

## Office of Global Engagement (OGE) Policy on International Travel to Countries/Areas of Heightened Risk

### POINT OF CONTACT

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The OGE Risk Management Advisory Committee reviews and provides recommendations to the Office of Global Engagement on Travel Authorization requests by sponsoring academic units, individual students, faculty and staff seeking to participate in educational activities in countries/areas under U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory Level 3 and 4, CDC Travel Health Notice Level 3 or 4, or a CDC recommendation against travel.

### **International Travel by University Faculty and Staff**

UGA travelers to international destinations are required to register their travel and provide their itineraries for risk management and export control purposes when submitting Travel Authorization requests. A Travel Authorization must be submitted, even if a UGA account is not paying for the travel.

Please note that both the Travel Authorization and the Travel Registration must be submitted prior to travel. To allow processing of an international Travel Authorization, travelers, or their UGA designees, must complete the registration online at <http://studyaway.uga.edu/international-travel-authority/>.

Faculty or staff traveling to countries that are under a U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory Level 1 and 2, but contain Level 3 or Level 4 areas, are subject to the same requirements as those traveling to countries of Reconsider Travel (Level 3) or Do Not Travel (Level 4), if they intend to travel to those areas of heightened risk.

### **International Travel by Undergraduate Students on University of Georgia Programs**

In general, travel by undergraduate students on University of Georgia programs to countries under a U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory Level 3 or 4 or a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Level 3 or 4 is not allowed. However, under certain circumstances, the Office of Global Engagement may allow travel following review in concordance with the policies below.

### **Travel When a CDC or State Department Advisory Level is Elevated to a Level 3 or 4**

In the event that the travel warning for an existing program is elevated to State Department Level 3 or 4 or a CDC Notice Level 3 or 4, either before departure or during the program, established study abroad programs will be reviewed according to national trends at peer and aspirational institutions and evaluations or assessments published by discipline-specific professional organizations. On the basis of these considerations, the Risk Management Committee will make a recommendation to the Associate Provost as to whether the program should proceed (if the program has not departed) or continue (if the program has departed) as planned. If the Committee in consultation with the Associate Provost makes recommendations for further mitigating risk prior to departure or during the remainder of the program, the Program Director, for the program to proceed or continue, must demonstrate that all recommendations have been implemented in full.

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In the event of a program cancellation, undergraduate students who are present in their country of origin may remain in country rather than return to the United States. Undergraduate students making this decision shall submit a request to OGE in writing, verifying their intent to stay in country and their understanding of the risks and costs involved in their decision. Submit requests to [studyaway@uga.edu](mailto:studyaway@uga.edu).

### **Proposals for New Programs**

Proposals for new UGA study abroad programs will be accepted for destinations under a U.S. Department of State Level 3 or Level 4 Travel Advisory or a CDC Warning Level 3 or a CDC recommendation against travel at the time the proposal is submitted. However, programs will not be allowed to travel so long as a Level 3 or 4 advisory is in place for the location.

### **International Travel by Undergraduate Students on Third-Party Programs**

Travel by undergraduate students to a country/area that is currently under either a U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory Level 3 or a CDC Travel Health Notice Level 3, on third-party programs may only be approved after completion of the mandatory review process described below. Students participating in a third-party provider program are required to sign a waiver in the StudyAway Portal acknowledging the risks of program participation and may participate if their provider is operating the program.

Outgoing students wishing to proceed with their international study plans at a Level 3 destination through a third-party program will need to first confirm with their host institution/organization that the program will continue, then petition OGE for a permission to travel by completing the **UGA International Travel Petition** in the [StudyAway Portal](#). Petitions must include:

- (1) An explanation why the proposed international experience is important for the student's academic/career goals, including information about unique opportunities or resources the host institution may offer, such as study or research materials, curricular offerings, etc.
- (2) A statement confirming that the petitioning student will:
  - a. purchase the mandatory insurance plan and will maintain it throughout the duration of the program
  - b. enroll into the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) via the U.S. Department of State: <https://step.state.gov/>
  - c. attend a Travel Consultation at the UGA Health Center Travel Clinic (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/services/travel-clinic>) and upload proof of attendance in the Portal
  - d. and attend a pre-departure orientation at UGA
- (3) A Risk Mitigation Plan, which should list the major risks, threats and dangers in each of the program location(s) (e.g., local natural disaster risks, violent crime, civil/political unrest, disease, pandemic, earthquakes, sexual assault, terrorism, etc.) as described in the location-specific advisory by the U.S. Department of State and CDC, and outline plans to mitigate said risk or danger.

