

Bangor University
Safe Overseas Travel – Equality Guidance for Staff
June 2021

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

This **Safe Overseas Travel** guidance aims to raise awareness of issues and potential risks that staff who identify with one or more protected characteristics may encounter when undertaking overseas travel on behalf of the University.

Cultural acceptance and law can vary from country to country, we advise staff to research their destination thoroughly prior to travel and to consult their line manager or HR Officer should they have any concerns.

The aim of this guidance is not to deter employees who have one or more protected characteristics from travelling abroad in connection with their employment, but simply to ensure research and consideration of potential risks associated with such travel and the steps that can be taken to minimise the risks.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the [Health & Safety Policy - Travel Overseas](#)

The Protected Characteristics

For the purposes of this document, the main piece of legislation in the UK is the Equality Act 2010.

Throughout this document, you will see reference to “protected characteristics”. These are the grounds upon which discrimination is unlawful under the Equality Act. The protected characteristics and associated risks are listed below alphabetically and some known risks relating to overseas travel are identified against each characteristic, this list is not exhaustive.

Risk Assessment

The line manager will carry out a [risk assessment](#) with staff members **prior to any overseas travel**. Equality considerations should be included.

Confidentiality and Disclosure

Staff are not obliged to disclose sensitive personal information which might include one of the protected characteristics, and if the staff member prefers, they can discuss with their HR Officer. Any disclosures should remain strictly confidential.

If after discussion an individual chooses not to travel overseas due to concerns about their protected characteristics and the potential risks associated with this in the destination country, they may not want their wider network of colleagues to know the reasons they decided not to travel. If this is the case it is important for the individual's decision to be respected, and managers should deal with this sensitively. If however staff member's role clearly requires travel of that nature or to that country then it may be necessary to consider reasonable adjustments under the Supporting Capability Procedure.

Protected Characteristics and Associated Risks:

Age:

No known associated risks.

Disability:

The nature of the disability will determine the potential risks. However, as an example consideration could be given to physical accessibility, availability of necessary medication, and cultural approach to certain disabilities such as mental illness.

Gender Identity (Trans):

Some countries continue to criminalise transgender identity and persecute Trans people, sometimes violently. Trans people in these countries may be vulnerable to state violence or hate crimes, and Trans organisations 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.

Marriage and civil partnership:

Some countries prohibit public affection between both heterosexual and homosexual couples. As of 2020 few countries have passed legislation that includes full-fledged legal recognition for LGBTQ couples such as marriage, adoption, inheritance, and insurance rights.

Pregnancy and maternity:

No known associated risks from the point of view of equality. The only known risks will be from a health and safety point of view, for example if vaccinations are required before travel, or if the visit constitutes a field trip. Also consider the quality of medical care if required abroad.

Race (ethnicity):

The threat of racial violence can never be ruled out whenever a person is travelling – including within Europe. As the risk may vary from 'none' to 'elevated', it is suggested that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website is used to ascertain any particular racial tensions.

Religion, Belief and Non-belief:

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 – including within Europe. The risk may vary from 'none' to 'elevated'.

Sex or Gender:

While sex discrimination applies to both males and females – there are some countries where females still do not have the same rights as their male counterparts. As this varies from territory to territory, it is worth checking before making travel arrangements.

Sexual Orientation:

As of 2020 few countries have passed legislation that includes full-fledged legal recognition for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) couples such as marriage, adoption, inheritance, and insurance rights. Some countries continue to criminalize homosexuality and persecute LGB people, sometimes violently. LGB people in such countries may be vulnerable to state violence or hate crimes, and LGB organizations or movements may be vulnerable to state sponsored harassment.

Cultural Customs

Some countries may have customs that require staff to participate in activities they are uncomfortable with. This can include eating and drinking certain things, events and behaviours. Staff are advised to check before travelling and any concerns should be discussed with the line manager or HR. To avoid offending, should staff find themselves in

this position, having a quiet word with the host/ess in advance of the event can often avoid uncomfortable situations.

Further information and sources of support:

[The Foreign Commonwealth Office](#)

[Wiki: LGBT Equality around the World](#)

[Amnesty International](#)

[Human Rights Watch](#)

[Stonewall Global Working Guides](#)

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