

The University of Alabama

International Travel Policy: Travel to Countries Under Certain Travel Advisories or Health Notices

Summary: The University of Alabama (UA) is committed to developing and supporting a wide variety of international study, research, and work opportunities for faculty, students, and staff; however, the University recognizes that there are situations in which safety and security concerns may outweigh the advantages of exposure to international experiences.

This policy addresses international travel by UA faculty, students, and staff to countries under certain U.S. Department of State (DOS) Travel Advisories and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Travel Health Notices. The policy applies to faculty, staff, and all students traveling outside of the United States for University-related purposes, which may include but are not limited to, study, research, internships, service, conferences, presentations, teaching, and performances. The University also reserves the right to cancel, alter, or suspend travel for University-related purposes to any destination when a determination is made, based on a review of relevant information and resources, that the security, safety, or health of students, faculty, or staff may be seriously threatened, even if the DOS or CDC has not issued a particular level of travel advisory or travel health notice.

The Education Abroad Office of the Capstone International Center, as well as the Risk Management Office, monitors information relevant to the security and safety of UA students, faculty, and staff abroad from official sources as well as from our domestic and international partners and colleagues. Such sources are the United States Department of State (DOS), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). See Section D below regarding these sources.

A. General Policy

The University of Alabama prohibits University-related travel to or through destinations with an active DOS Travel Advisory of Level 3 or 4 or a CDC Travel Health Notice of Level 3. Countries under such advisory or notice levels are considered to be unstable and/or unsafe. However, the University recognizes that security and safety situations may vary considerably in different parts of a country under a travel advisory, that different advisory levels may apply to different parts of a country, and that a travel advisory or health notice does not always outweigh compelling academic reasons for traveling to a country. Therefore, a request for a waiver of this policy may be submitted to the International Travel Risk Assessment Committee, and the University will review such requests on a case-by-case basis. **UA will not sponsor, fund, or reimburse expenses associated with travel to or through any country under a DOS Level 3 or 4 Travel Advisory or a CDC Level 3 Travel Health Notice without proper approval being obtained prior to the trip from UA officials.**

1. Faculty-Led or Approved Student-Organized Programs

If a level 3 or 4 travel advisory or a level 3 travel health notice is issued for a country in which UA operates faculty-led study abroad programs or has approved student-organized programs **before the departure date of the programs**, the programs will be immediately suspended. The faculty leaders and

student organizers of the impacted program(s) may request the International Travel Advisory Committee for a program suspension waiver. Waivers apply to single iterations of a specific program only (unless specified otherwise during the review). A waiver for one program in a country does not automatically apply to another program in that same country, nor will waivers be extended for additional iterations of the program. Faculty members and student organizers may be required to complete additional administrative requirements to comply with University policy on travel to destinations with DOS Level 3 or 4 Travel Advisories or CDC Level 3 Travel Notices.

If such a travel advisory or travel health notice is issued for a country in which UA operates faculty-led study abroad programs or has approved student-organized programs **while the program is in session** but where circumstances pose no immediate threat to faculty, staff, or student health or safety, the program will be reviewed by the International Travel Risk Assessment Committee which will make a recommendation to the Provost and the Associate Provost for International Education about whether or not the program should be suspended and participants evacuated. In the case of an immediate threat to faculty, staff, or student health, safety, or welfare, the International Travel Risk Assessment Committee has the discretion to suspend the program and begin evacuation immediately.

2. Non-UA Programs

If such a travel advisory or travel health notice is issued or is in effect for a country in which a UA student, faculty member, or staff wishes to study or participate in other international activities on a non-UA program, the student, faculty, or staff is required to complete a request for a waiver before UA funds may be used or academic credit received. The International Travel Risk Assessment Committee will review the request and make a recommendation to the Provost. The final decision to grant or deny a waiver will be made by the Provost, and the student, faculty, or staff will be notified of the decision.

If the waiver is denied, the student, faculty, or staff may not use any UA funds for his/her international program or other international activities or receive academic credit either concurrent with the program or after return. In addition, in the case of denial, the Education Abroad Office of the Capstone International Center will not provide any support to students who still wish to participate in program(s) located in countries with such travel advisories or travel health notices and will not be able to maintain the student's enrollment at UA during the study abroad program.

If the waiver is granted, then the student, faculty, or staff may participate in the program or other international activities and they will receive access to all regular study abroad and other applicable services offered by UA. **The University is not responsible for the decision of the student, faculty, or staff to travel to locations under such Travel Advisories or Travel Health Notices.**

3. UA Students, Faculty, and Staff Conducting Independent Travel

If such a travel advisory or travel health notice is issued or is in effect for a country in which a UA student, faculty member, or staff wishes to conduct independent travel, the student, faculty, or staff may not use UA funds or receive academic credit, either concurrent with travel or after return. This policy applies to all UA students (undergraduate and graduate), faculty, and staff who are receiving funds from UA to pay for a portion or all of their expenses for independent travel (independent study, research, conference attendance, etc). A request for a travel policy waiver may be submitted to the International Travel Advisory Committee. If the waiver is granted, then applicant must complete the normal application

process or submit participant information as appropriate to the activity and may receive credit and use UA funds. If the request is denied, the student, faculty, or staff may not use UA funds or receive academic credit from UA for work completed in the country either concurrently or retroactively. **The University is not responsible for the decision of the student, faculty, or staff to travel to locations under such Travel Advisories or Travel Health Notices.**

B. International Travel Advisory Committee

The International Travel Advisory Committee reviews safety and security conditions associated with UA study abroad programs and independent international travel undertaken by students, faculty, or staff. The committee is responsible for recommending to the Provost when students may use UA funds and receive academic credit for travel to international destinations that are under certain travel advisories. In addition to the DOS, WHO, CDC and other government and organization information, the committee considers a variety of factors - the most important being the safety of the students, faculty, and staff.

