

## for students on Education Abroad Programs

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### How does the University make decisions about travel-related to future Education Abroad programs?

Decisions about University-sponsored travel after August 2021 will be made in consultation with the University's Office of Risk, Ethics and Compliance (OREC) and will be based on the considerations listed below. All travel must route through OREC for review, risk mitigation, and subsequent recommendation to the Provost for approval. Decisions about future abroad programs may be communicated by the University and shared by Education Abroad through email. Updates to information will also be available on the [Education Abroad website](#).

#### FACULTY-LED PROGRAMS, FIELD TRIPS, AND STUDENT GROUP TRIPS

Texas A&M University has made the decision to cancel TAMU-led programs with travel itineraries that are less than four weeks from May to August 2021. The decision to cancel experiences under four weeks is primarily due to complications and concerns surrounding quarantine and isolation requirements and testing protocols and availability.

TAMU-led programs that exceed four weeks can proceed pending COVID-19 specific mandates or restrictions in the host country, re-entry requirements, and an additional review and approval by OREC.

Because crossing a border usually triggers additional quarantine periods or requires further COVID-19 tests and implementation of new COVID related measures, all approved TAMU-led program itineraries are restricted to one country.

*Other considerations for TAMU-led program approval include:*

- A requirement for all programs to have at least two responsible leaders, which can include an approved TAMU employee (a second faculty, graduate assistant, or TAMU staff). In some cases, a second leader may be an in-country program partner. Spouses, dependents, or visitors do not qualify as second leaders.
- A full assessment of the host location, including the availability, accessibility, and expense of healthcare and COVID-19 testing. We will examine:
  - Entry and exit requirements and the likelihood that existing measures will become more stringent (the new variant is a concern);
  - Testing protocols;
  - Possible vaccination requirements;
  - Quarantine requirements – length of, test out scenarios, and any tracking requirements;
  - Quality of the in-country experience such as movement restrictions in host city and from one city to another, access to meals, ability to engage in field visits and cultural activities.

## EXCHANGE, AFFILIATE PROVIDER, AND INDEPENDENT PROGRAMS

Students participating in individual experiences through a provider or exchange partner are permitted to go as long as the host university or partner has confirmed that it is operational, and with the understanding that they do so at their own risk. Any financial loss incurred because of travel or health issues related to COVID-19 will not be reimbursed by Education Abroad or Texas A&M University.

*A few things students should consider include:*

- The ability to depart the U.S. and enter destination country based on current travel restrictions;
- That programs may be abruptly ended by the provider or host institution if conditions worsen;
- Travel restrictions may change while abroad, prohibiting students from returning to the U.S.;
- There may be a need to self-isolate upon return to the U.S.;
- Major delays in the processing of passports may prevent students from obtaining a passport and/or visa (or residence permit) in time for travel;
- Institutional and federal financial aid may not be awarded due to travel restrictions;
- Remaining enrolled in Texas A&M courses in addition to 1 credit hour of the appropriate placeholder course until closer to the departure date in the event travel is not possible

## Can you guarantee my safety abroad?

While no one can guarantee the safety of students, faculty, or staff in any location (on campus, in the United States, or abroad), or eliminate all risks from traveling and studying abroad, the University is committed to taking reasonable steps to ensure that it does not place Aggies in situations that expose them to undue risk.

While the COVID-19 pandemic continues, TAMU Education Abroad will:

- Communicate the risk of travel abroad to students, faculty, and staff before departure;
- Require all student, faculty, and staff to register with the US Department of State through the STEP program;
- Restrict crossing borders while abroad for TAMU-led programs, limiting program itineraries to one country;
- Enroll all TAMU students, faculty, and staff on TAMU-led Education Abroad experiences in CISI international insurance, require CISI enrollment for students on exchange programs, and require enrollment in an international insurance policy for students on provider programs;
- Provide 24/7 emergency assistance for TAMU students, faculty, and staff abroad;
- Provide COVID-19 related training and information to students, faculty, and staff;
- Require international vendors and partners to provide risk mitigation and emergency plans;
- Regularly review and assess host country requirements or restrictions related to COVID-19 and communicate updates to faculty, staff, and students;
- Provide students, faculty, and staff with details on locating resources and assistance in their host country.

