

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 PhD Student offsite visits overseas.

2 SCOPE

This Safety Code of Practice provides guidance for Heads of Schools/ Functions, academic supervisors, fieldwork leaders and managers who are responsible for the health and safety of staff, students, and other participants in overseas travel.

This code covers 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 within and outside the UK, including business travel. It does not cover Study Abroad and Placements.

Overseas travel must be properly managed so that: the University can demonstrate that it has done all that is reasonably practicable to minimise risks to health and safety; and to reduce the likelihood and ameliorate the consequences of any reasonably foreseeable accident during overseas travel.

For UK Fieldwork please refer to ‘Safety Code of Practice 32 Fieldwork’

3 RESPONSIBILITIES

The University Executive Board (UEB) will determine the level of risk associated with overseas travel that is acceptable to the University.

The Insurance Team are responsible for putting in place appropriate travel and other insurance policies, including emergency assistance support and repatriation arrangement support for travellers overseas.

University Security are 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. Depending on circumstances they may also invoke the Major Incident Plan.

The Communications Office are responsible for taking the lead on communications with press/media arising out of a serious incident.

Human Resources are responsible for ensuring that occupational health advice with respect to overseas travel is available via Occupational Health, who in turn will notify the PI/Supervisor if they believe the traveller is not fit to travel.

Heads of Schools/Functions (HoS/F) are responsible for the safety of travel undertaken by students/staff within their School/Function and must ensure that travel group leaders and individual travellers have adequately risk assessed and planned for the conditions that they might encounter including the University’s arrangements for medical and travel support overseas and completed the required forms, i.e. Notification of Travel and Sanction form. They must approve travel plans.

Travel Group Leaders/Travellers must ensure they have the appropriate level of authorisation to undertake the travel and have adequately risk assessed and planned for the conditions that they might encounter.

Where a group of students/staff 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. For fieldwork overseas, please refer to [CoP 32 Fieldwork](#)

Individual travellers are responsible for doing likewise when travelling alone.

All travellers must ensure they have completed a suitable and sufficient risk assessment and ensure they have the appropriate approval.

All staff must complete the online ‘Notification of Travel Form’ details of which can be found on the [Insurance Webpage](#). Failure to do this will result in expenses not being paid. PhD students are to complete the Risk Management form on RISIS.

All travellers must, if travelling to a [Sanctioned Country](#), complete a Sanctions form and submit in appropriate time to be approved if required. Please see [Insurance Webpage](#) for further details.

All travel must be booked by the Travel Management Company (TMC).

If for any reason individual travellers do not feel comfortable travelling abroad, they should not feel or be forced to do so. The University will never force travel on anyone.

4 REQUIREMENTS

The initial risk assessment should be used as a planning tool. Please seek advice from your Local Health & Safety Coordinator.

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 2. Please note, your risk assessment should reflect the highest level of risk, for example, you may be transiting through a high - risk country.

Table 1 Approval levels

Low	Medium	High
<p>Line Manager, consistent with normal financial approval systems Risk profiling tool completed. 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/Function Head of Department where Head of School has delegated authority/ Deputy Head of Function Where the UK Government advises ‘all but essential travel only’ – Head of School/Function Supported by a written risk assessment which explains how the risks will be mitigated. Please note, in the event of a world-wide pandemic where the FCO advise against ‘all but essential travel only’ this would be treated as High Risk and authorisation would automatically sit with the VC’s office.</p>	<p>Where the UK Government (GOV.UK) advises against all travel or it is a Sanctioned country, Vice-Chancellor; Deputy Vice-Chancellor; Pro-Vice-Chancellor 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. For other high risks, Vice Chancellor; Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Pro-Vice-Chancellor sign-off still required.</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 Website](#)
- ii. <https://drum-cussac.com/login>
- iii. RSA Travel Assistance app.
- iv. Your local Health and Safety Coordinator.

