

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: Operating Board

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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
Issue 1 Amend	February 2017	Sections 1, 2 and 4 amended to tighten control
Issue 2	March 28 th 2017	Approved by the University Court
Issue 3	June 2017	Amended to update Policy and Guidance to add advice and links on services provided by AIG. Also, amended errors in Issue 2.
Issue 4	October 2017	For approval

DISTRIBUTION:

To: Principal, Senior Vice Principal, Vice Principals, Directors, Heads of Schools, Safety Coordinators, School Administrative Officers, Policy Zone

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 countries for travel advice and categorises them further as follows:

- a) Countries, or parts of countries (denoted by Red Zone), to which the FCO advises against all travel and
- b) Countries, or parts of countries (denoted by Amber Zone), to which the FCO advises against all but essential travel.

For staff or students intending to travel to *any* of the countries or areas in a and b categories above,:

- Permission for travel must be obtained from 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 (link) if the trip involves any of the following:
 - a. Field work
 - b. Work in a host location
 - c. Exhibition
 - d. Conference
 - e. Driving (see section 7 of guidance)
 - f. FCO advises against all travel or against all but essential travel

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 for any travel overseas or any travel involving an overnight stay or a flight in the UK, 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. A link is also provided to AIG site where there is also information on how to register for advice and guidance and other assistance services provided by the insurer through Globe Cover. Contact the University's Insurance Section for advice if necessary (insurance@abdn.ac.uk) to discuss any particular travel insurance requirements.

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 ([link](#)), 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
- Attending a conference
- 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 (<http://cibtvisas.co.uk/>). 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 looked for 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.

2.4 Freight

Freight is usually co-ordinated via DJG (www.djgfsl.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

Advice, guidance and help is available 24/7 via

<https://travelguard.secure.force.com/TravelAssistance/TGPreLoginHomePage?PL=AIG%20UK>
and through the AIG Travel Assistance App.

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.

Advice, guidance and help is available 24/7 via

<https://travelguard.secure.force.com/TravelAssistance/TGPreLoginHomePage?PL=AIG%20UK> and through the AIG Travel Assistance App.

In addition to this sign up to 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 AIG 24/7 help line (+44) (0) 1273 401 950 or 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 and keep their Outlook diary up to date. 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.

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
- AIG App
- SafeZone App
- 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

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/working-here/insurance-367.php#field-trip-and-travel-risk-assessment>