

# 2014-2015 Safety Abroad Handbook

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**The Safety  
Abroad  
Office**



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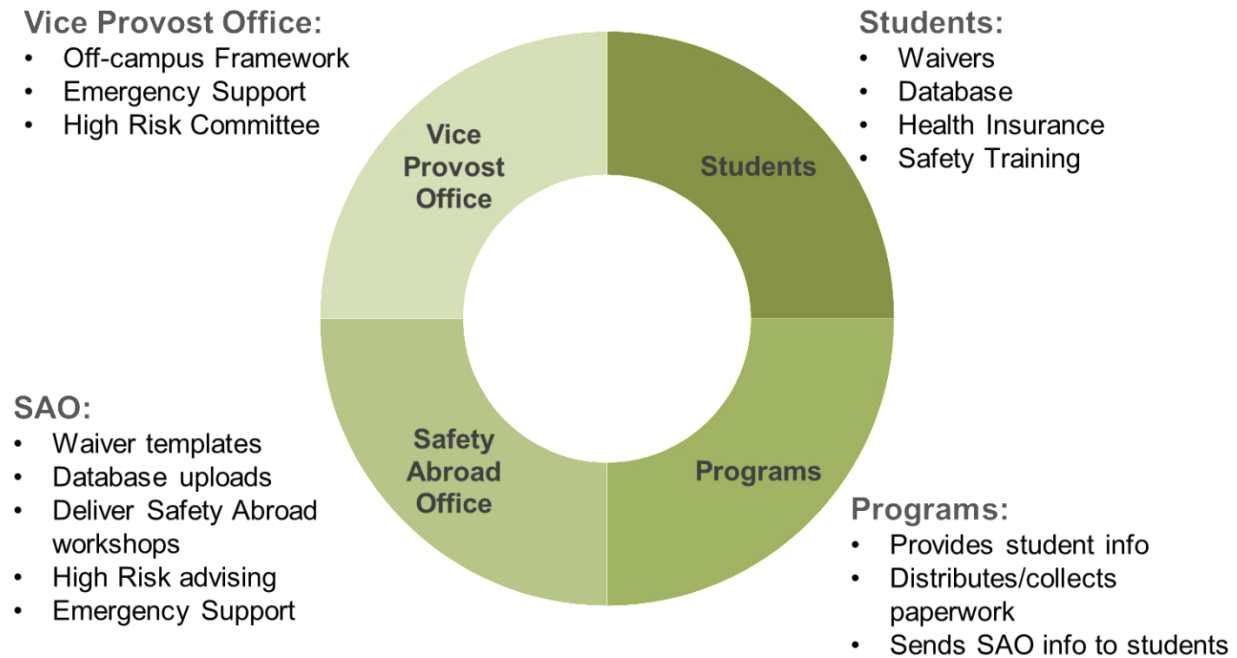
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# The Importance of Safety Abroad

International education opportunities can broaden our horizons, foster the development of new skills and add a fun and exciting element any university program. We at the Safety Abroad Office (SAO) want to help our students do just that. Maximizing time abroad, however, means helping students develop the tools and strategies they will need to navigate the health and safety risks of international travel. This handbook provides an overview of the policies and procedures associated with preparing students for University sanctioned travel along with an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of all University stakeholders.

## Safety is a Shared Responsibility

The safety of our students is a shared responsibility at the University of Toronto. As such, the Safety Abroad Office partners with a number of different departments to evaluate and manage cases to ensure our students’ well-being during their University-sanctioned travel. The following diagram provides a glimpse of the major players in the management of safety abroad:



## What is the Safety Abroad Office?

The Safety Abroad Office (SAO) proactively manages the safety of our students through all the stages of a student’s travel experience. Using the University of Toronto’s Safety Abroad Guidelines (SAG) to guide our work, the SAO performs outreach, interprets policy, supports staff and faculty as they prepare students for international travel and offers emergency support to students in crisis. While no excursion is 100% risk-free, this strategy has helped students develop the tools and tactics they need to minimize risk during their time abroad. The results of these efforts speak for themselves. As of 2014, the SAO works with more than 6,000 students in 130+ departments across all three University of Toronto campuses.

