Australasian Universities Air Travel Consortium (AUATC)
Guidelines on University Air Travel 2022

Preamble

1. AUATC recognizes that aviation as presently practiced, damages the environment and is unsustainable.
2. Universities and the research and education system in which they are embedded have developed so as to become increasingly reliant on air travel for many purposes.
3. To ensure a transition to a safe future, conventional air travel should be reduced. Universities, as a servant of the public good, should play an active role by managing their practices and transforming the research and education sector.

"Academia is generally carbon intensive. Many academics are highly aeromobile to an extent that is now being framed as a form of 'climate hypocrisy'. Technological advances are not enough to reduce the negative impacts of flying, and behaviour change is needed." – *Higham & Font, Journal of Sustainable Tourism 2020, 28(1) 1-9*.

Guidelines

- Air travel should be comprehensively measured and publicly reported, including
  - work-related air travel by academic and professional staff and students, and
  - air travel by staff and students to and from the university.
- Emission calculations should include the non-CO_2 impacts of aviation (as evaluated by, e.g., Toitū Envirocare).
- An aviation emissions reduction of at least 30% relative to 2019 level averaged over 2023–2030 should be targeted. A progressive reduction target of 50–75% by 2030 should be considered.
- University travel policies should take into account greenhouse gas emissions when evaluating the relative value of trips. Unnecessary flights should be eliminated and essential flights prioritized. Broad engagement including with academic experts in climate change mitigation is recommended in development of the policy.
- Principles of a just transition should be followed including equity for early career, female, Māori, Pasifika and Indigenous members of the university and for people with disabilities, while mitigating any inequities in the current system. Incentives for flying less should be considered alongside restrictions. Administrative and financial processes should be fair and transparent.
- Alternatives to flying, primarily online equivalents, should be well resourced.
- Universities should support members who make an individual pledge to minimize or eliminate flying.
- There is a wide range of views on the validity of offsets. To reach a claim of carbon neutrality, some component of offsetting may be essential, but should not remove a primary focus on reducing gross emissions.
- Universities should consider adopting carbon budgets for total air travel.
- An internal carbon charge may serve to focus attention on the climate impact of flying; to raise funds for other decarbonization projects; and to act as a disincentive.
- Universities should engage with the research/education sector and government to ensure a coordinated reduction of flying and support their members to do likewise.