



University of Houston Student International Travel Policy

The University of Houston (UH) encourages its students, faculty and staff to participate in international activities and promotes the development of opportunities for international study, research, and engagement. To this end, the University is committed to promote safety and accessibility to enhance student success for all international programs.

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1 Definitions

- A. **Abroad** – for this policy, abroad includes travel to U.S. territories
- B. **Dismissal** – Administrative action to involuntarily remove a student from their learning abroad program or when an acceptance to their program is rescinded due to misconduct reasons.
- C. **Elevated Risk Country or Region** – A country or region is defined as follows:
 - a. Current DOS level 3 or 4
 - b. Current CDC level 3 or 4
 - c. Destination has a current Security Assessment rating of 4 or 5 based on intel from On Call International risk assessment
 - d. UH travel to that country/region has been designated as restricted by the Office of the Provost, Office of the President, or UHS
- D. **Faculty-Led Programs** – for credit programs that have a course taught abroad or associated with travel
 - a. **Traditional faculty-led program** – course for credit is taught 50% or more abroad
 - b. **Embedded faculty-led program** – required travel associated with a course taught at UH
 - i. Course associated must be taught during the same, preceding, or proceeding academic term
 1. Ex. Winter travel for a fall, winter, or spring course
 2. Ex. Maymester/Summer travel for a spring course
- E. **Global Experiential Opportunities (GEOs)** – previously referred to as *Non-credit faculty-led program* are Faculty/Staff guided group travel not associated with a course taught during the same, preceding, or proceeding academic term. Examples include:

- a. Winter travel for a course taught the previous academic year
 - b. Arts/music competition
 - c. Study-tours
 - d. Service learning led by a faculty or staff member (not student service learning)
 - e. Other examples include research, subject-area intensive travel, service learning with a UH group as a university-sponsored program outside of the Learning Abroad designated program portfolio
- F. **Learning abroad travel** – (as defined in [MAPP 04.02.04](#)) Travel by individual university students to destinations outside the United States on a university-sponsored or organized credit or non-credit-bearing trip. There are two types of travel – student travel affiliated with the UH Learning Abroad office, and non-affiliated student travel. Learning Abroad travel includes partner programs, reciprocal exchange programs, faculty-led programs, global experiential opportunities, and student service organization travel.
- G. **Non-Affiliated Student Travel** – Non-affiliated student travel includes any non-Learning Abroad affiliated travel for a UH supported academic or co-curricular purpose, including research, internships, conferences, credit, or non-credit programs, etc.
- H. **Program Leader** – Full-time UH faculty or staff member
- I. **Student Service Learning** – travel abroad by a UH registered student organization for service purposes. These programs must be submitted to Learning Abroad and must adhere to registration and participation requirements.
- J. **Travel Registry** – Online registry where all students, faculty, and staff must register their travel for all non-credit programs or student engagement abroad
- K. **UH International Travel** – any UH-related travel abroad
- L. **UH Student** - means a person who is:
- a. is currently enrolled at the University
 - b. is accepted for admission or readmission to the University
 - c. has been enrolled at the University in a prior semester or summer term and is eligible to continue enrollment in the semester or summer term that immediately follows
 - d. is attending an additional program sponsored by the University while that person is on campus
 - e. has engaged in prohibited conduct at a time when that person met the criteria of (a), (b), (c), or (d).
 - f. This definition does not include alumni of the University unless they additionally meet the criteria of (a), (b), (c), (d) or (e).

2 Student International Travel

Any student traveling internationally for a university-related purpose, regardless of credit or funding, must obtain authorization prior to departure. For more information about policies governing student international travel, see [SAM 05.C.03](#) and [MAPP 04.02.04](#). This policy covers university sponsored, organized or affiliated travel as outlined below:

- Trips organized and/or sponsored by UH for which academic credit is awarded, or any other travel administered by, conducted under the direction of, or with financial support from any University department, program, or office.
- Travel by members of a registered student organization for academic, service learning, or co-curricular experiential learning related purpose, regardless of whether or not the

organization requires its members to attend the activity or event. This does not include social, leisure, or tourism travel by a registered student organization.

