SAFEABROAD

SafeAbroad's

TRAVEL RISK MANAGEMENT
HANDBOOK

FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

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Contents

Executive Summary

While abroad, travelers embark on a transformative journey filled with new experiences, cultural immersion, and the inherent opportunities and risks of their environment; however, such risks can be mitigated with a dedicated travel risk management (TRM) program, which is designed to help international education program managers fulfill duty of care obligations.

Before the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, approximately 300 to 350 thousand U.S. students studied abroad annually.[1] As international travel resumes in the post-pandemic era, SafeAbroad analysts anticipate a significant surge in the number of students participating in international education programs, surpassing the pre-pandemic levels. These students rely on the support and resources provided by their sending universities to ensure their safety and well-being while abroad.

In response to this growing demand and the evolving legal landscape, international education program managers face increased responsibilities to protect the health, safety, and security of their travelers. It is essential to understand the current legal requirements surrounding international education and duty of care, as well as best practices for establishing a robust travel risk management program.[2]

Throughout this handbook, the term **program** includes any international education program, such as collegiate study abroad programs and third-party providers. The term **managers** refers to all who oversee these programs and are responsible for the safety and well-being of travelers on behalf of educational institutions. The term **travelers** encompasses all students and faculty who participate in institution-sponsored trips abroad.

This guide is designed to serve as a valuable reference for managers, offering insights and recommendations to ensure the safety and security of all travelers. By following the guidelines outlined in this handbook, managers can navigate the complexities of international education, foster a culture of preparedness, and provide a safe environment for travelers to embark on their educational journey abroad.

Creating a strong travel risk management plan begins with meticulous planning. Managers need to recognize the unique aspects of each travel destination, program, and university, tailoring risk mitigation measures accordingly. The handbook serves as a valuable resource, offering recommended strategies and protocols that enable managers to proactively address potential risks, enhance safety measures, and foster a culture of preparedness and vigilance among all stakeholders involved.

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[1] https://studyabroad.state.gov/value-study-abroad/study-abroad-data

[2] https://drj.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Travel-Risk-Management-Best-Practices-WorldAware-043019.pdf

Effective travel risk management is an ongoing process that requires continuous evaluation and adaptation. This handbook not only provides guidance for establishing a strong foundation but also emphasizes the importance of regular reviews, updates, and refinements. By actively engaging with industry best practices and staying informed about emerging trends, managers can ensure that their travel risk management efforts remain effective, efficient, and responsive to the evolving landscape of international education.

We actively invite members of the international community to bring their knowledge and expertise to the table and contribute to further editions of this handbook. By collaborating and sharing experiences and best practices, we can create a collective resource that reflects the diverse perspectives and insights of the international education community. To contribute or learn more about participation, please reach out to **safeabroad@safeabroad.org**.

Key Takeaways

1. **Duty of care** is the responsibility and legal obligation that an organization has in taking reasonable measures to protect and prioritize the safety of their travelers from any foreseeable threats when traveling abroad.[3] When preparing to send travelers abroad, universities must undertake the reasonable measures required to mitigate any potential risks for their travelers. Then, the travelers must be informed of and consent to the risks associated with traveling abroad.

2. Duty of care requirements can be fulfilled by implementing a **Travel Risk Management (TRM) program**. Travel risk management is the process of predicting, preventing, and responding to any potential risks to travelers. TRM programs require functional controls, which help ensure the safety of travelers on a daily basis, and enabling controls, which ensure the overall development and continuity of the program.

3. SafeAbroad has identified thirteen **domains** that play a crucial role in the successful implementation of a TRM Program. These categories work in tandem to create a comprehensive and holistic approach to fulfilling the duty of care and improving overall program safety and security.

Methodology & Purpose

Methodology

SafeAbroad conducted a review of best practices for travel risk management, with a focus on international education. This handbook incorporates lessons learned and best practices derived from a thorough, multi-source collection process, including:

- International TRM policies from 65 universities
- Pre-departure safety training from 36 universities

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[3] https://www.terradotta.com/blog.php?article=An-Inside-Look-At-Duty-Of-Care&year=2020&iid=53

- Private sector and NGO travel risk policies from 12 organizations
- Information and best practices from 6 government agencies and bureaus
- Information and best practices from 3 senior advisors and travel security consultants

Purpose

This guide intends to deliver the current best practices regarding TRM for international education. This report is not intended to be comprehensive, but to highlight the information and practices needed to apply TRM to international education programs. Managers can leverage this information to prepare proportionate risk-mitigating actions for their travelers.

Ensuring traveler safety is
the utmost priority for study abroad programs.

Duty of Care

Duty of care is the responsibility and legal obligation that an organization has in taking reasonable measures to prioritize the safety of their travelers and protect them from any foreseeable threats when traveling abroad.[4]

Over time, the concept of duty of care has evolved through a combination of policy, legislation, and legal precedent. To fulfill its duty of care, an organization must assess and mitigate any potential risks wherever foreseeable, and the travelers must give their informed consent to any risks throughout the course of their program.

Informed consent, a concept adapted from healthcare practices, refers to travelers being informed of and consenting to the risks associated with traveling abroad. Programs must provide this information, and travelers must demonstrate that they understand and are willing to accept the potential risks.[5]

Case Briefs

If universities do not meet their duty of care requirements, they may be considered negligent, and any damages may result in a lawsuit against the university. The following cases provide examples of legal action that can be taken against a university regarding the institution's ability, or lack thereof, to uphold its duty of care requirements and the legal precedents that have been established for international education programs.

Bloss v. University of Minnesota (1999)

Incident Summary
In 1999, the University of Minnesota sent travelers to the Cemanahuac Educational Community in Cuernavaca, Mexico. Students in the program were housed with host families about 3 miles from the Cemanahuac campus and used public transportation to get to and from the campus. While on her way to meet friends for a social meeting, one of the travelers was raped at knifepoint by a taxi driver. The student then sued the school for negligence because it did not provide housing closer to the campus, provide school-sponsored transportation, or warn travelers of the risks of using public transport.[6]

Court Decision
The University claimed it had statutory immunity because the student signed a waiver before going on the trip. The district court initially denied statutory immunity because the

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[4] https://www.nycbar.org/get-legal-help/article/personal-injury-and-accidents/duty-care/
[5] https://forumea.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Standards-of-Good-Practice-for-Education-Abroad-6th-Edition-2020.pdf
[6] https://casetext.com/case/bloss-v-university-of-minnesota

waiver was overbroad; however, this decision was overturned on appeal and it reinstated the University's claim of statutory immunity based on the signed waiver.

Precedent

The University was shielded from liability for negligence due to the signed waiver, highlighting the legal weight that waivers can carry in shaping the extent of a University's duty of care obligations.

King v. Board of Control of Eastern Michigan University (2002)

Incident Summary

During a five-week Intensive Educational and Cultural Program in South Africa in 1999, female travelers at Eastern Michigan University (EMU) were harassed by three male EMU travelers. Despite bringing their complaints to the faculty coordinator on the trip, nothing was done about the harassing behavior, and ultimately nine travelers left the program early. Six of these women filed a suit claiming they were subject to illegal discrimination based on sex and sexual harassment, and the University had an obligation to address and cease the actions of the defendants.[7]

Court Decision

The court ruled that the defendants denied the plaintiffs access to the program, through consistent sexual harassment. The court also ruled that since the trip was sponsored by an institution that received federal funding, Title IX rules applied even though the incident occurred in a foreign country. The court ultimately decided that Eastern Michigan University was responsible for addressing and stopping the defendant's behavior. Since they did not, the school was in violation of Title IX.

Precedent

Schools and Institutions that receive federal funding are responsible for enforcing Title IX rules and regulations even when in foreign countries.

