

## Safety Code of Practice 38

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# OVERSEAS TRAVEL



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# 1 SUMMARY

This Safety Code of Practice sets out procedures for managing the travel aspects of work-related staff and student offsite visits overseas. This includes organised trips with groups of students for the purposes of teaching or research, and travel by individual members of staff or postgraduate students for teaching, research or other activities while representing the University outside the UK, including business travel.

Travel to a country or area of a country where the UK Government (via the GOV.UK Foreign Travel Advice web site) advise against all travel must not be undertaken by staff on University business or by students in connection with their studies, unless prior written authority has been given by the University Vice-Chancellor. In the absence of the Vice-Chancellor, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, followed by a Pro-Vice-Chancellor, can give approval.

Travel to a country or area of a country where the UK Government advises ‘essential travel only’ must be approved by the Head of School/ Function or Pro-Vice-Chancellor in the case of the Vice-Chancellor’s office.

In both cases the request for approval must be supported by a risk assessment and business case that sets out the benefits to the University that justifies the risks involved, and explains how the risks will be mitigated.

Approval levels for overseas travel and requirements for risk assessments are summarised as:

Low	Medium	High
<p>Line Manager, consistent with normal financial approval systems</p> <p>Specific risk assessment not required, provided the generic University risk assessment and travel guidance are followed.</p>	<p>Head of School</p> <p>Head of Department where Head of School has delegated authority</p> <p>Head of Function / Deputy Head of Function</p> <p>Must be risk assessed and suitable control measures to reduce the risk must be identified and followed.</p>	<p>Where the UK Government (GOV.UK) advises against all travel, Vice-Chancellor; Deputy Vice-Chancellor; Pro-Vice-Chancellor</p> <p>Where the UK Government advises ‘essential travel only’ – Head of School/Function</p> <p>For other high risks: Head of School or Function Must have full written risk assessment.</p>

Guidance on managing the risks associated with the work itself, including fieldwork, is given in Safety Code of Practice 32 Fieldwork.

Figure 1 overleaf summarises the procedures for planning and managing overseas travel.

## Figure 1 Planning and managing travel

### STEP 1 Make an initial assessment of risk

Determine if the proposed travel is assessed as low, medium or high risk. Consult the [GOV.UK web site travel pages](#) and other reliable sources, including the University travel insurers and the University travel agents – see the [Insurance Office](#) and [Procurement](#) web pages for contact details.

### STEP 2 Obtain authorisation

All travel overseas must be approved in advance by an appropriate manager, Head of Department, Head of School/Function or senior University officer (Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor or Pro Vice-Chancellor).

Approval levels are dependent on the level of risk which the travel may present to the individual, group or University, taking into account personal safety and security, duty of care and benefit to the University.

If high or medium risk, the proposed travel must be fully risk assessed prior to approval being given. See below for more information on approval levels.

### STEP 3 Confirm travel plans

- Arrange accommodation and travel (through University contracted suppliers wherever practicable – see [Procurement](#)'s supplier database).
- If necessary e.g. travel to a high risk country/area, check that the University travel insurer provides cover (contact the [Insurance Office](#)).
- Check health requirements e.g. general fitness, vaccinations. Contact Occupational Health (for staff) or University Medical Practice or GP (for students) for travel health assessment, to arrange vaccination or other medical support.
- Check that you have a valid passport that will not expire while abroad.
- Obtain a visa & work permit if required.
- Check that any goods/equipment that you intend to take with you or bring back to the UK are legal for transportation/import/export.
- Make contingency plans appropriate to the destination, covering foreseeable emergencies (e.g. travel disruption, loss of communications, personal injury or illness, political instability, threat to personal safety or security, loss of money/personal possessions, extreme weather etc.)
- Obtain safety & security briefing via the Insurance Office and the University's insurers if required.

**STEP 4 Provide travel plans and contact details to your School/Function. Copy details to the Insurance Office, by completing the University Overseas Travel Form. Failure to do so may result in incurred expenses not being reimbursed unless a prior agreement for exceptional circumstances has been put in place.**

**STEP 5 Undertake travel** Take all essential information with you (e.g. tickets; accommodation details; passport + copy; contact details for the University; Embassy/High Commission contact details; copy of travel insurance policy and contact details plus travel assistance emergency number; etc.)

**If you consider yourself to be at unacceptable risk, you are authorised to take whatever action is necessary and reasonable to keep safe.**

**STEP 6 Review** adequacy of arrangements on return to the University. Pass on any lessons learnt to colleagues and the Insurance Office.

## 2 SCOPE

This Safety Code of Practice sets out procedures for managing the travel aspects of work-related staff and student offsite visits overseas. This includes organised trips with groups of students for the purposes of teaching or research, as well as travel by individual members of staff or students for the purposes of teaching, research or 'business' activities while representing the University outside the UK.

The management of hazards associated with work activities off campus are covered in other Safety Codes of Practice – see the Health and Safety Services web site.

This Code covers:

- All staff
- All postgraduate and research students
- All undergraduate students who travel overseas in connection with work/ study organised by their School or other exchange or partnership study abroad programmes supported by the University e.g. Erasmus.

UK travel is not covered, since this is generally regarded as low risk, or is already addressed in the University's Driving for Work policy.

Where core actions have been identified, those units/persons within the University with responsibility for their implementation have been identified by colour coding as follows:

Yellow	University level – i.e. University Executive Board, Health & Safety Services, Insurance Office, other strategic managers and central policy departments.
Green	Management of travel – Heads of Functions, Schools and Departments; Directors of Safety; research supervisors.
Blue	Individual travellers or travel group leaders.

