

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

International Travel Risk Review — Flagged Destinations

Frequently Asked Questions for Travelers

Before You Read On: What This Process Is NOT

- ✓ **NOT a travel ban.** The University of Maryland supports and values international research, fieldwork, and scholarly exchange.
- ✓ **NOT a research ethics or IRB review.** It does not affect your IRB approval or research design.
- ✓ **NOT punitive.** Every traveler to a flagged destination goes through the same process — it is applied uniformly.

The training and briefing processes exist to ensure compliance with federal regulations and University of Maryland System policy, and to provide important information about resources and institutional support before professional travel.

This document answers common questions faculty and graduate students have about the international travel security process for flagged destinations. If your question is not answered here, please contact International Travel Security (ITS) at intltravelsecurity@umd.edu.

SECTION 1 Getting Started — Why Is This Happening?

Q1 What is the rationale for this procedure?

The university's [International Travel Professional Travel Procedures](#) implement the University System of Maryland (USM) Policy on University System Travel ([VIII-11.00](#)). The USM policy requires that:

- **All professional travel must be documented.**
- **Pre-approval of all professional travel is required** for all travel outside of Maryland and/or the Washington D.C. Metropolitan Area.
- Travelers are expected to make travel arrangements in advance through the contracted travel service vendor.

These procedures also align with federal funding agency requirements as set forth in the [White House OSTP Guidelines for Research Security Programs](#), which require that:

- Institutions must implement periodic training on international travel security.
- Institutions must have a travel reporting program and an organizational record of international travel.

Q2 My travel request is on hold in Concur. What does that mean and what do I do?

The Concur “error” occurred because you are traveling internationally. To advance the request, [you must complete the Global Safety and Security Training](#). A link to this training is in the Concur error message that appears when you submit your international travel request.

For most destinations, once you complete this training and enter the date of completion in Concur, the request will continue to route for regular Concur approval. To enter the date, click “Add expected expenses and/or travel plans” in the Concur error message, then select “Global Safety and Security Training” from the drop-down menu and add the completion date.

When Concur detects a flagged destination, it automatically places your request on hold until the training and a required briefing are both completed. This is not an error on your part, and it does not mean your trip is denied.

After you complete the training and enter the date in Concur, the request advances to ITS. You will then receive an email from ITS explaining your next step: a briefing with an ITS member. Once that briefing is completed, ITS will move the request to the next approval stage.

If you have not received an email within one business day of submitting your Concur request, contact ITS at intltravelsecurity@umd.edu.

Q3

Can I take the Global Safety and Security Training and/or complete the ITS briefing in advance?

Yes. You can access the [Global Safety and Security Training](#) at any time in advance of your trip. When you enter your travel into Concur, simply enter the date you completed the training. The date is valid as long as it is no more than one year from your trip's departure date.

All travel to flagged destinations (any [U.S. Department of State Level 4](#) location, or country of concern flagged by the [Research Security Office](#)) must be entered in Concur before an ITS briefing can be scheduled.

Q4

Why is my destination considered “flagged”? Who decides that?

Destination classifications are determined by ITS using a risk criteria framework drawing on multiple authoritative sources, including:

- U.S. State Department Travel Advisories (Levels 1–4)
- The U.S. Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC)
- The CHIPS and Science Act (Public Law 117-167)
- Military End-Use/End User countries (Department of Commerce)

A destination is generally flagged when it presents elevated or complex risks in one or more categories: research security concerns, political instability, active conflict, public health emergencies, crime, or civil unrest. The classification is applied to all university travelers going to that destination, regardless of trip purpose or prior travel history.

If you believe a destination has been classified incorrectly or your travel context substantially changes the risk profile, you may raise that in your ITS briefing.

Q5

How can I learn which destinations are “flagged” before I start the Concur process?