Tezca v. University of San Francisco (2013)

Incident Summary

Jason Tezca, a student in law school at the University of San Francisco, took part in a university study abroad program in Europe in 2007. During the trip he alleged that his disability was wrongfully revealed, therefore violating his privacy. While at the main campus of the university, he was granted accommodations for attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), which included longer times on tests and a secluded testing area. However, while studying abroad, he faced difficulties in securing the appropriate accommodations for his disabilities, and his disabilities were allegedly exposed to fellow travelers during the trip.[8]

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[7] https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/FSupp2/221/783/2486385/
[8] https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/appellate-courts/ca9/10-16270/10-16270-2013-06-25.html

Court Decision

The district court first dismissed Tezca's case. On appeal, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit accepted one of three claims, the defendant breached the contract with the plaintiff. The appellate court argued that a contract between Tezca and USF existed and USF was responsible for following student confidentiality guidelines.

Precedent

Universities are responsible for following all guidelines set by their disability services, even when travelers are abroad.

Boisson v. Arizona Board of Regents (2015)

Incident Summary

Morgan Boisson, an undergraduate student at the University of Arizona, participated in a study abroad program established by UA and the Arizona Board of Regents in 2009. While in China, Morgan and other travelers took a side trip to Tibet and made arrangements with a separate tour company. Morgan developed altitude sickness while visiting the Mount Everest base camp and died. His mother brought a wrongful death suit against UA and the Board.[9]

Court Decision

In a unanimous decision, a panel of the Court of Appeals affirmed that public universities or institutions generally don't have a special relationship or duty to prevent travelers from harming themselves or others, unless there are specific circumstances that establish such a duty. The court held that this trip was not an off-campus school activity by examining a number of legal factors, such as whether the activity was part of a course curriculum and whether the risk encountered by the travelers was independent of school involvement. The case highlighted that a university's duty of care to its travelers is limited, and the court ruled that universities are not typically responsible for protecting travelers from their own actions, including their expression of ideas or beliefs, unless there's a direct and foreseeable threat to safety.

Precedent

International education programs bear a distinct but limited duty of care towards their travelers; Universities are not liable for travelers' individual actions and may not be held accountable if an incident arises that is separate from the program's context.

Munn v. Hotchkiss School (2017)

Incident Summary

In 2007, Cara Munn, a student at the Hotchkiss School in Connecticut, contracted a tick-borne disease while on a school-sponsored study abroad program in China. This

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[9] https://caselaw.findlaw.com/az-court-of-appeals/1694245.html

disease caused severe brain damage, and Cara lost the ability to speak and control her facial muscles. Her family then sued the school for negligence.[10]

Court Decision

The court found that the defendant did not warn the plaintiff, and other travelers, about the risks of contracting insect-borne diseases, and the Munn family was awarded $41.5 million.

Precedent

Schools are responsible for warning travelers about foreseeable health and disease risks of their destinations and taking reasonable measures to mitigate these risks.

Doe v. Rhode Island School of Design (2019)

Incident Summary

In 2016, Jane Doe participated in a study abroad program in Ireland organized by the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). During the first night, Jane Doe was sexually assaulted by an unknown man while in her bedroom. Jane's bedroom did not have a lock on the door, which allowed John entry in the middle of the night. Jane Doe sued RISD for not providing safe and secure housing during the program. Further investigation showed that a similar event occurred in 2013, and no subsequent changes were made to housing.[11]

Court Decision

The court ruled that the defendant was negligent towards the plaintiff and awarded Jane $2.5 Million. The court found that the defendant owed the plaintiff a duty of care in providing secure housing, and it breached its duty of care by not ensuring travelers could lock their doors. The court concluded that the breach of duty of care led to Jane's injuries.

Precedent

Universities have a duty to warn travelers about potential risks and offer strategies for mitigation, and negligence standards can be applied to instances involving third-party sexual assault and misconduct.

Travel Risk Management Standard ISO 31030

Published by the International Standardization Organization in 2021, **ISO 31030** is the new universal guideline for TRM. ISO 31030 provides a structured approach to the development, implementation, and evaluation of TRM. It also reviews policy, program development, threat identification, opportunities and strengths, risk assessment, and mitigation strategies.[12]

One of the key focuses of ISO 31030 is Travel Risk Treatment, which offers detailed guidance on

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[10] https://www.lexisnexis.com/community/casebrief/p/casebrief-munn-v-hotchkiss-sch
[11] https://casetext.com/case/doe-v-ri-sch-of-design-1
[12] https://www.iso.org/standard/54204.html

best practices for managing travel risks. These include:

- **Risk Avoidance:** Implementing pre-travel authorizations and travel restrictions to minimize exposure to high-risk areas or activities.

- **Risk Sharing:** Utilizing insurance solutions to share the financial burden of potential travel-related incidents.

- **Risk Reduction:** Implementing proactive measures, including careful selection of accommodations and transportation, access to medical and security support services, and thorough incident planning to lessen the impact of travel-related incidents.

To support ongoing improvement and effectiveness, ISO 31030 highlights the importance of communication and consultation, ensuring travelers and stakeholders are well-informed about risks and safety measures, and regular program monitoring and review through surveys, benchmarking, and metrics. Proper documentation and reporting of policies, procedures, and incidents related to TRM are also emphasized to maintain accountability, transparency, and continuous learning. By incorporating these elements into the TRM program, organizations can enhance their ability to protect travelers and respond effectively to travel-related risks and emergencies.

Furthermore, ISO 31030 emphasizes the essential role of leadership in developing plans and policies to protect travelers. Strong leadership involvement is vital in providing direction, support, and commitment to ensure the effective implementation of the TRM program. Leaders help foster a culture of safety and risk awareness within the organization, ultimately safeguarding the well-being of travelers during their journeys.

Although ISO 31030 is not legally binding, managers should follow ISO 31030 guidelines to fulfill their duty of care requirements. Recent legal cases regarding duty of care have elevated the responsibilities of programs to ensure the safety and security of their travelers. Following the guidelines established by ISO 31030 will establish a solid foundation for fulfilling these increasing duty of care expectations.

Fulfilling Duty of Care

To fulfill their duty of care, programs must go beyond the fundamentals of standard pre-departure training, and basic risk monitoring from the State Department.