## 3 RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The University Executive Board (UEB) will determine the level of risk associated with overseas travel that is acceptable to the University.
2. Heads of Schools/Functions must approve travel plans that are high risk - see Section 4. Where the UK Government (GOV.UK) advises against all travel, approval by the Vice-Chancellor, or in their absence the Deputy Vice-Chancellor or a Pro-Vice-Chancellor is required. Where The UK Government advises 'essential travel only' this must be approved by A Head of School/Function. Approval cannot be delegated.
3. The Insurance Office is responsible for putting in place appropriate travel and other insurance policies, including emergency assistance support for travellers overseas.

**4. Heads of School/Function are responsible for the safety of travel undertaken by staff/students within their School/Function. They must ensure that:**

- Travel group leaders and individual travellers are authorised to undertake the travel and have adequately risk assessed and planned for the conditions that they might encounter.

- Any travel that is considered to be 'medium' or 'high' risk does not proceed without the appropriate approval/authorisation - see section 4.

In addition, costs associated with travel (e.g. reputable travel providers, specialist training, equipment, accommodation etc.) should be included when preparing budgets, estimates and grant applications. This may involve the Head of School/Function.

### 3.1 Travel group leaders / travellers

Where a group of staff/students are travelling together as an organised group, the group leader must ensure that the group and all participants comply with the University guidance and any other School/Function procedures. Individual travellers are responsible for doing likewise when travelling alone.

#### Travellers must:

- Plan and risk assess all aspects of the trip
- Ensure that they are authorised to travel
- Check that the travel is within scope of the University insurance policies (see Section 8)
- Consult and comply with the advice given on the GOV.UK travel web site and other sources of reliable travel information such as the University's travel insurance provider
- Check that any health requirements such as vaccinations and fitness to travel have been addressed
- Book travel and accommodation in accordance with Procurement policies, using a University contracted supplier
- Ensure that visas and work permits are obtained if required
- Leave travel plans, personal emergency information and contact details with their University School/Department and the Insurance Office for access in an emergency – see section 7. **Travellers must complete the University Overseas Travel Form on the Insurance Office web site. Failure to do so may result in incurred expenses not being reimbursed unless a prior agreement for exceptional circumstances has been put in place.**
- If required by risk assessment, keep in contact with the University (by phone, text or email) to confirm that they are safe
- Stop the activity (which may include leaving a location/changing travel plans) if they judge that the situation is unsafe**
- After the trip, review how things went and feed lessons learnt back into the risk assessment process. Report any accidents or near misses using the University incident reporting system.

## 4 INITIAL ASSESSMENT AND APPROVAL

1. The School/Function must have arrangements in place to make an initial assessment of travel risks, before detailed planning is undertaken.
2. All travel must be risk assessed (but a full written risk assessment is not necessarily required). The objective is to identify the foreseeable hazards associated with the work & travel and to assess the risks from these hazards. This should include personal health safety & security as well as natural & political hazards.

3. Any travel that is initially assessed as high risk (see Appendix 1 risk profiling tool) must have a full and specific written risk assessment that identifies what actions need to be taken, by whom, how and by when in order for risks to be reduced to an acceptable level. Any residual risks must be identified. The control measures must then be implemented at the detailed planning stage. A template for a travel risk assessment to a high risk destination is given on the [Health and Safety Services web site risk assessment page](#).
4. University generic risk assessments have been developed for low and medium risk travel – see Table 1 below and the [generic risk assessments on H&SS web site](#). Travellers do not need to undertake a further written assessment for low or medium risk travel, provided they comply with: the controls identified in the generic assessments; any additional controls that they or their School/Department/Function identify as necessary; the requirements and guidance in this Safety Code of Practice; and any local School/Department/Function procedures.

## 4.1 Approval of travel

Table 1 sets out the authorisation levels for travel that must be complied with. These are linked to the initial risk assessment and risk profiling tool in Appendix 1.

Heads of School/Function may delegate authority to approve travel that is assessed as low or medium risk. However overall responsibility remains with the Head of School/Function. Approval of high risk travel cannot be delegated.

**Table 1 Approval levels**

Low	Medium	High
<p>Line Manager, consistent with normal financial approval systems</p> <p>Specific risk assessment not required, provided the generic University risk assessment and travel guidance are followed.</p> <p>Note: If the trip is being financed by an external organisation/grant award body and the grant holder has authority to approve expenditure, authorisation from the Head of Department and/or Line Manager must still be obtained.</p>	<p>Head of School</p> <p>Head of Department where Head of School has delegated authority</p> <p>Head of Function /Deputy Head of Function</p> <p>Must be risk assessed and suitable control measures to reduce the risk must be identified and followed.</p>	<p><b>Where the UK Government (GOV.UK) advises against all travel, Vice-Chancellor; Deputy Vice-Chancellor; Pro-Vice-Chancellor</b></p> <p><b>Where the UK Government advises 'essential travel only' – Head of School/Function</b></p> <p>In both cases the request for approval must be supported by a risk assessment and business case that sets out the benefits to the University that justifies the risks involved, and explains how the risks will be mitigated</p> <p>For other high risks:</p> <p>Head of School or Function</p> <p>Supported by a written risk assessment.</p>



## 4.2 Threat analysis

Information about the proposed destination, and any countries en route, should be obtained early in the planning stage. The following should be contacted for travel advice before and if necessary during travel.

