

## Check List for Students Traveling Abroad

### Background:

As you prepare to take an overseas assignment you should take into account a few administrative, health, and safety issues before you leave the country. Keep in mind that when working overseas, even in the short-term, you need to be prepared before leaving the US in order to have a productive experience and avoid unnecessary health and safety risks. **It is the responsibility of each student to complete and submit the completed checklist no later than one-week prior to your departure for all overseas assignments.** Here are a few recommendations for you when traveling overseas:

### Administrative:

(1) Travel Documentation: You should assure that your travel documents are current and appropriate. Visas, if necessary, should be obtained well in advance of your travel. You can find out if a visa is required for the country you will be visiting by calling the embassy of that country (most are in Washington), or by checking the web sites of most embassies. Remember that you may need a visa for transit through some countries. Also, a tourist visa is often all you will need, but a business visa may give you extra time in-country and help you avoid additional fees if multiple visits are required. You should be sure that your passport will be valid for the full time that you will be away. Most countries require that your passport be valid for 6 months from the date of departure. Finally, be sure that you have return airline tickets well in advance of your trip. Do not travel with a one-way ticket, as you may be restricted from entering the country upon arrival, and you may have difficulty securing airline tickets while away.

(2) University Approvals: Assure that you have the requisite approvals from the University to initiate any overseas research. Examples include submission of the attached check list and approval from the Homewood IRB for collecting data for research projects. Remember that for student research your advisor is the Principal Investigator, and she/he must approve the research and sign the forms. You may also need to have approval from the NIH to conduct your research overseas. The Office of Protection of Research Risks (OPRR) is the agency that grants such approvals.

(3) Host Country Approvals: Be sure that you have the necessary approvals from the host country to travel and conduct research. Many host country governments have agencies that must approve all foreign research projects. To check on this you should consult with your advisor, as well as with your host country collaborators. These approvals often take considerable time, so be sure to plan ahead. You should be sure that the host-country collaborating agency has granted you approval. It is good to get this in writing. Be sure that they know the scope of your work in-country, your travel dates, where you will stay while there, and who they can contact if a problem develops. Take care to set your travel dates to accommodate your collaborators. If you are not sensitive to their schedules you run the risk of getting a low level of support while you are on travel status.

### Health:

(1) Vaccinations: Be sure that you have obtained relevant vaccinations prior to travel. To ascertain which vaccinations you need you should consult with a travel medicine specialist. You can consult the CDC website for recommendations of appropriate vaccines. Many vaccinations require a series of injections or oral medications, so plan ahead to assure that you are properly vaccinated. When traveling to areas with malaria you should secure a prescription for malaria prophylaxis medications. One of the most serious health risks you face is from malaria, and it can be lethal. Take such medications as recommended, and take the full course, which usually requires that you take them for a full four weeks upon your return. If you get a high fever, severe headache, or flu-like symptoms upon return from a malaria zone be sure to go to the doctor immediately, as this can be a sign of malaria. Prompt treatment is imperative to avoid serious health consequences. Other vaccinations that are often needed include tetanus, measles, polio, rabies, Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B (especially if you are sexually active or work with biologic samples or blood), Japanese Encephalitis, and yellow fever. Note that entry into some countries requires a yellow fever vaccination, which must be recorded on a yellow form provided by the WHO. There are only certain places you can obtain these, so plan ahead. In some countries in Africa if you arrive without the yellow fever vaccination card you will be vaccinated upon entry, which carries some risk of contamination with unsterile equipment. Consult with a travel medicine specialist well before departing.

(2) Infectious Diseases: Take care with what you eat and drink to avoid food-borne contamination. It is advisable that you consult the CDC website to get advice on how to avoid food and drink borne infections. You may also want to carry a supply of an antibiotic (such as ciprofloxacin), which your travel doctor can give you before you go. Be sure to get instructions on when to take these, as well as how to take them. You should be very careful with the water and drinks that you consume. It is advisable to drink bottled water in which you see the sealed bottle. Be careful of fruit juices which are often contaminated or which have had water added to them. Note that table condiments, such as chili sauce, are also often a source of contamination. It is very important that you take extreme care to avoid a sexually transmitted infection, including HIV. If you will be sexually active you should use a condom for all sexual contact, oral, vaginal, or anal. You may want to carry condoms with you as a source of condoms may be difficult to find. Take care that the condoms are stored correctly (not in heat) and that they are not expired. The best way to avoid a sexually transmitted disease is to avoid sexual contact.

(3) Accidents: This is probably the most likely health risk that you face, especially traffic accidents. Avoid traveling by car at night, especially on long-distance highways. When you travel by car use a seatbelt (even if others do not), and tell the driver to slow down if you feel unsafe. It is always much better to risk social embarrassment to avoid an accident, so do not be shy about asserting your desire to have a driver go more slowly. You may want to establish a maximum driving speed before you depart. You should also tell the driver to avoid passing (overtaking) if you feel that he/she is being unsafe. It is advisable to carry a first aid kit. If an accident does occur seek medical care quickly. If you wait too long you risk serious health consequences. It is suggested that you get and read "When There Are No Doctors" before you travel. This is an excellent resource on travel health issues for developing countries. It is especially important that you avoid

unsterile needles and syringes. In many cases, you can request to purchase a new needle or syringe, or have someone with you do so. Note that the US embassy maintains a list of medical providers in most countries. If you need medical care you may want to contact the embassy. You should get word back to your advisor and family if an accident occurs.

(4) Insurance: You should check to be sure that your health insurance will cover you when you are overseas. You should consider getting evacuation insurance (such as International SOS which has an inexpensive student policy). This type of insurance will assist you in seeking quality medical care, and in evacuating you should a serious problem arise.

