

Policy on Overseas Travel to High Risk Destinations for Undergraduate MBBS Students

A. BACKGROUND

Following recent world events involving terrorism, a number of MBBS students have sought advice from the Faculty about advisability of travel to certain overseas destinations and the associated insurance implications.

In general, the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing & Health Sciences acts on advice issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in respect of the level of safety of overseas destinations. DFAT advice about individual countries contains descriptions of the current level of safety and makes recommendations about particular activities, places and circumstances under which varying degrees of caution should be exercised (refer <http://www.dfat.gov.au/travel/index.html>). DFAT offers various advice depending on the level of risk that has been assessed, ranging from a reminder to be aware of personal safety, to a recommendation not to travel at all for countries with the highest level of risk.

Current DFAT advice about travel to certain destinations continues to recommend that Australians defer non-essential travel. This has given rise to a number of requests from students for clarification of what constitutes “essential” travel, the insurance implications of travelling despite a DFAT warning to the contrary, and the circumstances under which an exemption may be granted to travel to destinations deemed by DFAT to be high risk.

This paper sets out the Faculty’s policy for making decisions about the advisability of travel by Faculty undergraduate MBBS students for University-related purposes to high risk overseas destinations.

B. PRINCIPLES

- All Faculty decisions about whether a student should be permitted to travel to an overseas destination for University-related purposes must be based on advice from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).
- Determination of whether or not the travel is essential and exemptions from adhering to DFAT advice may only be made by the Associate Dean, MBBS Curriculum for undergraduate MBBS students.
- Special circumstances may apply to travel undertaken by International students.
- A medical student cannot be required to travel for University-related purposes to any destination for which DFAT has issued advice that Australians should not travel or reconsider their need to travel to that destination.
- Students who are overseas for University-related purposes are required immediately to comply with any direction given by the Associate Dean, MBBS Curriculum as a result of a change in the assessment of the level of safety of the particular overseas destination.

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- The Faculty will retain current and accurate information regarding the whereabouts and contact details of students travelling overseas for Faculty-related purposes and this information will be accessible at short notice.
- The Associate Dean, MBBS Curriculum is accountable for the implementation and oversight of this policy.

C. PROCEDURES

1. Decisions about whether a student should be permitted to travel to, or remain in, an overseas destination for the purpose of off-shore student exchange, work, study abroad or other University purposes must be based on advice from DFAT. The Associate Dean, MBBS Curriculum has responsibility for ensuring that decisions are made on this basis.
2. Except with prior approval of the Associate Dean, MBBS Curriculum, students will not be permitted to travel to, or remain in, for off-shore work or study conducted under the auspices of the University, any destination for which DFAT has issued advice that Australians should *reconsider their need to travel* or *not travel* to that destination.
3. Students who have had overseas Elective clinical placements approved on the basis of DFAT warnings at the time of application for approval of Elective, may have that approval revoked, should travel warnings from DFAT be upgraded to *reconsider your need to travel* or *do not travel* to that destination.
4. Permission to travel to a destination or remain in a destination against DFAT advisories will only be approved in exceptional circumstances.
5. In the case of a student planning to travel to, or remain in, a destination for which DFAT has issued advice that Australians should exercise caution or exercise a high degree of caution, the Faculty must ensure that the student takes due note of any DFAT warnings and advice and that an appropriate risk management strategy has been prepared. This strategy should include instructing students to register their in-country address and contact details with the nearest Australian diplomatic mission.
6. The Associate Dean, MBBS Curriculum may approve circumstances for travel for University-related purposes by an International student that is not based on DFAT advice, as follows:
 - (a) The travel destination is the student's home country or
 - (b) The student has been advised by his/her relevant home-country authority that travel to that destination represents a lower risk for nationals of that country than that indicated by the DFAT advice for Australian nationals.
7. The Associate Dean, MBBS Curriculum may approve travel for University-related purposes by an International student under the circumstances outlined in Clause 4.
8. The Manager, Clinical Curriculum Development has the responsibility for retaining current and accurate information regarding the whereabouts and contact details of students travelling overseas for University-related purposes. This information must be accessible for use by the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing & Health Sciences at short notice.
9. Any further queries about travel restrictions and related matters under this policy should be directed to the Associate Dean, MBBS Curriculum who will consult with others as required.

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10. Students at overseas destinations in pursuance of University activities must comply immediately with any direction given in the interests of their safety by the Associate Dean, MBBS Curriculum or other senior Faculty Officer.

D. MAINTAINING CURRENT RECORDS

1. The Manager, Clinical Curriculum Development has responsibility for maintaining an accurate and current database of DFAT advice for overseas destinations that is accessible to all students and for providing advice about, and communicating any changes in, DFAT advice to students.
2. Students are responsible for furnishing the Manager, Clinical Curriculum Development with details of travel itineraries and contact details for students travelling overseas for University-related purposes.
3. The Manager, Clinical Curriculum Development is responsible for retaining current and accurate information regarding the whereabouts and contact details of students. This information must be accessible for use by Faculty staff on a need-to-know basis at short notice.

E. INSURANCE

1. Currently no country is excluded from the University's insurance policy, regardless of the level of warning issued by DFAT. This position may be subject to change. The Manager, Risk Management and Planning is responsible for providing immediate advice of any change in relation to this.
2. The current University insurance policy excludes claims resulting from "acts of war" including civil war. This may include demonstrations or civil protests relating to declarations of war.
3. Students should contact the Manager, Risk Management and Planning for further advice regarding insurance.

F. ACCOUNTABILITY

1. The Associate Dean, MBBS Curriculum and Manager, Clinical Curriculum Development are accountable for the implementation of, and compliance with, this policy in their Faculty unit. Accountability extends to ensuring that travel taken by themselves for a University-related purpose is consistent with the principles and procedures set out above.
2. The Manager, Clinical Curriculum Development is responsible for communicating this policy to students.
3. The Associate Dean, MBBS Curriculum is accountable for ensuring that this policy is communicated to students.

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