

Guidance notes for students: Risk Awareness Form

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Introduction

These guidance notes support students completing the Risk Awareness Form (RAF) which is a mandatory requirement for taking part in a Study Abroad Programme. More information on the deadlines for submission and the approval process can be found from the Study Abroad Office/your Study Abroad Coordinator.

The planning and risk awareness process

These guidance notes have been designed to provide some ideas of the topics you may need to take into account as you plan your time abroad. Researching information about living and studying in your destination location is essential to support you to prepare for travel and to ensure you have a plan to deal with challenges if they arise.

By carrying out background research on living and studying at your destination you are building up an awareness of the risks/challenges associated with your time abroad and importantly, preparing yourself for addressing different challenges should they arise. The key points from the information you find is used to complete your Risk Awareness Form

This process will take some time to complete and should not be rushed. Consider this as a structured way of preparing for your time abroad and gathering important knowledge ahead of your travel.

Risk Awareness Form (RAF)

The Risk Awareness form prompts you to research and summarise information for many of the important areas which aid planning/preparation for travel. Not all of the areas may be relevant to you depending on your destination and the nature of the subject you will be studying.

The risk awareness form aims to help you:

- Record the key information from your background research.
- Consider all aspects of your trip prior to departure, so you can make the most of your time abroad and stay safe.
- Identify any possible challenges relating to your academic/ work setting and/ or your day-to-day life.
- Consider ways of minimising these problems by using the information and resources available before you leave.

The Risk Awareness Form is designed to prompt your research into different areas and to help you make your preparations to travel. It needs to be completed based on information found through background research and planning. It isn't designed to be completed from top to bottom without additional background work.

All completed forms should be submitted to the Study Abroad Office (outgoingstudyabroad@leeds.ac.uk), copying in your Study Abroad Coordinator.

Research and planning your travel

Possible sources of background information you could use include (not an exhaustive list):

- Study Abroad Office information on Minerva and Webpages.
- Information provided by Study Abroad Office such as feedback from previous students or from incoming students from your host institution.
- Host information for incoming students
- UK Government information on travelling overseas - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-british-nationals-abroad-a-guide> (non-UK nationals will be able to source home country information from own government)
- UK Government information on overseas travel - <https://www.gov.uk/travel-abroad> (step by step guide)

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- Information detailing own government support for nationals abroad – UK government information is here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-deal-with-a-crisis-overseas>
- UK Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO) information for the destination
- Official information provided by destination country for incoming visitors (use translation apps if not available in a language you can understand) including civic information for specific location (e.g. city)
- Lonely Planet, Trip Advisor, Wikipedia and other similar websites
- News stories and media websites
- Student reviews and student to student peer support information
- Information targeted at gap year students is often still relevant to students taking Study Abroad
- Non-destination specific student travel safety information
- Recent travel blogs and websites
- Use a search engine with any relevant phrase e.g. “Power Supply in Thailand”

Remember: Exercise caution with the reliability of information on non-official websites!

When you find particularly relevant sources of information save the URL as a bookmark and paste it into your RAF so that you can monitor websites as you prepare to leave and once you are established at your destination.

Guidance for Risk Awareness Form

This section provides guidance for researching information relating to your travel and your time abroad under each heading included in the Risk Awareness Form.

Travel and Entry Requirements

What are the current entry requirements including COVID testing and quarantine?

Do you have to provide evidence of entry for essential purposes?

Do you have necessary means (incl. financial) to quarantine/isolate on entry if needed?

Provide details (links) of the sources of information you can monitor concerning entry requirements in case of changes

Have you obtained (or plan to) the necessary visa. Is there a requirement for a period prior to expiry remaining on passport.

Are there vaccination requirements for the country and is any proof of vaccination required (non-COVID related as well as COVID

Entry requirements

- Every country has its own entry requirements or restrictions on entry for overseas visitors. It is essential that you have everything you require to be allowed into the country and to reside there legally for your period of study when arrive at immigration.
- Carry out background research using resources such as embassies, government information and advice obtained from your host University to identify what is required.
- Many countries will require you to obtain a visa in advance. This process may involve sending your passport to an embassy so research the requirements and get your application process underway as soon as possible.
- You may need to be able to confirm that you are entering for permitted reasons or have a letter of authorisation in addition to any visa requirements.

Quarantine/ isolation

- During the COVID-19 pandemic most countries now have requirements for overseas visitors to either quarantine on entry or show evidence of a negative COVID test. Some countries have both requirements. You may be required to enter a period of quarantine in an official facility which could result in additional charges. Research and understand the testing and quarantine arrangements you need to follow on arrival and ensure you have arrangements in place to follow what is required of you (e.g. transport directly from airport to accommodation to go into isolation). If you require a negative COVID test for entry then you will need to obtain this privately, not use the NHS testing system for symptomatic individuals. The University Lateral Flow Test system is unlikely to be adequate for these purposes.
- If a period of isolation is required on entry, ensure you have budgeted for any additional costs and have made arrangements to obtain essential supplies. Your host University may be able to support you while in quarantine but this is not guaranteed.
- It is very likely that these requirements will change in the time you are planning your travel. Changes may affect your entry requirements or even whether you can travel at all
- Ensure you record the links to find information about the entry conditions, quarantine requirement or other variables and keep checking them as your departure date gets closer.

Visa/ passport

- Your passport will need to be valid for the whole of your time abroad, including any personal extensions to your trip. Many countries also require a minimum period of validity beyond your stay e.g. 6 months.
- Spend time researching the requirements for immigration. Remember you may be tired after a long flight on arrival and may not be in the best state of mind to navigate problems on arrival at an unfamiliar airport.
- For more information about visa requirements, Go to Study Abroad Organisation in Minerva – Get Ready to Go – Visas and Immigration

Vaccination requirements

- If you are planning to travel outside the UK, you may need to be vaccinated against some of the serious diseases found in other parts of the world. For more information on requirements, use this link <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/travel-vaccinations/>

Travel Planning

Provide details of transport to be used to travel to the country from your home country. Consider potential domestic travel restrictions in home country.

What precautions will be required to protect yourself and others during travel – international and domestically? What precautions may be needed during any airport or station etc. layover?

How will you travel away from the destination airport after arrival?

Has your research highlighted anything to be particularly aware of at first arrival (deceptions, fake taxis, visa scams etc.).

- Your travel between your home country and your destination before/after your placement make up a small but significant portion of your study abroad year.
- Travelling to your destination University may be very simple, especially if there are direct flight to the location from your home country. However, more complicated travel arrangements will need careful planning to make sure you have a smooth journey to reach your destination.
- Carefully plan your travel within your home country (e.g. to reach an airport) as well and onward travel from your point of arrival in your destination country (e.g. from an airport).
- Ensure you allow enough time between connections to avoid the potential for missing a departure. Schedule in extra time to meet a connection if you need to pass through immigration before onward travel.
- Research the COVID-safe requirements for using public transport both in your home country and if applicable at your destination; also include the requirements during any layovers.
- Note that if you have to change flights in a third country, the restrictions or requirements may be completely different to your home/destination country.
- Research the precautions required during a flight here - [Coronavirus: safer air travel for passengers](#)
- Your onward travel - once you have arrived in your destination country and been through the necessary immigration processes - is a very important consideration which must not be left to chance. Major transport hubs where travellers from overseas are arriving after long journeys are a prime target for fraudsters, thieves and scammers. Examples include theft of belongings, fake taxis, over charging, deception in currency exchange points or people offering services (e.g. transport) which do not exist. Research and plan your travel away from your point of arrival in the destination country (e.g. airport) very carefully and have a firm booking in place. Check for reports or warnings about deception and scams and be very conscientious of your surroundings.
- Long distance travel is a key consideration in budgeting for your time abroad. Research different options for travelling to your destination to select the mode of travel which suits you. However, we recommend that you do not take “roundabout routes” with additional layovers as this may increase the risks to your personal safety just to save a few pounds. Long periods in transport hubs or having to cross unfamiliar cities to reach a departure point for onward travel are rarely enjoyable experiences, especially if there is a time pressure!
- Provide as many details as possible about your travel arrangement on your Risk Awareness Form.

Nature of Study Abroad Programme

How will you be studying? Lectures/seminars, online or face to face or blended. Laboratory or fieldwork, any time on placement or work-based environment. What precautions or procedures will you need to follow to protect yourself and others during teaching/learning?

What is the environment you are going to be studying or working in? Is it a University? Find out how lectures are delivered; will you be required to join remote/electronically delivered sessions or will you have to attend in person? Research the measures the destination University has in place to maintain social distancing and also what precautions you will need to take personally. Will these precautions be different to your last 12 months at University of Leeds? You

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may find other countries have different social distancing measures and a different approach to reducing the potential for cross infection. Different cultures may also have adopted different social norms in their attitude to social distancing etc. to your home country.

Will you be learning through lectures/seminars only or are there other activities such as laboratory work, fieldtrips or activities in workshops? Research what may be expected of you during these sessions and ensure you are prepared.

If you will be spending time in a workplace, what are the work activities of the company? Are they office-based, field-based, laboratory-based, or based in healthcare setting etc.? Research in advance what the hazards are associated with the work and what you might need to do to remain safe.

If your time abroad is all work-based then you should consult with your study abroad coordinator to ensure you do not need to work with an employability coordinator instead.

Host organisation

Has your host University agreed that you will attend in-person? If not, explain why you are travelling.

What information have you found out from your host on the health and safety/covid safe precautions while on their site/campus (e.g. asymptomatic testing, face coverings, distancing, hygiene requirements?) – please outline these measures.

What induction and safety-related training will you undertake?

Whilst the COVID pandemic is ongoing your host may still ask you not to travel from your home country but to study through remote resources. If your host does not require you to travel, then you should not leave your home country. However, if you still believe that it is necessary to travel please consult with the Study Abroad Office so that you can agree on the reasons for travelling. You will still be considered as being on University business and so the University retains a level of responsibility for you.

Use the information provided by your host to prepare yourself for the precautions and restrictions you will encounter while around the campus. You may find different approaches to social distancing and personal precautions compared to University of Leeds or your home country. Further, there may be specific behaviours expected of you while on host University premises. Find out if you will be expected to undertake asymptomatic testing on a regular basis or whether the University will be operating any contact tracing system which you will be expected to use. Find out about these so you are not surprised on your arrival.

It is likely that your host will coordinate a welcome programme (even if it is electronic). Find out about how introductory programmes and in particular safety briefings etc. will be delivered to ensure you are provided with essential information.

Current civil restrictions

With the COVID pandemic continuing what are the current restrictions in place and what are the implications of these on your time abroad? What precautions will you need to take when in public places or shops? Are there restrictions on which businesses can open? Are you confident you can obtain essential supplies etc?

Every country has its own precautions and restrictions based on the current status and recent trends in COVID infections. Research the situation as you plan your time abroad and note down the links you use to ensure you can keep checking on the latest position.

Research the current civil restrictions that are in place to build up a picture of how they will impact on your day to day movements. You may have to follow curfews, observe social distancing practices or need to account for restricted business opening/operating hours.

Plan how you will be able to obtain basic supplies such as food, drinks, health products etc. to ensure you can look after yourself.

Over the time you are abroad it is highly likely that the situation will change. Therefore, keep checking back to the resources you find and also identify local media outlets which can provide local news in a language you can understand. Sign up to the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) alerts to your phone for your destination country and any that you will pass through on your outward or return journey. Remember to sign up on your local number if you purchase a new SIM once you arrive.

Cultural

Identify any cultural differences that may affect you and consider consequences of actions within the country e.g. religious differences, differences in laws, differences in food and drink, appropriate clothing, appropriate behaviour, attitudes to gender and sexuality, politically sensitive issues

Different countries have different views, attitudes and sensitivities on topics which may be different to your home country. This may include some consideration as to how you should dress and behave in certain countries where it can be an offence to be seen in public dressed inappropriately. You should also consider different attitudes to alcohol consumption and diet. There are commonly differences in attitudes to gender and sexuality, or other potentially politically sensitive issues. The consequences of some actions that may be normal/acceptable in your home country but not in your destination, can be very severe.

Carry out background research and note your findings and anything you may need to approach differently on your Risk Awareness Form.

Your research may identify aspects that are more relaxed than your home country or you may face additional restrictions than you are used to. Particular examples include consumption of alcohol (age, public places etc.), close contact with another person or the legal implications of taking substances (including those that may be legal or tolerated in your home country). Make sure you do not allow naivety to catch you out resulting in consequences. There may be very serious penalties for breaking local laws – even those which could seem trivial to you and may be accepted and/or legal in your home country. You could be liable for prosecution in your home country for breaching laws abroad.

If you follow a particular diet make sure you will be able to obtain suitable food in your destination country.

New Surroundings

What do you need to be particularly aware of while out/about in your destination country? Examples include traffic on different side of the road, different behaviour of drivers towards pedestrians, etiquette, different attitudes to public safety etc.

Living and studying overseas is a fantastic opportunity but different countries can initially feel strange when you are out and about. There may be contrasts in attitudes and behaviours which you need to quickly adapt to. The attitude to public safety and overall health and safety culture is an area that can take visitors by surprise. Background research will help your preparation for differences like these. For example, does traffic stop and allow pedestrians to cross on a zebra crossing or are pedestrians still expected to wait for a gap in the traffic? You may notice differences in how pedestrians and cyclists mix; some countries give a higher priority to cyclists and pedestrians are not allowed to walk in cycle lanes. Vehicle drivers may not be under the same obligations to avoid pedestrians and many countries allow the use of electrical scooters and powered skateboards which are illegal on public roads and pavements in the UK.

Whilst it may sound very simple, as a pedestrian or cyclist outside of your home country it is very important to account for traffic driving on a different side of the road if it is applicable. Simply looking one direction before stepping into the road as you may do in your home country may cause you to miss an oncoming vehicle.

Travellers' diarrhoea is one of the most common reasons for seeking medical assistance (just behind road accidents in statistics). Especially when you first arrive, (your digestive system will acclimatise over time) ensure you are very careful

about where you eat and be sure of the source of drinking water and ice. Research whether water from taps is drinkable and follow normal travel advice around food (ensure it is piping hot on clean crockery etc).

Do not take risks in new surroundings that you would not take at home. If a situation appears to be dangerous then it probably is.

Accommodation

*Will you be living in a shared space or alone or accommodation that is University owned/affiliated or run by a private landlord
Consider its location with respect to where you are studying and the neighbourhood it is in.
How do you feel about returning to your planned accommodation after dark?*

When deciding where to arrange accommodation, research the location/area and review the routes you will need to use to get to and from the University. Carefully consider whether you will be comfortable with moving between your accommodation and the University, especially late at night. Google Streetview has become an excellent resource for viewing the route you will need to take between two points.

Review your accommodation options carefully to choose the setting you prefer. You are likely to have more scope in getting problems solved in University-owned accommodation but may find private accommodation which suits your needs. Do not be panicked into signing up for accommodation.

The Study Abroad Office provides additional information on accommodation on this link:

<https://students.leeds.ac.uk/studyabroadaccommodation>

If your financial situation is steering you towards more basic/cheaper accommodation then consult the information about possible options for support with costs on the Study Abroad Organisation on Minerva –Look under Get Ready to Go – Funding and Finance.

Transport and Local Movement

*How will you move around on a day-to-day basis e.g. public transport? What precautions are required for your safety?
If intending to drive a vehicle can you fulfil the licence requirements for the country? How is driving locally different to your home country?
Have you got necessary insurance?
What additional precautions may be needed outside daylight hours or other specific times (e.g. public/religious holidays)*

As you make progress with planning where you will live and where you will spend most of your time you will be able to work out how much local travel you will need to undertake. Research the different options for transport. Different locations may facilitate alternative means of transport to your normal methods in your home country. For example, you may find that cycling is highly prioritised with excellent infrastructure and good options for hiring a bike.

Taking public transport in certain parts of the world can be one of the highest risk activities you undertake. However, many cities have well developed local transport networks where the level of risk is no greater than your home location.

During COVID there will be restrictions and additional precautions required on enclosed public transport such as buses, trains and trams. Research what these are in advance to ensure you are prepared.

If you will have a vehicle available and plan to drive carry out careful research into the differences from driving in your home country (e.g. priorities at junctions, roundabouts etc). Road accidents are the most common reason for travellers seeking medical attention when outside their home country.

Should you decide to move around the local area by bicycle ensure you have safety equipment such as a helmet available and research the local requirements and precautions for cycling in the area. For example, some countries allow cyclists to proceed when vehicles are not allowed and others have cyclist-specific road signals and signage.

You driving licence issued in your home country may not be immediately valid without applying for a local licence or an international driving permit. Alternatively, your licence may be valid for a short period. Ensure you check that you will be driving legally.

You will need to arrange separate insurance for using a vehicle as this is not covered by the University travel policy. It is safe to assume you must never drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs. You should also be clear that penalties may be much more severe than in your home country. On the spot fines for driving offences are common outside of the UK.

Climate/ Time difference

Consider differences in temperature, humidity, altitude, seasons from your home region. Will you need to take precautions to avoid sunburn? Will any time differences affect you (e.g. communication with home). Will you need to account for jet lag on arrival? Is a period of acclimatisation required prior to needing to start learning/teaching work?

Look into the climate and likely weather conditions at your destination and decide how to prepare for the conditions if they are different to your home country. Consider differences in temperature and humidity, rain fall and how changeable weather conditions could be (e.g. sudden thunderstorms). Take clothing and other items with you or plan to obtain them locally on arrival.

Do not overlook the usual advice for being in countries where the climate is different to your home country. For example, UK students travelling to a hot climate must ensure they drink plenty of water, use sun cream regularly and wear a hat etc. Depending on the climate in your own country, check what the differences might be. You may find your destination country particularly cold compared to your home country.

As part of your preparations, also research the likely weather conditions during the colder part of the year. You may be preparing to travel while the conditions are particularly hot or cold but what will you encounter half way through your placement?

Consider how any time differences will affect you both on arrival (i.e. jet lag) and during your placement. You may find communication with family is a challenge when working across different time zones. As part of your preparation you could review possible times of the day when you are likely to have downtime and your family are going to be available for a call.

It is advised that you plan to have a period of rest and relaxation after your arrival. Do not plan a busy administration timetable immediately on arrival. Aim to spend your first day or so acclimatising to your new surroundings.

Personal Security

What have you learnt from your research about the potential for crime (theft, assault etc.), hostility or physical/ mental violence, scams and deception etc.

How do you intend to secure valuables? What payment methods are available to avoid carrying cash?

Are there events coming up which could trigger political instability? (Research advice/ previous incidents etc.).

During your preparation work, carefully review location-specific information on how to maximise your personal security. In common with University of Leeds, overseas University campuses are often located in large cities and unfortunately the student population can be targeted by those looking to steal money and valuables or those who wish to cause harm.

It is probable (destination dependent) that the level of risk around your host University will be no greater than in the immediate area around University of Leeds but bear in mind that you are familiar with Leeds and have learnt to reduce the risk to your personal security. Consider how you keep yourself safe in Leeds and aim to follow similar practices while abroad, in addition to any practical advice you find during your planning. Your host University should be able to help with information on personal security and you may be able to find hints and tips from other students who have studied at the University.

As a general rule, plan to only carry as much money as you need. If contactless payment is common then you may need very little cash on a day to day basis. Set up contactless payment on your phone and/or take advantage of University pre-payment systems to avoid needing to carry cash or cards. See the section on preparing for emergencies for more information on mitigating against the loss of payment cards etc. (e.g. suffering a mugging)

Some countries require you to carry ID at all times. Check the requirements for this to ensure you can answer a challenge from the authorities to prove who you are.

Some areas or countries may have increased risks of civic violence associated with them, often in the form of military, political or civil unrest. Although the University of Leeds would not expect its students to undertake any activity where they would knowingly be at risk, it is worth bearing in mind that situations can change. The Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO) or your home country Embassy/Consulate will be able to advise you on what to do if such a situation arises. Also be aware of the concerns fellow students have raised in previous years; the Study Abroad Office hold feedback from previous students.

As part of your background research find out if there are any events coming up which could trigger political instability such as elections.

As part of your preparation ensure you are aware of how to use your phone to best advantage. For example, do you know how you can make a silent emergency services call on your phone? If you have a smart watch you may also be able to set up emergency alarms or “man down” alarms. If you do set your phone/watch to contact another person if it detects an emergency, ensure that person is clear on what to do next.

Isolation

Do you know how you could be supported should you have to self-isolate during your stay (in addition to on arrival)? Has your host University got arrangements to support students who are isolating? Will you be able to obtain food etc.? Can you access any medication you require if you are isolating?

During the COVID-19 pandemic a large number of countries currently require a period of quarantine on arrival as well as evidence of a negative COVID test (typically through PCR; the Lateral Flow Tests you can take on campus or do at home are unlikely to fulfil these requirements). You may not be able to leave accommodation to obtain food etc. and so ensure you have a plan for being able to access food, drinking water and other essential supplies. It is likely that your host University will be providing support for incoming students so find out about what is available and engage with any arrangements being put into place.

You should also plan for having to isolate in addition to any requirements following your initial arrival in the country. Determine how you would be able to obtain support (food and other essential supplies etc.) if your flat/household have to isolate or you get COVID-19 yourself

Also consider how you would be able to obtain any medication you require when you are isolating.

Planning for Emergencies

How do you summon the emergency services or report crime etc? Where will you be able to obtain medical assistance should you need it? Do you need to provide any payment upfront for treatment?

What contingencies have you got in case of lost valuables or lost financial means?

How can lost travel documents be replaced?

Do you have the contact details of the UK (or your home country) embassy in the country you will be residing in? Do you know what services they can offer you if you need them (e.g. assistance with insurance or legal matters).

Have you got a contingency plan if you are not allowed to enter the country?

There is more information on how to approach an emergency and how to keep yourself safe should something happen at https://students.leeds.ac.uk/info/10335/during_your_study_abroad_year/838/emergency_situation

This section covers your preparation for isolated issues (e.g. you lose your wallet, suffer an injury or are mugged) as well as larger scale emergencies such as a nationwide lockdown, natural disasters or civil unrest. A significant proportion of this advice involves proactive prior preparation in case of an emergency.

For UK nationals there are two important guidance documents from the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) which provide more information on preparing to travel and what to do in an emergency.

[Support for British Nationals Abroad](#)

[Dealing with a crisis overseas](#)

Non-UK nationals should find similar information on their own government webpages but preparing and taking action in line with UK advice will place you in a robust position if something happens.

It is very important to note that there is no legal right to consular assistance while you are abroad. All assistance given by the UK government through the consular assistance programme is discretionary based on an assessment of vulnerability, the situation you are in and where you are located.

Research contact details for the local police, a doctor and note details of the recommended lawyers and translators recommended on the British Embassy website. Ensure you are clear on how to summon the emergency services or contact local police to report crime (e.g. stolen belongings) or how to call an emergency ambulance. There can sometimes be different contact numbers for each emergency service.

Plan how you will be able to obtain medical assistance should you need it. Where can you find a GP, emergency dentist or any other services you may require. You may be advised by your host to register with a local GP. If you need to see a medical specialist on a regular basis then will you be able to access this service in your destination country. For any medical service, find out in advance whether you need to provide any payment upfront for treatment. You are covered by the University's travel insurance but it is essential to let them know as soon as possible and ideally before any costs are incurred. This contact is made through the Aviva Business Assist service – see the contact card linked here: [Travel Insurance Assistance Details](#). Ensure you take these details with you while abroad.

Plan some contingencies in case of lost valuables or lost financial means. Make personal arrangements to keep back up cards/cash etc. in a safe place in case you lose the cards that you are carrying (e.g. you are mugged). Never carry all of your means to pay at the same time. Keep a separate note of your debit and credit card numbers and the phone numbers to use in case they are lost or stolen. This information will become very important if you need to cancel your cards or order another.

Do not underestimate how important your passport is to you. Your embassy may be able to issue you with emergency travel documents (at cost) if you lose it but you will face delays and additional security procedures to re-enter your home country without your passport. Your visa may not be valid while using an emergency travel document.

Take pictures of your important documents; take copies with you and leave copies with your family. If you take photographs on your phone ensure it is synchronising with a cloud-based service such as iCloud or Google Photos in case you lose the device.

Your research may highlight important contact numbers in addition to those covered here but make sure you are prepared for making contact and being contacted in case of an emergency. Find and store the contact details of the UK (or your home country) embassy in the country you will be residing in in case you need their support (e.g. you are in hospital, lost travel documents, in trouble with authorities).

Ensure the emergency contact details in the back of your passport are completed. This may help authorities to contact your family should you be unable to inform them you are injured/in trouble.

Ensure the emergency contact details in your phone are up to date. A third party can access these from your lock screen on many types of smartphone. Also consider having an emergency contacts list inside your phone case

If you are admitted to hospital then contact your nearest embassy office as well as the Aviva business assist line ([Travel Insurance Assistance Details](#)). If you are unable to do so then ask someone to do it for you. Leave advice with your family to contact your local embassy in your destination country should they hear that you are in hospital etc. Also alert your family that an overseas embassy may contact them should something happen to you while overseas.

A list of country-specific contacts for lawyers, translators, doctors etc. specific to UK students is available on the gov.uk website. Take contact details with you in case you need them.

Should you find yourself in trouble with the authorities (e.g. arrested, detained, imprisoned etc.) then ensure you ask that your embassy is contacted immediately. They are not able to get you out of detention or act in a legal capacity but they can support you in obtaining assistance.

If you become caught up in a major emergency or large-scale civil disruption follow local advice initially (e.g. return to your accommodation) and monitor the local news and advice issued by your host University. As the situation and the impact on overseas visitors becomes clear your home country embassy/consulate and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and development Office (FCDO) will provide information. Ensure you keep the Study Abroad Office up to date with your situation.

Finally, do not assume you will definitely be allowed to enter a country because you have the paperwork and permissions that have been requested. During the COVID pandemic you are vulnerable to local nuances and so there is a risk of entry being denied unexpectedly. Ensure you look into what options you have available to you (e.g. financial, regularity of return flights, contacts for your host University who may be able to assist etc.)

Insurance

Appropriate and adequate travel, medical and repatriation insurance for destination is provided by University of Leeds.

Are there any limitations on liability from the host University?

Consider specific country requirements for additional insurance or areas not covered by University (e.g. driving vehicles).

Also, where relevant join your professional body.

All students undertaking a year abroad should have adequate insurance cover for both travel and medical expenses. You are covered automatically by the University of Leeds insurance policies which cover mainstream travel and health-related issues while you are on your placement. Some activities that you are planning to undertake may not be covered in standard policies so it is vital that you check the policy, along with the level of cover and the liability for all activities especially if your study (or personal time) will involve any higher risk activities.

You should also check if you will be required to purchase an insurance policy from the institution where you will be studying abroad.

Note that it is unlikely that personal belongings are covered by the University insurance once you have arrived at your destination. The University is not able to provide insurance for cycles, vehicles etc. If you use these for transport then have your own additional insurance.

During the COVID pandemic the insurance coverage for delay, curtailment or other disruptions has been removed. This means that should you have to return home early, have to terminate your study or other similar situations directly caused by the pandemic (e.g. nationwide lockdowns) then the travel insurance will not cover you. COVID-related medical costs are still covered should you become ill.

Where appropriate you should consider joining a professional body e.g. the GMC for medics as there is additional professional indemnity insurance available.

Individual – Health & Wellbeing

Consider any health condition(s) (physical, mental or psychological) or any other disabilities that may require medication or specific arrangements at the destination. (See Health and Disability disclosure form- linked from the Study Abroad Organisation under Get Ready to Go – Health and Learning Support). Where relevant, ensure you have enough medication and support for the time you are abroad. Is your medication legal in your destination country. Do you need a GP letter to prove legitimate medical use?

While you are preparing your Risk Awareness Form check the latest country-specific health advice from the National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC) TravelHealthPro website <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries> on travel-related risks and diseases, including vaccine recommendations. Consider what you need to do to follow the advice provided

You may then wish to contact your health adviser or pharmacy for advice on other preventive measures and managing any pre-existing medical conditions while you're abroad. Guidance is also available from the NHS website <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/> and NHS (Scotland)'s fit for travel website <https://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/destinations.aspx>

It is also very important to ensure you can obtain any medical assistance or other treatment you may need (e.g. regular physiotherapy) while outside of your home country. If you are aware of a particular condition or have something in your medical history which may require you to obtain support then make sure your needs can be met in your destination country. Consider what you could do or what is available to you if you suffer a deterioration in your health while away

It is important for you to check that any medication you require is either available in the country you are going to, or that you can take it with you. Speak to your GP who may be able to advise you. It is also worth considering that some common over-the-counter medication may have the same trade name but a different formulation in other countries. Medication which is commonly prescribed in your home country may be subject to additional restrictions or even be illegal in other countries. Your GP may be able to advise on whether your regular medication can be legally taken overseas. Your home embassy in your destination country may be able to assist if you are not certain. The penalties for holding drugs (even when intended for personal medical use) can be very harsh in some countries so ensure you do not get caught out.

If you usually have specific assistance provided at University of Leeds (e.g. support for dyslexia etc) then complete the Study Abroad Health and Disability Support Form which is found in the Study Abroad Organisation on Minerva (see Get Ready to Go – Health and Learning Support).

If possible, visit your dentist and optician before travelling to identify any underlying issues so these can be treated/addressed prior to travel.

Prior to travel prepare a small medical kit containing various over the counter medicines for minor ailments. This could include pain killers, sting/bite cream, antihistamines, travel sickness tablets, rehydration salts, treatments for travellers diarrhoea etc. Note this is different to a first aid kit; everything should be for personal use and should not be offered to others.

During your planning check whether your phone works in your destination country. You might find that it would be better to take a phone without a SIM and get a local SIM on arrival. You may need to ensure your device is not locked to a UK network to make use of an overseas mobile/data provider. Check the networking provision in your accommodation to determine if video calls etc. will be possible to stay in touch with family, friends and your University support network.

During your planning check the vaccination requirements for your destination. Whilst you may not necessarily be able to obtain a COVID vaccine before travelling do not lose sight of the traditional travel vaccine requirements and make sure you have any evidence of vaccination that you require.

Returning after Study Placement

Have you considered the implications of there being a sustained period of travel restriction preventing you returning to your home country after your study abroad placement? How would you approach this?

Do you have accommodation beyond the end of your placement should you be unable to return when originally planned?

University Travel Insurance may not cover COVID-related delays or curtailment of travel – do you have financial means to return?

Even though it may seem a long way away, it is important to plan for your return as well as for your departure to start your placement.

The COVID pandemic has introduced more uncertainty into the situation once you need to return but you can plan some contingencies in case you are not able to return as planned.

Consider what you would do if you could not return to the UK or your home country as applicable at the end of your placement. Would you be able to support yourself financially, will you have somewhere to live? Would your visa allow you to look for some work?

If you plan to bring anything back to your home country check it is legal. For the UK you can find out more from HM revenue and Customs for restricted or banned items and from DEFRA concerning meat or other animal or plant products. Bringing any wildlife-derived product home is generally risky.

Finance

Do you feel you have the financial means to sustain your placement should you be unable to return? If you were intending to work alongside your studies to sustain yourself have you considered the risk of being unable to find work? Do you have sufficient funds to support your period abroad including flights, accommodation, subsistence etc. Consider the financial implication of leaving your placement – having to repay Erasmus grants, losing deposit from your accommodation etc.

Do you have sufficient funds to support your period abroad including flights, accommodation, subsistence etc. Whilst this section does not need you to provide personal details around finances it is very important that you are clear about the costs of your study overseas and do not get into difficulties because of financial limitations (i.e. unable to support yourself).

The Study Abroad Office provide more information on costs and potential sources of support on the Study Abroad Organisation (see Get Ready to Go – Funding and Finance)

Ensure you plan for the continuity of any financial means you have with you. Take details of how to replace any cards etc. with you and review whether you will be able to deal with any banking matters locally. Consider whether you can provide permission for family members to act on your behalf while you are overseas. These arrangements must be made directed with your bank etc. as they are very specific to each provider.

Whilst we all hope this will not become a consideration, review the financial implication of leaving your placement. This may include immediate costs such as changing flights/travel but also longer term obligations such as having to repay Erasmus grants, losing deposit from your accommodation etc. Would you be able to walk away from your placement should you feel you need to?

Other Considerations

Have you found anything else that is important about living and studying in your destination country? Consider any issues you have found previously when travelling/on holiday e.g. language barrier, electrical adapters, power rating of equipment, data connection/wifi, mobile communication.

Use this section to note any additional information you have found which helps your preparation.

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Look for background information on living and working in your destination. You may find information from previous students useful.

You may find that you need to take additional items such as power adapters (check the power supply output as well as the plug fitting to ensure compatibility). Will your phone, laptop etc. be able to connect to your host institution/accommodation provider's network?

If you are not already a languages student you may find learning some basic phrases helps you to settle into your new surroundings.

This may include knowing how to raise a concern/ problem whilst abroad both to staff at your host institution and to the Study Abroad here at Leeds. Review contact details at the University of Leeds that you need to take with you on the Study Abroad Organisation (see Get Ready to Go – Useful Contacts).