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

- [World Health Organisation](#)
- Travelhealthpro.org.uk
- [Centre for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) give advice about Foreign Travel and it is advised that prior to travel the appropriate page for the country of travel is consulted. Drum Cussac will also assist in identifying risks when visiting a country.

Advice will be given about the current travel advice e.g. the FCO advise against all travel to this country.

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.

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.

If your home is classed as a sanctioned country, you must still complete the sanctions form available on the [Insurance Webpage](#) This needs to be completed **AT LEAST** 21 days prior to departure.

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 (Procurement, RES or Legal).

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

4.3 Risk Assessments

Staff are advised to book travel and complete risk assessments, and all other necessary paperwork, as soon as possible. Ideally, a minimum of 21 days prior to departure. Please note, that if the country you are travelling to is sanctioned, you **MUST** complete the sanctions paperwork and send to the Insurance team no later than 21 days to departure. This is a requirement by the University Insurers. Travel will not be authorised if sanctions paperwork is not completed on time.

In all instance's travellers **MUST** check the [GOV.UK Travel Website](#) for travel advice prior to the risk assessment being undertaken and [Drum-Cussac](#), (**Registration is required**). This will provide further information on security, environmental, infrastructural, medical, and political. This can help to enhance the FCO advice.

Use the risk profiling tool in [Appendix 1](#) to determine if your trip is low, medium, or high risk in conjunction with advice from the FCO website and Drum Cussac.

If the risk profiling tool suggests your trip is low risk **you will not** need to prepare a further written risk assessment and you can go ahead and book your travel as normal, provided you comply with: any additional controls that you or your School/Department/Function have identified as necessary; the requirements and guidance in this Safety Code of Practice; and any local School/Department/Function procedures. If it suggests medium or high risk, **you will need to complete a further written risk assessment (Appendix 2)** A copy of the risk assessment template and other related documentation is available on the [Health and Safety Services Website](#)

Completed documentation must be uploaded to the online notification of travel form available on the [Insurance Webpage](#).

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 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 Preparation

- i. Read the [Travel and Other Expenses, Hospitality, and Gifts Policy](#)
- ii. Consult and comply with the advice given on the [FCO Advice](#) web site, [Drum-Cussac](#) and other sources of reliable travel information and whether it is a Sanctioned Country. Please check the following for the latest update of [sanctioned countries](#).
- iii. Plan and risk assess all aspects of the trip
- iv. Ensure you are authorised to travel
- v. Check that the travel is within scope of the University insurance policies.
- vi. Book travel with the TMC
- vii. Check that you have a valid passport, and visa (if required), that will not expire while abroad. Letter for Visa applications can be obtained from the Insurance team.
- viii. Ensure work permits are obtained if required.
- ix. Ensure the necessary permissions are obtained if necessary, from local authorities/ government etc. regarding your research, for example, interviews that have the potential to be misconstrued as espionage.
- x. Check that any health requirements such as vaccinations and fitness to travel have been addressed. Contact Occupational Health (for staff) or University Medical Practice or GP (for students) for travel health assessment, or to discuss the required vaccinations or other medical support. **If a medical practitioner has said a traveller is not fit for travel, they will not be covered by the University Insurance and their travel will not be authorised.**
- xi. Obtain information about local health care facilities and emergency medical assistance and, so far as is practicable, ensure they are satisfactory. You must have this information available to you during travel along with the insurance policy available on the [Insurance Webpage](#).
- xii. Finalise costs associated with travel (e.g. TMC, specialist training, equipment, accommodation etc.) These should be included when preparing budgets, estimates and grant applications. This may involve the Head of School/Function.
- xiii. Check that any goods/equipment that you intend to take with you or bring back to the UK are legal for transportation/import/export.
- xiv. Leave travel plans, personal emergency information and contact details with your School/Department for access in an emergency.
- xv. Take all essential information with you and download RSA Travel Assistance app, (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.) Save scanned images of all-important documents, including your passport, to a secure on-line account or to family/Department, for worldwide access in an emergency. Consider hard copies in hand-luggage, hotel safe etc.
- xvi. Stop the activity (which may include leaving a location/changing travel plans) if you judge that the situation is unsafe.
- xvii. Have a communications plan in place e.g. satellite phone, email enabled on laptop, agreed schedule of phone or email contact with the University or to a contact in country. Ideally, try to establish 3 means of communication, and test in country on arrival. Ensure that the

