International Air Travel Staff Survey Summary

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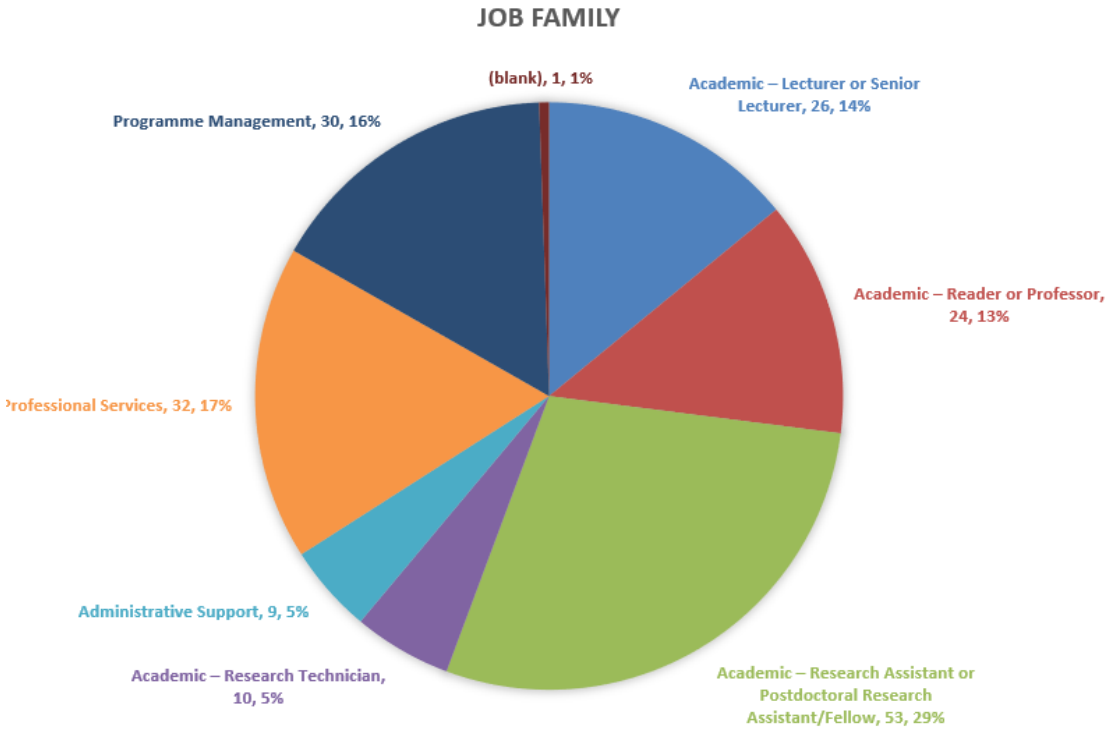
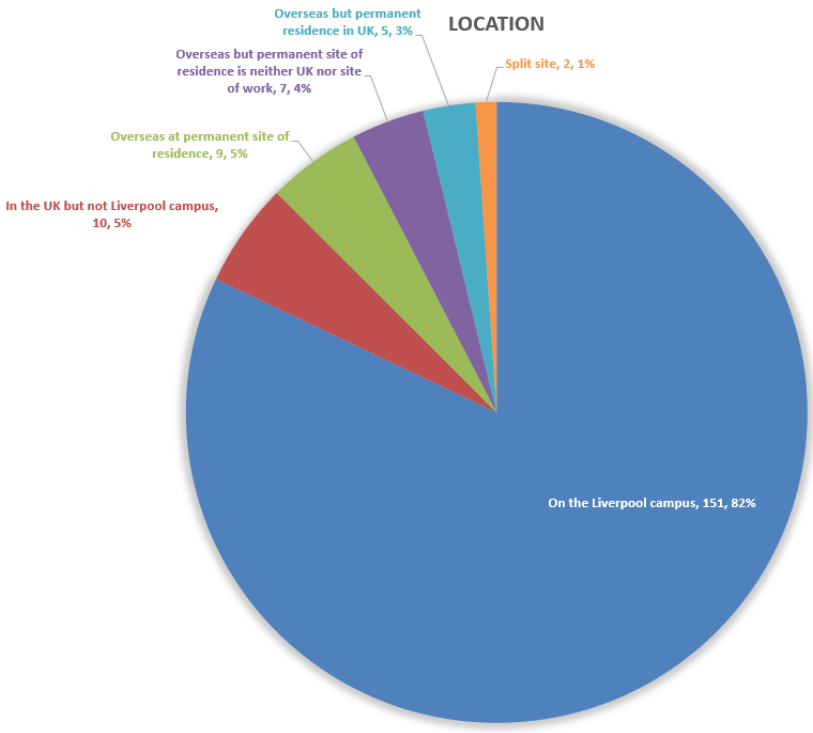
Overview of Respondents

As per 1st September 2019, LSTM had **582** members of staff[1]. We received **185 responses** which means that 31.7% of staff engaged in the survey.