- Academic-related travel includes for credit and not for credit programs, as well as course work, internships, service learning, research, fellowships, and volunteer opportunities.
- Travel to meetings of academic-related, professional associations including conferences, competitions, symposia, or performances.
- Athletic international travel is not included in this policy and should adhere to international travel policy set by University Athletics.

2.1 Program Cancellation

Under this policy, the University reserves the right to cancel any international activity or program and/or require UH students to depart their international location due to a health, safety, emergency, or other extenuating circumstances with a written directive from the University President, Provost, or Dean of Students. Additional student international travel information can be found on the UH Institute for Global Engagement website.

3 Student Travel Authorization & Eligibility

3.1 Authorization

Travel that takes place without adhering to the requirements of the Student International Travel Policy is not considered authorized university travel. Additional requirements for participation in international travel may be set by the departments and colleges facilitating or supporting the travel. This includes international travel for credit or non-credit purposes, including coursework or research conducted abroad. Failure to comply with this policy may result in a disciplinary referral to the Dean of Students in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

Travel authorization must be granted prior to international travel to an elevated risk destination. If travelling to an Elevated Risk Destination, students must follow the steps in the Elevated Risk section of this policy and receive written approval prior to travel as outlined in section 8. The University reserves the right to cancel the program and/or require students to leave their international program location due to health, safety and/or emergency concerns.

3.2 Learning Abroad Program Eligibility

Students participating in Learning Abroad programs are subject to academic eligibility requirements as listed on the Learning Abroad website. Students participating in Learning Abroad programs for academic credit cannot be enrolled in courses if they have a financial, academic, or other hold on their account. Students may not be accepted to Learning Abroad programs if they have financial holds on their accounts at the time of application, based on the term's application deadlines.

All students applying for participation in a Learning Abroad program must also be in good disciplinary standing. Students must be in good disciplinary standing with the University at the time of application to study abroad and remain so throughout the study abroad term. According to the [UH Student Code of Conduct](#), “‘Good Standing’ means that a student has complied with any assigned sanctions if applicable and is not in the process of serving on probation, suspension, or expulsion” (Section 2.7).

3.3 Non-Affiliated Student Travel Eligibility

Students participating in non-affiliated learning abroad student travel must gain authorization from the student's college or department prior to travel. The student's college or department should verify that the student is in good academic and disciplinary standing prior to giving support for the student to travel abroad. Additionally, students should register all travel with the Learning Abroad office in order to complete required forms and be registered for international insurance billing through their academic or co-curricular department.

3.4 Non-Discrimination in International Travel

All students are supported by the University of Houston's Anti-Discrimination policies and the office of Equal Opportunity Services. At UH, protected class identity cannot be considered in making decisions related to employment or academic progress, including in the participation of international travel. UH is committed to maintaining and strengthening an educational, working, and living environment where students, faculty, staff, and visitors are free from discrimination and harassment of any kind. Discrimination and harassment are antithetical to the standards and ideals of the University. The University will take appropriate action to eliminate discrimination and harassment from occurring, prevent its recurrence, and address its effects.

Students who believe they were discriminated against in their selection or participation in international travel are encouraged to utilize the options available in the UH System Anti-Discrimination Policy and Sexual Misconduct Policy as applicable, including the option to report to or file a formal complaint with [Equal Opportunity Services](#).

3.5 Student Accommodations

The Justin Dart, Jr. Student Accessibility Center (the Dart Center) works to ensure that reasonable accommodations are provided for students who have registered with the Dart Center and who are eligible for such accommodations. If accommodation is needed on an international travel program, it is the student's responsibility to consult with the Dart Center and communicate those accommodation needs to the program leader after acceptance into the program. However, we also encourage students to discuss their accommodation needs with their learning abroad advisor while looking at programs in order to best identify programs that have better accommodation options. Other countries and regions of the world may not have the same laws and accessibility accommodations as the U.S. and are not required to meet the standards of the U.S.

3.6 High Risk Activities

Participation in high-risk activities on international programs is voluntary, unless it is an indicted required component of the program. High risk activities may include, but are not limited to, hang gliding; riding in a hot air balloon; off-road motorcycling; scuba diving; jet, snow or water skiing; mountain climbing (where ropes or guides are used); sky diving; amateur automobile racing; automobile racing or automobile speed contests; bungee jumping; spelunking; white water rafting; surfing; or parasailing. Participants in these activities may be asked to sign an additional participation release form.

