General Optical Council

Expenses policy

Status of document: Draft			
Version: v7			
Date of approval: 2 July 2026			
Effective from: 1 August 2026			
Owner: Remuneration Committee			
Author: Director of Corporate Services			
Planned next review date: June 2029			
Version	Author	Date	Changes
7	Director of Corporate Services	2 July 2026	Change log created

Contents

Summary table

The table below is a summary of available expenses allowances. Please check the relevant policy section carefully for how to apply these.

Claim	Allowance	Policy section
Trains and coaches	• Standard class at the most economical rate • Booked in advance where possible	7.4
Bus, tube and tram	• Oyster and contactless permitted	7.5
E-bikes	• 20p per mile	7.6
Cars, EVs and motorcycles	• Car: 55p per mile, then 25p after 10,000 miles. • EVs: charging costs. • Motorcycle: 24p per mile.	7.7
Taxi	• Limited circumstances • Tips not reimbursed	7.11
Air travel	• Budget holder approval required For international travel: • Under 6 hours Economy • 6-10 hours Premium Economy may be approved • Over 10 hours Business Class may be approved	8
Subsistence	• Breakfast: up to £15 a day • Lunch: up to £20 a day • Dinner: up to £35 a day • Incidentals such as Wi-Fi and refreshments: £12 a day	9
Hotels	• London: £180 including VAT. • Outside London: £150 including VAT • Friends and family allowance: £25 per night • Self-catering accommodation: In line with hotel costs plus allowance of £25	10

1. Purpose

1.1 At the GOC, we are committed to ensuring our policies and practices are fair, inclusive and accessible for everyone. We recognise that people may have different needs and circumstances, and we will take a proportionate approach to ensure no one is disadvantaged when applying this policy. This includes considering accessibility, health, disability, caring responsibilities and other relevant factors, and making reasonable adjustments where needed.

1.2 We are committed to meeting our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty, and to applying this policy in a way that reflects our values of fairness, respect and empathy.

1.3 This policy sets out the rules for the reimbursement of travel, accommodation, subsistence and other business-related expenditure incurred while carrying out duties on behalf of the GOC.

1.4 It ensures that all expenditure is:

- necessary and reasonable;
- transparent and auditable;
- demonstrates value for money; and
- is consistent with the principles of fairness, accessibility and sustainability.

1.5 All claims made under this policy may be subject to Freedom of Information requests and public scrutiny.

2. Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all GOC employees, workers and contractors, including Council, committee, panel members and witnesses.

2.2 Expenses are reimbursed only where they are wholly, exclusively and necessarily incurred in performing GOC duties.

3. Principles

3.1 All expense claims must meet the following principles:

- Value for money - the most economical, reasonable option, taking into account accessibility, health, safety and wellbeing needs.
- Necessity - only expenses required for GOC business will be reimbursed.
- Transparency - claims must be supported by itemised receipts as well as approval evidence and clear cost comparisons where required.
- Fairness and accessibility - reasonable adjustments and flexibility must be considered to ensure individuals are not disadvantaged due to a disability, health condition or other access needs.
- Financial wellbeing – individuals should not be out of pocket when carrying out GOC duties. Consideration should be given to upfront or significant costs, and appropriate support provided.

- Sustainability - lower carbon travel options must be used where viable.
- Where there is uncertainty in how this policy should be applied, individuals and approvers should refer to these principles and take a reasonable and pragmatic approach.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 Claimants must complete the expenses claim form (annex A, along with itemised receipts or equivalent evidence. Claims must be within two calendar months of the expense being incurred, apart from at the end of the GOC financial year (31 March) when claims related to the previous financial year must be submitted no later than 15 April.

4.2 Claimants are responsible for ensuring expense claims are reasonable, necessary and comply with this policy.

4.3 Budget holders and/or directors are responsible for ensuring claims are legitimate, necessary and appear reasonable. Budget holders and directors must only approve claims only where full supporting evidence is provided and take account of fairness, accessibility and any reasonable adjustments required. Approval decisions should be applied consistently and proportionately, ensuring individuals are not disadvantaged and avoiding unnecessary barriers to legitimate claims.

4.4 The finance team are responsible for processing approved claims in accordance with published timetables and monitoring compliance. Finance will report exceptions quarterly to the Senior Management Team.

5. Authorisation rules

5.1 Unless stated otherwise, claims require budget holder and/or Director approval in advance. In the budget holder’s absence, the departmental Director may approve. Certain travel (e.g., air travel or exceptions) requires escalated approval, as set out in later in the policy.

6. Booking travel and accommodation

6.1 All bookings should be made as early as possible to secure best value.

6.2 Employees and Council members are normally expected to book their own travel and accommodation within policy limits.

6.3 A manager may request the support of the facilities team when making a booking, for example, where travel is complex or involves a group of individuals.