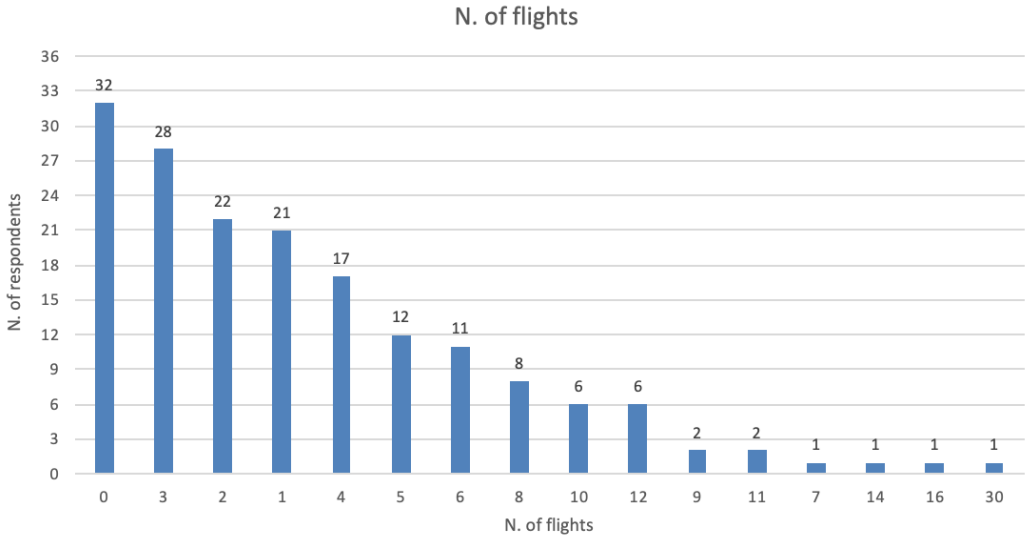


539 staff members are based in the UK and 43 based overseas[2]. The response rate from staff based overseas was higher than that of staff based in the UK: 48.8% of all staff based overseas (n. 21) responded to the survey versus 29.8% of all staff based in the UK (n. 161). These figures do **not** consider the 2 respondents who have a 'split-site' arrangement.

[1] Figures exclude IVCC and WTC staff members (Source: LSTM Annual Report 2018/19). However, some IVCC staff did fill out this survey.

[2] One responder did not fill in their job family and it shows as 'blank'. One responder did not fill in their location so the sum of the responders for location is 184 rather than 185.

Flights: Analysis



171 respondents indicated the number of flights taken in 2019, and 13 did not answer. Those who responded to the question reported an overall total of 652 flights taken in 2019. The average number of flights taken in 2019 was ~4. Of the 171 respondents:

- 32 people (18%) did not take any flights in 2019
- 88 people (51%) took up to 4 flights a year (i.e. the average)
- 51 people (29.8%) took more than 4 flights/year

Three individuals took 60 flights in 2019: of those staff that responded, the highest number of flights taken by a single individual in one year was 30 which was reported by an academic at Reader/Professor level based overseas[3]. This was followed by a staff member based overseas who took 16 flights, and finally by a technician based at LSTM who took 14 flights[4].

Responses showed that the number of flights taken is directly proportionate to the level of seniority (i.e. higher grade leads to higher number of flights): after removing one respondent who didn't indicate their job family (shown in the table below as 'blank'), the data clearly show that Academics at Reader and Professors level and at Lecturer and Senior Lecturers level took respectively 7.17 and 4.42 flights on average per person in 2019 versus 1 for Admin support.