## What additional measures will Education Abroad put in place due to COVID-19?

We are working with the University's Office of Risk, Ethics and Compliance and our in-country partners regarding additional risk mitigation measures due to COVID-19. As there are Education Abroad programs in many countries, each with different program designs, and evolving impacts of COVID-19 in host locations, measures will vary by program and may need to be adjusted multiple times before departure or while abroad. Examples of recommended measures are:

- Limiting student accommodations to no more than two students per room and no more than four students per apartment or suite;
- Including a second program coordinator to accompany and provide support for overnight excursions on programs with one program leader;
- Minimizing the use of public transportation;
- Restricting program and independent student travel outside the primary host country; and
- Requiring all students, faculty, and staff to have a working international phone/data plan.

## Will I be required to sign an additional waiver related specifically to COVID-19?

Students will be provided with an informed consent document prior to participating in Education Abroad experiences. We ask that you disclose health conditions in the Medical Information questionnaire section of the Education Abroad portal and schedule a travel health assessment with Student Health Services or your primary care provider before your departure. You may also be asked to participate in additional predeparture trainings related to COVID-19 and travel abroad.

## What is the protocol for COVID-19 in my host country?

The protocol for traveling to and from international destinations, and for reporting information on COVID-19 is country-specific. The best place to find information on COVID-19 in a specific country is through that country's Ministry of Health and government websites, US Embassies and Consulates overseas, The Center for Disease Control Travel Health Notices, and the US Department of State.

## Will I need to be tested for COVID-19 before I travel abroad?

It will depend on the country you are visiting. The protocol for traveling to and from international destinations, and for reporting information on COVID-19 is country-specific, however, you should plan to get tested with a [viral test](#) 1-3 days before your trip. The best place to find information on COVID-19 in a specific country is through that country's Ministry of Health and government websites, US Embassies and Consulates overseas, The Center for Disease Control Travel Health Notices, and the US Department of State.

## Will I need to be tested for COVID-19 before I return to the United States?

Effective Jan. 26, all air passengers coming to the United States, including US citizens, are required to have a negative COVID-19 test result or documentation of recovery from COVID-19 before they board a flight to the United States. You must make arrangements to get tested with a [viral test](#) 1-3

days before you travel back to the US. Keep a copy of your test results with you during travel in case you are asked for them.

For additional information about the testing requirement, please visit the [CDC website](#).

### Will TAMU pay for my COVID-19 test to enter/exit my host country?

No, TAMU Education Abroad will not pay for a COVID test to enter your host country or to return to the US. You can get a test at the Student Health Center and should reach out to your insurance provider with questions about covering the cost of testing. Before returning, visit your [state](#), [territorial](#), [tribal](#), and local health department's website to look for the latest information on where to get tested.

### Does the international insurance provided by TAMU include medical care if I get infected by COVID?

While the current CISI policy does not cover global pandemics, it does cover testing and the treatment for students diagnosed with COVID-19. More information on CISI's policy related to COVID-19 is available at <https://www.culturalinsurance.com/COVID-questions.asp>, and a copy of the TAMU CISI policy is available in the Education Abroad portal.

### Does the international insurance provided by TAMU include evacuation coverage due to COVID?

If you become ill with COVID-19 and a medical evacuation is necessary, that evacuation will be covered. Information on CISI's policy related to COVID-19 is available at <https://www.culturalinsurance.com/COVID-questions.asp>, and a copy of the TAMU CISI policy is available in the Education Abroad portal.

### Will I be required to purchase additional insurance, such as Cancel For Any Reason (CFAR) or Interrupt For Any Reason (IFAR) policies?

TAMU will not require you to purchase additional insurance; however, all students are strongly encouraged to purchase additional travel insurance that will cover you if your flight or program is canceled or if you are recalled to the U.S. because of COVID-19 since these events will not be covered by most international insurance policies, including the TAMU Education Abroad international policy. Additionally, TAMU will not be reimbursing those costs or refunding Education Abroad fees. You may also wish to search for additional coverage for other risks not covered by TAMU's current international insurance policy or the policy utilized by your provider if on a non-TAMU program.

We recommend that you thoroughly read the plan you are considering and review the fine print closely. Many policies may have a "pandemic exclusion." Look for plans that allow you to cancel for any reason, often called Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) or Interrupt for Any Reason (IFAR) plans.

