



THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

Overseas Travel Guidance for Staff & Students with Protected Characteristics

Guidance

October 2024

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Introduction

The University has a responsibility under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to eliminate discrimination, advance equality, and foster good relations for all of the protected characteristics.

The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, Marriage and Civil-Partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation. These are defined by and protected under the Equality Act 2010. The Equality Act also introduced the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) that requires public authorities, like higher education institutions, to tackle discrimination, victimisation and harassment, advance equality and foster good relations.

Guidance

This guidance aims to raise awareness of potential risks, complications, and barriers staff and students may encounter when travelling overseas on behalf of the University.

This guidance also aims to consider the health and safety implications of staff and students travelling who have one or more of the protected characteristics set out below and put in place procedures which mitigate those issues.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the [H&S Arrangements Chapter 24 - Health & Safety in Off Campus Work, including field work etc.](#)

Overseas visits can be categorised as low, medium, or high risk based a number of factors such as conflict, political instability, natural disasters, epidemic disease. However, it can also be the case that a low-risk destination can still pose elevated levels of risk due to an individual's protected characteristic.

To aid identification of potential hazards while travelling overseas with protected characteristics the Directorate of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) has created a risk assessment. The intention is to enable both employees, and the University to understand the potential risks in relation to their destination of overseas travel, and their protected characteristics. By doing this we can establish the necessary steps to mitigate the potential risks.

The University has produced a risk assessment form that an employee should complete before travel, this covers generic risk assessments to cover low-risk routine, regular activities. A general risk assessment toolkit providing guidance on how to use it can be found [here](#). The Directorate of EDI travel risk assessment (see appendix 1) provides an extra way of identifying and measuring the level of risk that can be associated with travelling overseas with one or more of the protected characteristics.

It is important to highlight that each individual case and situation will be different and will largely depend on the destination of the visit. This guidance is not written to deter any of our staff and students from travelling overseas but to consider the potential risks associated with that travel and understand ways in which the university can minimise these risks.

Confidentiality and Disclosure.

Parts of this guidance and associated risk assessments may impact on confidentiality, especially if the individual does not wish the details of their protected characteristics to be shared. Therefore, all information will remain confidential within the EDI and Compliance and Risk team, and not be shared with anyone else without the employee's written permission

A [University Risk Assessment](#) should be completed as standard procedure, however the optional Protected Characteristics risk assessment is also available (see appendix 1) This should be completed separately to the generic university risk assessments and sent confidentially to the [EDI team](#). The Protected Characteristics risk assessment will be checked and signed within the EDI team and any possible hazards will be highlighted. Information that is deemed as important to include on the general risk assessment will be done so with the consent of the individual.

For group travel, the individual may wish to disclose their risk assessment to the leader of the group and/ or to another person in the party. This would be helpful in certain cases, such as risks related to medical conditions. If the individual prefers not to disclose their risk assessment and it is deemed to put the individual and/or other members of the group potentially at risk, the University reserves the right to provide the risk assessment to the leader of the group (or a nominated individual) in a sealed and signed envelope which would only be opened if required.

Insurance

As with any travel undertaken on behalf of the University, individuals are covered by the University's insurance policy. More details can be found here:

www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/insurance/travel/business-travel-insurance/

The University's travel insurance policy will provide insurance cover for anyone who is travelling on University business that has been risk assessed and approved by the traveller's school. This includes any travellers with a pre-existing or long-term health issue or disability as long as this is noted in their travel risk assessment and the traveller must be fit to travel before any booking is made. Please note that this is fit to travel – not just fit to fly and all aspects of the travel must be considered and included in the risk assessment, such as the length of time away, the distance travelled, climate etc. The maintenance of pre-existing conditions is not covered by the travel insurance policy but emergency medical expenses are, as long as the

traveller was fit to travel at the time of booking. Confirmation that the traveller was fit to travel will be required in the event of a claim.

