**ANNEXURE-I**

# SAHA INSTITUTE OF NUCLEAR PHYSICS

## STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE (SOP): TRAVEL DESK OPERATIONS

## PURPOSE & SCOPE

The Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) outlines the standardized guidelines for the operation of the newly established institutional Travel Desk at the Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics (SINP). The primary objective is to streamline the ticketing process for approved official visits of SINP staff and invited guests, ensuring financial compliance and operational efficiency.

**Scope:** This procedure covers all official domestic and international air travel coordination funded by SINP. It clarifies the operational boundaries between internal travel desks and external authorized ticketing agencies.

## CORE MANDATE & OPERATIONAL BOUNDARIES

To optimize logistics and maintain clear financial channels, travel operations are segregated into two distinct mechanisms based on the geographic scope of travel:

| Travel Category | Authorized Booking Channel | Mode of Communication |
|---|---|---|
| Domestic Travel (Within India) | Internal SINP Travel Desks – responsible for direct booking and ticketing of all approved domestic flights through Balmer Lawrie & Co. Ltd. (BL). **(1)** | Internal Requisition Portal / Physical Submission **(2)** |
| International Travel (Outside India) | Balmer Lawrie & Co. Ltd. (B&L) – routed through an authorized travel partner as per Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) guidelines. | Official Email Communication via Administration **(3)** |

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## RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TRAVELER (EMPLOYEE & INVITED GUESTS)

The smooth execution of travel booking relies significantly on the timely compliance and complete documentation provided by the individual traveling. The traveler (an employee or the hosting division/faculty member on behalf of an invited guest) must adhere to the following duties:

### Pre-Booking Compliance & Timelines

- **Prior Institutional Sanction:** The traveler must ensure that official administrative and financial approval for the trip has been formally granted by the competent authority before contacting the Travel Desk.
- **Adherence to Booking Windows:** To secure cost-effective fares, domestic travel requisitions should be submitted to the Travel Desk at least 7 working days prior to the date of departure. International travel requests to B&L must be initiated at least 21 working days in advance to account for itinerary vetting, visa formalities, and DAE approval tracking.
- **Time-slot Approval:** In the application, give an itinerary, preferably on a non-stop flight. A ticket purchased within 72 hrs. of intended travel requires a self-declared justification note.

### Verification of Identification Credentials

- **Accuracy of Information:** The travel desk needs a clear, legible copy of a valid government-issued photo identification card of the traveler matching the exact legal name required for booking (e.g., Aadhaar card or PAN card for domestic travel; a valid Passport for international travel).
- **Passport Validity:** For international journeys, the traveler must verify that their passport possesses a minimum validity of 6 months from the date of the intended return and has at least two blank pages.

### Itinerary Vetting & Confirmation

- **Strict Financial Propriety:** GoI guidelines state that official travel arrangements must be made with due economy. While authorized agents (Balmer Lawrie, Ashoka Travels, IRCTC) do not charge agency booking fees, **airlines enforce their own fare rules, cancellation penalties, and dynamic pricing**.
- **Fare Differences:** If an itinerary is altered, any increase in airfare (fare difference) will be borne by the Institute if it is due to official requirements, or by the individual if due to negligence/delay.
- **Cancellation Penalties:** If a ticket is cancelled or modified without an approved justification, the avoidable penalties incurred due to delayed responses or non-adherence to the plan may not be reimbursable.
- **Prior Declaration:** Under GoI travel rules, mixing personal travel with official tour is permissible only with prior approval from the competent authority.
- **Cost Entitlement Cap:** GoI guidelines strictly limit public expenditure to the **direct official route entitlement**.
- **Calculation of Excess:** The traveler must obtain a quote for the direct official route on the date of travel. If the modified/extended personal itinerary costs *more* than the direct official fare, the individual must pay the full difference out of pocket. If it costs *less*, reimbursement is limited to the actual lower expenditure incurred.

## OPERATING PROCEDURE: DOMESTIC TICKETING (INTERNAL TRAVEL DESKS)

1. **Submission:** The traveler or host submits the approved Travel Form to the internal Travel Desk.
2. **Itinerary Options:** The Travel Desk will source the most economical and direct routes from authorized platforms within 24 hours of submission.
3. **Selection:** In accordance with Government of India Economy Class directives, the cheapest optimal flight will be selected.
4. **Issuance:** Upon confirmation from the traveler, the Travel Desk issues the ticket, logs the transaction against the respective budget head, and emails the ticket to the traveler.
5. **Travel Desk Timings:** 11:00-12:00 hrs and 16:00-18:00 hrs, on all working days.

## OPERATING PROCEDURE: INTERNATIONAL TICKETING (VIA BALMER LAWRIE)

6. **Email Initialization:** For approved international visits, the Traveler initiates communication with the Balmer Lawrie via official email (copying the Travel Desk).

7. **Quote Vetting:** B&L provides competitive itinerary options based on the approved sector. The traveler reviews the options for compliance with the sanctioned mandate.
8. **FC/DAE Clearances:** If the travel involves foreign hospitality or special DAE clearances, the traveler must supply the approval letters alongside the booking confirmation email.
9. **Final Issuance:** Administration/Travel Desk issues a formal purchase authorization to B&L via email, after which B&L issues the electronic ticket and sends it directly to the traveler.