Review Plans and learn more about CFAR/IFAR coverage from Texas A&M's preferred provider by visiting the [Travel Insured International website](#). You can also view additional information, including FAQs at [Page 4 of 6](https://abroad.tamu.edu/EducationAbroad/media/Education-Abroad/Documents/EA-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

[COVID-19-Student-FAQs.pdf](#). TAMU will provide information and a link to the vetted plan on our website and in the Education Abroad Portal.

## What happens if my program is canceled after it is confirmed to run?

If a TAMU-led program is canceled after it is confirmed to run, but before departure, Education Abroad or the department/unit managing the program budget will make every effort to recoup funds for payments or financial obligations made by the University on your behalf. However, we cannot guarantee that money will be returned. We strongly urge all students to purchase CFAR/IFAR insurance to protect their investment. Specific policies related to payments and refunds for fees charged by TAMU are available in the Texas A&M University Terms of Participation for Students on Education Abroad Programs. These policies remain unchanged as they pertain to COVID-19. Students on TAMU-led programs receive payment schedules and information in their program application portal and on their website.

Students not on TAMU-led programs are encouraged to reach out to their program provider or host institution for details pertaining to program cancellation and refund policies, to purchase additional CFAR/IFAR insurance, and to register in TAMU courses for their expected term abroad in the event they are not able to participate.

## What happens if my program is suspended and returned early?

Education Abroad will work with University leadership, our insurance provider(s), host universities, and program providers to facilitate faculty, staff, and students' return to the United States as quickly as possible. If necessary, we will coordinate with local, state, and national governments to ensure the prompt return of Aggies abroad. Education Abroad will communicate with emergency contacts in the event of an abrupt, unexpected departure. Every effort will be made to ensure that students can maintain progress towards their degree and complete their academic work. Specific policies related to payments and refunds are available in the Texas A&M University Terms of Participation for Students on Education Abroad Programs. These policies remain unchanged as they pertain to COVID-19.

## What happens if my classes move online?

Each country and program will be different, depending on the program model, how far into the term the program is, and the contingency plans of program providers and host universities. TAMU Education Abroad will coordinate with academic departments to determine the best course of action and will communicate information to students.

## Do I have to return early if my education abroad program converts to remote learning?

If a program converts to remote learning due to COVID-19, it is important to follow the guidance issued by TAMU Education Abroad and your host university or program provider. If TAMU recalls a program due to COVID-19, you will be required to return. If your program is canceled by an external entity such as an international university or program provider, you should follow their recommendation. In deciding if to return to the US, you should consider,

- Infrastructure and capacity of the public health system in the host country including the availability of resources, testing, and ventilators;
- Accessibility of the healthcare system to Americans abroad;
- Ability to depart the host country promptly should evacuation be necessary;
- Restrictions in place for Americans returning from abroad; and
- Academic and financial risks to students if you choose to stay in the host country.

## Will personal travel be restricted while abroad?

It is likely that personal travel will need to be restricted while abroad and students should prepare accordingly. Each country and program will be different, and may depend on the program model and host country protocols. Some excursions and other co-curricular events may need to be restricted, rescheduled, or cancelled, depending on local and global conditions. Students will need to check with the faculty director, host institution, or program provider for specific information related to personal travel. Crossing borders while abroad is prohibited and programs itineraries are limited to one country.

## What happens if my program is canceled and my degree requires that I study abroad?

You will need to consult with your academic advisor, department, or program director to see what alternatives may be available to fulfill the requirements of your major. Each country and program will be different, depending on the program model, how far into the term the program is, and the contingency plans of program providers and host universities. If necessary, and where possible, we hope to be able to offer remote instruction for coursework so students can complete their term abroad with as many credits as possible.

## When will the University determine if Fall 2021 Education Abroad activities can resume?

The university has approved planning for the resumption of education-abroad activities for the Fall semester and beyond. While planning will go forward for all trips, if substantial concerns remain in place for certain destinations, then only longer-term trips (30 days or more) may be practical.

*\* Information in this document is updated and accurate as of February 4, 2021. Because of the fluid nature of the pandemic and its effect on international travel, however, the information contained herein is subject to change.*