Together, the Safety Abroad team spends the majority of their time focused on how to preform Outreach, Interpret Guidelines, Support Staff and Faculty and Provide Emergency Assistance. Alongside these responsibilities, the SAO has a three-pronged approach to mitigating risks and supporting students while they are abroad.

- **Mitigate Risk:** Waivers, training, tracking on the Safety Abroad Database
- **Provide Support:** 24-hr emergency support, monitoring DFATD security updates
- **Repatriate:** Debrief sessions, access to CAPS and other resources

### *Meet the Team*

The Safety Abroad Office includes three full-time staff who work together to manage the safety component of a student's time abroad; our team members are:



**Laura Wood, Director, Safety Abroad**

Laura practices what she preaches with 15 years of international experience. Having studied at Queen's in Canada and at Cambridge in the UK, she has also lived in France, worked in Germany, researched Pitjantjatjara in Australia, taught foreign aid workers in South Africa and worked for the Directorate General for Education & Culture at the European Commission in Belgium. After six years as Rotman's Director, International and time leading Mitacs' international expansion, Laura joined the CIE to work with students who want to explore areas off the beaten path.

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**Chat with Laura about:** High risk travel & emergencies



**Julienne Lottering, Safety Abroad Advisor**

Having lived in South Africa, France, Italy and the Netherlands, Julienne has a wealth of firsthand experience in understanding the opportunities and challenges associated with transitioning from one culture to another. With more than 40 countries and 5 languages under her belt, she has developed a toolkit that she uses to prepare thousands of students in over 120 departments across all three campuses of the University of Toronto.

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**Chat with Julienne about:** Guidelines, high risk travel processes & student support



**Lourdes Calderon-Ortiz, Safety Abroad Officer**

Formerly of the Faculty of Nursing, Lourdes spent time on the front line of the CIE’s Student Exchange Program Office working with students looking to internationalize their academic program. Now the Safety Abroad Officer, Lourdes works tirelessly to ensure that all i’s are dotted and all t’s are crossed in the Safety Abroad Database and all our preparatory documents.

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**Chat with Lourdes about:** Our database, documents & general inquiries

## The Safety Abroad Guidelines

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The [Safety Abroad Guidelines](#) (SAG)] were created in collaboration with the Vice Provost’s Office to provide a framework for evaluating international travel at it relates to UofT students. All faculty or staff members who support students who travel as part of a University-sanctioned activity should reference the guidelines to better understand the roles, responsibilities and procedures associated with preparing students to travel. Failing to comply with the guidelines could result in serious consequences, such as the loss of student funding, credit or even emergency assistance.

### *What is a University-Sanctioned Activity?*



Any student who travels abroad under the University of Toronto banner is participating in a University-sanctioned activity. These activities may include, but are not limited to opportunities that are part of a student’s academic program (either for credit or for research), that involve funding from the University to support the travel or that are as informal as a student making use of their professor’s relationships with partner institutions overseas.

In short, a University-sanctioned activity includes those where students travel outside of Canada and receive:

## How Do I Get Started?

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We get it. Navigating the policies and procedures, understanding which form to use and knowing what information to provide can be complicated. This section provides a step-by-step look at what students, staff and faculty must undertake to prepare students for travel.

### *Program or Department Registration... Which Path Do I Choose?*

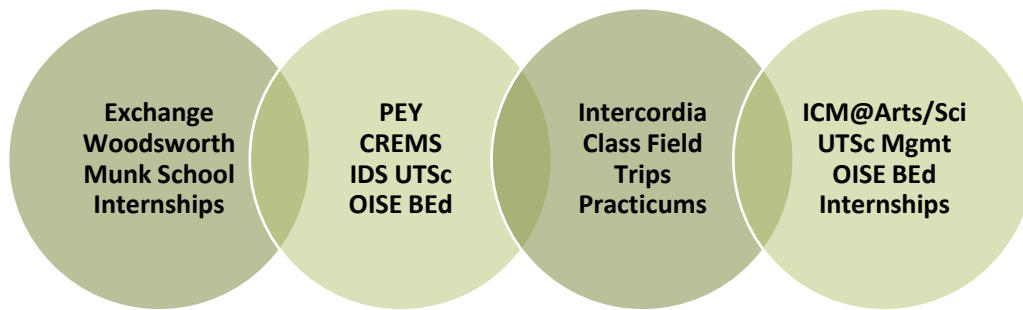
One size does not fit all and so the SAO has created two paths by which staff and faculty can register and prepare their students. While both paths lead to the same goal (i.e. a student who has completed all of the Safety Abroad requirements), the workflow to achieve that goal may be quite different. For that reason, it is important that students, staff and faculty understand the criteria for each path to ensure they make an informed decision on how to proceed.

