

## Risk Management Considerations for Study Abroad Programs

This information applies to international travel on official University business, except travel to British Columbia for two days or less. Travel leaders are strongly encouraged to consult with the Director of WWU's International Programs & Exchanges (IPE).

### **AUTHORIZATION**

- There is a University policy called [Authorizing and Reimbursing Travel for Official University Business](#) which outlines approval requirements. Approval by Provost or Vice President is required for international travel.
- [Online Travel Authorization Form](#)

### **PARTICIPANTS**

- Participants should possess official status, such as faculty, staff, enrolled students or registered volunteers of the University.
- Volunteers should be registered with Human Resources. Information is available [online](#).

### **PLANNING & PREPARATION**

- There is a University policy on [Traveling Outside the United States](#). The planning and preparation items for travel leaders that are outlined in the policy include:
  - Act in accordance with **safe international travel** as you plan and prepare for the trip per state regulations and Western policy.
  - Consult with **WWU's International Programs & Exchanges (IPE)** regarding safety, cultural and political information and to receive general guidelines for safe international travel.
  - Review and abide by **U.S. State Department** Travel Warnings, Public Announcements, Worldwide Cautions and Consular Information Sheets that have been issued.
  - Abide by **Centers for Disease Control (CDC)** Travel Advisories.
  - Register with the **State Dept./U.S. Embassy**. You can do this online.
  - Have all students provide evidence of adequate **travel or study abroad health insurance** during your travel outside the U.S.
- Consult with [WWU's Travel Clinic](#) before your trip. Contact the Student Health Center at 650-6864. A physical exam for each participant is becoming the norm for study abroad programs.
- Visit [IPE's study abroad website](#). This website has good information that would apply to planning and preparation including "Travel Resources" and "Pre-Departure Information" especially information in the Pre-Departure Handbook.
- Consult with [WWU's Travel Services](#) before your trip. They can be reached at 650-3341.

## **DOCUMENTATION**

Travel leaders should consider maintaining certain documents with important information for and about participants, such as:

- Emergency Response Manual or Plan – How to respond to injury, illness and/or death
- Participant Emergency Information (home contacts, medical issues, etc)
- Copies of Study/Travel Abroad Health Insurance ID Card
- Copies of Passport/VISA
- Photograph (if not on passport)
- Signed Participant Code of Conduct Forms
- Signed Acknowledgement of Risk/Hold Harmless Forms
- Signed Health Insurance Verification Forms
- Completed Medical Reports by Participant's Physician

IPE has an academic program director's manual that includes samples of these documents.

## **SAFETY & HEALTH**

Travel leaders should establish and maintain a healthy and safe environment for participants. Here are some things to consider:

- Conduct an assessment of health and safety conditions related to the program. Include inquiry regarding the potential health and safety risks of the local environment of the program, including program-sponsored accommodation, events, excursions and other activities, on an ongoing basis and provide information and assistance to participants.
- Develop and maintain emergency preparedness processes and a crisis response plan (see Documentation above).
- Provide health and safety information for prospective participants so that they can make informed decisions concerning preparation, participation and behavior while on the program.
- Provide clear information concerning aspects of WWU campus services and conditions that cannot be replicated while abroad.
- Provide clear information that University policies and procedures and related state laws and regulations still apply, including the University's [Alcohol Use Policy](#) and [Student Rights and Responsibilities Code](#).
- Provide orientation to participants prior to the program and as needed on site, which includes information on safety, health, legal, environmental, political, cultural, and religious conditions in the host country, dealing with health and safety issues, potential health and safety risks, and appropriate emergency response measures.
- Verify appropriate study/travel abroad health insurance (medical, emergency evacuation, repatriation) coverage by participants (see Documentation above).
- Conduct appropriate inquiry regarding available medical and professional services, provide information to participants and help them obtain the services they may need.
- Verify appropriate health and safety training (e.g. CPR/FA) for travel leaders, including guidelines with respect to intervention and referral, and working within the limitations of their own competencies.
- Communicate applicable codes of conduct and the consequences of noncompliance to participants. Take appropriate action when aware that participants are in violation (see Documentation above).
- In cases of serious health problems, injury, or other significant health and safety circumstances, maintain good communication among all participants and others at WWU who need to know (see Documentation above).

- Adopt a participant screening process. Consider factors such as participant's health and disciplinary history, and other factors that may impact the safety of the individual or the group.
- Provide information for participants regarding when and where the program's responsibility begins and ends, and the range of aspects of participants' potential experiences that are beyond the program's control. In particular, programs generally:
  - a. Cannot guarantee or assure the safety of participants or eliminate all risks from the travel abroad environments.
  - b. Cannot monitor or control all of the daily personal decisions, choices, and activities of individual participants.
  - c. Cannot prevent participants from engaging in illegal, dangerous or unwise activities.
  - d. Cannot assure that U.S. standards of due process apply, including legal proceedings or providing/paying for legal representation for participants.
  - e. Cannot assume responsibility for the actions of persons not employed or otherwise engaged by WWU, for events that are not part of the program, or that are beyond the control of WWU, or for situations that may arise due to the failure of a participant to disclose pertinent information.
  - f. Cannot assure that home-country cultural values and norms will apply in the host country.
- Provide information about vehicle use limitations while abroad. WWU strongly discourages the rental or purchase of any motorized vehicle, including cars, mopeds, motorcycles and scooters during the program.
- You may need to accommodate a participant who has a disability. For students, contact [DisAbility Resources](#) at x3083. For faculty, staff or volunteers, contact [Human Resources](#) at x3774.

### **USING VENDORS ABROAD**

When selecting vendors abroad who will provide services, the travel leader should research and consider vendors who are experienced, qualified, safe, insured and reputable. The vendor must be a licensed or registered, if required by a governing agency.

- A contract between the vendor and WWU should be vetted through [WWU's International Programs & Exchanges \(IPE\)](#) and [Contract Administration](#). A certificate of insurance will be requested.
- The vendor should supply a copy its waiver, release, limitation of liability, exculpatory, indemnification or hold harmless agreement to be signed by a student, faculty or staff. Such document(s) will be evaluated by WWU for fairness.

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