Travel Reviews and Approvals

Where required, how should department chairs, program directors, deans, and cabinet officers decide what travel has a critical purpose for their faculty, researchers, and staff members? How should this decision be documented?

The process for determining whether or not a proposed trip has a critical purpose may vary according to a department or office’s approach to administrative issues. Approving officials may designate a senior staff person to manage this process. However, all such entities should establish a review process that ensures the following conditions are true for a trip to be considered as fulfilling a critical purpose:

- There are no remote options for accomplishing the purpose of the trip to a sufficiently acceptable degree, or available remote options are otherwise ineffective;
- There is a time urgency involved such that the trip cannot be deferred until December 2021 without irreparable harm to a University affiliate’s academic progress or scholarship, or to the University’s scholarship, teaching, or operations;
- There is no form of stay-at-home order for the proposed destination(s); and,
- The logistics for the trip are feasible (i.e., commercial flights and accommodations are available, conditions in the destination(s) would not prevent carrying out the trip’s purpose, recommended quarantines would not interfere with the timing of the trip, etc.).

GS&S has created a decision guide to assist reviewers in determining whether or not a proposed trip meets the criteria for critical purpose. Reviewers may find the current version for download in GS&S’s online resources.

Department chairs, program directors, deans, and cabinet officers may approve their own travel, so long as they determine it meets the appropriate criteria; in such instances, they are asked to notify GS&S of their self-approval by email to globalsafety@princeton.edu.

Each sponsoring and funding entity should maintain a record of its reviews and decisions, even if only by retaining the emails involved in the process.
Even if a trip is determined to be critical, the traveler should retain final choice of whether or not to travel, given their individual concerns regarding risks to their health. International travelers must review and sign an advisement prior to their journey, which details more thoroughly the risks involved.

**How should department chairs, program directors, and DGSes determine what international travel by a graduate student can be approved?**

All graduate students who are in a program requiring completion of a dissertation are eligible for an exception in order to travel internationally. The department chair, program director, or DGS reviewing the request must determine that:

- The student has a critical need to conduct research directly related to their dissertation;
- The research cannot be completed effectively through remote means or domestic travel, rather than international travel; and
- The research cannot be deferred until at least December 2021 without irreparably harming the student’s ability to complete their dissertation in a timely manner.

The individual approving the purpose of the proposed trip need not consider questions of feasibility or risk. The Global Safety & Security unit is responsible for reviewing these issues and making a final determination if the travel can proceed. Additional information on the overall process for a graduate student to obtain approval for international travel is available in a separate guidance document.

**In reviewing exception requests for international travel by faculty, staff, and graduate students, should approvers ask for and/or consider vaccination status?**

Reviewers should not require that travelers disclose their vaccination status as part of the critical purpose and feasibility reviews. The decision on whether a given trip meets critical purpose requirements should be made as if a traveler were unvaccinated.

However, as part of the feasibility review for an international trip, travelers may voluntarily choose to disclose their vaccination status. Approvers may then consider how this status impacts quarantine or related entry requirements for the destination country. Vaccination may make travel to certain destinations more feasible, where the government in that destination has adopted different standards for vaccinated and unvaccinated persons.
Approvers may not encourage travelers to accept a vaccine not approved by the U.S. FDA simply to reduce logistical burdens related to proposed University-sponsored international travel.

As an undergraduate faculty adviser or internship program director, what should I consider when asked to review and approve University-sponsored domestic travel for an undergraduate?

Faculty advisers and internship program directors should ensure that the proposed domestic travel by an undergraduate is directly related to the student’s academic progress and is not travel that could be deferred until December 2021 or later. Requesting students must also demonstrate that their proposed research or internship is actually possible and that their travel is feasible in light of pandemic-related restrictions, e.g., the archive to be visited is open for visitors or the internship is actually in-person at the proposed destination and in compliance with local public health rules.

