

**UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON SYSTEM
ADMINISTRATIVE MEMORANDUM**

SECTION: Student Affairs

NUMBER: 05.C.03

AREA: Programs/Compliance

SUBJECT: Student Travel

1. PURPOSE

This document outlines the policy to minimize risks of liability connected with travel by students of any university within the University of Houston System.

- 1.1. Travel by students on official University business is restricted by state of Texas and federal regulations and by standards of good business practice.
- 1.2. This policy applies to travel by one or more students presently enrolled at any of the University of Houston System Universities, and where such travel meets the following criteria: travel that is in excess of 25 miles to a University-organized and sponsored activity or event where such activity or event is either:
 - A. Funded by the University, or
 - B. Is required by a student organization registered at the University.
- 1.3. In addition, this policy outlines the requirements for travel by authorized students and University athletic teams traveling in the name of the University, as well as students traveling abroad on a University-sponsored trip.
- 1.4. [Texas Education Code Section 51.950](#) requires the regulation of certain types of student travel sponsored, supported or sanctioned by the University.

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1. Organized and sponsored activity or event: An organized and sponsored activity or event is an activity or event that is a) initiated, planned and arranged by a University faculty or staff member, or by the members of a registered student organization, and b) endorsed by the University either through providing financial support, or by sending student(s) to participate in it as official representative(s) of the University.
- 2.2. Required by a student organization: An activity or event is required by a student organization when it is mandatory for a member of the student organization to attend or participate in the activity or event in order to maintain their membership status in the student organization.
- 2.3. Authorized entertainment: Entertainment of students during out-of-town travel, such as attending a movie, play, concert, or similar event. Videos or in-room

movies rented or purchased at a hotel or motel for individuals are not considered authorized entertainment. However, videos rented or purchased (including in-room movies) for groups of travelers to watch are permitted. Persons in positions of authority traveling with the students will determine which entertainment event or medium, if any, is appropriate. Admission to authorized entertainment events may also be paid for other persons traveling with the students, who are listed on the [Travel Roster](#).

- 2.4. College or division administrator: The person designated as the chief business officer within the college, division, or Athletics Department.
 - 2.5. Departmental trip coordinator: Functional title separate from the official position title designating that individual within the department sponsoring the student/team travel who is responsible for making travel arrangements, requesting any travel advances, disbursing any advance funds, and documenting and clearing any advances. This person may also participate in the travel. These actions of the departmental trip coordinator are subject to the prior approval of the college or division administrator.
 - 2.6. Learning/Study Abroad: Travel by individual University students to destinations outside the United States on a University-sponsored or organized credit or non-credit bearing trip.
 - 2.7. Athletic Team: A team of student athletes under the supervision of and coached by the University's Athletics Department.
 - 2.8. University of Houston System: The University of Houston System is comprised of four separate universities and their entities: UH, UH-CL, UH-D, and UH-V. Collectively referred to as "the Universities" or "University."
3. GENERAL STUDENT TRAVEL GUIDELINES
- 3.1. Students representing the Universities may travel on University funds if the trip is for official University business and if applicable University guidelines are followed. Student travel may not be paid from state-appropriated funds. All travel must be reasonable and necessary for carrying out the programs and activities of the Universities within budget allocations approved by the responsible senior administrative official. Travel not meeting these criteria or undertaken contrary to these guidelines becomes the obligation of the individual(s) making the unauthorized commitment.
 - 3.2. The Universities require an updated Motor Vehicle Record (MVR) evaluation on anyone authorized to operate a vehicle owned or leased by the Universities or who drive their personal vehicles for business purposes. MVR evaluations shall be requested for employees and students who operate a vehicle owned or leased by the Universities. Each department head will notify the Risk Management Department when MVR evaluations should be obtained for new drivers. MVRs can be obtained by the Universities or may be requested from the System Risk

Management Department, using the request form available on the System Risk Management Web site (https://uh.edu/risk-management/_docs/insurance/mvr-request-revised-2019.pdf). The MVR evaluation lasts for one year after Risk Management area approves it, and must be renewed annually. No employee, potential employee, student, or volunteer is allowed to operate a University-owned or leased vehicle until the authorization has been approved.

- 3.3. Departments, units and student organizations sponsoring organized travel outside the United States are responsible for assuring compliance with the provisions of any University policy regarding group travel outside the United States.
- 3.4. Universities must make this policy available to the public by publishing it in the institution's catalog. Universities should consider making available to the public all related policies concerning student travel and should consider other methods of providing public access, such as making student travel-related policies available on web sites.
- 3.5. Organized and sponsored student travel may require the use of various modes of transportation. Each form of transportation requires students to follow common and mode-specific safety precautions. In addition to applicable international, federal and/or state laws and using sound judgment while traveling, students must follow the safety provisions applicable to the specific mode of travel involved and travel conditions.
- 3.6. When using vehicles owned or leased by the Universities or their employees for student travel, such travel must be in compliance with [SAM 01.C.13 - Business Use of Vehicles](#). This SAM articulates the System policy for the use of vehicles owned, leased or rented by Universities by establishing standards for granting driving privileges, insurance coverage and reporting requirements when there are accidents or losses.
- 3.7. Students traveling by commercial transportation, whether domestic or international, must comply with all laws regulating travel and the rules of the specific carrier.
- 3.8. It is the responsibility of all individuals taking part in travel that is organized and sponsored by the University to behave in a manner that in no way detracts from the surrounding environmental safety, to act to avoid and prevent safety hazards associated with their travel, and to act in such a manner as to comply with all University standards, policies, and procedures insofar as they may be considered applicable to the circumstances.
- 3.9. It shall be the responsibility of University staff, employees, and others judged to be in positions of authority under the circumstances of the travel to inform individuals when their behavior or actions jeopardize their personal safety or that of other travelers. Such persons in positions of authority will be held accountable for their actions or inactions with respect to questionable activities of any members.