### Path #1: Program Travel Registration

A trip requires Program Travel Registration if:

- 1) A UofT representative selects the participants and/or contributes to the coordination of the student's travel.
- 2) A student travels as part of a group on the same trip or participates in activities that are similar or at the same time of year as other students even if they travel to different destinations.

Examples of Program Travel Registration include:

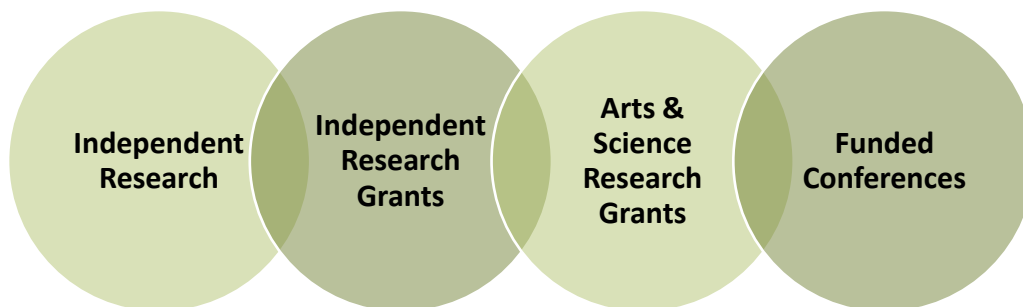


### Path #2: Department Travel Registration

A trip is considered to require Department Travel Registration if:

- 1) A student participates in travel that they themselves have organized; travel is often alone and/or at unpredictable times within the year.

Examples of Department Travel Registration include:



### *Workflow for Path #1: Navigating the Procedures for Program Travel Registration*

The SAO recognizes that programs often offer 'high touch' service to their participants and so don't require much support from our team. For this reason, we have created the Program Travel Registration pathway. This pathway provides staff with a great deal of flexibility when preparing their students for international travel and ensures that they, as the program administrators, remain the main point of contact throughout.

## Steps for the Program Travel Registration Pathway

The following steps are important for students who fall under the Program Travel Registration pathway; the workflow diagram on page 8 provides an overview of this process:

- 1) The program selects the participants who will travel as part of their group.
- 2) Using the SAO Excel template as a guide, the program staff will collect information about each student to send to the SAO for batch upload:
  - a. This begins the registration process and provides participants with a link to the Safety Abroad Workshops and waiver for the students to complete.
- 3) Students are expected to register for the appropriate Safety Abroad Workshop, where their attendance will be noted, and then asked to sign the waivers upon completion.
- 4) Waivers will go back to the student's program office for filing.

**Note:** The SAO will give staff an Excel template so that student information can easily be added; we can then batch upload it to the database.

