

COVID-19

Guidance for Fieldwork, Periods of Study, External Research Visits and Travel Overseas: Staff and Students

1. Purpose

Depending upon the transmission rate of Covid 19 and levels of restrictions in place to control its spread, the government may permit overseas travel for essential reasons such as work or education or indeed travel for non-essential reasons. That in itself does not mean that the visit should automatically go ahead. Cognisance must be given to the potential risk to staff and students of acquiring or spreading the virus whilst abroad.

This guidance supports the implementation of the [Return to Campus Process](#) Activity 3 Travel Overseas with regard to fieldwork, periods of study, external research visits and travel overseas.

2. Scope

This document applies to all staff who have responsibility for organising and supervising overseas fieldtrips, periods of study and external visits, including: line managers responsible for the work activity; Heads of Department (HoD)/Heads of School (HoS) who are responsible for signing off the risk assessment; and HoD who have the responsibility for approving the trip.

3. Approval

Head of Department (HoD) approval must be sought prior to any overseas fieldtrip or external research visit/travel taking place. It is advisable to provide timely justification and seek early approval **prior** to progressing any plans.

4. Justification

The reasons why a visit should take place must be detailed for the HoD/ to understand the nature of the visit and why it must take place, particularly where the government is only permitting travel for essential reasons.

A completed general health and safety risk assessment must also be undertaken and provided to support the justification for the trip (see Section 5).

The following points must be considered as part of the planning and risk assessment process.

4.1 Is travel permitted?

Check UK, Scottish and other devolved government webpages and the travel section of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) (see links below) for the latest guidance on whether travel is permitted. This will depend upon level of restrictions applying in the area where the staff/student departs from, where the fieldwork or visit is to be undertaken, any stop-off locations or travel connections points such as airports and train stations. Where increased restrictions are in place the governments may still allow travel for work or education purposes if it cannot be done from home (and where the work or study is essential).

Government guidance frequently changes and should be regularly checked as part of the planning process and immediately before departure to ensure staff/students are following the latest guidance.

In addition, the relevant government webpages of the destination country must also be checked to ensure travellers from the UK will be permitted entry and if there are any conditions as part of their entry requirements (see 4.5 below).

The FCDO may advise against travel for reasons other than Covid e.g. civil unrest, natural disaster and this must be followed.

Although government advice may permit travel, if the destination of the fieldwork, period of study or visit is to a country which is on the UK red list (see link below), then the application and risk assessment should specifically address this heightened level of risk e.g. how any period of study, visit or research activity will be interacting with the local community and what measures are in place to minimise risk of transmission.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-international-travel-quarantine/pages/red-amber-and-green-list-countries/>

4.2 Is the trip necessary or essential?

In all cases the member of staff/student should detail the reasons why the trip should go ahead to enable the HoD/ to decide whether the trip is justified and aligns with the most current Scottish Government advice on staying safe, including international travel.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-safe-and-protecting-others/>

Where tighter restrictions are in place, travel may be limited to essential travel and the Scottish Government guidance available at the time should be consulted.

When considering if the trip is necessary, cognisance must be given to the prevalence of the virus in the country being visited and whether it may be better delaying the trip until virus levels have reduced.

4.3 Duration of trip.

Can this be minimised as far as possible? The longer the duration of the trip there is potential for the prevalence of the virus at the destination country to change. This may have a knock-on effect such as local lockdowns or restrictions which may curtail some of the planned work activities. It could also affect the requirements when returning to the UK with the need for managed quarantine if the country is considered to be on the 'red list'.

Extended stays should be avoided if possible because if the member of staff or student contracts Covid during the trip they will have to self-isolate at the location. They may not have access to the usual support structure that can be afforded to them at home. Therefore, the risk assessment must detail how self-isolation will be supported if they do contract the virus.

If the proposed trip involves a member of staff going abroad for more than a month, then further advice on tax implications and employment rights must be sought from Finance and HR before departure.

4.4 Method of travel and booking travel

The University uses a Travel Management Company (TMC), Key Travel, to make travel arrangements for staff and students who require travel on university business. In order that the University is able to support staff and students in need or an emergency, travel bookings should always be made through Key Travel.

4.5 Entry restriction and requirements

Each country being visited will have its own specific entry requirements. In terms of Covid this may include a negative PCR test result less than 72 hours before departure or arrival in the destination country, possibly proof of vaccination, possibly a requirement to quarantine in a managed hotel or self-isolate at destination accommodation for a specified period, possibly have evidence of the reason for travel and completed the destination country's online health form, pre-travel declaration form etc.