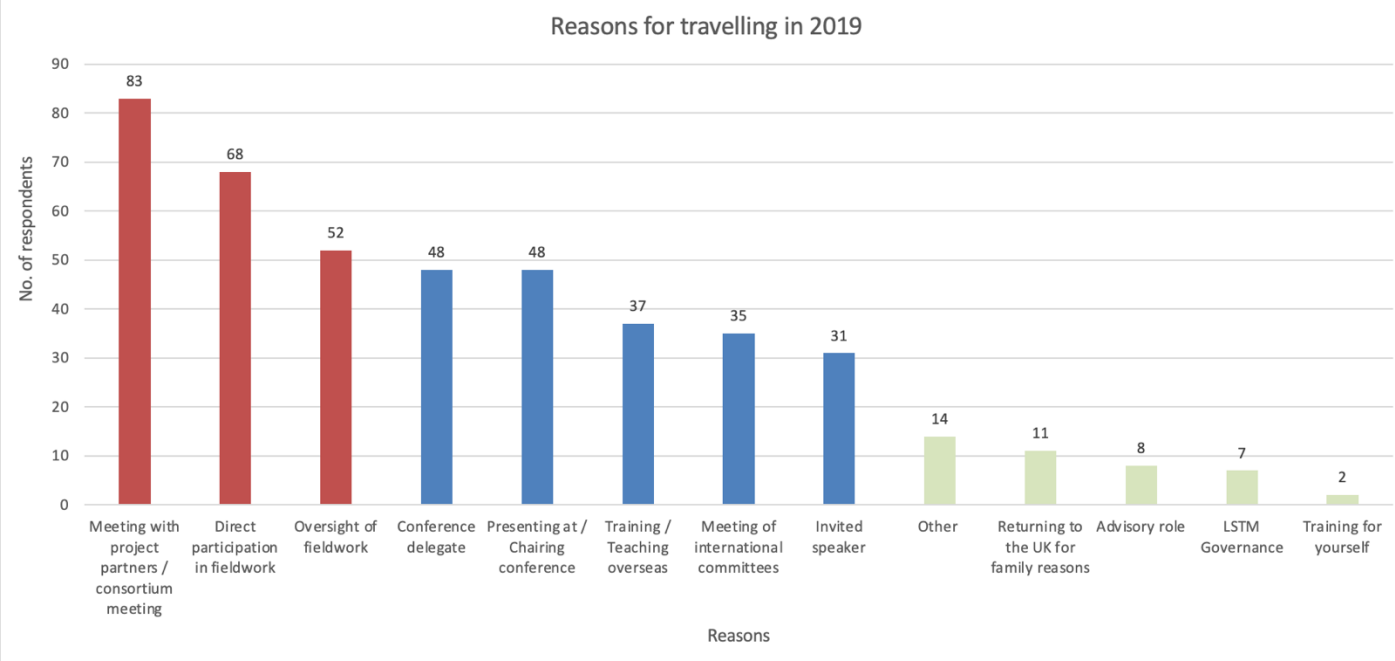
Job family	N. of international flights in 2019[5]	N. of respondents	Ratio (n of flights ÷ n. of respondents)
Academic – Reader or Professor	172	24	7.17
(blank)	6	1	6.00
Academic – Lecturer or Senior Lecturer	115	26	4.42
Programme Management	122	30	4.07
Academic – Research Technician	34	10	3.40
Academic – Research Assistant or Postdoctoral Research Assistant/Fellow	129	53	2.43
Professional Services	65	32	2.03
Administrative Support	9	9	1.00

[3] The main reasons for the 30 flights seem to be based around field work/site visits and conference/workshops/committee meetings

[4] This is probably due to technical training activities with in-country teams and activities research oversight in the field that required the technician to be in the field.

[5] We asked respondents to count a return journey as one trip. If they travelled (by air) to multiple countries on one trip, these were counted as separate trips.

Reasons for flying: Analysis[6]



We also checked for consistency: do staff travel for reasons they themselves find of high importance (i.e. scored 4 or 5 on Q.8)? What we found is that they mostly do.
The only minor inconsistencies[7] we found were related to:

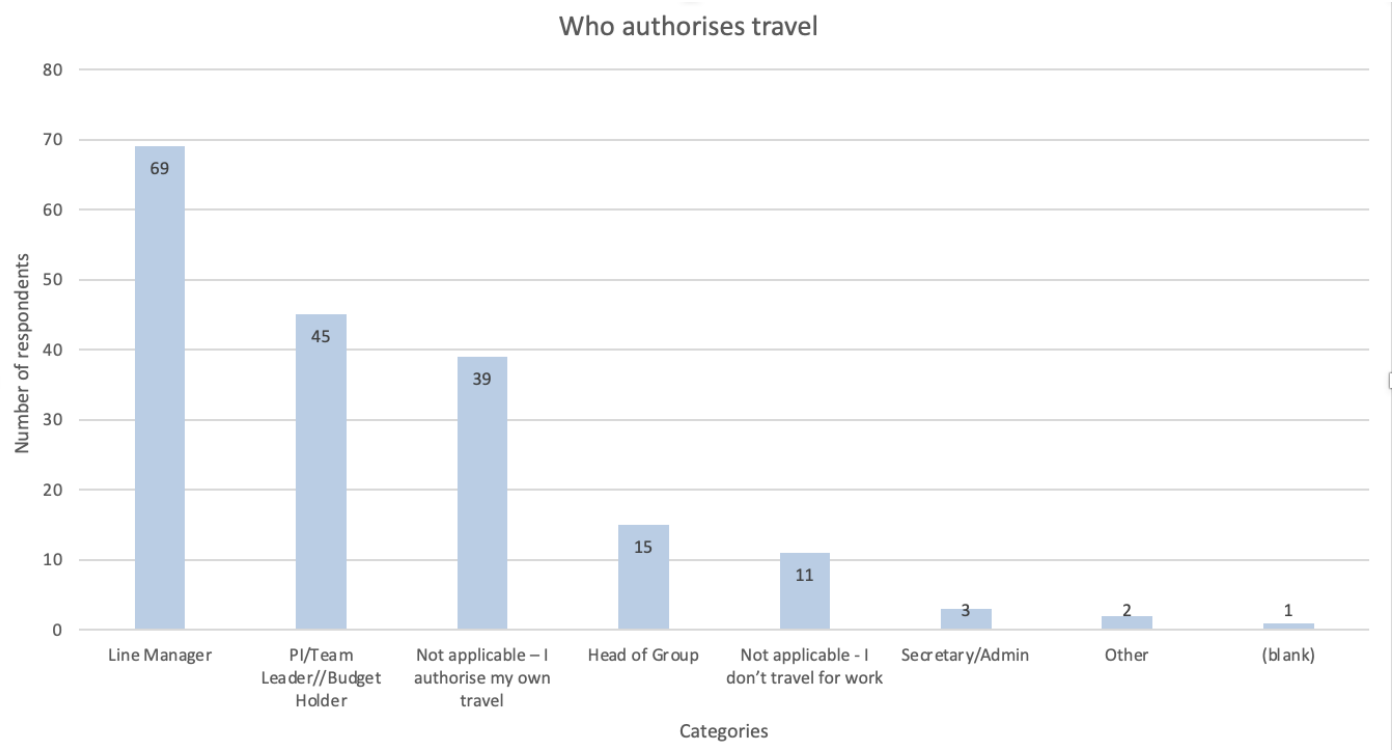
a) **Networking in general:** 6 respondents reported this as one of their main reasons for travelling in 2019 yet gave it a score of importance of 3 or below.

b) **Meeting of international committees:** 5 respondents reported this as one of their main reasons for travelling in 2019 yet gave it a score of importance of 3 or below.

c) **Conference delegate attendance**: 5 respondents reported this as one of their main reasons for travelling in 2019 yet gave it a score of importance of 3 or below.

Most respondents (n = 122) were happy with the amount of travel undertaken in 2019, 32 people would have liked to travel less, 24 would have liked to travel more, and 7 did not answer. On this topic of amount of travel undertaken, several respondents commented that they do not want to fly unless they absolutely have to as they see travel as disruptive because it can affect their personal safety - if the destination is unsafe, it involves personal discomfort and too much time away from family.[8]

[6] 'Returning to UK for family reasons' ranked low in the main reason for travelling in 2019 and we believe this is due to the fact that only members of staff based overseas responded to this question: 11 out of the 21 respondents based overseas selected this as one of the main reasons for travelling in 2019.
[7] These inconsistencies were not statistically significant.
[8] Some respondents wrote that they limited their personal flights to compensate for their work ones.



The vast majority of respondents (72%) seek approval for travels, with the only exception of Readers or Professors as 80% of them (19 out of 24) authorise their own travel.

Accompanied travel: Analysis[9]

ACCOMPANIED FOR TRAVEL	
YES ALWAYS	34
YES SOMETIMES	67
NO NEVER	41
N/A	14
BLANK	29

When asked about **the justification for travelling with colleagues**, almost all respondents said that more colleagues travelled to the same location because they carried out different tasks (for example, some interviewed participants, whilst others provided training or carried out a partner visit) thereby contributing to different parts of the project with their skills and expertise.