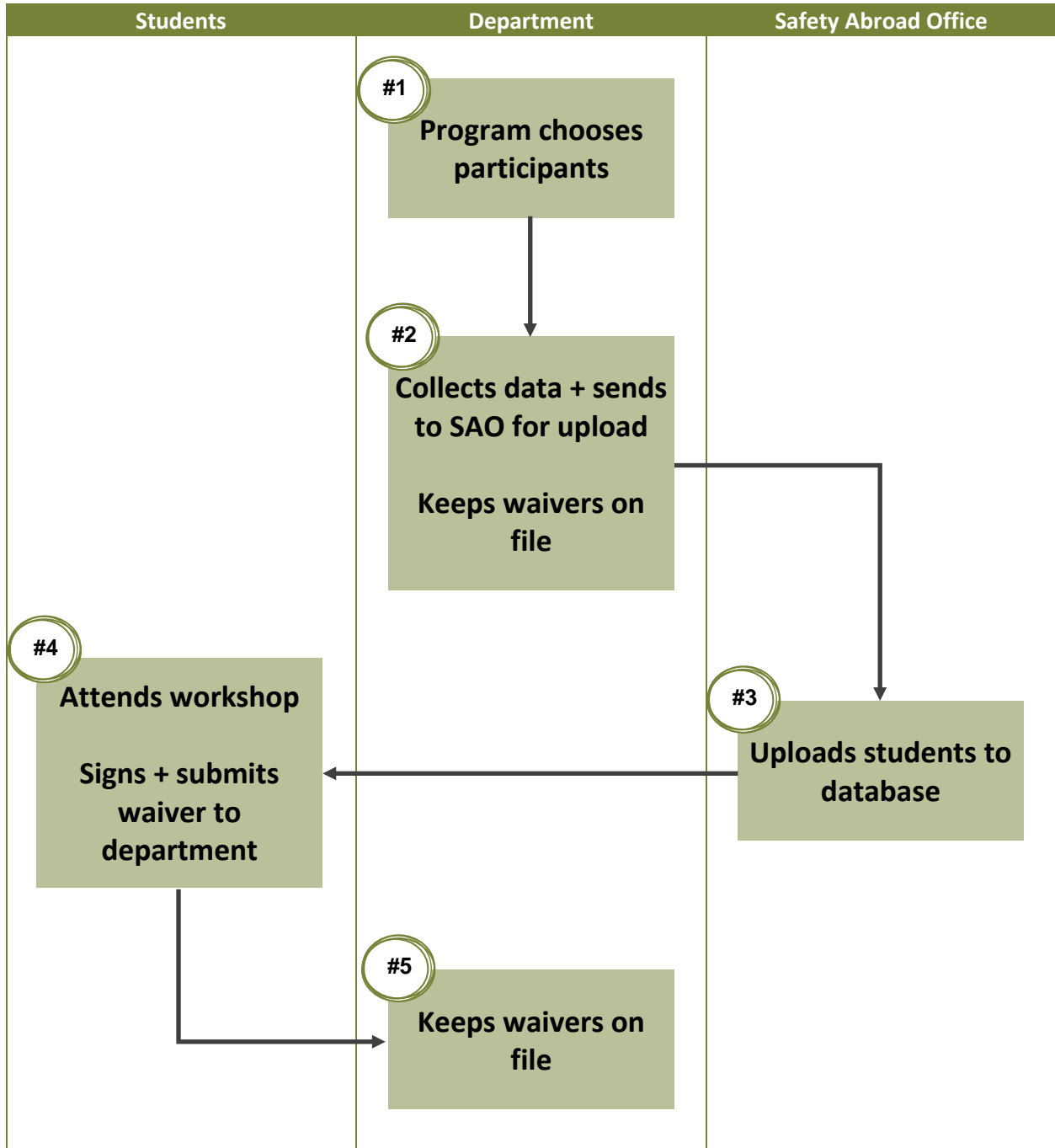
## Program Travel Registration Pathway Checklist

Program staff are encouraged consult the following checklist:

- **Database:** The best way for programs to add a student is to [fill in this excel sheet](#) and forward it to the SAO to batch upload.
- **Waivers:** Customizable templates are available and can be found [here](#) or we can email them to you.
- **Safety Abroad Workshop:** Specific group sessions can be organized for large special interest groups, otherwise students can register for our general session through [here](#).
- **Travel Health Insurance:** Programs are responsible for monitoring that students have completed their SAO database profiles and, most importantly, secured and submitted their health insurance.