The list of sanctioned countries/foreign countries of concern/State Department Level 4 countries: (as of 25 Aug 2026):

Afghanistan
Balkans
Belarus
Burkina Faso
Burma (Myanmar)
Central African Republic (C.A.R.)
Chad
China (inc. Hong Kong and Macau)
Cuba
Democratic Republic of Congo
Ethiopia
Haiti
Iran
Iraq
Israel (West Bank / Gaza)

Lebanon
Libya
Mali
Nicaragua
Niger
North Korea
Russia
Somalia
South Sudan
Sudan
Syria
Uganda
Ukraine (Crimea/Donetsk/Luhansk)
Venezuela
Yemen

Q6 I've traveled to this country before without any special review. Why is this required now?

It's possible that your prior travel predated the current system, or that conditions in your destination have changed and triggered a new classification. It is also possible that the process existed in a less formalized way and was not consistently applied. We are now standardizing that process across all units, which means some travelers will experience it for the first time even for destinations they know well. Our goal is to make the process as efficient as possible while ensuring you have genuine support.

Q7 Is this process a travel ban or restriction? Can I still go?

This process is not a travel ban or restriction. Completing the training and/or briefing is the pathway to getting your travel approved, not a barrier to it. In the vast majority of cases, travelers who complete the process proceed with their trips as planned.

The process gives ITS the opportunity to ensure you have destination-specific safety information, relevant institutional resources, and any guidance relevant to research security or export control considerations that may apply to your work.

Q8 Does this apply to personal travel attached to business travel that I book through Concur?

The process applies when any portion of the international travel is professional travel — meaning travel related to the mission of the university where an individual is representing the university or representing themselves as a university employee or graduate student. This includes travel sponsored or supervised by the university, and travel sponsored by external entities.

If you are mixing personal and professional travel in a single trip, the process applies to the university-affiliated portions of the trip. If you're unsure whether your travel falls within scope, contact ITS at intltravelsecurity@umd.edu.

Q9 I'm a graduate student, not faculty. Does this process apply to me too?

Yes. The process applies to all University of Maryland travelers — faculty, staff, and students, including graduate students — who submit a Concur international travel request using university funds or seeking institutional approval. Graduate students conducting funded fieldwork, dissertation research, or other sponsored travel to flagged destinations go through the same process.

If you are traveling as part of a faculty-led project, the faculty PI may already be in contact with ITS — but you will still need your own training and/or briefing. Contact ITS at intltravelsecurity@umd.edu with any questions.

Q10 What is ITS?

International Travel Security (ITS) is a joint effort of the Office of the Provost (International Risk Management, Office of International Affairs), the Vice President for Research (Research Security), the Vice President for Administration (Chief of Staff and Environmental Safety, Sustainability and Risk), and the Vice President for Finance (Travel Services). Travel briefings and training are administered by Research Security and International Risk Management.

SECTION 2 The Process

Q1 What happens during the briefing? What are IRM and RSO, and why do both meet with me?

The briefing covers both IRM and RSO responsibilities in a single conversation:

- **IRM (International Risk Management):** Covers destination-specific risks, safety protocols, emergency resources, and university insurance and emergency support.
- **RSO (Research Security Office):** Addresses research security, data protection, technology controls, and export compliance. Particularly relevant for travelers carrying sensitive data, equipment, or conducting research with national security or IP implications.

Q2 How long will this take? Will it delay my trip to a flagged destination?

The process is designed to move quickly. ITS is required to reach out to you within one business day of your Concur submission. From there, the timeline depends primarily on how quickly you complete your training and respond to scheduling requests. A realistic timeline if you respond promptly:

- **Day 1–2:** ITS contacts you; you complete required training.
- **Day 3–6:** ITS briefing is scheduled and completed.
- **Day 6–7:** Concur request is released to continue approval.

Our strong recommendation: Submit your Concur travel approval request as early as possible. [UMD's travel policy](#) requires that pre-approval be obtained and fully approved in Concur prior to booking travel or making reservations.

Q3 Will this process delay my travel to a non-flagged international destination?

The continuation of your Concur request depends on how quickly you complete the required training and enter the completion date in Concur. Travel to a non-flagged international destination only requires completion of the [Global Safety and Security Training](#).

Q4 What is the flagged destination pre-departure briefing with ITS and what should I expect?

