



International Educational Travel Handbook

**Prepared By:
The Global Education Office and the Environmental Health and Safety Office
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Foreword

This *International Educational Travel Handbook* is designed to assist faculty and students participating in international travel programs sponsored by George Mason University with understanding the requirements for creating travel opportunities, registering for travel, supervising student travel, and risk management abroad. This handbook is intended to provide a broad overview of the actions that should be taken before, during, and after travel to maximize the benefits of international education while clearly defining administrative procedures that must be observed to create a successful, rewarding and safe international experience.

Document History

Version	Date	Comments
1	December, 2015	Initial <i>International Educational Travel Handbook</i>
2	March, 2019	Routine review and updates

This *International Educational Travel Handbook* is reviewed biannually, amended as necessary, and when:

- Changes to university policy and/or procedures warrant amendments;
- The document is found to have deficiencies or new best practices are identified; or
- When significant changes to university staff or the organization occur which impact the guidance and requirements outlined in this document.

All revisions to this *International Educational Travel Handbook* will be shared with the various parties identified in this document as appropriate.

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Acronyms

AD/TL	Academic Director or Trip Leader
ATM	Automated Teller Machine
CAPS	Counseling and Psychological Services
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CPR	Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation
DOS	(United States) Department of State
EHS	Environmental Health and Safety Office
FERPA	Family Education Rights and Privacy Act
GEO	Global Education Office
HHS	(United States) Department of Health & Human Services
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IRS	Internal Revenue Service
ITAR	International Traffic in Arms Regulations
MMR	Measles Mumps and Rubella
OIPS	Office of International Programs and Services
PIN	Personal Identification Number
RDIA	Research Development Integrity and Assurance
SHS	Student Health Services
SIM	Subscriber Identity Module
TCP	Technology Control Plan
U.S.	United States of America
U.S. DOS	United States Department of State
UTAC	University Travel Authorization Committee
VAT	Value Added Tax

1.0. Introduction

This document outlines the roles, responsibilities, and travel procedures for individuals leading or participating in international educational travel conducted on behalf of, or sponsored by, George Mason University. The purpose of this document is to clearly define the procedures for creating international educational travel opportunities, participating in student travel, supervising student travel, registering planned travel, and managing risks abroad. The procedures outlined herein are designed to make the management of and participation in international educational travel as straightforward and as simple as possible. The process for creating, managing, and registering for travel is based on best practices with an emphasis on efficiency and convenience for faculty and students.

1.1. Scope

This document provides guidance to all persons who engage in international educational travel sponsored by George Mason University and establishes processes for registering such travel with the Global Education Office (GEO). It applies to all university faculty, staff, and students, as well as participants in university-sponsored or university-related group and individual international educational travel programs, whether credit-bearing or not.

International educational travel is defined by the university as any international travel undertaken by a student in association with a credit-bearing course, or by a student or participant in a non-credit-bearing course. International educational travel may include: study abroad courses; independent study, internships, volunteerism, or student research; or experiential learning or field experiences. All travel that is university-sponsored or university-related must observe university policies and the guidance herein.

University-sponsored refers to any means by which the university approves, funds, manages, promotes, admits into, or operates international travel activities whether directly or through a subcontractor; this includes volunteers and agents of the university.

University-related means any international travel activities engaged in by students or employees in their capacity as students or employees. This includes travel related to instruction, research, or business, such as: conferences, presentations, recruiting, site or program assessment, or development. This does not include international travel activities engaged in by students or employees in a personal capacity.

1.2. University International Travel Policies

The university maintains policies regarding international travel that specify the roles and responsibilities of Academic Directors/Trip Leaders (AD/TL), participants, and travelers. University policy also stipulates conditions under which travel may not occur or is subject to approval, such as travel to areas under a U.S. Department of State Travel Warning. In addition to travel related policies, it is expected that all university employees and students will observe all applicable George Mason University policies and standards while abroad, to include the honor code, codes of conduct, drug and alcohol policies, and federal requirements to report specific types of crime to University Police in a timely manner. AD/TL, students, and employees traveling abroad are expected to review and follow the following university policies and standards regarding travel abroad.

- University Policy 1134 – University-Sponsored or University-Related International Travel
(<http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/international-educational-travel/>)
- University Policy 2101 – Travel Authorization and Reimbursement (employees only)
(<http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/travel-authorization-and-reimbursement/>)
- Code of Student Conduct
(<http://studentconduct.gmu.edu/university-policies/code-of-student-conduct/>)
- Student Rights and Responsibilities
(<http://catalog.gmu.edu/content.php?catoid=27&navoid=5407&hl=code+of+student+conduct&returnto=search>)

2.0. Roles and Responsibilities

The following individuals, committees, and university units have responsibility for directing or supporting international educational travel abroad.

2.1. Academic Director/Trip Leader

AD/TL responsibilities include supervision and management of all aspects of international travel educational programs, under the direction of GEO or appropriate academic unit, and representation of George Mason University in the host country. AD/TL should familiarize themselves with all the responsibilities of the position well in advance of departure. AD/TL responsibilities can be divided into three phases:

Pre-departure: This stage encompasses preparation, course development (including course requirements and syllabus), marketing, recruiting, and research. All international educational travel programs must be approved by the appropriate university unit/official (see [Section 3.0](#) – Travel Program Proposal). During pre-departure, preparations are made for travel, planning for in-country activities, educating participants on travel procedures, and preparing participants for their international experience. This phase culminates in a pre-departure orientation with participating students. AD/TL should:

- Create the academic content of the program and coordinate academic credit for the program(s) and relay information to the appropriate academic unit(s)
- Create the program itinerary to include academic and non-academic activities
- Participate in or coordinate the marketing and recruitment for programs
- Sign and file *International Travel Acknowledgement of Risks and Medical Consent Form* <http://internationaltravel.gmu.edu/travel-forms/>
- Begin the *Trip-Specific International Travel Emergency Plan (Group)* <http://internationaltravel.gmu.edu/travel-forms/>
- Contact the Research Development Integrity and Assurance (RDIA) to determine license requirements if working under a Technology Control Plan (i.e. working with export controlled materials)
- Contact the University Travel Advisory Committee (UTAC) for procedures if trip includes travel to countries or areas under U.S. Department of State Travel Advisories Level 3 (Reconsider Travel) and 4 (Do Not Travel), a Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Level 3 warning, declaration of emergency, or under U.S. comprehensively economic sanctions
- Possess and maintain a personal and medical insurance policy
- Maintain confidentiality of student records
- Apply appropriate financial controls
- Attend AD/TL training sessions provided by GEO
- Conduct a pre-departure briefing with all participants that includes, at a minimum, the following:
 - Complete itinerary (e.g., dates, locations, accommodations, transportation, etc.)
 - Contact information for all AD/TL
 - A review of general travel procedures and safety considerations for the locations that will be visited
 - A briefing on cultural issues (see [Section 6.5](#) – Cultural Considerations)
 - Overview of emergency procedures (see [Section 7.5](#) – Emergency Procedures)

On-site: AD/TL are responsible for coordinating and overseeing all aspects of travel and student welfare while abroad. Though participants can pursue individual, personal interests, it is up to

the AD/TL to establish and maintain a central focus for the trip and manage issues as they occur during travel. AD/TL should:

- Behave in a professional manner befitting the faculty or staff member's leadership role in educational travel
- Maintain adequate communication with GEO, the relevant department and college, the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President, and other university offices, as appropriate
- Observe and enforce all university policies abroad
- Model appropriate etiquette, cultural sensitivity and moderation. AD/TL have significant influence on the quality of a program. Their guidance in cultural reflection and learning can ensure that students get the most of out their travel abroad experience
- Obtain and maintain Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) training prior to departure
- Complete the *Trip-Specific International Travel Emergency Plan (Group)* for each location during travel <http://internationaltravel.gmu.edu/travel-forms/>
- Notify George Mason University Police and local law enforcement in the event of an emergency (see [Section 7.5](#) – Emergency Procedures)
- Remain on-site with students until the end of the program

Post-program: This period allows for assessment and conclusion of the international education travel experience. Post-program responsibilities include submission of expense reports, completing a program report, and entering final grades if applicable. All AD/TL are advised to hold a post-trip debrief with participants to collect feedback on positive experiences, as well as constructive criticism that can be used to improve future programs.

