

# Wellcome Carbon Offsetting Guidance Notes for applicants

June 2024

Prepared by the Department of Social Responsibility and Sustainability.



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH  
Social Responsibility & Sustainability

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## Introduction

The following document provides guidance for University of Edinburgh staff on completing the Wellcome Application form section titled “Carbon Offsetting for Travel”. Advice is provided by Wellcome as to what steps the researcher should take to minimise their carbon emissions. Full details of Wellcome’s Carbon Offset Policy can be found at: <https://wellcome.ac.uk/funding/carbon-offset-policy-travel> . This policy notes:

If the host organisation has a carbon offset policy, researchers must follow this.

If the host organisation does not have a policy, researchers should:

- calculate the carbon footprint of their travel using a recognised standard (for example, the International Civil Aviation Organization for international flights and the UK government conversion factors for greenhouse gas 2019 for UK train journeys)
- choose their own carbon offset provider(s) – we recommend that they choose providers that:
  - spend nearly all or 100% of the cost on offsetting activities
  - support activities that remove carbon emissions from the atmosphere, not just reduce them
  - support activities that fit with the values of their host organisation and Wellcome.

New grant applicants should include the carbon offset costs in their grant application

The University of Edinburgh has its own [carbon sequestration scheme](#) to account for unavoidable carbon emissions such as those from air travel. In instances where carbon offsetting is not part of an organisation's sustainability strategy, Wellcome allows for funds raised through the Carbon Offsetting for Travel Policy to be used for an alternative sustainability initiative. As of November 2023, the University of Edinburgh's Forest and Peatland project was approved by Wellcome for use in this manner.

These additional sustainability projects will be delivered in partnership with the communities local to our sequestration sites, and could include:

- Funding a local school to plant trees or an orchard in their grounds
- Funding community groups to increase biodiversity in local spaces e.g. community gardens, allotments, parks, woodlands.
- Supporting outdoor learning and education in carbon and biodiversity for local groups / schools, this could include purchasing kit or equipment, delivering training courses and citizen science workshops.

Due to the commercial sensitivity of our land contracts, we are not able to disclose a single figure to be allocated against through the Forest and Peatland project. However, it is reported that the cost of carbon will be between £30 and £60 per tonne CO<sub>2</sub>e by 2030<sup>1</sup>. Because of this, we are requesting that the figure of £30 per Tonne CO<sub>2</sub>e is used to calculate the cost of carbon within Wellcome applications. This figure will be reviewed periodically over the coming years, and this document will be updated should there be material change to this figure.

In Spring 2022, the University of Edinburgh introduced a Sustainable Travel Policy. This policy aligns with the University's Climate Conscious approach to travel. It is essential that all University of Edinburgh travel, including applications submitted to Wellcome, adhere to the Sustainable Travel Policy. Further details can be found at: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/staff/business-travel>

The following guidance will assist in calculating the carbon emissions associated with your travel, in accordance with Wellcome's Carbon Offsetting Policy and University of Edinburgh's Sustainable Travel Policy.

## Wellcome Application Form: Carbon Offsetting

This section provides guidance for each question within the Carbon Offsetting section of the Wellcome Application form (as of February 2024). **The application form states that the total carbon offset costs requested should be input as a single line in the following table format.**

Wellcome application Question	Type	Description	How much carbon will this offset (in tonnes)?	Cost requested from Wellcome (£)
Question reference in this document	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4

**Additional Question (Q5):** Justification for travel and subsistence costs. (300 words maximum)

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<sup>1</sup>Cost of carbon in 2030 estimated at \$40–\$80 according to a report by the Carbon Pricing Leadership Coalition (2017):<https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2017/12/01/carbon-pricing>  
<https://www.carbonpricingleadership.org/report-of-the-highlevel-commission-on-carbon-prices/>

## Type (Wellcome Carbon Offset Policy Q1)

Choose “Carbon Offset” from the drop-down menu.

## Description (Wellcome Carbon Offset Policy Q2)

Input the text “Costs allocated to other sustainability initiatives through the University of Edinburgh’s Forest and Peatland programme, at a value of £30 / tonne CO<sub>2</sub>e” in the text box.

## How much carbon will this offset (in tonnes)? (Wellcome Carbon Offset Policy Q3)

Enter the number of tonnes.

The following steps should allow you to calculate your carbon emissions from travel. A table to assist in calculating carbon emissions from flights is provided in Appendix A.

### Step 1. Estimate your travel

Use the table in Appendix 1 to collate a list of probable locations expected to visit as part of this grant application and note down how frequently you are likely to travel to these locations.

The University of Edinburgh Sustainable Travel Policy (2021) states: “air travel is not permissible for travel within Great Britain, except in a limited number of exceptions”. Full details of the exceptions can be found at: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/staff/business-travel>

### Step 2. Calculate the corresponding carbon emissions

Once an estimated number of journeys has been established, for each journey, calculate the corresponding carbon emissions using the following online tool: <https://flightemissionmap.org/>

Important note: Ensure the carbon emissions calculated through this tool  
account for return flights.

