

Guidelines for Field Trips, Student Placements and Research Activity Planning and Approval Program

Health, Safety and Risk Management
McMaster University
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Table of Contents

Requirements For Activity Approval.....	3
Levels of Risk.....	3
Safety Planning Checklist.....	4
Passports & Visas.....	4
Emergencies.....	4
Travel Health & Medical Insurance.....	4
Itinerary, Destination & Money Matters.....	4
DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL CHECKLIST	5
Health	5
Safety	5
People	6
Environment.....	6
Administrative	7
Orientation Meeting for Group Travel with Supervisor	7
ADDITIONAL CHECKLIST FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL.....	8
Proper Documentation	8
Current Country Conditions.....	8
Risk Management.....	9
Emergency Plan.....	9
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR GROUP TRAVEL	10
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL:.....	10
Tool Box	11
Field Site & Equipment Hazard Assessment.....	11
Communication and Emergency Preparedness	12
Environment.....	12
Health Protection	13
Insurance Tool Box.....	15

REQUIREMENTS FOR ACTIVITY APPROVAL

For **LOW RISK** Activities (*see definition of low risk*)

- Complete RMM #801 Field Trip/Student Placement/Research Activity Approval and Review Form
- Complete Safety Travel Checklist (including participant waiver)
- Complete Declaration of Health Status (for activities taking place outside of Ontario)
- Submit forms to Supervisor and Chair/Director
- Receive Chair/Director Approval

You **DO NOT need to submit forms to EOHSS

For **SIGNIFICANT RISK OR EXTREME RISK** Activities (*see definition of significant risk*)

- **MUST** complete a risk assessment package including:
 - RMM #801 Field Trip/Student Placement/Research Activity Approval and Review Form
 - Complete Statement of Responsibilities Checklist
 - Complete Declaration of Health Status
 - Copy of risk assessment document outlining activities, risks and mitigation strategies
- **MUST** be submitted and approved in the following order
 - Supervisor
 - Department Chair/Director
 - EOHSS
 - Provost/VP International (for Extreme Risk activities ONLY)

LEVELS OF RISK

Off campus activities can pose varying levels of risk to the participants.

Low Risk

Examples may include but not limited to:

- Off campus activity that entails hazards no greater than those encountered by participants in everyday lives.
- It may include locations that have access to modern health care resources and communication devices.
- Global Affairs recommends that persons exercise normal security precautions.
- Local field trips or activities in an urban setting.
- Clinical placement at accredited institutions in Canada.
- Activities such as reviewing research data or meetings at other institutions.

Significant Risk

Examples may include but not limited to:

- Potential risk may be associated with the activity itself ie. scuba diving, mountain climbing or those entailed in the transportation to the site, as well as environmental and health risks that are characteristic of the site.
- Activity risk, even locally but outside university boundary, can be in this category.
- Remote region conducting field research or field trips.
- Working in a laboratory outside North America.
- Politically unstable country.
- Any activity that involves travel though or to a country or region for which a travel or health advisory is in effect.

Extreme Risk

Any activity that involves travel through or to a country for which a travel or health advisory has resulted in the Global Affairs risk rating of L3 or L4.

SAFETY PLANNING CHECKLIST

Passports & Visas

- Ensure that your passport will be valid for six months after your date of entry to your destination.
- Photocopy the ID page of your passport and keep a copy with you and another at home.
- Find out if your destination country requires a visa and ensure that you have the right type of visa.

Emergencies

- Register your travel with the government to receive timely advice during an emergency; for Canadians, register with Registration of Canadians Abroad (ROCA) travel.gc.ca/travelling/registration.
- Be aware of **travel advisories** and common problems when travelling abroad: <https://travel.gc.ca/>.
- Know the address of the nearest embassy or consulate in your destination country.
- Make note of the Emergency Assistance number **1-613-996-8885**. Learn more about this service at <http://travel.gc.ca/assistance/emergency-assistance>

Travel Health & Medical Insurance

- Ensure you have adequate travel and medical insurance (extended medical and emergency insurance).
- Carry a copy of your insurance policy with you.
- Leave a copy of your insurance policy with someone at home.
- Carry your insurance provider, policy number, and telephone number with you.
- Understand your coverage (e.g. the amount you are covered for, if you are covered for certain activities, pre-existing medical conditions).
- Inform other medical insurance providers of your travel.
- Obtain any vaccinations or immunizations that are needed (check with a Travel Clinic or family doctor).
- Bring your vaccination/immunization certificate with you as proof.
- Bring your prescriptions (in original labelled containers) and medical records with you.