Approvers should not inquire regarding a requesting student’s vaccination status and should make their approval decisions only on the bases discussed above. Students who meet the CDC’s criteria for being fully vaccinated do not require faculty adviser or internship program director approval for travel solely within the United States, provided they can submit documentation from a healthcare provider of this status during travel registration.

GS&S has created a decision guide to assist in determining whether or not a proposed trip meets the approval criteria for purpose and feasibility. Reviewers may find the current version for download in GS&S’s online resources.

General

What constitutes “travel”?

A journey or trip is considered to be “travel” for the purposes of the pandemic travel guidelines if it:

1. Involves a journey of any duration outside of the metropolitan statistical area in which a traveler’s usual home is located (for the United States), or outside the first-level administrative division of a non-U.S. country in which a traveler’s usual home is located; and/or,

2. Involves any overnight stay outside of a traveler’s usual home, including paying rent for accommodations, even if in the vicinity of one’s usual “home” (the exception being, a student experiencing homelessness who might require rental assistance).

Does attendance at conferences constitute a critical purpose for travel?
Yes, for conferences that involve only domestic travel. Where international travel is involved, conferences are not automatically considered a critical purpose for travel and the decision lies with the approving department chair, program director, dean, or cabinet officer.

**Can I plan or book University-sponsored international travel or other international programs not permitted under the current guidelines, if they will take place in the fall of 2021?**

International travel is likely to remain significantly disrupted throughout 2021. Therefore, we discourage the booking of future University-sponsored international travel not permitted under the current guidelines. In all cases, you should only make travel commitments where there is sufficient flexibility to prevent the loss of funds or other penalties if the travel must be canceled up until the date of planned departure.

**I have been vaccinated, why is Princeton still restricting my ability to travel internationally?**

Vaccination dramatically reduces the risk that you will become severely ill with COVID-19, but public health officials have not yet determined definitively that vaccination prevents the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. As such, governments have been slow to remove or modify travel bans and entry requirements for those who have been vaccinated, and individual vaccination is still not a sufficient tool for mitigating the substantial risks of international travel.

**I am an emeritus faculty member. What parts of the permissible travel guidelines apply to me?**

For all emeriti, the same restrictions on University-sponsored domestic and international travel apply as those in place for all faculty members.

Emeriti who regularly work on campus are strongly encouraged to enroll the details of their personal travel under the same conditions as other faculty members.

Those emeriti who will only be visiting campus occasionally should ensure they are following applicable University guidelines for on-campus faculty prior to visiting campus.

**Do the permissible travel guidelines apply to visitors coming to Princeton?**

Before hosting any visitor on campus, you should carefully review the current visitor policy to ensure you are complying with its requirements.
If the visit is otherwise permitted under that policy and the visitor’s travel is supported through funds disbursed by the University or a University-affiliated entity, and/or, is related to or in support of University operations, including research and teaching, the permissible travel guidelines apply to the trip. This is true regardless of whether or not the visitor is normally affiliated with Princeton.

**Undergraduate and Graduate Students**

*If an undergraduate is approved to travel domestically for an in-person summer internship, can the student use University funding to pay rent in a shared accommodation, such as an apartment with roommates?*

Yes, provided the University is not directly arranging the shared housing. Internship program directors may wish to consider ways in which they can support students who, for medical reasons, might want to avoid living in a shared-accommodation setting while participating in an in-person internship.

Regardless of how a student chooses to use any approved housing stipend, students are required to comply with local, state, and federal/national public health regulations at all times while engaged in University-sponsored travel, including while participating in a University-sponsored, in-person internship.

*If I am an undergraduate student are there any restrictions on personal travel over the summer?*

Undergraduates who have returned home for the summer may engage in personal travel they feel is safe and appropriate, based on their individual circumstances.

Undergraduates who will remain part of the University testing protocol and have access to campus during the summer may not travel outside New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and/or New York state without approval from their DSL on the basis of a compelling personal circumstance.