2.2. Students

Students are responsible for observing the guidance outlined within this handbook, and share responsibility for ensuring that travel procedures are followed and travel is conducted safely. For all participants, a signed application constitutes agreement to comply with Mason policies. Students must adhere to Mason policies as outlined in the student handbook, including the honor code, when abroad. A student will be dismissed at his/her own expense if he or she:

- Is a danger to him or herself, or to others
- Violates the laws of the host country
- Violates Mason policies
- Is caught indulging in drugs or abusing alcohol
- Is unable to manage a health condition

2.2.1. Traveling with a Group/Program

Students traveling as part of a university-led group or university-sponsored program must:

1. Complete the required program/travel registration process for each respective program. If the program is not administered through GEO, then student participants must register their travel with GEO. (<http://masonabroad.gmu.edu>).
2. Ensure that all required documentation, vaccinations, and travel arrangements are completed prior to departure.
3. Participate in a pre-departure briefing provided by the AD/TL.
4. Sign and file an *International Travel Acknowledgement of Risk and Medical Consent Form*.
5. Comply with policies and procedures regarding academics (e.g., registration, tuition, advising, and degree completion).
6. Abide by applicable University regulations and policies, including but not limited to the University Catalog, the Code of Student Conduct, and University drug and alcohol policies.
7. Purchase the University-approved travel insurance for the duration of the International Educational Travel.
8. Maintain a current personal and medical insurance policy.
9. Observe all local regulations and laws.
10. Notify the AD/TL if any of the following occur (AD/TL must report the following to University Police):
 - a. Murder/non-negligent manslaughter;
 - b. Negligent manslaughter;
 - c. Sexual assault (i.e., rape, fondling, or incest)
 - d. Robbery;
 - e. Aggravated Assault;
 - f. Motor vehicle theft;
 - g. Arson;
 - h. Domestic violence;
 - i. Stalking;
 - j. Larceny/theft;
 - k. Vandalism, destruction of property, or damage to property; or
 - l. Intimidation

2.2.2. Traveling Independently

Students pursuing independently arranged International Educational Travel experiences such as internships, independent study, service learning, volunteerism, or dissertation research, must:

1. Register travel with GEO (<http://masonabroad.gmu.edu>).
2. Sign and file an *International Travel Acknowledgement of Risk and Medical Consent Form*.
3. Contact UTAC for procedures if trip includes travel to countries or areas under U.S. Department of State Travel Advisories Level 3 (Reconsider Travel) and 4 (Do Not Travel), a CDC Level 3 warning, declaration of emergency, or under U.S. comprehensively economic sanctions. Visit Mason's International Travel website (<http://internationaltravel.gmu.edu>) for additional UTAC application process for travel to hazardous areas.
4. Comply with policies and procedures regarding academics (e.g., registration, tuition, advising, and degree completion).
5. Abide by applicable University regulations and policies, including but not limited to the University Catalog, the Code of Student Conduct, and University drug and alcohol policies.
6. Purchase the University-approved travel insurance for the duration of travel.
7. Maintain a current personal and medical insurance policy.
8. Complete a *Trip-Specific International Travel Emergency Plan (Individual)* for each location during travel <http://internationaltravel.gmu.edu/travel-forms/>

2.3. Global Education Office

GEO serves as the primary administrative unit supporting all university-sponsored or university-related international educational travel. Specific responsibilities are to:

- Manage or oversee all international educational travel for the university
- Work with students directly advising on study abroad opportunities to meet their academic and personal needs
- Maintain the university's student travel registration system
- Provide and disseminate best practices on establishing program approval procedures
- Facilitate, coordinate, or advise units on participant recruitment
- Coordinate exchange program travel opportunities
- Manage or advise units on administrative functions such as course creation, student registration, financial administration, and student billing
- Work with AD/TL on travel arrangements, housing, excursions (both academic and recreational), facilitation of course credit approval, and contract negotiations with travel vendors and host institutions based on agreed service level
- Procure and make available emergency insurance for students and faculty going abroad

- Serve as the primary on-call international travel emergency point of contact and provide staff to serve as emergency on-call support for AD/TL abroad
- Coordinate routine pre-departure orientations for all AD/TL.
- Notify registered travelers of emergency situations or hazardous conditions in the area(s) which they are in or are planning to travel
- Notify registered travelers of changes in travel plans or travel restrictions based on the recommendations of UTAC or the federal government

2.4. Individual Colleges and Schools

Individual Colleges and Schools that offer international educational travel opportunities, not initially organized by GEO, are responsible for designing, or approving, international travel opportunities that satisfy academic standards. Colleges and Schools are encouraged to utilize resources provided by GEO and the university to support international educational travel. Upon approval of an international educational travel opportunity, Colleges and Schools should direct the AD/TL to observe the travel program creation/registration and participant registration procedures (see [Section 3.0](#) – Travel Program Proposal). All students participating in programs offered by Mason Colleges and Schools must adhere to outlined guidelines (see [Section 2.2.1](#) – Traveling with a Group / Program).

2.5. University Travel Authorization Committee

UTAC must approve travel to areas that qualify as hazardous under any of the following criteria:

- Current country-wide or in country area travel advisories issued by the U.S. Department of State (DOS) at a Level 3 or 4.
(<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html>);
- Level 3 Warning issued by the CDC (<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>);
 - Areas or countries under a declaration of emergency, countries under comprehensive economic sanctions (<https://rdia.gmu.edu/topics-of-interest/export-controls/>);
- Or, areas otherwise considered dangerous due to ongoing conflicts, terrorism, communicable diseases, or social unrest.

Travel to hazardous areas is approved under certain conditions. Responsibilities of UTAC are to:

- Review and evaluate in a timely manner all petitions for exceptions to the prohibitions on international travel as described in University Policy 1134 – University-Sponsored or University-Related International Travel
(<http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/international-educational-travel/>)

- Approve individual exceptions to the above policy, as appropriate
- Provide guidance to students, faculty, and staff about the information that must be provided to UTAC to conduct such evaluations, as well as the specific procedures for preparing and submitting petitions
- Participate in or coordinate emergency response efforts when emergencies occur abroad that affect university students and employees

2.6. Environmental Health and Safety Office

The Environmental Health and Safety Office (EHS) supports international educational travel, and is responsible for the following:

- Monitor news and other sources for information about areas that are or may become dangerous
- Provide on-call personnel to support and/or facilitate institutions response procedures regarding international educational travel emergencies
- Maintain the university's *International Emergency Operations Plan* that outlines emergency response procedures that are followed when an incident or emergency involving George Mason University students or faculty occurs abroad
- Coordinate the Emergency Operations Group when international emergencies demand resources or participation from groups, agencies, or university units not listed in this plan
- Recommend to UTAC travel restrictions or risk management strategies based on information from the media, federal agencies, and university personnel at or near the area of concern

2.7. University Police

University Police are responsible for collecting and reporting (as appropriate) information regarding crimes abroad that fall under Clery regulations (see [Section 7.7](#) – Clery Compliance).

3.0. Travel Program Proposal

International educational travel programs may be managed by individual Colleges and Schools or centrally by GEO (<http://masonabroad.gmu.edu>). Once a program is approved by the college, school, or GEO, trip itinerary information must be entered into Mason Abroad Travel Registration System. The following section outlines how an international educational travel program should be proposed and approved for individuals, Colleges, Schools, or GEO, and the

steps that must be taken to register travel with the university, for risk management and insurance purposes.

3.1. Travel Program Approval - New Program

AD/TL who wish to develop international educational travel experience within their respective College or School are responsible for working directly with their Department Chair. AD/TL interested in leading a program through GEO should follow the guidance described below.

3.1.1. New Study Abroad Proposals

GEO can administer programs centrally for any unit on campus. Interested faculty or academic units should submit a *New Study Abroad Program Proposal* (<http://globaled.gmu.edu/media/proposals/New-SA-Proposal.pdf>) by set deadlines. This form is intended for study abroad programs that have not been previously offered.

3.1.2. Deadlines

The deadlines to submit new program proposals will be in early September for summer programs and in late May for winter break or spring-break short-term programs each year. Visit GEO (<http://studyabroad.gmu.edu>) for more specific dates and detailed timelines.

3.1.3. Submission of Proposals

All new proposals including the necessary attachments should be submitted via email to GoAbroad@gmu.edu. Please note that the proposal submission process will be changing to an online process in the near future.

3.1.4. Approval of New Programs

Decisions will be made in early October for summer programs and in mid-June for winter break and spring break programs.

3.1.5. Program Development Workshops

GEO offers a series of optional workshops focusing on content development, preparing a program budget, and marketing/ recruitment for short-term study abroad programs. These workshops are designed to assist faculty who have not previously led study abroad programs, but are open to all interested faculty. These workshops are offered annually, during the spring term; dates are listed on the GEO calendar ([GEO Events Calendar](#)).

3.2. Travel Program Approval - Returning/Repeat Program

AD/TL who wish to have their program offered again must submit a *Request for Program Renewal* form (<http://globaled.gmu.edu/media/proposals/Program-Renewal-Request.pdf>) to GEO by the set deadlines. The deadline for winter programs occurs in May, and the deadline for summer programs occurs in September.

