



Title: International Travel Policy
Effective Date: August 1, 2025
Issuing Authority: Provost
Policy Contact: Assistant Vice President, Office of Global Engagement
studyabroad@mercer.edu, 478-301-5964

Purpose

In support of Mercer University's mission, the University (1) recognizes that international endeavors are critical; (2) respects the academic freedom of all students, faculty, and staff to pursue international research, educational activities, and service where appropriate; and (3) understands that important work may sometimes take place in international locations that pose health, safety, and security risks. The University recognizes that travelers have significant responsibility for their own health, safety, and security. The University also has an institutional responsibility in supporting the health, safety, and security of travelers while they are undertaking the University's mission. This policy defines basic institutional requirements that will promote these joint interests.

Scope

This policy applies to all students and employees participating in University-related international travel. Individual travelers are responsible for compliance with this international travel policy when undertaking University-related international travel. Units sponsoring University-related international travel are responsible for informing travelers of this international travel policy and for facilitating compliance for individuals where appropriate. University units must not fund students who do not meet the requirements of this policy.

Exclusions

Mercer University assumes no responsibility for non-sponsored activities or liability for individual guests adjacent to the international travel.

Definitions

As used in this policy, the following terms have the meaning specified below:

Accompanying Individual: an individual who is not a Mercer University student or employee and who is not associated with the teaching or logistical delivery of the program, such as a spouse, partner, legal dependent(s), or minor child of program faculty and/or staff. An accompanying individual may also be an adult supervising a legal dependent or minor (relative or non-relative adult).

Accompanying individuals fall into one of two categories:

1. Individuals not associated with the teaching, logistical delivery of the program, or
2. Special academic guests

Please see the Accompanying Individuals on International Travel Policy for the extended definition of accompanying individuals.

Group Travel Abroad: University-related travel that meets all the following criteria:

- The group consists of at least one program faculty and one student participant with similar program experience dates, itinerary, and related activities at the destination.
- The group leader must be a Mercer employee who is leading the group within the context of job responsibilities.
- A group leader is assuming some responsibility for the group including but not limited to supporting students and serving as the point of contact in the event of an emergency or a significant change in travel.
- A Mercer University program organizer or group leader exercises some element of control by making travel logistic decisions on behalf of the participants, such as choosing accommodations and/or modes of transportation.
- Group travel abroad may be for study, research, joint project work, fieldwork, service, conferences, athletic or other competitions, musical performances, sponsored student organization travel that is formally sanctioned by a Mercer University unit as a sponsored event, or similar University activities.
- The sponsoring unit or the leader of the group is responsible for completing requirements provided by the Office of Global Engagement or Mercer On Mission.

High-Risk Activities: participation in 1) available activities or traveling under prevailing conditions that are not included or considered in the Department of State or the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advisories; 2) activities that are excluded from coverage for the University-approved international insurance; and/or 3) activities covered by the University-approved international insurance presenting significant risk without a clear connection or benefit to the University or study abroad program.

High-Risk Activities may include but are not limited to activities conducted in extreme conditions (altitude, heat, cold) or locations (remote, conflict-prone), activities presenting significant or unique threat to well-being (mountain climbing using ropes, rappelling, whitewater rafting), using uncommon transportation (all-terrain vehicles, helicopters, ultra-light aircraft), and other such activities or conditions.

High-Risk Destination: countries, states/provinces, or cities identified by the U.S. Department of State as Level 3 or 4 or approved by University leadership.

Minor: a person under the age of 18.

Non-Sponsored Activities (group or individual): travel for non-University reasons; personal travel. Also known as leisure or independent travel, personal travel may occur in conjunction with University-related travel abroad outside of official or academic requirements, including during weekends, evenings, or scheduled breaks. During non-sponsored activities, travelers are responsible for their health, safety, and security during personal travel as well as any additional costs arising from personal travel.

Program Faculty and Staff: any faculty (including but not limited to regular, visiting, or adjunct), any individual who has an appointment at the University, and all regular and temporary staff. Purposes and activities for faculty and staff include but are not limited to business trips, conferences, faculty exchanges, faculty-led study abroad programs, teaching, research, service, or sabbaticals. University-related travel is not dependent on receiving University funding.

