



March 4, 2020

Dear Students, Faculty, and Staff,

The spread of the novel coronavirus, and the COVID-19 diseases, has affected multiple regions of the world, including countries where our students, faculty, and staff are currently traveling. The University of Maine System is committed to your safety. The Office of Risk Management is monitoring guidance from the Center for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), the U.S. Department of State, and World Health Organization to assess travel risks every day and the Office of Academic Affairs is leading efforts to provide impacted students with academic accommodations to support their learning.

CDC Guidance for Student Foreign Travel for Institutions of Higher Education: Voluntary Return Home

The CDC has encouraged institutes of higher education to consider asking students in study abroad programs to return to the United States and to evaluate risks with choosing to maintain programs abroad. In response to that guidance, the University of Maine System encourages all travelers to return to the United States immediately if you have concerns regarding the virus and your safety. Our faculty and academic leaders will work on a case-by-case basis, if necessary, to assist students returning home early and on a volunteer basis with academic accommodations to complete their course of study.

Please contact your campus international travel coordinator to assist with travel arrangements.

Preparations for Mandatory Return Home Based on CDC and U.S. Department of State Travel Advisories

Students who choose to continue their study abroad programs are advised that an increase to the travel advisory level in their country of study will result in the immediate termination of their travel and a mandatory return to the United States. The University will continue monitoring CDC and U.S. Department of State travel advisories for students, faculty, and staff who choose to continue their travels abroad. When the CDC or U.S. Department of State increase travel advisories to a Level 3 - *avoid non-essential travel* or a Level 4 - *do not travel*, the University will require travelers to return to the United States. Each campus international travel coordinator will assist with travel arrangements.

Disease outbreaks could also disrupt a country's medical infrastructure therefore increasing the likelihood of life-threatening risks. In these situations, the U.S. government may have limited ability to provide support and assistance. The University recommends students make preparations now that would expedite their return home.



Following CDC Protocols for Return Travel and Restrictions

Upon your return to the United States, the University will follow CDC guidelines related to COVID-19. Additional information related to these guidelines are located on the CDC's website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>. These protocols may include restrictions on movements to help preserve public health. Anyone who has been asked by public health officials to restrict movements to halt the spread of the COVID-19 would receive academic accommodations during the period when they are required to be in isolation. Students will be required to work with their campus international travel coordinator to plan integration back to campus.

Guidance on Future Travel and Additional Resources

In addition to monitoring current travelers abroad, the University is assessing future international travel programming. At this time, the University is not planning any trips to countries with travel advisories of a Level 3 - *avoid non-essential travel* or a Level 4 – *do not travel*, as defined by the CDC and U.S. Department of State. Due to the rapid spread of COVID-19 and our commitment to keeping our students, faculty and staff safe, upcoming travel plans are subject to change.

The University wants our students, faculty, and staff to stay safe while also enjoying a rich cultural and academic experience abroad. We also understand that you have your own risk thresholds and may wish to make other decisions. In these instances, we will work with each individual on a case-by-case basis to determine how the University can best accommodate your needs, but in no case will University travel be authorized to places for which the U.S. State Department has issued a level 3 or 4 advisory. Please understand that this guidance is under active review and may be enhanced in the future. The University is encouraging all students, faculty, and staff to consider returning home if you are concerned for your safety. Additional informational resources are provided for your reference below.

- Campus International Travel Contacts - <https://www.maine.edu/health-advisory/international-travel-coordinators/>
- CDC Guidance for Higher Education Institutions - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/student-foreign-travel.html>
- European CDC - <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/novel-coronavirus-china>
- Maine CDC - <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/airborne/coronavirus.shtml>
- Smart Traveler Enrollment Program - <https://step.state.gov/>
- U.S. Department of State - <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html>

Sincerely,

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