

2022/23 STUDENT FINANCE ENGLAND (SFE) TRAVEL GRANT

See <https://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/products/full-time-undergraduate-education/full-time-travel-grants-for-students-studying-abroad-or-on-a-work-placement/> and <https://www.gov.uk/travel-grants-students-england> for full guidance.

If you're intending to do any placement under the Turing scheme, please be aware that **if you apply for the SFE Travel Grant, this would make you ineligible for the Turing Scheme underrepresented background uplift**. You're therefore advised to consider if the Turing Scheme would be financially better for you before submitting any claim for the SFE Travel Grant. There's no deadline for submitting a Travel Grant Claim to SFE - you just need to have an approved means-tested loan for the abroad year - so you can wait to find out about any Turing funding before making a decision.

Send your SFE Travel Grant Claim Form and receipts to:

- **Student Finance England, PO Box 210, Darlington, DL1 9HJ**

Eligibility

The Travel Grant is available to students who have applied for a maintenance loan based on their household income (i.e. means-tested), and who are spending at least 50% of any qualifying period:

- studying at an overseas university or college;
- undertaking unpaid research at a university abroad.

The Travel Grant is not available to students on a work placement abroad, unless this is a *category d*) Special Case work placement (i.e. unpaid research at a university).

Qualifying Periods

SFE divide the year into 4 qualifying periods. The qualifying periods are:

1. 1st September* to 31st December
2. 1st January to 31st March
3. 1st April to 30th June
4. 1st July to 31st August

**If your year abroad starts before 1st September, the first qualifying period is deemed to start on that date and not 1st September.*

In order to claim reimbursement in any period, you must be away for at least 50% of the time in that period. SFE will map your host university term dates onto the qualifying periods to determine the amount of time away. The grant is not based on the total number of days away throughout the year, but on the number of days away in each period. Therefore, students at universities with early start and finish dates might only be able to claim **2 return journeys**, and would only be able to claim internal travel costs in periods 1 and 2, if the academic year does not extend to over 50% of the 3rd period. The maximum number of return journeys you can claim in an academic year is 3.

How to Apply

SFE check your eligibility for the Travel Grant when they assess your loan application. The University will then confirm your study abroad details to SFE (country, institution, term dates) at the beginning of June. Once this has happened you can start submitting claims for reimbursement. To do this, you will need to send a Travel Grant Claim Form to SFE, along with evidence of expenditure (receipts/invoices).

- **Travel Grant Claim Form**

Download the Travel Grant Claim Form from the Gov.UK website:

<https://www.gov.uk/student-finance-forms/y/uk-full-time/travel-grant>

It is advisable to **keep copies of everything you send to SFE.**

SFE will sometimes send you a **Course Abroad Form (CAB)**. If they do this, please contact placement-funding@leeds.ac.uk and we will check that SFE do have your year abroad details. The CAB is generally not required as the University will have already provided SFE with the details of your year abroad.

Funding Available

The reimbursement covers reasonable travel expenses and related costs, and the amount reimbursed depends on your household income. You must buy the most cost-effective tickets using the most economical and practical form of transport. We advise that you **keep screenshots of your searches** so that you can demonstrate to SFE that you booked the cheapest available travel option at the time.

- The first **£303** of travel costs is disregarded, which means this is deducted from the total amount of Travel Grant claimed over the year.
- If your household income exceeds the threshold of **£39,796**, there is a further £1 disregard for each additional £8.73 of household income which will reduce the amount reimbursed.

Example calculation (illustration only):

Household income £46,000; Amount claimed £2,500; Amount reimbursed
 $£2,500 - £303 - £710.65$ [$£46,000 - £39,796 = £6,204 \div £8.73 = £710.65$] =
 £1,486.35

You don't need to deduct the £303 or calculate the means-tested deduction. You should claim all your expenses and send receipts for everything to SFE. They will then reimburse you minus any deductions as outlined above.

Acceptable Claims

- For a full year placement, up to 3 return journeys between the UK and an overseas institution (this includes travelling from your home all the way through to your residence abroad, and the reverse journey);
- Any necessary daily travel costs while abroad for the purposes of attending the institution;
- The cost of medical insurance purchased for the purpose of studying abroad;

- 40% of a travel insurance premium, but the insurance policy must include medical coverage;
- The cost of visas and medical tests that are a mandatory condition of entry to the host country;
- The cost of any vaccinations required;
- Mandatory covid-19/PCR tests required to enter a country, or to return to the UK, or required by an airline.

You can submit claims throughout the year, and you don't have to wait until the end of your time abroad. You can print out multiple copies of the claim form to submit to SFE with your receipts/invoices.

FAQs

What's the earliest I can submit a claim?

As soon as your loan has been approved and the University has confirmed your study abroad details with SFE and that you have arrived abroad, you can submit a Claim Form and receipts/invoices for expenses. This is usually from around the beginning of June.

Is there a deadline for claiming?

There is no deadline as such. You must apply for your loan application for the year within 9 months of the start of the academic year. Once your loan is approved you can submit a claim at any time and there is no deadline for travel claims.