- communications plan is included in the itinerary/planning documentation and included in the **Notification of Travel Form**. School/Function to monitor and communicate with traveller to check on welfare etc.
- xviii. Have local contact meet you at airport if possible, ensure that both parties know what the other looks like and have proof of identity, travel with a trusted local contact or trusted reputable travel company.
- xix. Review assessment on an ongoing basis as advice and the situation on travel may change.
- xx. **Report any accidents or near misses to the School/Function and to Health and Safety Services via the University Incident Reporting System. This includes incidents that occur during leisure time.**
- xxi. After the trip, review how things went, and feed lessons learnt back into the risk assessment process.

4.3.3 Contingency Planning

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 must 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.

5 EMERGENCY ARRANGEMENTS

In the event of an emergency that affects your travel and accommodation, contact the Travel Management Company in the first instance. Contact details can be found on the [Travel Webpage](#). If you did not use the TMC you will need to contact the airline directly if your flights are affected.

Depending on the type of emergency you may need to contact the University Insurers. Assistance from both Healix (medical assistance) and Drum Cussac (travel advice) can be accessed by telephoning: **+44 (0)208 608 4100** 24/7 (the call can be made via the travel assistance app), or by emailing rsa@healix.com.

Continue to monitor the FCO website and follow Government advice if all airlines cease travel.

If you need to make contact with the university, phone University Security on (+44 (0)118 378 6300) who will contact your Head of School/Function and who may invoke the Major Incident Plan.

Travel group leaders (or individuals travelling on their own) can decide 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. The University will support the decision and will meet any additional expenditure incurred as a result.

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.

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.

All travellers should carry a form of personal identification, in case of accident or emergency. In some countries, this is a legal requirement.

5.1 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:
 - Dates
 - Stopovers
 - 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 available by the Travel Assistance app
- 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.

5.2 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 University Finance financehelp@reading.ac.uk or telephone +44 (0) 118 378 6135. They will decide how best to transfer funds depending on the situation and location.

5.3 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.

5.4 Medical Repatriation

If a traveller becomes ill or suffers injury and requires either to be moved to the nearest suitable hospital or to be brought back to the UK, they must phone the 24/7 emergency phone Healix on **+44(0) 208 608 4100** number or by using the app, for the University Insurers and University Security **+44 (0) 118 378 6300**.

6 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

6.1 Health and Medical Aspects

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, general advice can be obtained from Occupational Health. Where an assessment of the fitness of an individual a **Management Referral** should be made.
- 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 chemo prophylactic tablets may not prevent disease or tropical infections, but they may ensure survival. Vaccination advice may also vary with underlying health issues, destination, and length of stay and time of year.
- It is therefore important to **contact Occupational Health, your GP or a travel clinic for advice on immunisations and vaccinations**. More information about the vaccines required for travel to each country is available from:
 - **Travel Health Pro**
 - **NHS Scotland Fit For Travel**
 - **Masta Travel Health**
- 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 the 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.
- **Pre-existing medical conditions are covered by the University Insurance provided the traveller is not travelling against the advice of a medical practitioner.**
- It is usually safe to fly whilst you're pregnant and it shouldn't harm the baby if the pregnancy is straight forward. Most airlines will not let you fly after week 37 of pregnancy, or week 32 if pregnant with twins or more. Further information is available from the **NHS Website**.
- Where appropriate a referral to Occupational Health should be made for staff, 6 weeks in advance.
- For students, advice should be sought from the University Medical Practice. Alternatively, the individual should seek advice from their GP.
- Modifications/adjustments to enable students/staff 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.
- 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, Altitude Sickness, and endemic diseases.
- 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.