- i. The **GOV.UK travel web site**:
- ii. The University Insurance Office or the University insurers (see the **Insurance Office web site** for details)
- iii. The University contracted travel management companies (see **Procurement web site** for details of current provider)

Other sources of advice may also be referred to e.g.

- USA – [www.state.gov/travel/warnings](http://www.state.gov/travel/warnings)
- Australia – [www.smarttraveller.gov.au](http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au)
- Canada – [www.voyage.gc.ca](http://www.voyage.gc.ca)
- World Health Organisation <http://www.who.int/ith/en/>

**Note:** Choose a country with close ties to your country of destination for further information.

For areas of political unrest this information must be kept under review until the day of departure, and where possible, during the trip. Be aware that governments are likely to take a cautious approach when providing information and the UK Government's advice reflects its ability to deliver consular services to UK citizens. In-country contacts can provide a useful context against which to evaluate information.

### 4.2.1 Overseas staff and students

Overseas members of staff or students wishing to travel to their home country for purposes directly related to their employment or course of study must comply with the authorisation procedures set out in this Safety Code of Practice. If this involves travel to a country on the GOV.UK travel advisory list, Vice-Chancellor or his/her delegated approval must be obtained.

Advice should also be sought from the Insurance Office - see Section 8.

Non-UK nationals (staff and students) undertaking work or study overseas should also check the travel advice and consular services provided by their own country for the destination.

### 4.2.2 Existing contracts or travellers already in country

Where an existing contract is in place that requires work in a country where the personal security risks subsequently increase and the UK Government advises against travel, travel should not take place, and advice should be sought on any contractual implications.

Any travellers already in country when a government travel advisory notice is introduced should contact the Insurance Office/ the University travel insurance providers /the British/own national Embassy for advice. The University insurance policy remains valid in these circumstances.

## 4.3 Risk assessments

Generic risk assessment covering low risk travel has been prepared for the University – see H&SS web site under **Risk Assessment**. **If the initial assessment is low risk, the traveller does not need to prepare a further written risk assessment, provided they follow the controls set out in the generic**

**assessment (where appropriate), the procedures set out in this Code, and any local School/Function procedures.**

**Medium and High Risk destinations/travel activities require a more detailed assessment. A high risk destination requires a full written risk assessment, and in some cases, approval by the Vice-Chancellor.** Model assessments are given on the H&SS web site (under Risk Assessment).

The purpose of any proposed trip, together with a summary of expected outcomes, must be clearly established early in the planning stage. This will enable the School/ Department and the University to give the proposal full and balanced consideration and decide if the expected outcomes are “worth the risk”.

#### 4.3.1 Changing circumstances

Dynamic risk assessments (i.e. assessments which are completed during the course of travel to take into account changing circumstances and conditions) may be required during some work to allow flexibility. However this should not replace adequate contingency planning, and it should not introduce completely new activities which have not been given prior approval without consultation with the person who has approved the travel.

#### 4.3.2 Personal concerns

Any traveller who is asked to travel on university business, but who believes that the proposed destination/travel/activity is unsafe, should discuss their concerns with their manager/ supervisor. If they are unable to do so, or if the issue cannot be resolved locally, they should contact the Insurance Office or Health and Safety Services for further advice. If they are unable to resolve the issue, it must be referred for a decision to a Dean of Faculty or to a member of the University Executive Board (UEB) i.e. Head of Function, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor.

## 5 PLANNING AND PREPARATION

1. Each School/Function must have system for reviewing travel proposals and obtaining approval at an appropriate level – see section 4.1. Where risks are classed as medium or high risk the Head of Department or School should be involved with the subsequent detailed risk assessment and planning.
2. The initial risk assessment should be used as a planning tool.
3. Each School/Function must have a system that enables them to access travel plans, personal emergency information and contact details for travellers, so that support can be provided in an emergency.
4. Plans must be revised as appropriate throughout the period overseas to ensure that they are always up to date and relevant to changing circumstances.
5. Where required, travellers must obtain visas and work permits. Sufficient time must be allowed to apply and obtain these documents before travel.
6. Travellers should leave travel plans, personal emergency information and contact details with their School/department for access in an emergency. They should send copies to the University Insurance office, OR complete the **University Overseas Travel Form**:
  - [Staff form](#)
  - [Student form](#)

7. Confidential personal information held by the University must be kept secure and must only be accessed in an emergency or at the request of the traveller.
8. Travellers must use the contracted University travel providers in accordance with Procurement procedures.

University travel providers should be able to assist with planning, and provide cost quotes. They can assist with locating travellers in an emergency and can make alternative travel arrangements on behalf of the traveller. This level of support may not be available from other non-contracted suppliers.

The University Insurance Office can assist with obtaining visas and work permits.

## 5.1 Operational planning

The generic risk assessment for travel to low risk destinations provides a checklist to assist with operational planning purposes.

Where appropriate and foreseeable, the contingency/emergency plan should include responses to:

- Illness, medical emergency and repatriation
- Domestic/personal or work emergency in the UK requiring immediate return to the UK
- Changes in activity or location
- Changes in political stability in-country, civil unrest
- Travel disruption
- Loss of communications
- Theft/loss of money, documentation or personal possessions (e.g. passports)
- The need for additional funds e.g. if return home is delayed, extra accommodation or travel tickets have to be purchased
- Theft/loss of essential or sensitive equipment or information e.g. laptops
- Extreme weather/natural disaster
- Lone working/missing persons procedure
- Emergency assistance (from the local police, emergency services, British or other national Embassy, local consulate, the University)
- Evacuation procedures
- Communications with the University and family members (if appropriate)

**Travellers travelling together as a group should all be aware of the general plan, significant risks, communications and emergency procedures.**

Travellers and their managers/supervisors should ensure that there is a contingency plan if the traveller fails to make contact with either the University or contacts in country. As a minimum this should involve trying to contact the traveller and establish if they are safe. The agreed frequency and need for making contact will vary, depending on the risk level.