Sponsored Activities (group or individual): all credit-bearing or degree-advancing international travel (e.g., study abroad, Mercer On Mission, research, practica/internships); travel organized on behalf of a registered student organization, school/college or department, or University athletic team; activities funded in whole or part by Mercer University.

Student: any undergraduate, graduate, or professional student enrolled in a degree program, professional certificate or executive education program, other credit bearing activities, and non-credit bearing activities at the University. Purposes and activities for students include but are not limited to teaching, research, internships, externships, training, study abroad programs, student teaching, University service, conferences, or travel by registered student organizations, club sports, or varsity athletic teams.

Student participants are responsible for completing University-related international travel requirements and paying the appropriate tuition and relevant fees.

University-Approved International Travel Insurance: the negotiated international travel insurance policy that provides medical evacuation and repatriation and security evacuation coverage for University-related travel abroad. It is the participant's responsibility to secure international medical insurance.

University-Related International Travel: travel outside the United States (50 states plus the District of Columbia) by students and employees for purposes and activities related to the University. Travel to U.S. territories and journeys on the high seas are also

considered international travel for enrollment in the University-approved international insurance which provides coverage in those locations.

Policy Statement

A. Travel Planning

Faculty proposals for groups traveling abroad must be submitted to the Office of Global Engagement or Mercer On Mission office. Each office has specific requirements for travel proposals.

B. Program Leadership

For group travel abroad, one employee must be the designated leader for issues of student safety and well-being. This person will report to the Office of Global Engagement or Mercer On Mission. In many cases an individual will also be designated as responsible for academic issues or oversight of the program. While working with program leadership, ultimate academic oversight for the program will normally rest with the sponsoring unit within the University. These roles, (a) safety and well-being leadership and (b) academic leadership, may be held by one individual or they may be held by different individuals. In all cases, leadership roles will be agreed upon in writing before the beginning of a program.

C. Accompanying Individuals

Accompanying individuals wishing to travel with all or a portion of the study abroad program must adhere to the Accompanying Individuals on International Travel Policy. The presence of accompanying individuals on the program must be disclosed in advance during program planning and be approved by the Office of Global Education or Mercer On Mission to travel with the program.

Accompanying individuals must register with the Mercer International Travel Registry under one of these categories:

- **Accompany Individual:** Traveler is adult (18 years of age or older) and not going as a special academic guest.
- **Accompanying Individual Under 18:** Sponsor must sign on the dependent's behalf
- **Accompanying Individual – Special Departmental and Leadership Guest**

All accompanying adults who are not regular University employees will sign a waiver similar to those signed by students.

All accompanying individuals become representatives of Mercer University and its educational mission. It is important they recognize this responsibility, and this responsibility is reflected in their behavior.

Students participating in a study abroad program may not sponsor an accompanying individual.

D. Minors

A minor enrolled as a Mercer University student may participate in University-related international travel as long as their parents or guardians review and sign all travel waivers and other required documents.

University-related international travel in which participants may be minors who are not enrolled as students must receive prior approval to travel by the dean or designated administrator of the academic or business unit in which the program is based. All adults accompanying non-enrolled minors on University-related travel must review the Minors on Campus Policy and the Accompanying Individuals on International Travel Policy prior to departure. While traveling, there must be a dedicated adult who takes primary responsibility for the minor and who is not in a program leadership role. A minor should not interfere with the educational experience.

E. Remuneration and Budget Preparation

Depending on the role played by accompanying individuals, appropriate remuneration should be provided. This can include in-kind support (e.g., free meals at group events, free room and board, travel expenses) or monetary payments. In all cases such support must be included in program budgets and negotiated with program leadership as part of the program proposal process. Monetary payments must be processed by University procedures. If the individual is a University employee, duties on the international travel program might fall under the individual's regularly contracted duties. Additional benefits to employees (e.g., free transportation, room and board, etc.) should be specified. If payments for services are made to University employees, University benefits may also need to be paid.