3.3. Post-Approval Process

Upon approval of the program proposal by the college or GEO, the AD/TL will:

1. Determine course numbers and credits with corresponding departments.
2. Finalize program details with administering unit and Program Officer, if applicable.
3. Actively market the program and recruit participants.
4. Register Non-GEO programs or have participants register, any travel with the university using the Mason Abroad Travel Registration System (<http://masonabroad.gmu.edu>).
5. Prepare for the student Pre-Departure Orientation (see [Section 5.9.1](#)).
6. Attend mandatory AD/TL Pre-Departure Training (see [Section 5.9.2](#)).

4.0. Travel Application and Registration

Students can explore international travel opportunities and apply for desired programs online through GEO (<http://masonabroad.gmu.edu>). Students should register all travel that is university-sponsored or university-related through GEO's Travel Registration System (<http://masonabroad.gmu.edu>).

University-sponsored refers to any means by which the university approves, funds, manages, promotes, admits into, or operates international travel activities whether directly or through a subcontractor; this includes volunteers and agents of the university.

University-related means any international travel activities engaged in by students or employees in their capacity as students or employees. This includes travel related to instruction, research, or business, such as: conferences, presentations, recruiting, site or program assessment, or development. This does not include international travel activities engaged in by students or employees in a personal capacity.

4.1. Travel Application - Global Education Office

Students participating in GEO programs apply through the online application (<http://masonabroad.gmu.edu>). Participants who complete the application process are automatically registered in the Mason Abroad Travel Registration System.

4.2. Travel Application - Individual Colleges and Schools

Students who participate in travel opportunities offered by individual Colleges and Schools will apply directly to those programs through the college administering the program, or by registering for international travel courses via the normal class registration process (e.g., Patriot Web).

4.3. Withdrawing from a Program

Students must submit their withdrawal from a program in writing to the unit administering the education abroad program. Each unit will have its own policies regarding refunds for withdrawal.

4.4. Independent Travel (Student)

Students traveling abroad independently for academic credit or sponsored by the university must register their travel in the Mason Abroad Travel Registration System (<http://masonabroad.gmu.edu>). During the registration process, students will be asked to acknowledge the risks inherent to international travel, and to provide the following: two contacts for emergency purposes, a detailed itinerary, passport information, and local contact information. While abroad, students will be expected to update the information, adding any side trips or independent travel undertaken.

4.5. Independent Travel (Faculty)

Faculty traveling abroad as a trip leader for a study abroad program (not offered through GEO) or on any other university-sponsored or university-related travel must register their travel in the Mason Abroad Travel Registration System (<http://masonabroad.gmu.edu>).

4.6. Side Trip and Extracurricular Travel

Student participants on any education abroad program, including those external programs and exchanges, must register their extracurricular travel with the Side Trip Registration System on their Mason Abroad homepage (<http://masonabroad.gmu.edu>). This includes weekend trips,

vacations, and other personal travel prior to, during, or following scheduled program dates. This data is compiled for risk management purposes only. In emergency situations, the university must rely on accurate information on the location of all Mason travelers in order to enact response measures.

4.7. Mandatory Travel Insurance

All Colleges and Schools conducting university-sponsored or university-related international educational travel are required to maintain insurance for the duration of travel for all members traveling with the program (i.e., faculty, volunteers, and participants). Travel insurance is available through GEO and all international educational travel programs are advised to secure travel insurance through them.

Failure to coordinate travel insurance through GEO, or to procure appropriate insurance independently, will result in assumption of liability by the college sponsoring the travel and individuals leading the travel. If travelers choose to extend their stay after the completion of a program, they will not be covered by university travel insurance. Contact GEO to coordinate travel insurance for group travel.

5.0. Travel Procedures

The following procedures are intended to provide a stepwise process for faculty and students to register for travel, and administrative procedures that are necessary for conducting travel in accordance with university policy, federal regulations, and international regulations.

5.1. Pre-Departure Education

Travelers are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the customs, technology, medical, and security issues in countries they will be visiting. The U.S. Department of State maintains websites that provide travelers with valuable information about travel conditions in destination countries and steps that can be taken to ensure personal health and safety abroad. Travelers are encouraged to complete the following steps prior to their departure:

1. Review the information under the *Before You Go* and *Country Information* tabs on the DOS website (<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/go.html>) to become familiar with the customs and conditions in the destination country.
2. Investigate if a VISA is required for travel to the destination country. (<http://www.state.gov/travel/>).

3. If applicable, review the information on the *Students Abroad* tab on the DOS website (<http://travel.state.gov/content/studentsabroad/en.html>) for valuable information on required travel documentation, health, emergencies, embassies & other important travel issues.
4. Complete the *Traveler's Checklist* on the DOS website (<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/go/checklist.html>) which outlines needed steps to prepare for a safe trip abroad.
5. Register with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) - *This is a George Mason University requirement for all students; and encouraged process for all university-sponsored or university-related travelers.* Travelers register for STEP on the DOS website (<https://step.state.gov/step/>). Registering will enable the DOS to update travelers (while on travel) of important information about safety conditions in their destination country and the US Embassy (in destination country) to contact travelers in an emergency, whether the emergency is a natural disaster, civil unrest, or a family emergency.

5.2. Travel to Hazardous Areas and Countries under Comprehensive Economic Sanctions

George Mason University policy does not permit undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, or staff to travel to hazardous areas and/or countries under comprehensive economic sanctions. However, George Mason University recognizes that a global perspective is essential to its academic mission. With that in mind, students and university employees may request an exception to this policy.

Those wishing to travel to a hazardous area and/or country under comprehensive economic sanctions must apply for, and be granted, authorization from the UTAC. Travelers must submit an *Application for Travel to Hazardous Areas and Countries under Comprehensive Economic Sanctions*. Applications are available on line at (<http://internationaltravel.gmu.edu/travel-forms>). UTAC, by direction from the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice-President, reviews hazardous travel to ensure university students, faculty, and staff fully understand the health and safety risks to the area, and have taken steps to mitigate them. Requesting an exemption for UTAC review does not guarantee travel approval. UTAC strongly recommends that no travel arrangements be made until approval has been received.

All travelers should determine if they are traveling to an area that requires UTAC authorization. Visit the following websites and determine if any apply:

- Is your destination country under a DOS Travel Advisory? (<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html>);
- Is your destination country under a CDC Warning Level 3 notice? (<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/>)
- Is your destination country under comprehensive U.S. economic sanctions? (<https://rdia.gmu.edu/topics-of-interest/export-controls/>)

If any of the above conditions apply, travelers must apply for, and be granted, authorization from UTAC. Visit International Travel (<http://internationaltravel.gmu.edu/>) for a detailed explanation of the approval process and requirements for travel to these areas, and the application for Travel to Hazardous Regions and Countries under Comprehensive Economic Sanctions. (Also see [Section 7.5.10](#) – Travel Warning Issued During Travel).

5.3. Export Controls and Sanctions Compliance

U.S. export control and sanctions laws apply directly to universities, as well as the individuals who work for them (researchers, staff, and students). Some university travel may be subject to U.S. export control and sanctions laws. Federal export control and sanctions regulations prohibit the export to foreign countries of certain goods, technology, and technical data without a license issued by the U.S. government. The sanctions regulations also prohibit *all* exports to (and imports from) goods and technology from certain countries. These regulations were implemented for reasons of national security, economic and trade protection, and the advancement of foreign policy goals, and they change regularly.

The term "export" as used in these regulations includes not only actually shipping goods to foreign countries, but also transferring/disclosing in any form (verbal, written, electronic, visual) export-controlled items or information to a foreign national (anyone who is not a U.S. citizen or permanent resident) or hand carrying equipment or technology outside the U.S. As a result, a license may be required before sharing certain technology or information abroad (or on campus) with foreign nationals participating or collaborating in affected research projects.

For example, Mason researchers, staff and AD/TL should be aware that the following common activities may require export authorization from the U.S. Government. Please contact RDIA for guidance regarding:

- Collaborating in the U.S. or abroad with foreign researchers or graduate assistants, or consulting with foreign persons or organizations, particularly in cases where foreign counterparties will have access to controlled equipment, materials, or data

- Traveling with export-controlled equipment, materials, or data, including electronic data stored on laptops or hand-held devices. Such travel constitutes an export of these items, even if only temporary and even if for personal use only
- Transferring non-public data or other assistance to foreign nationals (in the U.S. or abroad)
- Shipping export-controlled items outside the U.S.

In addition, the following activities need prior written approval from RDIA and may require authorization from the U.S. Government:

1. Travel to, or through, any U.S. comprehensively sanctioned country (<https://rdia.gmu.edu/topics-of-interest/export-controls/>).
2. Travel to a DOS military embargoed country (https://www.pmdtc.state.gov/?id=ddtc_public_portal_country_landing) if you are working under a Technology Control Plan (TCP) with International Traffic Arms Regulations (ITAR) data or items.