Should calculating the exact travel journeys not be possible, the following carbon emissions provide estimates for select regions. These figures are calculated based on the average carbon emissions for University of Edinburgh journeys from 2018-19, and can be used to provide a reasonable estimate of carbon emissions.

Where a flight is not expected to be direct (e.g. Edinburgh to New York with a connection in Paris), it is best to use the flight emission map linked to above. Where this isn’t possible, please use the carbon emissions for the furthest region on the specific journey (USA East Coast in the example provided here).

Region	Carbon Emissions (per direct return flight, travelling in economy class) (Tonnes CO <sub>2</sub> e)
<b>United Kingdom, e.g. Belfast, London, Exeter (allowable with limited exceptions only)</b>	0.5 (0.1 for rail journeys within mainland Great Britain)
<b>Europe e.g. France, Turkey, Iceland</b>	0.6 (0.2 for rail journeys from Edinburgh to continental Europe)
<b>North Africa e.g. Egypt, Ivory Coast, Chad</b>	0.8
<b>USA – East Coast e.g. New York, Washington DC, Detroit</b>	1.7
<b>India and Central Asia e.g. India, Pakistan</b>	1.7
<b>Middle East e.g. Saudi Arabia, Qatar</b>	2.1

<b>Central America e.g. Costa Rica, Panama, Belize</b>	2.6
<b>East Asia e.g. China, Japan, South Korea</b>	3.1
<b>USA - West Coast e.g. California, Nevada</b>	3.2
<b>South East Asia e.g. Indonesia, Philippines, Cambodia</b>	3.8
<b>Sub-Saharan Africa e.g. Kenya, South Africa, Zambia</b>	3.9
<b>South America e.g. Columbia, Venezuela, Brazil</b>	4.1
<b>Australasia e.g. Australia, New Zealand</b>	6.9

### Step 3. Accounting for different flight classes.

The University of Edinburgh Sustainable Travel Policy (2021) notes that economy class must be used, except for reason of health or disability. First class air travel is not permitted for any reason on behalf of the University. Figures provided for journeys on the above tools are provided for economy class travel. Carbon emissions for other classes of travel are significantly higher due to the increased amount of space per passenger associated with these classes. Please multiply the above carbon emission figure with the following values:

- Premium Economy Class: x1.6
- Business Class: x2.9

**Please Note:** Wellcome's policy suggests using the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) tool for calculating emissions. This calculator does not account for the impact of Radiative Forcing (the additional warming effect of releasing particles high in the atmosphere), therefore does not provide a full reflection of global warming potential and impact on the climate. As such, **we do not recommend this tool for calculating carbon emissions**. Should you decide to use the ICAO tool, we recommend that each calculation should be multiplied by a further 1.9x to account for the effects of Radiative Forcing.

### Costs requested from Wellcome (£)? (Wellcome Carbon Offset Policy Q4)

Enter the total cost for carbon offsetting using the steps below.

Carbon offset costs = Tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e emitted x Cost per Tonne CO<sub>2</sub>e being offset

### Step 1. Establish the carbon emissions associated with your travel.

Use the total carbon emissions figure from travel calculated above

### Step 2. Multiply your carbon emissions (in tonnes) by the University's carbon cost:

University carbon cost: £30 per tonne CO<sub>2</sub>e (as noted earlier, this is the lower estimated cost of carbon in 2030 according to the Carbon Pricing Leadership Coalition).

### Justification for travel and subsistence costs. (300 words maximum) (Wellcome Carbon Application Additional Question - Q5)

In the text box, include the following text for University of Edinburgh applications:

*“In relation to the costs provided for carbon offsetting, the University of Edinburgh Forest and Peatland programme has been approved by Wellcome as a suitable alternative to offsetting, at a cost of £30 / tonne CO<sub>2</sub>e”*

Additional points that could be considered within the 300-word limit for this question:

- Why this travel is necessary to achieve the projects aims / objectives
- Why this travel cannot be completed through other means which would have lower carbon emissions (e.g. by land – whether by road, rail or sea; virtually; or through collaboration with a local partner)

## What happens post-award?

Once funding is awarded, ERO will manage the funding requests and reporting mechanisms with Wellcome, the Forest and Peatland Programme, and other relevant parties.

In order for ERO to be able to effectively track travel and request carbon offsetting funds from Wellcome, Researchers are requested to book travel through Diversity Travel. **Travel not booked through Diversity Travel will not be eligible for carbon offsetting through the Wellcome Carbon Offsetting for Travel Policy.**

## Finding out more

These guidelines have been developed by the Department of Social Responsibility and Sustainability and the Edinburgh Research Office to support applicants. We use data provided by our travel suppliers to establish carbon emissions for each journey taken on behalf of the University.

## Contact Us

If you have further queries regarding completing applications relevant to the Wellcome Trust Carbon Offset Policy, please contact your funding specialist at the Edinburgh Research Office: <https://research-office.ed.ac.uk/winning-research-funding/find-my-research-funding-specialist>

## Alternative Formats

This publication can be made available in alternative formats on request.

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