



Risk Management of Student Study Abroad Programmes

Guidance notes for students: Risk awareness form

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<i>Doc control no: PRSG10.5v3</i> WELLBEING, SAFETY AND HEALTH MANAGEMENT SYSTEM							
Author:	HSS	Approved by:	CO	Version number:	3	Issue Date:	March 2018

Study abroad pre-departure planning

Guidance notes for students: Risk awareness form

The planning and risk awareness process

These guidance notes have been designed to give you ideas of some of the issues you may need to think about and some ideas on how you might deal with them when you complete the pre-departure planning and risk awareness form.

By following the pre-departure planning and risk awareness process you can begin to identify potential difficulties that you may face during your year abroad and start to identify possible ways of reducing these. The form covers several important areas, not all of which may be relevant to you, depending on the nature of the subject you will be studying/ the type of work you will be doing and / or your destination. All forms should be completed and submitted to your Study Abroad Coordinator.

Details on some sources of information that you may find helpful when completing the form can be found at the end of these guidance notes.

The aims of the form are to:

- Allow you to identify the time you will need to plan all aspects of your trip pre-departure to ensure you make the most of your time abroad.
- Identify any problems you may have with your year abroad relating to the academic or work setting you will be in and your day-to-day life.
- Consider ways of reducing the potential for these problems by using the information and resources available here at the University before you leave.

Things to think about

The following areas have been included on the form as they are considered the most crucial areas for consideration with regard to your time abroad. However, this is not an exhaustive list and if you feel there are topics missing please feel free to include them in the 'Other Considerations' section of the form. For each element you should consider what hazards and risks may be involved and what you can do to avoid the hazard or reduce the risk.

Nature of Study Abroad Programme

e.g. Lectures, Laboratory in a University, work in a School, type of company working for etc.

What is the environment you are going to be studying or working in? Is it a University – if so, is it lectures only or are there other activities such as laboratory work, fieldtrips or activities in workshops? If it is a workplace, what are the work activities of the company - is it office based, field-based, laboratory based, or based in healthcare setting etc?

Transport

Details of transport to be used to travel to the country but also on a day-to-day basis e.g. public transport, own vehicles, licence requirements for the country.

Taking public transport in certain parts of the world can be one of the highest risk activities you undertake so it is important to consider which is the most secure and effective. This section should include both your travel to your destination and transport whilst you are there (for example travelling between your accommodation and the University campus or place of work).

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Cultural

Identify any cultural differences that may affect you and consider consequences of actions within the country, e.g. religious differences, differences in laws, differences in food and drink, appropriate clothing, appropriate behaviour, attitudes to gender and sexuality, politically sensitive issues.

This may include some consideration as to how you should dress and behave in certain countries where it can be an offence to be seen in public dressed inappropriately. You should also consider different attitudes to alcohol consumption and diet. It should also consider differences in attitudes to gender and sexuality, or other potentially politically sensitive issues. You should also consider the consequences of any actions that may be acceptable in this country but not in the one to be visited.

Accommodation

Consider its location with respect to where you are studying/ working and the neighbourhood it is in. Is it shared, is it privately owned?

Within this section consider where your accommodation is in relation to the University or place of work.

Consider questions such as: Is it a reasonable distance away from the University/ place of work? What type of area is it in? Is it privately run? Is it private or University accommodation? Is it shared with others?

Personal Security

Consider the potential for crime, hostility or physical / mental violence (knowledge of country / Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) advice / previous incidents etc).

Some areas or countries may have increased risk associated with them, often in the form of military, political or civil unrest. Although the University of Leeds would not expect its students to undertake any activity where they would knowingly be at risk, it is worth bearing in mind that situations can change. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), Embassy or Consulate of the country will be able to advise you on what to do if such a situation arises. Also be aware of what concerns fellow students have raised in previous years - the Study Abroad Office have feedback from previous students.

Individual

Consider any health condition(s) (physical, mental or psychological) or any other disabilities that may require medication or specific arrangements at the destination. (See Health and Disability disclosure form). Where relevant, ensure you have enough medication and support for the time you are abroad.

Do you require any medication or other medical treatment such as regular physiotherapy that you will need to access abroad? It is important for you to check that any medication you require is either available in the country you are going to, or that you can take it with you. Speak to your GP who may be able to advise you. It is also worth considering that some common over the counter medication may have the same trade name but a different formulation in other countries. You may also need to consider access to ongoing treatment - is this available and do you need to plan this in advance?

Insurance

Appropriate and adequate travel, medical and repatriation insurance for destination (details). Consider specific country requirements e.g. American campus insurance. Also, where relevant, join the appropriate professional body.

All students undertaking a year abroad should have adequate insurance cover for both travel and medical expenses, you are not covered automatically by the University of Leeds insurance policies. Some activities that you are planning to undertake may not be covered in standard policies so it is vital that you check the policy, along with the level of cover and the liability for all activities. You should also check if you will be required to purchase an insurance policy from the institution where you will be studying abroad. Where appropriate you should consider joining a professional body e.g. the GMC for medics.

Climate / Time difference

Consider differences in temperature, humidity, altitude, seasons, time differences, jet lag etc. Is acclimatisation required?

Consider the local climate – particularly extremes of climate - and be prepared for this. Also consider the time difference and potentially different seasons.

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Other Considerations

Consider FCO advice, entry requirements such as Visas, specified time remaining on passports, vaccination certificates for the country. Will you be using any specialised equipment?

This may include knowing how to raise a concern/ problem whilst abroad both to staff at your host institution and to the Study Abroad here at Leeds. Consider what contact details at the University of Leeds that you need to take with you.

Also consider any specialist equipment you may need, and consider that standards may vary in certain countries from those that you are used to in the UK. Think about how you will ensure that you feel safe at all times.

Destination Specific

Any other measures not already considered, this may include endemic diseases.

Consider how you will find accommodation and whether it is essential for you to confirm arrangements before departure or whether it can be done easily on arrival.

Do you need to register with the British Embassy?

Do you need vaccinations for the country you are visiting? If so, plan these in advance with your GP and check whether you need evidence of these vaccines to enter the country.

In some cases it is recommended to drink only bottled water, check advice on this too.

Useful Resources pre-departure

- General advice for Study Abroad students is available from the Study Abroad Office (SAO).
- Feedback from students who have been to your destination in previous years. Feedback forms are available in the SAO and you can also ask them to put you in contact with previous outgoers.
- Contact current incoming students from the host institution via the SAO.
- Pre-departure briefings organised either by your school or by the SAO.
- The website of the institution where you will be studying, or the organisation you will be working with.
- The Foreign and Commonwealth Office <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/about-kbyg-campaign/>
- For language students, speak to staff or returning students within the subject areas of the School.
- Check out the Student wellbeing abroad website <http://students.leeds.ac.uk/safetyabroad>

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