6.2 Travel and Mental Health

Stress levels can be intensified during travel because of a lack of familiar support systems, disrupted daily routines, language barriers, culture shock and unexpected situations. Attitudes to mental illness vary between countries and in many, severe stigma and discrimination exist. Access to mental health services and medication may be very limited at some destinations.

Looking after yourself during travel and when abroad is important. Further information on travelling with mental health conditions is available at:

- [FCO guidance page](#).
- [National Travel Health Network and Centre \(NaTHNaC\)](#).
- [NHS Mental Health and Travel](#)

Staff can contact the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), which is an independent, free, confidential support and counselling service which is ran by CIC and is called Confidential Care.

Confidential Care gives you a place to turn for support any time of day or night, 365 days a year.

See the [University Wellbeing Pages](#) for further information

6.3 Medical Documentation and Supplies

Participants should have/carry, as appropriate:

- European Health Insurance Card (E111) for medical treatment in Europe. (*Please note, this advice may change following Brexit*)
- Vaccination certificates
- Proof of medical insurance (download via the University Insurance Website), 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.
- A copy of the prescription and a letter from your doctor explaining your condition, treatment, medication, and dosage may be helpful at customs.
- 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 be referred to 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. Medical kits containing sterile medical supplies are available from [Masta Travel Health](#)

6.4 Medication

The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or purchased in the UK can be different in other countries. If you're travelling with prescription or over-the-counter medicine, read this

guidance from NaTHNaC on [best practice when travelling with medicines](#). Many medicines are unavailable in some countries.

Rules for different countries can be checked with the [foreign embassy in the UK](#) but can be difficult to obtain for some countries; other useful resources are provided below:

- [FCO Travel Advice Webpage](#)
- [resource from ISTM Pharmacist Professional Group](#)
- [International Association for Medical Assistance to Travellers](#)

6.5 Travel Insurance

If the destination is remote or unstable:

- Check if the University Travel Insurer/emergency assistance provider can provide cover for foreseeable emergencies. This may attract an additional premium, payable by the School/Function and the trip must be referred to the VC, DVC or PVC as high risk.
- Ensure that the traveller has effective means of communication.

Travellers must draw the attention of the Insurance Team to any risks that they think may be out of the ordinary or potentially more hazardous than usual.

All travellers should take a summary of their insurance cover and emergency telephone numbers with them and download the RSA Travel Assistance app.

The University holds policies for employer's liability; public liability; staff and student travel on University business; and professional indemnity. See the [Insurance Website](#) for more details:

Please note, if the FCO are advising against all travel to a country, you will not be covered by the University Insurance and your travel will not be authorised. Extra premiums may need to be paid by the individual traveller if other high risks have been identified.

If in any doubt about the insurance cover provided, please contact the Insurance Team before travel on uor-insurance@reading.ac.uk

6.6 Guidance for LGBT+ Travellers

Public attitudes in some countries towards LGBT+ issues are unfortunately less tolerant than in the UK. For example, in Russia, there have been reports of harassment, threats, and acts of violence towards the LGBT+ community. There are no laws that exist to protect LGBT+ people from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

LGBT+ travellers can find out information on the country they are travelling to see if local laws and customs are broadly equivalent to the UK or not by checking the [FCO Travel Advice Webpage](#) and then selecting the 'Local Laws and Customs' section.

Complete the risk profiling tool in [Appendix 2](#), paying close attention to the 'Local Laws and Customs' section, to determine if the destination you are travelling to is regarded as medium or high risk. Relevant information must be included in the risk assessment.

Other useful links are:

- [Stonewall](#) Country Specific information about legal and social situations in each country.
- [Rainbow Europe](#) Information on the legal situation for LGBT+ people in Europe.

- [GOV.UK LGBT+ Foreign Travel Guidance](#) Guidance from the UK Government
- [International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association](#) Information on the legal and lived situation for LGBT+ people globally.
- [Equaldex](#): LGBT+ knowledge base created by the LGBT+ community

6.7 Incidental Holiday

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 will not be covered by the University travel insurance outside of the days listed below. Participants will need to take out their own personal travel/accident insurance if the activities they are doing are not part of the organised trip.

