Guidance on the Overseas Travel Safety and Security Risk Assessment (OTSSRA)

1. Introduction

Students and staff must complete an Overseas Travel Safety and Security Risk Assessment (OTSSRA) form prior to travelling overseas on university business (outside of the UK), including travel to or within your country of residence and/ or the countries for which you hold a passport.

The OTSSRA captures all relevant safety and security information related to the trip/ travel and assists you and the University to comply with policy, legal, ethical, and social obligations in respect of related activities.

This guidance explains when an OTSSRA is needed, how to complete the form and what authorisation is required.

Appropriate approvals (including insurance and sanction requirements) MUST be obtained PRIOR to travel, and no travel arrangements or commitments should be made until you have received confirmation of approval for travel.

2. Scope

This guidance covers staff, Emeritus Professors and student travel on University of Sussex business abroad (outside of the United Kingdom.) It includes travel to/ within your country of residence and/ or countries for which you hold a passport.

An OTSSRA form is not required for individuals registered as a distance learning student who plan to do research fieldwork outside the UK in their normal place of residence (home country), where NO FCDO travel warnings have been issued. If travel warnings have been issued for the region/ country, the OTSSRA (parts 1 and 2) must be completed.

'University of Sussex Business' includes undertaking research, study activities and attending conferences (see Insurance webpages for more information).

The OTSSRA relates solely to the travel component of any overseas travel, and additional risk assessments may be required to cover hazardous activities whilst abroad, including those associated with fieldwork activities (see section 6.1).

3. Definitions

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), a ministry of the Government of the United Kingdom with the purpose of protecting British interests around the world.

Sanction(s) is/are a measure(s) imposed by a governing body to enforce compliance with legal, political or social standards.

4. Completing and Submitting the OTSSRA

The following scenarios are a guide to when an OTSSRA is needed:

Scenario	Example	Outcome
The student lives in the UK and is going abroad.	Dave is travelling to take photos in Paris for their project. This project requires photographs of specific architecture that is only available in this region, hence the travel.	An OTSSRA form needs to be completed.
The student lives in the UK and chooses to work while they are abroad.	Sharon is on holiday with her family in India, while there, she works on her project. This could include photography, writing up a project or interviewing people within her social circle. This work could be carried out anywhere in the world and does not require travel but is carried out abroad due to the student's activities that are not part of her studies or work for the University of Sussex.	If the study activity is incidental to the trip, no OTSSRA needed. However, if the UoS provides funding for the trip in any form then an OTSSRA form should be completed. If in doubt complete an OTSSRA form.
In-person teaching student returning to their home country and working while there.	Miguel studies in the UK but lives in Mexico. Outside of term-time he has returned home but works on his project while back home. This could include photography, writing up a project or interviewing people within his social circle. This work could be carried out anywhere in the world and does not require travel but is carried out abroad due to the student's activities outside of studying.	No OTSSRA needed.
In-person teaching student returning to their home country as	Jemima is travelling to conduct interviews in Argentina. This project requires in- person interviews of	An OTSSRA form needs to be completed.

the work cannot be carried out in the UK.	Argentinian cattle farmers and cannot be carried out in the UK.	
Distance learning student working in their home country	Justin lives in China but is registered to study online only at the University of Sussex. As part of his project Justin is required to collect local materials and take photographs of them.	No OTSSRA form required as the work could be carried out anywhere in the world.
Distance learning student traveling to a third country that is neither the UK nor their home country.	Lalitha lives in Pakistan but is registered to study online only at the University of Sussex. As part of her project, she needs to travel to India to conduct an ethnographic study.	An OTSSRA form needs to be completed.
Attending a conference and representing the University of Sussex.	Francisco has been asked to represent the University of Sussex at a conference in Madrid. This is funded by the department and includes presenting at a seminar on behalf of his department.	An OTSSRA form needs to be completed.
Attending a conference.	Alex is studying for an MA in Engineering. They have chosen, out of interest, to attend a conference that is not related to their course, in Finland on Neuroscience and Psychiatry. Alex is not attending this conference for their course, is not representing the University of Sussex and has not been provided with any funding to attend.	No OTSSRA needed as this is personal travel.

5. Completing the OTSSRA

This section outlines what needs to be included within the OTSSRA for lower-risk and higher-risk travel. Please note that a separate OTSSRA must be completed for each traveller.

5.1 Assessing the Travel Risk

You should always research the country/ region that you are visiting and any locations you are travelling through to consider the risks and any issues relevant to travel. The UCEA guidelines provide comprehensive advice and practical suggestions for how to go about this. To assess potential risks in the country/ region or where you are travelling through, there are two sources that must be reviewed: The Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO) website for travel advisories/ warnings (Foreign travel advice - GOV.UK) and the University Sanctions List. Where there are travel advisories/ warnings and/or sanctions, additional

information is required to ensure you and the University have considered the risk and ensured sufficient control measures are in place.

The OTSSRA form is divided into two parts. PART 1 must be completed by ALL staff and students travelling overseas on university-related business (see section 2: Scope) as it captures information about where and how you are travelling, the activities that are planned and highlights general risk associated with travel, such as lone working, medical/ health and vaccination information, information security and key contact details including next of kin. The form prompts what information is required for each section, and you should give as much detail as you can.

5.2 Lower Risk Travel

Having checked the FCDO website and University Sanctions List, if the country/ region you are visiting or travelling to is not listed, the travel is considered 'lower risk' and you will not need to complete Part 2. Please view section 5.5 on Authorisation and section 6. Other Considerations.