Implementing a TRM program that is intelligence-driven (such as the one detailed below) will increase traveler safety and security and improve the quality of the program as a whole.
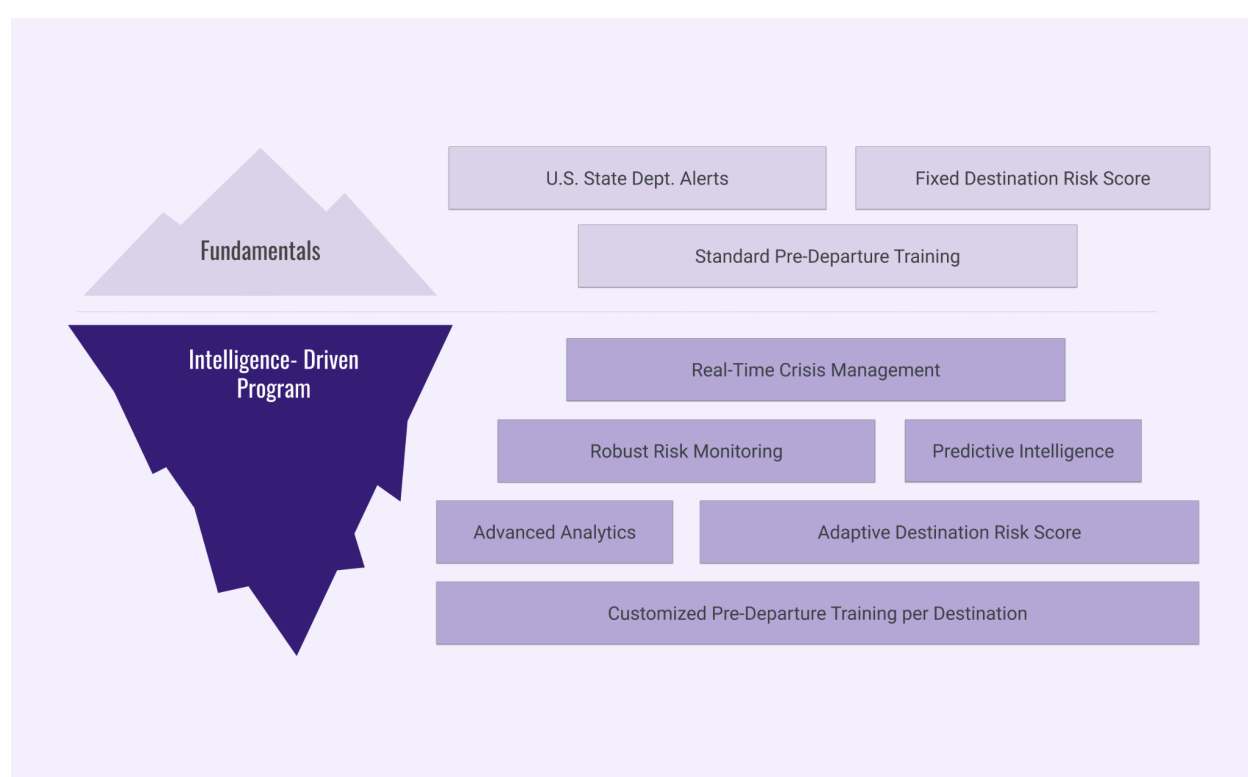
Risk Management and Preparedness

Effective program management relies on dynamic risk management strategies. Adaptive destination risk scores are paramount in ensuring a proactive approach to risk mitigation. These scores evolve with changing circumstances, allowing managers to stay ahead of emerging threats. Additionally, customized pre-departure training tailored to each destination equips travelers with crucial knowledge and safety protocols, preparing them for the diverse challenges they may encounter.

Enhanced Monitoring and Response

The key to comprehensive risk management is swift and well-coordinated crisis management. Real-time protocols are essential to address security incidents abroad promptly. In tandem, robust risk monitoring enhanced by advanced analytics offers insights that fuel continuous improvement. By detecting trends and gaps, managers can fine-tune program health, safety, and security measures. Predictive intelligence, fueled by data-driven insights from risk assessments, empowers managers to foresee potential issues and take proactive steps to prevent or mitigate risks.

Continuous Improvement and Evaluation

Sustained program excellence requires a commitment to evaluation and adaptation. Advanced analytics enable regular assessments of program components. Cataloged policies pertaining to

international education, health, safety, and security provide a solid foundation for benchmarking and improvement. Moreover, post-travel debriefing sessions with returning travelers yield invaluable insights. These insights contribute to refining program features, reducing risk exposure, and enhancing the overall participant experience.

Collaboration and Additional Resources

A program's success lies not only in its strategies but also in its ability to collaborate. Engaging university stakeholders is essential for building a robust crisis response network. When university communities unite to support international education initiatives, the program's resilience is fortified. Furthermore, utilizing external resources and benchmarking against peer institutions provide additional avenues for optimization. By tapping into proportional external resources and lessons learned from peers, managers can enhance safety measures and program efficacy.

Establishing a Travel Risk Management Program

Travel risk management is the process of predicting, preventing, and responding to any potential risks to travelers.[13] TRM programs require functional controls, which help ensure the safety, health, and security of travelers on a daily basis, and enabling controls, which ensure the overall development and continuity of the program.

Travel Risk Management Program Framework

Functional Controls
Safety, Health, and Security Assurance Abroad

DES	📋	Destination Onboarding & Risk Assessment
PRE	✈️	Pre-Departure Safety Training
SEC	🛡️	In-Country Safety and Security
HTH	➕	Health and Wellness Programs
MON	🎯	Risk Monitoring and Threat Assessment
CRS	⚠️	Crisis Management, Response, and Recovery
DBF	💬	Traveler Debriefing

Enabling Controls
Program Management, Development, and Continuous Improvement

GOV	👥	Program Governance & Stakeholder Engagement
OPT	⚙️	Program Optimization & Continuous Improvement
TRN	💻	Team Training & Development
MET	📊	Metrics and Analytics
POL	📁	Policies and Documentation
EXT	🤝	External Partnerships

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[13] https://www.brown.edu/global/international-travel-risk-management

Functional Controls

Functional controls for travel risk management encapsulate seven domains meant to ensure the safety, health, and security of all travelers abroad, including:

1. Destination Onboarding & Risk Assessment
2. Pre-Departure Safety Training
3. In-Country Safety and Security
4. Health and Wellness Initiatives
5. Risk Monitoring and Threat Assessment
6. Crisis Management, Response, and Recovery
7. Traveler Debriefing

DES Destination Onboarding & Risk Assessment

Managers are **responsible** for their travelers from the moment they leave the United States to the moment they return; however, the most important steps to keeping those travelers safe should occur long before the travelers ever leave the country.

New and existing destinations should undergo a **risk assessment process** supported by current intelligence about the present risks and emerging threats to the destination. In-depth research should be conducted to assess the safety and stability of the destination country, and managers should initiate site evaluations for destinations, which involves visiting and assessing a campus, dormitory, or other university-sponsored locations prior to student travel. If travel to these destinations is approved, university policies and **emergency plans** should be outlined and practiced before travel begins.

Determining High-Risk Destinations

Every university should have quantifiable standards to determine the **risk level** of any travel destination. Third-party risk assessments and risk monitoring practices with an international education focus regarding local crime, civil unrest, transportation disruptions, healthcare concerns, terrorism, and economic & political stability for all destinations may be necessary to fulfill these standards. Site evaluations are a crucial component of determining high-risk international education locations, as they provide on-the-ground insights into the specific conditions and challenges that may not be captured in broader risk assessments. Should a destination prove to be **high risk**, the university must work to mitigate the risk, and properly inform travelers of the risks before travel, or must avoid travel to the destination.

Identifying Potential Dangers

Managers should leverage **risk monitoring** data to identify potential dangers in the specific area of study. This can include, but is not limited to, nearby crime hot spots, local sentiments towards Americans, environmental, political and economic risks, and health risks. Once potential risks in university-sponsored destinations are successfully identified, travelers should accept these dangers via **waivers**, and an exemption process must be developed for travel without program leaders and to heightened-risk destinations.

PRE Pre-Departure Safety Training

Pre-departure training informs travelers about the benefits and potential risks of studying abroad and provides best practices to avoid these risks. By addressing health, safety, and security concerns, this training facilitates an effortless transition for travelers and makes their trip more enjoyable. Pre-departure training should be mandatory for all travelers to ensure that all legal requirements, including duty of care, are met.

Preparing to Go Abroad

Effective pre-departure training should ensure travelers have everything they need and **feel prepared** to handle going abroad. Pre-departure training should list essential items for travelers to pack, including clothing for various weather events, necessary documentation for travel, and any school supplies required for coursework. Managers should also touch on the local language, customs, and laws to prepare travelers for the general travel experience.

Traveler Safety and Security

Pre-departure training should **inform** travelers about the likelihood of encountering incidents such as crimes, civil unrest, and terrorism in the designated area of study. **Emergency protocols** for various crises should be reviewed, and managers should instruct on topics such as financial, transportation, and accommodation safety. Travelers should be well-versed in the safety preparations required to plan **independent travel**, including documenting all travel and accommodations with managers.