Itinerary, Destination & Money Matters

- Research your destination** and know the 4 C's: Customs, Currency, Culture, and Climate (e.g. know what to pack, how much money to bring with you, areas to be aware of, etc.).
- Leave a copy of your travel itinerary** with a relative or friend and inform them of any changes.
- Carry with you your address, phone number, and **emergency contacts** in the destination country.
- Learn about banking fees and card compatibility to ATMs.
- Notify bank or credit card companies of your travel to avoid having your cards blocked.
- Submit any other specific pre-departure forms as required by your faculty, program, or department.
- Obtain a Power of Attorney if required.
- Review this checklist <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/publications/travellers-checklist#3>.

DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL CHECKLIST

This document, is a checklist to assist all travellers engaged in field research and field education to address risk, health and safety issues. The list, while extensive, is by no means exhaustive and may not address all circumstances that may confront travellers. If you require further information or assistance, please contact Environmental and Occupational Health Support Services at eoHSS@mcmaster.ca.

Health

- Proximity to hospitals/medical assistance – check how close you are to these facilities; ensure you have the appropriate emergency contact numbers required.
- Medical & Health Insurance – ensure that participants have (and carry) documents for health insurance. It is recommended that a copy of these documents be carried by the trip leader (if applicable)
- Medical & eyeglass prescriptions – bring backup copies
- First aid requirements:
- Further information on those kits can be found at:
<http://www.workingatmcmaster.ca/eohss/prevention/first-aid/>
- Determine whether wilderness or regular first aid is applicable and ensure that someone (preferably two members if travelling as a group) is trained appropriately in that type of first aid.
- Ensure that you have a back-up plan in case the leader is incapacitated.
- Health conditions – check on any common diseases / parasites in the area to which you are travelling and address them (and any measures that need to be taken) with your group.
- Health Emergency Card - Everyone should carry a health emergency card on their person that is written in the language of the area to which they are travelling. This card should include any information that medical personnel would need in an emergency (i.e. name, what language(s) they speak, allergies, blood type, any particular medical condition that may require care (i.e. diabetes, life-threatening allergies, etc.) including appropriate medical response techniques for the condition, emergency contact number, etc. Also suggest that they wear a medical alert bracelet, if possible.

Safety

- Itineraries** – Complete your itinerary and leave a copy with your department. You also may wish to file your itineraries with your personal contact.
- Communication Check Points** - Set up a regular call-in schedule with a University contact (and a personal contact, if you chose) to ensure that if you are in trouble, someone will be looking for you.
- Communication Options** – Ensure that you have a form of communication readily available that is appropriate for your area – i.e. cell phones (that work in your area), satellite phones, etc. and that you have the appropriate numbers for emergency response.
- Emergency Response Plan** - Prepare an Emergency Plan. If you are travelling as a group, this should be prepared by the group leader and communicated to all individuals in the group. A checklist of what should be included in the plan is on the last page of this document. This should include an emergency evacuation plan if someone in your group gets hurt or if an incident occurs (fire, war, etc.) or what to do if the trip leader becomes incapacitated.
- Mode of Transportation** - Check into your mode of transportation and any safety concerns including conditions of the road, experience of the drivers, hazard warnings (such as snow, fire or avalanche) on your route, safety on trains (i.e., some train routes are not recommended for travel in other countries).
- Driving** - If you are going to drive, ensure that you have the appropriate qualifications, understand the language and the road signs and be aware of any increase in risk in the areas to which you are driving (i.e. night driving or lack of a road maintenance program on a particular road may increase your risk). Ensure that you have secured the appropriate driver's license and permits.
- Renting Vehicles** – If renting vehicles ensure that you list all drivers on the rental agreement and that you purchase the insurance offered by the rental agency.