Individual or group participation in high-risk activities not required by the program may not be covered by university international travel insurance. High-risk activities facilitated by non-sanctioned or external companies from the travel program logistics provider is highly discouraged. If a student opts to participate in a high-risk activity that is not part of the program, they are choosing to do so at their own risk.

4 Travel Registration

All students participating in Student International Travel must register their travel following the appropriate application and registration process based on their type of travel, either traveling on Learning Abroad programs, or as other university sponsored travel.

4.1 For Learning Abroad programs:

Students must apply to and be accepted to a Learning Abroad program based on the application deadlines, requirements, and processes set by Learning Abroad. Visit the [Learning Abroad website](#) for more information.

4.2 For Non-Affiliated Student travel:

Students accepted to or part of other international travel programs or trips not part of the Learning Abroad program catalog, including but not limited to credit and not for credit academic-related travel with or without faculty leaders, for credit or university-related internship, service learning, research, volunteer opportunities, international fellowships, conferences, competitions, meetings, or registered student organization travel, are required to register their travel through the Learning Abroad Student International Travel Registry and to purchase international health and emergency insurance. Visit the [Learning Abroad website](#) for more information.

5 International Insurance

As per [SAM 05.C.03](#), all students traveling internationally on a Learning Abroad program or on non-affiliated student travel are required to have international medical and emergency insurance. Students will automatically be covered by the University of Houston international insurance plan as long as they are traveling for a university-related purpose. Learning Abroad will coordinate billing of all students on Learning Abroad portfolio programs, and students traveling on non-affiliated programs may be charged directly through their college or department related to their travel. Insurance coverage details are shared by UH Risk Management and can be found on the [Learning Abroad website](#).

6 Student Conduct Abroad

6.1 Student Conduct

Any student traveling internationally for a university-related purpose must adhere to the [University of Houston Student Code of Conduct](#), in addition to any additional codes of conduct from the sponsoring unit, Institute for Global Engagement, sponsoring travel program or provider, or host. All UH students, faculty, and staff traveling internationally are subject to local laws of the country they are visiting and to the conduct and disciplinary guidelines set forth in UH policies, including the [UH Student Code of Conduct](#), the [UHS Anti-Discrimination Policy](#), the [UHS Sexual Misconduct Policy](#), [University of Houston Clery Act Compliance](#) information, and [UH Accommodations and ADA Policies](#).

6.1.1 Learning Abroad Student Conduct Checks

All students applying for participation in a learning abroad program must also be in good disciplinary standing with the University at the time of application to a learning abroad program and remain so throughout the study abroad term. For Learning Abroad sponsored programs, student conduct checks will be performed once an application has been opened to determine if the student is eligible to study abroad. Learning Abroad will work with the Dean of Students Office to complete a conduct check that includes disciplinary action imposed by the Dean of Students Office, Student Housing and Residential Life, and Equal Opportunity Services. If a student has a record of a sanction of disciplinary suspension, it may be decided that they are not eligible to participate on a learning abroad program.

6.1.2 Learning Abroad Conduct Check Appeal Process

Students participating in a Learning Abroad program who wish to appeal their eligibility may submit a separate Appeal Form that explains the student's motivations, readiness to study abroad, and their reasons for reconsideration despite their history of disciplinary action or their status as not in good standing. Completion of an Appeal Form does not guarantee that the student will be deemed eligible to study abroad. The Appeal Form is available from Learning Abroad and will be reviewed by the Dean of Students Office and Learning Abroad. The Appeal decision will be made by the Dean of Students.

6.1.3 Non-Affiliated Student Conduct Checks

For non-affiliated learning abroad student travel, the student's college or department should verify that the student is in good academic and disciplinary standing prior to giving support for the student to travel abroad.