## 6 HEALTH AND MEDICAL ASPECTS

1. The University is committed to providing equality of opportunity to all its staff and students, regardless of disability. This includes opportunities in research and travel in general. However in exceptional circumstances, information about needs and capabilities may need to be shared so that this can be taken account of when planning work-related travel. In extreme circumstances travel may be modified or limited in the interest of the traveller's own health and safety.
2. The University Insurance Officer is responsible for putting in place appropriate medical support and repatriation arrangements for University staff and students who undertake overseas travel.
3. Human Resources are responsible for ensuring that occupational health advice with respect to overseas travel is available via Occupational Health.
4. The School/Function must ensure that all staff and students undertaking overseas travel are aware of the University's arrangements for medical and travel support overseas.
5. Travel group leaders/travellers must consider any health and medical aspects of travel in the planning phase, in order to reduce to a minimum the possibility of a medical emergency during the period overseas. This should cover illness, accidents, pre-existing medical conditions, and hazards associated with the work or location e.g. diseases, parasites, venomous animals, poor food safety standards. Consideration should be given to first aid provision – see Safety Code of Practice 32 Fieldwork.
6. Travel group leaders/travellers must obtain information about local health care facilities and emergency medical assistance and so far as practicable ensure that they are satisfactory. They must have this information available to them during travel.

Consideration should be given to:

- The degree of general health fitness required (both mental and physical) for the work and for travel to the proposed destination. For staff, advice can be obtained from Occupational Health.
- Immunisations/vaccinations and the nature of the work to be done. It can take several weeks or months for full immunity to be developed after some courses of immunisations, and so advance planning is essential. Vaccinations and chemoprophylactic tablets may not prevent disease or tropical infections, but they may ensure survival. Vaccination advice may also vary with underlying health issues, destination, length of stay and time of year. It is therefore important to **contact Occupational Health, the University Medical Practice, your GP or a travel clinic for advice on immunisations and vaccinations.**
- Any traveller with health restrictions e.g. heart disease, epilepsy, diabetes, recent serious injury etc. should consider the possible effect that these may have on their ability to travel or to likelihood that they will need medical support while abroad. Underlying medical issues may not be a cause for concern in the UK, but they could be an issue on a long haul flight, or in a country where appropriate treatment is not readily available. Also disease or treatment may affect a person's response to a vaccine, or occasionally a vaccine may aggravate a disease. Medical confidentiality considerations may apply; if necessary advice should be sought from Occupational Health for staff, or the University Medical Practice for students. Alternatively the individual should seek advice from their GP.
- Modifications/adjustments to enable staff/students with disabilities to take part. Advice should be sought from Occupational Health for staff, or from the University Medical Practice for

students. The disclosed information should normally only be issued to the trip organiser on receipt of the participant's signed consent.

- Checks should be made that travel insurance will cover any pre-existing medical conditions.
- The availability of medical assistance in-country, and the procedures for medical repatriation must be checked.
- Information about likely health hazards and preventative measures must be obtained. This might include information about food, drink and hygiene, environmental or climatic illnesses e.g. dehydration, mountain sickness, and endemic disease.
- Travellers are strongly advised to have a dental check up prior to undertaking extended travel overseas to remote locations where access to dental care may be difficult or where there is a high prevalence of blood borne virus including HIV infection.

## 6.1 Medical repatriation

If a traveller becomes ill or suffers injury and requires either be moved to the nearest suitable hospital or to be brought back to the UK, the University insurer must be contacted. They can provide the following services:

- **Emergency Medical Help** – includes arranging medical care and repatriation if needed.
- **Emergency Message Communication** – pass messages to family and business colleagues in an emergency.

Travellers should check they hold up-to-date contact details for the University travel insurance provider and their emergency assistance provider. Contact details are published on the University [Insurance Office](#) web site. You will need the name of the company (University of Reading) and the policy number, published on the [Insurance Office](#) web site.

On-line information on medical/ health requirements and precautions for overseas travel are available at:

Via the Insurance Office web site

Occupational Health

[National Travel Health Network and Centre \(NaTHNaC\)](#)

[NHS Scotland Fit For Travel](#)

[MASTA](#)

[Health Advice for Travellers](#). Department of Health

[NHS. Healthcare abroad.](#)

[NHS. Travel safe. Reducing the risk of getting a blood-borne infection when you're abroad.](#)

## 6.2 Medical documentation and supplies

Participants should have/carry, as appropriate:

- European Health Insurance Card (E111) (for medical treatment in the European Economic Area or Switzerland)
- Vaccination certificates
- Proof of medical insurance (available via the University Insurance Office), etc.
- If required by a pre-existing medical condition, sufficient medication for the trip, plus spares in case of loss, destruction or damage e.g. asthma inhaler, insulin etc.
- Letter or prescription from a medical practitioner to justify carrying any necessary prescribed drugs

- A 'Fit to Travel' medical certificate, as required by some countries (obtainable through a GP, the University Medical Practice (for students) or a travel clinic. Staff should seek advice from Occupational Health if necessary
- In some instances, travellers may wish to take sterile packs, consisting of sterile syringes, needles, etc., in case invasive emergency treatment is required whilst travelling. Occupational Health or the University Medical Practice should be consulted.