- **Hazardous Equipment/Supplies** – Check into your equipment/supplies to see if they present any specific hazards. If transporting dangerous goods, ensure you are properly trained. Generally, hazardous substances cannot be transported in rental vehicles – check with the rental agency.
- **Safety Equipment Required** – Ensure that all persons in your group have the appropriate safety equipment for the activities you are undertaking (i.e., snake gaiters, helmets, eye safety goggles/shields, whistles for emergencies).

People

- **Working Alone** - If you, or members of your group, will be working alone, address any Occupational Health & Safety regulations that apply to “working alone” situations. Please see our RMM: #304 Working Alone Program <http://www.workingatmcmaster.ca/med/document/RMM-304-Working-Alone-Program-1-36.pdf>
- **Travellers Under 18 Years of Age** - If this is a youth or child group (under 18), ensure that any required consents are obtained and that appropriate supervision is in place.
- Review the abilities and experience of the group members to see where each person may be able to assist in planning the Emergency Response Plan.

- Establish standards of behaviour for the trip – Discuss thresholds or triggers for terminating the trip or dismissing individuals from the trip. Also discuss the following:
 - responsibilities during “free time”;
 - what happens if someone does not show up at the transportation points on time;
 - the consequences of substance abuse;
 - behaviours that would be deemed as harmful to the safety and well-being of others involved in the program, the reputation of the program or the reputation of the University. Use a conduct agreement, if appropriate.
- **Alcohol** - If alcohol may be a factor on the trip, ensure that the group is aware of any drinking age limits or alcohol consumption laws.
- **Emergency Contact** – Leave an emergency contact name and phone number with either your department or your group leader. The University may only release emergency information about you to the persons listed as your emergency contacts. Please use a family member wherever possible.

Environment

- **Environment Conditions** - Ensure that you have checked on the environmental conditions in the area to which you are travelling. This includes:
- **Weather** - extreme heat, cold, wet, fast changing weather, extremely dry zones with possible fire concerns
- **Natural Hazards** such as hurricanes, floods, volcanic activity, seismic activity, etc.
- **Notification of Presence** - Check to see if you are required to notify officials of your presence in an area. i.e. - notification to rangers in a national park or government permission to travel on provincially owned research land. There may be special requirements in foreign countries (i.e. guides) when entering parks and/or historical sites.
- **Licensing/Permits** - Check into licensing/permits required for research in certain areas.

Administrative

- **Waivers/Informed Consents** - Ensure that waivers or informed consent forms have been signed and filed with your department, if applicable.
- **Insurance** - Check on insurance that may be required and any exclusions to the policies. This includes life, travel, accident and health insurance. Information on property and liability insurance can be found on the Risk Management and Insurance department website. If you are renting a vehicle, purchase the insurance offered by the rental agency. If you will be in remote areas, you may wish to determine whether or not your insurance coverage includes Search and Rescue costs.
- **Contingency Funds** – Funds for emergency purposes should be taken with you or should be easily accessible.

Orientation Meeting for Group Travel with Supervisor

- Ensure that an orientation session is held that includes risk management issues, hazards, safety training on emergency plans, what to do if separated from the group, wildlife, culture shock issues, and checklists on travel requirements for this particular trip and so forth.

ADDITIONAL CHECKLIST FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

Proper Documentation

- Customs, immigration, permits, and visa requirements - Obtain all of the proper documentation to ensure that you will meet all the customs, immigration, permit or visa requirements.
- Vaccination requirements - Obtain required vaccinations or ones suggested for the area to which you are travelling. Contact the International Travel Clinic for this information.
- Equipment – register any equipment that you are taking with Canada Customs (check with Materials Management) so that it can come back across the border without you having to pay import duty or GST again. Ensure that you are not travelling with anything perceived as a dangerous good unless you have the proper documentation in place.
- Keep a photocopy of your passport and visa information with you in case the original are lost. Have a safe place for passports, visas and tickets (a hidden pouch or document holder). Do not keep originals and photocopies in the same place. Copies should be treated with the same sense of security as the originals.
- Leave a copy of your itinerary, passport, visa, medical information, and medical insurance with family or friends in case you require it in an emergency.
- Take copies of your eyeglass prescription, medical prescriptions, blood type, etc.