5.3 Higher Risk Travel

Parts 1 and 2 of the form must be completed when you are travelling to a country/ region which is included in the University list of sanctioned countries and/or where the Foreign & Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) have advised:

- Against all travel
- Against all travel to parts of the country
- Against all but essential travel
- Against all but essential travel to parts of the country, or
- You are aware that you will be going to places that you believe may be of higher risk

As these areas are of higher risk, both you and the University need to take all reasonable and practicable steps to reduce the risk while you are travelling.

You will not be authorised to travel until you have obtained the appropriate approvals (section 5.5.)

5.4 Single or Multiple Trips

If you are planning multiple trips relating to the same activity, you can complete one OTSSRA form that covers all related travel for one year. If the activity/ project is longer than this, you will need to review the OTSSRA on an annual basis.

You must still check travel advice regarding your destination immediately before you leave for each individual journey to ensure you have up-to-date information, and in case there have been any changes. In some circumstances, where the risk of the country/ region is high and/or the environment/ circumstances are changing quickly, you may be required to review the OTSSRA before each departure as a condition of authorisation to travel.

5.5 Authorisation

Appropriate approval (including insurance and sanction requirements) MUST be obtained PRIOR to travel, and no travel arrangements or commitments should be made until you have received confirmation of authorisation for travel.

Only role holders (or their Deputy if they are on leave) listed in the sections below have the authority to authorise travel.

Lower Risk Travel

Once you have completed Part 1 of the form, you will need to sign it to confirm the information you have provided is correct to the best of your knowledge and in the event of subsequent alterations, you will ensure that the form is updated as necessary.

Once Part 1 of the OTSSRA is completed and signed, **at least three weeks before travel**, send the form to the following for authorisation:

STUDENTS: Send the form to your supervisor for authorisation
STAFF: Send the form to your line manager for authorisation

Higher Risk Travel

If your destination is higher risk, you will have completed Parts 1 and 2 of the OTSSRA form. You only need to complete the authorisation section at the end of the form (not both authorisation sections), as this covers both sections of the form. You will need to sign this section to confirm the information you have provided is correct to the best of your knowledge, and in the event of subsequent alterations, you will ensure that the form is updated as necessary.

If the travel is higher risk, **at least three months before travel**, send the form to the following for authorisation:

STUDENTS: Send the form to your supervisor for checking and authorisation. The supervisor must then send the OTSSRA to the Head of School for authorisation and onward to the Executive Dean for authorisation.

STAFF: Send the form to your Head of School/Director for authorisation. The Head of School/ Director must then send the OTSSRA to the Executive Dean/Chief Operating Officer for authorisation.

5.6 What happens once I've completed the OTSSRA?

The Head of School or Director must ensure both an electronic and a signed hard copy of the OTSSRA form is retained by the School Office/ Health and Safety Coordinator for retention. This is to ensure that, if necessary, your contact details and travel arrangements can be easily located in a designated place.

6 Other Considerations

6.1 Risk assessments for specific activities

The OTSSRA covers risk related to travel only; therefore, additional risk assessments are required to cover any other significant risks or hazardous activities or environments associated with your overseas activity. A non-exhaustive list of hazardous activities is provided in Table 1 below. See section 7 for guidance on risk assessment. Append any related risk assessments to the OTSSRA to provide a full overview of the risk.

Laboratory work within another institution involving hazardous chemicals, biological agents, radiation and/or electrical hazards.	Work with any of the following groups: Alcohol or drug users, protest movements, persecuted or marginalised groups, individuals engaged in activities which are criminal in the local region, and individuals with a history of violence or aggression.	Natural hazards e.g. extreme weather, volcanology, glaciology, fire And/or physical environmental hazards, e.g. open cast mines, offshore drilling rigs, semi-submersible platforms, etc
The use of photographic or recording equipment in regions where this may put you at risk.	Transporting heavy equipment (manual handling).	Work in areas with a significant likelihood of there being unexploded munitions, recent conflict zones and or mined areas.
The use of transportation that is specifically listed as dangerous in FCDO guidance.	Activities that increase the risk of exposure to infectious diseases human or zoonotic.	Lone working including interviewing or visiting research participants in their home.

Bringing samples back into the UK excluding paper records and data.	Hazardous flora or fauna, plants or animals.	Dangerous activities e.g. climbing, diving, caving.

6.2 Overseas Travel and Ethical Review

If your travel involves research-related activities or fieldwork that require ethical review, a copy of the authorised OTSSRA form must be included with your online ethical review application form.

6.3 Record Keeping

Immediate access to the OTSSRA must be available in the event of an incident and/or urgent need to contact the traveller. An electronic copy of the OTSSRA must be securely stored on a safe, cloud-based University-supported storage option locally, within the School/ Division. If helpful, paper copies can be made available for the duration of the travel but must be kept in locked cabinets.

Access control to both electronic and paper formats must be set based on who should be able to view and access the forms. The form will only be shared internally if it is necessary based on the principles of data protection legislation.

The University will retain a copy of the OTSSRA for 5 years after the period of travel has ended, following the retention schedule and related principles. At the end of the retention period, forms must be disposed of securely.

See also:

- **Overseas Travel Safety and Security Risk Assessment Template**
- **Assessing risks in fieldwork: UCEA Guidance on Health and Safety in Fieldwork document**
- **Online ethical review process**
- **Guidance on completing risk assessments**

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