The ITS pre-departure briefing is a one-on-one (or group) conversation, typically 30 to 45 minutes, conducted via Zoom or in person. It is conversational in nature — not a formal exam or evaluation. Topics typically covered include:

- Current conditions in your destination — health, safety, political environment
- Destination-specific risks relevant to your travel purpose and itinerary
- University resources: international insurance coverage, 24/7 emergency assistance, Healix travel monitoring
- Emergency procedures — what to do if something goes wrong, and who to contact

- Local laws or customs with particular implications for researchers or academics
 - Sensitive data, research materials, or proprietary information you may be carrying, and how to protect them
 - Export control regulations that may apply to your equipment, software, or research activities
 - Cybersecurity practices: device security, VPN use, handling of credentials
 - Awareness of foreign government or third-party efforts to access university research (high-risk destinations)
 - Disclosure or compliance obligations specific to your sponsored research or grants
- You do not need to prepare a presentation or bring documentation. Coming with your itinerary and a general sense of your travel purpose is sufficient.

Q5 Do I need to prepare anything before my briefing, or just show up?

No formal preparation is required. It is helpful to come with:

- Your travel dates and destination(s), including any multi-city itinerary
- A general description of your travel purpose (conference, fieldwork, archival research, etc.)
- A sense of any equipment, devices, or data you plan to bring or collect. If you plan to travel with a laptop, [request a 'clean' loaner laptop](#) from the Division of IT prior to travel.
- Any specific questions or concerns you have about the destination or your trip

Completing the [Global Safety and Security Training](#) is the one concrete prerequisite — your briefing cannot be scheduled until ITS confirms your training is done.

Q6 Can the briefing be done virtually, or do I have to come in person?

Yes, the meeting can be conducted virtually via Zoom or your preferred video platform. In-person options are also available if you prefer or are on campus. If you are already traveling or located outside the College Park area, virtual meetings are the default.

Q7 I have co-travelers going to the same destination. Do we each need separate meetings, or can we do a group briefing?

Each UMD traveler must have their own individual Concur request reviewed and their own training completion documented — there is no way to satisfy this requirement through a single shared record. However, the ITS briefing can be conducted as a group meeting if all co-travelers are available at the same time and traveling together for the same purpose. This is an efficient option for research teams or faculty leading groups of graduate students. Mention it when ITS first contacts you to schedule.

SECTION 3 Training Requirements

Q1 What is the required pre-departure training and how long does it take?

The required pre-departure training is an online module covering foundational international travel safety and security awareness topics. The [international travel training](#) is self-paced. ELMS sends a certificate of completion to you via email. You then enter the date of completion in Concur to meet the training requirement.

For those traveling to flagged destinations: once you enter this date and submit the request, ITS will receive notice of your travel and will contact you to schedule a pre-travel briefing. ITS will enter the date of your briefing in Concur, and your request will move to the next approval step.

Q2 I completed the Global Safety and Security Training last year for a different trip. Do I have to do it again?

The [Global Safety and Security Training](#) is valid for one year from the date of completion. If your prior completion falls within the valid window, ITS will confirm this in ELMS and you will not need to retake the training.

If your training has expired, you will need to complete it again. The training is periodically updated, so a refresh is genuinely useful even for frequent international travelers.

Note: if your prior travel was to a non-flagged destination and your current travel is to a flagged destination, you will also be required to meet with ITS for a pre-travel briefing, as described in prior questions.

Q3

Where do I access the Global Safety and Security Training and how will ITS know I've completed it?

A link to this training is in the Concur error message that appears when you submit your request. [You can also access the training directly at this link.](#)

Completion is recorded automatically in ELMS and is visible to ITS. You will need to enter the date of completion in Concur to advance the travel request. You do not need to forward a certificate or notify ITS manually.

SECTION 4 Timing and Planning

Q1

How far in advance should I submit my Concur request to avoid delays?

You are required to submit a Concur request at least 2 weeks before your intended departure date. This should provide enough runway to complete training, a pre-travel briefing (if required), and the Concur release without pressure on your travel planning or booking timeline.

Submitting early is always preferable. Completing the training and/or briefing well in advance avoids last-minute pressure.

Q2

What if I need to travel internationally with less than two weeks' notice?