Other common justifications for *accompanied travels* include:

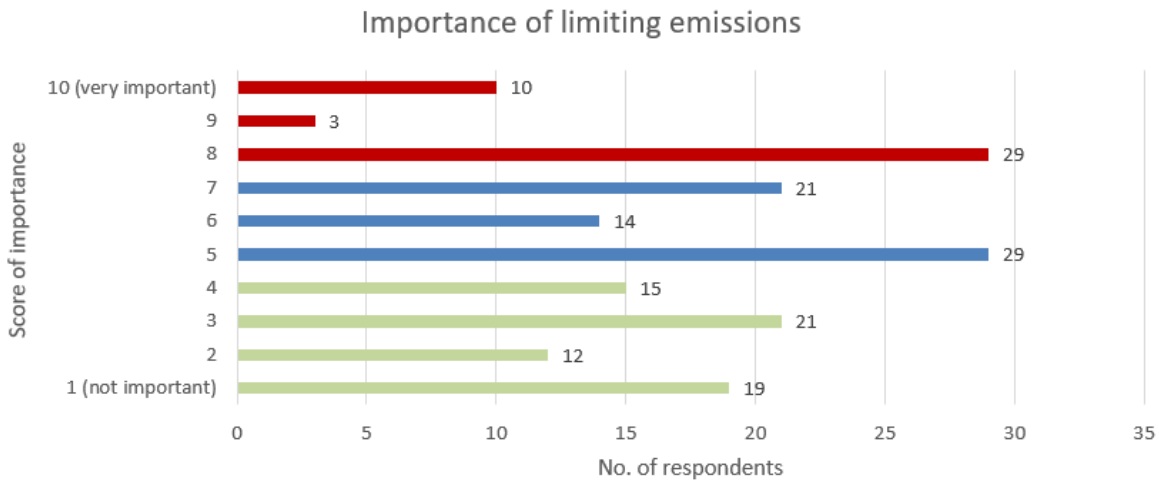
- **Sharing workload:** sometimes one person alone cannot facilitate large training events
- **Reducing timelines**: Work done in less time thanks to the presence of multiple team members (it is therefore worth considering the cost and time efficiency when organising trips and factor in the personal disruption for more than one member of staff)
- **Relationship building**: Need to have the whole team at consortium meetings to develop relationship with partners[10]

A couple of responses worth noting are the need to travel with a colleague who can help with **translation** or the need to travel accompanied by a colleague when visiting locations which are potentially **unsafe to travel alone**.

Carbon footprint and limiting emissions: Analysis

173 staff responded to this question (12 blanks not shown in graph below) and the results show very different and widespread attitudes towards the importance of limiting emissions: 42 respondents rated the importance of limiting emission as high (score of 8, 9 or 10); 64 rated it at medium importance (giving it a score of 5, 6 or 7) and the remaining 67 respondents rated it at low importance (score of 1, 2, 3 or 4).

There was no clear-cut majority and it is therefore challenging to draw a definite conclusion on what the prevailing attitude towards reducing emission is, at LSTM.



[9] N/A stands for not applicable, whilst blank are those who did not answer this question.

[10] Several respondents noted how improved online meeting technologies developed during COVID-19 can make meetings (incl. kick-off events and consortium meetings) work just as well as in-person meetings.

We also cross-checked the scores for 'level of importance of limiting emissions', with the number of flights respondents took in 2019, and it is perhaps not surprising that those accountable for 42% of the total flights taken in 2019, also gave the lowest scores to the importance of limiting emissions at LSTM (scores of 4 and below):

On a scale from 1 to 10 (1 low 10 high) how important is reducing emission for you?	N of repondents who gave that importance score?	No. of flights taken in 2019	ratio (n. of flights / n. of respondents)
1 (not important)	19	34	1.8
2	12	68	5.7
3	21	115	5.5
4	15	55	3.7
5	29	125	4.3
6	14	64	4.6
7	21	64	3.0
8	29	91	3.1
9	3	0	0.0
10 (very important)	10	36	3.6
	173	652	

Score of importance	n. of flights	as % of total flights
1,2,3,4	272	42%
5, 6, 7	244	37%
8,9,10	127	19%
TOTAL	643	

Initiatives to reduce carbon footprint

We provided respondents with a list of six possible initiatives to reduce carbon footprint and asked them if they would be willing to support them. Most respondents showed willingness to back the proposed activities with 131 respondents indicating they would be supportive of restricting the class of travel, 113 would support the introduction of a limit on the number of people travelling to the same event, and 104 would support the implementation of a flight approval process.

