

## **Best Practices for Students in International Travel Programs (ITP)**

Students completing their post-secondary academic programs have many international opportunities available to them. International travel for exchanges, internships, practicum placements, co-op experiences, research, independent study and study abroad programs and many other initiatives such as attending conferences and performance opportunities

International travel provides a broader scope and exciting dynamic to the student's educational experience however it also introduces increased risk factors.

The following are some recommended guidelines to assist the CURIE membership in the development of best practices for students engaged in ITP's.

### **Predeparture:**

Does your University have an international travel policy with designated policies and procedures? There are some excellent resources at various Universities across Canada. Examples of some resources are as follows: [www.safety.queensu.ca/ocasp](http://www.safety.queensu.ca/ocasp) ; [www.usask.ca/university\\_secretary/policies/academic/7\\_01.php](http://www.usask.ca/university_secretary/policies/academic/7_01.php); [www.ucalgary.ca/risk/get/international](http://www.ucalgary.ca/risk/get/international).

2. **Risk/Hazard Assessment of ITP:** Have those with the authority to sanction the ITP completed a risk assessment for the country, region or city where the ITP is to take place? This is a recommended critical step in the approval process to ensure that students are not engaged in an ITP to an area that has a travel advisory that may impact emergency medical coverage and trip cancellation insurance.

3. **Agreements/Contracts:**

It is recommended that an agreement/contract be arranged between the University and host institution/ agency prior to the commencement of any ITP. This provides formal, written documentation between the parties to address items such as:

- Obligations of the host institution/agency and the University (designation of a party for responsibility for oversight of the ITP)
- Insurance and workers compensation considerations
- Reporting requirements for accident/illness and incidents
- Contract term for the ITP experience
- Hold harmless, indemnity agreement and dispute resolution mechanism.
- Privacy and confidentiality requirements for all parties
- Policies of the university and host institution/agency that need to be followed
- Termination mechanism of the agreement/ contract

#### 4. **Pre-Departure Orientations:**

There is various orientation models used at member Universities providing excellent resources to assist in the development of an orientation process for your institution. Some Universities conduct in-house (face to face) orientation sessions with students, others may have on-line orientation processes such as the S2 Learning Risk Travel Course offered through CURIE or their own internal on-line travel risk orientation courses. This provides the students with important information concerning:

- Potential hazards and risks of international travel (personal safety, financial obligations, health concerns, cultural differences and the laws of other countries, and other relevant information.)
- Review of student roles, responsibilities and requirements whilst engaged in the ITP.
- Student conduct requirements inclusive of reporting of accidents, illness and incidents
- Importance of notifying the University of emergency contact
- Passport and visa requirements and responsibilities
- Requirement for the execution of waiver and assumption of risk form prior to departure
- Emergency response procedures

**Risk Travel Course (CURIE - S2 Learning):** CURIE in partnership with S2 Learning provides on line courses addressing safety and security risks when traveling abroad.

Three travel courses are offered:

- Travelers Risks
- Travel Packing & Preparation
- Institutional & Personal Liability

Your University can set up an administrator for access to this program by directing e-mail with the name and contact information of the designated university administrator to [jbreen@curie.org](mailto:jbreen@curie.org) or for additional information you may contact John Breen of CURIE at 888-462-4783.

#### 5. **Insurance:**

There may be some unique insurance requirements dependent upon the nature and purpose of the ITP. For example students in practicum placements and internships are typically required to provide evidence of liability insurance, inclusive of malpractice insurance as well as WCB coverage. These should be reviewed and addressed prior to the departure for the ITP.

i) **Health/Travel Insurance:** It is recommended that students obtain adequate insurance to cover off any health issues that they may face in the course of the ITP. Insurance should provide worldwide coverage and include repatriation and medical evacuation benefits. Consideration should also be given as to whether a travel policy with benefits extending to trip cancelation, non-medical evacuation and repatriation benefits, emergency travel arrangements and accommodation expenses, luggage and personal effects should also be obtained.

ii) **Liability Insurance:** Students engaging in an ITP are typically required to provide evidence of their institution's liability insurance to the host institution or placement agency that they are attending. Students should be aware of how the University's liability, inclusive of the malpractice coverage, extends to them in the performance of the academic initiatives. Emphasis to how any injury, damage, claims, lawsuits arising out their own personal activities are their responsibility and do not fall under the University's insurance program.

iii) **Personal Property & Liability Insurance:** Students should have coverage in place for their personal property as well as personal liability. The University is not responsible for the personal property and/or the personal activities of the student.

