Global Experience Office
Considerations to Assist Advisors and Program Leader Plan Global Travel

INTRODUCTION: When planning a global experience for students, WPI requires faculty and staff to incorporate safety and security throughout the program, from the initial proposal to the last day of the trip. The university understands risks are present in any location, but an undue degree of risk should not be an inherent part of any educational experience undertaken by WPI students, faculty or staff. The Global Experience Office can help program creators identify and mitigate risk.

For all travel: It is best practice to plan for the inherent risks of international travel in a knowledgeable and deliberate manner whether or not the university considers the program's destination high-risk. Personal experience can contribute to one's knowledge. That said, other sources of information could assist with building a fuller knowledge base or update one's understanding of a dynamic global security situation. Travelers should consider these sources when building their understanding of the destination's risk and draw upon information from others who have traveled in the region, local support providers/agents, multi-national security organizations, and international/host governments. Many of the linked resources available to university travelers build on combined experiences of great numbers of travelers.

This document is organized in two parts:
1) The first part of the document presents several questions that hopefully prompt consideration in the way that each trip is planned and executed. As you plan your travel and incorporate safety and security considerations into your itinerary, ask yourself these questions and let them guide your panning. (with thanks to Northeastern University's Office of International Safety and Security)
2) The second part is a **travel risk management worksheet** (with thanks to University of Wisconsin – Madison's International Safety and Security Director)**.** This tool allows program creators to self-assess the proposed itinerary. The results of the worksheet may indicate the need for a more objective, third party review to help the creator plan for a safer and secure trip. This worksheet may help the itinerary or program designer understand where the planned trip might require more careful consideration to ensure its learning success and reduce risks.

If you would like help finding someone who may have traveled previously to your destination, or have suggestions on how this resource document might be improved, please contact the Associate Director of Global Risk Management at globaltravel@wpi.edu.

PART ONE: Questions to Guide Planning:

with thanks to Northeastern University's Office of International Safety and Security

The questions below are designed to help program developers incorporate safety and security considerations into the program's itinerary. The questions are designed to help identify potential safety gaps that exist in a program. For the purposes of this document, risk is defined as an element of heightened threat due to the potential for travelers to be victimized by petty or violent crime; the presence and activity of terrorist or subversive groups; dangerous man-made or natural disasters either to or within the destination; environmental, sanitation, or health concerns; or the lack of security or medical resources.

Use these questions to thoughtfully review your program or build trips so that the questions can be answered with confidence prior to traveling:

1. **Overall Itinerary and Planning.** The first overarching question to ask is whether the educational goals can only be obtained in the planned destination, or is there another lower risk destination where the learning outcomes can be achieved? If so, consider re-planning the program to another destination or identify the second, potentially less risky, destination as a back-up plan. Remember risk is present everywhere, but high or undue risk is NOT necessary for experiential education.
   a. What risk are present in your destination and can you change the itinerary to mitigate the risk without eroding the intended learning outcome? E.g.: set itineraries to avoid travel during a high-risk holiday or natural disaster-prone periods.
   b. Do you have back up plans?
   c. Do you require additional security support or information?
   d. Can you alter the itinerary to reduce predictable risk? Example: trips at night when crime tends to be more common, or travel to public places during non-peak hours to reduce threat exposure created while waiting in line.
   e. Have you coordinated plans with recognized local providers/agencies? If not, discuss these options with the Global Projects Program staff or others who have traveled in the region (some countries tourist bureaus or similar agencies will keep a list of recognized and/or registered providers who offer a standard of care and diligence). If so, have you specifically discussed:
        i. Safety and security practices in the expected environment,
       ii. Alternate options during the trip if transportation, housing, experiences, or a particular destination on the itinerary are no longer safe for travel,
      iii. Reimbursement/additional costs for itinerary changes, and
       iv. Obligations of the provider?

f. Is there an identified plan to accommodate learning if you as the faculty leader or any member of the group becomes ill or is injured? Faculty leaders should identify secondary leader(s) and/or teaching assistants with knowledge of the program's communications, planning and execution and an awareness of health and medical resources at each location in the itinerary.

