

NHS Education for Scotland

Medical ACT

Travel, Accommodation and Subsistence Guidance 2025

1. Background

NES assumed responsibility for overseeing the Medical ACT Travel, Accommodation and Subsistence (TAS) guidance following a request from the Scottish Government 2009 and the current guidance has been updated in 2025.

Universities all have their own separate travel and accommodation policies, but this document is intended to provide high level guidance. Programmes should use the NES Medical ACT guidance in combination with their own detailed policies when making decisions on the funding of travel accommodation and subsistence costs.

2. Overarching principles

The two over-arching principles which underpin the guidance are:

- To limit the use of Medical ACT funding for travel and subsistence to support placements at least 30 minutes away from the Medical School by public transport **AND** more than 20 miles by car.
- To encourage equity of approach across Scottish Universities for matriculated students on primary medical qualification (PMQ) degree programmes.

With the criteria for the use of TAS funding being defined as:

- The provision of accommodation where there is a direct cost to the NHS in Scotland.
- The provision of transport by NHS Boards or PMQ programmes to facilitate the transfer of students to suitable placements that are distant from the central teaching sites.

3. Operational Guidance for Medical Programmes

To ensure accountability and value for money, consistent operational guidelines on TAS expenditure have been agreed between NES and the Universities and are outlined below, with suggested changes highlighted.

Student claims for travel

- 1) The most cost effective form of transport should be used at all times.
- 2) Where significant train travel is expected, and the use of railcards would, over the course of the year, lead to savings in excess of a railcard cost the cost of the railcard would normally be claimable. The cost of any evidence, such as photographs, required for the railcard will not be reimbursed.
- 3) Reduced fares available when tickets are pre-booked should be used wherever possible. Costs over this rate need to be justified by the student to the University. Student timetables are usually known well in advance, and this will facilitate such practice.
- 4) Where bus travel is possible and the student is under 22, it is expected that the student should make use of the Young Persons' (under 22) Free Bus Travel Scheme (or any such equivalent scheme)
- 5) Mileage allowance for car travel which can be claimed to Medical ACT will be at the Public Transport rate of 24p per mile as described in the NES Travel Policy and is intended to contribute to fuel costs. **Neither the rates set by the University that the primary medical programme is affiliated to nor HMRC mileage rates should be used for Medical ACT costs.** There is flexibility for programmes to give a higher mileage rate but this will not be covered by Medical ACT This is to ensure equity across the medical programmes and that costs incurred by Medical ACT remain sustainable. Costs for appropriate insurance cover for placements will not be reimbursed.
- 6) Additional passengers- where the claimant has carried a passenger attending the same placement, the claimant may claim a passenger mileage rate of 5p/mile.
- 7) Pedal cycling – reimbursed at a rate of 10p per mile of cycling for placements which are more than 20 miles from the Primary Medical Programme base (or home whichever is closer).
- 8) Reasonable parking expenses may be claimed if public transport is not possible but should be agreed in advance between the student and the programme.

- 9) This guidance only applies to travel in Scotland, undertaken by medical students enrolled in a Scottish PMQ programme. Medical ACT funding should not be used to cover travel out-with Scotland or for students enrolled in other PMQ programmes out with Scotland.
- 10) Medical ACT funds should only be used for travel and subsistence relating to students but not for staff.

Student claims for accommodation and subsistence

- 1) Accommodation costs will only be met where no free hospital accommodation is available. Accommodation costs may include breakfast.
- 2) If accommodation is provided that has cooking facilities, students will be expected to use them and will not be able to claim subsistence expenses.
- 3) If no cooking facilities are available, arrangements should be made with the host NHS Board for students to use hospital canteens. Such costs, up to a set maximum per day, will be reimbursed and the costs of this arrangement would require to be met by the Medical programmes within the funding agreed. It is hoped that host NHS Boards and Medical programmes will work to reduce any administrative burden of this process.
- 4) If there is no local hospital facility available, the costs of an evening meal can be included as part of an accommodation package.
- 5) There is awareness of the increased cost of non-NHS accommodation, particularly during busy holiday seasons, therefore Boards should aim to book accommodation well in advance enabling the most cost effective rate to be secured.