

COVID-19

Guidance for Fieldwork, Periods of Study, External Research Visits and Travel Overseas: Staff and Students

1. Purpose

Depending upon the transmission rate of Covid 19 and levels of restrictions in place to control its spread, the government may permit travel for essential reasons such as work or education or indeed travel for non-essential reasons. That in itself does not mean that the visit should automatically go ahead. Cognisance must be given to the potential risk to staff and students of acquiring or spreading the virus whilst abroad.

This guidance supports the implementation of the [Readiness Approvals Flowchart](#) No.5 with regard to fieldwork, periods of study, external research visits and travel overseas.

2. Scope

This document applies to all staff who have responsibility for organising and supervising overseas fieldtrips, periods of study and external visits, including: line managers responsible for the work activity; Heads of Department (HoD)/Heads of School (HoS) who are responsible for signing off the risk assessment; and Executive Deans who have the responsibility for approving the trip.

3. Approval

Executive Dean or Professional Service Senior Officer approval must be sought prior to any overseas fieldtrip or external research visit/travel taking place. It is advisable to provide timely justification and seek early approval **prior** to progressing any plans.

4. Justification

The reasons why a visit should take place must be detailed for the HoD/HoS and Executive Dean/PS Senior Officer to understand the nature of the visit and why it must take place, particularly where the government is only permitting travel for essential reasons. A completed general health and safety risk assessment must also be undertaken and provided to support the justification for the trip (see Section 5).

The following points must be considered as part of the planning and risk assessment process.

4.1 Is travel permitted?

Check UK, Scottish and other devolved government webpages and the travel section of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) (see links below) for the latest guidance on whether travel is permitted. This will depend upon level of restrictions applying in the area where the staff/student departs from, where the fieldwork or visit is to be undertaken, any stop-off locations or travel connections points such as airports and train stations. Where increased restrictions are in place the governments may still allow travel for work or education purposes if it cannot be done from home (and where the work or study is essential).

Government guidance regularly changes and should be regularly checked as part of the planning process and immediately before departure to ensure staff/students are following the latest guidance.

In addition, the relevant government webpages of the destination country must also be checked to ensure travellers from the UK will be permitted entry and if there are any conditions as part of their entry requirements (see 4.5 below).

The FCDO may advise against travel for reasons other than Covid e.g. civil unrest, natural disaster and this must be followed.

Although government advice may permit travel, if the destination of the fieldwork, period of study or visit is to a country which is on the UK red list (see link below), then the application and risk assessment should specifically address this heightened level of risk e.g. how any period of study, visit or research activity will be interacting with the local community and what measures are in place to minimise risk of transmission.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-international-travel-quarantine/pages/red-amber-and-green-list-countries/>

4.2 Is the trip necessary or essential?

In all cases the member of staff/student should detail the reasons why the trip should go ahead to enable the HoD/HoS/PS Director and Executive Dean/PS Senior Officer to decide whether the trip is justified. The documents in the links below have sections on essential work and travel. The latest versions should be consulted for the most up to date guidance on what is considered essential or otherwise.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-laboratories-and-research-facilities/pages/overview/>

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-universities-colleges-and-student-accommodation-providers/>

Can the trip be delayed until restrictions are lifted or eased? Remember restrictions are in place because there is high prevalence of the virus in the majority of countries across the world. Can some of the work be done by a colleague in the collaborating institution as a short-term measure to avoid the need to travel? Some fieldwork activities or visits may be necessary to meet completion deadlines. Can the period of study be conducted remotely or delayed?

Has an extension to the deadline been explored or requested given the current Covid restrictions? There may be cases where the research is time sensitive e.g. samples may be irretrievably lost and cannot be replicated.

4.3 Duration of trip.

Can this be minimised as far as possible? The longer the duration of the trip there is potential for the prevalence of the virus at the destination country to change. This may have a knock-on effect such as local lockdowns or restrictions which may curtail some of the planned work activities. It could also affect the requirements when returning to the UK with the need for managed quarantine if the country is considered to be on the 'red list'.

Extended stays should be avoided if possible because if the member of staff or student contracts Covid during the trip they will have to self-isolate at the location. They may not have access to the usual support structure that can be afforded to them at home.

Therefore, the risk assessment must detail how self-isolation will be supported if they do contract the virus.

If the proposed trip involves a member of staff going abroad for more than a month, then further advice on tax implications and employment rights must be sought from Finance and HR before departure.

4.4 Method of travel and booking travel

The University uses a Travel Management Company (TMC), Key Travel, to make travel arrangements for staff and students who require travel on university business. In order that the University is able to support staff and students in need or an emergency, travel bookings should always be made through Key Travel.

Since it will be impossible to avoid public transport when travelling overseas, guidance issued by the UK, Scottish and other devolved governments must be followed. Where travel involves air travel, guidance issued by the airline must also be adhered to. Once in country try to minimise the need for public transport by walking and cycling where possible. Where car sharing is the most suitable option then adopt the guidance in the document below with a requirement to wear a suitable face covering.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-travel-and-transport/>

4.5 Entry restriction and requirements

Each country being visited will have its own specific entry requirements. In terms of Covid this is likely to include a negative PCR test result less than 72 hours before departure or arrival in the destination country, possibly a requirement to quarantine in a managed hotel or self-isolate at destinate accommodation for a specified period, possibly have evidence of the reason for travel and completed the destination country's online health form, pre-travel declaration form etc..