The University travel insurance will cover family members who are travelling with you in the same way as detailed above.

Business trip duration (days)	Holiday duration (days)
Less than 5	0
5-12	2
13-21	5
22-35	8
36-50	12
51-65	16
66-80	20
81-100	23
101-365	25
Over 365	28

6.8 Vehicle Insurance

The use of private cars by individuals (Students or Staff) 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.

Car hire is covered by the TMC. 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 Team for further 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 advice from the University Insurance Team.

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

6.9 Accommodation

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

If the accommodation is found to present unacceptable risks to health and safety, in the first instance the traveller should contact the TMC to ask them to find alternative accommodation. If this is not forthcoming within a reasonable timeframe, or is impracticable, the traveller should be given delegated authority to find alternative accommodation.

Personal security and privacy should be considered when booking accommodation e.g. depending on location, some travellers may feel less secure in a ground floor room.

All travellers should make themselves familiar with the fire procedures in their accommodation (alarm signal, evacuation routes, extinguishers, assembly point). For further advice you can contact the University Fire Safety Advisor, firesafety@reading.ac.uk

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 Code of Practice 32; Fieldwork in [Health & Safety Forms & Resources](#)

The University discourages the use of Airbnb and strongly advises the use of recognised Hotels.

6.10 Lone Travellers

Travelling alone can bring additional risks and challenges. [Read FCO travel advice](#) for information on the local culture and customs for the countries you are travelling to.

Stay safe in your accommodation

- never leave your key where someone can note your room number
- do not leave your window open, especially if your room is on the ground floor or has a balcony
- lock your room door when you are inside the room
- if the door has a spyhole or chain, use these before opening the door to unexpected visitors

Stay Safe when out and about

- be respectful of local dress codes and cover up as appropriate
- in some countries, it helps to wear a ring on your wedding finger to avoid unwanted attention
- avoid walking alone in deserted areas, such as the beach, at night
- do not tell strangers where you are staying or details about your travel plans
- plan your daily itinerary: know where you are going and how to get back. Give a copy of your itinerary to the School/Department before you leave.
- Have a check-in procedure arranged with friends/family/School/Department
- ask your hotel or hostel to recommend a taxi firm
- store all useful phones numbers including the number and address of your accommodation, on your phone in case you get lost or find yourself in an emergency situation.
- do not leave drinks unattended and do not accept drinks from strangers

6.11 Transport

6.11.1 Driving and Road Safety

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, driving standards; the reliability and safety of hire car and taxi companies; what to do in the event of a road traffic accident.

Ensure that they are authorised to change the arrangements, even if this incurs additional costs, if they identify that the planned arrangements are unsafe or that safer options are available.

GOV.UK and local advice should be sought regarding the safety of public transport and road safety and driving overseas.

Travellers must ensure that they comply with local road safety and driver licence requirements.

Car/van/bus passengers **must** wear seat belts where these are fitted to the vehicle. 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.

Specific conditions relate to minibuses, especially with regard to driving licence requirements - further details are available from the University Insurance Team 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. [Health & Safety Forms & Resources](#)

When hiring vehicles use 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.

Plan contingency arrangements in the event that the transport arrangements fail or are assessed as unsuitable.

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.

6.11.2 Air travel

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.

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.

6.11.3 Aviation and marine safety standards

The European Commission provides a list of **Airline Carriers** which are banned from operating in EU airspace.

University contracted travel management company 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 Team must be consulted before approval is given.

Where practicable, it is preferable to use an international carrier which flies to 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 must be balanced by an assessment of the risk of road/ rail travel in-country to reach the final destination.

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

In some remote or under-developing 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.

6.11.5 Dangerous, controlled, and restricted goods

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.

A license may be needed to export or import certain items – 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. Travellers should also check the legal requirements for the countries that they propose to visit or travel through.