Exceptions to the two-week submission deadline will only be granted in rare cases when significant factors outside of the traveler's control prevent earlier submission. The travel must be submitted in Concur as far in advance of departure as possible, and a written exception request form must be submitted to ITS.

Contact ITS at intltravelsecurity@umd.edu as soon as possible, mention your departure date, and complete the required training the same day or the next morning. Proactive outreach from you is the most important factor in completing the process quickly.

Q3

I completed my training and am traveling to a flagged destination but have not heard from ITS. What do I do?

ITS is required to acknowledge your Concur request and send you an initial communication within one business day of your submission. If you have not received anything after one full business day (excluding weekends and university holidays), follow up directly with ITS at intltravelsecurity@umd.edu. Please include your full name and Concur request number.

Q4

What happens if ITS staff are out of office when I need my briefing?

ITS has designated backup staff who assume full process responsibilities whenever the primary staff member is unavailable. Coverage is maintained for every business day of the year. If your meeting contact is unavailable, a backup staff member will reach out promptly to confirm or reschedule.

Q5 My department needs to book flights before the process is complete. Is that possible?

Formally, your Concur travel request remains on hold until the briefing is complete, and institutional approval has not been granted until it is released. [UMD requires that all travel be fully approved in Concur prior to booking travel or making reservations.](#)

The best mitigation is to submit your Concur request early enough that the process is complete before you need to book. If that is not possible, contact ITS directly — we can give you a realistic sense of how the process is progressing. We recommend consulting with your department's business office or travel coordinator about their specific booking policy.

Q6 Do I have to report international travel in inTERP?

Yes. The Concur and inTERP submissions are both required, for different purposes. All university employees and applicable graduate students must disclose international and/or outside professional activities in [inTERP](#), in accordance with the University of Maryland [Policy on Conflict of Interest and Conflict of Commitment \(II-3.10\[A\]\)](#). Disclosures must be submitted before engaging in a new activity, or within 30 days of a change to an existing disclosure.

SECTION 5 Scope and Special Circumstances

Q1 To whom does this process apply?

All university employees and graduate students on international professional travel are required to follow this international travel security process.

- **Graduate Student(s):** A registered student enrolled in a graduate degree program at the University. This does not include individuals in certificate programs.
- **University Employee(s):** All faculty and staff employed by the University or otherwise holding an appointment with the University, regardless of title, FTE, or full- or part-time status. Also includes University officials.

Q2 My trip involves multiple countries — some flagged, some not. Does the whole trip get reviewed?

The process is triggered by the presence of any flagged destination in your itinerary. Your briefing will cover the full trip, but the depth of discussion will be proportionate to the risk profile of each destination. When you enter your trip in Concur, make sure all destinations are included in your itinerary.

Q3 I'm attending a conference and only transiting through a flagged country for a few hours. Does that count?

It depends on the nature of the transit. A brief layover where you do not pass through customs or leave the transit zone is generally not considered travel to that destination. A layover where you exit the airport, go through customs, or spend significant time in the country is typically treated as travel to that destination.

If you are unsure, contact ITS before submitting your Concur request and describe your itinerary. ITS can give you a definitive answer.

Q4 My research requires last-minute travel to a flagged destination. Is there an expedited process?

Exceptions to the two-week submission deadline will only be granted in rare cases when significant factors outside of the traveler's control prevent earlier submission. The travel must be submitted in Concur as far in advance as possible, and a written exception request form must be submitted to ITS. Contact ITS at intltravelsecurity@umd.edu immediately and mention your departure date. Complete the required training the same day. Proactive outreach is the most important factor in completing the process quickly.

Q5 The situation in my destination changed after I submitted my request. What happens?

ITS monitors destination risk conditions on an ongoing basis. If conditions change significantly while your process is in progress, ITS will contact you to discuss the updated situation. In most cases, the process continues with updated information incorporated into your briefing. If you learn of a significant development before ITS contacts you, do not hesitate to reach out directly. ITS welcomes traveler-initiated contact about changing conditions.

Q6 I'm traveling with a non-UMD collaborator or sponsor. Do they need to go through this process too?