For example, If someone is waiting for a hospital appointment and a trip has to be cancelled due to the appointment being made whilst the trip was due to take place, the cost of cancellation in these circumstances is not covered by the travel insurance policy.

Protected Characteristics and the associated risks with travelling overseas.

Each protected characteristic and its definition comes from the [Equality Act 2010](#) that ensure legal protection against discrimination if individuals have one or more of these characteristics.

Age

Definition: Where this is referred to, it refers to a person belonging to a particular age (e.g. 32-year-olds) or range of ages (e.g. 45 – 65-year-olds).

Associated risks: No known associated risks under the Equality Act, but travellers should be mindful of local laws concerning driving, consumption of alcohol, buying tobacco and the age of consent, for example.

Things to Consider:

While there are no associated risks with age while travelling overseas it is worth being mindful of local laws that come with age restrictions.

The legal age for activities such as driving, drinking alcohol and smoking, amongst other things differs between countries, and can even differ within regions of the same country in places with federal systems like India and the United States of America. Make sure to do the necessary research if you plan on engaging in age-restricted activities.

Disability

Definition: Disability is defined, within the UK's Equality Act as "a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on a person's ability to do normal daily activities". Long-term means the difficulty lasts or is likely to last more than 12 months.

Associated challenges: The nature of the disability will determine the potential barriers you may face while travelling abroad. These could include limited physical accessibility to buildings; medical care access; the difference in medical approaches abroad; language barriers and the cultural approaches to disability; different support structures within an institution such as having a disability or counselling service. This is a non-exhaustive list. Travellers may have a non-visible disability or may be neurodivergent and may need increased support when accessing public transport or flying.

Student Travel with a Disability or Long-Term Health Condition - Things to Consider:

Research.

Not all universities have the same level of accessibility and support services available. Make sure to do background research into prospective studying abroad options to ensure the city/region and institution can provide the necessary amount of

support you will require. This includes any support on assessments, travel, accommodation, etc.

Will you be able to access essential medications while abroad? If not, will you be able to organise enough to take with you, or source an acceptable alternative? Do you need a medical letter for your medication – allow enough time for your GP to produce this.

Insurance

Appropriate insurance cover is essential. Please speak with staff supporting you in arranging your trip if unsure regarding insurance.

Registering with the Disability Advisory and Support Service (DASS).

If you are already registered with DASS, your University Support Plan can be shared with your partner institution on placement – if this is something you would like to happen, please contact your disability adviser directly, to request this and have further discussions around your support on placement. Please be aware that it's not always possible for partner institutions to mirror support detailed in the University of Manchester DASS support plan – it's important to have a discussion with your Disability Adviser on this.

If you have not yet registered with DASS, you can find information on the service and how to register here: [Disability Advisory and Support Service](#)

Occupational Health

The Occupational Health Service at the University also provides support for staff and students travelling overseas. When completing your university risk assessment, they will screen individuals for potential risks with a priority of providing vaccination and immunisation. They work with DASS to provide holistic support for our community when travelling abroad. You can find information on the service here: [Occupational Health](#)

Who will be your first point of contact in the event of an emergency?

Do some research on the support systems and networks available to you on placement – and start making contact before you travel. Ensure you know the emergency service number in the country you're travelling to.

Think about when you're travelling

Travelling can be exhausting – think about arranging to travel on a day/at a time that allows you some time to recuperate and familiarise yourself with your new surroundings, before starting your placement. Do you need to consider any medications in relation to time of travel (for example, if your medication is a sedative)?

Staff Travel with a Disability or Long-Term Health Condition – Things to Think About

You may find that you need a Personal Assistant when travelling to assist you whilst you are away. If this is the case, please speak to your manager and DASS advisor. This can be claimed for through [Access to Work](#) although due to timescales the University will support this and reclaim from your Access to Work Grant.

When travelling to conferences please ensure that you make the organiser aware of your accessibility requirements in good time.