The International Travel Advisory Committee consists of the following permanent members or their representatives:

- Associate Provost for International Education
- Director of Education Abroad
- Vice President for Student Life or Dean of Students (or designee)
- Representative from the Office of Counsel
- Representative from the Office of Risk Management

As circumstances warrant, the International Travel Advisory Committee may also invite the following individuals to provide additional information:

- UA faculty or administrators with significant expertise in the country or region under review
- Dean of the College/School sponsoring the study abroad program or independent travel
- Other individuals as needed

C. Request for Waiver to Allow Travel to Countries Subject to Certain Travel Advisories or Travel Health Notices

Any traveler who wants a waiver of the policy prohibiting travel to countries with a DOS Level 3 or 4 Travel Advisory or a CDC Level 3 Health Notice must submit a formal Request for Waiver. Requests submitted at least three months prior to travel allow for a thorough review process and for alternative plans to be made should the request be denied. In all cases, requests should be submitted as far as possible in advance of the proposed travel. Include the following information:

1. Formal Request for Waiver of International Travel Policy.

Request must explain the purpose of travel and why the particular location is essential to proposer's academic study or research, the organization's mission, goals or service, and why the program could not be relocated to an alternative location. As applicable, request should include the program proposal, associated syllabi, anticipated credit, detailed travel itinerary, dates, and other relevant information.

2. Security Preparations and Emergency Plans.

- a) Provide detailed information on the security situation in the country to be visited. Resources for this information should include, but are not limited to, the Department of State travel advisories, Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) reports and information, similar documents from other countries such as Canada, United Kingdom and Australia, as well as sources known to faculty/researcher through their professional networks.
- b) Explain the precautions planned to mitigate risks to participants in the program or travel. These should include a description of how students/faculty/staff will be informed about and prepared to manage any risks of travel.
- c) Provide details of any institution or key contacts with which you are partnering or who operate the program. Include a list of their key personnel, contact information and their emergency protocols (if available).
- d) Describe student/faculty/staff's previous experience in the country and/or leading University programs abroad.
- e) Outline your preparations to mitigate risk and respond to potential crises (e.g., terrorist incident, epidemic, natural disaster).
- f) Describe your communication plan with the group (if applicable), with the University and with emergency contacts in the event of a crisis.

3. Awareness of Circumstances:

- a) Provide a letter from the department chair or supervisor for each faculty or staff traveler confirming a discussion regarding the risks of travel to the proposed destination and stating approval for traveler to visit the proposed destination.
- b) Faculty, staff, and students may be required to submit additional paperwork and/or waivers to participate in a program or other international activity granted a travel policy waiver.

4. Proof of Insurance and Release and Indemnification: For study abroad programs, all travelers will be required to purchase the University's study abroad insurance and to sign Conditions of Participation and Release and Indemnification Agreement - for Countries Under a DOS Level 3 or 4 Travel Advisory or CDC Level 3 Travel Health Notice. Travelers on other type programs or types of travel may be required to show proof of insurance and sign releases.

5. Embassy Registration: Confirm that all travelers will register with the U.S. embassy or consulate nearest their destination prior to arrival and will keep the U.S. embassy or consulate informed of their whereabouts while in-country. This should be done at <http://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/home.asp>.

D. Travel Advisories and Notices

The U.S. Department of State, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the World Health Organization provide travel information and issue advisories and notices as follows:

1. U.S. Department of State Travel Advisories

The U.S. Department of State (DOS) provides Travel Advisories on every country using the following system:

Level 1 - Exercise Normal Precautions: This is the lowest advisory level for safety and security risk. There is some risk in any international travel. Conditions in other countries may differ from those in the United States and may change at any time.

Level 2 - Exercise Increased Caution: Be aware of heightened risks to safety and security. The Department of State provides additional advice for travelers in these areas in the Travel Advisory. Conditions in any country may change at any time.

Level 3 - Reconsider Travel: Avoid travel due to serious risks to safety and security. The Department of State provides additional advice for travelers in these areas in the Travel Advisory. Conditions in any country may change at any time.

Level 4 - Do Not Travel: This is the highest advisory level due to greater likelihood of life-threatening risks. During an emergency, the U.S. government may have very limited ability to provide assistance. The Department of State advises that U.S. citizens not travel to the country or leave as soon as it is safe to do so. The Department of State provides additional advice for travelers in these areas in the Travel Advisory. Conditions in any country may change at any time.

See: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html>

2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issues travel notices to inform travelers and clinicians about current health issues related to specific destinations. These issues may arise from disease outbreaks, special events or gatherings, natural disasters, or other conditions that may affect travelers' health. Currently these notices are **Level 1**: Watch (Practice Usual Precautions); **Level 2**: Alert (Practice Enhanced Precautions); **Level 3**: Warning (Avoid Nonessential Travel). See: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>.

3. World Health Organization's International Health Regulation Alerts

The World Health Organization (WHO) continuously tracks infectious disease situations around the world and issues public alerts against travel to particular locations subject to outbreaks of particular infectious diseases or to recommend specific health precautions to residents and travelers in impacted regions. Although, less frequent than the DOS or CDC advisories or notices, these warnings are important in UA's on-going assessment of risks to our students, faculty, and staff domestically and internationally. See: <http://www.who.int/ith/en/>