5.3.1 International Travel with Laptops

Mason employees may take their university-owned laptops on international travel only if they have taken export control training conducted by RDIA and certify to RDIA in advance, in writing, that their Mason laptop does not have any export-controlled material stored on it. Such certifications are trip-specific, due to federal requirements. (See: <https://rdia.gmu.edu/topics-of-interest/export-controls/export-control-forms/>) Note: Mason laptops cannot be taken to most countries subject to comprehensive US sanctions without a U.S. government license. Cuba travel with a Mason laptop requires special forms to be submitted to the Federal Government. Contact RDIA for assistance in such cases.

Mason also has a short-term “clean laptop” loaner program for Mason employees who are traveling internationally and wish to take a clean laptop with them to avoid potential legal violations caused by unlicensed exports, loss of research data, or exposure to malicious software while overseas. To request a clean laptop for short-term international travel, please contact RDIA (export@gmu.edu).

For other concerns or questions regarding international travel and related exports of hardware, technology or data, please visit RDIA’s website (<https://rdia.gmu.edu/topics-of-interest/export-controls/international-travel/>) or email export@gmu.edu.

5.4 Required Legal Documents for Travel

It is the responsibility of the traveler to obtain passports, visas (if required), and any other necessary legal documentation. GEO can assist in determining necessary documentation, but will not obtain any documentation on the traveler's behalf.

5.4.1. Passport

A passport is an official government document that verifies an individual's identity and citizenship. When visiting, many countries require individuals to show a passport to gain entry. Most all countries, including the U.S., require citizens to show passports to *regain* entry to their country of citizenship.

The passport application process is detailed in the *How Do I Apply for a Passport* section on the DOS website (<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english.html>). U.S. citizens can expect to receive a passport in 4-6 weeks from the date of submission; passports cost approximately \$125. Travelers are urged to keep their passport safely in their possession at all times. Loss or theft of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to U.S. passport services (in the U.S.) or the nearest U.S. consulate/embassy (abroad). Theft of a passport should also be reported to local police authorities.

Some (destination) countries require that passports have up to four blank pages and remain valid for 6-months from the planned *date of return* (to the U.S.). This is to ensure that the traveler plans to return home and not remain in their destination country. Travelers with passports due to expire on or before 6-months of their return date, must acquire a new passport *before* leaving on travel.

5.4.2. Visa

A travel visa is an official government document that provides travelers with temporarily authorization to be in a country. Many countries require a visa to gain entry. Visas are usually in the form of a stamp or sticker placed in the passport, or a biometric card issued by the (destination) country.

Country specific information about visas requirements, immunizations, medical information, additional fees, and conditions abroad that may affect safety and security can be found on the *Americans Traveling Abroad* section on the DOS website

(<http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/general/americans-traveling-abroad.html>).

Although some countries may allow purchase of a visa stamp upon arrival, travelers are encouraged to obtain their visa stamp prior to departure.

5.4.3. Entry Requirements

Some countries have individual entry requirements and may require unique documentation/procedures prior to, or upon, entry. Travelers should visit the *Learn About Your Destination* section on the DOS website (<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/country.html>) for information on entry requirements for countries.

5.4.4. Students Traveling Under F1 & J1 Visas

F1/J1 students planning to travel outside the US while in school – including travel on a school break, semester trip, conference, study, research or a family emergency – must submit original I-20/DS-2019 to the Office of International Programs and Services (OIPS) (<http://oips.gmu.edu/>) for travel validation signature. F2/J2 dependents accompanying travelers must also submit original I-20s/DS-2019s. The validation signature indicates that OIPS certifies that the traveler is a George Mason University student maintaining legal status during travel and is expected to come back to George Mason University. OIPS staff will check school records, SEVIS record, valid visa, and passport before signing I-20/DS-2019 for travel. Signatures are valid for one year from the date the I-20/DS-2019 is signed. Additional information can be found on the OIPS website. See [Section 5.12](#) – Returning to the United States, for re-entry requirements.

5.5. International Student Identification Card

In many countries, educational activities, museums, and other sites offer discounts for students. Although student IDs from home or in-country institutions are often acceptable, travelers may want to consider purchasing an International Student Identity Card (<http://www.myisic.com/>) which is recognized internationally.

5.6. Proof of Immunization

Some countries may require proof of immunization before entry to the country. Travelers should visit the CDC (<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list>) to determine required and recommended immunizations. If proof is required, traveler must carry an official International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis form; a yellow booklet issued by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS). This form is available from Mason's Student Health Services (SHS) or from many physicians or travel agencies, and must be filled out by the physician or clinic administering the immunizations. Some countries require immunization records be presented, with passport/visa documentation, when entering the country. See [Section 7.3.2](#) - Immunization and Health Review, for information on how to obtain immunizations.

5.6.1. HIV Antibody Test Requirement

A limited number of countries prohibit entry to HIV positive travelers. Some countries require incoming foreigners to complete an HIV antibody test prior to admission. This is primarily for visitors planning a stay longer than six months. Travelers should consult the Global Database on HIV specific Travel & Residence Restrictions (<http://www.hivtravel.org/>) to determine if the HIV antibody test is required for entrance. If HIV testing is required, travelers should seek centers that offer pre- and post-test counseling. It is recommended that travelers allow at least two weeks for the testing process.

5.7. Power of Attorney

A power of attorney is a document that allows individuals to appoint a person or organization to handle their affairs while out of the country and unable to do so. If needed, travelers should provide an attorney, or designee, any official or legal documents prior to departure. Power of Attorney forms are available from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) (<http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f2848.pdf>). Forms should be notarized by a notary public and retained by the person who will be acting on the traveler's behalf.

5.8. Medical Authorization

All university travelers must register their travel (online) through the Mason Abroad Travel Registration System <http://masonabroad.gmu.edu> (See [Section 4.0](#) – Travel Application/Registration). During the registration process, travelers will be required to read and accept (via signature) the *International Travel Acknowledgement of Risk and Medical Consent Form* prior to departure. Included in this acknowledgement is language authorizing Mason agents or representatives to approve care or treatment, upon the advice of a licensed physician, for the traveler in the event of a medical emergency where the traveler is unable to act on their behalf, and where Mason agents or representatives are unable to receive direction from the traveler's designated emergency contact(s).

5.9. Pre-Departure Orientation

GEO or the college sponsoring international educational travel is responsible for conducting orientation for all participants prior to departure. Orientation must include the following:

- General safety information
- Health (physical and mental) information
- Insurance information

- Cross-cultural considerations
- In-country information
- Review of Mason policies (i.e. Honor Code, Student Code of Conduct, International Educational Travel, etc.)
- AD/TLs are responsible for conveying this information with their program's participants, generally in small break-out groups during the larger Pre-Departure Orientation event. Information that should be included and reviewed:
 - Travel dates
 - Locations
 - Addresses for all scheduled accommodations
 - Emergency contact information for the AD/TL
 - The use of a *Trip-Specific International Travel Emergency Plan* (finalized in country)

5.9.1. Student Participant Orientation

Travelers on GEO Programs: Orientation information will be provided to travelers by GEO after program approval and travel registration.

Travelers on University College or School Group Travel (e.g., School of Business, School of Policy Government and International Affairs, or Center for Field Studies): AD/TLs are responsible for conducting orientations with program participants.

Independent Student Travelers: Contact GEO (<http://studyabroad.gmu.edu/>) for schedule of orientation options.

5.9.2. Academic Director/Trip Leader Orientation

GEO conducts a training program for AD/TL that is mandatory for all faculty leading travel programs, regardless of the college or unit sponsoring the international educational travel program. GEO's orientation provides AD/TL with information on health, safety, legal, and cross-cultural issues in addition to a review of Mason policies (i.e. financial responsibilities). Contact GEO (703-993-2154 | <http://studyabroad.gmu.edu/>) regarding training dates and times.

5.10. Transportation to/from Destination

For most programs and university-sponsored travel, travelers are responsible for securing their own transportation to/from the host country. In rare cases, GEO, or the college sponsoring the international education travel, will reserve and purchase airline tickets for specific group travel. Students will be advised by the program if travel arrangements will be made on their behalf.

Travelers choosing to arrive early and/or extend their stay after the completion of a program must arrange their own travel.

5.11. Immigration & Customs Inspections

Procedures vary by country and arrival method. In general, travelers can expect to go through a process similar to the one described here. Generally, upon arrival in a country, travelers go through immigration where they will be asked to show their passport, visa (if required), and proof of immunizations (if required). If arriving via airplane, this process generally occurs after arrival but prior to retrieving luggage. Travelers meet with an immigration officer who determines the legitimacy of their visit. Generally, the officer will inquire about the nature and length of the visit. Travelers may not be admitted if their responses are deemed suspicious and/or deviant, or if they are in violation of any immigration or customs regulations. If the officer allows admission, the traveler's passport will be stamped to signify admission approval, and they can collect their luggage.