If you are flying with a disability the [Civil Aviation Authority](#) provides guidance that you should follow.

If you are travelling with a hidden or non-visible disability, consider obtaining a [Hidden Disability Sunflower Lanyard](#) which indicates to people that you may need additional time or assistance.

You can obtain one in most of our Humanities Buildings, the Library or by contacting the EDI Directorate.

Ensure that you have any documentation for your medication from your GP. The [Government website](#) provides advice for general medications. Rules for controlled medication differ and can be found at [Take medicine in or out of the UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Further Resources:

[University Travel Insurance](#)

[Student Travel insurance](#) guidance and process.

[Disability Rights Around the World](#) – Human Rights Watch Guidance

[Disability and travel abroad](#) – FCDO Guidance

[Staff & Students Network Groups](#) – UoM networks

[Disability Advisory and Support Service \(DASS\)](#) – UoM service for staff and students

[The Ultimate Guide to Studying Abroad with a Disability](#) – Article from Studee with all the necessary essentials to consider studying abroad.

[Disability, Mental Health & Self-Care Resources](#) – Lots of resources on how to manage mental health issues while abroad.

[Ways to safeguard your mental health while working abroad](#) – AETNA's strategies on working abroad with a mental health issue.

[Matador's](#) travel tips for people travelling solo with autism

Gender Reassignment

Definition: A person has the protected characteristic of gender assignment if that person "is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex." The guidance will refer to this characteristic as trans in some instances.

Associated Risks: Some countries continue to criminalize transgender identity and persecute trans people, sometimes violently. trans people in these countries may be vulnerable to state violence or [hate crimes](#), and trans organizations or movements may be vulnerable to state-sponsored harassment. Trans members of staff or students should also take into consideration barriers to medical treatment that may exist in some countries.

Things to consider:

Research the area you are travelling to. You can do this at [Maps of anti-LGBT Laws Country by Country | Human Rights Watch \(hrw.org\)](#)

Get to know the laws and customary attitudes of the destinations you will be visiting in relation to transgender identities.

Will you be able to access essential medications while abroad? If not, will you be able to organise enough to take with you, or source an acceptable alternative? Do you need a medical letter for your medication – allow enough time for your GP to produce this.

Research the facilities you will use. We endeavour for all of our suppliers to be inclusive of all protected characteristics, although we encourage you to check you will have access to appropriate universal facilities. Any issues faced while away in regard to discrimination should be reported to the Directorate of EDI, or anonymously through [Report and Support](#).

Have all necessary up to date travel and other documents on you available at all times, make sure the details match on all of your personal documents.

Further Resources:

[Transgender Travel Safety Guide and Resources](#) – Transgender safe travel guide and resource pack.

[Trans Legal Mapping Report](#) – ILGA's comprehensive report that goes through each continent and country's *de jure* & *de facto* laws and attitudes to Trans individuals.