Current Country Conditions

Download the International SOS app to your electronic device - <https://www.internationalsos.com/>

- Review the Global Affairs website for:
 - Political conditions
 - Crime rates
 - Difference in laws
- Register with Global Affairs, Canada. This can be done prior to your departure and then confirmed upon your arrival by accessing their web page at: <http://travel.gc.ca/travelling/registration>.
- Download the Global Affairs app to your electronic device.
- Canadian Consulate / Embassy - Ensure that you have the address and phone number of the nearest Canadian Consulate or Embassy office. This can be obtained on their web site at <http://travel.gc.ca/assistance/embassies>.
- You may also wish to retain the same information for the British, U.S. and Australian embassies, as they may be willing to assist in an emergency.
- Insurance Coverage – Review your current health, travel and accident insurance coverage and purchase additional coverage if necessary. Review your coverage to ensure that you know what is covered and whether or not you will be required to pay in advance for medical services. The University may provide some of this insurance if you are a faculty or staff member.
- Take extra prescription drugs in original containers. If you are relying on an over-the-counter medication, take sufficient supplies for the duration of the trip. Verify and check with that country's laws to see if those drugs are permissible to bring into that country.
- Take extra eyeglasses or contact lenses.

Risk Management

Situations can change unexpectedly and rapidly, prompting a change in a country's security rating.
PLAN AHEAD.

Emergency Plan

An Emergency Plan should include the following elements:

- Retain the address and phone number of the nearest emergency medical facility or the most appropriate emergency number for the area.
- Set up and maintain a call-in procedure with a University faculty or staff member where you will contact them on a regular basis and determine what action they should take if you do not report on time.
- If the area is known for a particular environmental condition (i.e. volcanic eruptions, avalanches, earthquakes, hurricanes, etc.), check with local authorities to see what they would suggest to pack in an "emergency kit" in case that type of environmental condition occurs. Familiarize yourself with evacuation routes.
- Determine options for alternative modes of transportation and routes by air, land or sea. If you are traveling internationally, familiarize yourself with the scheduled flights of various airlines in case you must leave the area quickly. In selecting alternative routes be aware of potential choke points, bridges, areas that could be congested and provide maps of those routes.
- Cultivate a relationship with a local travel agent, both for local (as well as international travel, if applicable) in case you need emergency assistance.
- Ensure that you have:
 - first aid kit
 - flashlight with batteries
 - waterproof matches
 - road/route map
 - pad of paper & pen
 - emergency/weather radio
 - a method of reporting any significant injuries or hospitalization to the University after the injury is attended to
 - Ensure that a copy of the Emergency Plan is retained at the University by your departmental contact
 - Carry a communications device appropriate for your area of travel, if possible

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR GROUP TRAVEL

- Who the “Leader” of the group is and who will take over if the Leader is incapacitated? Where you will meet in an emergency (a primary and a backup location). For example, if traveling internationally, a Canadian business establishment may be a good idea, if available.
- How will you react in a medical emergency (i.e. who speaks the language, who will accompany the person who is hurt to the hospital, etc.)?
- If you are required to depart the area earlier than expected, in an emergency situation, the leader must submit the following information to the University:
 - travel information: transportation type, date, time, destination, estimated time of arrival
 - names and number of evacuees
 - medical assistance, if needed
 - Ensure that all group members are aware of the elements of the Emergency Plan

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL:

- Ensure that you have the address and phone number of the nearest Canadian consulate. It is also helpful to have Australian, British and U.S. consulate information as well, in case you cannot reach the Canadian consulate.
- Determine what degree of support the Canadian Consular/Embassy Office closest to your city will be able to offer to you. The Canadian consulate can be quite helpful in familiarizing you with local resources that are available to Canadian citizens. If possible, arrange a meeting with the Canadian Consular/Embassy office. Ensure that you know the consulate/embassy locations and contact numbers. You should also have the same information for the British, Australian and U.S. embassies/consulates, as they may be able to be of assistance in an emergency.
- Investigate any departure problems in connection with in-country taxes and any other related departure requirements so that you are aware of them in case you must leave quickly.
- In an early departure scenario, **ALL TRAVELLERS SHOULD HAVE:**
 - current passports & visas
 - appropriate amounts of cash (local currency and American dollars recommended)
 - water & food
 - blankets/sleeping bags
 - up-to-date list of vaccinations
 - all host country identification papers and at least one photocopy of each including Embarkation Cards, customs documents etc.

