

Applying the University policy regarding student travel 2020-21 Recovery Board – September 2020

The University has a long-standing policy which does not permit student travel where this is against FCDO advice. This applies to all students, both UK nationals and international students. During the summer of 2020, the University has kept this policy under review and permitted travel only to countries where the FCDO advice is clear and permits all travel including non-essential travel. This position was endorsed in early September 2020 by the University's Recovery Board.

Undergraduate students who have planned to undertake a semester or year abroad during the 2020-21 academic year should check the FCDO travel advice prior to departure and should not travel where this advice is against all but essential travel. The University does not support travel to undertake a study or work placement overseas as essential travel. Schools should advise students accordingly on minimum requirements of weeks spent overseas and any impact this may have on their academic progression.

As always, students are responsible for making their own travel arrangements and arranging insurance covering, amongst other things, travel, healthcare, repatriation and living costs whilst overseas. Students who travel should understand that if they become stranded overseas, there may be limited UK government and University assistance and the University is, in particular, unlikely to be able to assist with repatriation.

Travelling overseas when FCDO advice permits

Where FCDO advice permits non-essential travel to a country at the time of the student's departure then this can be supported by the student's home School for a period of study or work overseas. Students should follow local restrictions or requirements at all times when overseas and keep up to date with changes that may apply.

Students advised against travel

Where students are advised not to travel due to FCDO or local restrictions, Schools must offer students alternative options and should liaise with partner institutions to establish if online learning options can be applied. Similarly, if the student is undertaking a work placement, then the student should liaise with the placement provider to ascertain if it is possible to undertake the placement remotely. Where this is not possible, students should be offered a range of options as permitted within their programme, including deferral of the year of study/registration, deferral/switching of the overseas placement period, withdrawing from the overseas placement period or transfer to an alternative degree programme where available.

Ignoring FCDO advice and University advice

The University is clear that students who choose to travel despite the advice from the FCDO, and the consequent formal instruction from the University that they should not travel are making a serious error of judgement. If they disregard the advice they must recognise and accept that they are willingly and voluntarily exposing themselves to a multitude of risks, including:

- being trapped overseas, in isolation away from family and friends – potentially without access to resources (eg money, food, accommodation) or support;
- their travel insurance becoming invalid or unfit for purpose;
- the closure of the institution or workplace they are attending;
- in the event of becoming unwell, finding themselves in a health system that is not one with which they have any familiarity and where family cannot get to them; and
- embassy facilities closing leaving them without any recourse to support.

It is likely that costs incurred in attempting to return home or other contingency costs in any of these circumstances would be substantial. For the avoidance of doubt, the University would not provide funding for such costs. Whilst we will not end a student's registration if they do disregard the safety advice and we will continue to support their academic learning, wherever possible, all other support will be severely limited in its scope which is why we strongly advise against ignoring the FCDO advice.

Remaining overseas when FCDO advice changes

Where local requirements or FCDO advice are amended whilst the student is overseas, the University advice to students is to return home and for Schools to support and offer alternative learning options. Students must undertake any decision to go against this advice carefully and with due consideration given the risks cited above.

Where students no longer wish to remain in country due to the change in FCDO advice, they should consult with their home School to confirm their ability to switch to online or virtual means and/or if this will require a reduction of their time on the placement. Schools should advise students accordingly on minimum requirements of weeks spent overseas and any impact this may have on their academic progression.

Where a student decides to remain in country and disregard our and FCDO advice, students must re-assess their ability to remain in country safely and check any limitations on insurance which they have purchased for the period of study or work. Where students wish to remain in country, the University will continue to support their academic learning, wherever possible, but all other support will be severely limited in its scope as noted above.

Students should be aware that changes to FCDO advice may indicate further lockdowns will occur and consider carefully the implications of this. They will likely be isolated from friends and family with a health service that is unknown to them, they may potentially incur significant costs where insurance ceases to be valid or is limited, they may not be able to return to the UK and they may face significant barriers in areas where their first language may not be the language spoken.

Credit Earned

Where a student's study abroad is expected to include the opportunity to earn credit that contributes to their degree at Nottingham then that credit would be recognised in the normal way for their course notwithstanding Covid-19 policies or processes in the relevant country or the FCDO and subsequent University advice.

As an example, if a student was already in country and had to return owing to FCDO advice we would take the credit they had already earned into consideration if that was normally the case for their course. Individual schools would discuss this with the relevant student on a case by case basis

Conduct

Students remain registered throughout their degree at the University of Nottingham and as such are subject to the Student Code of Conduct, even when overseas. Students should make sure they understand and follow the University of Nottingham rules regarding conduct, including special arrangements relating to COVID 19 measures, and those of the host country and host university or placement provider.

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