## 7 EMERGENCIES

1. The Insurance Office is responsible for providing access to key support services for travel overseas. This includes insurance cover (see section 8) and emergency assistance.
2. University Security is responsible for responding to telephone calls made out of hours to the Security emergency number (+44 (0)118 378 6300) and referring the member of staff or student to the appropriate help – normally the travel insurance emergency assistance. Depending on circumstances they may also invoke the Major Incident Plan.
3. The Communications Office is responsible for taking the lead on communications with press/media arising out of a serious incident.
4. Schools/Functions must ensure that there are effective emergency arrangements in place for all travel. For low risk work it may be sufficient to rely on University systems and support e.g. normal travel insurance. For higher risk travel, additional measures may be required.
5. Schools/Functions must have a system for knowing the identities, contact information, location and planned travel, departure and return dates for travellers.
6. The School/Department must ensure that a responsible person is nominated for travellers to contact in the event of a problem or emergency. This contact may need to be available 24 hours a day i.e. a departmental office number that is only manned during Monday- Friday office hours may not be sufficient. If this is not practicable, a reporting-in system may be required. The frequency of reporting in by the traveller will depend on the level of risk.
7. A responsible person within the School/Function/Department must be in a position to make further enquiries or raise the alarm if the traveller fails to make agreed contact, or fails to return at the planned time.
8. Any personal information relating to travellers must be kept secure and in accordance with Data Protection requirements.
9. **Travel group leaders (or individuals travelling on their own) are empowered to stop an activity or leave a location if they deem it to be unsafe.** This decision can be made without reference to the University if circumstances dictate this - although where it is possible to share information and seek advice within the University, or from the University contracted travel supplier, this should be done. The University will support the decision and will meet any additional expenditure incurred as a result.
10. Travellers must have an emergency plan, appropriate to the circumstances likely to be encountered. This may be as simple as relying on the standard University travel insurance/emergency assistance cover, and having access to their emergency contact telephone number, or it may require more planning and resources e.g. 'buddies' in country; flexible travel tickets; security protection.
11. All travellers must comply with the requirement to provide travel plans and associated emergency contact information, for use by the University only in an emergency situation.

12. All travellers should carry a form of personal identification, in case of accident or emergency. In some countries, this is a legal requirement.
13. All travellers should obtain basic security advice relevant to their destination, before travel. Travellers planning to travel to a high risk destination overseas must contact the Insurance Office to check that adequate emergency support can be provided.

## 7.2 Travel information

The information that will be valuable for the traveller and the School/Function in case of an emergency is likely to include:

- Names of all travellers
- Passport and visa details for all travellers
- Emergency contact details (to be used only in the event of an emergency and with the prior consent of the traveller)
- A copy of the itinerary, with details such as:
  - flights
  - addresses (for appointments and hotels)
  - contact names and telephone numbers (for appointments and hotels)
  - times of appointments (where relevant/known)
- Contact names, addresses and telephone numbers of the British Consul, agents and British Embassy/High Commission
- Purchase card/credit card emergency numbers (to report loss etc.)
- Travel insurance company contact details, policy number and emergency numbers
- Details of any health issues or disabilities of vulnerable individuals
- Name and contact details for the nominated School/Function contact

If there are any last-minute changes, especially of participants, the information must be updated.

### Guidance:

- For overseas work/travel, it can be helpful for the School/Function/Unit to hold a copy of each traveller's passport (or at least have a note of the passport details), visa details and names and emergency contact information (e.g. next of kin, partner etc.).
- **All such information must be kept secure**, and destroyed after the trip is finished (except for staff who travel regularly, where it may be more convenient to hold this information for a longer period).
- All students should be reminded of the need to keep personal details, including emergency contact information, up-to-date on RISIS. All staff should be reminded of the need to do likewise on Trent.
- It is good practice for each traveller to take a copy of their passport with them (not in hand luggage) or email it to their university email account or store in a secure on-line data storage system so that it can be accessed in an emergency.
- Travellers should check that their passport is valid for a minimum of six months at the date of return, that it is in good condition and that they have a note of its number, date and place of issue.
- It is good practice to have emergency telephone numbers and email contact details stored on a mobile phone AND in written format, and stored in more than one location e.g. handbag/clothing and luggage.
- University travel providers offer additional services which can be accessed in an emergency e.g. ability to track travellers, fully flexible tickets to enable rapid exit from a country etc.



## 7.4 Personal security

Information about crime and security at the destination country and en route must be obtained from the Gov.UK web site before travel. The Insurance Office should also be contacted for specialist security advice.

## 7.5 Emergency funds

If a traveller needs access to emergency funds (e.g. due to lost or stolen cash or credit cards; extended duration of stay etc) they should contact the University Insurance emergency assistance 24 hour help line who can arrange emergency funds.

Alternatively, University Finance should be contacted ([financehelp@reading.ac.uk](mailto:financehelp@reading.ac.uk) or telephone 0118 378 6135). They will decide how best to transfer funds depending on the situation and location.

## 7.6 Communications

Depending on the location, a variety of methods of communication may be required e.g. landline, mobile phone, satellite phone, HF radio, agreed email communications schedule. In high risk remote locations, up to three methods of communication may be required to provide assurance that a system will work in an emergency. Systems must be tested in country before they are needed 'for real'.