## POST-TICKETING & POST-TRAVEL RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TRAVELER

Because the institute carries the financial liability of the ticket from the moment of issuance, the traveler (or the host on behalf of a guest) assumes direct accountability for validating and settling the travel asset.

- **Mandatory Boarding Pass Retention:** The traveler must retain and produce the original physical or digital boarding passes for all flight sectors. Under Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and Government of India rules, a ticket alone does not constitute absolute proof of travel; the boarding pass is the mandatory legal evidence of the journey being performed.
- **Verification of Travel Logs:** Within 3 working days of completing the journey, the traveler must confirm to the Travel Desk via email that all journey legs were completed as scheduled.

## PROCEDURES FOR ALTERED OR CANCELED ITINERARIES

Any deviation from the originally approved ticket creates an outstanding financial mismatch in the institute's books. These scenarios must be handled as follows:

### 1. Cancellations or Alterations due to Official Exigencies

- **Immediate Notification:** If a trip is canceled or postponed due to institutional requirements, administrative changes, or emergency rescheduling, the traveler must immediately notify the internal Travel Desk (for domestic) or Travel Desk plus B&L (for international) via email. This ensures the booking can be canceled or placed on hold before dynamic cancellation penalties escalate.
- **Penalty Absorption:** If the cancellation is driven by official institute business or natural disasters beyond the control of the traveler, any non-refundable cancellation fees or rescheduling charges will be absorbed by SINP under the original budget head, provided an explanatory note is approved by the competent authority.
- **Rescheduling:** A fresh, signed approval note must be produced and submitted to the Travel Desk before any rescheduled dates can be ticketed.

### 2. Cancellations or Alterations due to Personal Reasons

- **Financial Liability:** If a ticket is altered, postponed, or canceled due to personal reasons or negligence, the traveler is personally liable to cover any financial loss incurred by the institute.
- **Recovery Mechanism:** The traveler must pay the cancellation/change penalty amount directly to the SINP cash section, or the differential amount will be adjusted by Accounts.

## SETTLEMENT OF THE TRAVEL ADVANCE

Until a final Travel Allowance (TA) bill is submitted and verified, the cost of the ticket remains logged as an "outstanding advance" against the traveler's or host's name.

### 1. Timeline for Settlement

- **Domestic Travel:** The traveler must submit a finalized TA adjustment bill within 15 days of the completion of the journey.
- **International Travel:** The adjustment bill, along with external agency invoices, must be submitted within 15 days of return.

### 2. Step-by-Step Settlement Workflow

10. **Drafting the TA Claim:** The traveler fills out the standard TA adjustment form, declaring the actual dates and times of the journey.
11. **Attaching Supporting Documents:** The traveler must append the original ticket/e-ticket, original boarding passes (or train tickets), and a copy of the initial sanction note sheet.
    - The original ticket/e-ticket issued by the Travel Desk or B&L.
    - The original physical / digital boarding passes for all air segments (or original train tickets if applicable).
    - A copy of the initial administrative/financial sanction note sheet.
12. **Accounting for the Cost:** The TA form must clearly state that tickets worth the specified amount were directly booked via the SINP Travel Desk/B&L and are to be adjusted against the claim.
13. **Final Reconciliation:** If the actual travel entitlement matches the ticket cost exactly, the advance is successfully liquidated and marked as Settled in the institute ledgers. If any unauthorized sectors or personal extensions were embedded, the traveler must deposit the excess amount via a challan to the accounts department to close the loop.

**Warning on Non-Settlement:** Failure to submit the TA adjustment bill and boarding passes within the stipulated timeline will result in the entire cost of the ticket being treated as an unsettled cash advance. As per institutional rules, this can lead to a suspension of further travel desk privileges and a direct recovery of the amount from the employee's subsequent salary or other applicable dues.

## LEAVE TRAVEL CONCESSION (LTC) TICKET BOOKING PROCEDURE

### Overview

In compliance with Government of India (DoPT/Department of Expenditure) guidelines, air tickets for Leave Travel Concession (LTC) must be booked exclusively through authorized travel agents.

### Direct Down-Payment Facility

If an employee chooses to book LTC tickets directly through Balmer Lawrie by paying the ticket cost upfront (down payment), the following procedure may be followed:

1. **Submission of Request:**
    - The employee must send an email request directly to Balmer Lawrie at the dedicated email address: east.travel@balmerlawrietravel.com.

- The request must be sent from the employee's official institutional email ID (@saha.ac.in).

2. **Required Information in Email:**
    - Employee Name, Designation, and Employee ID.
    - Full details of passengers (Family members as per LTC declaration).
    - Detailed itinerary (Sectors, Dates, Preferred Time Slots).
    - Explicit mention of "**LTC Booking on Down-Payment Basis**".
    - Copy of approved LTC sanction / application form (if required by B&L).

3. **Payment & Ticket Issuance:**
    - Balmer Lawrie will issue a payment link or bank transfer details for the exact fare amount.
    - Upon successful payment (down payment) by the employee, Balmer Lawrie will issue the confirmed e-ticket along with the mandated **LTC Certificate** showing the fare break-up.

4. **Reimbursement Claim:**
    - After completion of travel, the employee shall submit the LTC final settlement claim to the SINP Finance/Accounts Section, attaching:
        - Boarding passes (in original).
        - B&L Tax Invoice and e-Ticket (reflecting LTC entitlement fare/class).
        - Proof of payment made to Balmer Lawrie.

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