

Expenses Policy

For Open session

Board meeting:

21 May 2025

Agenda item:

11

Action:

- For noting ☐
- For discussion ☐
- For decision ☒

Purpose

To review and agree additions to ARB's expenses policy.

Recommendations

The Board is asked to approve ARB's updated expenses policy to make provision for overseas travel.

Annexe

Annexe A – ARB Expenses Policy.

Author/Key Contact

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1. Open Session

2. Background and Key points

- 2.1. To support good governance it is important that Board members, staff and any associates incurring expenses in carrying out their duties, are clear about what is allowable and appropriate. Having a clear policy helps ensure consistency and good decision making.
- 2.2. As ARB's international work and participation in network events is expanding, it is clear that there are gaps in ARB's expenses policy and that international travel is not currently covered in a clear and transparent manner. This risks inconsistent decision making and potential conflicts of interest.
- 2.3. The Framework Agreement¹ with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) states the following in relation to our travel expense policy:

'6.7. The travel expenses of the Board members will be tied to the rates allowed to the staff of the ARB. Reasonable actual costs will be reimbursed.'
- 2.4. The Senior Leadership Group (SLG) has reviewed and updated the policy as set out in Annexe A. It was also reviewed by the People Committee at its February 2025 meeting, at which all Committee members agreed with the updated policy.
- 2.5. The Executive carried out benchmarking before updating the draft policy including reviewing central government policies and analogous regulatory bodies. The proposed approach to international travel, as set out at Annex A, is consistent with other bodies (although there is some small variation in the eligibility for premium economy or business class travel depending on length of flight). The policies of HM Treasury, MHCLG, Defra, the General Medical Council, RCVS and the Health and Care Professions Council were also reviewed. Nearly all use a similar scale regarding travel class on flights.
- 2.6. The policy takes into account the need to keep travel costs as low as possible with a recognition that for longer, intercontinental travel, particularly across time zones premium economy or business class may be appropriate. It should be noted that all international travel by staff requires a written business case and approval by the Chief Executive and Registrar.
- 2.7. The changes made relate to international travel only. The rest of the policy is unchanged.
- 2.8. Noting that the policy should apply to both Staff and Board members, the Board is asked to review and approve the adjustments.

¹ [Framework Agreement - Architects Registration Board](#)

3. Resource Implications

- 3.1. The approach within the policy ensures that where international travel is required for ARB business there is a clear, consistent approach to flight travel and costs. The approach enables clarity and transparency regarding the financial implications of staff expenses. The policy will also support clearer and more accurate budgeting in future in relation to this area.

4. Risk Implications

- 4.1. It is important to have clarity around the expenses policy in an area that could give rise to potential fraud and high expense claims for the organisation that relies on the profession for its funding.
- 4.2. A clear, Board approved policy, ensures transparency around the expenses policy will mitigate such risks. As there is no current provision in the policy for international travel, authorisation including decisions on class of travel for Board and staff sits solely with the Chief Executive which is not appropriate. The new policy will remove this risk.
- 4.3. Whilst ARB is an independent statutory regulator, it is also an Arms' Length Body and sponsored by the MHCLG. As a result it is important that we take into account relevant expectations set out with our Framework Agreement. Failure to take the relevant expectations set out in the Framework Agreement could ultimately lead to a breakdown in trust between ARB and Department, lead to greater levels of scrutiny and potential reputational damage. In developing the approach to overseas travel we are observing the relevant expectations within the Agreement, and believe that we have developed a proportionate and transparent approach.
- 4.4. We are conscious that air travel is particularly damaging to the environment and remain committed to keeping air travel to a minimum. This is why all staff travel still requires a full business case.

5. Equality and Diversity implications

- 5.1. The implications around equality and diversity have been taken into account when producing and updating the policy to ensure that it is accessible to all.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1. The Board is asked to approve the updated expenses policy to make provision for overseas travel.

ANNEXE A

Expense Policy

ARB will reimburse expenses properly incurred in the performance of your duties and in accordance with this policy.

The principle of this policy is that expenses must be incurred wholly, exclusively and necessarily in the execution of your duties for ARB.

It is important to remember that all claims under this policy may be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act and subject to public scrutiny. A summary of Board member expenses is published within the ARB Annual Reports and Accounts, which is in turn published on the ARB website.

- Any expenses outside the scope or claimable limits set out below will be either removed (if they are not in scope) or reduced to the maximum allowable claim (if they are over the claimable limit). The only rare exception to this may be when participating in networking events or hosting working lunches/dinners with key stakeholders. Anything that could be categorised as 'entertainment' would need Director or CEO approval in advance.
- **All expense claims must be submitted by the 5th of the month following the date of the expense incurred**, and within at least three months of the meeting/event date, claims made outside this timescale will be rejected.
- All expenses must be supported by itemised VAT receipts, or tickets for travel.