6.2 Transportation

Students on Learning Abroad or non-affiliated student travel programs are strongly discouraged from driving vehicles or motor driven equipment, including but not limited to motorbikes, motorcycles, automobiles, or boats; faculty and staff are strongly discouraged from driving vehicles in which students are passengers while abroad. If such driving is unavoidable, students, faculty, and staff must follow the guidelines referenced in [SAM 05.C.03](#), which requires an updated Motor Vehicle Record evaluation in order to receive authorization to drive and are strongly encouraged to consult with the program's travel logistics company and/or other resources regarding local customs and safety precautions for drivers. Group participation in activities using segways, ATVs, etc, may also require a waiver from participants. Locally hired drivers and vehicles or public transportation are preferred for use to transport students in international locations, in accordance with national tourism and transportation laws in the country and transportation recommendations from the US Department of State country travel advisories.

6.3 Alcohol

Drinking alcohol abroad is not encouraged on UH international programs. Participants must adhere to the legal drinking age of the host country at the time, and based on those laws may be permitted to drink in a responsible manner. Students are held accountable to the student code of conduct, which includes public intoxication as a code violation.

6.4 Drugs

The use of controlled substances and/or illegal substances as defined in the United States while a student is abroad is prohibited, regardless of what is legal in the country. The use of any controlled substances must be prescribed to that student by a medical professional and taken based on the prescription.

6.5 Dismissal

Due to the short duration of learning abroad programs and the far-reaching implications of student behavior occurring outside the United States, this dismissal policy applies in cases involving student misconduct during Student International Travel.

If a student engages in conduct that creates a material disruption to the program and/or its participants or jeopardizes the health and safety of any participant, including oneself, the student may be dismissed from the program. The program leader will consider evidence regarding the student's behavior during the program, and will give the student the opportunity to respond to the allegations against them. If the program leader finds that the student violated the Student Code of Conduct, the program leader will determine whether dismissal is appropriate in consultation with the Institute for Global Engagement, the UH Dean of Students Office, and the Office of the Provost. UH Equal Opportunity Services and the Office of General Counsel may also be consulted.

Dismissal from a learning abroad program is when a student is involuntarily removed from their program or when an acceptance to their program is rescinded for misconduct reasons. Dismissal can occur before or after the program begins. Considerations for dismissal include, but are not limited to, danger to self or others, patterns of behavior, nature of the violation, and a student's response to the process. Common reasons for dismissal include, but are not limited to:

- Repeated failure to follow directions
- Repeated tardiness and poor attendance
- Threatening or abusive communications or actions
- Alcohol abuse or misuse
- Illegal activity, including use of illegal substances
- Violence, aggression, or sexual harassment
- Disruptive behavior

Under normal circumstances, the dismissal process will follow the progressive disciplinary steps outlined below.

1. Verbal Warning (Learning Abroad recommends documenting this verbal warning given via an email follow-up)
2. Final Written Warning
3. Dismissal Process Initiated

The University and onsite personnel are authorized to skip any step of this process and move directly to consideration of dismissal if the conduct in question involves serious misconduct, as explained above.

Students dismissed from their program will be responsible for the costs of their return transportation and will not be entitled to a refund of any fees, dues, tuition, or payments of any kind that have been paid in connection with their participation in the program. If dismissed from the program, the student must separate from the program activities and setting immediately. Neither the University of Houston nor the partner institution will have any further responsibility

for the student's accommodations, travel, or in-country support, however they will attempt to provide reasonable logistical support for the student as they determine new housing and travel accommodations. **The student will be responsible for finding and paying for new travel and logistical arrangements and will not be entitled to a refund of any fees or pre-paid costs associated with the initial program arrangements.** If dismissed, the student will also cease to be covered by university sponsored international insurance. A program dismissal will result in no credit for academic coursework completed after the date of dismissal.

6.5.1 Administrative Review of Conduct Abroad

Serious misconduct abroad requires expedited consideration and may result in dismissal before the procedures set out in the Student Code of Conduct can be followed. The following is the process that will be followed if the program learns that a student has engaged in conduct that may constitute a violation of program rules or the Student Code of Conduct:

1. The reported information will be provided to Learning Abroad, the Institute for Global Engagement, UH Office of the Dean of Students, and additional campus offices charged with addressing certain types conduct violations, including the UH Equal Opportunity Services, as appropriate.
2. If immediate administrative action is considered to dismiss a student from their program, the student will be provided with information regarding the alleged misconduct and provided an initial opportunity to respond, either in-person, via video conference, or via telephone.
3. Taking into consideration the reported information, student response, and any additional information relating to the alleged misconduct, Learning Abroad in consultation with the Institute for Global Engagement, UH Office of the Dean of Students, and other involved offices will determine whether immediate administrative action, including dismissal from the program, is appropriate. Students will be immediately dismissed from the program if the information regarding the misconduct supports a finding that it is more likely than not that misconduct occurred and one of the following is true:
 - a. The student has shown a persistent unwillingness to comply with program rules or to engage in appropriate behavior during the learning abroad program.
 - b. The student's continued involvement in the program would be unreasonably disruptive.
 - c. The student's continued involvement would pose a health or safety risk to other participants, including the student.
 - d. In matters involving sexual harassment, sexual assault, stalking or relationship violence, EOS has determined that other interim action or protective measures are not reasonably feasible and/or appropriate.

UH has the discretion to impose other immediate administrative actions (removal from a host family, restriction from certain activities, participation requirements unique to the student, change in living location, etc.) short of dismissal.

4. Students will be informed of the decision on the issue of immediate dismissal from the program via email and directly from the program leader. Students may request expedited reconsideration of the dismissal decision by submitting a written request to the program leader. Students are not entitled to a judicial hearing before returning to campus. However, upon return to campus, the student's case will be handled by the UH Dean of Students Office in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct and/or Equal Opportunity Services for discrimination or sexual misconduct allegations, as appropriate.

7 Global Risk and Safety Committee

7.1 Charge

The Global Risk and Safety Committee develops guidelines and policies related to the health and safety of University of Houston students traveling abroad. The committee also reviews group and individual travel, including elevated risk destination travel authorization requests, and provides recommendations to the Institute for Global Engagement and the Office of the Provost. The committee may also convene as needed to address global risk and safety concerns for program locations or student participation in programs as they arise. Decisions made are accepted with a majority vote of the committee.

7.2 Membership

The Global Risk and Safety Committee is comprised of key stakeholders at the university regarding global risk and safety concerns. Members are appointed by the Institute for Global Engagement. Membership should include, but is not limited to:

- Assistant Director, Learning Abroad
- Director of Global Engagement, Institute for Global Engagement
- Director, Risk Management
- Director, Office of Emergency Management
- Representative, University Police Department
- Representative, Office of General Counsel
- Representative, Dean of Students
- Representative, UH Equal Opportunity Services
- Representative, UH Student Health Center and Campus Pharmacy
- Representative, Counseling and Psychological Services
- Representative, UH System Clery Office
- Representative, UH Faculty Senate

7.3 Review and Approval process of Elevated Risk Destinations

The Global Risk and Safety Committee reviews all requests for travel to elevated risk destinations as outlined in section 8.

8 Elevated Risk Destinations

8.1 Elevated risk destination overview

The University of Houston encourages participation in international activities and promotes the development of opportunities for international study and research as part of its academic mission. While all travel abroad has some risks, some parts of the world pose heightened risks to the health and safety of travelers. To safeguard the well-being of students, faculty, and staff going

abroad, the Elevated Risk Destinations Policy provides a framework for review and approval of elevated risk destinations. Students, faculty and staff are not permitted to travel to elevated risk locations unless an exception is granted by the Global Risk and Safety Committee and the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost. This policy does not apply to personal or other travel that is unaffiliated with the University of Houston.

No UH student shall be required to participate in university sponsored, organized or affiliated travel to an elevated risk destination. The student must consider the risks, and, weighing those risks against the value of the educational opportunity to the student, make their own determination about whether to continue pursuing the planned international travel research, study, or other engagement opportunity. The student should also take into consideration the possibility that the countries not designated as elevated risk may be updated to be part of the list without warning. The student should also consider the possibility that, if he or she encounters difficulties abroad, UH and even the U.S. Department of State may be unable to assist.

