

Aberystwyth University Guidance for University-related Overseas Travel

Introduction

The following guidance provides additional advice and support to colleagues in the interpretation of Aberystwyth University's Travel Policy. In particular, further information is provided relating to overseas travel, and the appropriate actions required of all staff prior to each trip.

The basic process for any overseas travel for University-related business can be summarised as follows:



For any such travel, the basic premise of each step must be considered and addressed according to the levels of perceived risk in each case.

Step 1: Authorisation

All University-related travel **must** be approved by the relevant Institute / Professional Service Department.

Additional authorisation requirements are imposed for any travel to counties where the Foreign and Commonwealth Office have imposed additional travel restrictions. The FCO travel advice must be reviewed prior to each trip (even if colleagues frequently visit a particular area or region), and any additional advice or requirements will result in a change to the normal authorisation process, and should be addressed appropriately by the resulting risk assessment.

Institutes and Professional Service Departments should make staff aware of the appropriate authorisation processes for the following types of travel:

- i. Domestic Travel (i.e. within the United Kingdom);

- ii. Countries or regions with no travel restrictions imposed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office;
- iii. Countries or regions where the Foreign and Commonwealth Office advises against all travel unless on essential business;
- iv. Countries or regions where the Foreign and Commonwealth Office advises against all travel;
- v. Travel to home countries or regions.

Please note that while the responsibility for authorising certain types of travel can be delegated by the Institute Director of Head of Professional Service Department, the authorisation process must follow that of the University's Travel Policy when specific travel restrictions for a particular country or region have been imposed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Please note that the Travel and Fleet Department should be notified immediately of any intention to travel to any country or region with Foreign and Commonwealth Office travel restrictions or elevated risk status.

If travelling to a country with an elevated FCO risk status colleagues are advised to register with the British Embassy or Consular Office on arrival, carrying the relevant contact details at all times (available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/world/organisations>).

Step 2: Travel Insurance

At the earliest possible juncture, colleagues should notify the Travel and Fleet Department of their travel arrangements in order to ensure that appropriate Travel Cover is provided. Travel Cover through the University's provider can only be arranged by contacting travel@aber.ac.uk with the following information:

- Dates of travel
- Destination(s)
- Purpose of travel
- Any Pre-existing Medical Conditions

Colleagues should also provide further notification in the event of any changes to the information given either in the lead up to, or during, the period of travel e.g. length of stay extended, additional country to visit, etc.

A full copy of the University's Travel Cover Summary is available at:

<https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/media/departmental/finance/pdf/Travel-insurance-policy-details.pdf>.

Following receipt of this information, colleagues will be issued with their Travel Cover certificate, and provided with the relevant contact information for the University's travel cover providers. A copy of the Travel Cover certificate and contact details for the University's travel cover provider should be taken on each trip.

Please note that in some cases, additional Personal Travel Insurance may be required, for example where an individual will be undertaking high risk activities in their own time, or during a period of extended travel e.g. bungee jumping, jet skiing, etc.

Step 3: Risk Assessment

Risk Assessments are an integral part of the travel process, and require employers to protect those travelling on business from harm, as far as is reasonably practicable. As a result, risk assessments must be completed for all travel undertaken for the purpose of University business. Risk assessments should be produced by a competent person within the Institute or Professional Service Department (who may be the staff or student undertaking the travel). In cases where the competent person is another member of staff, the individual(s) involved in the travel should have considerable input in the identification of hazards and control measures and the overall contents of the risk assessment, particularly where the activities involved require significant technical and scientific expertise.

Colleagues should be fully aware of, and comply with, the control measures identified in the relevant risk assessment(s). The nature of the risk assessments will vary depending on the nature and destination of travel, and the activities that will be undertaken during the period of travel. All cases of University-related overseas travel, should, as best practice, have one risk assessment specific to the method(s) of transport, and a second risk assessment relating to the activity(ies) to be undertaken during the travel (e.g. fieldwork, research, etc.).

The types of issues to be considered and addressed in the travel risk assessment may include, but may not be limited to:

- Disease or other particular medical concern(s), such as known condition(s) for the individual(s) concerned;
- Personal fitness to travel;
- Immunisation / vaccination requirements;
- Accommodation;
- Manual Handling;
- Medical Emergency Protocols;
- Specific safety issues or concerns regarding proposed destination;
- Terrorism.

For further information on Risk Assessments, please see the Health, Safety and Environment Department website at: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/hse/proc-prac/risk-assessment/>.

For further details of the risk assessment training course, please see the following link: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/hse/training/risk-training/>.

Review

The conditions in a particular country or region may be relatively fluid and subject to regular change, therefore colleagues should regularly review the latest travel advice in the period up to and during their period of travel, and amend or revise the hazards and accompanying control measures as required.

Step 4: Travel Health Essentials

Day to Day Health Considerations

These may include, but may not be limited to such issues as:

- Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) – Is particularly relevant if undertaking any long-haul journeys. The associated risks can be mitigated by such precautions as avoiding wearing tight fitting clothes on long distance journeys, doing regular stretches and moving along the plane at frequent intervals, drinking plenty of fluids during travel, and avoiding alcohol or caffeine-containing drinks while travelling.
- Culture Shock – Some travellers experience unease or distress when first arriving in new countries or cultures. It's advisable, particularly if unfamiliar with a particular country or region, to prepare for the trip by making yourself aware of the cultural and legislative differences prior to any journey.
- Eating and Drinking – The quality of drinking water and general food and hygiene standards can vary significantly from country to country, however a number of common precautions can reduce the risks involved. These include regularly washing hands (especially before eating or drinking), using antibacterial hand gel at regular intervals, avoiding uncovered food at retail outlets, and using bottled water (checking that the seal has not been broken).
- Traveller's Diarrhoea – May be caused by change of diet and climate.
- The Sun and High Temperatures – in countries with warmer climates, a number of precautions should be considered to limit exposure to harmful sun rays. These include using sun cream with a high protection factor, staying in the shade during the warmest period of the day, avoiding strenuous activities during the hottest periods, and drinking enough fluids to stay hydrated.
- Snow, Ice and Cold Temperatures – In extreme cold temperatures, the risks of ailments such as hypothermia and frostbite are significant. Steps to reduce these risks include wearing clothes (including gloves and hats) with suitable insulation, sufficient layers of wind- and water-proof clothes, and warm waterproof footwear with strong grips to minimise slips and falls.
- Altitude Sickness – At high altitudes, the air will be thinner, which may lead to symptoms such as extreme tiredness. When situations allow, colleagues should consider a period of acclimatisation at lower altitudes before proceeding to higher areas.
- Insects (including Malaria) – Bites are common and can lead to reactions or carry diseases. Medical attention should be sought immediately if an insect bite causes swelling, bruising or persistent pain. In addition, pre-travel checks should be made with a GP as to whether medication is required (e.g. Malaria tablets), use insect repellent when outside, avoid using scented products that can attract insects, and wear suitable clothing to cover exposed skin, particularly after sunset when insects are most common.
- Animals – can injure or transmit infections. If bitten, licked or scratched by an animal, wash the area thoroughly, seek medical advice immediately and record details of the incident and animal.

Vaccination / Medication

Colleagues should ensure that they have received appropriate vaccinations and medications for the countries that they are going to be visiting. Please see your GP before any such travel in order to discuss particular requirements.

Information relating to the types of necessary and recommended vaccinations depending on the counties to be visited is available via the following links:

NHS Fit for Travel: <http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/destinations.aspx>

National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC): <http://nathnac.net/>

Pre-Existing Conditions

If colleagues suffer from a pre-existing medical condition, suitable control measures should be identified in the relevant risk assessment. For example, for conditions which require regular or intermittent treatment, colleagues should ensure that enough medicine is taken for the duration of the trip, accounting for any foreseeable or possible delays.

It is also considered good practice to take copies of all prescriptions with you in case of any loss or theft, and if the illness or treatment is considered rare or unusual, carry a GP's letter which describes the problem and the usual management or treatment method of the condition.

When travelling with medicines always check the relevant Airline Regulations. Where the airline allows, carry all medicines in your hand luggage to avoid the risk of damage or loss. In addition, if medicines are taken by injection or in liquid form, carry a GP's letter confirming this. A GP's letter will also be required if your treatment involves controlled drugs (opiate pain-killers, some tranquillisers) to avoid difficulties when entering countries. Please be aware there may be restrictions and even prohibitions with regards to certain medications when travelling overseas. For example, opiate based drugs such as codeine are banned in some countries.

If any of the following conditions apply, GP advice should be sought before any travel is undertaken:

- The amount of medicines required is more than is usually prescribed on a single prescription;
- The health problem requires regular medical assessment or monitoring e.g. blood tests;
- The problem can cause sudden incapacity e.g. epilepsy, diabetes;
- Impaired immunity e.g. HIV, treatment with immuno-suppressant drugs;
- The health problem is so severe you have been admitted to hospital in the last year;
- The medicines used in the treatment is novel;
- Your health problem limits your ability to undertake physical exertion e.g. heart disease;
- Travelling within 3 months of a major illness e.g. heart attack, or operation / treatment requiring overnight stay in hospital.

Travel will **not** be permitted if against the advice of a GP.

Step 5: Travel Basics

The travel risk assessment should include other basic travel considerations, which may include but may not be limited to:

- Culture – Local customs and norms can vary between countries, and must be respected by any visitors. These may include religious and legislative norms which can impact on the way

that people are expected to behave, such as dress and behaviour, the consumption of alcohol or the restriction or prohibition of filming or photography.

- Accommodation – Always use a reputable booking agent or site, while respecting the University's Procurement and Financial Regulations. Familiarise yourself with your immediate surroundings upon arrival, including the location of the nearest fire exits, and always lock your room.
- Transport – Vehicle conditions and the way that people drive varies between countries. There may also exist local means of transport that are best avoided.
- General Welfare – Bottled water may be preferable to drinking tap water in certain countries, and the general food and hygiene standards can also vary considerably.
- Theft or loss – Take copies or store electronic copies of essential documents that can be accessed if required.
- General Safety – Standards can vary, such as electrical, glazing or fire safety standards. Be vigilant for your own safety, and heed the advice provided by trusted contacts, travel providers and respected websites.

Colleagues should ensure that colleagues within their Institute or Professional Service Department hold copies of their travel and activity risk assessments, a **full itinerary** (providing details of contact details, location, accommodation, transit and flights), and that there are certain individuals in their Institute or Professional Service Department who are able to contact them in the event of an emergency.

Supplementary Information

The following links provide some of the main sources of information to consider before any overseas travel. Please note that the following sources do not represent an exhaustive list of potential sources of information. Travel to particular regions or areas or activities may require the consideration of additional sources as necessary.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Travel Advice: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>.

National Health Service (NHS) Travel Advice:

<http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/travelhealth/Pages/Travelhealthhome.aspx>.

Health, Safety and Environment Department Website: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/hse/>.

NHS Fit for Travel: <http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/destinations.aspx>

National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC): <http://nathnac.net/>

For any further information or guidance relating to Travel, please contact the Health, Safety and Environment department at hasstaff@aber.ac.uk or on extension 2073.