

Learning Abroad Policy for Student Travel to U.S. Department of State Travel Warning Destinations

The University of Houston 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 Travel Warnings. Students, faculty and staff will need to consult the policy for specific details before making arrangements for university-sponsored travel to countries where there are recognized dangers, instabilities or severe health risks. University-sponsored travel is travel which is led by a University employee or 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. Students who choose to participate in a non-University-sponsored program to a country for which a travel warning has been issued do so voluntarily and are acting outside the control and responsibility of the University.

The U.S. Department of State issues travel warnings and travel alerts for destinations around the world to alert U.S. citizens of potential risks. Travel alerts are for short-term events that of which you should be aware when planning to travel to a country. Travel warnings are issued for individuals to consider if they should travel to a country at all. Travel warnings typically fall into two categories: (1) warnings of conditions that heighten the ordinary risk of travel to a particular district/country and (2) more urgent warnings that forbid, restrict or otherwise urge U.S. citizens to defer travel to a country. In some cases, a district or country may be subject to a category (1) travel warning while certain specific areas within the district or country are subject to the higher risk category (2) warning.

I. Category (1) Travel Warnings (Heightened Risk)

No University of Houston (UH) student shall be required to participate in university-sponsored travel to a location for which there is a U.S. Department of State travel warning. When Department of State travel warnings are in place, UH does not recommend travel to the affected area. However, if a student wishes to obtain approval for university-sponsored travel to a district/country for which the U.S., Department of State has issued a “heightened risk” travel warning, he/she may do so, under the following conditions:

1. The student must review the Travel Warning 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 Warning and, weighing those risks against the value of the educational opportunity to the student, make his or her own determination and whether to continue with the planned research or study. The student should also take into consideration the possibility that the existing Travel Warning may be changed to a more urgent warning. The student should also take into consideration the possibility that, if he or she encounters

difficulties abroad, UH and even the U.S. Department of State may be unable to assist.

3. The student must sign a release, acknowledging the existence of the travel warning 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.
4. Students must obtain insurance that includes (accident, health, medical evacuation and repatriation of remains) to be in force and effect for the entire duration of their travel.
5. If the general travel warning for the district/country in question contains category (2) warnings 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.
6. If the student is already in the district/country for which the travel warning 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. Category (2) Travel Warnings: Travel Warnings Forbidding, Restricting or Urging Deferral of Travel

When the U.S. Department of State issues a travel warning that forbids, restricts, or otherwise urges U.S. citizens to defer travel to a certain district/country, the following rules apply:

1. UH Learning Abroad programs in that district/country shall be suspended.
2. No UH student shall be allowed to travel to that district/country for university-sponsored travel.
3. No UH student shall be given UH funding for any activity in a category (2) district/country. If the student has already received such funding prior to the imposition of the travel warning, the funding shall be returned to the University.
4. If the student is already in the district/country for which the travel warning 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 warning has been issued of the 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 warning 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.