In the customs area, or on the return flight, most travelers are given a customs declaration form to complete, identifying items they are bringing into the country. Travelers may pass through this area undeterred, or custom officials may choose to inspect their luggage to ensure it meets entrance requirements. If there are any irregularities or violations with customs regulations, items may be confiscated or travelers may be asked to pay duties (See [Section 6.1](#) – Taxes, Duties, and Tariffs for additional information).

5.12. Returning to the United States

U.S. custom agents allow citizens to import items up to a specific dollar amount per person when returning from abroad. Citizens may also import alcohol up to a specified volume. Check with U.S. customs to for specific value, quantity, and volume restrictions on imported goods. Any goods over the specified amount will be taxed. All items acquired abroad and in your possession at the time of your return must be declared to custom officials. Declaration forms are usually distributed during the flight back to the United States. Travelers should visit the U.S. Customs and Border Service website (<http://www.cbp.gov/travel>) for information about duties and tariffs for destination countries. Customs representatives are also available at U.S. Embassies.

F1/ J1 students and visiting scholars who leave the U.S. must have the following documents with them to be eligible to re-enter the U.S. in F or J status:

- Valid passport (passport must be valid for at least 6 months beyond date of return)
- Valid (unexpired) U.S. visa stamp or sticker in the passport or biometric card

- Valid I-20 form for F1 status, signed for travel on page 3 by an OIPS advisor within the last year
- Valid DS-2019 form for J1 status with current travel signature on the lower right hand side
- Evidence of financial funding (bring a copy of whatever funding is mentioned on your I-20: Teaching Assistant/Research Assistant (TA/RA) funding letter or bank statements for personal funds)
- Proof of enrollment (certificate of enrollment or transcript). You can obtain a certificate of enrollment from the registrar's office

6.0. In-Country Procedures

The following procedures are intended to provide best practices for navigating travel regulations, expectations for in-country conduct, cultural considerations, and potential physical and social challenges.

6.1. Taxes, Duties, and Tariffs

Value Added Tax (VAT) in host country: Sales tax, placed on the sale or lease of goods and services in the U.S., generally does not exist in other countries. Instead, many countries impose a VAT on certain goods (not services), especially on expensive items. Travelers who are visiting can reclaim the VAT amount spent on purchases (during their visit) at the international airport when leaving the country. To claim this refund, travelers must show receipts to verify VAT paid on purchases. See [Section 5.12](#) – Returning to the United States for information about duties, taxes and restrictions on importing goods.

6.2. Communications

Although AD/TL do not need to be physically present with students, AD/TL **must** be accessible, at all times, for the duration of the trip. AD/TL must provide in-country contact information to students, as soon as it is available, providing students a way to contact them at all times via phone, text or email.

While abroad, travelers should have a plan for communicating with others abroad and friends and family back home, especially in case of emergency. Options for communication while abroad include landline, cell phone, and by computer – through email, social networking, and Skype.

Many travelers find the best way to maintain communications during travel is to buy an inexpensive pay-as-you-go phone, or a SIM card for a personal phone, from a local carrier abroad. It is vital that travelers provide up-to-date current contact and emergency contact information when they register their travel in Mason Abroad Travel Registration System (<http://masonabroad.gmu.edu>). Mason will use contact and international contact information, listed in Mason Abroad Travel Registration System, to notify travelers of emergencies or other situations affecting their travel.

Maintaining contact with friends and family may help alleviate feelings of homesickness and culture shock. Online services such as email, Skype, and other social media tools, are low cost options for staying in touch with family and friends.

6.3. Money and Banking

Although many banking procedures are internationally standardized, travelers should familiarize themselves with destination banking practices. Prior to leaving, travelers should alert their (U.S.) bank of travel plans. For security reasons, many countries now require a debit/credit card with a chip and corresponding personal identification number (PIN) to conduct card transactions. Visa and MasterCard tend to be the most widely accepted card. Travelers should be aware that some banks charge fees and/or high interest rates for overseas credit card use, cash advances, and withdrawals.

Travelers studying abroad for the academic year should consider opening a bank account in the host country. A local account may be necessary to complete some business and potentially reduce automated teller machine (ATM) withdrawal fees.

6.4. Privacy Issues

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 is a federal law that pertains to the release of and access to educational records. A student's admissions status, Mason identification number, program related materials, account and billing information, grades, and transcripts cannot be shared (with parents or others) by faculty trip leaders or Mason administrators, without the student's permission. Students can grant permission for university officials to speak to others (e.g. parents) about their participation in study abroad, financial obligations, and FERPA-protected information, by submitting a completed *Student Information Release Authorization* form (<http://registrar.gmu.edu/wp-content/uploads/FERPA-Release-Form.pdf>) to the Office of the Registrar.

6.5. Cultural Considerations

Travelers should recognize that things will be different abroad, and that they will benefit from maintaining the perspective that challenging experiences are part of understanding a culture. Travelers may go through a period of cultural adjustment, sometimes known as *culture shock*. Culture shock is evidenced by strong feelings of happiness and excitement, but also anxiety or depression. It is a normal response to a new environment. Travelers can help combat negative feelings by learning the cultural practices and traditions in their destination country. Travel guidebooks and the *Culture Shock* series are great resources for cultural tips. Travelers with mental health concerns should discuss their plans for spending time abroad with a counselor before departure. Professional counselors can provide advice on dealing with cultural adjustment issues.

6.5.1. Local Customs

Travelers should review local customs before travel. Below are examples of some customs that may differ by location:

Price bargaining: Bargaining over prices is customary and expected in some countries.

Personal Space, Greetings and Gestures: All cultures have social space and greeting norms; how far away to stand when conversing, eye contact, how to shake hands or wave farewell, etc. Learning customs related to boundaries and personal space in an unfamiliar culture also plays an important role in personal safety.

Punctuality: Regard for promptness varies by country and culture. Travelers should understand a country's perception on time, be flexible, and always error on the side of promptness.

Relationships: When establishing social relationships, travelers should be aware of the level of familiarity to adopt. What may be considered normal relations between people of the opposite sex in the U.S. may be interpreted very differently in other cultures.

Religion: Religion may have a strong influence on a host country's culture. Be respectful of the local religious traditions.

6.5.2. Language

Most cultures respect efforts to communicate in their native language, even if command of the language is limited. Most guidebooks contain key phrases in the various language(s);

phrasebooks or a translating phone application may be useful, especially for longer trips. Travelers should be patient with those attempting to communicate in English; it may not be their native language, and they are attempting to help by communicating in English.

6.5.3. Attire

Like in the US, appropriate attire abroad will vary by location and occasion. Travelers should understand that conservative dress is expected in many traditional countries, as well as some religious locations and buildings. If uncertain, travelers should avoid shorts, short skirts, tank tops or other clothing which might be considered too revealing. Women should consider carrying a scarf to wear in churches or mosques in case a head covering is expected. In many areas of the world, it may also be customary to remove shoes before entering a home or sacred site.

6.5.4. Photos and Videos

Travelers should be respectful when documenting international experiences by photos and videos. People captured on film are not objects of curiosity and should be treated with civility. Ask permission before taking picture of individuals. If images will be used on websites or blogs, know that some countries have laws that protect the use of images of minors unless explicit permission has been obtained from parents or guardians. Permission should be sought before taking photographs of certain religious sites, government buildings and military installations. Some countries may detain travelers for taking a picture of the wrong government building.

6.5.5. Food and water considerations

Food: Customs and practices connected with food and eating (e.g. typical time of meals, customization of orders, table etiquette, and types of food available) vary around the world. Travelers should be aware and sensitive to the customs of others in order to enhance their own experience and avoid offending others. Travelers with severe food allergies should carry a card detailing allergies written in the native language.

Water: Be aware that other countries may not filter or sanitize water in the same way as the U.S. Contaminated water can cause mild gastrointestinal distress (e.g. traveler's diarrhea or other more serious bacterial diseases). Travelers unsure about the quality of water should avoid tap water for drinking and brushing teeth (note: ice is usually made from tap water). Travelers should use sealed bottled water or sanitize tap water by boiling, filtering or using water purification tablets.

6.5.6. Alcohol

Students should be sensitive to cultural attitudes regarding alcohol. It may be that drinking alcohol at most meals is the norm, or it may be a rare occurrence. If students choose to consume alcohol while abroad, responsible behavior and moderation is expected. Mason students studying abroad are responsible for following local laws, rules, and regulations regarding the consumption, misuse, and/or abuse of drugs and alcohol. In some countries, alcohol use can result in arrest.

AD/TL should consider the implications of their personal alcohol consumption when traveling with students. The role of faculty director is a position of authority and responsibility, and AD/TL must be capable of addressing an emergency should it arise. To remain alert, it is advised that alcohol consumption be minimal, both at formal program functions and any informal gatherings. Participation in and/or accompanying students to social events that involve excessive consumption of alcohol may send a contradictory message regarding responsible drinking.

