-chat etc. technology, and actively to encourage institutions to ensure that there's provision for its use.
- facilitate and support others who wish to make use of such technology to avoid making high-emissions travel
- facilitate and support others who wish to make use of lower emissions form of travel.

If these guidelines are adopted, our events are likely to become more inclusive of philosophers for whom participation can be difficult when long distance travel is involved such as those with disabilities and with caring responsibilities.

The BPA would like to thank Fraser MacBride and Jane Heal for proposing a version of these guidelines to the BPA.