

Overseas Travel Policy and Guidance

Synopsis

To provide for the health, safety and wellbeing of staff and students, this policy specifies the requirements for Overseas Travel and provides guidance.

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Approval

Approved by: **University Court**

Date: October 4th 2016

Revision Record

ISSUE	DATE	REASON FOR REVIEW
Draft 1	May 2016	New document for consultation
Draft 2	June 2016	Document modified in light of comments received from International Team, VP of Internationalisation, Insurance and Procurement colleagues
Draft 3	July 2016	Document modified following comments at the UMG
Draft 4	September 2016	For approval by the Court- Changes made following PNCC to remove 'considerably' in section 13.
Issue 1	October 2016	Approved by University Court

DISTRIBUTION:

To: Principal, Senior Vice Principal, Vice Principal, Directors,
Heads of School, University Safety Committee, Local Safety
Coordinators

StaffNett -

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/safety/resources/personal/travel/>

Implementation

From receipt after approval, unless a specific date agreed.

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POLICY

In the interests of health, safety and wellbeing, staff and students who are required to travel on University business and projects must ensure that in advance of travel, they:

1. Check travel information provided by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) (<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>):

On their website under "travel advice", the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) lists

- a) Countries, and parts of countries, to which the FCO advises against all travel and
- b) Countries, and parts of countries, to which the FCO advises against all but essential travel.

For staff or students required to travel to *any* of the countries, or parts of countries, listed in either (a) or (b)

- Permission for travel must be obtained from the Head of School or Department or the University Secretary;
 - Flights should be arranged through the University-approved travel agency (Key Travel) ;
 - Staff and students should adhere to advice provided by both the Travel Agent and the Airline;
2. Complete a risk assessment using the standard template (see appendix) if the trip involves any of the following:
 - a. Field work
 - b. Work in a host location
 - c. Exhibition
 - d. Driving (see section 7 of guidance)
 - e. FCO advises against all travel or against all but essential travel
 3. Complete insurance details on the University website <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/working-here/travel-372.php>. It shows the travel insurance policy and has an application form – the form must be completed noting any special equipment. Once completed a reference number and a 24 hour emergency telephone number will be sent via email which should be kept at all times and used in case of any problems when overseas. There is also information on how to register for advice and guidance and other assistance services provided by the insurer through GlobeCover <https://www.aig.co.uk/globecover>).

Contact the University's Insurance Section for advice if necessary (insurance@abdn.ac.uk) to discuss any particular travel insurance requirements.

4. Provide contact details and itinerary to school or department so that the University can render timely assistance in the event of an emergency.

Note: Staff and students, who are concerned about traveling abroad on University business, should address these concerns to the Head of School or Department.

GUIDANCE

The following guidance is provided as a supplement to the Policy to enable a safe and healthy travel experience. By following this guidance, risks associated with the travel can be carefully managed by the traveller and will also enable the University to react to emergency situations and provide assistance to the traveller as quickly as possible.

BEFORE TRAVEL

1 Risk Assessment

In order to ensure that risks are properly considered and correct procedures are followed, a risk assessment should be completed using the standard template (see appendix), if the travel involves any of the following:

- Field work as part of a University project
- Work in a host location such as a laboratory or research station etc.
- Exhibition of work or University or a recruitment fair
- Driving on University business
- FCO advises against all travel or all but essential travel to the country or part of the country

2 Logistics

2.1 Visa

Check for information on visa requirements when making travel plans. A useful website and service to corporate travellers is provided by an independent company CIBT (www.uk.cibt.co). If a visa is required, the relevant applications can be downloaded from the website. Applications can then either be made directly through CIBT, or the University Travel agent, Key Travel (www.keytravel.com/uk).

2.2 Accommodation

Accommodation should be confirmed before travel. A copy of the booking confirmation should be taken, along with any reservation numbers.

When booking a hotel, the following facilities should be as standard:

- 24 hour front desk staffing
- Security staff
- Electronic / key room locks
- Peephole in doors, self-locking, security chain and double locking facilities.

2.3 International Flights

International flights should be booked through Key Travel (www.keytravel.com/uk/), the official University travel agent. If a cheaper flight is available elsewhere and Key Travel cannot match it, the cheaper option can be booked in line with the current travel policy. Once the international flight is booked, the e-ticket number allows check-in online before arriving at the airport.