### 5-step Program Travel Registration Pathway

The following chart outlines the 5-step pre-departure preparation through the Program Travel Registration pathway:





## *Workflow for Path #2: Navigating the Procedures for Department Travel Registration*

Students often travel in a far less structured way whether it be for independent study, research, internships or conferences. With this type of trip, students take on more responsibility for the planning and preparation while departments play a much smaller role in the process. While departments do not coordinate the student's travel itinerary, it is important that they know

### Steps for Department Travel Registration

The following steps are important for students who fall under the Department Travel Registration pathway; the workflow diagram on page 10 provides an overview of this process:

- 1) Students trigger the registration process by completing an [online form](#) on the Safety Abroad website.
- 2) A notification will then be sent to the SAO and the department contact. Once the SAO has received this request to register, SAO staff will add the student to the SAD.
- 3) The SAO will then send the waiver and Safety Abroad Workshop link to the student via email.
- 4) Students must attend the SAW, where attendance will be taken and then they must sign and submit the waiver to the SAO.
- 5) Once the waiver has been verified, the SAO will send the waiver to the student's home department for filing.

**Note:** Students should be directed toward the SAO website for the online form. All waivers have blanks so that students can customize them to account for the specifics of their program.

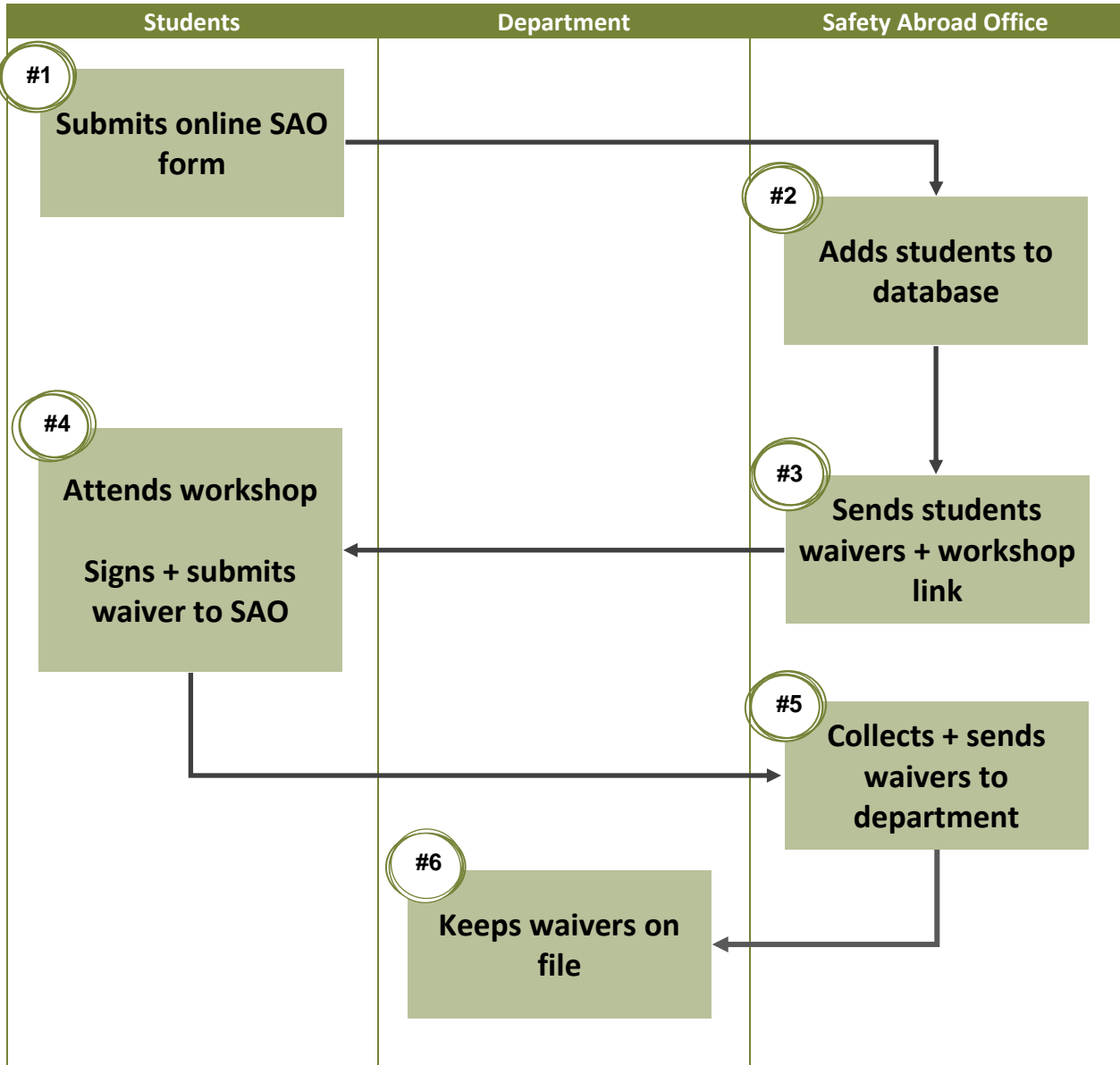
### Department Travel Registration Pathway Checklist

