

A. INTRODUCTION

This policy supports education and experiences abroad by balancing the value of participation in activities internationally with the potential risks to the welfare and safety of students, [faculty and staff.??] This policy establishes the minimum requirements to mitigate and manage risks associated with university-affiliated international travel by students.

“International” or “abroad” is defined to include U.S. territories as well as any country outside of the United States.

“Student” is defined as any participant in a university-related activity abroad. “Student” may include, but is not limited to: an enrolled student, member of a student organization, alumnus, or program guest.

“University-related activity abroad” includes, but is not limited to, any activity supported by the university by way of use of university funds or financial aid; any activity related to academic credit, experiential learning, service learning, research; or support from a university employee such as organization, coordination, or supervision of activities abroad.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

Global learning and international engagement are strategic priorities of Western Kentucky University. The university facilitates student international travel and education abroad to foster interpersonal, academic and career development, as well as cross-cultural understanding, while encouraging sound health, safety, and security measures that minimize risks to the traveler and institution. The Global Learning and International Affairs (GLIA) is charged by the Provost with oversight of all international travel. Therefore, all students, faculty, or staff involved with individual or groups of students traveling under the auspices of the university must contact the Global Learning and International Affairs for specific processes.

This policy applies to any student traveling under the auspices of the university through the use of funds, group affiliation (e.g., through “affiliated” or “associated” student organizations, service learning, or adventure travel), or to fulfill academic requirements, or for experiential learning experiences. These experiences include, but are not limited to study, service learning, research, internship, student teaching, practicum or capstone project, or experiential learning.

All classes of students fall under this policy, including but not limited to: non-degree, undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral. This policy does not apply to international travel for solely personal purposes such as vacation or non-university work-related activity that has no affiliation with the university.

4. TRAVEL APPROVALS:

The university, in its sole discretion, may deny approval for student international travel. WKU relies on official US government recommendations and regulations issued by the US Department of State (USDOS) and the Center for Disease Control (CDC). WKU will seek advice from other reliable resources such as the World Health Organization (WHO); foreign government advisories, e.g. Australia, Canada, the European Union, the United Kingdom Foreign Office, etc.; international travel assistance providers, etc.; and WKU authorities. All travelers are required to obtain international health and medical insurance, including emergency evacuation coverage for the duration of their international travel.

1. Travel to locations with USDOS travel advisory Level 1 – “exercise normal precautions,” or Level 2 – “exercise increased caution,” must register with GLIA and follow all required pre-departure and in-country requirements defined by the GLIA Risk Management Committee (GLIA RMC).
2. Any student wishing to travel for academic purposes or any faculty or staff member overseeing travel with any university student(s) pursuing an academic goal (e.g. WKU Faculty Led Program) to a location with a USDOS travel advisory rating of Level 3 – “reconsider travel,” is restricted. Students must appeal the restriction: first inform the academic department or unit head, then file a travel appeal through GLIA Risk Management Committee to seek Provost approval. **The travel appeal request must be approved before the program/international opportunity will be confirmed.** Contact GLIA for guidance in the travel appeal process.
 1. **Considerations for approval include, but are not limited to, the compelling justification for the academic program/experience to be in the high-risk location; relevance and meaningfulness of the academic goals; detailed description of the risks associated with travel to the location (USDOS), foreseeable health or safety concerns and their mitigation measures; traveler’s experience; and the level of support in country.**
 2. Unit or departmental policies may prohibit a student or group of students to request the appeal, such as with student organizations.
3. Student travel, with or without accompanying faculty/staff, is prohibited to locations with a USDOS travel advisory rating of Level 4 – “do not travel.”
4. Student travel, with or without accompanying faculty/staff, is prohibited to locations with a CDC travel advisory rating of Level 3.
5. Travelers, including non-US citizen travelers, may be required to submit a request for permission to travel to locations or participate in programs that pose a specific health, safety, or security concern as indicated by authorities other

than the U.S. Department of State (USDOS), such as the Center for Disease Control (CDC), World Health Organization (WHO), non-U.S. government authorities (e.g., United Kingdom, Australian or Canadian authorities, or international travel assistance provider), and WKU authorities.

6. Exemption: An international student who holds U.S. student visa and who is returning to their home country for a university-sponsored experience where the home location has a USDOS Level 3 or Level 4 advisory, need not file a travel appeal. GLIA may require proof of citizenship/permanent residency must be prior to departure. Such students are still required to complete the standard pre-departure requirements.

5. REVOCATION, SUSPENSION OR MODIFICATION OF TRAVEL APPROVALS

When a significant health or safety concern arises (e.g., natural disaster, political disturbance, deteriorating security environment, disease outbreak, etc.), the GLIA Risk Management Committee will review student travel currently in progress and make recommendations to the Provost or her/his designee who will determine if such activity may continue in light of the circumstances. The university, in its sole discretion, may withdraw approval for or insist on modifications of international travel at any time. The Provost, or the Provost's designee, has final decision-making authority on university-related international travel.

6. ADDITIONS OR MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED TRIPS OR PROGRAMS

If an approved international experience adds a new activity or academic track that materially changes its risk profile, an explanation will be required of how perceived risks will be mitigated. The applicant should consult with GLIA to determine which parts of the application require review.