6.4 The facilities team will book travel and accommodation for everyone other than employees and Council members, including committee and panel members, workers, witnesses, and contractors, using the request form (appendix 1).

6.5 We recognise that funding upfront or high travel costs may not be manageable for everyone. Where needed, alternative arrangements such as advance booking by the facilities team or other support should be put in place. Please speak to your manager or meeting organiser.

7. Travel

7.1 Travel arrangements should take account of individual accessibility, health, safety and caring needs where relevant, and appropriate adjustments will be supported.

7.2 Travel timing and claims for travel expenses:

- For one day events, individuals whose usual home address is within two hours of the destination should normally travel on the day.
- For events with an early start or late finish, or events lasting two or more days, overnight accommodation may be approved where door to door travel exceeds two hours.
- All non-employees may claim for travel to the GOC office, with advance approval and subject to their place of work as set out in the contract
- Employees can claim for travel that takes place outside the employee’s contracted day and will be reimbursed within the amounts set out in this policy (for example, weekend attendance at optical conferences).
- Employees cannot claim travel to their contractual GOC workplace
- Where employees are required to attend an alternative London location within the M25, they may claim the difference between their normal commute and additional business travel cost.

7.3 If a meeting finishes earlier than expected, any extra cost of changing travel arrangements will usually need to be covered personally. An exception may be considered where the original booking would involve an unreasonable wait before travelling home, or where there is another reasonable justification.

7.4 If a meeting overruns beyond the planned finish time, reasonable additional travel, accommodation or subsistence costs incurred as a direct result may be claimed, provided they are necessary and supported by appropriate evidence. Consideration will also be given to accessibility, health, safety and wellbeing factors, including where travelling late at night would be unreasonable or unsafe.

7.5 For train and coach travel:

- Standard class, booked in advance at the most economical rate
- Fully flexible or same-day fares reimbursed only where this can be justified (e.g. meeting end time uncertain, cost difference not significant)
- First class may be booked if the cost of the ticket is the same price or cheaper than standard class at time of booking (evidence required). Where you book first class travel that is more expensive than standard class, we will only reimburse the cost of standard class (evidence required)
- Costs of nonrefundable tickets for cancelled meetings can be claimed.

- Please use railcards where applicable, for example a 26 to 30 Railcard or Senior Railcard
- Please check any additional booking charges through third-party booking websites. Sometimes it is cheaper to book directly with the transport provider (such as the train operating company).

7.6 For bus, tube and tram travel:

- Oyster/contactless travel is permitted.
- Claims must include evidence of individual journeys (not top-ups).
- Bank statements, suitably redacted, may be used where applicable.

7.7 The use of bicycles and e-bikes is encouraged where safe and practical to do so, including on ‘pay for/rental’ bicycles available in many towns and cities. Cycling is reimbursed at 20p per mile, or the cost of the ‘pay for/rental’ bicycle as evidenced through receipts/ app screenshots. You may use personal or rental bikes/e-bikes for business travel, provided you follow relevant road laws and safety rules, including holding the appropriate insurance.

7.8 Mileage for electric vehicles (EVs), cars and motorcycles may be claimed only where public transport is not reasonable. You may use personal or rental cars/ EVs for business travel, provided you follow relevant road laws and site safety rules, including holding the appropriate insurance. Mileage will be reimbursed at the following rates:

- Car: 55p per mile, then 25p after 10,000 miles.
- for EVs, charging costs where receipts or app screenshots are provided.
- Motorcycle: 24p per mile.

7.9 The GOC reserves the right to request supporting evidence (e.g. route confirmation or map), for example, if a claim appears unusual, excessive, or inconsistent with expectations.

7.10 Car travel within the M25 is not normally reimbursed, unless there is a clear business, accessibility or safety need such as: accessibility; availability of public transport; transporting equipment; personal safety (e.g. evening meeting); or other justified operational reasons.

7.11 The congestion charge/ultra low emission zone (ULEZ) may be reimbursed where car use is approved, as set out above. Parking and tolls will be reimbursed on provision of receipts.

7.12 Taxis should normally be used only in limited circumstances. Examples include where shared taxi use is more cost effective than public transport, where heavy luggage is being carried, or where travel takes place before 6am or after 8pm. Taxis may also be used where public transport is infrequent or unavailable, or where accessibility, health or safety reasons apply. Advance approval should be sought where possible. All taxi claims must include a receipt, and your expense claim must show the start point, end point, time and purpose of the journey. Tips are not reimbursed.