*Do the pandemic guidelines supersede the pre-pandemic policy that required undergraduate and graduate students to seek approval for travel to higher-risk locations?*

No. To the extent a trip is permitted under these guidelines, that travel is still subject to the Policy for Travel to Higher Risk Locations.
How can I prepare for my travel? What information should I review before traveling, either for University-sponsored or personal reasons and what special items should I take with me to ensure I am prepared?

To prepare for your trip, it is important that you understand and are prepared for the risks of travel, as well as for the public health requirements in your destination(s) and your home location when you return. At a minimum, all travelers should review:

- The latest disease-status information and recommendations for travel-related precautions from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC);
- The COVID-19 policies and requirements of your airline, if applicable, which should be prominently available on the airline website;
- For international destinations, the latest COVID-19 reporting from the relevant U.S. embassy;
- For domestic destinations, online COVID-19 resources from the applicable state or local government(s), which can be found through an internet search; and,
- The local public health guidance in your home location, to which you will return at the end of your trip and which can be found through an internet search.
- Current guidance and policies from Princeton’s University Health Service (UHS), Environmental Health and Safety (EHS), HR, and others, available on the University COVID resources site.

You should also consider consulting with your personal medical provider to evaluate your individual health circumstances and determine any additional measures you may wish to take to protect yourself and to prepare should you become ill while traveling.

International students, faculty, and staff in the United States on University-sponsored visas, who are considering travel abroad, should consult with the Davis International Center regarding potential implications for their U.S. immigration status.

For University-sponsored travel, you are encouraged to consult with UHS regarding relevant non-COVID vaccinations and other, non-COVID travel health information.

Please also take the time to review and familiarize yourself with the general travel planning information available in the GS&S travel toolkit. The downloadable ISOS app, which provides destination-specific safety and health alerts, is available for you to use even if you are engaging in personal travel.

You should always plan to travel with a sufficient supply of items necessary to comply with public health recommendations, such as face coverings and hand sanitizer, as these items may not always be available in your destination(s). For University-sponsored travel, you may contact EHS for further details on obtaining personal protective equipment for your trip.
How should I go about booking University-sponsored travel, if I have been approved to do so under the permissible travel guidelines?

The University has a dedicated team of travel experts who can assist with reservations, review pricing and penalties, and apply the University’s negotiated rates and complimentary amenities. As such, approved University-sponsored travel by faculty and staff should be made through the Concur Travel online booking tool or by calling the University’s travel management company, World Travel.

In the limited circumstances where University-sponsored travel for them is permitted, students may also make use of these booking resources and are encouraged to do so, given the complexities and uncertainties of travel arrangements during the pandemic.

As an additional benefit, booking through Concur or World Travel will automatically begin the required process of trip enrollment for you in the Enroll My Trip system by populating your itinerary in the online tool. For more information, see the Enroll My Trip resource page.

Concur can be accessed via the University’s travel website, and World Travel can be reached at 1-888-530-4087 or by emailing princeton@worldtravelinc.com.

The definition of “group travel” in these guidelines is not the same as that used by the group travel program in Finance and Treasury. Why the difference?

In these guidelines, group travel is defined strictly as a means to address the risks of disease transmission and individual health attendant on travel undertaken together by any number of University affiliates. The definition used by the group travel program continues to apply to issues involving booking and possible discounts.

If I am traveling for a University-sponsored purpose, will the University supply me with personal protective equipment (PPE) required for the journey?

Yes. Please contact EHS for further details on obtaining PPE for your trip.

What should I do if there is a health, safety, or logistics problem on my University-sponsored trip? Whom should I call?

Please review the GS&S online resources for responding to emergencies abroad. The guidelines and information provided there are up to date.
What am I required to do before returning to living, working, or studying on campus if I travel outside of Princeton?

No earlier than a week prior to returning to campus, you must complete the online COVID-19 Risk Assessment for Princeton University community members.

The UHS Global and Community Health team will review the submission and respond to you within 72 hours with guidance on whether or not you may return to campus and on what additional steps you may be required to take before doing so.