



UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Education Quality and
Policy Office

Policy cover sheet

Policy name	University Policy to Safeguard Students Studying and Working Away
Purpose	To manage risks to the health and safety of University students undertaking overseas activities
Owner	University
Contact	educationalpolicy@admin.cam.ac.uk
Approved by	General Board (minute C1(ii) of 12 July 2017) on recommendation of its Education Committee (minute 528.3.2.1)
Approval date	12 July 2017
Last Reviewed	August 2024
Next review due	August 2026
Version	3.0

University Policy to Safeguard Students Studying and Working Away

CONTENTS

Purpose	1
Scope of the policy.....	2
Governance.....	2
Steps to working away.....	3
Responsibilities	4
The systems (still to be considered)	5
Stakeholders	5

PURPOSE

The University of Cambridge is a global institution. The mission of the University of Cambridge is *to contribute to society through the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence* and the core values support delivery of that mission. The mission and core values apply to our global activities and so to students who undertake activities outside of the UK for the purposes of study, research, or work (hereafter referred to as overseas activities).

Under UK law, the University has a duty of care properly to manage risks to the health and human safety of its students and has robust and agile policy and procedures in place to deliver that duty.

Consequently, the University strives to have a policy that covers a range of different student related overseas activities, which is proportionate and sensible, and supported by comprehensive, accessible, agile, and auditable processes and systems that ensure a consistent and properly managed approach.

The policy is not intended to limit activity but is intended to ensure that students and their Departments consider consciously all aspects of undertaking overseas activities both before a decision to approve is made, and during the time away, especially within a constantly changing world. It is possible that in some cases, the risks, which are identified through consideration of an application for leave to study/work away, are such that permission cannot be given.

Neither is it intended that this policy interfere with the pastoral care and provision provided by Colleges. Instead, it is hoped that the health and safety responsibility on the University and the pastoral role of the College can coincide to safeguard and support students whilst overseas.

SCOPE OF THE POLICY

The policy applies to all matriculated students who seek to work overseas for the purposes of study, research or work as part of their degree. The policy does not apply to student sports and society activities and College initiated activities, e.g. Transatlantic Series sport competitions, European Theatre Group, College Exchange Programmes, and Festival Concerts.

Below are some examples of working away.

Study:	Fieldwork	predominantly PhD students
	Collaborative provision	predominantly PhD students, but also MBA and other master's level courses
	Year abroad study placement	e.g. in MML, Law, Chemistry, Engineering
	Writing-up (not eligible for University insurance)	only PhD students
	Industrial experience	e.g. BA/MEng Engineering
	Summer activity (integral to course)	e.g. Master of Finance, BA/MEng
	Conferences	predominantly graduate students
	Summer schools in overseas institutions	undergraduate and graduate students
	Research:	Research placements in laboratories in an overseas research centre or institution
Work:	Year abroad work placement	e.g. in MML, Law, Chemistry, Engineering
	Mandatory work placements	e.g. MPhil Public Policy
	Professional placements	e.g. MSt Building History
	Internships/work placements	e.g. graduate and undergraduates as advertised opportunities and Bursary Scheme via the University's Career Service

GOVERNANCE

The University of Cambridge takes the safety of its students extremely seriously. Therefore, to ensure students gain the expected academic benefits of studying/working overseas without placing them at unacceptable risk, the University will ensure that:

- the risk and gain are consciously assessed in advance, and during the period overseas where circumstances change, drawing on experts as required;
- the student is adequately prepared for the context in which they will be studying/working before travelling;
- the University holds all pertinent information concerning the individual, their arrangements for living and studying/working during the time overseas and their family (where appropriate);
- the University has up-to-date and accurate information regarding the location of the overseas activity and the means to communicate with the student in a timely fashion;
- emergency or contingency plans can be developed and instigated as necessary.

To do this, the University will:

- require every student who wishes to study or work away from Cambridge to apply to do so. Persons authorised under this policy will scrutinise that application. Where the student wishes to travel to higher risk areas or to undertake work that potentially puts them at high risk or where there are health concerns, leave to work away will not be given without the approval of the Study Away Risk Assessment Committee determined by this policy;
- require every student to submit a travel preparation plan and, where required, undertake training;
- require the student to submit information, before travelling;
- require the student to inform the University should the information provided or the activity to be undertaken alter once away from Cambridge;
- require the student to check in regularly and particularly report changes in circumstances that affect their risks;
- periodically review the risk assessments for those students whose circumstances change or are away for a long time;
- through a dedicated team, and in collaboration with experts, respond to emergency situations.

This will require a duty of responsibility on the student.

The General Board, through its Education Committee, is responsible for this policy. The Education Committee shall appoint a Study Away Risk Assessment Committee (SRAC) who, acting on behalf of the University General Board will consider exceptional cases. This body shall also have the authority to require the student to return from overseas. The Education Committee will determine membership.