F. Accommodations

At the request of a University employee(s) leading study abroad programs and with the approval of sponsoring units and program leadership, accompanying individuals may share the employee's accommodations. The Mercer employee will receive housing allowance for one person, regardless of how many accompanying individuals share the accommodation. Exceptions are possible. Mercer employees and accompanying individuals and program assistants must not share accommodations with students.

G. Staff to Student Ratios

As part of the program proposal process, program leadership will recommend an appropriate staff to student ratio. This can vary depending on the goals and nature of the program but will ensure adequate supervision of student activities and emergency protocols.

H. Mercer International Travel Registry and Support

All University-related international travel must be registered with and supported by the Office of Global Education prior to purchasing airfare or making any financial commitments for the intended travel. Whenever possible, travelers are expected to update the registration, including

travel dates, destinations, and on-site contact information, if updated information becomes available.

Students will be notified of their acceptance through email from the Office of Global Engagement or Mercer on Mission Office along with instructions to make a deposit on the program through the Bursar's Office. Students will need to make their deposit and sign a Statement of Financial Responsibility (located in their post-acceptance portal) in order to secure their spot on the program by the stated deadline.

All accompanying individuals will work with the program leader and Office of Global Engagement or Mercer On Mission to determine if any financial commitments need to be made on their behalf and what the total cost for these commitments comes to. The accompanying individual will be expected to pay these costs before any travel commitments have been made. The accompanying individual will also be expected to sign a Promise of Payment form outlining the amount paid and costs it will cover. The Mercer International Travel Registry is the official and authoritative source of traveler information gathered for the purpose of locating and communicating with travelers, responding to emergencies, and managing media and public relations during critical incidents abroad. Anonymous, aggregated data within the Mercer International Travel Registry also serves as the central source of travel abroad data for institutional reporting.

The contents of the registry are kept in accordance with Mercer University's privacy notice. The Assistant Vice President of Global Engagement, on behalf of the Office of the Provost, is responsible for the overall management of the Mercer International Travel Registry.

No University funds shall be allocated prior to authorization for such travel. Group travel abroad must be requested on behalf of student participants by employee leaders at least six weeks prior to travel. Separate guidelines and deadlines have been established for faculty-led study abroad programs, including Mercer On Mission. Failure to follow relevant international travel requirements may result in the denial of all purchases associated with travel and/or all expenses being deemed ineligible for reimbursement by Mercer University. In addition, failure to follow international travel requirements could result in disciplinary action.

I. International Travel Insurance

All Mercer University employees and students participating in University-related international travel are automatically enrolled in the University-approved international travel facilitation insurance. Students and employees enrolled in Mercer University's medical insurance plan are automatically provided medical insurance coverage for international travel. Students and employees not enrolled in Mercer University's medical insurance plan must show proof of international medical insurance prior to departure.

J. Training and Orientations for Employees Traveling with Students

Employees traveling with students must attend a mandatory health and safety workshop within 12 months preceding the travel abroad. Employees must provide a pre-departure orientation to

participants and an onsite orientation at each location. An orientation is not required for employees traveling without students.

K. Compliance with Laws, Regulations, and Policies

All travelers on University-related international travel must comply with applicable United States, State of Georgia, Mercer University, and international laws, and host country's law, regulations, and policies, and procedures. University regulations concerning student conduct, as codified in the Mercer University Student Handbook, also apply to students abroad.

Students traveling on sponsored activities are strongly discouraged from driving any type of motorized vehicle, especially motorcycles, mopeds, and similar vehicles. Graduate or professional students who must use a vehicle to conduct research or to access clinical facilities must confirm they have adequate personal liability insurance.

A student has committed and is expected to remain on the University-related international travel experience during the entirety of the scheduled trip or program. In the case of overlapping academic commitments, family exigencies, or visits with indigenous immediate family (parents, siblings, grandparents), a student may depart before the program is complete if the sponsoring unit or leader is notified prior to the student's departure. The student is responsible for return travel arrangements.

L. Export Control

Prior to departure, travelers who are taking any equipment (such as a laptop computer) or information (including collaboration or training with foreign nationals) or are working with a country subject to a U.S. trade embargo must contact the Office of Global Engagement or Mercer On Mission office to seek clarity with regard to compliance with U.S. laws concerning export control.

