

Revised 11/02/2010

Western Carolina University

## International Travel and Risk Management Protocols

Office of International Programs and Services

109 Cordelia Camp Building

69 East University Way

Cullowhee, NC 28723

2010

## INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The health and safety of WCU personnel and students, while abroad, are of primary concern when participating on international study and research trips. WCU administrators, study abroad administrators, faculty/staff (for faculty-led travel courses or service learning courses/trips, and host institution representatives abroad share the responsibility for monitoring local and national conditions affecting participant health and safety while abroad and providing relevant information to program participants.

At the same time, participants themselves are responsible for becoming familiar with all materials provided and for following health and safety guidelines provided by Western Carolina University, its representatives and host institutions abroad. The office of International Programs and Services (IPS) can assist the traveler with most questions about the information provided in this policy. For faculty-led travel courses and service learning travel groups, please refer to the Faculty Guidelines for Travel Courses at <http://www.wcu.edu/9515.asp>.

## PLANNING TRAVEL ABROAD

### A. WCU Policy 100: International Travel

All individuals traveling overseas on university business, whether funded by state or departmental money or personal funds, are required to fill out the forms associated with Policy 100: <http://www.wcu.edu/25383.asp>

### B. Location and Inspection of Host Country

IPS staff (for individual students), faculty/staff (for faculty-led travel courses or service learning courses/trips), and university personnel traveling abroad should conduct an inquiry of the health and safety risks of the local environment of the program, including program sponsored accommodations, events, excursions and other activities on an ongoing basis and share information with participants. See <http://travel.state.gov>, which includes safety and security information specific to most countries in the world and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) website at <http://travel.cdc.gov/travel/index.html> for health related issues.

Travelers should take into consideration that certain facilities, like embassies, military bases, popular tourist attractions, are potential targets for terrorist activities.

### C. Travel Advisories

IPS is notified about changes to the Department of State (DOS) travel warning website and notifies students, faculty and administrators about changes that might affect student, faculty, and staff travel overseas. IPS staff (for individual students), faculty/staff (for faculty-led travel courses or service learning courses/trips), and university personnel traveling abroad should regularly review the U.S. Department of State's travel advisories when planning education abroad programs and PRIOR to traveling abroad.

When a country is placed on the DOS warning list shortly before travel is to commence, IPS, in consultation with WCU Legal Counsel, GA Counsel, the faculty travel course leader, the Third Party Provider (if required), will discuss the situation and make a decision. As a rule, IPS adheres to the suggestions in the advisories that restrict or ban travel to specific counties or areas of countries.

If a faculty member or student desires to appeal the ban or restriction, he/she can appeal in writing to the Travel Abroad Appeals Committee, which will review all relevant information in making a decision regarding the situation in this particular country at this particular time. All travel abroad appeals are reviewed on a case by case basis.

#### D. Travel and Transportation

Participants on independent study, internship, service learning, direct enrollment, or exchange programs abroad should provide complete travel and contact information for their files maintained in the Office of International Programs and Services at WCU.

For faculty-led programs and service learning courses/trips, information on travel methods and routes should be as specific as possible (by bus, train, air, sea, private and/or commercial). Faculty/staff travel course directors should present and prioritize alternative methods of travel and routes in the event that the usual route is no longer safe or feasible. For certain sites, program leaders need to travel with a secondary instructor/chaperone.

All study/research abroad students and faculty-led travel course directors MUST register with the U.S. Department of State before departing the U.S. Travel registration is a free service provided by the U.S. Government to U.S. citizens traveling abroad to other countries, which records trip information with the appropriate embassies abroad. This will allow the embassy to assist the students/group in case of an emergency. Register online at: <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>.

#### E. Health Care Issues

The program leader and/or participants should consult the WCU Travel Clinic in the office of Health Services or the Center for Disease Control website (CDC) at <http://travel.cdc.gov/travel/index.html> well before the date of travel abroad to receive health-related information or vaccinations recommended for the country where the participants are going.

Travelers can receive immunizations at the WCU health service and area County Health Departments.

All students studying, interning, researching, or conducting service learning as part of a class must be insured through health insurance plans provided by the International Student Exchange Program (ISEP) or other approved programs. These plans insure the participants anywhere in the world except the U.S. Students are advised to retain their U.S. health insurance plan while overseas.

IPS enrolls all students and participants on faculty-led programs in the appropriate insurance plan.

Emergency assistance is provided by HTH at the following numbers:

1-610-254-8771 or 1-610-254-8772 (collect call from outside the U.S.)

1-888-243-2358 (toll-free call inside the U.S.)

F. Emergencies

Study/research abroad students need to be familiar with the student services personnel in their host country and the procedures used in case of emergency.

Faculty-led groups need to have a plan in place for emergencies that could arise in the host country that affect one or more members of the group.

Faculty-led leaders need to have copies of each participant's passport, Health statement, emergency information and release form while in the host country.