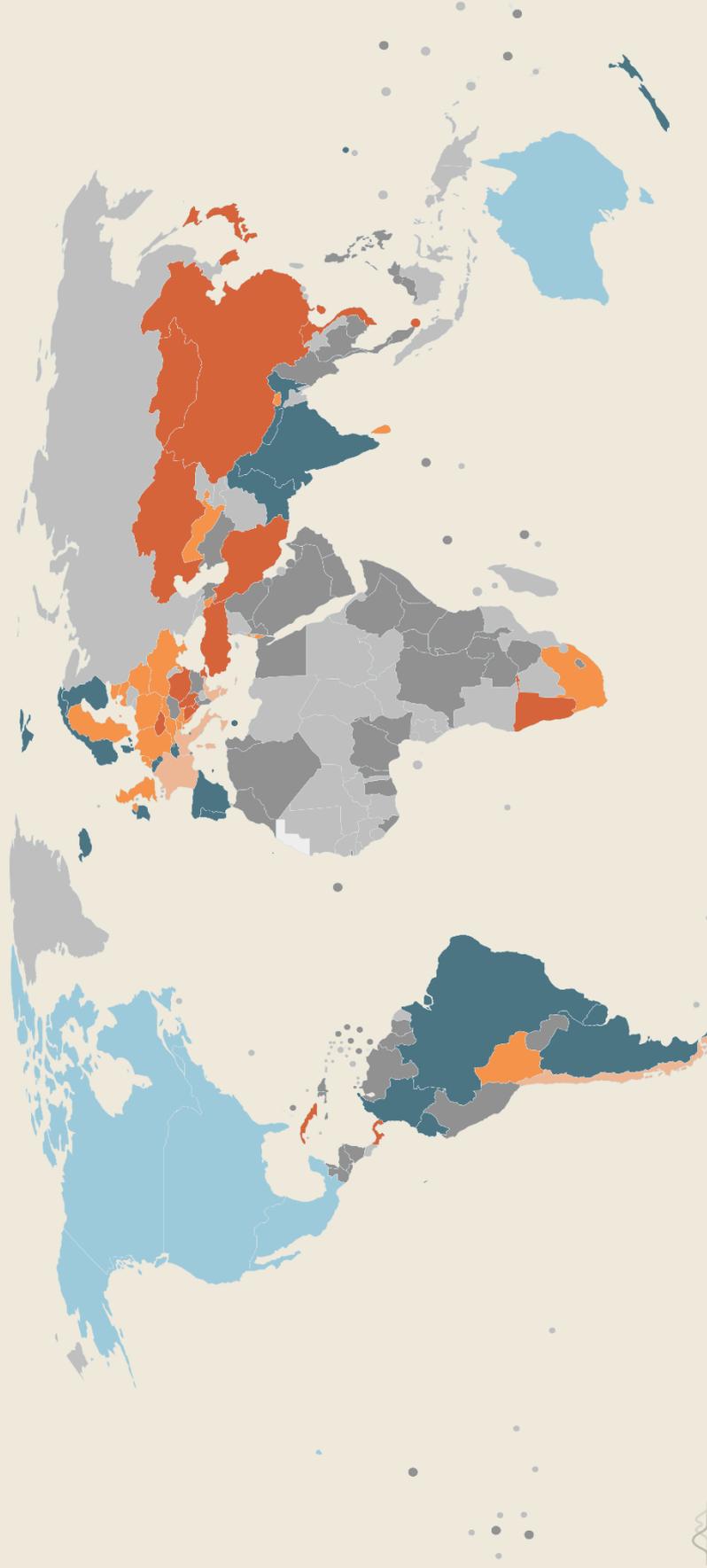
[ILGA world map on legal Gender Recognition](#) – Accurate as of March 2023.

[Tips for Flying While Trans](#) – FOLX guidance on flying.

[10 travel tips for transgender and non-binary travellers](#) – Skyscanner's travel advice

Legal Gender Recognition

March 2023



This map was downloaded from the ILGA World Database. It can be printed and reproduced without permission as long as the content is not modified. database.ilga.org

Marriage/ Civil Partnership

Definition: A person has the protected characteristic of marriage or civil partnership if the person is married or is civil partner. In the UK marriage and civil partnership is legal between men and women, and same sex couples. It is illegal to treat civil partners, or married individuals more favourably than the other. It is also illegal to treat married individuals or civil partners less favourably than single people.

Associated Risks: Some countries prohibit public affection between both heterosexual and homosexual couples. As of 2023, 34 countries around the world have enacted Marriage Equality legislation. This means same-sex marriage remains illegal in most countries in the world.

Things to consider:

Research the local culture, customs, and laws on public affection if travelling with a partner.

Exercise caution: In some countries, police monitor websites, social apps, and popular meetup spots for LGBTQ-related activity.