Staff are reminded that when flights and/or accommodation are booked through Key Travel then the records are held detailing who from the University has booked flights, the destinations and the itinerary etc. This information is invaluable should any incidents occur (e.g. the volcanic ash from Iceland and the recent incident at Brussels airport). Key Travel know immediately who is travelling with them at the time and who will be impacted by any events - they make contact with the travellers involved so action can be taken to assist them and they will immediately inform the University. Travel booked with alternative providers will not be covered by this level of service.

Internal flights can also be booked via Key Travel, or alternatively booked online.

To prevent dehydration and fatigue, on long haul flights drink lots of water, reduce intake of caffeine and alcohol, and do stretching exercises during the flight.

2.4 Freight

Freight is usually co-ordinated via DJG (www.djgfsi.co.uk) for British Council exhibitions. However, if taking part in an independent visit and a large amount of material is to be sent on ahead, this is best done via DHL (<http://www.dhl.co.uk/en.html>). Freight can either be sent to the hotel of stay or a particular conference or meeting venue. Take a copy of what freight has been sent and where. It is advisable to take photographs of the freight before it is packed and sent.

2.5 Luggage

The luggage allowances vary between airlines and it is important that the luggage allowance is checked before travelling as some airlines limit the amount of luggage economy passengers can check in and impose significant additional charges for those that go over the limit.

Things to remember:

- Use inconspicuous luggage
- Don't over pack
- Cultural – be aware of the customs of the country being visited and pack clothing accordingly
- Combination locks – these are better than keys (TSA lock recommended)
- Pack laptops in carry-on bags
- Take photographs of the luggage, this will help airlines or their agents with identification and retrieval of the luggage should it go missing

2.6 Currency

There are a number of websites that can be used for currency conversions e.g. <http://www.xe.com/ucc/> or <http://markets.ft.com/ft/markets/currencies.asp> Staff are responsible for organising their own currency before travel. Cash advances in Sterling from the cash office can be organised. See <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/working-here/expenses-and-advances-582.php>

Credit cards are accepted at all major hotels, therefore, cash is only likely to be needed for general subsistence such as taxis, meals etc. Cash withdrawal from local cash machines may incur charges by the banks and this will vary depending on the country (please note, money cannot be withdrawn from the University credit card) – the Lonely Planet (www.lonelyplanet.com/) is a good source of information on local currency.

Where possible take small bills for the destination country.

3 Health

3.1 Vaccinations

Ensure vaccinations for international travel are up-to-date for the country before travel. This can be done via University Occupational Health Service (GO Health Services 01224 553663) or GP's surgery or a travel clinic. This may need to be done a couple of months in advance as certain vaccinations require a number of doses.

Things to remember:

- Depending on length of journey and destination it is advisable to have a dental check-up before travelling
- Ensure vaccinations are up to date
- Ensure all vaccinations are documented on an international vaccination certificate (this is particularly important for yellow fever and meningitis for certain countries). Keep the documentation for travel.
- Carry a note of any medication allergies (it is also sensible to have this translated to the language of the country of destination)
- Carry a first aid kit (including e.g. paracetamol, ibuprofen, plasters, antiseptic cream, insect repellent, bite cream) or contact University Health Service (GO Health Services 01224 553663) for a travel kit
- Take any necessary prescription drugs (and related documentation). Ensure that any medication or drugs are actually allowed in a given country, for example, any codeine based drugs are NOT allowed in the Gulf countries.
- An extra pair of glasses if needed
- Know your blood group

4 Security

Be aware of and understand the local security situation. As a general security tip, consider carrying a throw away wallet which would contain a small amount of currency, redundant cards etc which can be given away if a situation arises. The same can also be done for a mobile phone.

Alerts re incidents that happen globally are available through Red24.com and by signing up to daily red24 email alerts. Go to <https://www.red24.com/affiliate/acebusinessclass/> and use password 7796 to enter email address. In addition to this sign up to text alerts – these would need to detail a specific region but would allow sign up for individual trips to ensure update on any issues for that country before travel.

In the event of any crisis in the country contact the FCO for help and advice, on (+44) (0) 207 008 1500. Also, take time to read guidance given by the FCO on <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-deal-with-a-crisis-overseas>

5 Communication

5.1 Contact Information

When completing schedule it is important to have all the contact information for the various meetings being attended in case there is a change of plan during the visit, or running late etc. Also if travelling to e.g. China, taxi drivers can often not read Roman letters, always have a copy written in Chinese as well, including a card with details of the hotel for the return journey. Alternatively, it can be useful to call the person you are travelling to meet and have them give the address and any other directions to the driver.

Staff travelling overseas must ensure that they leave a schedule of their activities including their flight, accommodation and meeting details with a departmental contact. Remember to leave your contact details with your family as well.