No. This process applies only to University of Maryland travelers engaged in professional travel. Your non-UMD collaborators, sponsors, or external partners are not subject to this process. Your ITS briefing may touch on how to coordinate with external partners on safety and security protocols, especially if you are leading a team that includes both UMD and non-UMD members.

Q7 I've already booked and paid for travel and then learned it requires this process. What now?

Submit your Concur request immediately if you have not already done so and complete the Global Safety and Security Training. Contact ITS directly to explain the situation. If a briefing is required, ITS will work to schedule and complete it as quickly as possible given your timeline.

SECTION 6 Data, Privacy, and Research Sensitivity

Q1 What information about my research or travel will be shared during the ITS consultation? Is it confidential?

The ITS briefing for travel to flagged destinations is confidential within the bounds of institutional policy and applicable law. Information you share about your research, data, or travel plans is used only for the purpose of the security briefing and is not disclosed to your department, your dean, or external parties except as required by law or university policy.

ITS staff are experienced in handling sensitive research information. You are not required to share proprietary findings, IRB-protected participant data, or unpublished research results in order to complete the briefing.

SECTION 7 After the Process — Before, During, and After Your Trip

Q1 My training and/or briefing is complete and my Concur request was released. What do I still need to do before I leave?

- **For U.S. citizens — register with the U.S. State Department's STEP program:** step.state.gov. Allows the U.S. Embassy to contact you in an emergency.

- **For international students and scholars:** Ensure you understand and comply with the requirements of your U.S. visa. Check in with [International Students and Scholar Services](#) if you have questions.
- **Enter your emergency contact(s) into Concur**, including a mobile phone number reachable in your destination country(ies).
- **Implement device and data security recommendations:** If ITS provided guidance on device preparation, VPN use, or data handling, complete those steps before you leave.
- **Share your itinerary and copies of travel documents** with a trusted colleague or family member.
- **Download the Healix Travel Oracle app:** [Healix Travel Oracle](#) provides country and region-specific health and safety alerts, 24/7 UMD contact information, and more.
- **Insurance:** Familiarize yourself with [CISI, UMD's international medical and security assistance insurance](#). You are automatically enrolled once your travel is approved in Concur. [Contact Travel Services](#) if you have not received enrollment confirmation.

Q2

What university emergency support is available to me while I'm traveling?

If your travel is approved in Concur:

- [International Travel Insurance \(CISI\)](#): Covers emergency medical care, medical evacuation, and repatriation.
- CISI Emergency Assistance: Email MEDASSIST-USA@AXA-ASSISTANCE.US | Phone: +1 (312) 935-1703
- [Healix Travel Oracle](#): IRM uses this platform to monitor the global risk environment and send safety alerts to travelers impacted by events in their itinerary destinations.

Q3

Do I need to check in with anyone while I'm in the field, or when I return?

There is no universal mandatory check-in requirement for all flagged destination travelers, but your ITS briefing may include destination-specific or project-specific recommendations for check-ins within certain operational contexts (e.g. boating, hiking, high-risk or remote locations). For higher-risk destinations or extended fieldwork in remote areas, ITS may request periodic check-ins at agreed intervals — this is discussed during your briefing, not imposed after you depart.

Upon return, you are not required to file a formal debrief, although we strongly encourage you to contact ITS if something significant occurred during your trip. Your account helps improve the university's ability to support future travelers to that destination.

If you hold a clearance, ensure you are following the reporting requirements of the agency or department holding your clearance.

If you have feedback about the process itself, ITS welcomes it at intltravelsecurity@umd.edu.

Questions Not Answered Here?

Contact the ITS at:

- **ITS Email:** intltravelsecurity@umd.edu

Other Points of Contact:

- [Research Security](#) — researchsecurity@umd.edu
- [International Risk Management](#) — 301-314-7748
- [Travel Services](#) — support.umd.edu (select Procurement > Quick Links > Open a Case with Procurement) — *for Concur questions and CISI insurance enrollment confirmation*
- [Environmental Safety, Sustainability and Risk](#) — (301) 405-3960 — *for field research safety questions*
- [International Students and Scholar Services](#) — (301) 314-7740 — *for U.S. visa questions*

Thank you, and safe travels!