Travellers must check the legal requirements for taking communications and satellite navigation equipment in and out of countries; some countries ban the use of such technology and there are legal penalties for non-compliance.

## 7.7 Accident, incident and near miss reporting

All incidents, accidents and near misses that occur during overseas travel must be reported to the School/Function and to Health & Safety Services in accordance with normal University procedures – see [Safety Code of Practice 9 Part 1](#). This includes incidents that occur during leisure time.

# 8 INSURANCE

## 8.1 Travel insurance

1. Appropriate insurance must be in place for staff and students who undertake overseas travel in the course of work/research/study. The insurance must also cover their work activities and University-owned equipment.
2. Schools/Functions must liaise with the Insurance Office to ensure that the level of cover is adequate for School activities.
3. All travellers must inform their School/Department/Function as appropriate and the Insurance Office of their travel plans, contact details and personal emergency information. Notification to the Insurance Office can be achieved by sending copies of travel plans etc, or by completing the on-line travel form, available on the University web site.
4. **If the destination is remote or unstable:**

- check if the University Travel Insurer/emergency assistance provider can respond to foreseeable emergencies. If they cannot, the trip must be referred to the VC, DVC or PVC as high risk.
  - ensure that traveller has effective means of communication.
5. Travellers must draw the attention of the Insurance Office to any risks that they think may be out of the ordinary or potentially more hazardous than usual.
  6. All travellers must inform the Insurance Office of any significant pre-existing medical conditions prior to travel as this information may need to be disclosed to the University insurers.
  7. All travellers should take a summary of their insurance cover and emergency telephone numbers with them.
  8. If a long term stay in country is planned, the Insurance Office must be contacted to check that this is covered by the University travel policy; if not, alternative travel and medical insurance must be obtained.

The University has policies for employer's liability; public liability; staff and student travel on University business; and professional indemnity. See the Insurance Office web site for more details: <http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/finance/TravelandInsurance/fcs-ins-travelandinsurance.aspx>

If they are not already covered by University insurance, all travellers must have insurance which covers:

- Emergency medical expenses/search and rescue costs/repatriation;
- Cancellation/curtailment;
- Personal liability/personal accident;
- Loss or damage to equipment/personal effects

## 8.2 Insurance for leisure activities

If travellers are likely to undertake hazardous activities during personal down time, or make their own travel arrangements e.g. by extending a business trip to take a holiday, this may not be covered by the University travel insurance. A holiday in the same country is covered, but if the holiday extends to another country or includes hazardous activities, you must check with the Insurance Office. Participants may need to take out their own personal travel/accident insurance.

## 8.3 Vehicle insurance

The use of private cars by individuals (staff or students) for overseas travel is not recommended. If a student or member of staff wishes to use their own vehicle overseas, they must check that their own vehicle insurance cover is adequate. **Cover for business use is required for staff and may be required for students.** Students must be advised to check the terms of their insurance policy to make sure that the cover is adequate for themselves, any other passengers, and any equipment carried.

If it is proposed to hire a vehicle, the hirer's insurance cover must be obtained; hiring vehicles overseas is NOT covered by University insurance. The extent of cover must be checked, including cover for any equipment carried, any off road travel, theft, loss, damage, etc. If the cover offered is

the legal minimum, this may not be sufficient. If in doubt, contact the University Insurance Officer for advice.

Travellers should also check the insurance cover for contracted external vehicles which have their own drivers. Hire should include passenger insurance, but it is always best to take the advice of the University Insurance Officer.

Breakdown insurance is recommended for hire vehicles. Check if it is included in the hire package.

## 9 ACCOMMODATION

1. Travellers should have the ability and authority to decide if accommodation meets acceptable standards of safety and hygiene. Consideration may need to be given to:
  - Fire and electrical safety
  - Safety of gas appliances
  - Personal security
  - General safety of the structure and facilities – for example pool, lifts, balconies, cleanliness
  - Environment surrounding the accommodation
  - Existence of third party liability insurance
2. If the accommodation is found to present unacceptable risks to health and safety, in the first instance the traveller should contact the University contracted supplier to ask them to find alternative accommodation.
3. If this is not forthcoming within a reasonable time frame, or is impracticable, the traveller should be given delegated authority to find alternative accommodation.
4. Personal security and privacy should be considered when booking accommodation e.g. depending on location, female travellers may feel less secure in a ground floor room.
5. All travellers should make themselves familiar with the fire procedures in their accommodation (alarm signal, evacuation routes, extinguishers, assembly point).

Accommodation should be booked through the University contracted travel agent who will be able to guarantee that health and safety standards in the accommodation have been checked.

However there may be circumstances when accommodation is not booked through a contracted supplier e.g. for research in remote locations, camping or hostel accommodation etc.

Advice on camping is given in [Safety Code of Practice 32 Fieldwork](#).

# 10 TRANSPORT

## 10.1 General requirements

1. Ensure that the travel group leader/individual traveller is competent to assess the safety of the travel arrangements in country, including travel to/from airports, transportation in-country, and the emergency arrangements.
2. Ensure that they are authorised to change the arrangements, even if this occurs additional costs, if they identify that the planned arrangements are unsafe or that safer options are available.
3. GOV.UK and local advice should be sought regarding the safety of public transport and road safety/driving overseas.
4. Travellers must ensure that they comply with local road safety and driver licence requirements.
5. Car/van/bus passengers **must** wear seat belts where these are fitted to the vehicle.
6. Travellers **must check** and comply with all legislative requirements relating to airline safety regulations, luggage limits, and carriage/import/export of dangerous goods and restricted or controlled articles and equipment, computer software etc.
7. Plan contingency arrangements in the event that the transport arrangements fail or are assessed as unsuitable.
8. Risk assessments should consider the potential security threats associated with different forms and modes of transport. This applies particularly in areas with a history of kidnap or ambush.