Entry restrictions and requirements must be confirmed in advance as part of the risk assessment process by checking the FCDO travel advice for the destination country.

If you're unclear about any aspect of the entry requirements, or you need further reassurance, you should [contact the embassy, high commission or consulate](#) of the country or territory you're travelling to.

You should also consider checking with your transport provider or travel company to make sure your passport and other travel documents meet their requirements.

You should not use the NHS testing service to get a PCR test in order to facilitate your travel to another country. You should arrange to take a private test from a [private coronavirus testing provider](#).

Some travel operators such as airlines may specify types of masks to be worn on board e.g. surgical masks and may encourage you to take spares for long journeys. You should check with your travel operator before travelling. You should also consider checking with your transport provider or travel company to make sure your passport and other travel documents meet their requirements.

As time progresses destination countries are likely to ask for evidence of people having completed a vaccination programme. Where a destination country requires evidence of a person having received a Covid vaccination, you can access your Covid Vaccine Status online by logging onto <https://www.nhsinform.scot/covid19status>

5. Risk Assessment and other pre-requisites

Any justification for overseas fieldwork, period of study or external visit must be supported with a detailed risk assessment addressing the various relevant hazards associated with the fieldwork itself, Covid, travel, accommodation, lone working, manual handling, weather conditions, emergency arrangements etc. Particular attention must be made to Covid testing in advance of travel outbound and inbound as well as quarantine arrangements upon return to the UK which may need to be booked at a designated hotel in advance.

Risk assessors must complete the risk assessment training to ensure they are familiar with the risk assessment requirements. If visits are to another institution then their health and safety arrangements for reducing the risk of Covid transmission must be obtained, read and understood before travel and followed once at the institution. The risks must be reduced as

far as is reasonably practicable. The risk assessment should be reviewed in the days before the trip to take account of any changes in government guidance.

HoD ensures risk assessments are conducted by the relevant manager/PI and include travel, hazards at the location being visited/from the activities undertaken,

Covid controls to reflect the requirements of the country being visited etc. HoD signs off risk assessment.

Staff or student to sign onto the risk assessment or the significant findings are communicated.

Researcher/PI/PhD student engages with external institution/venue to

- ensure their local health and safety arrangements,
- including Covid-19 requirements, are understood and adhered to.

Destination country risks, including Covid, must be considered and included in the risk assessment process. The following sources can be accessed to assist informing the risk assessment process:

- The University insurer's travel security platform, 'Risk Monitor,' provides additional information about local safety and security risk and other risks as well as helpful advice on staying safe. The 'Travel Prepare' e-learning platform provides several modules to help prepare and keep staff and student safe while travelling.
<https://www.strath.ac.uk/professionalservices/finance/accountingservices/only/travelcoverage/travelcoversummary/>
- Occupational Health Travel Health section
<https://www.strath.ac.uk/wellbeing/generalhealth/travelhealth/>
- Travel Health Pro website <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>

6. Returning to the UK

Pre-departure tests for flights from abroad

From 5 January 2023, if you travel (or return) by plane from mainland China to Scotland via England, you must take a pre-departure COVID-19 in China. [Read Travel to England from another country](#) during coronavirus (COVID-19) for information on what is required.

There are no Covid travel rules in place for people arriving in Scotland from abroad and you'll no longer need to:

- complete a Passenger Locator Form
- have proof of any vaccinations you've had
- take a COVID-19 test before travel to Scotland or book a day 2 PCR test when you arrive – currently you have to take these tests if you're not fully vaccinated

. Countries around the world may still have travel rules in place.. Before you travel, you should [check the travel rules](#) on GOV.UK for each country you're travelling to. Any changes to entry requirements and international travel can be found [here](#).

7. Supporting Information and Guidance

- Risk Assessment online training <https://bookings.strath.ac.uk/Home/Course/5375>
- e-Risk System <https://safetysystems.strath.ac.uk/ra.php>
- Travel and Work Off Campus
https://www.strath.ac.uk/media/ps/safetyservices/campusonly/localrules/Travel_and_Work_Off_University_Campus.pdf
- Student Placements
https://www.strath.ac.uk/media/ps/safetyservices/campusonly/localrules/Student_Placements.pdf