Initiatives	N. of respondents willing to support this initiative	N. of respondents who said they would be supportive, but DON'T think it would be an impactful initiative (i.e. scored 1-2-3 for impact of this initiative)	% of those who scored low impact (1, 2 or 3)	% of those who scored high impact (4 or 5)
Restrict high carbon consumption classes of travel, i.e. business/first class travel	131	86	66%	34%
Limitations to number of people travelling to the same event/conference/meeting	113	84	74%	26%
A flight approval process which considered necessity of travel and carbon footprint	104	71	68%	32%
Limitations on the number of trips per person per year	94	77	82%	18%
Mandatory carbon offsetting payments charged to grants	94	53	56%	44%
Prioritising travel for certain sectors, e.g early career professionals	79	39	49%	51%

We then asked respondents if they thought these 6 proposed initiatives would be impactful in reducing LSTM's carbon footprint and 51% of respondents thought that prioritising travel for certain sectors would be impactful. 44% of respondents also thought that mandatory carbon offsetting payments charged to grants could lead to LSTM reducing its carbon footprint.

There was some scepticism about the impact of some other initiatives, particularly limiting the number of flights per person (with only 18% of respondents thinking this would have a high impact) and restricting the number of people travelling to the same event (with only 26% of respondents giving this initiative a high impact score[11]).

It is not possible to determine whether scepticism is due to anticipated low adherence or low impact.

When we asked staff to list additional initiatives they would consider to be impactful in reducing LSTM's carbon footprint (Annex 1, answers to q. 9b), it became apparent why the activities we proposed scored low on impact: staff clearly prefer incentives, changes in policies & culture[12], and alternatives, rather than limitations. Travel restrictions were seen as a potential obstacle to the delivery of our global health work which is often based on face-to-face interactions with colleagues overseas. Many respondents also highlighted that we must **not create** stigma around travelling as this is part of our job in global health, and whilst non-essential/non-vital travel should be avoided, we should not stigmatise against those who travel to do their job.

[11] We provided a scale of 1 to 5 for rating impact, where 1 was low impact and 5 high impact. These figures exclude 'blanks' (i.e. responders who did not give an impact score to the initiatives).

[12] It was noted that LSTM has a culture of flying at the first opportunity and there is an external expectation that physical presence is important.

The suggestions we received mirror the comments and attitudes above and can be broadly classed into the following categories:

Virtual & online technology improvements: staff suggested the School to invest in virtual platforms and tools[13] that facilitate and promote e-interaction (including delivering of online teaching). It was however recognised that some of our partners overseas may not have the suitable IT infrastructure[14] to work solely offline, and travels may still be needed to meet collaborators face-to-face.

Promotion and encouragement of multipurpose trips: staff should plan their fieldtrips carefully and methodically[15] to ensure the maximum amount of work is carried out on each trip, so that multiple short-term trips are replaced with one, longer, trip (if possible). Some suggested introducing a minimum number of days in-country to reduce flights that are effectively day returns.

Strategic planning of conference/event attendance: this refers to 3 stages:

a) Pre-conference/event [Plan your attendance] – this could be done at group, department or even School level ensuring all relevant research groups are represented at major events without unnecessary duplication where more people from within the same group attend the same event, unless, of course, they are presenting their work. A suggestion for better planning conference attendance included providing authorisation only if an abstract has been accepted or if a member of staff needs to attend a workshop, and not to support travel just to attend as a delegate.

b) During the conference/event [Plan the sessions] – the approach of '*divide and conquer*' emerged several times in the questionnaire. Large events often have multiple sessions running at the same time, hence, when more people from LSTM attend the same event, it was suggested they study the programme carefully beforehand, and attend different sessions to maximise benefits.

c) Post-conference/event [Feedback to colleagues] – respondents really stressed the importance of giving feedback to the rest of the team/department after the event. It was highlighted how we need a **cultural shift** moving from personal/project gain of attending conferences and international meetings to a more institutional gain. This includes being more aware of the different projects within the school/department so that information from the conference can be relayed to the right people.

To implement this strategic approach, it would be necessary to substantially **improve inter- and intra-departmental communication** around travel plans so that synergies can be achieved across departments / research groups.

Training & Learning: several respondents suggested to introduce training for staff. The following topics were proposed:

a) How to plan trips (field and conferences) to maximise benefit of time overseas.

b) Climate change: aimed at raising awareness and ensure staff learn about the impact that our work has on carbon emissions. Some people may be less aware than others[16], so a fact sheet on emissions and what people should consider might be useful. The school seminar series could also be used to highlight the link between climate change and poverty, and to provide positive examples of changes in other institutes

c) How to get the most out of attending online conferences.

