

Blue Book

G – Accommodation and workplace

G1: Establishing new or refurbishing overseas office accommodation

Background

Where the financial cost of establishing a new, relocated or refurbished overseas office is to be met from DFID's Admin Capital Budget, approval must be sought from the Estates Board if less than £500k or the Capital Portfolio Board if in excess of £500k.

Further guidance and the Admin Capital Process Map can be found at Quest number 3785703.

Where other types of funding are used the standard DFID rules on financial approval and delegated authority apply. Please contact your Divisional Accountant for advice.

In both cases the proposal should be linked to the country or regional programme planning cycle. This includes full approval of budget, planning, timetable and project management arrangements.

Compliance Tasks

- Any department planning an admin capital investment for an overseas office must apply to the Estates or Capital Portfolio Boards for funding.

You can seek advice from the Strategies, Estates, Programme and Project Management Support (SEPPS) - Overseas Estates Team and Security Department to help you assess the feasibility of potential options. Co-location with the FCO as part of one government abroad and shared services must always be considered.

Task assigned to: Departmental Finance Officer (DFO), Head of Department, Head of Overseas Office

- You should seek advice from your Regional/Divisional Accountant and SEPPS in order to build the Business Case required for all capital investment.

Advice on the implications of the MoU on HMG overseas estate corporate services charging model (also known as PAG Agreement) must be sought from your Regional/Divisional Accountant.

Task assigned to: Departmental Finance Officer (DFO), Office Manager

- The Head of Department/Overseas Office must submit a Project Mandate or a Project Brief to the Estates Board/Capital Portfolio Board

for consideration, SEPPS can assist in this. The Board will decide (1) does the proposal meet DFID's Strategic Direction and (2) is the project affordable.

Depending on the size and nature of the admin capital investment, the Board in consultation with SEPPS will decide the project management documentation and process required.

Task assigned to: Head of Department, Head of Overseas Office

- The FCO Overseas Security Advisers must (under the SLA managed by Security Section) be commissioned at an early planning stage to undertake a security risk assessment of any potential new sites and buildings for DFID overseas offices.

DFID's Security Committee must be informed of any plans to move/open a new office and be assured that security risks have received adequate consideration in terms of the location and design of the building.

Task assigned to: Office Manager

- The guidance in the Sustainable Development Green Guide for Managers on the Government Estate (link below) must be taken into account when considering designs for new or refurbished offices. For advice contact the Environmental Management in Human Resources, Security and Facilities Management.

DFID Offices must use an assessment method to rate the environmental performance of new builds and major refurbishments within the overseas office estate. For advice contact SEPPS.

Task assigned to: Office Manager

- DFID offices will normally be accredited to the FCO diplomatic mission. FCO London and Post must be consulted. Where this accreditation is not possible a separate administrative arrangement setting out the terms under which DFID offices and staff will operate must be agreed with the host Government.

Task assigned to: Office Manager

- Any project that has an Admin Capital Investment value of over £0.5 million must be submitted to the Secretary of State for final approval.

All politically sensitive, novel or contentious proposals, regardless of value, must be submitted for approval by the lead PUSS or Secretary of State. (This could include where DFID chooses not to co-locate with the FCO on the basis of the project proving not to be value for money).

It is recommended that any project that requires an admin capital investment of over £1 million should undertake an OGC Gateway Review.

Task assigned to: Estate Management Officer, Head of Overseas Office, Office Manager

Risks of non-compliance

- Expenditure not properly authorised
- Negative impact on delivery of development programme(s) through delays in establishing a devolved office
- Potential Health and Safety risks to staff and visitors
- Vulnerability of DFID staff and buildings to terrorism
- Failure to meet required building standards
- Poor Value for Money (VfM) if inappropriate design.

G2: Leasing office premises and domestic housing overseas

Background

Before reading DFID's rules, you must read and understand the Government Spending Controls published on the Cabinet Office website (see link under Processes and Tools section below).

DFID's overseas estate and property portfolio represents a significant commitment of public funds. It is important that DFID's interests are safeguarded by properly drafted and legally sound lease arrangements. Responsibility for this lies with the Head of Overseas Office.

Compliance Tasks:

- DFID must consider sharing/using HMG Partner's existing office and domestic accommodation before entering any new lease agreements.