All study/research abroad students, whether traveling singly or with a group, are required to sign and submit to IPS the Study Abroad Agreement, Emergency Information and Release Form, the Health Statement, and the Liability Release, Waiver, Discharge and Covenant. Copies of these forms are kept in IPS.

All students, faculty, staff, and participants on international study and research trips need to carry an emergency contact card that includes HTH insurance information, faculty contact information, host institution/hotel contact information, and U.S. embassy information.

G. Faculty/Staff Pre-Departure Orientation

Prior to the travel, the IPS staff should conduct a pre-departure orientation for faculty/staff. At the minimum, the following should be discussed:

- a. Need for a detailed itinerary which specifies course and extracurricular activities;
- b. Cultural, safety and other issues;
- c. Roles of faculty and staff while abroad;
- d. Duties of program leader and assistant or foreign staff if applicable;
- e. Travel procedures and processes;
- f. Reporting incidents, including serious injuries, crimes, medical problems, and others;
- g. The need to provide a periodic update to appropriate staff members in IPS.

H. Participant Pre-Departure Orientation

All students studying, researching, or conducting service learning abroad are required to participate in a pre-departure orientation organized by the staff of IPS before embarking on their travels.

I. Vehicle Use While Abroad

Participants on WCU study, research and service learning abroad programs are strongly discouraged from renting or driving vehicles while in foreign countries.

Participants who decide to drive should carefully review the Road Safety section of the U.S. Department of State's Country Specific Information ([http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1765.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html)), which is available for every country in the world. Participants may also want to review the U.S. Department of State's Background notes (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/ghn/>) for any country in which they intend to drive or travel by road as a passenger. Also check the website of the U.S. embassy or consulate in the countries of travel to learn about local requirements for driver's licenses, road permits, and auto insurance. Rules and laws of the road can differ significantly in other countries. Participants are responsible for obtaining adequate insurance to cover risks of liabilities, as well as costs of litigation and other expenses that may be incurred as a result of accidents or infraction of local laws in the host country.

In situations where the program leader decides to contract the services of a local transportation company, he/she must check and make sure that the company has sufficient insurance coverage and conduct the driver's background check.

#### J. Early Termination of Travel

Individual student travelers on semester and year-long study abroad programs will be subject to the university's policies on course withdrawals and the host institution's policies concerning termination of housing. If students leave the host institution before the end of the semester, grades may not be awarded for the courses and financial aid may be affected.

Individual student travelers on summer short-term and students on faculty-led travel courses will be subject to the travel cancellation and refund policies of WCU, the host institution or third party provider, and may not receive credit for the course work completed and financial aid may be affected.

Travel that is terminated because of a natural disaster, political turmoil, or similar, unforeseen occurrence, will be handled on an individual basis.

#### K. Communications

Students are encouraged to communicate and check in with their parents from time to time.

Professors teaching faculty-led travel courses should maintain weekly or bi-weekly communication (depending on the length of the program) with appropriate staff persons in the office of International Programs and Services.

## EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

- A. Medical Emergencies – Contact HTH Worldwide Global Assistance Services:  
1-610-254-8771 or 1-610-254-8772 (collect call from outside the U.S.)  
1-888-243-2358 (toll-free call inside the U.S.)
- B. Health Insurance  
For health insurance related issues, contact HTH Worldwide at:  
1-610-254-8769 (collect call from outside the U.S.)
- C. International Programs and Services Office
- Lois Petrovich-Mwaniki, Director  
Office: 001-828-227-3433                      Cell: 001-828-342-4943  
Email: [Lmwaniki@email.wcu.edu](mailto:Lmwaniki@email.wcu.edu)
  - Claudia Bryant, Assistant Director  
Office: 001-828-227-7739  
Email: [CBryant@email.wcu.edu](mailto:CBryant@email.wcu.edu)
  - Kay Moore, Office Manager  
Office: 001-828-227-3440  
Email: [KMoore@email.wcu.edu](mailto:KMoore@email.wcu.edu)
  - John Schweikart, Study Abroad Advisor  
Office: 001-828-227-2567                      Cell: 001-614-937-9044  
Email: [JSchweikart@email.wcu.edu](mailto:JSchweikart@email.wcu.edu)
- D. Western Carolina University Police  
Main contact number is 828-227-7301  
Emergency 828-227-8911; Alternate 828-227-3206  
Chief of Police: Ernie Hudson [ehudson@wcu.edu](mailto:ehudson@wcu.edu)  
Communication Center e-mail [commcenter@email.wcu.edu](mailto:commcenter@email.wcu.edu)
- E. Counseling and Psychological Services  
John Ritchie, Director  
Office: 001-828-227-7469  
Email: [Ritchie@email.wcu.edu](mailto:Ritchie@email.wcu.edu)
- F. Student Health Services  
Pam Buchanan, Director  
Office: 001-828-227-7640  
Email: [PMBuchanan@email.wcu.edu](mailto:PMBuchanan@email.wcu.edu)