5.2 Emergency Contacts

Take emergency contact numbers (e.g. a departmental contact and the number of the University's security 24 hour line – 44 1224 273939). In addition, take the address and phone number of the British Embassy, High Commission or consulate for each country being visited.

(University's Safezone app, where available is vital means of summoning help and assistance in the event of an emergency. Make sure you have the app downloaded on to the phone you intend to use while travelling).

5.3 Mobile Phone

Make sure the departmental contact has your mobile number to make contact on in the event of an emergency. Make sure that the mobile phone will work in the country of travel and set it up to work overseas by contacting the service provider before travel.

If travelling with a group it is advisable to ensure there is some variance in the networks for mobile phones to ensure the maximum likelihood of reception should the group need to contact someone in an emergency.

6 Documentation to Consider

6.1 Next of Kin Information

Update the next of kin information both with HR and department or school before travel.

6.2 Documentation

Make copies of your passport, carry one copy and leave one copy either at home or with the department, where it can be reached if something goes wrong abroad. Another idea is to send a scan of the relevant page to your email account or photograph the relevant key pages. Also leave a note with the next of kin of your blood group, a list of vaccinations and dates and any allergies.

6.3 Personal Affairs

It is good practice to ensure all personal affairs are up to date.

7 Work-Related

7.1 Presentations

When taking presentations, don't assume that the computing facilities will be of the same standard as the UK. It is advisable to bring own lap top if possible, but in addition have the presentation saved on a memory stick and also email any presentations to own email address.

WHILE OVERSEAS

8 Personal Security Principles

Travellers can often trace their personal security problems down to lack of planning and general awareness. Good security habits will enhance rather than detract from travel experience. Things to consider are:

- Dress – always dress for the area being visited
- Confidence and Authority – show polite confidence and authority in conduct
- Routine – vary daily routine if possible
- Alert – be alert at all times
- Suspicious – be suspicious at all times
- Methodical – adopt a personal security plan and stick to it
- Anonymous – blend in with the group
- Communication – always keep someone informed of travel movements
- Planning – do not publicise travel plans except to immediate contacts

POSSIBLE ISSUES ON ARRIVAL

When arriving in a foreign airport, things to think about are:

- Ensure luggage hasn't been tampered with
- Be aware of possibility of pickpockets
- Be aware of the travel options from the airport - only use authorised taxis or pre-arranged transport
- Avoid friendly strangers
- Ensure all valuables are not kept in one place e.g. use money belt, throw away wallet etc

10 Communication

When travelling overseas, check in with the office either via email or phone every time location is changed. Before leaving for an overseas trip, agree with a designated person frequency of call/email to confirm that all is well. The frequency of this may be increased depending on the country of destination.

11 Emergencies

It is advisable to have a small grab bag in case of emergencies which can be 'grabbed' if having to evacuate the hotel e.g. in the case of fire. What should be included will vary on the region and the level of risk. Examples of what should be included are:

- Important documents e.g. passport
- Money
- Phone / charger / adaptor
- Water
- Medication / first aid box
- House keys
- Contact numbers
- Torch
- Hat
- Jumper
- Energy bar

12 Accommodation

When checking in, it is important not to disclose the room number to anyone unwittingly or unnecessarily. Once checked-in be aware of the fire escapes and evacuation points. Depending on the region being visited and the location of the evacuation point, consider an alternative evacuation point if concerned about safety and security.

It is worth noting that key cards can hold credit card details, depending on the system the hotel uses, therefore it is advisable to bring the room key back with and then dispose of it by shredding.

Note all the advice above will depend on the region or country being visited.

13 Driving Abroad

The University strongly advises against driving immediately after an outbound flight into a significantly different time zone (of +/- 3 hours). The research has shown that in such situations a driver is at an increased risk of crashing because of fatigue which is often compounded by unfamiliarity with the route, driving on the opposite side of the road to the UK and unfamiliarity with the vehicle and vehicle controls. The risk is not similar upon returning to UK but the driver should assess their own fitness to drive immediately after the return flight to UK. It is recommended that alternative means are used to get back home instead of driving if the driver feels tired or unwell or the driving time is greater than one hour.

There are several aspects to consider when driving abroad. While renting a car to get about offers flexibility and independence, it requires a specific risk assessment to take into consideration the Country, the road infrastructure, the security situation, knowledge and understanding of local driving rules and regulations and familiarity with the route. It is best to avoid driving and use alternatives means of transport like public transport or a taxi from an officially recognised or registered source.