Any new lease agreements must ensure the properties fit into a joint HMG estates strategy where the estate is adaptable to changing demands of the environment within which it operates, and provides value for money.

Task assigned to: Estate Management Officer, Head of Overseas Office

- Heads of Overseas Offices must ensure that there is clear and appropriate definition and segregation of responsibility for negotiation and authorisation of all leases.

Records of negotiation and approval must be recorded in Quest. Local arrangements should be handled by Local Contract Officers (LCOs). Any lease with the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) must be subject to the FCO Service Level Agreement (SLA).

Task assigned to: Head of Department, Office Manager

- Legal title to the premises must be established before a lease is signed. A local property adviser must be used to establish that the person leasing is the legal owner of the property.

Task assigned to: Estate Management Officer, Head of Department, Head of Overseas Office, Office Manager

- All leases should be in English wherever possible. If, due to local legislation, the lease is required to be in a different language, a translation into English should be obtained from a legal translator, and be signed at the same time. (Note, that in the case of dispute the non-English version is likely to take precedence).

Task assigned to: Estate Management Officer, Head of Department, Head of Overseas Office, Office Manager

- Leases will be subject to local law and must be cleared by a local property legal adviser, and registered if required under local law.

Task assigned to: Head of Department, Office Manager

- Office and Estate Management staff in overseas offices must be conversant with lease requirements for all property under their control.

Task assigned to: Estate Management Officer, Office Manager

- Signed original leases must be kept securely and a scanned copy stored in Quest.

Task assigned to: Office Manager

- Leases must be recorded on the Resource Account Year End Pack.

Task assigned to: Head of Department, Office Manager

Risks of non-compliance

- Mis-appropriation of public funds
- Collusion and fraud
- No legal status in event of a dispute.
- HMG does not effectively use its global estate, leading to waste

Associated learning and skills

- Customer Relations
- Negotiation Skills

G3: Overseas housing management

Background

Before reading DFID's rules, you must read and understand the Government Spending Controls published on the Cabinet Office website (see link under Processes and Tools section below).

Housing related issues can be stressful both for occupants and management staff, largely due to problems associated with security, maintenance and health & safety.

The Staff Handbook contains broad parameters regarding the provision of accommodation for assignments of more than 4 months, but DFID overseas offices have discretion regarding the interpretation and implementation of the guidance to determine needs, based on Value for Money (VfM), availability, suitability security and Health & Safety (H&S).

DFID overseas office management must take into account certain criteria, such as security and suitability of premises when selecting accommodation, with the objective of establishing a portfolio of rented accommodation to meet anticipated needs over the long term - at least 6-10 year period.

Compliance Tasks

- DFID's policy on residential accommodation overseas states that DFID will not normally purchase residential accommodation overseas. Accommodation should be sought from the rental market.

The Capital Portfolio Board will on an exceptional basis consider releasing Admin Capital funds for residential accommodation purchase if there is a clear business case to do so and there are funds available when other priorities have been taken into account.

Any request for Admin Capital funding must be in the form of an initial Project Mandate, followed by a Project Brief and Business Case with a Cost Benefit Analysis.

Task assigned to: Head of Department, Head of Overseas Office

- Costs must be in line with the local market rates, and any upgrade costs to be paid by DFID (other than in exceptional circumstances) must be offset against rental payments; there are no prescribed limits

for upgrading property but DFID overseas offices must consider the availability of suitable alternative accommodation and value for money

Task assigned to: Estate Management Officer, Office Manager

- The Office/Estates Manager in each overseas office must provide SEPPS - Overseas Estates Support Unit, annually, with comprehensive information on all property owned or leased by the office, including a copy of the lease, rental period, rent costs, and refurbishment/ upgrade costs

Task assigned to: Estate Management Officer, Office Manager

- DFID offices must implement the best practice guidance provided in the Overseas Domestic Accommodation Guidance (See link below)

Task assigned to: Office Manager

- DFID's policy is to follow safe Health and Safety (H&S) standards in office and residential accommodation wherever possible. This means that, for example, the following must be carried out:
 1. Surveys - all properties must be subject to comprehensive structural, fire and electrical surveys, undertaken by suitably qualified professionals, to minimum acceptable standards .
 2. Security - property including grounds must be secure, with a range of perimeter and building security measures appropriate to the country in question. Offices must take advice from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO), and DFID Security Section and follow their guidance. Property should be reasonably close to the office having consideration to emergency, maintenance and security issues
 3. Health & Safety (H&S) - all accommodation fixtures and fittings must comply with safe standards within the region. In particular, electrical and gas fittings, fire safety, pest control and security.

