

POLICY 1.53 – Safety Abroad

Policy Category:	General
Subject:	Student Safety Abroad
Approving Authority:	Board of Governors
Responsible Officer:	Provost & Vice-President (Academic)
Responsible Office:	Western International
Related Procedures:	Safety Abroad Procedures
Related University Policies:	International Academic Partnerships
Effective Date:	November 20, 2014
Supersedes:	(NEW)

1. Purpose

This Policy sets standards to help ensure safe experiences for Western undergraduate and graduate students who travel internationally as part of a university activity. The policy and its accompanying procedures are meant to offer assistance in managing the risks associated with University-sanctioned international programs and activities and to provide processes to undertake the following:

- a) Approval of student international travel for University sanctioned activities and programs
- b) Risk assessment of travel locations, regions and/or countries
- c) Centralized and accessible risk management resources to enable University travelers to be informed of and manage the risks associated with travelling abroad

2. Definitions

- 2.1. “DFATD” is the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development
- 2.2. “Activity Sponsor” refers to the Western faculty or staff member who is actively organizing or coordinating the University Activity, or if there is no such person, the Unit Head.
- 2.3. “Unit Head” is the head of the academic or administrative unit that approves and is responsible for the University Activity, sponsors the University Activity or gives academic credit for the University Activity.

- 2.4. “Student” means individuals enrolled in a program of study or registered in credit or non-credit undergraduate or graduate program and/or courses at the University
- 2.5. “University Activity means any approved international activity:
 - 2.5.1. Undertaken by a student to fulfill a requirement for academic progress at the University; or
 - 2.5.2. Officially organized by the University; or
 - 2.5.3. Paid for in whole or in part from University funds, including without limitation, third party research or other funds administered by the University.

3. Scope and Application

- 3.1. This Policy applies to any activity undertaken outside of Canada by the University's students in connection with a University Activity
- 3.2. University Activities include but are not limited to:
 - Credit Courses
 - Field trips
 - Community Service Learning
 - Research projects
 - Exchange programs
 - Study abroad
 - Letters of Permission
 - Practica
 - Internships
 - Co-op placements
 - Scholarly conferences
 - Organized sport competitions or other extracurricular activities
- 3.3. Activities sponsored or organized by Western's University Student Council, the Society of Graduate Students or student clubs, or activities organized solely by a student or group of students are not included unless they otherwise meet the definition of University Activities
- 3.4. If there is uncertainty as to whether proposed travel is considered to be for a University Activity, Western International should be consulted.
- 3.5. Students planning to travel abroad for a purpose other than a University Activity do so as private citizens. Such students are solely responsible for making their own travel arrangements and making their own decisions regarding personal safety.

4. Risk Rating System

- 4.1. All University Activities must comply with the [Risk Rating System](#) established by the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD). It is the responsibility of the Activity Sponsor and/or Unit Head to consult with Western International to determine compliance and to receive other relevant information prior to proposing approval of a University Activity that requires student international travel.

- 4.2 Travel to Level 1 or Level 2 Destinations (Moderate Risk) as defined by DFATD will normally be authorized, subject to compliance with the [Procedures](#) for this policy.
- 4.3 Travel to Level 3 or Level 4 Destinations (High and Extreme Risk] as defined by DFATD is strongly discouraged and will not normally be authorized.

5. Travel Planning and Responsibilities

- 5.1 Western International provides resources and support services aimed at facilitating safe travel for students. The office will support Activity Sponsors, departments and faculties to identify and take steps with respect to health and safety issues so that student travel is as safe as possible. However, it must be clear that the University cannot ensure that all travel will be problem free or account for all of the potential risks that might be experienced during international travel.
- 5.2 All student travelers retain primary responsibility for preparing themselves in advance of international travel, to research and be aware of the risks involved in their planned trip, to ensure they are physically and mentally prepared for the travel, to ensure they have appropriate medical and other insurance, to conduct themselves in a safe manner while travelling and to bring any concerns they may have to the attention of the Activity Sponsor or the International Learning office as soon as possible.
- 5.3 The University has no control over international events. In the event of unforeseen political or military changes or natural or other disasters that may have impact on safety considerations, the university will not be responsible for the refund of any costs or losses, including the loss of timely academic progress, associated with student travel or the cancellation of student travel. This will be the case regardless of whether:
 - 5.3.1 Authorization for travel is revoked pursuant to this policy; or
 - 5.3.2 The student does not travel due to concerns for personal safety
- 5.4 The university bears no responsibility for students who undertake travel without the university's authorization, whether or not it is in pursuit of an approved university activity.