Health and Wellness

Pre-departure training should inform travelers of differences in **healthcare** between countries and advise travelers on healthcare abroad, dealing with illnesses, and address the scenario of medical emergencies and how to resolve them quickly. The topic of culture shock and reverse culture shock should be explored in detail, as well as the implications for **mental health** when acclimating to a new environment.

SEC   In-Country Safety and Security

While travelers are abroad it is crucial to continue **monitoring** any potential threats including crime, scams, and security incidents. Any potential risks should be **communicated** to travelers as soon as possible, so they can avoid potentially dangerous areas or situations. Managers should have several avenues to contact travelers, including through mobile devices and email, and should offer security and safety support for travelers abroad.

Emergency Contacts and Support

All travelers should have access to a comprehensive list of **emergency contacts** in case of any unforeseen circumstances. This list should include university contacts, the nearest embassy or consulate, and local police, fire, or health services. Managers should ensure that all travelers register any independent travel with the sending organization and the **Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)** led by the U.S. Department of State. STEP helps U.S. embassies and consulates abroad recognize U.S. citizens, keep them updated with safety alerts about their destination country, and facilitate contact in case of emergencies. Additionally, documenting transportation and hotel information is crucial to ensuring safety while travelers are away from the specific international education location. It also makes it easier for managers to provide support during any potential emergencies or crises.

Tours of the campus and local area are an essential part of safety and security support for travelers. Managers should also provide evacuation maps to aid in emergency exits of buildings and facilities. Information on local **emergency services**, such as ways to recognize law enforcement and local laws and customs that are most likely to affect travelers, should be distributed soon after traveler arrival in the host country. A list of local safe havens should be included, with clear directions to access them from the main campus.

A **safe haven** is a place for travelers to go for safety or refuge in the event of an emergency.[14] Before travel, managers should be able to identify specific local safe havens and create a list that is easily accessible to travelers before and during travel. Potential safe havens can include local hospitals, police stations, other universities, churches, or community centers.

Additionally, managers should provide a comprehensive **healthcare briefing** that offers insights into the host country's healthcare system, mental health services, pharmaceutical accessibility, and potential health risks. Accessible mental health support is imperative, with on-site counseling services or partnerships with local professionals.

Safety Measures and Precautions

Safety surveys elicit feedback from travelers to gauge perceptions of safety and security while abroad, allowing managers to proactively identify risks and develop plans to mitigate the impact.

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[14] https://ready.army.mil/Safe%20Haven%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf

These work in tandem with routine **safety and security checks** throughout the duration of a cohort's stay on a campus abroad.

Managers should establish a strong rapport with the local community to offer student travelers a safe and trustworthy environment. Additionally, managers should conduct **due diligence checks** on third-party vendors with close contact with travelers abroad to ensure vendors have the appropriate licenses and certifications. A **security workforce** on campus provides extra security measures and acts as an additional resource for travelers, offering immediate assistance in case of emergencies.

Finally, managers should have an easily accessible list of common **safety practices**, such as not leaving personal items unattended and avoiding traveling alone at night, which travelers can reference at any point during their time abroad.

HTH Health and Wellness Initiatives

While health and safety are often prioritized, wellness is an equally crucial part of ensuring traveler well-being. Before sending travelers abroad, universities should provide essential **healthcare information**, including mental health resources, to equip travelers with the knowledge necessary to safeguard their health while in the host country and provide resources to ensure the mental health and wellness of travelers abroad.

Healthcare Briefing

Before going abroad, travelers should receive a briefing on various aspects of the host country's **healthcare system**. This includes detailing the capabilities of the local health facilities, availability of mental health services, accessibility to medicines and pharmaceuticals, and the potential risk of disease outbreaks in the region. Students should be informed about the common health issues prevalent in the destination country and educated on **safety precautions** to mitigate the risk of encountering such illnesses, including vaccination requirements to ensure travelers are adequately protected.

Accessible Mental Health Services

Universities should offer accessible **mental health services** and resources to travelers abroad. Recognizing that international travel and adjustment to a new environment can lead to increased **stress**, it is crucial to have proper support in place to address mental health concerns. Onsite counseling services or partnerships with local mental health professionals can provide travelers with the necessary support during challenging times. Furthermore, establishing off-campus support systems and emergency contact points can be beneficial for travelers who may feel more comfortable seeking assistance externally.

Addressing Stress and Culture Shock

Studying abroad often comes with significant changes and new challenges that may contribute to **stress** and **culture shock**.[15] By acknowledging potential stressors and addressing them proactively, universities can better prepare travelers for their time abroad. Whether through Pre-Departure training or other workshops, universities should provide strategies to cope with culture shock, provide resources for stress management, and offer tools to maintain emotional well-being while abroad. This can include workshops on mindfulness, cultural sensitivity, and self-care practices to promote resilience and adaptability.

Supporting Mental Health Disorders

If a traveler experiences mental health disorders such as anxiety or depression while abroad, universities must have appropriate **protocols** in place. This includes establishing clear communication channels for travelers to seek help or report their concerns, ensuring confidentiality and privacy when addressing mental health issues, and facilitating access to qualified mental health professionals. Collaborating with local healthcare providers or international counseling services can ensure travelers receive necessary care promptly.

Diversity & Traveler Identity

Universities must equip travelers with essential healthcare information for host countries and resources to maintain mental health abroad. Acknowledging **diverse traveler identities** is vital to this process, and promoting cultural competence and addressing unique challenges related to gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disabilities fosters an inclusive environment. Tailored resources for different identities empower all travelers to prioritize mental and emotional health during their international experiences.

Health Crisis Response Plans

Comprehensive health and wellness initiatives should include well-defined incident response plans that outline the steps to be taken in case of a **health-related crisis** or outbreak. These plans should provide travelers with clear guidance on whom to contact and how to seek immediate medical attention. Ensuring travelers are aware of emergency contact numbers, insurance coverage, and available resources for medical assistance will instill confidence and preparedness in case of a medical emergency.

Regular Check-ins and Monitoring

Universities should initiate regular **check-ins** to maintain communication with travelers abroad and monitor their well-being to offer ongoing support. Implementing check-ins through emails, phone calls, or virtual sessions enables travelers to voice any concerns and receive guidance

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[15] https://www.terradotta.com/articles/article-Mental-Health-11-24-17.pdf

when needed. Encouraging travelers to stay connected with their support networks back home can also contribute to their emotional and mental stability during their international education experience.

MON Risk Monitoring and Threat Assessments

Risk monitoring is the process of identifying any potential risks to travelers. Threat assessments are evaluations of risks to determine the potential impact on travelers. Both are essential to keeping travelers safe while abroad and fulfilling duty of care obligations.

Risk Monitoring

Continuous risk monitoring can be a proprietary or outsourced service that is 24/7, 9-5, or ad hoc and includes a risk escalation procedure in case of emergency. Part of this includes attention to indicators and clearly defined thresholds. An indicator is any precursor or warning that a situation that may impact the safety of travelers is likely to occur, whereas a threshold determines when an incident requires further action.[16] Comprehensive risk monitoring requires the establishment of a multi-channel communication system to inform travelers of risks, in which travelers should also have the ability to confidentially report safety/security incidents or express concerns.

Effective risk monitoring requires training university staff and officials to be responsible for continuous awareness and predictive risk analysis. Leveraging data and early warning indicators drives a program's ability to predict and/or track emerging incidents. Managers must access and frequently monitor gold standard sources and intelligence feeds of both the host country and the U.S. government to monitor developing situations, trends, and risks abroad.