There is useful guidance and tips available on the UK Government website and it is highly recommended that those driving abroad consult <https://www.gov.uk/driving-abroad>.

GENERAL CHECKLIST

- FCO advice
- Risk assessment
- Insurance
- Passport / Visa (if required)
- Money / Credit cards
- First Aid box
- Vaccination documentation (if required)
- Paper copy of trip schedule and booking confirmations for flights and hotels
- Key contact numbers (both in the office and in destination country)
- Printed copy of insurance numbers
- Laptop
- Business Cards
- Presentations (if required)
- Adaptor
- Mobile Phone / Charger
- Travel pillow / wet wipes for the plane
- Gifts (if required as give-aways)

APPENDIX – RISK ASSESSMENT

See below.



FIELD TRIP/TRAVEL PLANNING

Where is the field trip/travel to?	
When is the field trip/travel taking place? (date and time)	
Brief outline of the purpose and objectives of the field trip/travel	
Organiser's contact details, email and phone	
Will any equipment be required to be taken?	
How many people taking part in the field trip/travel?	
Who will complete the mandatory insurance form?	

FIELD TRIP RISK ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

The University of Aberdeen has produced this risk assessment template for you to use to assess the risks of your upcoming trip. This is an important part of the planning for the trip to ensure, as far as reasonable, the health, safety and wellbeing of those taking part in the trip or travel.

You should use this as a minimum standard. We have already populated the template with some of the more common risks. You need to assess these risks before controls are applied by using the guidance on the attached tab then input what controls you are going to apply. After this you then need to reassess the risks. You must also add to the risks and not just use our most common risks. You also need to consider who may be harmed your volunteers, students, members of the public, University staff, contractors etc.

Remember - this is your Risk Assessment and should remain a working document to be updated as the trip progresses.

Risk Assessment of Field Trips/Travel

Step 1: Identify the hazards

Identification of hazards and potential sources of hazards can be from prior knowledge and understanding or experience or by researching thoroughly the available data from reliable sources.

Ask your other people what they think. They may have thought about things that are not immediately obvious to you.

Visit the FCO website when travelling overseas to information on any current advice or restrictions. Our own Occupation Health Services or Key Travel can also provide information on likely threats or scenarios. There is also wealth of information available on insurers globecover website.

Check manufacturers' instructions or data sheets for chemicals and equipment as they can be very helpful in spelling out the hazards and putting them in their true perspective.

Remember to think about long-term hazards to health (eg extreme cold/heat or exposure to viruses and insect or animal bites) as well as physical safety hazards.

Step 2: Decide who and how they might be harmed and how

For each hazard you need to be clear about who might be harmed and how they might be harmed; it will help you identify the best way of managing the risk. That doesn't mean listing everyone by name, but rather identifying groups of people by activity or job type.

Remember: some people may have particular requirements, eg new and young workers, migrant workers, locally hired staff or help, new or expectant mothers and people with disabilities may be at particular risk. Extra thought will be needed for some hazards that may well be very unusual in nature and may only be very occasional e.g a particular type of insect or plant or virus.

In each case, think through how they might be harmed, i.e. what type of injury or ill health might occur. For example, some may suffer back injury from repeated lifting of equipment across unfamiliar terrain.

Step 3: Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions

Having identified the hazards, you then have to decide what to do about them. The law requires you to do everything 'reasonably practicable' to protect people from harm. You can work this out for yourself, but the easiest way is to compare what you are doing with good practice.

First, look at what you're already doing, think about what controls you have in place and how it is organised. Then compare this with the good practice and see if there's more you should be doing to bring yourself up to standard. In asking yourself this, consider:

- 1 - Can I get rid of the hazard altogether?
- 2 - If not, how can I control the risks so that harm is unlikely?

When controlling risks, apply the principles below, if possible in the following order: try a less risky option (eg switch to using a less hazardous chemical); prevent access to the hazard (eg by guarding); organise work to reduce exposure to the hazard (eg put barriers between pedestrians and traffic); issue personal protective equipment (eg clothing, footwear, goggles etc); and provide welfare facilities (eg first aid and washing facilities for removal of contamination).

Improving health and safety need not cost a lot. For instance, placing a mirror on a dangerous blind corner to help prevent vehicle accidents is a low-cost precaution considering the risks. Failure to take simple precautions can cost you a lot more if an accident does happen.

Step 4: Record your findings and implement them

Putting the results of your risk assessment into practice will make a difference when looking after people.

Writing down the results of your risk assessment, and sharing them, encourages you to do this.