My host institution requires me to have regular covid tests that I have to pay for. Can I claim for these?

Where tests are mandatory, and the host institution requests the tests in writing or states this on their website, SFE have reimbursed these costs in previous years. This was based on the tests being done at test centres charging a fee set and regulated by the country's government and not done by private or commercial companies. If you are in this situation, please email placement-funding@leeds.ac.uk with evidence that the tests are mandatory and how much they would cost. We'll then ask SFE if the test costs can be claimed.

My host institution/the UK government requires me to go into a quarantine hotel. Can I claim for this?

No, SFE will not reimburse the costs of quarantine hotels or travel to a hotel.

I have to go into quarantine/isolation. Can I claim the costs of an early release test?

No, SFE will not reimburse the costs of tests that are not mandatory.

I've booked and paid for a flight but I've tested positive for covid and can't travel.

Will SFE reimburse me for any charges for changing flights or if I need to book a new flight with a different airline?

SFE will consider reimbursement in these situations. You would need to provide evidence of your positive test, and also that you had contacted your original airline about changing flights. If you have been able to change your flight but with the same airline, you should provide evidence of the original flight costs and charges incurred for changing this. If you have had to book a new flight (e.g. with a different carrier) you would need to show how much refund you received from the original airline company, or, if you did not receive any refund from them, you would need provide evidence that this company has a 'no refund' policy. You are advised to set out in writing to SFE exactly what you are claiming for - what costs and charges you have incurred and any refunds or offsets given to you by the airline.

I've booked and paid for a flight but it transits through a country that was on the green list when I booked it but is now on a restricted list meaning I would need to go into quarantine. Can I claim for changing flights so I don't have to quarantine?

The same would apply as above. You should submit a full explanation to SFE with evidence to support this. SFE will apply discretion in these situations.

I need to travel to London (or another city) to get a Visa (or other documents). Can I claim this journey?

No. SFE will not reimburse costs related to obtaining documents to enable you to travel abroad.

Can I claim postage/courier costs?

No. SFE will not reimburse costs related to obtaining documents to enable you to travel abroad.

I'm travelling to Europe and don't want to fly. Can I travel by rail or car?

You can claim travel by rail, provided your tickets are the most economical available at the time you book. SFE discourages claims for travel by car as these are generally not an economical option. If you are considering travelling by car, you should check this with SFE first with regard to what you can claim, and what evidence of costs you will need to provide.

Can I book two single journeys instead of a return journey?

Yes, this is acceptable. However, be aware that single journeys are often far more expensive than return journeys, but if it's the most economical option at the time booked then that's fine, e.g. if you don't have dates for your return at the time you book your outward journey and an open ticket would be potentially more expensive. SFE may ask you to provide price comparisons, so keep screen shots of the searches you do for travel options as proof.

Do I need to travel direct to my destination, or can a travel via another destination?

The expectation is that you will travel direct to your destination. Where the usual route is via a hub then this should be acceptable. If it looks as if the route taken purposely deviates for the purposes of making a stop-over (e.g. a couple of days' holiday) somewhere on route to the destination, then SFE may reject this. Any unusual travel arrangements should be checked with SFE for eligibility.

How much luggage can I claim for?

Generally, SFE will reimburse you for one standard hold bag (usually around 23kg). If you need to carry additional baggage (e.g. equipment) you should check with SFE about claiming for this. If you are charged an excess for a bag that is over your carrier's limit, you will not be able to claim this additional charge.

I'm carrying equipment that can't go in the hold. Can I claim for an additional seat?

No, you won't be reimbursed for an extra seat.

Do I convert expenses in another currency into Sterling?

No, you don't need to do this. Complete the Claim Form in the local currency. SFE will convert this based on the exchange rate on the date you made the payment. You'll be reimbursed in Sterling.

Do I need to have receipts/invoices translated?

It is not SFE policy to request professional translations with receipts/invoices, due to the additional cost you would incur for this. However, SFE do need to be able to identify which expenses the evidence relates to, so students may need to provide a translation. Where there are multiple receipts for the same repeat expense, it's fine to translate just one of these. You can't claim for translation costs.

I've lost my receipts/my expenses were cash and I don't have receipts. Can I still claim?

SFE will not reimburse you if you cannot provide receipts. Particularly, if you are claiming daily travel expenses, you must provide evidence of this expenditure. If you pay cash on local transport, you will need all the tickets. If you buy a travel card that you top-up with cash, you will need receipts for all the top-ups.

All reimbursements are at the discretion of SFE.

The University can only provide general information based on SFE guidelines and cannot confirm if SFE will accept particular expense claims or not.

Students are advised to check any travel arrangements with SFE if they are unsure.

Further information on placement years can be found at:

http://students.leeds.ac.uk/info/21518/study_abroad_and_work_placements

SFW, **SFNI**, and **SAAS** students should contact their loan provider for Travel Grant information.

The information and figures provided are for guidance only. The actual amount and terms of the Travel Grant will be determined by SFE. The figures quoted here have been obtained from Student Finance England: <https://www.gov.uk/travel-grants-students-england> [accessed 03/02/2022]