



Overseas Travel Policy

Fieldwork and Other Off-Site Activities Policy Statement

1. Policy Statement

The London School of Economics and Political Science ('the School' or LSE) recognises that its future as one of the world's leading social science universities hinges on its ability to support creative thought and intellectual exploration.

LSE recognises that its education, research and engagement activities are to be supported and promoted wherever possible and practicable. Accordingly, LSE accepts that staff and students must be enabled (within reason) to travel overseas, including sometimes to potentially challenging, complex or hostile environments.

All travel carries a degree of risk. In some locations, political, economic or social challenges may produce violence, insecurity or disorder. In others, authoritarian governments may regard independent academic research with suspicion. Such factors may have direct impact on a traveller's physiological or emotional health. They may also have wider implications for the School's finances, reputation and ability to attract new talent.

With the School's focus on social sciences, in which research and fieldwork is often ethnographic and qualitative in nature, the level of risk exposure is defined not just by location, but also by the nature of the activity – and, in some cases, by who is performing it. It is a question of 'what are we doing' (and perhaps 'what is our profile') as well as 'where are we doing it'.

Whilst it is not possible to eliminate these risks entirely, LSE has an obligation to ensure that they are being minimised as far as reasonably practical. This is not only driven by legal requirements stipulated under the *Health & Safety at Work Act 1974* and other UK laws, but also by the School's own Health and Safety Policy and the Ethics Code.

Purpose, Application & Scope

- 1.1. This policy lays the foundations for how LSE's commitment to provide reasonable care to its staff and students travelling overseas for LSE academic purposes is achieved. It aims to define the School's overarching strategy for the management of risk during overseas travel, so it can be minimised to within acceptable limits through a clear, consistent and standardised approach.
- 1.2. This policy applies to any student, researcher or staff member (henceforth referred to as traveller) from an LSE academic unit or professional services division who is travelling outside of the UK on work related activities, such as conducting fieldwork, attending a conference, meeting or teaching. It also applies to anyone who has any managerial oversight or who provides technical support and guidance for overseas travel.
- 1.3. The LSE Students' Union (LSESU), which is a separate legal entity, is not bound by this policy. Likewise, any traveller undertaking overseas travel that is independent of any official School business is not expected to adhere to this policy in full. However, in both circumstances, LSE encourages travellers, in both their own interest and that of the School, to conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent with the School's strategic approach to travel risk management.
- 1.4. Any deliberate breach of the policy by those to whom it applies may be considered a serious disciplinary matter, and addressed accordingly. The School reserves the right not to fund travel from internally provided research grants and allowances if individuals do not comply with the policy.

Typically, the School's sees two distinct types of travel. For the purposes of this policy, these are referred to as *Simple* and *Complex* travel.

- **Simple** travel is that which is largely brief and straightforward (e.g. attending a conference) and is such that the risks associated do not involve ethical considerations, research sensitivities or data collection methodologies.
- **Complex** travel is that which may involve a prolonged period of stay overseas, or where the risks associated are influenced by factors such as location, ethics, research design or the vulnerability of the traveller to unwelcome attention from the authorities or others in the host location.

Whilst this policy covers both types of travel, the School takes a different risk management approach to simple and complex travel. The differing approaches are set out in separate documents covering procedure.

Principles

The following principles underpin the School's approach to managing travel. They aim to foster a strong, consistent and coherent organisational culture for managing travel risk, and provide the basis for any measures that the School and its travellers may take to mitigate risk.

Prevention

The School's fundamental approach to managing the risks associated with travel is to anticipate what could go wrong and take steps to prevent or at least reduce harm. The School does not seek to avoid risks entirely, but does seek to protect travellers from exposure to undue risk. Key to this is good preparation. It is not acceptable for travel risk management to focus purely on reacting to incidents and emergencies when they occur.

Cooperation

Travel risks cover many different types of threat, vulnerability and impact. Given the complexities, the School seeks to foster collaboration and open communication between travellers and all others at the School who play a role in approving, facilitating or otherwise supporting travel. The School expects all members of its community to cooperate to this end.

Flexibility

Circumstances change, often rapidly. The School and its travellers must remain adaptive and flexible in their approach, and continuously aware of changes in the global environment.

Proportionality

The School aims to manage travel risk proportionately to the level of risk involved. Restrictions or other mitigation measures will only be put in place where they are necessary.

2. Risk Appetite

Travel will always entail some degree of residual risk (that is, risk remaining after reasonable mitigation measures have been put in place). However, some residual risks remain unacceptable under any circumstances.

- 2.1 Any decisions made by the School or its travellers should be guided by the following risk appetite statement:

LSE treats the safety, security, health and well-being of anyone travelling on School business with the utmost importance. The School will not approve any overseas travel where a high residual risk can be foreseen of:

- a traveller, or any of their interlocutors, suffering serious physical or psychological harm; or
- the School's finances, reputation or ability to attract new talent suffering serious damage.

LSE does not consider any of its overseas activities critical enough to warrant tolerating a greater level of residual risk, regardless of how important the need to travel may be in the opinion of the traveller, their manager or supervisor.

- 2.2 The School's risk appetite has been set by the School Management Committee (SMC). As such, any decision made to decline travel on the premise that it exceeds the School's risk appetite must be respected by all. However, in such cases, the School will encourage travellers and their

managers or supervisors to explore and propose alternative options for travel that will continue to achieve the intended purpose while respecting the School's risk appetite.

Review schedule

Review interval	Next review due by	Next review start
3 years		

Version history

Version	Date	Approved by	Notes
1.0	October 2017	SMC	

Contacts

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