Resource:

- [Shaken: The Don'ts of Alcohol Abroad](#)

6.6. Gender and LGBTQ Considerations

Gender roles and norms may differ abroad from those in the U.S. Travelers should recognize they may be treated differently, or be expected to treat others differently, based on these roles and norms. Countries viewpoints on these matters can vary from liberal to conservative.

Keep in mind that civil and human rights are only as protected as the local laws allow, and that consensual heterosexual and same-sex activities remain illegal in many countries in the world. Online LGBTQ travel guides provide country-by-country advice that can help travelers understand expectations to help them keep comfortable and safe.

Resources:

- <https://ilga.org/>
- <http://www.rainbowsig.org/resource-center/study-abroad/>
- <https://www.diversityabroad.com/guides/diversity-and-inclusion-abroad-guide/lgbtq-students-abroad>
- <https://www.iesabroad.org/study-abroad/student-diversity-access/resources/lgbtq>

6.7. Discrimination

Travelers should recognize that individuals abroad may be judgmental; influenced by race, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, age, religion, gender, or physical ability. Identity paradigms may differ from those in the U.S. Travelers should expect to encounter anti-Americanism in some parts of the world, and are encouraged to model tolerance and kindness when confronted with disagreeable social issues.

6.8. Harassment

Harassment can be a major stress factor for travelers and can greatly affect their experience abroad. For example, it is not uncommon in some countries for women to be verbally and loudly addressed, honked at, and given aggressive attention in other ways. Although being culturally sensitive and respectful is an important element of the experience abroad, travelers should not accept behavior that invades personal boundaries or makes them feel unsafe or uncomfortable. The traveler should trust their instincts and remove themselves from any uncomfortable or dangerous situations. Boundary setting is important. Use body language, facial expressions, and a firm voice to fend off unwanted attention. Make sure body language is consistent with words.

6.9. Individuals with Accessibility Needs

Accessibility accommodations and perceptions differ around the world. When planning to travel, consider the following:

- Disclose accessibility needs to program staff early, if applicable, so appropriate arrangements and reasonable accommodations can be made in advance
- Research what types of accommodation are typically provided in the host country; be flexible and open to different ways of accommodating accessibility needs
- Determine, before departure, how the accessibility need is viewed by the host culture
- Consider carrying a card detailing the accessibility need and associated concerns in the native language to assist with acquiring proper assistance

Mobility International (<http://www.miusa.org/plan/americans-abroad>) is a useful resource for finding overseas support services.

AD/TL leading trips should be aware of the accessibility needs of their students and work to accommodate those needs whenever possible. The program course description should adequately inform potential participants of class structure, location, physical or other potential accessibility barriers before students apply to the program.

6.10. Local Laws

Travelers are subject to the laws of the countries they are visiting. Research of local laws is critical to remain compliant. Penalties in some countries may be much tougher than in the U.S. Embassies and consulates in the host country cannot intervene on the traveler's behalf should they be arrested or prosecuted for violation of local laws, including laws on drug use, currency exchange, and disturbance of the peace. Should a traveler become involved in any legal problems, contact GEO and the administering unit at Mason.

Avoid involvement with drugs and other illegal substances. Buying or carrying even small amounts of drugs can result in arrest. Drug charges can carry severe consequences, including imprisonment without bail for up to a year before a case is tried, and sentences ranging from fines and jail time to years of hard labor. Some crimes even carry the penalty of death. Contraband or paraphernalia associated with illegal drug use can also result in trouble.

Bail provisions such as those in the US are rare in many countries, and pretrial detention without bail is not uncommon. The principle of "innocent until proven guilty" is not necessarily a tenet of legal systems abroad. Many countries do not provide a jury trial, and, in some cases, those on trial may not even be allowed at the trial.

7.0. Risk Management

The safety and security of Mason students, faculty and staff traveling abroad is of the upmost importance. George Mason University closely monitors the security issues and travel advisories and warnings around the globe. Emergencies can escalate quickly when traveling. Studying and traveling abroad require many of the same health and safety precautions that one would take in the United States, however, participants need to be aware of additional risks that may be unique to traveling abroad.

7.1. University Travel Insurance

Mason's international travel insurance policy provides coverage for emergency medical evacuation/ repatriation and may cover medical expenses related to a sickness or injury occurring during the course of approved international travel that is outside of your home country. Mason's international travel insurance policy is intended as a supplement to, not a substitute for, individual comprehensive health insurance. This insurance does not cover medical treatment or supplies for: routine, maintenance, elective, or medical care for a condition that did not occur during the course of the trip. Mason's international travel insurance is also not intended to be a substitute for individual, trip protection, financial and personal property insurance. Travelers are

required to possess and maintain a personal and medical insurance policy for the duration of the travel.

George Mason University students and participants traveling abroad on university-sponsored educational programs are required to have Mason's international travel insurance. Most GEO-sponsored programs build the cost of insurance into the general program fees. For all other university-related and sponsored student travel (including external programs, overseas research and independent study), insurance is provided at a cost and payment is collected during registration with GEO.

Faculty and Staff travelling internationally on official University business are covered worldwide, with benefits extending to accompanying spouses, domestic partners and children. Employees traveling without a student group should register travel with the Office of Risk Management to receive insurance coverage documents.

Mason's international travel insurance is underwritten ACE American Insurance Company (a member of Chubb Group). Emergency travel assistance services are provided by AXA Assistance USA, Inc. *This program is branded as Mercer Campus Travel Assistance Services.*

For more information on this policy, coverage, and how to obtain insurance, please visit the Office of Risk Management's international travel insurance website for more information: <http://risk.gmu.edu/insurance/international-travel-insurance/>.

7.1.1. Travel Assistance Services - medical or security emergency

In the event of a medical emergency, please contact AXA Assistance. The multi-lingual call center operates 24/7. Toll free 1-855-327-1469; or direct dial at 1-312-935-3542. Collect calls will also be accepted. Please be prepared to provide your contact information and also reference policy # GLM N1089315A (which also can be found on your insurance ID card -via PDF).

7.1.2. Filing a claim for reimbursement

To file a claim or obtain information about a claim, or other customer service needs, please contact: Administrative Concepts, Inc. (ACI) at:

- 1-888-293-9229 (from inside the U.S.)
- 610-293-9229 (from outside the U.S.)
- fax 610-293-9299 for claims or inquiries or e-mail aciclaims@visit-aci.com.

Mail claims to: Administrative Concepts, Inc.
994 Old Eagle School Rd., Suite 1005,
Wayne, PA 19087-1706.

If you are a student, and would prefer to have a claim filing on your behalf, contact GEO. Please reference policy # GLM N1089315A.

7.1.3. Personal Insurance

Travelers should review personal health insurance coverage to determine medical services their personal health insurance provider will cover overseas. Although some health insurance companies will pay "customary and reasonable" hospital costs abroad, some policies do not provide coverage for which can be costly. Regardless of whether personal insurance is valid overseas, standard international practice often requires full payment when services are rendered.

Travelers who purchase or are otherwise covered under the university's international travel insurance policy are provided with a basic travel insurance package, which provides supplemental coverage for medical expenses, repatriation, trip interruption and cancellation, as well as emergency evacuation in the event of political instability or a natural disaster. All travelers are encouraged to consider purchasing an additional short-term policy to cover, at least partially, any financial loss incurred by the loss of baggage and personal effects while traveling, and health care expenses incurred in the participation of activities excluded from policy (see 7.2). Short-term policies can be purchased through travel agents and private companies. Be reminded that most insurance companies will require a copy of a policy report before they will consider reimbursement of a claim – for instance, loss/theft of items abroad should be reported to the local police to obtain the needed case number for reimbursement of claim.

7.2. Prohibited activities

While abroad, AD/TL and participants should be aware of limitations to personal and university insurance policies that prohibit or do not cover specific activities such as, but not limited to, operating a motor vehicle, SCUBA diving, spelunking, horseback riding, and mountaineering without the assistance of ropes or a guide. Some activities may require additional insurance or certification (e.g., SCUBA diving and sky diving). Specific activities may be prohibited by the administering unit as outlined in program guidelines.

In order to comply with state financial regulations, travelers may not allow family, friends, or others not associated with the program to occupy rooms or use transportation procured with university funds without authorization from the administrative unit.

7.3. Health and Safety

In the context of this handbook, health and safety encompasses physical and mental health abroad. Physical health includes the prevention of harm to travelers from food borne illnesses, communicable diseases, and injury during an activity, assault, or other bodily harm. Mental health includes psychological distress, suicidal ideation, depression, and anxiety.