g. Develop an emergency plan at each overnight location on your itinerary. You should consider consulting with in-country hosts, agencies, and/or providers to prepare this plan. You should also assess (or request assistance to determine) a health or safety providers level of competency. Plans should include:

   i. Medical and safety assistance near accommodation. Determine what services the hospital or clinic provides and when they are open. The provider may only have a specific specialty (re: mental health support) or may not be open 24/7.

   ii. Determine which police departments provide the required services.

   iii. Identify the locations of each traveler's embassy or consulate (having a basic understanding of what services they provide can reduce the wait time if a student needs replacement travel documents).

   iv. Do you have access to transportation at all hours? If not, you must identify a trusted transportation company in all overnight stay locations in order to be prepared for any necessary movements outside of normal business hours or while public transport is closed.

h. How are travelers notified of program itineraries and potential changes? Consider making an electronic data repository available for travelers to view the latest itinerary, potential travel changes, travel requirements, and program syllabus.

i. How can travelers access their passport picture page and copies of their visas? Have all travelers scan their passports, immigration documents, and entry visas. Keep this copy in a place separate from the physical passport or travel document.

2. **Communications:** This section goes over questions related to how a faculty leader can stay in touch with members of the group and WPI's Global Projects Program office. Communication can take two forms: routine and emergency. "Routine communication" is defined as keeping group members aware of travel requirements and daily activity. "Emergency notification" entails making group members aware of an ongoing or potential crisis, requiring each group member to "check-in", and provide direction to responds to the threat.

   a. Is there a communications plan that allows for all travelers to be notified of routine and emergency communication? Can the faulty member manage this communication?

   b. Does each traveler have the contact information for the faculty leader, local emergency number, number for his/her consulate, WPI, host or provider,

transportation company, accommodations, etc.?

c. Do students know how to make local calls in country?

d. Does the group have redundant forms of communication? Types of communication redundancies can include: cellular phone, internet-based calling/video chat, land-line telephone, primary and secondary meeting points if communication systems are inoperable, etc.

e. WPI requires all travelers to register their travel with the university's *MyTrips* travel registry (www.wpi.edu/+travelregistry) and notify their consulates/foreign ministries about their travel (US citizens can enroll with the Department of State Smart Travel Enrollment Program - STEP - https://step.state.gov/step/).

f. Do you understand your role in the emergency communication process? Have you set these expectations with all the travelers and the host/travel agent? The emergency alert process is automated by the university's response provider (currently International SOS) and managed by the Global Projects Program office.

g. In the event of an alert, what message do you have for your students? How can you alter your program? What information do you need to verify the alert (can you obtain additional information from the university, your provider, or host)?

3. **Travel:** This section asks questions about your travel plans to and from the destination, as well as in-country, designed to mitigate potential risk. Can revision to these plans further mitigate risk to a more acceptable degree?

a. Is travel undertaken with recognized agencies or providers?

b. Do members of the group arrive at the destination together or separately? If separately, are there detailed plans to gather the group in a safe manner that does not rely on ad hoc taxi services or extended waits in public places? How do travelers notify the group of delays and what plans are in place to deal with delayed arrivals?

c. What are alternate plans for flights or local transportation if there are unforeseen delays or cancellations in commercial air, over land, or rail travel that shift arrival times? What plans are in place for the group to stay overnight as to avoid night travel? Do you have the emergency telephone number of your travel agent or local provider?

d. What risks are present in your destination vis-à-vis public transportation, taxis, ride sharing, water ferry, or other modes of locally available transportation? For instance, if you intend to rent a taxi, have received a list of known safe taxi companies from the US embassy or a trusted host or third-party provider in-country?

e. Are in-country travel plans redundant to accommodate unexpected challenges such as mechanical breakdowns, flat tires, etc? (A minimum of two vehicles per group is a standard best practice from a safety and security perspective. The ability to safely accommodate all passengers into the remaining vehicle if one breaks-down, versus

waiting for help, is well worth the added cost. That said, avoid "convoy-profile" movements as more than two vehicle moving in tandem may attract undue attention and create a tempting target for organized criminal or even terrorist groups. Consider using empty vehicles to travel ahead of the group and check if there any obstructions on the roadway in advance of the group's movement).

f. Consider the number of cities on your itinerary. Increased number of cities on the itineraries may result in logistics challenges, programmatic disruptions, traveler fatigue, lost items (such as passports due to packing/repacking) and increase vulnerability due to new settings.