STEPS TO WORKING AWAY

1. Application to study or work away

- A student applies, in advance, by completing an application form and a risk assessment that together captures all pertinent information, including contingency plans.
- Since the College will continue to have pastoral responsibility, it will be included in the application process and will have the opportunity to comment as appropriate.
- The Head of Department is authorised to decide except where the application is for a high-risk country, or where the work will place the individual at personal risk, or where there are health concerns, be that either the student's health or because of more general risks, e.g. an outbreak of disease in the country of destination. (Guidance will be provided on what constitutes a high-risk area and what might place the individual at personal risk.) For these exceptional cases, the application is passed to the Study Away Risk Assessment Committee. This body will consult with the relevant Head of Department and might seek further information and/or consult experts. A student can appeal the decision of Study Away Risk Assessment Committee under the [Reviews of Decisions of University Bodies](#).
- The decision making body will only consider a full application.
- The student is advised of the decision, which is held on file together with all documents submitted in the full application. Such documents are accessible to those supporting the

student even whilst overseas, such as their, Faculty/Department and College, and central offices providing a service to students whilst overseas, such as the Student Registry, Insurance Office, Safety Office.

2. Preparation

- The student prepares for their work overseas, using support materials provided.
- Where students will be at higher risk (either because of their personal circumstances, or because of the nature of their research/work activity or because of the location), they will provide additional information and receive additional support.
- The student applies for insurance (e.g. travel, health). **Please note that University insurance cannot be used for travel related to writing-up.**

3. Continuing Support

- The student records arrival and checks in regularly.
- The University will use expert information and tools to monitor overseas risks.
- The student will receive appropriate alerts and instructions (e.g. because of change in risk, travel disruptions, environmental changes).
- The University will periodically review the risk assessments of those who are away for a long time.

4. Change in circumstances, contingency planning and emergency measures

- The student informs the University of any change to their circumstances (that might range from change in contact details to change in nature of study/work/health) and amends the risk assessment accordingly.
- The University will review the changes, and in discussion with the student will determine any action required to ensure the safety of the student. The University has the final say.

Where the University determines that a student has gone overseas without an adequate risk assessment, particularly to a High Risk country, it might require him or her to return to the UK immediately.

Should a student refuse to return to the UK, or move to another place identified as more secure, the University would consider this a serious matter, to be reviewed on the return of the student.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The University has a duty of care to students and this policy enables it to fulfil that responsibility where students are studying/working overseas. To enable the University to manage the risks to students effectively, the students themselves are required to co-operate fully and responsibly in complying with the requirements of the policy and to raise any concerns about risk at the very earliest opportunity with their Research Supervisor, Department or Head of Department. A student who anticipate that they may be in a high-risk situation should discuss and explore what alternative arrangements might be put in place, or what actions might be taken to reduce that risk with those in authority in his or her Department. This discussion would include a detailed exploration of the pros and cons of the

contingency plan in the risk assessment. The Research Supervisor or Head of Department will be invited to comment on the feasibility of such alternative arrangements or actions.

The assessment of the application and the support available relies on a full and honest application that is submitted in advance of any travel and also relies on the student informing the University of any changes.

The University wishes to support students studying/working overseas, but it will limit activities where the risks are considered too great for that individual at that time, or if the individual does not fulfil the requirements of the policy in such a way that the University can make an informed assessment of the risks.

Those granted the authority to decide on applications are responsible for adhering to the policy and seeking advice where the risks are high.

THE SYSTEMS

A comprehensive system supports delivery of the policy. There is a single repository of information that allows data to be added, viewed, and extracted by multiple users. The system contains information required by the main stakeholders (Faculties and Departments, Colleges, Student Registry, Insurance Office, Safety Division). The information held would include the following.

- Student details that are relevant to safeguarding and might inform any emergency action. Such details would include full name, course, college, student's contact details, nationality, gender, religion, health, next of kin, overseas location and local contacts, Faculty/departmental contact details, College contact details;
- Details of the overseas activity, that might include approved institutions for the undergraduate year abroad together with indication of whether the student is on work placement or study option);
- The risk assessment and contingency plans;
- A record of the approval process;
- Documents used to inform that decision;
- Any updates, including a record of any emergency actions, including rationale.

STAKEHOLDERS

Central offices:

Vice-Chancellor's Office
Pro-Vice-Chancellors
Registrary's Office
Student Registry
Insurance Office
Health and Safety and Regulated Facilities
Legal Services Office
Office of External Affairs and Communication

International Student Team
Disability Resource Centre
University Counselling Service
Careers Service
Finance Division (Procurement Services, Taxation Office)

Schools: Heads of Faculties and Departments
Research Supervisors
Degree Committees
Programme Directors
Year Abroad Offices (and equivalent)

Colleges: Senior Tutors
Directors of Studies/Tutors
Graduate Tutors
Tutorial Offices

Students: Undergraduate
Masters
Postgraduate
Graduate
Visiting students
Exchange students

External: Insurance Company
Funding Bodies
Collaborative partners