Further Resources:

[ILGA State sponsored Homophobia report](#). – ILGAs latest 2020 edition on state sponsored homophobia. Be aware that more countries since 2020 have legalised same-sex marriage.

[Know Before you Go guide](#) – Swift Passport services blog on pre-travel considerations for same-sex couples and families.

[Marriage Equality Around the World](#) – Human Rights Campaign web page on marriage equality around the world.

[FCDO](#) – Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office’s guidance on travelling abroad as a member of LGBT+ community.

Source: <https://www.hrc.org/resources/marriage-equality-around-the-world>

Pregnancy and Maternity

Definition: Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

Associated Risks: There are no known associated risks of travelling while pregnant from an equality perspective. Pregnancy related discrimination can occur in the employment context, and this can be associated with travel. If the suggested travel poses a risk to health, then your employer is obligated to consider and reduce risks. Alternatively, it isn't for your employer to tell you what is 'good' or 'bad' for you. If they decide you should not travel because of your pregnancy and you are disadvantaged because of it, this can be considered pregnancy discrimination.

There are healthy and safety considerations that should be made before travelling while pregnant, including the provision of medical care, and adequate health insurance cover.

Thing To Consider:

Many airlines will not carry pregnant women in the third trimester. See the NHS guidance linked below for further advice on this.

Public breastfeeding is acceptable in most countries, it is worth checking your destination of travel for local customs and laws surrounding it.

Further Resources:

[Equality and Human Right Commission](#) – Legal Advice during pregnancy.

[Travelling in pregnancy](#) – NHS Guidance

Race

Definition: Race is defined broadly to include several aspects:

- **Colour:** This refers to the colour of a person's skin.
- **Nationality:** This includes a person's citizenship.
- **Ethnic or National Origins:** This can be different from a person's current nationality.

Associated Risks: The threat of racial violence can never be ruled when travelling abroad. The risks can vary from 'none' to 'elevated', the government guidance on the country you are travelling should be used found on the [FCDO website](#).

Things to consider.

Considering whether or not your race will impact how you are treated while travelling is a complex issue. Circumstances change between each country, each region within a country, and between urban and rural areas. It will also depend on the individuals' colour, nationality, ethnicity or national origins. Make sure to research the specific location and the attitudes and beliefs of that area.

As a student, the guidance remains the same. Carefully choose studying abroad options after researching the climate of racial prejudice where you go. Seek the experiences of other global majority students who studied at the university you want to go to. Also, find out if other global majority students plan to go to your chosen overseas institution. Having a network whilst studying abroad can be helpful if you are navigating similar difficulties together. Identify where you can seek support at your host university if you suffer from discrimination and report it when you do.

Further resources.

[Diversity Abroad's](#) Guidance for global majority students travelling abroad. Told from a U.S. perspective but is still useful.

[Institute for Study Abroad's](#) advice for women of colour studying abroad.

[IES Abroad](#) has a fantastic country-specific identity resource for a large number of countries.

[FCDO](#) – Country specific foreign travel advice

Religion and Belief.

Definition: Religion, is as described, referring to any religion. Belief refers to any religion or philosophical belief system which includes things like Veganism, it also includes a lack of belief system, such as Atheism. Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

Associated Risks: There are certain territories where atheism, blasphemy or denouncement of a particular religion carries the death penalty. The threat of violence towards people with a particular religion or belief can never be ruled out whenever travelling- even in Europe. The level of risk can vary from none to elevated. Check the [FCDO website](#) for country-specific guidance.

Things to consider:

Does the country you are travelling to have any legislation against specific belief systems such as Atheism?

What is the cultural context to the region you are travelling to, are there existing religious tensions?

What are the religious and cultural customs of the area? E.g. wearing head covering for women etc.

Further Resources:

[FCDO](#) – Governments country-specific travel guidance.

[Pew Research Centre](#) – Lots of articles international Religious Freedom and Restrictions

[Religious Discrimination During crises](#) – A talk about the religious discrimination during period of political uncertainty.

