

Department of Geography, Planning & Environment

FLYING LESS POLICY

“Researchers are the source of the increasing number of warnings about the state of our climate and biodiversity, and their credibility would be damaged by not setting an example.”¹

Flying is the single largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in academia. Flying represents about 3% of global greenhouse emissions, but it is growing quickly and most of these emissions are generated by a very small fraction of the world population that includes academics. Given the current climate emergency, we - the faculty members of the Department of Geography, Planning and Environment (GPE) at Concordia University - have implemented **a flying less policy to significantly reduce our greenhouse gas emissions**. Inspired by a growing number of similar initiatives around the world², this policy is based on the personal commitment of each member of the department to make serious and significant efforts to reduce work-related emissions.

The overall goal of this policy is **to encourage a low-carbon working culture** by “valuing the health and productivity benefits that can be gained by reducing travel, supporting each other in making conscious travel decisions, and working towards sensitizing others to the needs of the research community to walk the talk on climate change.”³

GPE’s flying activity and associated emissions will be reported annually and the report will be made publicly available. Our efforts will also contribute to Concordia University’s new Climate Action Plan, which includes a goal of decreasing research-related greenhouse gas emissions across the University. The GPE flying less policy will begin June 1st, 2019 with a target of reducing significantly our flight-related greenhouse gas emissions every year. This policy will be revisited one year from now, based on the results obtained and on the latest scientific evidence available at that time.

¹ Anglaret, Wymant and Jean (2019) - <https://theconversation.com/researchers-set-an-example-fly-less-111046>

² See for instance “Calling Upon Universities and Professional Associations to Greatly Reduce Flying”:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1URRRh4zMSpvtZY08F9-Rkbx0qkNNmfzIzqOlqZVWKxE/edit>

³ From LUCSUS 2018 Travel Policy: <https://www.lucsus.lu.se/article/lucsus-presents-new-travel-policy-to-reduce-work-related-emissions>

Department of Geography, Planning & Environment

COMMITMENTS

We, the faculty members of the Department of Geography, Planning and Environment (GPE) at Concordia University, have committed to the following:

- 1. Disclosing our annual flying activity** - Each full-time faculty member has agreed to provide her/his work-related flying record, including all individual flight segments, for the period June 1st, 2018 to May 31st 2019. These flight segments will be used to compute the amount of CO₂ produced during this period of time⁴. The results will be made public collectively, in anonymous format. Each faculty member will also receive a personal report. At the end of each academic year the GPE Flying Less Policy will be re-evaluated with the goal of setting more ambitious and concrete reduction targets;
- 2. Prioritizing travel-free meetings** and telephone/video conferences over physical travel (e.g. participating on dissertation committees; giving academic presentations), and lobbying for better video conferencing facilities within the University;
- 3. Prioritizing collective ground travel** for all destination within 12 hours from Montreal (e.g. train, bus, car-pooling);
- 4. Prioritizing extended stays** over more frequent and shorter research trips (e.g. for field work);
- 5. Declining to participate in academic activities** that involve long distance travel for low academic benefit;
- 6. Promoting a Flying Less Policy** at the Concordia University level (by sharing this policy with other departments and the office of sustainability and lobbying for the implementation of a centralized air travel emissions accounting system) as well as at the provincial and federal level (by encouraging the Tri-Council Funding Agencies to develop its own Flying Less Policy);
- 7. With financial support, encouraging students** to attend academic activities that do not require flying.

⁴ Source: <https://coolclimate.berkeley.edu/calculator>