

Goucher College Policy on Study Abroad and Travel Safety or Health Warnings and Alerts

I. Introduction

Goucher College is the first liberal arts college in the country to require every student to have an education abroad experience. We believe that international awareness is a requirement for anybody who wants to lead a satisfying and successful life in the global community of today -- and Goucher offers a wide range of opportunities to help our students develop that awareness.

At the same time, Goucher College is committed to providing safe study abroad programs for our students. All decisions regarding program operations are made with reference to data from a number of sources. In addition to the consular information sheets and advisory messages posted by the U.S. Department of State (www.travel.state.gov) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (wwwn.cdc.gov/travel), our resident directors, host institutions, and faculty program directors use information gathered locally and through conversations with other providers in the city or country. In making individual decisions concerning participation, participants and their parents should carefully review the two websites listed above.

II. Travel Warnings and Alerts and Health Precautions and Alerts

The United States government has designated certain countries to be potentially dangerous locations for U.S. travelers. **Travel Warnings** are issued to describe long-term, protracted conditions that make a country dangerous or unstable. A Travel Warning is also issued when the U.S. Government's ability to assist U.S. citizens is constrained due to the closure of an embassy or consulate or because of a drawdown of its staff. **Travel Alerts** are issued to disseminate information about short-term conditions, generally within a particular country, that pose imminent risks to the security of U.S. citizens. Natural disasters, terrorist attacks, coups, anniversaries of terrorist events, election-related demonstrations or violence, and high-profile events such as international conferences or regional sports events are examples of conditions that might generate a Travel Alert.

The CDC also issues different types of notices for international travelers. A **Travel Health Precaution** is notification by CDC that a disease outbreak is occurring in a widespread geographic area. The purpose of a travel health precaution is to provide accurate information to travelers and Americans living abroad about the status of the outbreak (e.g., magnitude, scope, and rapidity of spread), specific precautions to reduce their risk for infection, and what to do if they become ill while in the area. A **Travel Health Warning** is a notification by CDC that a widespread, serious outbreak of a disease of public health concern is expanding outside a more limited area or populations than were initially affected. The **CDC recommends against nonessential travel to the area** because the risk for the traveler is considered to be high (i.e., the risk is increased because of evidence of transmission outside defined settings and/or inadequate containment).

Students who wish to study in a location where the U.S. Department of State has posted a Travel Warning or Travel Alert, or the CDC has posted a Travel Health Precaution or Travel Health Warning, should pay special heed to the fact that there are specific risks that may be involved in the prospective study abroad program. Goucher students should weigh these potential risks as they choose whether or not to participate in such a program.

III. Goucher Programs

Goucher College follows U.S. State Department Travel Warnings and CDC Travel Health Warnings with respect Goucher study abroad programs. With the exception of Goucher programs in Israel, Goucher study abroad programs in locations currently under a Travel Warning or Travel Health Warning will be suspended for the duration of the Warning. If such a Warning is issued while a Goucher Program is in effect, the programs may continue or other decisions may be made as the situation and circumstances warrant. Events and circumstances will be carefully monitored by the Office for International Study and, if necessary, the Crisis Incident Response Team of the college as to whether:

- a. the Goucher program(s) should continue, or
- b. the program(s) should relocate temporarily to a safe site in order to allow the program to continue, or
- c. the program(s) should temporarily suspend operations, or
- d. the program(s) should be closed and the participants return to the U.S.

IV. Approved Non-Goucher Programs

Goucher will generally not approve programs that take place in countries for which a U.S. State Department Travel Warning or CDC Travel Health Warning has been issued, with the exception of Israel. Students who elect to study in Israel are required to sign a Special Release and Hold Harmless Agreement.

In addition, students who have a compelling educational reason to travel to such countries may submit a request for an individual exemption from this policy to the Director of OIS.

The exemption process is described in Part V below. The travel exemption process is a time-intensive process and students should allow sufficient time for the review process. Students may appeal the negative decision of the OIS to the Provost. The Provost's decision is final. If the student's participation in the program is approved, students will be required to sign a Special Release and Hold Harmless Agreement.

V. Advice for Students

When applying to any program, but especially to those for which a U.S. State Department Travel Warning or Travel Alert, or a CDC Travel Health Warning or Travel Health Precaution, has been or might be issued, we strongly recommend that students:

1. Develop a back-up plan (for example, an application to a different study abroad site) that you might pursue should your program be cancelled.
2. Check in frequently with the Office of International Studies and consult the DOS and CDC Travel Advisory lists regularly as you apply to study abroad. You may find these at the Web sites listed below. www.travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html
wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx
3. **Become familiar with the refund policy deadlines of the program(s) to which you are applying and be aware of the financial implications to you and your parents should the program be cancelled.**
4. Although Goucher will not withhold approval of study and internship programs in **Travel Alert** or **Travel Health Precaution** countries, Goucher students are **strongly advised** to use caution and will be asked to sign a Special Release and Hold Harmless Agreement.

VI. Request for Exemption

To prepare a request for exemption under Section V of this policy, students must present the following information in writing to the Office of International Studies:

1. Details about the geographic environment of the program and its relationship to security and health issues.
2. Information about the travel advisories or warnings of other countries about the country under the U.S. Department of State's Travel Warning or CDC Travel Health Warning.
3. A detailed description of the preparation the students will receive during orientation provided by the program to prepare them for security and health-related issues (with detailed examples).
4. Details about the local support structure on site.
5. The academic relevance of the program to the students' degree programs and/or the importance of the presence of the students to the program itself (e.g. the impact of their contributions locally).
6. Alternative programs that have been considered and why they were not chosen by the student.

If OIS denies the petition for an exemption, the student may submit a written appeal to the Provost within seven days of the decision. The appeal should include the above information, as well as any additional information the student would like the Provost to consider. The Provost will decide whether to grant the exemption. The Provost's decision is final and may not be appealed.