



TITLE	Expense Policy
VERSION	Version 6
SUMMARY	The policy sets out rules for the reimbursement of travel, accommodation and subsistence expenditure for all staff and members.
APPROVAL	Approved by the Remuneration Committee on. Effective from 1 June 2021
REVIEW DATE	June 2024

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## **1. Scope**

- 1.1 This policy applies to all employees, Council, Committee and Panel members, Advisers, Visitors and Witnesses of the General Optical Council (GOC) and replaces all previous instructions relating to expenses and will take effect on 1 June 2021. It is designed to ensure we make the most cost-efficient use of registrants' fees.
- 1.2 Claimants must use the most cost-efficient method in line with the GOC's commitment to use registrants' fees responsibly. Expenditure which conflicts with the policy will not be authorised and therefore not reimbursed.

## **2. Responsibilities**

- 2.1 You must ensure that expense claims 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 Budget holders must ensure that all claims are directly related to and in the best interest of the GOC.

## **3. Authorisation**

- 3.1 Unless stated otherwise, all claims are to be submitted after the event but authorisation for the expense is needed, before claiming, by the Budget holder (in their absence, the department Director). \*For attendees who are invited to meetings such as council or committees, we infer the invitation as authorisation.
- 3.2 Claims submitted must be authorised for payment by the Budget holder (in their absence, the department Director) after reviewing documentary evidence and expense claim form.
- 3.3 The Head of Case Progression is responsible for authorising witness expense claims, including loss of earnings, locum fees and expert reports.
- 3.4 All claims must be supported by documentary evidence.

## **4. Expenses**

- 4.1 The GOC does not use the services of a travel agent. Requests for travel or accommodation must be emailed to Facilities using the standard form (Appendix 1)
- 4.2 Except with prior permission, all travel and hotel bookings must be made via the GOC Facilities team.

## 5. Travel and Subsistence Costs for Members, Advisers and Witnesses

- 5.1 For one-day events it is expected that those who live within two hours' travelling distance of the GOC offices or their official destination, will travel on the day.
- 5.2 For events lasting two or more consecutive days, those who live more than 1.5 hours' travel distance of the GOC offices or their official destination, can apply for hotel accommodation.
- 5.3 For travel to Council or Committee meetings or other GOC business, expenses can be claimed for the following:
  - (i) the most cost-efficient travel, which will usually be standard class and fixed return train travel;
  - (ii) the cost of travel from the claimant's main home in the UK or the actual cost of travel, whichever is lower;
  - (iii) air travel, where rail travel is not possible or more expensive, after obtaining advance permission;
  - (iv) travel by private car, at **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 and tolls on receipt of evidence. Travel by private car into London (within the M25) will not be reimbursed except in exceptional circumstances, in which case the congestion charge may also be claimable;
  - (v) travel by motorcycle, at **24 pence per mile**;
  - (vi) travel by bicycle, at **20 pence per mile**;
  - (vii) travel on the Transport for London (TFL) network, reimbursement of the actual fare on receipt of evidence (e.g. Oyster statement or bank statement). Taxi fares will not be reimbursed within London, except for exceptional circumstances and with prior permission;
  - (viii) in the event of business meetings finishing earlier than expected, claimants will be expected to fund the additional cost of any early return themselves.
- 5.4 Where a Council or Committee member holds a travel pass allowing a discount (for example the Senior Citizens pass), sharing these details will minimise the cost to the GOC.
- 5.5 Expenses will be reimbursed **against receipts** up to the following limits:
  - (i) for refreshments, up to **£8.33** per day plus VAT (**£10.00**) for absences of more than 3 hours including the period 12-2pm;
  - (ii) for dinner, up to **£20.00** per day plus VAT (**£24.00**) for absences including a whole working day;

- (iii) for accommodation and breakfast up to **£150.00** plus VAT for each night's absence in London (**£180.00**) and **£100.00** plus VAT outside London (**£120.00**). This may not include any extras (e.g. alcohol or newspapers), for which you must pay separately;
- (iv) a **£25.00** 'friends and family' overnight allowance if you stay with friends and family instead of a hotel. This covers all costs including accommodation, evening meal and breakfast. No claim can be made by anyone staying in their own property.

5.6 Expense claims may not include alcohol or optional gratuities.

## 6. Hotel Accommodation

- 6.1 All accommodation must be booked through the Facilities team. The GOC will book accommodation that is within the overnight allowance and within reasonable distance of the location (generally up to 30 minutes' travel from the hotel).
- 6.2 This will usually mean 3\* - 4\* accommodation or equivalent to Premier Inn or Hilton Express hotels. Alternative accommodation, including 5\* hotels, will be considered if cheaper options are not available within a reasonable distance of the location.
- 6.3 If you require reasonable adjustments or have other concerns about the booking, please notify the Facilities team at the earliest opportunity.
- 6.4 If the booking needs to be cancelled, please contact the Facilities team or, if that is not practical, the hotel directly, to avoid hotel charges.

## 7. Insurance

- 7.1 All travel for GOC purposes is covered by travel and accident insurance with world coverage. Further information can be obtained from the Facilities manager.

## 8. Reward Schemes

- 8.1 You may retain frequent flyer programme benefits, airline club memberships and credit card reward programmes at your own expense. However, such participation must not influence selection, and the most cost-effective option must be taken regardless.