Further information on shipping dangerous goods and import/export restrictions is given on the **GOV.UK** website.

6.12 Food Safety

Food safety standards vary greatly around the world. Illness from food or water-borne diseases is a significant risk. Further advice can be sought from the World Health Organisation. [**A guide on Safe Food for Travellers**](#)

7 REVIEW & AUDIT

Review adequacy of arrangements on return to the University. Pass on any lessons learnt to colleagues via local Health, Safety and Wellbeing committees, the Insurance Team and Travel Category Manager.

APPENDIX 1: OVERSEAS TRAVEL RISK PROFILING TOOL

A tick in any box in the medium or high-risk columns means that the proposed travel is regarded as medium or high risk and you will need to complete a written risk assessment.					
LOW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MEDIUM	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	HIGH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Personal Safety and Security					
No FCO travel restrictions in force		FCO advises all but essential travel only		FCO advises against all travel	
				Worldwide Pandemic restrictions in place.	
A location where personal safety and security risks are broadly equivalent to the UK or known from previous recent experience to be safe		Higher than normal risk of civil disorder, political unrest, serious crime or other comparable danger but no FCO restrictions		Significant and immediate risk of instability, disorder, crime against the traveller, conflict or similar danger than could threaten the traveller (either targeting them, or risk of being in the wrong place at the wrong time)	
Any higher risk areas can be avoided		It is possible, but unlikely, that the traveller may be caught up in local disturbances		Contingency arrangements for foreseeable emergencies cannot be provided	
Transport/Travel Safety					
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 or accommodation present a high risk of accident, injury, disease, UK, EC or US regulators consider the provider to be unsafe	
Travel plans are commensurate with the risk and have reduced risks to as low as reasonably practicable					
The mode of travel and accommodation are broadly equivalent to the standards that apply in the UK					

HEALTH RISKS AND MEDICAL INFRASTRUCTURE				
No vaccinations or precautionary health measures are recommended/required		Vaccinations and precautionary health measures are recommended/required, e.g. inoculations		Vaccinations and precautionary health measure are recommended/required, e.g. inoculations but there has been no assessment of health needs prior to travel and travelers may not have adequate health protections
				If you choose not to follow the advice of the FCO/medical practitioner regarding immunisations etc.
Good health/medical infrastructure		Health/medical standards are significantly lower than in the UK		Medical or rescue services not available quickly or locally or are below acceptable international standards. Repatriation is difficult, time-consuming, or impossible
Emergency medical support can be provided locally		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 can be compensated for by availability of medical repatriation in extreme cases.		
No reported issues of air pollution		An area where air pollution is uncharacteristically high and may aggravate bronchial, sinus or asthma condition and other pre-existing medical conditions		
Good food/water safety and hygiene standards		Food/water safety and hygiene standards are significantly lower than in the UK but the traveller should be able to adopt good food, water and personal hygiene precautions		Food and water safety and hygiene standards are low, there is a serious disease that is not practicable to protect against.

COMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE					
A location with a good communications infrastructure enabling contact with emergency assistance services and/or the University if necessary.		Two-way communications with the traveller are possible, but not reliable 24/7		An area where communication in the country or to the UK may not be available and where this would prejudice the ability to provide essential emergency support	
Contact details for the traveller are available					
INDIVIDUAL FACTORS					
The traveller is experienced, understands the risks for the intended destination and has no known ill health or physical mobility issues		The traveller may be at greater risk due to inexperience/unfamiliarity with the destination or cultural differences.		Those with known health problems, or recovering from ill health or surgery, or who need regular prescribed medication, which cannot be given adequate support.	
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 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.		Females where the University knows they are beyond 24 weeks pregnant.	
		The work is inherently hazardous, but safe working practices will reduce the risk as low as reasonably practicable.		Despite planning to reduce the risks, they remain substantial.	
		Travellers have not adequately risk assessed the trip or have previously failed to follow University/school procedures for overseas travel.			
		Risks are considered to be tolerable but higher than would be the case for equivalent work. in the UK. The travel plan reflects this.			