(5) Dental: If you will be overseas for an extended time be sure to have a dental check up prior to leaving. You should avoid dental care in many developing countries.

(6) Medications: Be sure to carry an adequate supply of required medicines with you. You may not be able to get them while traveling.

### **Safety:**

(1) Crime: Crime is a serious problem for persons traveling. It is recommended that you not carry or display large amount of cash when traveling. Use a money belt to store your money and valuables. Store valuables (including your airline tickets, credit cards, money, passport, and travelers checks) in the hotel safe, or other secure location if a safe is not available. Check with your local collaborators about risky situations and areas to avoid. If you are robbed do not resist, give them your money and valuables. It is always better to replace them then risk physical harm. Report such events to the police immediately. You should also make a photocopy of your passport and store it separate from your passport. This can be very helpful if you lose your passport. If you need to keep identification on you, use the photocopy of the passport with your driver's license. It is also helpful to make photocopies of your credit cards, passport, and travelers check receipts and leave them with someone you can contact back home. This will facilitate replacement if they are lost or stolen.

(2) Terrorism and Civil Conflict: Check before you leave the country with the State Department (the website is a good location to do this) to see about safety in the country you are traveling to. Avoid countries and regions where there are travel advisories. Register with the US embassy (and/or your home embassy). If you are working on a US sponsored project, register with the US embassy. If you have any problems you should contact the embassy. This includes problems with health, safety, or civil conflict. You should contact your advisor and family if you have any problems. Use common sense in your dealings, and avoid association with persons who may place you at risk, or cause you to be a target for terrorism or police harassment.

(3) Contact Information: It is important that you leave your contact information with your family and your advisor. Be sure to leave your family's contact information with your advisor, and vice versa. If you need to be contacted while away it is important we know how to reach you. If you are out of town while away be sure to let your advisor and family know. It is quite common for students to leave town for trips and people at home

are unable to reach them, generating significant worry and concern among your family and colleagues. Be considerate and let people know how to reach you. You should leave behind the name and contact information of your colleagues you are working with, and let them know how to contact you when you are in-country in the event of an emergency. It is also worth the extra money to subscribe to an email service while you are away; it will likely save you money and time in the long run, as mail and phone calls can be expensive.

Final Note:

Please take these common sense precautions seriously. With a little care and planning you can have a safe and enjoyable experience overseas. Realize that each country is unique and has special issues that should be attended to. Your advisor, and others who have traveled regularly to the country you are visiting, can help you plan for your trip accordingly. Note also that this list of recommendations is cursory and will not cover all events that may occur. Plan ahead, be careful, follow the advice of colleagues, and do not be shy about advocating for your health and safety.

### **Check List for Students Traveling Abroad**

This check list must be completed and submitted to your advisor no later than one week prior to travel.

\*\*\*\*\*

Student Name:  
Date Submitted:  
Country of Travel:  
Dates of Travel:  
Advisor:

(1) Have you fully read the attached recommendations for student travel?  
 Yes  
 No

### **Administrative:**

(1) Has Homewood IRB approval been obtained?  
 Yes  
 No  
 Pending  
 Not Needed — provide explanation

(2) Have local collaborators approved your visit?  
 Yes (provide documentation)  
 No  
 Not Needed — provide explanation

(3) Have you secured NIH (OPRR) approval for your research?  
 Yes

No  
 Not Needed — provide explanation

(4) Do you currently hold round-trip airline tickets for the trip?

Yes  
 No  
 Not Needed — provide explanation

(5) How much cash and/or travelers check will you bring? Indicate how you will finance your travel, food and lodging.

(6) Do you have a visa for your trip?

Yes  
 No  
 Not Needed — provide explanation

(7) Is your passport valid for the period of your trip, and for the next six months?

Yes  
 No  
 Not Needed — provide explanation

**Health:**

(1) Have you visited a travel medicine office or your physician to seek advice on health and vaccinations?

Yes  
 No  
 Not Needed — provide explanation

(2) What vaccinations have you received in preparation for this trip?

(3) Are you traveling to a malaria zone?

Yes  
 No (indicate how you have checked on this).  
 If yes, have you secured a full supply of malaria medications?

(4) Do you have health insurance that will be valid for medical treatment in the country you are visiting while you are away?

Yes  
 No  
 Not Needed — provide explanation

(5) Please list your medical insurance company, and list policy number:

(6) Do you have evacuation insurance (recommended but not required):

Yes  
 No  
 Not Needed — provide explanation

(7) Do you have any special health problems that may affect you while traveling, or chronic health problems? List them and indicate how they may affect you while traveling, and how you will deal with related problems.

(8) Are you required to be vaccinated for yellow fever for the country you are visiting?

Yes

No (indicate how you check on this)

If yes, indicate if you have a WHO Vaccination Stamp.

(9) Do you take medications regularly?

Yes

No

If yes, do you have an adequate supply for your trip?

**Safety:**

(1) Who should your advisor contact in the event of an emergency? List name, address, email (if available), and phone:

(2) Indicate how your advisor can reach you in the event of an emergency. Provide address, email, fax, and phone:

(3) Provide the contact information for your collaborators in the host country. Give name address, email, fax, and phone:

(4) Have you checked to see if there is a travel advisory for the country you will visit?

Yes (indicate how)  No

Not Needed — provide explanation

(5) If there is a travel advisory indicate nature of the advisory:

(6) Are there any special security issues for the country that you are traveling to that you are aware of?

Yes

No

If yes, describe:

(7) Have you been to this country before?

Yes

No

If yes, when?

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Advisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\*\*\*\*\*