Long-term monitoring focuses on permanent risks and long-term trends in a particular destination and is used to judge the overall safety of a destination and plan for possible responses and procedures. Sources for long-term monitoring can include, but are not limited to, government databases, international and local news organizations, and nongovernmental organizations. Short-term monitoring highlights temporary risks that are linked to a particular event. It can be used to ensure safety during a crisis and develop the best course of action. As short-term monitoring may involve covering real-time events, social media, and local news sources play a more prominent role than in long-term monitoring.

Threat Assessments

Once risks, potential indicators, and associated thresholds have been identified, managers should perform a threat assessment to properly determine any potential impact on travelers.

Threat assessments have 5 key steps:
1. Identify, research, and understand risks

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[16] https://technology.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/managing_project_risks_9_26_2016.pdf

2. Determine the severity and probability of risks

3. Assess all current measures to mitigate risks

4. Determine any potential gaps or vulnerabilities in plans of action

5. Document findings and provide recommendations to mitigate risks

Risk Management

After the risk has been identified and assessed, managers develop a **risk mitigation plan** to reduce the impact of unexpected events on travelers. Five mitigation techniques can be effective tools in reducing individual risks and the risk profile of the program.[17]

- **Risk avoidance:** Aim to eliminate any hazards that may pose harm to travelers. By removing the chance of the risk becoming a reality, this approach seeks to deflect as many threats as possible, effectively preventing their costly consequences. This may involve developing alternative strategies with higher costs but higher success probabilities or choosing proven and existing procedures over untested techniques, even if they may promise better performance or lower costs, to avoid the risk associated with unvetted approaches.

- **Risk acceptance:** Acknowledge potential risks associated with program activities, reflecting a willingness to tolerate certain levels of risk in pursuit of specific objectives. Institutions with a high level of confidence in their ability to manage and navigate adverse events may opt for risk acceptance when the perceived benefits of an activity outweigh the potential drawbacks; however, this approach requires a comprehensive understanding of the risks involved, careful consideration of their potential impact, and a commitment to absorbing any negative outcomes that may arise.

- **Risk sharing:** Collaborate with others to share responsibility for higher-risk activities by connecting with more stakeholders to turn the program into a joint venture. External partnerships allow managers to share the risk associated with the program is advantageous when the other stakeholders have experience that the manager may not. If a risk event occurs, the stakeholders and partnerships company absorb all or part of the negative impact of the event.

- **Risk mitigation:** Make a preemptive investment in the program to reduce future risks to travelers. Assigning high-risk management activities to highly qualified personnel is a common risk reduction method. For example, managers can hire experts to perform risk monitoring and threat assessments to increase confidence in the program's risk management plans. Experts can often anticipate more problems and find better solutions than those with less training in a given sector.

- **Risk transfer**: Shift risk from the manager to another party to reduce risk. A common

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[17] https://twproject.com/blog/risk-response-strategies-mitigation-transfer-avoidance-acceptance/

example of risk transfer is the purchasing of insurance, wherein risks can be transferred from the program to the insurance company. Purchasing insurance is usually in areas beyond the control of the program and manager, such as weather, political unrest, and strikes. Simply put, purchasing insurance is a risk transfer method that involves paying someone else to accept the risk.

While it may be impossible to anticipate every potential risk when laying the groundwork for an international education program, it is crucial to diligently identify and address as many risks as possible. Developing a comprehensive risk management plan from the outset is invaluable, as it ensures that travelers will be better prepared and protected during their time abroad.

CRS Crisis Management, Response, and Recovery

Crisis management is the process of preparing for, responding to, and recovering from a crisis.[18] As such, the crisis management functions of the program must be effective in handling risks abroad by taking action before, during, and after an emergency.

Crisis Preparation

Implementation of a **Crisis Management Team** is crucial to crisis preparation, as this team leads the development and execution of various risk mitigation strategies, and is essential to coordinate the flow of real-time information and mobilize resources during a crisis. A Crisis Management Team is composed of various stakeholders such as university personnel and management, legal counsel, travelers, parents or guardians of travelers abroad, emergency personnel in the host country, state department officials, and third-party support providers—all of whom should be involved in the crisis management functions of a program. Also referred to as the emergency operations center, this team acts as a dedicated location for program leadership to prepare for and respond to emergencies.

Crisis preparation is the most intensive stage of crisis management and builds off risk monitoring and threat assessments to identify potential risks and create mitigation strategies such as emergency protocols and incident response plans. **Emergency protocols** provide direct guidance to individuals affected by the crisis and those responsible for resolving it. They may involve measures such as evacuations, sheltering in place, and lockdowns. In developing emergency protocols, it is important to incorporate diverse perspectives to ensure comprehensive plans that address vulnerabilities. **Incident response plans** are detailed schemes that identify all tasks and action items during a particular type of incident and outline those on the crisis management team responsible for carrying out said tasks.

Make sure to develop thorough plans that are easy to follow during a crisis, and ensure that no critical steps are overlooked. Prioritize tasks and action items in the order in which they should be carried out, including a designated timeframe for completion.

[18] https://training.fema.gov/emi.aspx

While an incident response plan should cover a wide variety of incidents, not all incidents require escalation to a crisis level. Therefore, establishing clear **activation thresholds** is essential. These thresholds provide managers and crisis team members with the necessary information and tools to determine when appropriate actions are required to address a crisis. Activation thresholds should include specific criteria that crisis managers consider when deciding the level of intervention and escalation for a given crisis.

Effective **crisis communication** is of utmost importance to keep all stakeholders well-informed during a crisis. During the planning phase, establishing a reliable mass communication system is crucial for the rapid and efficient dissemination of information. Creating and regularly updating a comprehensive contacts list ensures that information reaches the relevant individuals promptly. In instances where communication with emergency personnel in the host country requires translation, managers should plan for and secure the necessary translation services to facilitate efficient communication.

Once emergency protocols and incident response plans are in place, thorough training of all stakeholders becomes crucial to ensure the effective implementation of outlined procedures during an emergency. Regular training on **standard operating procedures (SOPs)** is essential for all stakeholders under the leadership of the Crisis Management Team. Conducting **crisis simulations** plays a vital role in testing the capabilities of the crisis management team and identifying areas that require improvement. Realistic crisis simulations provide managers and their teams with valuable insights to enhance their response strategies. These drills help identify any gaps or weaknesses in emergency protocols and enable adjustments to be made for better crisis management.

Through comprehensive planning, training, and communication, managers can equip stakeholders with the necessary knowledge and skills to respond appropriately in crises. By the end of the crisis management planning process, managers will have developed and maintained a full set of plans and protocols, encompassing both large-scale and minor incidents, and covering various aspects of crisis management such as communication protocols, escalation procedures, and reporting requirements.

Crisis Response

Once a crisis unfolds, **crisis response** comes into action, putting into effect the protocols and strategies developed during crisis preparation. Should an incident meet a set activation threshold, it should be immediately handled by the Crisis Management Team closely following incident response plans and disseminating emergency protocols to individuals affected by the crisis.

It is important to recognize the **limitations** of the U.S. government, particularly the State Department, when providing emergency assistance. Crisis management teams should explicitly outline the extent of assistance that can be expected from the U.S. government during a crisis. Ensure gaps in government assistance are addressed by incident response plans and team training exercises.

Crisis Recovery

To facilitate effective **crisis recovery**, it is crucial to implement a structured approach. All stakeholders should actively participate in the documentation process by performing an after-action review promptly after a crisis event to capture valuable information about the incident and the emergency response. Subsequently, the crisis management team can thoroughly review after-action reports to identify any flaws or errors in the response and make necessary adjustments to their emergency procedures.

Continuous review of crisis management functions is essential to gain insights into the effectiveness of a program's emergency response. This proactive approach allows for the creation of new policies when needed and the revision or updating of existing ones to maintain their relevance and effectiveness. By carefully examining the actions taken during and after a crisis, stakeholders can evaluate their efficacy and identify areas for improvement. Regularly examining and updating these guidelines ensures that emergency protocols are continuously refined, enabling a quicker and more effective response to future crises.