NATURAL DISASTERS/EXTREMES OF WEATHER					
No expected natural disasters and weather conditions broadly equivalent to the UK		Higher than normal risk of extreme weather particularly at certain times of the year, e.g. Monsoons		Threat of extreme weather.	
		Natural disasters can occur, but the likelihood is lower than expected due to time elapsed.		Natural disasters have occurred in the last five years and are likely to re-occur	
Local Laws and Customs					
A location where local laws and customs are broadly equivalent to the UK or known from previous recent experience to be safe		Public attitudes towards LGBT+ issues are less tolerant than in the UK		Significant and immediate risk of a homophobic, biphobic or transphobic incident	
		There are restrictions on certain religious beliefs/activities		A location where no laws exist to protect LGBT+ people from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and/or gender identity.	
				A location where homosexual acts are illegal.	
				Significant and immediate risks of hate crimes, discrimination and imprisonment based on religious beliefs.	

Appendix 2: Medium & High-Risk Assessment

Overseas Risk Assessment (Medium & High Risk)

This form must be completed in full if the risk profiling tool identifies proposed travel as Medium or High risk - see Safety Code of Practice 38 for definitions of what constitutes low, medium, and high-risk travel.

Safety Code of Practice 38 Overseas Travel sets out University of Reading procedures for planning and undertaking overseas travel. However, neither this form nor the Safety Code can define the precautions that are appropriate for all travel assessed as medium or high risk. These must be tailored to suit the individual traveller, the risks that have been identified, and the destination country.

If travel is repeated, completion of this form will constitute a generic assessment for repeat travel, **PROVIDED** that this is reviewed before every visit to check that circumstances have not changed, and that the assessment remains valid.

In addition, any proposal to undertake travel against the advice of the UK Government must be approved by the Vice-Chancellor, the Deputy Vice Chancellor, or a Pro-Vice Chancellor. This form should be used to present a supporting statement in support of the proposal.

This form only addresses travel aspects of working overseas. Any hazards and risks associated with the work activities must be subject to a **separate risk assessment**. Contact your HSC or H&SS for further advice.

OVERSEAS TRAVEL CHECKLIST FOR:

Name(s) of Traveller:

Travel to (country/location):

Purpose of visit

Department/School

Dates
from:

To:

COMPLETE FOR MEDIUM AND HIGH-RISK TRAVEL

1. Description of proposed travel/fieldwork and any relevant background information:

2. Summary of hazards and risks:

e.g. GOV.UK advises that there is a substantial risk of terrorist or criminal activity; disease outbreak occurring in-country; remote & hostile location with poor road access and limited communications; traveller has a significant medical condition that requires ongoing medical support.

3. Local Laws and Customs to be aware of:

e.g. Photography near military and other government installations is strictly prohibited; Using a laptop or other electronic equipment in public places can be misinterpreted, especially if it contains photographs; There are additional dress requirements at certain religious sites; There are no laws that exist to protect LGBT+ people from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

4. Agreed precautions and control measures:

5. Details of the nearest Embassy, High Commission, Consul Etc.

6. Explain why other options of achieving the work objective are not considered viable:

7. Outline the benefits to the University that would justify approval. Outline the consequences of not going ahead:

I have considered the risks and proposed precautions and control measures and agree that the work can proceed, subject to these precautions being rigorously observed.

I have read and understood Code of Practice 38.

Signatures/Authorisation:

Traveller:	Date:
Reviewed By:	
Reviewed by Supervisor/Line Manager:	Date:
Reviewed and any comments by your Health and Safety Coordinator or other delegated authority:	Date:
Authorised for Travel	
Head of Department/School/Function:	Date:
Vice Chancellor (or DVC/PVC) for HIGH RISK GOV.UK restricted destinations only	Date:

APPENDIX 3 – OVERSEAS TRAVEL FLOWCHART

HOW TO: Overseas Travel