**6. Workers Compensation Coverage:**

Workers compensation coverage may be mandated by the contract that is entered into for the placement of a student in their practicum and/or internship experience. Typically this is not provided by the hosting institution/agency and the University may need to ensure this coverage is in place prior to the student's departure to engage in their international experience. Coverage for students does vary provincially and should be reviewed with the appropriate in-house resource.

**7. Immunizations:**

Travel to some countries requires certain immunizations to be completed prior to entry into the country. Refer students to access the DFAIT (Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada) website and their health care professional or local public health agency to ensure the required immunizations are received.

**8. Financial:**

Students who are engaging in an ITP should have the financial ability and resources available for the duration of the ITP. Many countries require proof of financial resources to be provided prior to entry into their country particularly if the stay is for several months. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure they familiarize themselves with the entry requirements of the country being travelled to.

**9. Criminal Record Background Checks:**

Some programs, such as those in the Faculty of Education and Faculty of Medicine/Health Sciences require criminal record clearance prior to acceptance into the internship/practicum. Students in all programs should be aware that if they have an issue on their criminal record that has not been pardoned then they might risk not being allowed entry into the country to which they are traveling.

#### **10. Incident/Accident Reporting:**

Recommend a process in accordance with the University's policy and procedure for reporting of accidents, illness and incidents that may occur during the course of the ITP. This is especially important if Workers Compensation claim has to be reported and/or if this is an issue that must be reported as a claim and/or potential claim to the University's insurer.

#### **11. Emergency Response:**

Reference your University's Emergency Response Plan (ERP) to review the procedures and guidelines when a critical international incident occurs that may impact the safety and security of its students abroad whilst engaged in their ITP. The ERP should be inclusive of everything from moderate to major illness and death that may occur to one of its students to what to do when a student goes missing because of kidnap or from some other cause. Communication and response procedures for natural disaster and or war and insurrection etc. that may impact the safety and security of those travelling abroad are recommended to be included in the ERP.

12. DFAIT: Recommend that students be referred to this Government of Canada resource which provides Country Travel Advice and Advisories inclusive of official information that may affect the student's safety and well-being abroad, as well as other important travel issues such as security, local laws and culture, entry and exit requirements and health. Note that this is for Canadian citizens however it may extend to non-Canadians whose countries have signed a reciprocating agreement with the Government of Canada.

13. Visas: The acquisition of the visa required for travel to a specific country is the student's responsibility as part of the predeparture process.

14. Passports: Passports are required for travel and should be current for the duration of the travel experience and is the student's responsibility to ensure they have a valid and viable time period based on the requirements for the country which they are travelling to which can vary.

15. Legal Jurisdiction: DFAIT is an excellent resource. Students should be aware that the laws of Canada are not applicable to where the country where the ITP takes place. If a legal issue arises as a result of the student participation in an ITP the University should be notified. If the legal matter arises from a personal activity this is the student's responsibility.

16. **Waivers:** Many universities require that students execute a waiver prior to engaging in an ITP, particularly if the travel is to a high risk destination and/or if the ITP has a high risk component it. Some Universities require it for all ITP's.

17. **Emergency Contact:** It is recommended that the students engaged in an ITP provide notification of an emergency contact that University is authorized to communicate with in the event of an emergency.

18. **Travel Registry:** Many universities have created an on line travel registry to maintain a record as to where students engaged in an ITP are located. This provides an excellent resource for emergency response in the event of a critical incident that may occur abroad that may adversely impact the students. This is in addition to the recommendation that the student register their travel with DFAIT.

**19. Post ITP Debrief:** Inviting feedback from the students who have been engaged in an ITP is an excellent resource to communicate any specific risk factors such cultural adaptation, limited services and re, reintegration into Canadian culture and any psychological impacts they may have experienced. This information may be critical for the planning of future ITP experiences at your University.

While the focus of this section is on student safety, best practices can be tailored to faculty and staff while travelling on University business.

**Disclaimer:** The information contained within this document is intended to provide guidance in the development of university best practices. It is a living document and subject to change and is not to be construed as being complete nor is it intended to provide any legal advice.