It is important to acknowledge the potential psychological impact on crisis responders. Working in crisis management exposes individuals to traumatic information and experiences, which can result in **vicarious trauma (VT)**, or secondary traumatic stress. To support the well-being of all team members, especially the crisis management team leadership, it is crucial to be knowledgeable about the symptoms of VT and remain vigilant for any signs among themselves or their colleagues. If symptoms of VT are identified, prompt action must be taken to provide additional support, including therapeutic or professional assistance, to mitigate the impact and ensure the resilience of the team.[19]

DBF Traveler Debriefing

Debriefs are an opportunity to receive feedback about traveler experiences and provide support to travelers following a critical event. Valuable feedback provided by debriefs can be used to improve the overall program and duty of care fulfillment. Debriefs also allow managers to identify travelers who may be at a risk for reverse culture shock or require additional support to return to normal life.[20] Managers should ensure that all debriefing questions and responses are properly documented for future reference. Over time, these responses can provide insights into common trends among travelers and highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the program.

Developing Traveler Questionnaires

When preparing **traveler questionnaires** for debriefs, managers should take a thoughtful and comprehensive approach to ensure that the right information is gathered to improve the program and provide adequate support to returning travelers. Managers should develop a standardized list

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[19] https://ovc.ojp.gov/program/vtt/what-is-vicarious-trauma
[20] https://www.sfu.ca/students/isap/explore/culture/stages-symptoms-culture-shock.html

of questions or topics.

- **Overall Feedback:** The questionnaires should begin by inviting travelers to share their overall impressions of the program. Encourage them to highlight positive experiences, memorable moments, and aspects of the journey that they enjoyed the most.

- **Criticisms and Suggestions:** Allow travelers to express any concerns or criticisms they may have about the program. Create a space for constructive feedback and suggestions for improvement, ensuring that their voices are heard and considered in future program enhancements.

- **Safety and Security:** Inquire about any health, safety, or security concerns that travelers encountered during their journey. Understanding potential risks and incidents can help in strengthening safety measures and emergency protocols for upcoming programs.

- **Incidents while Abroad:** Include specific questions to gather detailed accounts of any critical incidents or acute crises experienced by travelers. This information will be instrumental in providing appropriate follow-up care and support.

To ensure the effectiveness of traveler questionnaires, use clear and easily understandable language, avoiding complex jargon or technical terms that might confuse travelers. Include a balanced mix of question types, incorporating both open-ended and multiple-choice questions to capture detailed responses and quantitative data for **comprehensive analysis**. Additionally, customize some questions to address program-specific aspects or experiences, enhancing relevance and gathering unique insights. To promote honesty and candor in feedback, reassure travelers that their responses will remain anonymous and confidential.

Engaging with Travelers

During the debriefing sessions, managers and faculty should strive to create a calm and supportive environment that encourages travelers to speak openly about their travel experiences. Active listening and genuine interest in their narratives can foster a sense of trust and openness. Particular attention should be given to any health, safety, or security concerns raised by the travelers. If **critical incidents** occurred during the trip, managers should ensure that events are described in detail, including any stress reactions experienced.

In the debriefing process, if travelers are identified as needing additional support or care, such as those who have experienced a crisis incident, managers should conduct **follow-up questionnaires** approximately three weeks after the initial debrief. These follow-up questionnaires allow travelers to provide further feedback and updates on their well-being, helping to ensure that appropriate support is provided as needed.

Ongoing Duty of Care

Debriefs with travelers serve as a valuable opportunity for managers to gain insights into their travel experiences and identify those who may need additional support during the transition back

to life at home. As travelers readjust to their normal academic and work commitments, common **mental health** conditions, such as stress, anxiety, and reverse culture shock, may impact their well-being.

Stress can present itself in various ways, and managers should be equipped to identify the signs of each type. **Basic stress** can manifest as normal reactions to daily factors, leading to tension, frustration, irritation, and anger. **Cumulative stress** can result from prolonged exposure to various stressors, such as adapting to new environments or different cultures, building gradually over time and possibly going unnoticed. **Traumatic stress**, on the other hand, arises from direct experience or close exposure to sudden, unexpected, and violent events, with reactions varying among individuals, and symptoms may manifest immediately or in the following hours or days. Post-traumatic stress may even present itself months or years after the event.[21]

Likewise, **anxiety** is a common mental health issue that travelers may face, characterized by feelings of worry, unease, or fear about various aspects of their lives, including academics, career prospects, or personal relationships. During periods of change or transition, including the shift back into normal routines at home, anxiety may worsen.[22] If left untreated, this may result in **reverse culture shock** during the reintegration phase, leading to feelings of disorientation, confusion, and frustration.[23]

Recognizing the signs of stress, anxiety, and reverse culture shock is vital for managers. Symptoms can manifest physically, cognitively, emotionally, or behaviorally. Managers should be attentive to any changes in behavior or demeanor to offer timely **support** or recommend further care when needed.

Connecting travelers with the appropriate support **resources** is paramount in addressing their mental health needs. Offering counseling services, mental health resources, or workshops on coping strategies can be crucial in helping travelers navigate these challenges and promoting their overall well-being. By proactively identifying travelers in need of additional care and offering the necessary support, managers play a vital role in ensuring a successful and positive post-travel experience for their travelers.

Identifying Areas for Improvement

Once the debriefs have been completed and valuable feedback has been collected from travelers, the next crucial step is to identify specific **areas for improvement** within the program. Managers must carefully analyze the responses, looking for common themes, patterns, and recurring concerns that emerge from the travelers' experiences.

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[21]
https://www.care.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/CI-Personal-Safety-and-Security-Handbook-2014.pdf

[22] https://www.depression.org.nz/the-causes/major-changes/

[23] https://www.isepstudyabroad.org/returning-home/how-to-deal-with-reverse-culture-shock

By thoroughly reviewing the debriefing data, managers can pinpoint potential weaknesses or challenges that need to be addressed. These might include issues related to program logistics, academic support, cultural integration, safety measures, or communication protocols. Identifying such areas for improvement allows for **targeted actions** to be taken, ensuring a more enriching experience for future participants.

Enabling Controls

Enabling controls for travel risk management consist of six domains designed to help develop, manage, and continuously improve international education programs, including:

1. Program Governance & Stakeholder Engagement
2. Program Optimization & Continuous Improvement
3. Team Training & Development
4. Metrics and Analytics
5. Policies and Documentation
6. External Partnerships

GOV Program Governance & Stakeholder Engagement

Establishing a **program governance** framework with a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities for team members, that also outlines effective stakeholder engagement and communication is essential for the successful implementation of an international education program.[24] Managers must create a well-defined hierarchy that facilitates decision-making and supports the international education department's TRM, safety, and security initiatives. Among internal international education staff, specific staff members should be assigned distinct roles and responsibilities, especially concerning the management of critical incidents and other health, safety, and security matters.

Identifying Stakeholders and Driving Engagement

Stakeholders are individuals or entities with a vested interest and influence in the program's success. Common stakeholders in an international education program may include university leadership, faculty members, students, parents, alumni, partner institutions, local communities in host countries, program coordinators, travel agencies, and relevant government bodies.

Programs that actively engage stakeholders tend to be more successful and resilient, especially during challenging situations. Engaging stakeholders creates a supportive network that contributes to the program's growth and adaptability. To ensure this, it is crucial to establish a well-structured **stakeholder engagement plan**. A stakeholder engagement plan should begin by identifying all key stakeholders and clearly defining their roles and responsibilities concerning the program's functionality. Once stakeholders are identified, managers should plan how to communicate and interact with each stakeholder. Managers should also lead regular briefings to keep stakeholders informed about ongoing program developments.