4. **Public Resources and Infrastructure**: This section asks questions about the local resources and travel conditions. Special attention should be paid to design your program to reduce the risks of local concerns. Program alterations, or adding redundancy, can further mitigate risk to a more acceptable degree.

   a. Is commercial air travel to the destination on a recognized international carrier with a strong safety record? If not, can travel be arranged on a recognized/approved carrier?

   b. Are local roads and highways going to support the rate of travel at which you've planned your itinerary? Example: will it take you several hours to travel a distance that would only take an hour or two in a more developed country?

   c. What safe stopover lodging have you identified in the event of a breakdown or travel disruption? Stopovers are preferable to traveling at night or arriving at a destination much later in the night than might be safe or desired.

   d. Is there a major medical hospital in the country within reasonable transportation distance (e.g., within one hour by road) if a group member becomes extremely ill or is injured? If not, is there timely emergency air service available to a capable hospital?

   e. Is the quality of medical care commensurate with your needs and travelers expectations? Do travelers need specific care to address chronic or pre-existing conditions? Consider retaining a local partner or provider with medical support services that can travel with your group.

   f. Have you worked with your in-country host (or other resources) to identify local medical clinics and ascertained available care (e.g., even for relatively minor required care—such as the closure of a cut or treatment for a bad sprain or fracture)?

   g. Is rail travel available on segments of your intended route or between destination stops that might be a more secure alternative to travel by bus or other motor vehicle?

   h. How long will it take to travel to the nearest airport or transportation hub? How easily can the group or individual group member get to this hub in a crisis?

Part Two: International Risk Management Score
With thanks to UW-Madison's International Safety and Security Director

Use the below worksheet to honestly assess potential risk to your program's itinerary. Users will answer questions by applying a numerical value for each answer using the point-range in the right-hand column. Some of the questions simply dictate a specific point entry (e.g., 3 pts) depending on the answer to the question; others ask you to evaluate within a range of points. When point-range is offered, try to make an evaluation of your planned trip given the question's purpose and assess a point value based on the degree to which your trip meets the condition. This is admittedly subjective but doesn't dilute the value of the exercise: the Risk Score simply attempts to help you assess the risk associated with your planned trip through a quantified framework.

When you have answered all of the questions, total these numbers into a single composite score. This is your **International Risk Score—or IR**. The IR score will place your planned trip into a range of potential risk illustrated on the spectrum found at the bottom of the matrix.

1. If the total IR score characterizes your trip as **"significant risk,"** then review your planning and attempt to make meaningful changes to mitigate risk where the scores drive your total into that range. It may not be possible to avoid risk entirely but even the awareness that it exists will tend to heighten your attention to surroundings and environment with a positive influence on your safety and security.

2. If the total score characterizes your trip as **"high risk,"** then it is strongly recommended that you make significant changes to your itinerary to mitigate risk – and even review the entire purpose for the trip and its balance with intended learning outcomes and experiences.

3. It is suggested the itinerary be reviewed by someone who is not involved with it otherwise and who also has significant experience in international education. An external observer may review the trip with greater objectivity and help highlight areas of concern or for improvement. Associate Director of Global Risk Management may be asked to provide this sort of review and will offer advice on reducing the trip's risk.

ASSUMPTIONS:

1. *Your group will have enrolled in university travel registry- MyTrips*
2. Your group will be present at a pre-departure orientation at which safety, security and health concerns are discussed in addition to cultural considerations and standards of conduct.
3. You have established safety expectations, a program code of conduct, and learning outcomes in your syllabus
4. You have created a basic emergency plan that is shared with the entire group
5. You have created a communications plan and contact information that is given to the group,

group members have important telephone numbers, and established an electronic data repository/system to house important information and notify travelers of itinerary changes.

