

COMMONWEALTH SCHOLARSHIP COMMISSION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Commission Policy on Member and Secretariat Travel

Proposals for the CSC's policy on member and secretariat travel were discussed at a meeting of the Finance Committee on 2 November 2005; the following document was approved, incorporating amendments approved by the Committee on 16 May 2006.

Background

Members will be aware of periodic media speculation regarding the travel policy of government departments and officials. In recent months, particular attention has been paid to practice within DFID. In view of this, it would be sensible for members to confirm Commission practice in the area.

Present Situation

Relevant sections of the DFID policy are attached, as are those adopted last year by the Marshall Commission. It will be noted that this allows for considerable discretion amongst staff to respond to specific circumstances. The CSC does not have such a written policy, but our actual practice has generally been less generous than this. The small amount of overseas travel by Commission members and secretariat members has almost all been in economy class. The same can be said of travel within the United Kingdom, except where members have been able to take account of promotional and other offers to secure higher class seats at prices comparable with normal business class fares, or where a special case has been made on the grounds of space or the need to work during the journey.

It may be that the amount of overseas travel required of Commission members will increase in future years, given our desire to place a higher proportion of work with partners in developing countries, the need to monitor partnerships developed under the distance learning programme, split-site and Institutional Capacity programmes, and our desire to play a full role in the development of the CSFP at international level. In view of this, and the tendency towards public scrutiny described above, it is proposed that the Commission adopt a more coherent approach.

Principles

It is proposed that our approach be based around the following principles:

- (a) the CSC approach, taken overall, should not be more generous than either the general approach taken by DFID or the Marshall Commission (being the other NDPB concerned with award of scholarships)
- (b) that account should be taken of the length of journey, and likelihood that work will be required
- (c) that members and members of the secretariat be expected to take advantage of all discounts and special offers that can reasonably be expected to be available
- (d) that a case exists for distinguishing between members of the Commission – who undertake their work largely on a pro bono basis, and members of the secretariat
- (e) that amounts claimed in no case should exceed actual expenditure

Proposed Arrangements

In view of the above, members are asked to consider the following general approach:

International Travel

Air Journeys over ten hours in duration

CSC Members – premium economy class where available. Otherwise business class where premium economy is unavailable.

Secretariat – premium economy class where available. Otherwise economy unless travelling with a member of the Commission.

Air Journeys from 6-10 hours

All Journeys – premium economy class where available, otherwise economy class unless a special case is made to the Chair.

Air Journeys less than 6 hours

Economy class in all cases, unless a special case is made to the Chair.

Domestic Travel

By Air

Economy Class in all cases, unless a special case is made to the Chair.

By Rail

Journeys over two hours or 100 miles

Commission Members – First class may be claimed

Secretariat – Economy class unless a special case is made to support the need to work on the journey, or the person concerned is travelling with a member of the Commission

Journeys under the above length

Economy class in all cases – unless a special case is made on the need to work or other factors, such a storage space required

By Car

Members and secretariat should note the statement in DFID regulations discouraging the use of private car in most circumstances, and stating that no liability will be accepted for any accident, damage, injury or death beyond that which would have existed had the journey been by public transport. In case where care are used, the Commission would apply standard DFID rates of 25. / 40p per mile, and update these automatically at such time as DFID rates are updated.

Taxis

Members and secretariat will be permitted discretion on the use of taxis, taking into account the five principles stated in the DFID guidelines. These are as follows:

- availability of other forms of public transport
- relative effectiveness and cost of other transport forms
- requirement to carry heavy or bulky items
- impact on the time of the person involved
- safety issues – for example travel at night

Other Issues

On other issues, such as personal refunds and concessions and involuntary changes in arrangements, CSC guidelines would follow those of the DFID document.

Proposal

The Finance and ARM Committees are invited to consider the above approach. If approved, then it is expected that an expanded version of this document, incorporating any amendments agreed, would be put to the full Commission meeting in December.

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Includes amendments approved by the Finance Committee.

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