

STUDY OR RESEARCH ABROAD TO AREAS UNDER HIGHER LEVEL TRAVEL ADVISORIES AND/OR TRAVEL SANCTIONS

**Office of Global Partnerships and Programs
Purdue University (West Lafayette)
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BACKGROUND RATIONALE

As a general rule, Purdue University (West Lafayette) does not allow programs to go to countries that are under higher level Department of State Travel Advisories. These advisories, issued periodically by the U.S. government, are widely – but not universally – used by universities in making decisions about which overseas sites are “safe.”

Similarly, for locations under an Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanction, Purdue has a discernment and preparation process to prevent vulnerabilities to both students and the institution.

Issues arise, however, from many directions. Travel Advisories are often not specific. Different regions of a country may present very different situations. Specific programs present different risk profiles. Given that no program, anywhere, is automatically “safe,” Purdue needs a way to respond flexibly to the information conveyed in Travel Advisories.

This memo outlines an updated review procedure for Purdue based on the experience of a number of other universities, which now specifically includes locations under and OFAC sanction. The procedure was developed in consultation with the units listed below.

THE SECURITY AND RISK ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE (SRAC)

This Committee has the authority to approve the safety of programs and sites abroad, as well as the ability to cancel or revise programs. This applies to all students (i.e. both graduate and undergraduate students) on all approved Purdue activities taking place outside the United States. Cancellations or revisions can take place in the absence of Advisory updates from the U.S. Department of State.

The Security and Risk Assessment Committee (SRAC) meets as needed and is composed of representatives from the following:

- Office of Programs for Study Abroad
- Office of Global Partnerships and Programs
- Office of the Dean of Students
- Office of Risk Management
- Office of Marketing and Media
- Office of Purdue Police
- Office of Emergency Planning and Preparedness (as needed)
- Purdue Legal Counsel (as needed)
- Faculty Representative (as needed)
- One or more at-large country experts, not associated with the program (as needed)

WAIVER DECISIONS

Requests for exemptions from Purdue’s overall policy will be evaluated on a program-by-program basis by the Security and Risk Assessment Committee (SRAC). The request for student travel should be submitted to Office of Programs for Study Abroad and should clearly describe the following:

- The importance of this educational experience abroad for students, particularly with respect to its importance in their degree program
- The geographic, cultural and political environment of the program and its relationship to safety

and security issues in the country concerned

- How specifically the program will work to ensure the safety and security of participants
- How the program will specifically address the State Department Travel Advisory concerns, minimizing risks to participants

Programs should provide as much detail as possible, including – but not necessarily limited to – information about the following:

- Modes of travel, routing, and other details related to reaching final destination
- Orientations both prior to departure and on-site which include information on safety, health, legal, environmental, political, cultural, and security-related issues (with examples, if possible)
- The nature of the local support structure, including how much experience the program organizers (from both Purdue and the host entity) have in working with participants
- Procedures for keeping track of students' whereabouts and communicating this to Purdue (e.g. housing information, in-country contacts, mobile telephones, provisions for contacting students when they have free time)
- An emergency response plan for dealing with crisis situations on the program site
- An evacuation plan for moving participants off-site (including key decision makers and how resulting plans will be funded)
- A communication plan for how program leaders will monitor and report situations to Purdue officials during the operation of the program
- Details of how faculty and other program supervisors will be trained in these procedures
- Other relevant information associated with a specific waiver request

OBLIGATIONS OF THE PROGRAM(S) AFFECTED

If waivers are granted, program leadership will be required to oversee the following activities associated with carrying out the study abroad program before departure:

- Obtain student signatures on the International Travel Program Release (Risk Management form RM55)
- Obtain supplemental emergency medical, evacuation, and repatriation insurance for students through the existing mechanism (Purdue Office of Risk Management)
- Ensure that all students who are United States citizens register online with the Department of State
- Attend to additional related tasks before participant departure

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Should a crisis situation present itself while a program is underway, the Office of Global Partnerships and Programs (GPP) will determine whether conditions warrant suspension of the program and/or departure of the student from the host country. When time permits, this will occur following appropriate consultation with program leaders, the Security and Risk Assessment Committee (SRAC), on-site staff, area experts, peer institutions, and other organizations that offer programs abroad.

RESOURCES

The following resources were consulted in the preparation of this memo.

- Association of International Educators (NAFSA). "Responsible Study Abroad: Good Practices for Health and Safety."
- Center for Global Education. Safety Abroad First - Educational Travel Information (SAFETI) Clearinghouse. Loyola Marymount University.
- The Forum on Education Abroad. "Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad."
- Indiana University, Office of Overseas Study
- Michigan State University, Office of Study Abroad
- University of Minnesota, Learning Abroad Center, International Programs
- University of Wisconsin, Madison, International Academic Programs