International Risk Worksheet

Travel Itinerary	Does the travel itinerary take you to a country on WPI's high-risk destination list? High risk destinations are countries with a U.S. State Dept. Level 3 or Level 4 travel advisory attached. If yes …	(10 pts)
	Do all of the members arrive in the destination country and at each location together? If not …	(3 pts)
	Does your itinerary include more than two modes of travel on the way to the destination (e.g., air, bus, taxi, train) or during the trip?	(3 pts)
	Does your travel include one or more legs on a regional airline other than in the United States, Canada or Western Europe?	(2 pts)
	How many overnight destinations do you have on your itinerary? (Give yourself one point for each destination)	(1 pt/local)
	Once in-country, does your travel rely on publicly procured, not prearranged transportation, such as public taxi or bus service?	(3 pts)
	Is a recognized or registered local provider or in-country host agency <u>heavily</u> involved in your planning and trip execution? If not …	(4 pts)

	Is a significant proportion of your itinerary at public sites or institutions with public access? (historic sites, museums, sporting events, university conference, etc)	(3 pts)
	Is a portion of your travel through rural areas with known poor or unimproved roads? (*base the number of points on the relative amount of time during your trip that you will travel on poor or unimproved roads. Give yourself 2 points if the program spends less than 50% on rural roads, 3 points if the program spends 51-75% of road travel on rural roads, or 4 points if the program spends 76%+ on rural roads.)	(2 - 4 pts)
	Do your travel dates coincide with any major holidays or events? (Examples include: Ramadan, Easter, Olympics, World Cup, G20, World Bank Meetings, etc.)	(3 pts)
	Does your travel rely on a single vehicle for your entire group during any significant portion of the itinerary?	(3 pts)
Communication	Will all or most members of the group have immediate access to a cell phone with an active international calling plan? At least enough so that each room or home-stay has a working cell phone? (According to university guidance, all travelers are required to have a working cellphone, that operates on the regional cellular infrastructure.) If not …	(3 pts)
	Will there be any part of the itinerary when the group is separated by design (not including different rooms at the same hotel, dormitory or hostel)—this includes different work sites, different home-stays (even within the same village or at the same general location), dorms in different buildings, etc--?	(3 pts)

	Will you have internet access throughout the itinerary (this may include satellite access via a cell phone's international activation?) If not …	(2 pts)
	Will you have access to cellular phone signals throughout the itinerary? (Meaning that a signal is available during the majority of	
	the time at any planned location—this is a question that can be asked of your in-country hosts or even the US embassy or consulate.) If not …	(4 pts)
Medical and Health Resources	Are there capable hospitals within a reasonable distance of each location on your itinerary in case of trauma or illness? The term "reasonable" here will depend on your location and available transportation—2-3 hours by vehicle is probably a good rule of thumb to help you define "reasonable" in a developing country for this purpose. (Gauge the points by the proportional number of locations on your itinerary that have hospitals nearby.) If not …	(3 - 5 pts)
	Are local medical clinics available in the rural areas in which you intend to travel that have the capability to treat minor illness, fractures, sprains, etc? (Gauge the points by the proportional number of locations on your trip that have or lack capable, modern clinical medical care. Give yourself 2 points if most but not all areas on your itinerary have clinics, 3 points if more than 50% of your locations do NOT have clinics nearby accommodations, and 4 points if more than 75% of your itinerary lacks local medical clinics) If not …	(2 - 4 pts)

	Is there a health-related alert or advisory for any location on your itinerary posted by DoD or CDC?	(7 pts)
	Is there an activity of any kind planned during your itinerary that even under conditions at home would be considered "risky" – (rock climbing, single-track mountain biking, hiking over rocky terrain on unimproved trails, etc)	(5 pts)
	Is clean drinking water readily available (tap, bottled or otherwise-- e.g., you must plan to take your own through large portions of your itinerary)? If not …	(2 pts)
TOTAL		Points:

Low Risk (1 – 20 pts)	Acceptable Risk (21 – 30 pts)	Significant Risk (31 – 40 pts)	High Risk (41 + pts)