NOTE: you may be restricted in the poundage of the items you are taking (anywhere from 20-66 pounds or 9-30 kg.). If you are required to leave some of your items behind, make a list of them in case they can be retrieved at a later date. **DO NOT** take weapons or alcohol with you.

- **THE LEADER** may assume responsibility for the following:
 - first aid kit
 - flashlight with batteries
 - waterproof matches
 - road/route map
 - pad of paper & pen
 - emergency/weather radio
 - reporting any significant injuries to group members to the University after the injury is attended to.

If the Leader would like to retain personal info on each participant please check with McMaster Privacy Office prior to collection of information

TOOL BOX

- Review from the Presidential Biosafety Advisory Committee (PBAC) and Health Physics Advisory Committee (HPAC) may be required, if the nature of the trip warrants such approvals.
- Communications and emergency response protocols must be documented and submitted with the travel approval forms (When warranted. See Communications Guidelines).
- Environmental impact protocols to deal with specific environmental issues must be documented and submitted with the travel approval forms (When warranted. See Environmental Guidelines).
- Health care protocols must be documented and submitted with the travel approval forms. (When warranted. See Health Protection Guidelines).
- Insurance and waiver provisions must be considered and documented on the travel approval forms.
- Approval may be granted for an entire course of study involving multiple field excursions if the risks and conditions of study are essentially the same and one SOP will sufficiently facilitate planning.
- Standing approval may be given for field trips that are repetitive in nature, i.e. every year or every term, if the excursions are identical and the SOP has proven sufficient. A note should be sent to EOHSS for file whenever a field trip is arranged under the authority of a standing approval.
- A single field trip involving diverse individual activities may be approved providing that risks for the individual activities that may occur are adequately considered and prepared for.
- Report all injuries/incidents by completing McMaster University Injury/Incident Report Form and faxing to EOHSS at 905-540-9085 or FHS at 905-528-8539.

Field Site & Equipment Hazard Assessment

- Identify possible hazards unique to the locale of the field work e.g. altitude, climate extremes, wildlife, insects, disease, etc.
- Consult with local officials responsible for wildlife management and site access control, etc.
- Obtain and document as much information as possible about a new area or region. If possible talk to someone who has worked in or visited the area before.
- Ensure that all equipment, including vehicles that will be used during the field trip is certified as being safe by a competent person, and that all breakdowns of equipment during the trip are reported immediately to the Field Trip Supervisor and/or Safety Officer.
- When considering field trips to Manufacturing Plants, Mines and Construction Sites, etc. it is essential to check and include the organization's safety, health and risk management procedures in the protocols for the planned field trip.

- Consider the safety requirements for boating, scuba diving for research purposes and firearms. NB. The purchase, storage and handling of firearms is regulated by the Federal Government through the Firearms Act. All persons handling firearms shall have a valid Firearms Acquisition Certificate, shall comply with the Act and shall report ownership to and store the weapons with the University's Security Services Department.
- The regulations concerning Restricted Fire Zones designated by the Ministry of Natural Resources must be considered when planning field trips. The local office of the Ministry of Natural Resources can provide information regarding the location of such zones.

Communication and Emergency Preparedness

- When warranted by the nature by the location and nature of the risks involved leave an itinerary and communications plans with the Department Chair or Director's office.
- Where practical and when warranted by the potential risks inform others (locally) of daily travel plans including estimated time of arrival at a destination or return to base.
- Work should always be in pairs. Exceptions to be noted on Field Trip/Student Placement/Research Activity Planning Form. (See Risk Management Program "Working Alone"). For electives, the working conditions under the academic host must be noted.
- Where practical and when warranted by the risks a local guide should be hired.
- In remote areas dependable radio communications and backup are essential in the event of a medical or other emergency. Establish radio or other contact with local emergency responders, i.e. Law Enforcement Agencies, Department of Natural Resources or other agencies. A personal locator beacon may be required.
- When warranted by the location and / or the nature of the risks involved, ensure that at least two field trip participants are trained in first aid and CPR and that appropriate first aid supplies are provided.
- When warranted by the location, ensure a supply of emergency food and water.
- Consider the need to facilitate a medical evacuation. You may need to know:
 - who to telephone for a medical evacuation;
 - location of nearest medical facility to which evacuation would proceed; and
 - who to contact for medical advice and to advise of your arrival;
- An emergency call list shall be carried by every member of the field party.