M. High-Risk Destinations

The University identifies some international locations as high-risk destinations based on U.S. Department of State travel advisories and determinations by University leadership. The University will not require travel to a high-risk destination; such travel is voluntary, and travelers assume responsibility for all associated risk.

- For degree completion and other academic requirements associated with international travel, an alternate destination will be arranged if possible. Academic units will address situations where alternate destinations cannot be arranged on a case-by-case basis.
- For faculty and staff, travel to high-risk destinations will not be a condition of current or future employment.

Requirements for University-related international travel to high-risk destinations vary by traveler status. These requirements do not apply during non-sponsored activities.

The University reserves the right to cancel travel and/or require travelers to depart an international location due to significant or unusual risk. Identified travelers must depart the destination by the most expeditious and secure means available, as determined by the U.S. Department of State, the University's international health and emergency facilitator, and Mercer University leadership. Failure to do so may result in the withdrawal of all University support and resources.

N. High-Risk Activities

The University may review and reserves the right to cancel travel to any destination if substantial risk arises from conditions, activities, and/or inadequate health and safety preparations.

O. Individual Student Travel Abroad

Students participating individually on any program affiliated with Mercer University or participating in any non-University affiliated program must:

1. Follow this International Travel Policy which incorporates applicable University policies and guidance for international travel and the procedures communicated by the Office of Global Engagement.
2. Comply with University guidelines for managing health, safety, and security abroad as outlined by the Office of Global Engagement.
3. Pay the appropriate tuition and relevant fees.
4. Attend the required pre-departure orientation offered by the Office of Global Engagement.

All students must have courses pre-approved for transfer credit prior to leaving for study abroad programs. Pre-approval should be requested well in advance of any program application deadline or enrollment to ensure transferability of selected courses.

P. Group Travel Abroad

For group travel abroad, risk is magnified by the increasing numbers of participants, and the organizer or leader is assuming some responsibility for others within the cohort.

Group travel abroad that is organized or managed by a Mercer unit must be approved in advance by the dean or supervisor of each academic or business unit in which the program is based. Sponsoring units or leaders are responsible for:

1. Submitting an Emergency Response Plan for group travel and receive Office of Global Engagement support in order to travel. Individual travelers do not need to complete an Emergency Response Plan.
2. Ensuring that all University guidance relative to travel abroad is followed, including meeting requirements relative to travel warnings, travel restrictions, and high-risk designations, and following the additional requirements for group travel abroad.

3. Following best practices for health, safety, and security planning; collection of fees; pre-departure orientation; on-site activities; crisis management, and post-trip review.
4. Following any additional unit-level guidance or requirements for travel. Requirements may include signing and adhering to any documents detailing program leader responsibilities.
5. Supporting students to the best of their ability in the event of a crisis situation and alerting the University of a crisis by following the general emergency protocols for Mercer University international travelers.
6. Reporting any deviations to the group travel itinerary to the Office of Global Engagement that includes a participant departing from the group before the program is complete.
7. Adhering to the sponsoring unit directions when performing duties in the official capacity as a University program leader.

Q. Emergency Evacuation Insurance and Support

Evacuation support relies on Mercer students and employees registering their travel.

Students who remain in-country after being advised to evacuate may not be eligible for University funding or academic credit related to the travel experience and may be subject to disciplinary action.

R. Non-Compliance

Failure to adhere to this policy may jeopardize the University's ability to provide emergency services and could result in disciplinary action. Employees or students may be referred to the Office of Human Resources or to the Dean of Students, respectively.

Additional Resources

1. Accompanying Individuals Policy: <https://policies.mercer.edu/accompanying-individuals-on-international-travel/>
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Travel Health Notices: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>
3. Minors on Campus Policy: <https://policies.mercer.edu/minors-on-campus/>
4. U.S. Department of State Travel Advisories: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html/>

Website Address

Mercer On Mission: <https://www.mercer.edu/global-impact/mercero-on-mission/>

Office of Global Engagement: <https://globalengagement.mercer.edu/global-education/>