Travel

Please always consider train travel wherever possible as this is a more sustainable method of travel

Reasonable travel and subsistence expenses may be claimed when undertaking ARB business. This might include travelling to Board or Committee meetings, annual reviews or attending other stakeholder meetings as an ARB representative as agreed by the Board Chair or Chief Executive Officer and Registrar.

Train: Tickets should be purchased using the most economical option (usually standard class, fixed fares) and always in advance. We will only reimburse fully flexible tickets, or tickets purchased on the day of travel in exceptional circumstances. A first-class ticket may be booked where it is cheaper than a standard class ticket at the time of advanced booking (evidence must be provided of this). Use of any available concessionary discounts while travelling on ARB business would be appreciated.

If a meeting is cancelled by ARB, the cost of the fare is claimable if it is not possible to exchange or refund the purchased ticket.

Bus/Tube: When using buses or London Underground, you can use Oyster or contactless. You will need to provide a receipt for travel, either by way of your monthly credit/debit card statement if contactless, or by way of your Oyster card statements. You cannot claim for Oyster top up, only individual journeys.

Taxi: Taxis should not be used except in exceptional circumstances (examples being where shared taxi use is more cost effective than public transport, travelling early morning (pre-6am) or late at night (post 8pm)). If taxis are required because of a medical condition or disability, authorisation should be sought in advance (for Board Members this should be from the Director of Governance). All taxi claims must include receipts and the claim should include the start and finish points, and the time and purpose of the journey. Tips cannot be claimed.

Mileage Allowance: Travel by car should only be considered where public transport cannot easily be used. If travel by public transport is not possible, car mileage can be claimed at 45p per mile, motorcycle mileage at 24p per mile and bicycle mileage at 20p per mile.

Domestic Air Travel: Air travel can be used in the UK when it is the most cost-effective and convenient way to travel. Economy class must be used at all times. No overseas travel may be claimed unless approval has been given in advance by the Chief Executive Officer.

International Air Travel: When booking flights staff must ensure they achieve value for money by using an ARB approved or recognised ABTA or ATOL registered travel agency, or by using well known online booking search engines to ensure a competitive price. If using a booking engine, you should get at least two quotes at the same time to demonstrate value for money.

All international travel must be approved by the Chief Executive Officer prior to making a booking and a business case provided. The business case should evidence the connection to the delivery of ARB's statutory function and current Business Plan. International travel should not be booked until a short business case has been completed and approved by the Chief Executive Officer. Where a request is made for Business Class travel the CEO's approval will be required.

All travel should be in economy class unless it meets the criteria set out below:

- For flights of less than 6 hours should be via economy class only.
- For flights of between 6 hours and 10 hours a business class flight may be purchased but lower class should be considered, such as premium economy, if the flight is a day flight.
- For flights of over 10 hours a business class flight may be purchased subject to approval from the relevant Director and CEO.

A business case is required and the criteria applied equally, when booking international travel for board members (in all likelihood the Chair) or staff.

Subsistence

Overnight accommodation: ARB will pay for hotel accommodation and meals where necessary; you should always consult with the meeting organiser before booking accommodation. For meetings held in or around the office, ARB will have a negotiated rate with a local hotel which we can book on your behalf. If Board members are booking their own accommodation, ARB will reimburse reasonable costs where receipts are provided up to the following maximum amounts (all rates to include VAT):

Hotel stay	£186 with breakfast/£176 without breakfast
Stay with friends/family	£25 additional contribution to evening meal (must include a receipt)

Meals: If attending an ARB meeting which extends over mid-day, lunch will usually be provided. Otherwise, the following expenses can be claimed when travelling on ARB authorised business, and when claims are accompanied by a valid VAT receipt (credit/debit vouchers on their own are not acceptable):

Item	Claimable when	Amount
Breakfast	Leaving home to travel pre 7am. Where overnight accommodation does not provide breakfast.	£15
Lunch	ARB does not provide lunch	£15
Dinner	You are away from home post 8pm	£50

Please note: For international travel these limits may need to be overridden, and reasonable local costs will be reimbursed.

Out of pocket expenses: If you are staying overnight or are making a long journey, a maximum of £5 per day can be claimed for incidentals such as refreshments, newspapers, Wi-Fi access etc.

Business Case for Overseas Travel

Please complete the form below and submit to your departmental director for 1st approval and CEO for final approval **before** booking any international travel.

Please complete ALL sections below	
Please state the reason(s) for travel.	
What other alternatives have been considered that could achieve the desired outcomes without the need for travel?	
What are the specific objectives of the travel & expected deliverables and benefits to ARB.	
What destination(s) & activities will be undertaken.	
Budget Estimated travel costs (flights, accommodation, meals, etc.) Other expenses (transportation, visa fees, etc.)	
Proposed travel dates.	
First approval - Departmental Director	
Final approval - CEO	