

# Travel and Outside Study (off-campus and overseas) Guidance for Postgraduate Research students



*Guidance updated in May 2023 and replaces previous guidance approved by PGR Sub-Committee of UEC on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2020.*

## **Context**

The purpose of this guidance is to provide specific information to Postgraduate Research students who are participating in (or planning to participate in) travel and/or outside study (off-campus and overseas and outside of UK territorial waters) in relation to their academic programme and to highlight the key factors for consideration. It is important that students undertake travel with consideration to this guidance and the requirements outlined in the following documents, which detail the University's framework for travel and insurance abroad:

- Travel Abroad [Management Standard](#) and [Guidance](#)
- [Insurance Cover Guide](#) and [Insurance Certificates](#)

This guidance is of particular relevance to students registered at the Newcastle campus, however, the general principles in this policy apply to all students, regardless of their location, course or mode of study. (Staff and students should note that there may be particular provisions or different Insurance arrangements at our Newcastle University London or overseas campuses (NuMed, NUIS etc.) and for students studying at a distance or through e-learning and that advice on these should be sought from the Insurance Office, in advance of any travel.)

## **Definitions**

### ***University business***

This refers to currently registered students who are undertaking travel as a formal requirement of the programme of study, training or research, or any other academic activity, which has approval as part of the programme of study, training or research.

### ***Off-campus***

A location away from the student's registered Campus, which includes all University buildings/farms/laboratories etc.

## **Responsibilities**

The University encourages student engagement with diverse opportunities available as part of their programme of study, which can include, primary research or fieldwork, off-campus / outside placements in various national or international locations.

The University will take all necessary and reasonable measures to protect registered students whilst they are on University business – this includes active study at the student's main campus and at any off-campus / outside locations.

For Postgraduate Research students, the University will take all steps to avoid instances where students need to travel as part of their research programme to locations designated by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) as '*advise against all travel*' and the University's Insurance provider. At key stages, such as admission, project approval and ethical approval, the University will challenge and is unlikely to approve activities involving travel to such locations.

### **This guidance does not apply where:**

- Students voluntarily choose to travel or participate in activities, which do not form part of their programme, or any other approved academic activity, e.g. student holidays or visits to families or to their home country for purposes other than approved University business.
- Students are not in active study, normally when beyond minimum candidature for their programme, e.g. registered as writing up; pending submission; extended submission; under examination; or on an interruption of studies.
- International students who have completed their studies and are no longer eligible to remain in the UK (or other university campus), under the terms of their student visa.

### **Travel Guidance**

In accordance with the Travel Abroad Policy, the University allows travel based on the three levels of travel advice provided by the UK Government Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). The travel advice may apply to the whole country or more commonly to specific regions or areas within a country. A summary table showing how the FCO classifications control where students may travel is below.

#### **FCO advice categories**

Advise against all travel	No student is permitted to travel to these destinations for University business.
Advise against all but essential travel	Postgraduate students may travel but the risk assessment <b>must</b> be approved by the Faculty Pro-Vice- Chancellor
No specific travel restrictions but traveller must read FCO travel advice before travelling	Students may travel having regard to the travel advice both before and during the period of travel.

FCO travel advice can change at short notice. The FCO classification on the departure date determines whether travel can continue. This may mean in isolated cases that travel has to be postponed or cancelled, if the category changes in response to local events. If a student's home country is classified as '*advise against all travel*', they should consult their academic supervisor in the first instance and it is likely that consultation will be required with the [Insurance Office](#) and the [Occupational Health and Safety Service \(OHSS\)](#) to discuss the individual circumstances.

There are a small number of countries where automatic insurance cover does not apply. In addition, the Insurance Team must be notified about travel on University business to any sanctioned country by completing a [sanctioned countries questionnaire](#) and returning this to [insurance@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:insurance@ncl.ac.uk). In these situations travel cannot proceed without specific approval from the Insurance Office.

Students who choose to travel (for family or personal reasons) to a home country where the FCO advises '*against all travel*' or '*all but essential*' travel, should take particular care to ensure their personal safety, including ensuring that their own insurance cover is in place (if relevant). Students are advised that it might become difficult to return to the UK to resume study due to changes in political regimes, entry requirements or other natural disasters.

### **Insurance**

University insurance cover will normally apply for all pre-authorised University business, even if the University is not directly funding the activity. Insurance cover is provided according to the Insurance Policy and associated provisions in force at the time of travel. Further information is available on the [Insurance and Operational Risk webpages](#).

For clarity, please note the following points of exclusion:

- If a student books travel to a country where at the time of booking there is an advisory by the FCO 'against travel' then no insurance would apply if that remains in place at the point of their trip.
- Where students are travelling on pre-approved University Business to a country not automatically covered by the University insurance, the University may require the student or their academic unit to fund alternative insurance arrangements before travel, if possible. This will require the approval of the Dean of Postgraduate Studies or the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor if to an FCO 'Advise against all but essential travel' location.
- The medical costs incurred by students whilst in their **home country** are not covered, even if the student is travelling on pre-authorized University business. Students travelling to their home country should access the health provisions of their home country in the normal way.
- Family members accompanying the students from Newcastle to another country are not covered by the University's insurance: families should take out their own travel insurance for this purpose.

Students should read carefully the specific provisions of the University's [Insurance Policy for Postgraduate travel](#) before travel.

### Outside Study for Current Full-Registered Postgraduate Research Students

The action required depends upon the duration of the proposed outside study and the location.

Duration and Location of Proposed Outside Study	Procedure
Less than one month to a location with no specific travel restrictions	Normally approved using a ' <a href="#">Student Absence Request</a> ' form on the recommendation of the Head of School or nominee concerned, taking account of the provisions of the University's Travel Abroad Management Standard.
More than one month to a location with no specific travel restrictions	Students apply using an ' <a href="#">Outside Study</a> ' form, normally three months in advance of the proposed travel for consideration by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies on the recommendation of the Head of School, or nominee, concerned.
Any duration to a location identified as 'Advise against all travel' and 'Advise against all but essential travel'	Students apply using an ' <a href="#">Outside Study</a> ' form, normally three months in advance of the proposed travel. It is unlikely that travel will be approved to 'Advise against all travel' locations, however, travel to 'Advise against all but essential travel' may be possible, subject to consideration and approval by the Faculty PVC

A '[Travel Risk Assessment Form](#)' is required for all travel/outside study and should detail the specific activities to be undertaken. The academic supervisor must consider and approve the Travel Risk Assessment Form, in accordance with the Travel Abroad Management Standards and the student should include this with any outside study application submitted to the Dean of Postgraduate Studies for consideration.

#### Useful Webpages

- [Insurance and Operational Risk](#)
- [Outside Study](#)
- [Occupational Health and Safety](#)
- [Student Health and Wellbeing](#)
- [Research Ethics](#)