Respondents also suggested to compile lessons learned – i.e. use of online/streaming options to reduce travel.

[13] An option to improve virtual platforms and tools could be including the costs for dongles, airtime, and similar tools in our applications' budgets and ensure these funds are then transferred to partners (if the grant is successful) to purchase the best and most efficient solution for their context. This is an approach some projects have successfully implemented already.

[14] With IT infrastructure we mean software, composite hardware, network services, and resources.

[15] A sentiment that came out from the responses is lack of planning and an attitude of travelling at the first opportunity without thinking whether a trip is really needed or not. Staff encourages a **change in culture** and a shift to a more reflective practice where travellers stop to think about the necessity of a trip and fly only if truly necessary.

[16] We have evidence of this in the responses where several people, for example, did not understand why travelling business/ first class creates more emissions than travelling economy.

Guiding principles for implementing changes[17]

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 1: EQUITY

i. Travel restrictions may disadvantage under-represented groups (e.g. women, BAME, LGBTQ+, people with caring responsibilities) who may be less likely to be chosen as part of the team selected for travelling. Whatever measures are put in place, we need to make sure that staff and their careers are not penalised by senior managers hogging all the flights.
ii. Limiting the number of flights across the board should **not** be the way forward as it would not take into consideration the number of projects staff have overseas: a member of staff may only have one small project in one country, while another staff may be involved in a large consortium with 10+ partners or be involved in many projects requiring a higher number of trips.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 2: TRANSPARENCY

i. LSTM is a charity and we should operate in line with our values, including ethical ethos founded on respect, accountability, and honesty. Respondents to the survey highlight that as a charitable organisation that receives significant funding from UK taxpayers, allowing much a liberal policy on class of travel leaves us a risk of criticism on top of the colossal waste of carbon.
ii. Data from the survey show that the number of flights taken is directly proportionate to the level of seniority (i.e. higher grade leads to higher number of flights)[18] and respondents called for (a) greater transparency on travels undertaken by senior management, and (b) action and commitment[19] from LSTM senior staff, senior management, and leadership team who would need to lead by example.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 3: LEADERSHIP

i. LSTM is a leader in global health, and we are in a strong position to advocate for change in the sector[20]
ii. LSTM is a HEI and we can lobby for change in the academic / research sector by becoming a trend-setter.
iii. Staff and students interested in joining LSTM may demand policies on reducing climate footprint and chose organisations on the basis of their leadership in this area.

Initiatives that respondents did not seem willing to support

- Setting a maximum number of trips per person per year across the whole school without considering staff involvement in more than one projects or in a project which includes many countries.
- Introduce mandatory and standard carbon offset payments as this could disproportionately impact cash-poor grants/groups/individual PIs.
- Introduce an authorisation process as this could lead to increased bureaucracy and could put people off completing it, therefore creating either non-compliance, or even worse, people deciding not to travel at all due to the administrative burden which would impact the valuable work LSTM does overseas.
- Limiting trips to one person per team as this may not be the most efficient way of carrying out work in the field.

[17] Contents of this section were mostly taken from the answers given on q.12 (other suggestions), please refer to Appendix 2.
[18] See pg. 3 of this document: Academics at Reader and Professors level and at Lecturer and Senior Lecturers level took respectively 7.17 and 4.42 flights on average per person in 2019 versus 1 for Admin support.
[19] Several respondents in the survey said that a database where data is anonymous so that staff cannot be identified is sorely needed.
[20] Researchers feel obliged to go to international meeting organised by donors as they feel they would get funding unless they are in the room.

Appendix 1

List of all suggestions received on q. 9.b 'Other initiatives considered to be impactful in reducing LSTM's carbon footprint'