8.2 Elevated risk destination determinations

Elevated risk destinations are determined based on four criteria for the country or region of a country. Destinations are cataloged and updated monthly by the Assistant Director of Learning Abroad. The determining criteria are:

- U.S. Department of State Travel Warning Level 3 or 4
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Travel Warning Level 3 or 4
- On Call International Risk Assessment Levels 4 and 5
- UH travel to a country/region that has been designated as restricted by the Office of the Provost and/or Office of the Chancellor & President

8.3 Review and Approval process of Elevated Risk Destinations

The Global Risk and Safety Committee reviews all travel authorization requests for travel to elevated risk destinations. Travel to these destinations may be approved when there is compelling justification, thorough risk management plans, and no suitable alternative destinations. All requests to travel to elevated risk destinations must be strongly linked to the academic goals and must adequately address major health, safety, or security concerns of the destination. In addition, all safety provisions (security, travel within location, etc.) relating to the protection of traveling to the elevated risk destination must be addressed and provided in advance. The Global Risk and Safety Committee has the authority to impose additional requirements before approving a request to travel abroad (e.g., health or disciplinary clearances, restricted travel to specified areas of concern).

8.4 Travel Authorization Request to an Elevated Risk Destination

If a student wishes to request authorization for travel to an elevated risk destination, they must complete the appropriate travel authorization request or travel acknowledgement forms and receive approval before departure.

8.4.1 Request for approval for Learning Abroad programs

Faculty-led and GEO programs: The coordinating department must complete the *Learning Abroad Elevated Risk Travel Request Form* and submit the form to the Assistant Director of Learning Abroad. The form will be reviewed by the Global Risk and Safety committee and

decided upon by the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost. Submission of a travel authorization form does not guarantee approval.

- For faculty-led programs for which the coordinating department has received Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost approval, each participating student must complete the *Learning Abroad Elevated Risk Travel Acknowledgement Form* found and submitted on the student's online program application.

Affiliated, exchange, and other individual travel programs approved by Learning Abroad: Students must complete the *Learning Abroad Elevated Risk Travel Student Request Form* and submit the form to the Assistant Director of Learning Abroad. The form will be reviewed by the Global Risk and Safety committee and decided upon by the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost. Submission of a travel authorization form does not guarantee approval.

8.4.2 Request for approval for other student international travel

International Group Travel: The coordinating department or student group must complete the *Learning Abroad Elevated Risk Travel Request Form* and submit the form to the Assistant Director of Learning Abroad. The form will be reviewed by the Global Risk and Safety committee and decided upon by the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost. Submission of a travel authorization form does not guarantee approval.

- For University sponsored and/or organization group travel for which the coordinating department receives Senior Vice President for Academic Programs and Provost approval each participating student must complete the *Learning Abroad Elevated Risk Travel Acknowledgement Form*.

International individual travel: Students must complete the *Learning Abroad Elevated Risk Travel Student Request Form* and submit the form to the Assistant Director of Learning Abroad. The form will be reviewed by the Global Risk and Safety committee and decided upon by the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost. Submission of a travel authorization form does not guarantee approval.

8.5 Changes to elevated risk destinations

If a student is already in the region/country for which the elevated risk destination has been issued, Learning Abroad and the Global Risk and Safety Committee in consultation with the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, will make a determination as to whether the student shall be required to return to the U.S. Learning Abroad will notify those students who are already in the district/country where the heightened travel advisory has been issued, informing them of UH's actions regarding their program and safety. If the student is not required to return, the student will be required to sign a release, acknowledging the existence of the travel advisory and his/her decision to continue with the planned activity despite that warning, and releasing UH from liability upon continuing to participate in the program. If a student is under the age of 18, a parent or guardian must also sign the release.

8.6 Elevated Risk Destination Insurance Requirements

Students traveling to elevated risk destinations are required to maintain international health and emergency insurance coverage for the entire duration of their travel. No insurance coverage exemptions are granted for travel to elevated risk destinations.

9 Non-Compliance

It is the responsibility of students to comply with the International Student Travel Policy. It is also the responsibility of the faculty, staff, and sponsoring unit to comply with and enforce the International Student Travel Policy. Violations of this policy may result in termination or suspension of the student from program travel, in whole or in part, with a recommendation from the Institute for Global Engagement and/or the Global Risk and Safety Committee to the Provost. In addition, failure to comply may result in denial of academic credit. UH will not reimburse travel or program expenses incurred in conjunction with international travel that does not comply with this policy. Any violation of this policy by a UH student may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the program at the student's expense. Additionally, if violation of the policy also results in a violation of the law, the violation may be referred for criminal or civil prosecution. Students who choose to participate in a non-University sponsored program or travel to an elevated risk destination do so voluntarily and at their own risk.