Department staff are encouraged consult the following checklist:

- [Online Registration Request form](#) for students to fill in
  - The SAO will register you and send you a confirmation email, you can then sign on to the [Safety Abroad Database](#) and fill in your profile completing Emergency Contact, Passport and Travel Health insurance information
- **Safety Abroad Workshop:** Specific group sessions can be organized for large special interest groups, otherwise students can register for our general session through [here](#).
- **Travel Health Insurance:** The Safety Abroad Office will monitor the completion of students' health insurance in the database.

### 6-step Department Travel Registration Pathway

The following chart outlines the 6-step pre-departure preparation through the Department Travel Registration pathway:



## High Risk Travel

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As a publically funded institution, the University of Toronto refers to **The Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD)** to assess the risks associated with a particular country. These DFATD country advisories put a country or region into one of four categories:

- 1) Exercise normal security precautions.
- 2) Exercise a high degree of caution.
- 3) Avoid non-essential travel.
- 4) Avoid all travel.

The Safety Abroad Guidelines permit all students to go to level 1 and 2 countries. However, travel to countries that fall into levels 3 or 4 is restricted to graduate students and, even in these situations, a student must make a strong case to be granted permission to travel to higher risk destinations under the auspices of the University. Advisories are updated daily and available on the DFATD website; [click here](#) or visit this url: <http://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories> to determine the level of a particular destination country.

### *Making a case to travel to a high risk destination*

Graduate students interested in traveling to a level 3 or 4 country are encouraged to work closely with their supervisor, department and the SAO to develop their case. As part of their proposal, they will need to demonstrate that:

- 1) They are familiar with the destination country/region.
- 2) Their supervisor understands their role and they are supportive of the student's travel plans.
- 3) This work is academically linked to the student's work in such a way that they need to travel in order to complete their graduate work.

**Please note:** The approval process for high risk travel is not taken lightly and timelines for approval are variable. As such, alternative travel plans should be considered while case is being stated and reviewed.

### Steps to Requesting Permission to travel to high risk destinations

Students interested in traveling to high risk destinations should consider the following steps in preparing their case:

- 1) **Meet with SAO:** Students should contact SAO to understand guidelines and how to make a case for high risk travel.
- 2) **Make the case:** Student must complete Risk Assessment Form in order to prove familiarity with region, academic necessity, high risk travel health insurance, communication plan, evacuation plan, etc.
- 3) **Review by SAO:** SAO reviews to ensure that all requirements outlined by the Safety Abroad Guidelines have been addressed.
- 4) **Approvals:** SAO will forward case to the Supervisor and the Chair of the Department on behalf of the student. In some cases, documents will be required to be reviewed by the Office of the Vice Provost. Once approved, the student moves on to regular register process.

For more information about high risk cases, please contact our office at: [safety.abroad@utoronto.ca](mailto:safety.abroad@utoronto.ca).

## How we have helped students in the past

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The Safety Abroad Office proactively monitors the safety of our students by keeping a close eye on changes in country advisories by DFATD and security updates shared by other Universities across North America. In addition, the SAO offers a 24/hr emergency number, triaged by Campus Police, that is accessible to students should they have a personal emergency abroad. If there is an emergency we ask all staff and faculty to forward relevant information to our office so that we can ensure the Emergency Guidelines are followed and that communication is streamlined. In the case of a national emergency (ie. Tsunami in Japan), we welcome requests for information, but recommend communication to the students continues to come from the Safety Abroad Office to ensure consistency.