Environment

Care of the environment requires knowledge of possible effects of intrusion. Issues that should be considered, in planning a field excursion include:

- Water: Careful practices must be used to protect surface and groundwater.
- Vegetation: Careful practices must be used to avoid disturbing or cutting vegetation, which, could result in erosion and or affect the feeding and nesting habits of animal wildlife.

- Wildlife:** Care must be taken to avoid affecting the nesting, feeding and migration of animal wildlife. If in doubt contact the Ministry of Natural Resources about Ontario's Wildlife Management Units. If outside Ontario research and comply with hunting regulations and endangered species in the area.
- Aquatic Life:** Consider noise and boat speed effects on aquatic life. Federal and Provincial laws regulate fishing. Contact the Ministry of Natural Resources for details.
- Erosion:** Avoid the creation of surface conditions that can change the rate and pattern of the erosion process.
- Air:** Avoid generating contaminants or noise levels that may adversely impact wildlife and/or humans.
- Waste:** Waste materials include petroleum products and solvents, general camp wastes such as food, trash and sewage, and equipment wastes.
- Wastes must be transported to an authorized recycling or disposal facility.
- Cultural and Local:** customs, traditions and religious beliefs must be considered.
- Subsistence:** When planning and conducting a field excursion. Communication with area residents can often minimize concerns.

Health Protection

Declaration of a satisfactory state of health and proof of immunization of all participants must be obtained when warranted by the nature of the risks or by the country in which the field trip or elective will be conducted.

Sources of information regarding health issues in specific locations are:

- City of Hamilton Public Health Unit
- International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers (IAMAT)
- U S Center for Disease Control

Plan prevention of diarrhea and water and food-borne diseases: (examples)

Hepatitis A - a viral disease that is vaccine preventable.

Typhoid fever - a salmonella bacterial infection that is vaccine preventable

Cholera - a bacterial disease causing severe diarrhea, vaccine preventable.

Schistosomiasis - a bacterial disease causing diarrhea, not vaccine preventable.

Plan prevention of insect-borne diseases: (examples)

Malaria - a mosquito-transmitted parasite infection that is usually preventable with anti-malarial medication

Yellow fever - a mosquito-transmitted viral infection that is vaccine preventable

Japanese Encephalitis - a mosquito transmitted viral infection that is vaccine preventable

Tick-borne Encephalitis - a European viral infection transmitted by tick bites, vaccine preventable

Dengue fever - a mosquito-transmitted viral disease for which there is no vaccine.

Lyme disease - a tick-borne spirochetal disease that is not vaccine preventable.

Plan prevention of blood-borne diseases: (examples)

Hepatitis B - a viral infection that can cause chronic liver disease, vaccine preventable.

HIV - a sexually transmitted viral infection that is not vaccine preventable.

Plan prevention of zoonotic diseases: (examples)

Rabies - a viral disease transmitted by animal bites, vaccine preventable.

Hanta-virus - a viral disease transmitted via the droppings of deer, mice and other rodents, not vaccine preventable.

INSURANCE TOOL BOX

Insurance and waiver requirements must be considered early in the field trip or elective planning process. EOHSS must be contacted for advice relative to insurance coverage and use of waivers.

Major points to consider:

- Waivers must be put in place for all volunteer participants in Field Trips and Field Activities.
- Field trips that are not part of an approved research project or course of instruction, for instance, a fortuitously available ad-hoc trip, require waivers for each participant.
- Waivers must be put in place for participants in Field Trips or research activity which are not approved as a component of an approved research project or course of instruction
- Faculty and staff participating in field trips are covered under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board Program
- All faculty, staff and students are covered under the University's Travel Accident Insurance Policy. This is a secondary policy to your primary employee benefits, MSU, UHIP plan.
- Vehicle insurance may need to be purchased when leasing or renting during your fieldtrip based on coverage provided by your corporate card, type of vehicle required and location of travel. Contact your credit card corporate office for confirmation of collision coverage. Further information can be found in RMM 904 University Owned, Leased, Rented Vehicle Program and refer to Appendix A.
- Placement students are eligible for accident benefits if they fit the criteria of the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development.