If a provider program destination is elevated to Level 3 or 4 during the program, the student will need to consult with their program operator or host institution to determine if the program will continue.

In the event of a program cancellation, undergraduate students who are present in their country of origin may remain in country rather than return to the United States. Undergraduate students making

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this decision must contact OGE in writing, verifying their intent to stay in-country and their understanding of the risks and costs involved in their decision. Submit requests to [studyaway@uga.edu](mailto:studyaway@uga.edu).

### **International Travel by Graduate Students**

Graduate students should check whether the country/area to which they intend to travel is currently under a U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory Level 3 and 4 or a CDC Travel Health Notice Level 3 or 4 or a CDC recommendation against travel.

In general, graduate students are discouraged from traveling to countries/areas that are currently under either a U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory Level 3 and 4, a CDC Notice Level 3 or 4, or a CDC recommendation against travel. The risk of injury, detention, and death is significantly greater for many areas in countries/areas at these levels, and UGA is not in a position to fully assess those risks or provide services in the event of emergency.

OGE recognizes that there can be compelling reasons to conduct research sanctioned by a Department and School or College, even when there is elevated risk in that location. Therefore, if a graduate student intends to travel to countries under the above travel advisories or warnings, the academic activity must have the support of a major professor and the department head or program director in the graduate student's major or in the unit sponsoring the student's travel. The petition to travel must follow the procedure described below. The graduate student, in conjunction with the supporting faculty member, is required to identify all relevant risks and demonstrate that they will be appropriately managed.

Graduate students who are traveling to countries/areas under a U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory Level 1 and 2, but contain areas of Reconsider Travel (Level 3) or Do Not Travel (Level 4), are subject to the same petition requirements as below if they intend to travel to those areas of heightened risk.

To secure OGE approval, the petition to travel must be submitted at **least 4 weeks prior to the date of travel**. The petition must be submitted as follows:

1. Register your travel in the StudyAway Portal: <http://studyaway.uga.edu/student-travel-registration/grad.html>.
2. Provide a detailed Risk Mitigation Plan in the Portal, as approved by the unit Head or Director (a link will be provided upon submission of the initial Travel Registration). Each Risk Mitigation Plan must include a section detailing the Graduate Student's plan to return to the United States in the event that a global prohibition on travel or similar event occurs. Samples of previously approved Risk Mitigation Plans can be found at the following links:
  - o [Example1](#)
  - o [Example2](#)
3. Provide a letter of support signed by both the major professor and the Head or Director of the sponsoring academic unit. The letter of support must include the following information: (1) Information about the student's familiarity with the area, e.g., proficiency in the language, previous visits to the affected area, traveling alone versus traveling as part of an organized group; (2) Specific information about the purpose of the travel, for example: access to unique study materials, e.g. to study a species or geological formation that only exists in one place; or access to specialized or unique research facilities, e.g., a specialized archive or research institute; (3) If applicable, a statement to the effect that the intended travel is not to the area affected by the Travel Advisory Level 3 and 4; (4) A statement that travel is essential, and (5) Acknowledgement of the student's Risk Mitigation Plan by the department/college.

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4. Purchase USG/UGA insurance for the duration of the travel and upload proof of coverage in the Portal.
5. Attend a Travel Consultation at the UGA Health Center Travel Clinic or similar and upload proof of attendance in the Portal. See: <https://www.uhs.uga.edu/services/travel-clinic>.
6. Enroll into the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) via the U.S. Department of State: <https://step.state.gov/>.