In short, the SAO can help students:

- Find the right resources for visa inquiries
- Track and/or replace lost or stolen passports
- Find secure housing if security is breached
- Find legal support and counselling for sexual harassment
- Assist in finding support for mental or physical health
- Evacuate a particular country/region during national emergencies
- Access help through the 24-hour Emergency line which takes collect calls

## FAQs: We Know You've Got Some!

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We Thought You'd Never Ask...

**1. I work with the XXX, should I follow the 'Program' or 'Department' pathway?**

Your SAO pathway depends on whether the department is organizing the trip and choosing participants or if students are organizing a trip on their own and travelling independently. If you have reviewed the "how do I get started" section and still have questions please call us and we can recommend a pathway for you.

**2. My students are going to the USA, do they really have to attend a Safety Abroad Workshop (SAW)?**

Yes. We recognize that the USA is relatively safe and quite similar to Canada, but bad things can happen anywhere. Passports get stolen, hurricanes ravage the coastal areas and terrorist attacks do take place on American soil. Our SAW: USA provides important risk mitigation information while considering the USA's proximity to Canada in terms of geography and culture.

**3. One of my undergraduate students would like to do research in one of DFATD's high risk zones that he has visited many times, can he go?**

No, the Safety Abroad Guidelines state that undergraduate students are not permitted to travel to any region that is considered to be high risk according to the DFATD country advisories.

**4. When should students start the registration process?**

Students should start this process 6-8 weeks (and no less than one month) before their intended departure to allow enough time to address accommodation requests, vaccinations and complete all requirements. For high risk cases, the preparatory phase is far more robust and so it may take longer for students and their departments to complete the necessary

requirements; in these cases, students should contact the SAO as soon as possible.

**5. Do students have to complete a waiver every time they travel?**

Yes, students must submit a completed waiver and update the Safety Abroad Database for each new trip abroad.

**6. We don't always know when our students are going to travel... how do we keep track?**

We recognize that it can be difficult to know when students are on the move, so the Safety Abroad Office has created an email template on our website. Students simply fill in a few important details about their trip, which will prompt an email to your departmental representative's office alerting them to upcoming travel.

**7. How can I make sure that I don't miss any of the details in my messaging to students?**

We know it can be difficult to keep track of the nuances of policies and procedures and so the Safety Abroad Office has created email templates that you can use to send to students, staff and faculty to highlight the important information.

**8. Do students have to attend a Safety Abroad Workshop every time they travel?**

A general Safety Abroad Workshop (SAW) expires after 1.5 years at which time students must contact us for a refresher. In cases where a student has attended the SAW: USA and then travels to another country, they should contact the SAO as they will need to augment that session with another. If in doubt, ask the student to contact the SAO.

## Appendix A: NTCSATAA: Navigating the Crazy Safety

### Abroad Terms And Acronyms

The Safety Abroad Office has a number of terms and acronyms that we use to describe the policies, procedures and sessions we run. Here are a few of the key terms to get you started:

Terminology	Abbreviation	Previously Known As	Description
<b>Safety Abroad Office</b>	SAO		The office responsible for securing the health and safety for students traveling abroad on any UofT activity.
<b>Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development</b>	DFATD	DFAIT	DFATD provides the country advisories which the SAO refer to when analyzing risk levels within a country.
<b>Activity Sponsor</b>	Programs and/or Departments		“Activity Sponsor” includes faculty and staff involved in sending students participating in UofT activities abroad.
<b>U of T Sponsored Activity</b>	Trip		Any activity where: a student is gaining credit or doing research; is funded by UofT; or sanctioned by UofT
<b>Safety Abroad Database</b>	SAD		The SAD allows us to track when and where students are abroad in case emergency assistance is required.
<b>Safety Abroad Workshop</b>	SAW	Pre-departure Orientation Session	This workshop is a mandatory requirement before students travel. It covers UofT policies and support overseas.
<b>High Risk Travel Request</b>	HRT Request	Field Research Planning Record or Out of Country Risk Assessment	This form must be completed by students requesting to go to “Avoid Non-Essential Travel” or “Avoid All Travel” areas designated by DFATD.
<b>Safety Abroad Waivers</b>	Waivers	Consent Form and/or Terms of Participation Form	Waivers are a mandatory requirement before students travel. These are customizable by activity sponsors and/or by students.