

March 2022

Update from Southern Universities Purchasing Consortia regarding current issues with suppliers on the Travel Management Framework Agreement

Dear Colleagues

It has been brought to our attention that a number of institutions have been experiencing service level issues across the Travel Management Services Framework. I have spoken to a number of the suppliers, and they are all experiencing largely the same issues, to a greater or lesser extent.

I have outlined them below as best as I can:

- *Demand for bookings has increased at an unforeseen rate in the last month.*
- *Changes in travel policies introduced during or following the Covid period at many institutions have required changes at TMC level.*
- *Institutional bookers and staff have also changed, or are now requiring offline assistance, where online bookings were previously the norm.*
- *Recruitment of service personnel at the TMCs is still proving problematic; on boarding and training still takes time and resource.*
- *Due to a considerable number of changes in restrictions and regulations globally, the offline bookings have spiked, tipping the balance to more offline than online, even with experienced travellers.*
 - *This is in part due to bookers seeking advice and guidance on restrictions and requirements in booking destinations – much of which changes frequently.*
- *The supply chains supporting the TMCs (hotels, airlines, car hire etc) are also not operating at full capacity and are also struggling with recruitment.*

Russia's invasion of Ukraine

It is worth noting that some of the TMCs have a considerable number of customers in the humanitarian and charity sectors and some of the TMCs will be prioritising their resource to support these clients, others have separate specialist teams.

- *Some TMCs have been working to extract travellers from the area, with others requiring humanitarian or medical support.*
- *Bookings from humanitarian organisations have increased considerably as aid agencies look to put aid workers on the ground in areas like Poland and Romania.*
- *Restrictions at the edge of Eastern Europe has resulted in very busy air space over Turkey, requiring careful management and last-minute changes.*
- *The closure of airspace over Russia has resulted in flights to far eastern Asia being diverted, which has meant that a number of journeys have been cancelled where flights operating under capacity aren't financially viable for the airline to run.*
 - *The no-fly areas have resulted in delays and last minute cancellations.*

The TMCs are appreciative of the patience, understanding and expertise of institutions procurement teams in the way they handle and escalate the problems end-users are facing.

We will remain in communication with all the TMCs and will update as appropriate on the situation. If you have any specific queries that you would like raising, please do get in touch directly and I will do my best to resolve these.