7. PROGRAM CANCELLATIONS

1. If the university cancels a program before departure or while the program is in progress for reasons beyond its control, including but not limited to, political unrest, danger to participants' safety, natural disasters, or changes to the USDOS travel advisory or CDC warning, participants may incur financial losses in the form of lost fees and tuition, or additional travel expenses in connection with program cancellation. Participants may or may not receive academic credit if a program is canceled. In the event of program cancellation, the university will make efforts to minimize the financial loss to students.
2. Western Kentucky University does not assume responsibility for financial risks associated with participation in its education or experiences abroad opportunities. Students, staff, and faculty are encouraged to consider

supplemental insurance options, such as trip insurance, to cover losses if programs or activities are canceled. Supplemental insurance is also helpful if a traveler needs to cancel participation in a program or return early due to unforeseen personal emergencies. Such insurance is not required by the university and must be purchased on an individual basis.

8. UNAFFILIATED GUESTS ON GROUP TRAVEL (E.G., SPOUSES, CHILDREN)

The university does not support or condone accompanying unaffiliated travelers on official university programs. The university does not permit unaffiliated travelers to accompany the group on any international programs or activities during the entire duration of the program or activity. "Unaffiliated travelers" refers to family members, friends, and other individuals not associated with the particular program. Exceptions may be requested through an appeal process with the IRMC.

9. PRE-DEPARTURE REQUIREMENTS

Listed here are the minimum requirements for student international travel. International experiences organized by the university may have additional requirements. Contact the GLIA for requirements, timeline, and process based on the type of travel.

Minimum Requirements:

- - Travel approved by academic department or unit head.
- - Register with GLIA, to include emergency contact information, contact information while abroad, etc.
- - Purchase of international medical and evacuation insurance as recommended by GLIA.
- - Sign "Student Release and Waiver detailing academic, financial, behavioral, travel risk, and health-related responsibilities while abroad.
- - Complete the pre-departure orientation, which may be completed online for some travelers.
- - If necessary, obtain a successful travel appeal (for countries or regions with U.S. Department of State travel advisory Level 3).
- - Submit an Emergency Action Plan (EAP). This is required for group travel and highly recommended for all travelers.

Recommendations:

- - Address any personal health and safety concerns (e.g., meet with primary care doctor or visit immunization clinic, Student & Community Counseling Center, or other support service).
- - Contact Disability Resources & Services if any accommodation would be required.

- - U.S. citizens should register with the U.S. Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). Non-US citizens are encouraged to register with the appropriate government office.
- - Review online information about destination(s) via U.S. Department of State, Center for Disease Control, World Health Organization, and insurance provider websites.
- - Contact travel assistance provider for detailed security and health information about destination(s) and itinerary.

IN-COUNTRY REQUIREMENTS

Requirements:

- - At all times carry an electronic and hard copy of the EAP which includes international medical and evacuation insurance information and the closest medical facility.
- - Uphold the Student Code of Conduct - Students traveling under the auspices of the university are expected to uphold the Student Code of Conduct.

A student may be dismissed from the abroad experience for conduct that is disruptive to the program experience, including but not limited to safety concerns, reputation, or academic integrity of the program, the student, other participants, or the university. Should a student be dismissed, the student may not be reimbursed for the program fee, may suffer academic consequences, and is responsible for all expenses related to immediate departure from the country. The student is responsible for any direct damage caused to university property, or property owned and maintained by the university's partners or contractors.

- - Fully participate in required program activities.
- - Adhere to university policies/procedures.
- - Obey laws of host country and U.S. as applicable.
- - Students are not permitted to drive motor vehicles under any circumstances

(including but not limited to electric or gas-powered scooters, motorbikes, motorcycles, recreational vehicles, and cars) while participating in a university-related opportunity abroad. A traveler returning to one's home country may appeal this restriction to the IRMC.

Recommendations:

- - Apprise university contact of any changes to itinerary, address and contact information while abroad. Changes should be submitted as soon as possible and at a minimum within 24 hours of the change taking effect.

K. CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATING POLICY/TRAVEL IN VIOLATION OF THIS POLICY

1. Individual students who have not obtained travel permission (or whose travel program administrators have not obtained travel permission) will not receive academic credit nor

institutional funds, including financial aid or grant funding, for related international travel activities, and may be required to pay back any spent funds. Employees who knowingly facilitate undisclosed or unapproved or non-reviewed university-sponsored student international travel may be subject to discipline under university policies and procedures, including termination of employment.

2. Students who choose to travel in violation of this policy are acting outside the control and responsibility of the university.

Essential Travel Definition: Travel that is absolutely necessary and required.

For university staff, faculty, researchers, postdoctoral scholars, undergraduate and graduate students:

- For Undergraduate Students: Undergraduate student travel is considered non-essential.
- For Staff: Staff travel is considered non-essential except when accompanying students on approved essential travel or when not traveling will cause harm to the operations of the university.
- For Faculty, Researchers, Postdoctoral Scholars, Graduate Students: Essential travel is defined as travel that is required to:
 - Preserve the safety of a research subject and cannot be postponed; or
 - Preserve the results of a research activity and cannot be postponed.
- *For All Travelers:* If travel is approved and deemed essential, anyone traveling abroad for university-related purposes MUST register their travel before their expected departure and update this information as changes occur, before and during travel. Registration is an important step in reducing the risks of traveling abroad and helps keep the university community safe, especially in environments with heightened health risks such as COVID-19.