Entry restrictions and requirements must be confirmed in advance as part of the risk assessment process by checking the FCDO travel advice for the destination country.

If you're unclear about any aspect of the entry requirements, or you need further reassurance, you should [contact the embassy, high commission or consulate](#) of the country or territory you're travelling to.

You should also consider checking with your transport provider or travel company to make sure your passport and other travel documents meet their requirements.

You should not use the NHS testing service to get a PCR test in order to facilitate your travel to another country. You should arrange to take a private test from a [private coronavirus testing provider](#).

Some travel operators such as airlines may specify types of masks to be worn on board e.g. surgical masks and may encourage you to take spares for long journeys. You should check with your travel operator before travelling. You should also consider checking with your transport provider or travel company to make sure your passport and other travel documents meet their requirements.

As time progresses destination countries are likely to ask for evidence of people having completed a vaccination programme. Where a destination country requires evidence of a person having received a Covid vaccination, you can access your Covid Vaccine Status online by logging onto <https://www.nhsinform.scot/covid19status>

5. Risk Assessment and other pre-requisites

Any justification for overseas fieldwork, period of study or external visit must be supported with a detailed risk assessment addressing the various relevant hazards associated with the fieldwork itself, Covid, travel, accommodation, lone working, manual handling, weather conditions, emergency arrangements etc. Particular attention must be made to Covid testing in advance of travel outbound and inbound as well as quarantine arrangements upon return to the UK which may need to be booked at designated hotel in advance.

Risk assessors must complete the risk assessment training to ensure they are familiar with the risk assessment requirements. If visits are to another institution then their health and safety arrangements for reducing the risk of Covid transmission must be obtained, read and understood before travel and followed once at the institution. The risks must be reduced as far as is reasonably practicable. The risk assessment should be reviewed in the days before the trip to take account of any changes in government guidance.

In sufficient time before travel, the member of staff/student undertaking the trip must ensure they complete the:

- Health Self-assessment.
- Travel insurance notification form

[Staff Health Self Assessment](#)

[Post Graduate Student Health Self Assessment](#)

<https://www.strath.ac.uk/professionalservices/finance/accountingservices/only/travelcoverage/>

Destination country risks, including Covid, must be considered and included in the risk assessment process. The following sources can be accessed to assist informing the risk assessment process:

- The University insurer's travel security platform, 'Risk Monitor,' provides additional information about local safety and security risk and other risks as well as helpful advice on staying safe. The 'Travel Prepare' e-learning platform provides several modules to help prepare and keep staff and student safe while travelling.
<https://www.strath.ac.uk/professionalservices/finance/accountingservices/only/travelcoverage/travelcoversummary/>
- Occupational Health Travel Health section
<https://www.strath.ac.uk/wellbeing/generalhealth/travelhealth/>
- Travel Health Pro website <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>

6. Returning to the UK

A traffic light system has been introduced assigning countries a red, amber or green status depending on a range of measures about the prevalence of the virus in the country. In advance of returning to the UK, staff/students must check the FCDO, UK and Scottish

Safeguarding and Compliance

Governments websites for the latest guidance and status of a country as this will determine what you need to do when you arrive in Scotland. Even if you have been vaccinated, you will still need to follow the rules on testing and quarantine.

What you must do when you arrive in Scotland from abroad depends on:

- where you've been in the 10 days before arriving in Scotland
- whether the country or area you've travelled from is on the red, amber or green list

Requirements will vary and could include a Covid test 3 days before travelling to the UK, completing a passenger locator form and completing a defined period of quarantine: either self-isolation at home or managed self-isolation in a designated hotel, Covid tests on day 2 and day 8 etc. A summary is listed below:

- **Red** Take a Covid test before you travel and book and pay £1750 for a quarantine hotel and tests on day 2 and day 8.
- **Amber**
 - If you've been **vaccinated outside the UK**, you'll need to follow the amber list rules for those who are not fully vaccinated. Take a Covid test before you travel and book and pay £170 for a specific Covid test on day 2 and day 8. You must book your testing kit using the CTM Booking Portal – any other type of testing kit, such as free NHS kits or those sold by private businesses, cannot be used for these tests.
 - If you're fully vaccinated in the UK, you no longer need to self-isolate if you're travelling to Scotland from an amber list country and you've been fully vaccinated in the UK. Please note this does not apply to France. You will still need to test before travel and book and pay £88 for a Covid test within 2 days of arriving in Scotland. You must book your testing kit using the CTM Booking Portal.
- **Green** Book and pay £88 for a Covid test (PCR) within 2 days of returning to Scotland.

Costs for quarantine hotels and tests will be met by the University provided they are agreed in advance when the trip is approved.

Further details on the arrangements for returning including how to book a designated hotel and tests can be found in the links below.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-international-travel-quarantine/pages/overview/>

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-international-travel-quarantine/pages/what-you-must-do/>

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-international-travel-quarantine/pages/testing-for-people-travelling-to-scotland/>

7. Supporting Information and Guidance

- Risk Assessment online training <https://bookings.strath.ac.uk/Home/Course/5375>
- e-Risk System <https://safetysystems.strath.ac.uk/ra.php>

Safeguarding and Compliance

- Travel and Work Off Campus
https://www.strath.ac.uk/media/ps/safetyservices/campusonly/localrules/Travel_and_Work_Off_University_Campus.pdf
- Student Placements
https://www.strath.ac.uk/media/ps/safetyservices/campusonly/localrules/Student_Placements.pdf