Task assigned to: Office Manager

- Maintenance - an adequate maintenance programme must be established to ensure H&S standards and protect investment. A clear set of service standards, based on quality and availability of contractors should be established.

Task assigned to: Office Manager

- Procurement - DFID standards must apply, in particular to furnishing materials (timber from sustainable sources, fire retardancy) refrigerants (air conditioning units), appropriate local servicing/ maintenance arrangements.

Task assigned to: Estate Management Officer, Head of Overseas Office, Local Contract Officer, Office Manager

Risks of non-compliance

- Unsafe accommodation
- Wasted investment of funds
- Discontentment / Stress
- Potential Health and Safety implications for staff
- Vulnerability of staff and buildings to terrorism and theft
- Failure in duty of care to staff and others
- Detrimental impact on environment.

Associated learning and skills

Estates Management staff should receive the following training:

- H&S Roles and Responsibilities, including Risk Assessment Customer Relations Negotiation Skills Local contracting skills for LCO
- The OSSD web-page, security tab contains additional guidance on Staff Appointed in Country (SAIC) Security Clearance procedures and a handy guide to Security Clearance

G4: Health and safety

Background

The Health & Safety at Work act 1974 requires all employers to ensure "so far as is reasonably practicable", the health, safety and welfare of all its' employees.

All employees must take reasonable care of their own health and safety as well as that of other persons who may be affected by their activities. They should also co-operate with the employer to enable them to comply with legal requirements.

The Permanent Secretary is responsible for providing a safe and healthy workplace and working environment for all staff, and must take all practicable steps to meet that responsibility.

Human Resources Group Operations is responsible through the Health, Work & Wellbeing Team (HWW) for producing and maintaining the DFID H & S Policy Statement which reflects commitment to:

- We are committed to providing a safe and healthy working environment for all staff, helping them to understand their own duty of care and how to act appropriately at all times to achieve high standards of health and safety throughout all our offices.

- Managing and advising staff, visitors, clients, contractors in all its offices on H & S matters.

It is the responsibility of HR Operations Health, Work & Wellbeing Team and Heads of Overseas Offices to implement this policy.

Compliance Tasks

1. All staff must read and familiarise themselves with DFID's Health and Safety (H&S) Policy and the Duty of Care Policy documents and associated guidance. Heads of Department and Overseas Offices are responsible for ensuring compliance tasks are carried out in accordance with these policies before signing off their Directors Assurance Statements for audit purposes.

Task assigned to: All staff, Heads of Departments and Overseas Offices.

2. The UK Health, Work & Wellbeing Team are responsible for hazard identification and risk assessment. For overseas offices a local contact will be appointed to assist with this. Appropriate steps should be taken to remove and reduce risks to prevent accidents and ill health. If significant risks are identified , assessments must be:

- a. Recorded
- b. Communicated to staff via [SHE portal](#)
- c. Reviewed

Task assigned to: Health and safety officer

3. Managers must ensure that all staff who travel on official business outside the UK are aware of any risks involved and have the appropriate medical clearance.

Task assigned to: Head of Departments, Head of Overseas offices, Line managers

4. Staff with safety responsibilities - First-aiders, Fire wardens and Incident Control staff are to be appointed to assist in the event of accidents or emergency situations.

Task assigned to: Health & Safety Officer, SFM, Local Contact Overseas

5. Managers are required to complete the Safety For Line Managers e-learning & ensure their staff complete the Workstation Safety Plus training & adhere to safety procedures at all times.

Task assigned to: All staff and Managers

6. Individual members of staff are responsible for:
 - a. Taking care of their own Health and safety and other persons who may be affected by their acts
 - b. Reading the DFID H & S policy on inSight
 - c. Reporting all hazards, incidents and accidents to their line manager as well as the HWW Team via SHE Enterprise portal
 - d. Not removing, damaging, interfering or misusing anything provided in the interests of Health, Work and Wellbeing
 - e. When required, making use of safety equipment and special protective clothing

Task assigned to: All staff

7. The HWW Team and local office contacts will provide advice/guidance on the requirements for recording risk assessments which are undertaken. These may include:
 - a. New and expectant mothers
 - b. Manual handling
 - c. Accident prevention
 - d. General workplace assessments

Task assigned to: Health Work & Wellbeing Team, Local Office Contacts

8. Information, Instruction and Training: All staff and Managers, are required to participate in Cardinus, our interactive e-learning training modules. These cover: Workstation Safety & Safety For Line Managers.