8. Air Travel

8.1 Air travel is permitted only where it is overall the most cost effective, practical and timely option. Travellers must retain cost comparisons with alternatives (e.g. rail). Economy class is the default unless criteria in paragraphs 7.4 apply.

8.2 Alternative modes of transport are encouraged where possible. Domestic air travel is permitted where cost, timeliness, practicality and welfare factors support this.

8.3 Approval:
- Budget Holder approval required.
- Chief Financial Officer approval required where total cost exceeds the threshold levels set out in this policy.

8.4 International air travel must be approved in advance by the Chief Executive and Registrar. A business case, developed by the budget holder and team member, must demonstrate:
- Alignment with statutory functions or the business plan
- Why remote attendance is not feasible
- Cost and timing comparisons with alternatives
- Class of flight is determined by journey time (which is the total door-to-door time including travel to/from airport, flight and layovers) and accessibility/additional circumstances:
  - Under 6 hours → Economy
  - 6-10 hours → Premium Economy may be approved for day flights or where better value than economy
  - Over 10 hours → Business Class may be approved by department director and Chief Executive and Registrar where it is justified by business need or traveller wellbeing.
  - Lower-cost classes must still be considered first.
  - In accessibility and additional circumstances, alternative travel or upgraded classes may be approved. Supporting evidence may be required.

9. Subsistence

9.1 Subsistence allowances are as follows:
- Breakfast: up to £15 a day when travelling commences before 7am and where overnight accommodation does not provide breakfast as part of the booking.
- Lunch: up to £20 a day for absences of more than 3 hours including 12–2pm.
- Dinner: up to £35 a day for full day absences.
- Incidentals such as Wi-Fi and refreshments (including for overnight/long journeys): up to £12/day, and where not provided as part of the meeting/event.

9.2 Other allowances:

- Alcohol will not be reimbursed.
- Restaurant service charges where applied to the bill will be reimbursed.
- Other voluntary gratuities will not be reimbursed.
- Lunch will usually be provided at GOC meetings.
- Where individuals have specific dietary, medical or religious requirements, reasonable flexibility may be applied to these limits where necessary.

10. Hotel Accommodation

10.1 Hotels booked will be within reasonable distance of the venue (approx. 30 minutes travel by public transport).

10.2 Typical standard: 3- or 4-star hotels, for example Premier Inn or Hampton by Hilton may be used only where no suitable lower cost options are available, or where there is a clear business or accessibility need.

10.3 Accommodation should take account of accessibility, safety and wellbeing needs where relevant.

10.4 Maximum reimbursable costs per night:

- London: £180 including VAT.
- Outside London: £150 including VAT.
- Friends and family allowance: £25 per night if staying with family or friends. Not payable if staying in your own home or the home of an employee.
- Self-catering accommodation: the cost should be broadly in line with standard hotel rates. An allowance of £25 per night may also be claimed for the purchase of food for self-catering (excluding alcohol).

10.5 Where it is not possible to secure suitable accommodation within the maximum nightly rates set out in this policy, individuals should speak to the meeting organiser before making a booking. This may occur due to limited availability, major local events, accessibility requirements, safety considerations, or wellbeing needs. In such cases, approval may be given for accommodation above the stated limits where appropriate. If issues arise in securing suitable accommodation, individuals should inform the organiser at the earliest opportunity.

11. Operational incidentals

11.1 Operational incidentals are small, essential expenses that may be incurred while carrying out GOC business away from the office. These costs are reimbursable where they are necessary, reasonable, and directly related to delivering GOC duties.

11.2 The following are types of examples of incidental operational expenses that may be claimed:

- Postage costs (e.g., sending documents while away from the office).
- Printing or photocopying required for operational purposes where no GOC facilities are available.

- Small administrative items required to complete business activities (e.g., envelopes, stationery).
- Essential communications costs (e.g., faxing, scanning, or secure document transmission where required).

11.3 All claims must be supported by:

- itemised receipts wherever possible, and
- a short explanation of why the incidental was required for GOC business.

11.4 Limits and approval:

- Claims must be reasonable and proportionate to the operational need.
- Where a pattern of regular incidentals emerges, employees should discuss alternative arrangements with their manager to ensure value for money.

11.5 Exclusions. The following will not be reimbursed:

- Personal administrative costs.
- Consumables that should be obtained through office-based resources (where possible).
- Any items purchased for personal convenience rather than operational necessity.

12. Insurance

All GOC travel is covered by GOC business travel and accident insurance. Details are available from the Facilities Manager. It is your responsibility to ensure that personal transport, such as cars and bikes, are appropriately insured for business use and that you observe relevant laws and regulations.

13. Reward schemes

13.1 Frequent-flyer points and reward schemes may be retained personally. They must not influence travel choices, which must remain cost effective.