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[24] https://www.pmi.org/learning/library/project-governance-critical-success-9945

To ensure efficient communication during travel risks or crises, managers should maintain a centralized **communication database** that includes up-to-date contact information and backup contacts in case primary stakeholders are unresponsive. Communication data should be tailored to fit each stakeholder's level of engagement as well as a preferred communication method. This approach ensures that each stakeholder receives information in a way that best suits their needs and preferences, minimizing repetition and maximizing engagement.

In addition to routine communications, managers should produce annual **reports** and disseminate information about the health, safety, and security components of the program to key stakeholders. The reports should include aggregated metrics and statistics about critical incidents, details about policy adjustments, and content relating to the program's crisis management capabilities.

Stakeholder Feedback

Managers should always solicit **feedback** from all stakeholders, especially travelers in the program. These responses allow managers to address issues and suggest changes to operational procedures, which can then prevent future risks. After the conclusion of a trip abroad, travelers and other stakeholders should provide information on their overall experience, and highlight the strengths of the program and overall recommendations for improvement. Following a crisis, all stakeholders should reflect on their experience and identify what could have been done to improve the response.

Once feedback has been received, conduct **follow-up meetings** with all stakeholders to discuss the information in greater depth. It may call for a change in procedure, which should then be updated and distributed to the appropriate stakeholders.

OPT Program Optimization & Continuous Improvement

Program optimization requires continuous evaluation of health, safety, and security capabilities. Managers leading program optimization efforts must be responsive to emerging trends, identify gaps, and learn from past experiences to drive incremental improvements in the program.

Benchmarking

Proactively **benchmarking** against peer institutions and industry frameworks provides valuable external reference points for program enhancement. By proactively comparing program capabilities with those of peer universities, managers can identify areas that require improvement or additions. This includes ongoing monitoring of the program management process to ensure it efficiently contributes to the program's success.

Continuous Quality Improvement

Fundamental to the enhancement of an international education program is the commitment to

continuous quality improvement. Managers should meticulously **log** major and minor events occurring in destination countries to gain insights for future adjustments. By **analyzing** trends and gaps presented in metrics and reports derived from these logs, managers can take necessary steps to address incidents that may jeopardize travelers' health, safety, and security. Regular **assessment** of the program's emergency and incident response plans ensures that all information is up-to-date and accurate.

Leveraging Feedback and Lessons Learned

Managers should encourage participants of past programs to complete **surveys** and share what lessons they have learned during their time abroad. These lessons should be documented and referenced when building future programs. Review of these after-action reports can identify gaps/weaknesses, and help managers catalog areas for targeted improvement. Keeping teams accountable in adhering to SOPs and communication **protocols** fosters continuous improvement and excellence across the team.

TRN Team Training & Development

The safety and success of an international education program heavily rely on the proficiency and preparedness of the team. To create and maintain a safe international education environment, managers must prioritize team **training and development**.

Staff Onboarding

Consistent and standardized onboarding procedures are crucial for new staff members. Managers should implement a "new hire" **checklist** to ensure that all staff members receive a solid foundation in departmental policies and procedures. Team members should also undergo additional tailored training based on their specific roles.

Training

Designated crisis management teams should receive formal crisis management training and **certifications**. This includes vital instruction such as FEMA's Incident Command System (ICS) training, which outlines a structured approach for operations, planning, logistics, administration, finance, and central incident command procedures. Specialized staff members should receive supplemental training in data and incident mapping and geopolitical risk analysis.

To enhance their collective capabilities, all international education team members should be **cross-trained** in various aspects of international education risk and crisis management. Moreover, they should be equipped to recognize early warning indicators for distress, culture shock, and personal crises in travelers. This includes training on how to handle sensitive issues confidentially, such as health concerns, sexual assault/harassment, discrimination, and personal safety topics.

Team Collaboration

Following the onboarding process, managers should foster a culture of collaboration and teamwork within the program team. Routine training sessions should be conducted to help team members understand how their roles and responsibilities **coordinate** in emergencies, enabling them to provide optimal support for travelers abroad. Furthermore, the international education program should maintain an **internal centralized resource** hub for staff to access policies, standards, documents, resources, and databases as needed.

Ongoing Training and External Opportunities

To ensure that the team remains up-to-date with the latest best practices, managers should support **ongoing training** for staff members. This includes organizing sessions about handling health, safety, and security issues that may arise during international education programs. Moreover, managers should provide opportunities for staff to upskill through external training, such as attending conferences, webinars, and formal training programs.

MET | Metrics and Analytics

Data-driven decision-making is paramount to effectively manage health, safety, and security incidents while minimizing risk exposure in international education programs. Managers must establish a robust **case management system** to actively document all incidents, providing a comprehensive dataset for trend analysis and continuous improvement. **Key performance indicators (KPIs)** should be measured to evaluate the program's effectiveness and enable proactive decision-making based on identified risks.

Case Management System and Incident Documentation

Creating and maintaining a case management system is fundamental in **recording incidents** that impact travelers during their travel experience. This system captures essential data points, including incident type, frequency, date, event description, location, and root cause. Adhering to HIPAA regulations ensures proper handling of medical incidents and reports, safeguarding travelers' privacy and well-being.

Measuring Metrics for Informed Decision-Making

Appropriate documentation of **metrics** is vital to identify trends, risks, and anomalies. Managers must possess the capability to conduct meaningful analysis based on compiled data and present insights to key decision-makers. Measuring KPIs allows for a deeper understanding of the program's performance and assists in identifying areas that require attention and enhancement.

Analytics and Analyzing Trends in Data & Making Proactive Decisions Based on Increased Risk

Data is raw material that may be unuseful, incorrect, irrelevant, or redundant, and must be

validated and analyzed for relevance and accuracy. Processed data that is presented in a context that makes it useful and can be used to support decision-making is known as **information**. Information that is exclusively threat-related and developed by law enforcement, medical surveillance, or other investigative organizations which normally requires special access and handling requirements then becomes known as **intelligence**.

Measuring metrics begins with the **validation** of the data brought in by the case management system to ensure higher accuracy and efficiency when analyzing information and establishing trends in intelligence later on.

Evaluating Crisis Management Team Performance

Metrics and KPIs are indispensable tools for **evaluating** the team's performance during emergency responses. Stakeholders should diligently record their actions and responses during and after crisis events. The data collected over time helps identify long-term trends, establish benchmarks, and drive continuous improvements in the program's emergency response capabilities.

POL | Policies and Documentation

Effective program management requires proper **documentation** of all relevant resources and policies, as well as detailed accounts of all crises and feedback received by the program. Policies relating to international education, health, safety, and security must be cataloged, accessible, complete, and periodically updated. **Periodic policy reviews** at least once a year with a documented approval chain and change management process can aid this update process.

University Policies

Managers must develop guidelines for travelers when studying and living in university-sponsored locations. **Academic policies** maintain scholastic standards for travelers while abroad. This can include minimum GPA and credit requirements or extracurricular standards. **Residence policies** safeguard the well-being and safety of travelers staying in dorms, homestays, hotels, etc. abroad. These should include a standard policy regarding accompanying guests and/or spouses abroad. Finally, managers should have policies in place for **insurance** coverage and financial liability when hosting travelers on campus.

Independent Travel Policies

Policies to provide a standard for how travelers will notify managers of extracurricular travel are essential to the safety and security of an international education program. A waiver or policy regarding **independent student travel**, personal decisions to remain abroad, or refusal to return situations should also be developed to protect the program from associated liabilities.