## 10.2 Driving and road safety

A very significant risk in many countries is road traffic/driving related. Travellers should consult the GOV.UK travel advice and other sources for advice on e.g. licence requirements; driving standards; the reliability and safety of hire car and taxi companies; what to do in the event of a road traffic accident.

Where there is the option of using a vehicle fitted with seat belts, this **MUST** be selected in preference to one without seat belts, even if this incurs additional costs. Seat belts, if fitted, must be worn.

Specific conditions relate to minibuses, especially with regard to driving licence requirements - further details are available from the University Insurance Officer or see the University policy '[Driving for Work Purposes](#)'.

Drivers of vehicles being driven off road must have specialist training – see the University 'Driving for Work' policy and procedures document.

Hiring vehicles, especially abroad, may be more cost-effective than taking University-owned vehicles, unless the destination is readily accessible. Wherever possible arrange vehicle hire abroad from the UK and note the following points:

If possible, hire from a university contracted supplier and ensure that the hire covers overseas travel – see the Procurement web site. If abroad, hire from a reputable company - the cheapest may not be the most reliable or the safest.

The hirer has the responsibility of checking that the vehicle is as described on the delivery sheet, is properly equipped, and is roadworthy.

It is strongly recommended that university staff and students DO NOT hire motorbikes, All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) (quadbikes, etc) mopeds etc. If it is necessary to do so, protective headgear and clothing must be worn, and training in use must be provided.

## 10.3 Air travel

The effects of jet lag should be considered when planning overseas visits, and subsequent work. The Finance Hospitality, Expenses and Travel policy may permit an upgrade in class of travel subject to budgetary approval.

Staff who are regular international travellers should be subject to health surveillance by Occupational Health.

## 10.4 Aviation and marine safety standards

The European Commission provides a list of airline carriers which are banned from operating in EU airspace – see [http://ec.europa.eu/transport/air-ban/list\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/transport/air-ban/list_en.htm).

University contracted travel suppliers will only book on EU approved airlines. No 'blacklisted' companies will be offered.

Travellers must not use any of the airlines banned by the EU unless there is no alternative. If they propose to fly with a carrier banned by the EU, they must obtain approval of their Head of School and justify why an alternative, safer mode of transport cannot be used. The Insurance Office must be consulted before approval is given.

Where practicable, it is preferable to use an international carrier which flies to western/ developed destinations. Likewise, airports that receive international flights may have higher standards than a local domestic airport, even although the latter may be closer to the final destination. However this also has to be balanced by an assessment of the risk of road/ rail travel in-country to reach the final destination.

### **Travel by light aircraft, non-scheduled air services and local marine services**

In some remote or under-developed areas, travel by light aircraft or boat/ferry may be the only practicable method of travel. Facilities and safety standards may be lower than would be permissible in the UK or EC. Where there are doubts about the safety of this method of travel, Head of School approval must be sought in advance.

## 10.5 Dangerous, controlled and restricted goods

In the UK and elsewhere there are import/export controls on military or paramilitary goods, technology, IT software (in particular encryption software), artworks, plants, animals, foods, medicines, chemicals and infectious substances. License requirements may depend on the potential use of the item – e.g. if it has a military application (usually referred to as dual-use goods) and where the item is being exported to/from.

A license may also be needed to export or import goods temporarily – e.g. taking a sample to an exhibition. Exporting or importing controlled goods without the right license is a criminal offence, therefore anyone travelling with equipment/goods/samples must check the requirements beforehand.

**Guidance:**

Guidance on import/export restrictions for the UK is given on the GOV.UK web site. Travellers should also check the legal requirements for the countries that they propose to visit or travel through.

The carriage of dangerous goods by road, sea or air is governed by international regulations and conventions, covering classification, packaging, labelling and certification. Dangerous goods are any goods that pose a risk to people, property and the environment. The relevant regulations must be checked before travel.

**Guidance:**

Note that dangerous goods (HAZMAT) can include everyday items such as lithium batteries. These must have the exposed terminals covered by a safety cap, if the battery is carried loose, not installed in a device.

Guidance on shipping dangerous goods is given on the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) website.

## 11 FOOD SAFETY

Food safety standards vary greatly around the world. Illness from food or water-borne diseases is a significant risk. The following publications provide advice:

- [A Guide on Safe Food for Travellers](#). World Health Organisation
- [Five Keys to Safer Food](#). World Health Organisation.

## 12 MONITORING AND REVIEW

1. Health and Safety Services are responsible for auditing the health and safety aspects of work-related travel.
2. An appropriate level of monitoring of health and safety arrangements must be an ongoing process for travel, in particular for travel to medium and high risk destinations. Procedures must be adapted and documents, instructions etc. updated as necessary.
3. Where appropriate, hold a post-travel debrief meeting, or other form of review, to capture any recommendations for improvement.
4. Address all accidents, incidents and any near misses in the formal review on the traveller's return to the University. Reviews should focus on potential shortcomings in planning, processes & procedures.
5. Relevant risk assessments should be reviewed as soon as possible after return to the University. Provide feedback to the Department, School, Procurement, the Insurance Office and Health and Safety Services to allow for "institutional learning".