Receiving OGE approval is a critical step in the approval process for graduate student travel to countries/areas under a U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory Level 3 and 4, CDC Travel Notice Level 3 or 4, or a CDC recommendation against travel. It is recommended that only after receiving OGE approval graduate students should apply for internal (e.g., Graduate School, LACSI, OVPR) or external (e.g., national scholarships or fellowships) travel funds. In all cases, OGE's decision to approve a petition is independent of funding decisions made prior to the student submitting the travel petition. **Note that even if a UGA account is not paying for the travel, a Travel Authorization and a petition to travel must still be submitted.**

Extant approvals for travel may be rescinded in the event of a change in travel warnings or advisories to the levels mentioned above prior to departure. Should that be the case, a petition must be submitted and approved before travel may take place.

If warning levels change during the travel period, the student must confer immediately with the Graduate School and the student's major professor to determine if travel may continue. Graduate students who are present in their country of origin may remain in-country rather than return to the United States. Graduate students making this decision shall submit a request to OGE and the Graduate School in writing, verifying their intent to stay in country and their understanding of the risks and costs involved in their decision.

#### **CHECKLIST FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS**

- Seek the support of your major professor and unit Head and discuss travel plans
- Submit Travel Registration
- Develop Risk Mitigation Plan and submit to faculty member & unit Head/Director
- Obtain letter of support

#### ***After OGE conditional approval has been granted:***

- Purchase and provide proof of insurance
- Attend Travel Clinic and provide proof of attendance
- Enroll in STEP

#### ***After OGE final approval has been granted:***

- If applicable, apply for funding

#### **CHECKLIST FOR FACULTY AND UNIT HEADS AND DIRECTORS**

- Discuss graduate student's plans and project
- Review Risk Mitigation Plan
- Write letter of support

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### **Graduate Student Travel on Faculty-Led Programs**

UGA graduate students serving in a position of authority on approved faculty-led study abroad programs are required to attend the Risk Management Workshop offered by OGE before embarking on their travel with the program.

For more information, please visit the [Health & Safety section](#) of the StudyAway Portal.

### **International Travel of Faculty, Postdocs, and Non-Graduate Student Staff**

Faculty, postdocs, and non-graduate student staff will be prompted to read and acknowledge the following statement in the Travel Registry upon receipt of a Travel Authorization (TA) for countries/areas under a U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory Level 3 and 4, CDC Travel Notice Level 3 or 4, or a CDC recommendation against travel.

### **Acknowledgment of Travel Risk for Faculty, Postdocs, and Non-Graduate student Staff**

If your destination is under a Travel Advisory Level 3 and 4, there is a significant risk of travel to this country/area at this time. While OGE is not authorized to restrict or otherwise prohibit faculty travel, we recommend against travel to countries/areas under U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory Level 3 and 4, CDC Travel Notice Level 3 or 4, and a CDC recommendation against travel. Travel to such countries/areas poses a significant risk to your safety and wellbeing. There is a greater likelihood of life-threatening risks if traveling to countries/areas under U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory Level 3 and 4. Because of this risk, please be advised that any travel to such destinations must be at your own risk and volition, that the University does not require this travel, and that the University may not be in a position to assist you in the event of emergency.

Please check the box to acknowledge that you understand the risks associated with travel to countries/areas under a U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory Level 3 and 4 and that travel is not recommended.

Please check the box to acknowledge that you understand the risks associated with travel to countries/areas under a CDC Travel Notice Level 3 or 4 or a CDC recommendation against travel.

Although you may be a frequent traveler to this destination, we recommend you do the following:

- Leave your daily itinerary (location, hotel, modes of transportation) with your office staff
- [Register your trip](#) with the U.S. Department of State
- Contact the Office of Research Security and Export Control, if the Travel Advisory Level 3 and 4 country also has a travel restriction: <https://research.uga.edu/export-control/>

### **Personal Travel**

OGE does not oversee the registration, approval, or denial of personal travel to any international destination. Travel for personal reasons is exclusively at the discretion of the traveler.

### **UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE TRAVEL ADVISORIES**

The U.S. Department of State issues a Travel Advisory for each country of the world. Travel Advisories apply up to four levels, describe the risks associated with travel, and provide recommended actions that U.S. citizens should take to ensure their safety. Current Travel Advisories can be found on [Travel.State.Gov](https://travel.state.gov). Travel Advisory Levels are defined as follows:

**Level 1 - Exercise Normal Precautions:** This is the lowest advisory level for safety and security risk. There is some risk in any international travel. Conditions in other countries may differ from those in the United States and may change at any time.