7.3.1. Personal Responsibility

Travelers are ultimately responsible for their personal health and safety. George Mason University and AD/TL are committed to providing a safe and a healthful experience; however accidents, emergencies, and illnesses can, and do, occur. Accidents and emergencies can be minimized by exercising caution, avoiding dangerous situations, and using good judgment. Travelers are encouraged to study travel destinations, understand local customs, avoid excessive drinking and drug use, travel in a group or with a partner at night, avoid areas known to have criminal activity, and make responsible choices regarding excursions, recreational activities, and personal relationships.

7.3.2. Immunization and Health Review

George Mason University Student Health Services (SHS) offers Travel Clinics to prepare university community members for safe travel by providing prescriptions and immunizations needed for disease prevention, as well as travel safety tips. The Travel Clinic is available to students, faculty, and staff by appointment only. A nominal fee is charged for visits; additional fees are charged for immunizations. For visits to the travel clinic:

1. Call SHS at 703-993-2831 to make a Travel Clinic appointment.
2. Appointments should be made approximately four to six weeks prior to departure, especially if traveling to a developing country.
3. Complete the *Travel Clinic Pre- Assessment Form* (<http://shs.gmu.edu/about/forms/>) before the scheduled appointment and bring the completed form to the appointment.

SHS may recommend that travelers receive one or more of the following immunizations:

- Measles/Mumps/Rubella (MMR) vaccine
- Tdap (Tetanus, Diphtheria & Pertussis) vaccine
- Meningococcal vaccine
- Varicella (chicken pox vaccine)
- Hepatitis B
- Hepatitis A
- Typhoid

- Malaria (oral medication)

Possible vaccinations required, but not available at SHS:

- Yellow Fever vaccine
- Rabies
- Poliovirus vaccine

If immunizations are necessary before departure, AD/TL or administering unit is responsible for ensuring that participants have obtained the necessary immunizations either through the university's SHS, local health department, or their primary care physician. University programs through GEO do not pay for immunizations. Participants assume all immunizations costs related to their travel. AD/TL immunizations *required to enter a country* may be eligible for reimbursement at the discretion of the administering unit.

7.3.3. Mental Health

Participants with mental health issues are encouraged to discuss their condition with a counselor to determine if traveling is appropriate. Some travel experiences can increase stress, anxiety, and exacerbate pre-existing mental health conditions or generate mental health issues. Participants that experience mental health issues are advised to discuss their situation with their AD/TL and seek help abroad or return home if necessary. The following stressful situations may be potential triggers for psychological distress:

- Difficulty in making transition or adaptation to a new culture
- Insufficient or lack of social support
- Excessive pressure to do well academically
- Perceived or real maltreatment or discrimination
- Traumatic events or experiences
- Untreated mental illness or unresolved psychological issues
- Serious physical illness

Participants seeking counseling or psychological services abroad should contact Mason Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS):

- **Website:** Mason Counseling and Psychological Services (<http://caps.gmu.edu>)
- **Phone:** +01-703-993-2380 (CAPS | 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time)

- **After Hours Assistance:** Contact University Police to reach counseling services +01-703-993-2810 or you may contact a third party counseling service at +01-703-527-4077 (CrisisLink | <http://prsinc.org/crisislink/services/crisislink-hotlines/>)

AD/TL should be aware of mental health issues and intervene if participants become distressed or appear capable of causing harm to themselves or others. Warning signs of psychological distress are:

- Decrease in academic performance
- Complaints of difficulty concentrating, complaints of memory loss
- Absences from classes and planned events
- Changes in patterns of interaction, inability to communicate clearly
- Repeated requests for extra consideration
- Behavior that is disruptive or inappropriate, aggressive, antisocial
- Changes in eating and sleeping patterns
- Exaggerated emotional responses, panicky reactions, excessive worry or distress
- Loss of reality, delusional thoughts or language
- Homicidal or suicidal threats
- Physical exhaustion
- Excessive use of alcohol or other abusive substances.

If an intervention is warranted, AD/TL are advised to do the following:

1. Discuss the participant's behavior with sympathy and understanding in a private location.
2. Make individual arrangements (e.g., individual room, relocation to a different room, modify activities or assignments, etc.) as appropriate, and, if feasible, assist the participant in managing/recovering from a mental health episode.
3. Advise the participant of resources available to them:
 - a. CAPS (<http://caps.gmu.edu>) or +01-703-993-2380.
 - b. National Suicide Prevention Hotline +01-800-273-8255
 - c. Veteran's Crisis Hotline +01-877-838-2838
4. If the above services are not available, Contact University Police to reach counseling services +01-703-993-2810, or you may contact a third party counseling service at +01-703-527-4077 (CrisisLink | <http://prsinc.org/crisislink/services/crisislink-hotlines/>).
5. If necessary, seek local professional help from a local mental health care provider (Instruct them to retain all exam documentation, and receipts for services and medications as they will be required for insurance claims).
6. Recommend that the participant return home and make arrangements for them to do so at the earliest convenience.

7. If repatriation or local assistance is needed, AD/TL must:
 - a. Contact GEO at +01-703-993-2154 (business hours) or +01-703-993-7500 (emergency number),
 - b. Contact the universities insurance provider and request assistance if necessary; and,
 - c. Escort the participant to airport of departure.

7.3.4. Prescription Medication

Travelers are responsible for providing and bringing any necessary personal prescription medication while traveling. Some prescription medications or their equivalent may not be available or may be illegal to possess abroad. While carrying prescription medications, it is recommended that:

- A copy of the prescription be kept with the medication to show valid use and possession
- Prescription medication be kept in its original packaging
- Consumption of alcohol or use of other prescription or over the counter medications be used in accordance with the prescription warnings
- Enough prescription medication be procured, before departure, to last for the duration of travel

7.3.5. First Aid and CPR

AD/TL are required to have CPR and First Aid Training. Training is available from the American Red Cross (<http://www.redcross.org/take-a-class>), Northern Virginia Community College, (<http://www.nvcc.edu/wdce/mec/>), and the American Heart Association (<http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/>). CPR and First Aid Training may be eligible for reimbursement from the administering unit. Consult with a medical professional or EHS if assistance is needed to compile emergency or first aid equipment.

7.4. Emergency Preparedness

Once AD/TL and travelers arrive in the country, a *Trip-Specific International Travel Emergency Plan (Group)* (<http://internationaltravel.gmu.edu/travel-forms/>) must be completed and made available to all participants. A briefing should be conducted to ensure that all participants are familiar with emergency procedures specific to that location (e.g., shelter areas, designated assembly areas, rally points, emergency contact numbers, and how to contact local emergency services).

7.5. Emergency Procedures

AD/TL should observe the following procedures when an emergency occurs. These procedures are generic and may require modification depending upon the circumstances of the event. AD/TL may contact GEO at any time for assistance in responding to or recovering from emergencies that occur abroad.

7.5.1. Contacting the Global Education Office

GEO may be reached by phone +01-703-993-2154 (business hours) or +01-703-993-7500 (emergency number), and by email: GOAbroad@gmu.edu. GEO should be contacted whenever the following emergencies occur, if coordination or assistance is needed:

- Serious injury, illness, psychiatric incidents, death, or hospitalization.
- Reports or occurrence of infectious disease.
- Natural disasters.
- Political unrest or turmoil.
- Missing employee or student.
- Any other situation deemed an emergency by employees or students.

7.5.2. Contacting DOS American Citizens Services (ACS)

The American Citizen Services unit of the closest U.S. embassy can help provide assistance to United States citizens traveling abroad. The center should be contacted by phone +01-202-501-4444 whenever any of the following occur:

- Death of an American citizen abroad
- Arrest/detention of an American citizen abroad
- Robbery of an American citizen abroad
- American citizens missing abroad
- Crisis abroad involving American citizens
- Lost or stolen U.S. passport

For more information visit (<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/emergencies.html>).

7.5.3. Arrest or Illegal Behavior

Upon notification of an arrest of a traveler for illegal activities or awareness of illegal activity that jeopardizes travel or traveler safety, AD/TL will:

- Notify GEO of the arrest, status of the participant, and circumstances surrounding the incident
- Notify the DOS Overseas Citizens Services
(<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/emergencies.html>) | +01-202-501-4444
- Recommend to the program administrator that a traveler(s) be expelled from the program and return to the US to face student misconduct proceedings or disciplinary action if warranted

7.5.4. Communicable Disease

The following procedures should be followed whenever there is a regional communicable disease outbreak, pandemic, or public health emergency declared by the nation/state, or local health official(s). For all other routine, seasonal, or individual health issues, employees and students are directed to contact a local healthcare provider. Routine, seasonal, and individual health issues do not need to be reported to university officials, unless advised to do so by your healthcare provider. AD/TL will:

- Seek medical attention if necessary for travelers that become ill
- Attempt to isolate travelers from others and avoid close contact with others to the extent possible
- Advise travelers not to participate in group activities, if so advised by a health care professional
- Insist that travelers remain segregated to the extent possible and not participate in travel activities for the duration of their illness and 24-hours after symptoms abate
- Limit the spread of a communicable disease, attempt to avoid travel when travelers are sick, unless otherwise deemed appropriate by a health care professional
- Maintain awareness of the situation and the progression and nature of the communicable disease emergency by monitoring media outlets
- Notify GEO of communicable disease emergencies that involve three or more travelers, disrupt scheduled travel plans, or present a health threat to other travelers

Confidentiality: All student and employee medical information must be treated as private and confidential and handled in compliance with legal requirements and professional ethical standards. The university and AD/TL will not disclose the identity of any employee or student who has a communicable disease, except as authorized or required by law. AD/TL are advised to contact GEO with questions regarding requests for release of medical information.