## 9. Witness expenses

- 9.1 The GOC will refund witness expenses for attending an FTP Committee hearing, at the rates specified in this policy.

- 9.2 We will not normally reimburse the cost of a non-witness attending a hearing. Exceptions must be raised in advance with the Head of Case Progression, e.g. if someone is needed to accompany a child, elderly/disabled or vulnerable witness, or if a witness needs to bring a carer for their child.

## 10. Expert witnesses

- 10.1 You may be called to give evidence, usually opinion evidence, because of your expertise in a particular field. The GOC will agree fees in advance, for preparing a report and attending a hearing. Expenses for travel and accommodation will be reimbursed in accordance with this policy.

## 11. Loss of earnings

- 11.1 Many employers will allow paid time off to attend hearings. If not, the GOC will reimburse net loss of earnings subject to documentary evidence (e.g. pay slip or letter from your employer). Unless the GOC has called you as an “expert witness” or a “professional witness” (as defined below), you will be reimbursed up to the following rates:

For employed witnesses:

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

For self-employed witnesses:

- £42.95 for a period of 4 hours or less; and
- £85.90 per day for a period exceeding 4 hours.

- 11.2 You may be called as a **professional witness** if you are a pharmacist, doctor, dentist, veterinary surgeon, solicitor, barrister or accountant (ie a member of ICAEW, ICAS, CIPFA, CIMA or ACCA), to give evidence on **matters arising out of your profession**. If you believe this applies to you, you must obtain prior written authorisation from the Head of Case Progression.

Reimbursement will be subject to documentary evidence, and paid up to the following limits for professional witnesses set out in the Public Legal Services Division’s “Guide to Allowances under Part V of the Costs in Criminal Cases (General) Regulations 1986” , which were as follows at September 2016”<sup>1</sup>,

- £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 the cost of employing a locum to cover the period of your absence. You must obtain prior authorisation from the Head of Case Progression, and any claim that has not been authorised in advance will not be reimbursed. The claim must be supported by a receipted invoice for the locum fees and reimbursement will be up to the daily rate paid to members (£319.00 as at 1 March 2021). [INSERT LINK TO MEMBER RATES ON WEBSITE]

## **13. Missing Receipts / Tickets**

13.1 In the event of missing receipts/ tickets, please seek duplicates or produce alternative proof of payment. If no proof of payment is provided, refunds over £10 will be granted only with a written explanation and approval from the departmental Director, Director of Resources or Chief Executive & Registrar, for audit purposes.

## **14. Notes**

14.1 We expect employees, Council, Committee and Panel members, Advisers, Visitors and Witnesses to pay for their own subsistence and then claim reimbursement, however we do understand that sometimes this is not possible. Any exceptions must be discussed in advance with the budget holder, or with the Head of Case Progression for witnesses.<sup>1</sup>

14.2 Receipts are required for all expense claims. Items not supported by receipts or other evidence will not be authorised and therefore not reimbursed. Ticket counterfoils and boarding passes for airline tickets, and original receipts for all incidental expenses, must be attached to expense claims. For Oyster travel and other forms of contactless payment, highlighted extracts of statements must be provided.

14.3 The Head of Finance will monitor exceptions to the policy, and report them to the Audit, Risk and Finance Committee quarterly.

14.4 Claims for subsistence may not exceed the daily limits shown except with the agreement of the Budget holder or the Head of Case Progression for witnesses, e.g. special dietary or seating requirements in the case of disability.

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

14.6 Claims are normally paid monthly, in accordance with the timetable

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<sup>1</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/592291/guide-allowances-under-part-v-costs-criminal-cases-general-september-2016.doc](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/592291/guide-allowances-under-part-v-costs-criminal-cases-general-september-2016.doc)

published by Finance.

14.7 You must submit claims within two months from the date of expenditure.

Claims submitted after the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month will be reimbursed the following month.

## 15. Appendix 1: Travel and Accommodation Request Form

### Travel and Accommodation Form

<b>Your details</b>					
<b>Full name:</b> <i>(As appears on your passport)</i>					
<b>Email:</b>					
<b>Tel/mobile number:</b>					
<b>Reason or name of meeting:</b>					
<b>Your travel</b>					
<b>Departure date</b>	(DD/MM/YY)		<b>Departure time</b>	(24:00HR CLOCK)	
<b>From</b>			<b>To</b>		
<b>Return date</b>			<b>Return time</b>		
<b>From</b>			<b>To</b>		
<b>Additional requests</b> <i>(ie Underground ticket, airport-city transport, taxi)</i>					
<b>Your accommodation</b>					
<b>Arrival date</b>	(DD/MM/YY)		<b>Departure date</b>	(DD/MM/YY)	
<b>Hotel location</b>			<b>Room type</b>		
<b>Additional details</b>					
<p>Please submit your form to:          FAO: Office Assistant          Email: <a href="mailto:meetingroom@optical.org">meetingroom@optical.org</a>          Or          Mail: 10 Old Bailey, London EC4M 7NG</p>					
<b>Internal Use Only</b>					
<b>Date Received</b>	__ / __ / __	<b>Date Processed</b>	__ / __ / __	<b>Date of Completion &amp; sent to traveler</b>	__ / __ / __
<b>Approval email received on</b>	__ / __ / __	<b>Approved by</b>		<b>Nominal code- Cost Code</b>	