14. Missing receipts / tickets

14.1 Where receipts are missing, you must try to obtain a duplicate or alternative evidence. Claims over £20 without proof require written explanation and approval from the department director, Chief Financial Officer or Chief Executive and Registrar.

15. Use of personal vehicles (non-contractual driving)

15.1 The use of a personal vehicle to travel to and from an individual's usual place of work is not considered business travel and is undertaken at the individual's own risk. Where travel is to a location other than the usual place of work, this may be treated as business travel and reimbursement will be in line with HMRC rates as set out in this policy. Reimbursement of mileage does not imply that the organisation requires or endorses the use of a personal vehicle over other forms of transport. The organisation does not require employees to drive as part of their role.

15.2 Individuals remain responsible for ensuring that:

- They hold a valid driving licence.
- The vehicle is roadworthy, taxed and has a valid MOT where required.
- Appropriate insurance is in place, including business use where applicable.
- They comply with all relevant road traffic legislation and the Highway Code, including prohibitions on using handheld mobile devices while driving and ensuring any hands-free use does not create a safety risk.
- They are fit to drive and do not drive when impaired.

15.1 Under the Health and Safety at Work. Act 1974, individuals must take reasonable care for their own safety and others affected by their actions, including when undertaking work related travel.

15.2 Managers should not require or assume that employees will use a personal vehicle. Approval relates to the expense, not the mode of transport.

15.3 The organisation does not accept liability for loss, damage or incidents arising from the use of personal vehicles, except where required by law.

16. Additional Notes

16.1 Exceptions must be discussed in advance with the budget holder (or Head of Investigation for witnesses).

16.2 Claims may not exceed limits unless approved in advance for accessibility health and safety or dietary needs.

16.3 Claims will normally be paid monthly; claims submitted after the 15th will roll to the next month.

16.4 Any expenses not covered in this policy will be declined unless there is a clear and justifiable business or individual need agreed in advance.

16.5 All claims may be subject to public disclosure and audit.

GOC STAFF EXPENSES CLAIM FORM

General Optical Council

NAME:

DATE:

Rec No.	Date	Description	No of receipts attached	Nominal code -CC	Total Cost	Car *	Bus/Train	Underground	Taxi	Parking	Hotels	Refreshments	Dinner	Other
1					0.00									0.00
2					0.00									
3					0.00									
4					0.00									
5					0.00									
6					0.00									
7					0.00									
8					0.00									
9					0.00									
10					0.00									
11					0.00									
12					0.00									
13					0.00									
14					0.00									
15					0.00									
16					0.00									
17					0.00									
18					0.00									
19					0.00									
20					0.00									
21					0.00									
22					0.00									
23					0.00									
24					0.00									
					0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL AMOUNT OF EXPENSES CLAIMED					£ -									

Claims for Mileage - please ensure you provie the postcode for your journeys start and end location

	Starting post code	**Ending postcode**
Journey 1		
Journey 2		
Journey 3		

I confirm these expenses have been properly incurred for business purposes only and have not ben claimed from any other source.

Signature ____

Authorised Budget Holder

Signature:- __________
Name:- __________
Position:- __________
Date (of email authorisation) __________

MEMBERS, VISITORS AND WITNESSES EXPENSES CLAIM FORM

General Optical Council

Name:		**Tel No:**	
Reason for attendance:		**Email:**	
Event attended:		**Bank Account Number:**	
Date(s) attended:		**Sort Code:**	

Rec No.	Date	Description	No of receipts attached	INTERNAL USE Nominal code -CC	Total Cost	Car*	Bus/Train	Underground	Taxi	Parking	Hotels	Refreshments	Dinner	Other
1					£0.00									
2					£0.00									
3					£0.00									
4					£0.00									
5					£0.00									
6					£0.00									
7					£0.00									
8					£0.00									
9					£0.00									
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16					£0.00									
17					£0.00									
18					£0.00									
19					£0.00									
20					£0.00									
					£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
TOTAL AMOUNT OF EXPENSES CLAIMED					£0.00									

I confirm these expenses have been properly incurred in undertaking GOC businesses and have not ben claimed from any other source.

Signature ______________________________

Date ______________________________

GOC Office use only:

Authorised Budget Holder

Signature:- ______________________
Name:- ______________________
Position:- ______________________
Date (of email authorisation) ______________________

Claims for Mileage - please ensure you provie the postcode for your journeys start and end location

	Starting post code	Ending postcode
Journey 1		
Journey 2		
Journey 3		

Guidance Notes:
*** return completed form and receipts to the same email addresswhich sent the forms.*
*** Refer to Travel and Accomodation Policy (website link .... Will be updated when available)*
*** Claim within 2 months of attendance*