- **Increase use of virtual tools** and investing in such platforms that facilitate and promote e-interaction **(x10)**
- **Dashboard showing n. of trips, cost and class of travel by dept/group:** database showing flights' history by year made available to staff, it could look like an energy bill, allowing people to compare number of trips, carbon footprint, number of direct flights etc. **(x3)**
- Reducing per-diem as this is seen as the main driving force for staff to travel
- Consider direct flights as standard option (more expensive, but less CO2 emissions)
- Embed carbon offsetting in the LSTM general recycling programme
- **Explore other means of transport within UK and for EU destinations (e.g. train) (x3)**
- Investment in carbon offsetting projects in the UK
- Do more to promote cycling / walking to work
- **Online teaching and exploring possibility for MLW staff to teach on DTMH remotely (x2).**
- Include justification of why travel is required in proposals
- **Introduce an approval process whereby all travels need to be signed off by line managers** and the person proposing the trip has to give 3 reasons why they must travel (x2).
- Introduce a self-assessment for travel with just 5 questions.
- **Greater transparency on travel especially for LSTM senior managers:** if this is being taken seriously, then we need LSTM Leadership and commitment from senior management who would need to lead by example **(x2)**
- Choose sustainable accommodation
- Provide quotas of travel / carbon footprints to individual grants
- Offer subsidies for those enrolling in virtual conferences
- Training staff in developing and delivering online training
- **Facilitate online attendance at meetings and conferences**: the MLW or the Chester conference for example are attended by many but does the whole school benefit from these or only the individuals who attend (x 2)
- **Mandatory environmental training for all staff:** this would cover global warming and raise awareness and make sure people are aware of their own carbon footprint. Some people may be less aware than others, so a fact sheet on emissions and what people should consider might be useful. (x3)
- **Promote & encourage multipurpose trips** and train people to better plan their field trip to ensure maximum amount of work is carried out on each trip, so that multiple short-term trips could be replaced with one, longer, trip (x6).
- **Better planning for conference/meeting attendance** done at group / dept level ensuring the group is represented at major events and those who attend then hold a feedback session with the rest of the team once they're back (x3)
- Improve interdepartmental communication of travel plans in case synergies can be achieved across departments - for example - an individual travelling for one project checks in on another project for another department.
- Introduce a minimum number of days in-country.
- Organise holidays around work travel.

Word cloud showing the most frequent words appearing in the list above:

Appendix 2

List of all suggestions received on q. 12 'If you have any comments regarding your travel, or suggestions for ways to reduce LSTM carbon emissions associated with international travel, please write them below'.

- Training staff in getting the most out of attending online conferences
- Identify a CO2 offset provider that can help LSTM
- Improve technology and internet could reduce the need for travel.
- Limiting trips per person sounds fair though at times some projects might need a lot of support.
- Mandatory carbon offset payments sound good though this could disproportionately impact cash-poor grants/groups/individual PIs.
- Cut down the number of travels per year for each category of staff
- Introduce an authorisation process (only for travel deemed to be essential) approved by the Environmental Working Group on case-by-case basis.
- Only support travel to conferences if an abstract has been accepted or delegate needs to attend a workshop. Not support travel just to attend as delegate.
- **At the grant writing stage, we should include the number of flights we intend to carry out (just being asked to put this in may cause people to reduce the numbers per trip) and consider either fewer countries or having point people who are on several grants with responsibility for one country (x2).**
- 'Non-vital' travel should be limited, but measures also need to be brought-in to limit carbon spending for non-travel associated aspects of LSTM's operation.
- Re-think staff location: having worked effectively remotely for the past few months there is a case for staff involved mainly in implementation to be based in the region which would reduce international or at least involve only short flights.
- **Remove business class/first flights as a whole from our travel practices (unless it's for health reasons):** as a charitable organization that receives significant funding from the UK tax payer, allowing much a liberal policy leaves us a risk of criticism on top of the colossal waste of carbon. For the policy to be successful travel agents would need to be briefed that 'business class' was not an option **(x2).**
- Allocate travel funding to the external partner and they book flights for you.
- Think carefully about the bureaucracy as too much of it could put people off and limit some of the valuable work LSTM does in LMICs.
- **Lobbying**: ensure we ask event organisers, other partners (esp. in the Global North) and funders about sustainable travel, travel reduction, and alternative ways to meet. Researchers feel obliged to go to international meeting organised by donors as they feel they won't get funding unless they are in the room. In addition, would be fairer, as the same people wouldn't always get invited to all the meetings (x3)
- Compile lessons learned – i.e. the use of online/streaming options to reduce travel
- **LSTM-wide tracking and reporting emissions** (e.g. per head per dept) will incentivise reduced or unnecessary travel and is sorely needed. Sharing data - not to shame people, but there should be a database**. (x 2)**
- **Expand beyond travel to all areas of our business:** transport, energy, consumer decisions, diet, etc. We should buy green electricity at LSTM and other measures, e.g. put solar panels on the roof. Flights are a very small part of global warming and although we should be sensible restricting air travel is not the most impactful way to reduce CO2 output (x3)

Word cloud showing the most frequent words appearing in the list above: