

Learning Abroad Policy for Student Travel to Destinations with a Level 3 or 4 Travel Advisory

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 and research. To this end, the University attempts to balance the value of participation in international activities against their potential risks. The University of Houston has developed this policy for international activities in countries for which the U.S. Department of State has issued an official Travel Advisory of Level 3 (“Reconsider Travel”) or Level 4 (“Do Not Travel”). Students, faculty and staff will need to consult the policy for specific details before making arrangements for university sponsored, organized, or affiliated travel to countries where there are recognized dangers, instabilities or severe health risks. University sponsored, organized or affiliated travel includes the following:

- 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 regardless of whether or not the organization requires its members to attend the activity or event.
- Travel with a UH affiliated program including for credit and not for credit programs, including course work, internships, service learning, research and volunteer opportunities.
- Travel to meetings of academic-related, professional associations including conferences.

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 other concerns. Failure to comply with this policy may result in the Dean of Students initiating disciplinary proceedings. Students who choose to participate in a non-University sponsored program to a country for which a travel advisory has been issued do so voluntarily and are acting outside the control and responsibility of the University.

January 10, 2018, the U.S. Department of State created a new advisory system in order to provide clear, timely and reliable security information about every country in the world. The new system has four advisory levels:

- Level 1: Exercise normal precaution
- Level 2: Exercise increased caution
- Level 3: Reconsider travel
- Level 4: Do not travel

To see a complete list of all travel advisories, visit the U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory page here: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html/>. In some cases, a country may have an overall Level 2 advisory, while specific areas within the country are subject to a Level 3 or 4 designation.

I. Level 3 Travel Advisory (“Reconsider Travel”)

No UH student shall be required to participate in university sponsored, organized or affiliated travel to a location for which there is a U.S. Department of State travel advisory of 2 or above. When a Department of State Level 3 advisory is in place, UH does not allow travel to the affected area unless authorization is granted prior to the program abroad. If a student wishes to obtain authorization for university sponsored, organized or affiliated travel to a district/country for which the U.S. Department of State has issued a Level 3 advisory, he/she may do so, under the following conditions:

1. The student must review the Travel Advisory and the U.S. Department of State Consular Information sheet for the district/country in question. The student must also review applicable U.S. Department of State public announcements for the region in question. These documents are available on the web at www.state.gov.
2. The student must consider the risks described in the Travel Advisory and, weighing those risks against the value of the educational opportunity to the student, make his or her own determination about whether to continue pursuing the planned research or study. The student should also take into consideration the possibility that the existing Travel Advisory may be changed to a Level 4. 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.

If a student still wishes to request authorization for travel to a country/region with a Level 3 advisory, he or she must complete the appropriate travel authorization or acknowledgement form:

- For University sponsored and/or organization travel for which the coordinating department has already received Senior Vice President for Academic Programs and Provost approval, students must complete the **Learning Abroad Travel Policy Acknowledgement for University Sponsored Travel Form**.
 - For other University sponsored, organized, or affiliated travel, including credit and not for credit programs, internships, service learning, research, volunteer opportunities, conferences and registered student organization travel, students must complete the **Learning Abroad Student Travel Authorization Request Form**, which will be reviewed by the Learning Abroad 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.**
3. Students must obtain the UH CISI insurance coverage to be in force and effect for the entire duration of their travel.
 4. If the travel advisory for the district/country in question contains Level 4 advisories for specific regions within the country, the student must agree in writing to refrain from any travel to those regions during his/her education or research abroad activity.
 5. If the student is already in the district/country for which the travel advisory has been issued, Learning Abroad will attempt to notify him or her of the changed status, and discuss if he/she wishes to remain in the affected area. If he/she chooses to remain in the district/country, he/she will be required to sign a release.

II. Level 4 Travel Advisory (“Do Not Travel”)

When the U.S. Department of State issues a Level 4 advisory that forbids, restricts or urges U.S. citizens to leave a certain district/country as soon as it is safe to do so, the following rules apply:

- UH Learning Abroad programs in that district/country shall be suspended.
- No UH student shall be allowed to travel to that district/country for university-sponsored travel.
- No UH student shall be given UH funding for any activity in a country/district with a Level 4 advisory. If the student has already received such funding prior to the imposition of the travel warning, the funding shall be returned to the University.
- If the student is already in the district/country for which the travel advisory has been issued, the Learning Abroad Risk and Safety Committee will make a determination as to whether the student shall be required to return to the U.S. Learning Abroad will attempt to notify those students who are already in the district/country where the heightened travel advisory has been issued 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 for death, injuries or losses suffered by the student while participating in the activity. If a student is under the age of 18, both of his/her parents or guardian must also sign the release.

III. UH University Sponsored and/or Organized Program Authorization Process

- No UH sponsored and/or organized programs and/or excursions within authorized programs are permitted to countries/districts with a Level 4 advisory.
- If a faculty or staff member wishes to request approval to lead a program to a country/region with a Level 3 advisory, he or she must complete a **Learning Abroad University Sponsored Travel Authorization Request Form**, which will be reviewed and decided upon by the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost after review and recommendation from the Learning Abroad Risk and Safety Committee. **Submission of a travel authorization request form does not guarantee approval.**
- If program authorization is received, students and faculty must adhere to all conditions outlined in Section I of this document.
- If program authorization is received, students must complete the **Learning Abroad Travel Policy Acknowledgement for University Sponsored Travel** in order to participate in the program.