When writing down your results, keep it simple, for example 'Tripping over rubbish: bins provided, staff instructed, weekly housekeeping checks'.

We do not expect a risk assessment to be perfect, but it must be suitable and sufficient. You need to be able to show that: a proper check was made; you asked who might be affected; you dealt with all the obvious significant hazards, taking into account the number of people who could be involved; the precautions are reasonable, and the remaining risk is low; and you involved your staff or their representatives in the process.

Step 5: Review your risk assessment and update if necessary

Things are likely to change between first conducting your risk assessment and your field trip/travel. It makes sense therefore, to review what you are doing on an ongoing basis.

Look at your risk assessment and think about whether there have been any changes? Are there improvements you still need to make? Have other people spotted a problem? Have you learnt anything from accidents or near misses? Make sure your risk assessment stays up to date.



Nov-15

What is the Hazard?	0
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Hazard or hazard source	Risk of	S	L	RFR	Control measures or actions to reduce the risk	S	L	RRR
		(1-5)	(1-5)	(1-25)		(1-5)	(1-5)	(1-25)
		Before control measures				After control measures		
<i>Example:-Food poisoning</i>	<i>Example: Staff, students at risk</i>	5	2	10	<i>Example: All staff and voluteers will have completed a food safety hygiene training course as a minimum</i>	5	1	5
Road transport	Road traffic accident/break down			0				0
Air transport	Plane crash or hijack, Deep Vein Thrombosis, air sickness			0				0
Water transport	cap sizing/drowning/ sea sickness			0				0

Accomodation	Inadequate security/inadequate safety/food and hygiene issues			0		0		0
Food	Food poisoning			0		0		0
Operating in the Field	Insect or animal bites			0		0		0
Operating in the Field	Extreme heat or cold			0		0		0
Operating in the Field	Separation/Lost			0		0		0

Operating in the Field	Cuts and abrasions			0		0		0
Operating in the Field	Water borne disease or infection			0		0		0
Operating in the Field	Slips, trips and falls			0		0		0
Operating in the Field	Physical and mental exhaustion			0		0		0
Operating in the Field	Fire			0		0		0

Operating in the Field	Poor sanitation			0		0		0
Operating in the Field	Adverse weather, floods, storms etc.			0		0		0
Operating in the Field	Equipment failure			0		0		0
Operating in the Field	Lack of or failure of electrical power			0		0		0
Operating in the Field	Complacency or Horseplay			0		0		0

Operating in the Field	Medical condition or emergency			0		0		0
Operating in the Field	Civil unrest or terrorism			0		0		0
Operating in the Field	Drugs and alcohol abuse			0		0		0
Operating in the Field	Theft, mugging, assault			0		0		0

ACTION PLAN

Please complete the list below with actions identified above.

Action	Responsibility	Date

RISK FACTOR MATRIX		Severity (What could the impact be?) → → → →				
		1	2	3	4	5
		Trivial Injury	Minor Injury	Potential Major Injury	Major Injury	Fatality
Likelihood (How likely is it to occur) ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓		A trivial injury or condition not requiring hospital treatment could occur	A minor injury or condition could occur which may require minor hospital treatment	A major injury or condition could occur resulting in an over seven days absence from work	A major injury or condition will occur unless risk controls are put in place	A fatality will occur unless robust risk controls are put in place
5	Certain It will almost certainly occur?	5 LOW	10 MEDIUM	15 HIGH	20 HIGH	25 HIGH
4	Frequent occurrence It could occur on a regular basis?	4 LOW	8 MEDIUM	12 HIGH	16 HIGH	20 HIGH
3	Likely occurrence It could occur but not on a regular basis?	3 LOW	6 MEDIUM	9 MEDIUM	12 HIGH	15 HIGH
2	Occasional occurrence It is unlikely to occur but it is possible?	2 LOW	4 LOW	6 MEDIUM	8 MEDIUM	10 MEDIUM
1	Improbable occurrence It is very unlikely to occur?	1 LOW	2 LOW	3 LOW	4 LOW	5 LOW

RISK ACTION		
Severity (S) X Likelihood (L) = RISK FACTOR RATING (RRF) before risk controls.		
After risk controls are applied = RESIDUAL RISK RATING (RRR)		
1 - 5	Indicates a LOW risk	Proceed with caution as there could still be risks present
6 - 10	Indicates a MEDIUM risk	Proceed with caution as there are Medium risks still present. Improve control measures if reasonably practicable.
12 - 25	Indicates a HIGH risk	DO NOT PROCEED. Further control measures need to be applied to reduce the risk to a Medium or Low risk