Withdrawal, Disciplinary, and Emergency Return Policies

Managers must set clear policies for actions to take in the event a program participant decides to **withdraw** from the international education program or home institution while abroad. There should also be a written policy for the short-notice **return** of the cohort to the United States in the case of an emergency. Finally, a written policy for outlining measures and requirements of **disciplinary** action abroad should be developed by managers. As a means to avoid potentially hazardous events, managers should consider the implementation of a **Good Samaritan policy** for travelers who are forthcoming with potential risks without the threat of disciplinary action.

EXT External Partnerships

External Partnerships help bridge the gap between program capabilities and the resources and planning necessary to keep travelers safe while abroad.[25] By benchmarking against peer institutions and strategically utilizing external resources, programs can augment their in-house capabilities.

External Partnerships

External partnerships play a vital role in supporting international education programs, offering valuable on-the-ground information during emergencies and direct assistance when needed. **Collaborations** can be established with various entities, including the U.S. State Department, local government, law enforcement officials, and other educational institutions in the host country. Cultivating and sustaining partnerships at multiple levels (private, public, local, national, and international) is essential for ensuring the safety and well-being of all travelers. Formal **documentation** detailing collaboration with partner institutions and organizations should be maintained, outlining charters and minimum service-level agreements to ensure smooth cooperation.

Managers, as key facilitators of these partnerships, play a crucial role in enhancing traveler safety and emergency response. They actively engage with **local diplomatic missions**, such as embassies and consulates, to facilitate safety measures and receive assistance during emergencies. By maintaining connections with **industry networks** like NAFSA and The Forum on Education Abroad, managers gain access to valuable resources and expertise that contribute to the program's success. Moreover, establishing ties with local government bodies, emergency services, and relevant organizations strengthens the program's support network and preparedness.

Joint Planning and Resource Division

Before travel, it is important to hold a **joint planning session** between stakeholders and external partners to identify the purpose of the partnership, the contribution and division of joint resources,

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[25] https://emilms.fema.gov/is_0662/groups/134.html

and the responsibilities of all parties. Some partners may be limited in what support they can provide, so it is important to identify any program gaps and establish additional external partnerships to cover those vulnerabilities.

Assessing Third-Party Risk

Managers bear the responsibility of **assessing third-party risk** of external vendors and entities before entering into external partnerships. This thorough vetting process serves as an enhanced risk mitigation approach to guarantee the safety of international education participants. [26] Managers should evaluate third-party partners responsible for travel, transportation, activities, and excursions to ensure their competence and compliance with safety standards.

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[26] https://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/partner-vetting-system#

With ongoing education and certifications, you can
increase parent and student confidence and participation.

Program Accreditation & Continuing Professional Education

SafeAbroad's program accreditation service and professional certifications were created for institutions and educators to demonstrate their understanding of travel risk management, and their ability to ensure the health and safety of all travelers. These certifications can improve student and parent confidence in a university's international education program and increase program participation.[27]

Travel Risk Management Program Accreditation

Program Accreditation demonstrates your program's excellence as a nationally recognized leader in international education safety, health, security, and risk management. Comparing your program to peer institutions helps identify the best policies and procedures for your program. Programs equipped with gap analyses and future-state roadmaps are often able to justify an increased budget as well. Identify blind spots and gaps to ensure your program maintains optimal health, safety, security, and duty of care standards by pursuing an independent assessment & accreditation of your program as a pledge to help your travelers travel confidently.

SafeAbroad's TRM Program Assessment

SafeAbroad Analysts evaluate the current state of an international education program, identify gaps, and provide a strategic roadmap for optimization. The assessment lasts around 6-8 weeks while we conduct interviews, initiate document and technology reviews, and lead workshops.

SafeAbroad's maturity model outlines the characteristics of an international education program's safety capabilities from foundational, to advanced, to distinguished programs. The five levels are bronze, silver, gold, platinum, and titanium.

Completion of the assessment results in a SafeAbroad Certification to recognize your program's commitment to excellence. You will be given deliverables that outline SafeAbroad's examination of your program. This will include a gap analysis, a risk heat map, and a personalized roadmap with recommendations for your program. This feedback allows program leaders to understand where their program stands compared to peer organizations and review recommendations for program optimization. Upon successful accreditation, you will receive a certificate, badge kit, and press release verifying your program's excellence.

If interested in accreditation for your university, please contact **safeabroad@safeabroad.org** to schedule a free consultation.

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[27] https://safeabroad.com/program-accreditation/

Professional Certifications

SafeAbroad offers professional certifications for international education managers with credentials that provide verifiable proof of knowledge regarding safety, crisis management, and analysis in the realm of international education and international education. At this time, SafeAbroad offers four distinct certifications.

Certified International Education Safety Executive (CIESE)

The Certified International Education Safety Executive (CIESE) certification is designed for seasoned professionals with 5+ years of experience in directing international education programs, including risk management functions. This certification validates the candidate's expertise in safety protocols, risk assessment, crisis response, and compliance with industry standards. Additionally, CIESE certificants possess a comprehensive understanding of strategic planning, enabling them to proactively identify risks, develop robust safety policies, and create secure environments for travelers during their international educational experiences.

Certified International Education Safety Professional (CIESP)

The Certified International Education Safety Professional (CIESP) certification caters to individuals with 2+ years of experience in international education management. This certification equips professionals with the necessary knowledge and skills to ensure the safety and well-being of travelers during their international educational experiences. It encompasses key areas such as risk assessment, crisis response, and compliance with industry standards.

Certified International Education Crisis Manager (CIECM)

The Certified International Education Crisis Manager (CIECM) certification is specifically designed for professionals responsible for crisis management in international education. This certification requires a minimum of 2+ years of experience and validates expertise in handling and mitigating crises, including emergencies, natural disasters, and other challenging situations. It equips professionals with the necessary tools to effectively lead crisis response efforts and ensure the safety of travelers abroad.

Certified International Education Risk Manager (CIERM)

The Certified International Education Risk Manager (CIERM) certification is aimed at professionals who play a pivotal role in identifying and managing risks within the international education landscape. This certification requires a minimum of 2+ years of experience and emphasizes risk assessment, risk mitigation strategies, and the implementation of comprehensive risk management plans. By earning this certification, professionals demonstrate their ability to proactively address potential risks and safeguard the well-being of travelers in international education settings.

If interested in one of these certifications, please contact **certifications@safeabroad.org** for more information or visit safeabroad.com/certifications.

With the proper planning and controls in place,
you can systematically manage travel risks.

Acknowledgments & Contributions

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all the writers, contributors, and editors who dedicated their time and expertise to make SafeAbroad's Travel Risk Management Handbook a reality. Without your valuable insights and commitment, this report would not have been possible. Your dedication to promoting safety and enriching experiences for travelers and staff in international education has been essential.

As we conclude this edition of the handbook, we recognize that TRM guidelines, especially those concerning duty of care, are ever-evolving. We are committed to ensuring that this handbook remains relevant and up-to-date, and we encourage the international community to actively contribute and share their experiences, insights, and best practices for future editions.

To be a part of shaping the next version of this report or to provide feedback and suggestions, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at **safeabroad@safeabroad.org**.
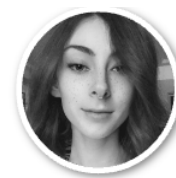
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About SafeAbroad

We're the international education safety experts. It is our mission to prepare travelers and study abroad managers to navigate and manage the risks of international education.

SafeAbroad is a leader in security consulting and risk analysis for international education. As certified security analysts and study abroad alumni, our team understands the global risk landscape.

Our analysts have helped build fusion centers for government agencies and corporations. We've conducted security risk assessments on all corners of the world, and we've helped corporate executives plan safe travel to heightened-risk destinations. Now, we're applying these skills and technologies to help international education programs travel confidently and to help program managers navigate and manage the risks of international education.

SafeAbroad

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