## 13 FURTHER ADVICE AND INFORMATION

- Health & Safety Services web site [H&SS Risk Assessment pages](#) – for checklists for low, medium and high risk travel.
- Guidance on Health and Safety in Fieldwork. Universities Safety and Health Association (USHA), May 2011.
- GOV.UK web site travel advice <https://www.gov.uk/browse/abroad/travel-abroad>
- [Expedition Handbook](#), Royal Geographical Society
- BS 8848: Specification for the provision of visits, fieldwork, expeditions, and adventurous activities outside the United Kingdom (BS 8848:2007+A1:2009). (BSI).

## Appendix 1: Overseas travel risk profiling tool

(a tick in **any** box under the Medium or High risk columns means that the proposed travel is regarded as Medium or High risk as appropriate)

	Low	Mark	Medium	Mark	High	Mark
	Standards are broadly equivalent to the UK.	X	Risks are considered to be tolerable but higher than in the UK. The travel plan reflects this.	x	Despite planning to reduce the risks, they remain substantial.	X
<b>Personal safety and security</b>	No GOV.UK travel restrictions in force.  A location where personal safety and security risks are broadly equivalent to the UK, or known from previous recent experience to be safe.  Any higher risk areas can be avoided.		Higher than normal risk of civil disorder, political unrest, serious crime or other comparable danger, but no UK Government restrictions.  It is possible, but unlikely, that the traveller may be caught up in local disturbances.		<b>GOV.UK (FCO) advises against all travel ; GOV.UK (FCO) advises essential travel only</b>  Significant and immediate risk of instability, disorder, crime against the traveller, conflict, or similar danger that could threaten the traveller (either targeting them, or risk of being in the wrong place at the wrong time).  Contingency arrangements for foreseeable emergencies cannot be provided.	
<b>Transport/travel safety</b>	A location with good, safe transport systems.		Modes of transport present risks greater than might be experienced in the UK e.g. suspect road or air safety records; long haul travel without reasonable breaks or rest.		Modes of travel, including road safety, present a very high risk of accident/ injury. UK, EC or US regulators consider the provider to be unsafe.	
<b>Health risks and medical infrastructure</b>	A location with no endemic disease or none that could be contracted by the traveller.  Good health/ medical infrastructure.  Good food/water safety & hygiene standards.		Precautionary health measures are required and are provided e.g. inoculations.  Health/ medical standards are lower than in the UK.  Food/ water safety & hygiene standards are lower than in the UK, but the		Medical or rescue services are not available quickly or locally or are well below acceptable international standards. Repatriation is difficult, time-consuming or impossible.  Specific health protection measures are essential e.g. inoculations, but there has been no assessment of health	



	Low	Mark	Medium	Mark	High	Mark
	<b>Standards are broadly equivalent to the UK.</b>	X	<b>Risks are considered to be tolerable but higher than in the UK. The travel plan reflects this.</b>	x	<b>Despite planning to reduce the risks, they remain substantial.</b>	X
			traveller should be able to adopt good food, water and personal hygiene precautions.  Emergency medical support can be provided locally, but may be difficult to access or may not be to an equivalent standard to the UK. This may be compensated for by availability of medical repatriation in extreme cases.		needs prior to travel and travellers may not have adequate health protection.  Food/ water safety & hygiene standards are low, there is a known risk of serious disease, which it is not practicable to protect against.	
<b>Communications infrastructure</b>	A location with a good communications infrastructure, enabling contact with emergency assistance services and/ or the University if necessary.  Contact details for the traveller are available.		Two-way communications with the traveller are possible, but not reliable 24/7.		An area where communications in country or to the UK may not be available and where this would prejudice the ability to provide essential emergency support.	
<b>Individual factors</b>	The traveller is experienced, understands the risks for the intended destination and has no significant ill health or physical mobility issues.  The proposed work is itself low risk e.g. attendance at a conference, visit to an academic or business institute with no practical work hazards.		The traveller may be at greater risk due to inexperience/ unfamiliarity with the destination/ cultural differences.  The traveller has not been adequately briefed on accepted norms of behaviour.  The traveller has significant health problems (e.g. heart, respiratory, diabetes etc.), or mobility limitations, or requires regular prescribed medication. Adequate support can be provided, or reasonable adjustments can be made.		Those with known health problems, or recovering from ill health or surgery, or who need regular prescribed medication, who cannot be given adequate support.  Females where the University knows they are beyond 24 weeks pregnant.	

	<b>Low</b> Standards are broadly equivalent to the UK.	Mark X	<b>Medium</b> Risks are considered to be tolerable but higher than in the UK. The travel plan reflects this.	Mark X	<b>High</b> Despite planning to reduce the risks, they remain substantial.	Mark X
			The work is inherently hazardous, but safe working practices will reduce the risks as low as reasonably practicable.  Travellers have not adequately risk assessed the trip, or have previously failed to follow University/ School procedures for overseas travel.			
			Any other equivalent risks.		Any other equivalent risks.	

## Appendix 2: Version control

VERSION	CHANGES	REVIEWED	APPROVED BY	APPROVAL DATE
7	Removal of specific references to named travel insurers or emergency assistance providers, with reference made instead to the Insurance Office and Procurement web sites. Changes to University management structures.	Every three years	H&SS Moira Simpson	June 2015
8	Amended to include changes to approval levels for high risk travel.		H&SC	Oct 2016