7.5.5. Crime

In the event of a crime (theft, assault, robbery, theft, stolen identity, etc.), the following actions should be taken. The AD/TL will:

- Report crimes to the local law enforcement agency and request a copy of the crime/police report
- Contact the nearest US Embassy or Consulate (<http://www.usembassy.gov/>) for information on:
 - o How to replace travel documents (e.g. passports)
 - o Victims' assistance and counseling services
- Notify George Mason University Police of the crime, name of the victim(s), the condition of the victim(s), and status of the investigation (if reported to local law enforcement)
- Advise victims of crimes and sexual assault that university Counseling and Psychological Services are available
- Separate the alleged assailant and the victim if a sexual assault occurs, if possible. In some circumstances, the alleged assailant may be required to return to the university until an investigation is completed

7.5.6. Localized Violence: Terrorism, Political, or Civil Unrest

Travelers should understand that engaging in political activity in a foreign country, including but not limited to joining political parties or unions, participating in demonstrations, soliciting political material or picketing may be dangerous or illegal. If travelers encounter legal problems because of such activities, neither Mason nor the U.S. government may be allowed to assist and/or provide legal counsel.

In the event of political or civil unrest that threatens the safety of travelers, future travel, or purpose of travel (e.g., restricts access to academic, research, or cultural sites which are the purpose of travel), the AD/TL will:

- Follow safety precautions issued by local officials, aid agencies, the U.S. DOS or local U.S. Embassy or Consulate (<http://www.usembassy.gov/>)
- Determine if it is safe to continue travel or if alternate travel arrangements or accommodations are required
- Contact GEO of potentially or actual dangerous situations or conditions and confirm:
 - o Current location
 - o Injuries, damages, or loss of property
 - o Any immediate need for assistance

- o Anticipated travel plans or alternative travel plans that result from the threat
- Request assistance from the university, if necessary, to coordinate alternate travel arrangements or accommodations
- Request emergency evacuation, if it is required, through the university's insurance provider

7.5.7. Medical Emergency

Before leaving the US, it is recommended that AD/TL obtain the name and address of a reputable hospital and an English-speaking doctor in the host country. This information should be documented in the *Trip-Specific International Travel Emergency Plan* (<http://internationaltravel.gmu.edu/travel-forms/>). If a traveler suffers an injury, becomes ill, or suffers from alcohol poisoning, drug overdose or other medical issue and requires immediate medical attention, the AD/TL will:

- Immediately contact emergency services and relay the following information:
 - o Nature of the injury or illness
 - o Victim's location
 - o Identity of the victim
 - o Suspected or known cause of the injury or illness
- If trained, provide first aid or medical assistance as necessary.
- Not move the victim if they are unconscious, unless they are in immediate danger.
- Remain with the victim until emergency response personnel arrive.
- Remain on scene to assist with the investigation or response as necessary.
- Report severe medical emergencies requiring medical evacuation to receive appropriate care, hospitalization greater than two days, or medical emergencies/injuries that result in death to GEO.

7.5.8. Missing Person

All suspected missing students must be reported to local emergency services. Any person missing for more than 24-hours must be reported to George Mason University Policy in accordance with the Higher Education Opportunity Act. A person that deviates from a normal routine, fails to appear for a scheduled event, or is unable to be reached after repeated attempts may be considered missing. Missing persons may also be the victims of kidnapping or extortion. If a student or employee is suspected to be missing or the victim of foul play, the following procedures will be observed. The AD/TL will:

- Notify local emergency services and provide the following information:

- o The person’s full name, nickname(s), or aliases
- o Full description including sex, race, date of birth (age), height, weight, eye color, and hair color
- o Unusual or visible physical attributes such as birthmarks, tattoos, scars, or piercings
- o Date and time of last contact
- o Last known whereabouts
- o What they were last seen wearing
- o Who they were last seen with
- Notify George Mason University Police and provide the information listed above
- Notify the U.S. DOS Overseas Citizens Services
(<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/emergencies.html>) | +01-202-501-4444
- Contact local hospitals and law enforcement to determine if the person has been involved in an accident or crime
- Notify the local U.S. Embassy or Consulate immediately (<http://www.usembassy.gov/>) if it is determined that an individual(s) are missing as the result of kidnapping or extortion, and record or keep all communications with the perpetrators, to include:
 - o Date of time of contact
 - o Exact wording of the request or threat
 - o Tenor, accent, and demeanor of the caller’s voice
 - o Background noises that can be used to identify a location
 - o Methods to contact the caller
 - o Name(s) of the participant(s)
 - o Evidence that the participant is well
- Provide all information and assistance to the investigating agency(ies) as necessary

7.5.9. Natural Disaster

In the event a natural disaster threatens the safety of travelers, future travel, or purpose of travel (e.g., restricts access to academic, research, or cultural sites which are the purpose of travel), AD/TL will:

- Follow safety precautions issued by local officials, aid agencies, the U.S. DOS or local U.S. Embassy or Consulate (<http://www.usembassy.gov/>)
- Determine if it is safe to continue travel or if alternate travel arrangements or accommodations are required
- Contact GEO at +01-703-993-2154 (business hours) or +01-703-993-7500 (emergency number)
- Notify them of potentially or actual dangerous situations or conditions and confirm:

- o Current location
- o Injuries, damages, or loss of property
- o Any immediate need for assistance
- o Anticipated travel plans or alternative travel plans that result from the threat
- Request assistance, if necessary, from the university to coordinate alternate travel arrangements or accommodations
- Initiate request, if emergency evacuation is required, through the university's insurance provider

7.5.10. Sexual Assault

In the event of a crime (theft, assault, robbery, theft, stolen identity, etc.), the following actions should be taken. The AD/TL will:

- Report the incident to the local law enforcement agency and request a copy of the crime/police report
- Notify George Mason University Police of the crime, name of the victim(s), the condition of the victim(s), and status of the investigation (if reported to local law enforcement)
- Advise victims of sexual assault that university Counseling and Psychological Services are available
- If a sexual assault occurs, efforts should be made to separate the alleged assailant and the victim. In some circumstances, the alleged assailant may be required to return to the university until an investigation is completed

7.5.11. Trip Relocation or Evacuation

In accordance with University Policy 1134: *University-Sponsored or University-Related International Travel*, UTAC may determine that a trip must be relocated or cancelled due to possible or existing threats to traveler welfare. Upon notification or awareness of an emergency situation that warrants an evacuation, UTAC will:

- Brief the AD/TL with the actions that are required for protection from immediate threats to health and safety (e.g., precautionary measures to avoid communicable disease, relocation plans pending relocation or evacuation to the U.S., etc.)
- Determine relocation and/or evacuation site(s) based on the recommendations of the U.S. DOS, insurance provider(s) assisting with relocation/evacuation, and information provided by trip leaders and/or travelers

7.5.12. U.S. DOS Travel Advisory Issued During Travel (Level 3 or 4)

AD/TL wishing to remain in an area affected by a warning must immediately contact GEO at +01-703-993-2154 (business hours) or +01-703-993-7500 (emergency number). The request (which may be made by phone, if necessary) must provide a detailed justification for remaining in the hazardous area; UTAC will determine if the trip may continue. Should UTAC or university leadership determine that individuals or a group must evacuate a country due to a "state of emergency." Refusal to comply with an evacuation order may result in dismissal from the University in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct, in termination of employment, or other disciplinary action as appropriate. UTAC may assess risks associated with activities in and travel to other areas and restrict travel as appropriate (See [Section 5.2](#) – Travel to Hazardous Areas).

7.6. Clery Compliance

The following crimes that involve employees or students or occur on property or locations under the control of the university must be reported to University Police in accordance with the *Clery Act*. AD/TL must report crimes to the Mason Department of Police and Public Safety by phone +01-703-993-2810 or complete a report on line (<http://police.gmu.edu/clery-act-reporting/csa-form/>)

- Murder/non-negligent manslaughter;
- Negligent manslaughter;
- Sexual assault (i.e., rape, fondling, or incest);
- Robbery;
- Aggravated Assault;
- Motor vehicle theft;
- Arson;
- Domestic violence;
- Stalking;
- Larceny/theft;
- Vandalism, destruction of property, or damage to property;
- Intimidation; or
- Simple assault.