Sex

Definition: Under the Equality Act 2010, this protects men and women from discrimination, because they are men and women.

Associated Risks: While sex discrimination applies to both men and women under UK law, there are some countries around the world where females still do not have the same rights as their male counterparts. Across the globe, men and women are treated differently in different cultural contexts.

Things to Consider:

It is important to research the cultural contexts of the area you are travelling to. Get to know the customs and gendered social practices to avoid uncomfortable situations.

Even in countries where there is no legislated discrimination against women local attitudes can be uncomfortable. Have support networks in place that you can access while abroad.

Gender:

Gender is not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, but we endeavour to support our entire community at the University. Non-binary and gender non-conforming (GNC) individuals deserve to feel safe and supported while travelling abroad. We have provided some resources below.

Further Resources:

[Government Guidance for women travellers](#) abroad

[Travel Advice for Business Trips \(especially for Women\)](#) – LinkedIn Guidance

[Podcast](#) – How to Actually Enjoy your next work trip.

[5 Advantages of Studying Abroad as a Woman of Color](#) – Institute for Study Abroad blog.

[5 safety tips for women studying abroad](#) – Study International Blog.

[Six Two – blog about travelling as a GNC person](#)

Trip Savvy – [tips for GNC travellers](#)

Information about the [Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women \(CEDAW\)](#)

Sexual Orientation

Definition: A person's identity in relation to the gender or genders to which they are sexually attracted to. Under the Equality Act 2010, everyone is protected from being treated adversely because of sexual orientation, whether they are bisexual, gay, lesbian or heterosexual.

Associated Risks: As of 2023 few countries have passed legislation that includes full legal recognition for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) individuals and couples across the globe. Some countries continue to criminalise homosexuality and persecute LGB people under the law, sometimes violently. LGB people visiting these countries may be vulnerable to hate crime and state sponsored homophobia and violence.

Things to Consider:

What are the LGBT+ legal rights, past and present in the country you will be visiting? Are there active protections against discrimination towards sexual orientation?

What is the local attitude surrounding gender identity and sexuality?

Will you have a support network while abroad? Look for active LGBT+ communities at your destination of travel.

Further Resources:

[FCDO Travel Advice](#) – The governments country-specific guidance.

[LGBT Foreign Travel Advice](#) – The governments LGBT specific travel guidance.

ILGA - [State Sponsored Homophobia Report](#)

ILGA – [Our Identities under Arrest report](#).

[Stonewall](#) - Global Workplace Briefings

[Studee](#) - Guide to studying abroad as an LGBTQ+ Student

[IES Abroad](#) – Student Experiences Studying abroad as LGBTQ+

[Pink News](#) – Article discussing the challenges of working overseas as an LGBTQ+ employees/

[Equality Index](#) – from Equaldex

Appendix 1: Protected Characteristics Risk Assessment Form: Studying / Working Overseas.

Name:

Overseas Travel Dates:

Location/s:

You can only properly assess risk, and identify ways to limit risk if you are fully aware of the potential hazard to which you are being exposed. Make sure that you research the new environment you will be travelling to. Use the guidance to understand how protected characteristics can impact the level of risk abroad.

Protected Characteristic	Potential hazards	Measures to control risks/ actions required	Level of Risk (L/M/H)
Age			
Disability			
Gender-Reassignment			
Marriage and civil partnerships			
Pregnancy and maternity			
Race			
Religion and belief			
Sex or Gender			
Sexual Orientation			

Risk rating: Level of risk should be judged on the likelihood of risk occur, and the outcome of risk if it were to happen.

Low – unlikely that harm would arise, even is exposure occurred the effect would be relatively slight. **Medium** – more likely that harm would occur and the level of harm that it would cause. **High** – harm is likely to arise, and level harm would also be high.

Signature of Traveller:.....

Checked by Directorate of EDI:.....