Task assigned to: All staff, Managers

9. Sustainable Facilities Management (SFM) and Heads of Overseas Offices must ensure that planned maintenance is programmed for all machinery and equipment, including fire detection and prevention equipment (annually by specialist companies)

Task assigned to: Head of overseas office, SFM

G5: Business continuity planning

Background

A Business Continuity Plan (BCP) is a plan for the fast, efficient resumption of essential business operations by directing the recovery actions of specified recovery teams.

All DFID offices are required to maintain a BCP to ensure the prompt and efficient recovery of business operations following any incident at the premises which disrupts or prevents normal business activity - e.g. fire, flood, or any other event requiring evacuation or preventing occupation of the premises.

Heads of Overseas Offices must ensure that BCPs are consistent with, and take account of, local emergency evacuation plans, and corresponding local FCO plans.

Directors of Divisions in UK buildings covered by an overarching BCP must maintain an appropriate Divisional Business Recovery Plan or where necessary a lower level plan specific to the operation of essential business units, including all essential services. It should include, as relevant:

- Business Continuity Team, staff call tree, specifying those which have remote working facilities
- Details of any backup systems
- Identified core functions (critical activities)

- Recovery time objectives for core functions
- Resource requirements
- Responsibilities for co-ordination and liason throughout the department / external contacts to be notified
- BCPs /BRPs must be updated by the Business Continuity Manager as soon as any details change. Copies of revised plans should be sent to Departmental Security Unit.

Compliance Tasks

1. Heads of Overseas Offices and UK Directors must appoint a Business Continuity Manager who should be responsible for producing a Business Continuity Plan (BCP) or Business Recovery Plan (BRP)

Task assigned to: Head of Overseas Office, Directors

2. Heads of Overseas Offices and Directors must approve BCPs / BRPs and ensure they are registered electronically on Quest and with Departmental Security Unit.

Task assigned to: Head of overseas office, Directors

3. BCPs must be reviewed and updated at least every 6 months or when changes occur and tested in a proportionate manner, at least annually.

Task assigned to: Head of Overseas Office, Business Continuity Managers

Risks of non-compliance

- Delay in recovery of key operations
- Loss of information including financial and HR details
- Damage to reputation
- Failure to meet financial obligations/payment deadlines
- Potential Health and Safety implications for staff.

G6: Vehicles

Background

It is the responsibility of the Heads of Overseas Offices to ensure that adequate systems are in place to ensure the proper control and management of the use of DFID vehicles.

The private use of official vehicles is permitted only in exceptional circumstances. It is a concession, which, Heads of Overseas Offices have discretion to approve, subject to strict conditions for hire.

Compliance Tasks

- Arrangements must be in place to ensure secure storage/ parking of vehicles when not in use

Task assigned to: Estate Management Officer, Head of Overseas Office, Office Manager

- A vehicle maintenance programme must be in place and regular servicing of the vehicle recorded in the logbook

Task assigned to: Estate Management Officer, Head of Overseas Office, Office Manager

- Conditions for use of DFID vehicles are:
 - a. Only drivers authorised by the Head of Overseas Office (or nominee) may drive the vehicle.
 - b. DFID locally employed drivers must be covered by local insurance which includes personal liability and injury.
 - c. The driver must have a valid driving license.
 - d. A local handbook setting out guidance must be set up and a copy given to all vehicle users.
 - e. A vehicle logbook must be maintained and kept in the vehicle for regular inspection.
 - f. The vehicle must be insured to the minimum extent required or compliance with local laws.
 - g. First Aid Kits must be placed in every vehicle.