**Level 2 - Exercise Increased Caution:** Be aware of heightened risks to safety and security. The Department of State provides additional advice for travelers in these areas in the Travel Advisory. Conditions in any country may change at any time.

**Level 3 - Reconsider Travel:** Avoid travel due to serious risks to safety and security. The Department of State provides additional advice for travelers in these areas in the Travel Advisory. Conditions in any country may change at any time.

**Level 4 – Do Not Travel:** This is the highest advisory level due to greater likelihood of life-threatening risks. During an emergency, the U.S. government may have very limited ability to provide assistance. The Department of State advises that U.S. citizens not travel to the country or to leave as soon as it is safe to do so. The Department of State provides additional advice for travelers in these areas in the Travel Advisory. Conditions in any country may change at any time.

#### **Varying Levels Within Countries**

The Department of State issues an overall Travel Advisory level for a country, but levels of advice may vary for specific locations or areas within a country. For instance, the Department of State may advise U.S. citizens to “Exercise Increased Caution” (Level 2) in a country, but to “Reconsider Travel” (Level 3) to a particular area within the country.

#### **Risk Indicators**

Travel Advisories at Levels 2-4 contain reasons for the level assigned, using established risk indicators and specific advice to U.S. citizens who choose to travel there. These are:

- **C - Crime:** Widespread violent or organized crime is present in areas of the country. Local law enforcement may have limited ability to respond to serious crimes.
- **T - Terrorism:** Terrorist attacks have occurred and/or specific threats against civilians, groups, or other targets may exist.
- **U - Civil Unrest:** Political, economic, religious, and/or ethnic instability exists and may cause violence, major disruptions, and/or safety risks.
- **H - Health:** Health risks, including current disease outbreaks or a crisis that disrupts a country’s medical infrastructure, are present. The issuance of a Centers for Disease Control Travel Notice may also be a factor.
- **N - Natural Disaster:** A natural disaster, or its aftermath, poses danger.
- **E - Time-limited Event:** Short-term event, such as elections, sporting events, or other incidents that may pose safety risks.
- **O - Other:** There are potential risks not covered by previous risk indicators. Read the country’s Travel Advisory for details.
- **K - Kidnapping or Hostage Taking:** Criminal or terrorist individuals or groups have threatened to and/or have seized or detained and threatened to kill, injure or continue to detain individuals in order to compel a third party (including a governmental organization) to do or abstain from doing something as a condition of release.

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[Review current Travel Advisories](#) to check if your destination is currently under a U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory Level 3 and 4. [Review current Travel Health Notices](#) to check if your destination is currently under a CDC Warning Level 3 or 4.

### **CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION TRAVEL HEALTH NOTICE LEVELS**

CDC uses Travel Health Notices (THNs) to inform travelers about global health risks during outbreaks, special events or gatherings, and natural disasters, and to provide advice about protective actions travelers can take to prevent infection or adverse health effects.

A THN can be posted for: 1) a disease outbreak (higher number of expected cases) in a country or region, 2) sporadic cases of a disease in an unusual or new geographic location, 3) natural and human-made disasters with severe environmental health risks, or infrastructure damage that would limit healthcare services availability and 4) mass gathering events that can lead to disease outbreaks. Current Travel Health Notices can be found on <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>. CDC Travel Health Notice (THN) Levels are defined as follows:

**Level 4 (Red): Avoid All Travel:** Avoid travel to this destination unless traveling for humanitarian aid or emergency response; there is an extreme health risk for travelers and no available precautions.

**Level 3 (Orange): Reconsider Non-essential Travel:** The outbreak or event poses risk to travelers because limited precautions are available.

**Level 2 (Yellow): Practice Enhanced Precautions** for this destination. The Travel Health Notice describes additional precautions or defines a specific population at risk.

**Level 1 (Blue): Practice Usual Precautions** for this destination, as described in the Travel Health Notice and/or on the [destination page](#).