Task assigned to: All Staff, Office Manager

- Insurance cover for personal injury for drivers of DFID vehicles not employed by DFID (e.g. consultants) is the responsibility of the employer (or the individual where the consultant is self-employed). No liability is accepted by DFID for non-DFID staff passengers using DFID

vehicles. They are responsible for their own accident cover, failing this, they travel at their own risk

Task assigned to: All Staff, Estate Management Officer, Head of Overseas Office, Office Manager

- Private hire of DFID vehicles, provided it is authorised in advance, may be granted when:
 - a. no alternative form of transport is available or suitable
 - b. it would not interfere with the official use of the vehicle
 - c. the applicable hire charge is levied - see detailed guidance
 - d. charges are received as Appropriations-in-Aid

Task assigned to: All Staff, Estate Management Officer, Head of Overseas Office, Office Manager

- The Officer hiring the vehicle is responsible for the cost of adequate insurance, all fuel and hiring charges for the duration of the hire period. All fuel put into the vehicle must be recorded in the vehicle logbook which must be passed to the Transport Manager at the end of the hire period.

Task assigned to: All Staff, Estate Management Officer, Head of Overseas Office, Office Manager
Task assigned to: All Staff, Estate Management Officer, Head of Overseas Office, Office Manager

- Private hire of DFID vehicles, provided it is authorised in advance, may be granted when:
 - no alternative form of transport is available or suitable;
 - it would not interfere with the official use of the vehicle;
 - the applicable hire charge is levied - see detailed guidance;
 - charges are received as Appropriations-in-Aid.

Task assigned to: All Staff, Estate Management Officer, Head of Overseas Office, Office Manager

- The Officer hiring the vehicle is responsible for the cost of adequate insurance, all fuel and hiring charges for the duration of the hire period. All fuel put into the vehicle must be recorded in the vehicle logbook which must be passed to the Transport Manager at the end of the hire period.

Task assigned to: All Staff, Estate Management Officer, Head of Overseas Office, Office Manager

Risks of non-compliance

- DFID Vehicles not adequately maintained

- DFID vehicles being used inappropriately without approval
- DFID vehicles being driven by uninsured staff
- Staff not adequately insured in the event of an accident.

Associated learning and skills

Some drivers in certain countries may require specialist training - e.g. Defensive Driving Techniques, but this is not mandatory across DFID.

G7: Environmental management

Background

The Government has directed that Departments should set an example in environmental management by reducing its carbon output, reducing landfill waste, conserving resources and encouraging others to do the same. DFID is strongly committed to the Sustainable Development in Government (SDIG) targets (see link below under Processes and Tools for details). In addition, DFID has made a commitment in its White Paper to make all our operational activities, both in the UK and Overseas, carbon neutral by 2012. We have also signed up to the 10:10 climate change campaign pledging to cut our carbon emissions by 10% in 2010.

There are various means by which all staff can individually make a positive contribution to DFID's internal environmental performance. These include:

- **Energy:** staff should ensure they switch off IT and other equipment at night or when not in use.
- **Waste Management:** Be familiar with and follow local practices for sorting and recycling of waste, including paper, plastics, consumables, etc
- **Paper:** Use less paper and create less waste by reading short e-mails on screen, and copying and printing double-sided wherever possible
- **Water:** Don't leave taps running and only use what you need.
- **Procurement:** Ensure that environmental aspects are fully taken into account in all procurement. For staff who are involved with DFID procurement please first read Procurement guidance on MoneySight. There are specific government standards which must be applied in respect of procurement of a number of areas where the goods, or means of manufacture of those goods, have an environmental impact, such as all wood products (including furniture, paper and printed publications), electrical items, and equipment using refrigerants. Guidance on local procurement can also be found there.
- **Travel:** DFID has an undertaking to reduce our air miles by 5% year on year. In the UK, rather than flying, consider using the train when travelling between Palace Street & Abercrombie House. Ensure the travel is essential and cannot be covered by either video or teleconference.

Compliance Tasks

All staff must ensure that they give due regard to environmental issues in their day-to-day activities within DFID.

Task assigned to: All Staff

Risks of non-compliance

- Detrimental Impact on the Environment
- Failure to achieve the Government targets
- Risk of infringement of waste legislation resulting fixed penalty fines
- Loss of reputation for DFID.

Associated learning and skills

- For further guidance please contact the Environmental Management officer in OSD (see OSD Insight page for contact details).
- Awareness campaigns - posters, leaflets etc. Notices on Insight. Travel questionnaires. E-learning for new staff
- Environmental (green housekeeping) issues are included in the mandatory Induction/e-learning material.