4. LEARNING/STUDY ABROAD TRAVEL GUIDELINES

4.1. Study abroad travel is considered group student travel. Therefore, the trip coordinator must complete a Travel Roster for the students and a Travel Request for themselves and any other employees traveling with the students. Any and all learning abroad travel must be registered with and approved by the appropriate University office of each campus. Students must adhere to their University's code of conduct.

4.2. See the individual University websites for up-to-date information about Learning Abroad:

- University of Houston – Main Campus:
<https://www.uh.edu/learningabroad/>
- University of Houston – Downtown:
<https://www.uhd.edu/academics/international/index.aspx>
- University of Houston – Clear Lake:
<https://www.uhcl.edu/academics/education-abroad/>
- University of Houston – Victoria
<https://www.uhv.edu/handbook/study-abroad/>

4.3. International Medical and Emergency Insurance Requirement

All students participating in a Learning Abroad program are required to have international medical and emergency insurance.

5. SAFETY

[Texas Education Code Section 51.950](#) requires the regulation of certain types of student travel sponsored, supported or sanctioned by the University.

General information and safe practices for drivers and occupants are listed under [Student Travel Guidelines](#) at the Risk Management website.

5.1. Administrative Responsibilities

- 5.1.1. The applicable division's vice president (or Athletic Director) shall be responsible for overall administration of this policy and shall assign a member of their staff to be responsible for compliance, oversight and necessary record keeping.
- 5.1.2. The applicable division's vice president shall have the responsibility to verify that the type of vehicle recommended for use in student and athletic team travel is in compliance with this policy.
- 5.1.3. Coaches are responsible for developing their season travel plans, to include recommended vehicle types, and gaining written approval from

the appropriate senior associate athletic director in advance of the season or subsequent schedule change.

- 5.1.4. Athletic coaches or applicable administrator will consider the type of travel necessary to comply with the institutional policy relating to issues such as missed classes. Post-season athletic travel shall be handled according to NCAA guidelines and/or NAIA or applicable association, and approved by the Athletic Director or designee.
- 5.2. When aircraft are used under this policy, the captain (pilot in command) shall make the final decision whether to fly. However, in no case will the pilot fly if weather conditions do not meet the standards of the pilot's certification. The senior administrator that is present may always overrule the pilot if the senior administrator concludes that it is inappropriate to fly.
- 5.3. Any administrator, coach or athletic staff member knowingly violating this policy will be suspended with or without pay until the division's vice president (or Athletic Director) or designee investigates the violation. Violations may result in disciplinary action, possibly including termination.

6. TYPES OF VEHICLES USED AND REQUIREMENTS FOR OPERATION

6.1. General Requirements

- 6.1.1. Coaches, assistant coaches, faculty or staff members and students employed by the University may drive vehicles used for student travel if the specific requirements for the vehicle are met.
- 6.1.2. When using vehicles owned or leased by the University or their employees for student or athletic team travel, such travel must be in compliance with [SAM 01.C.13](#).
- 6.1.3. Student athletes may not drive other athletes as a part of team travel.
- 6.1.4. Student drivers not paid by the University must be approved by the appropriate vice president.
- 6.1.5. Seat belts must be worn by all vehicle occupants.

6.2. Approved Vehicle Types – The following types of vehicles shall be approved for group travel under the conditions noted:

- 6.2.1. Automobiles/Minivans (Specific Requirements)
- 6.2.2. Twelve-Passenger Vans (Specific Requirements)
 - A. For safety reasons, drivers must have completed the “High Profile Vehicle Safety” training course offered by Risk Management.
 - B. Only vans with a 155-inch wheelbase equipped with “E” rated radial tires, or equivalent, properly inflated will be allowed to

transport teams greater than 100 miles from a point of departure. In cases when it is necessary to lease vans from a commercial vendor or when vans are provided as a courtesy, team travel is authorized even if the van does not meet the 155 inch/“E” criteria, but travel will be limited to 100 miles one way.

- C. The manufacturer’s recommended weight limits must not be exceeded.

6.2.3. Fifteen-passenger vans are strictly prohibited.

6.2.4. Buses (Specific Requirements)

- A. Buses may be used to transport to away venues, transport to hotels from airports, and transport from hotels to playing venues.
- B. Approved buses for team transport are motor coach common carriers or institution leased, owned or operated over-the-road bus transports.
- C. Drivers of buses must have a valid and approved CDL.

6.2.5. Mini-Buses (defined as 20 to 30-passenger transports) [Specific Requirements]

- A. Acceptable mini-buses shall be institution or commercially-owned.
- B. Driver must have a valid and approved CDL to operate a mini-bus for purposes of this policy.

6.2.6. Air Transportation (Specific Requirements)

- A. Commercial airlines and Charter aircraft are an acceptable means of travel. Tickets must be procured under the travel guidelines established by the state of Texas.
- B. Please see specifics regarding general requirements, proof of insurance, and pilot information which is discussed under [Student Travel Guidelines](#).
- C. Requirements for Maintenance and Operation of the aircraft are listed as well.

6.3. Use of Personal Vehicle by Employees

6.3.1. No individual shall be required to use their vehicle for transporting students to events organized and sponsored by Universities.

6.3.2. System employees occasionally use personal vehicles while transporting students to or from events organized and sponsored by Universities. Because personal automobile insurance will be looked to first in the event

of an accident, all persons who use their vehicles while conducting University business should be made aware of the possibility of personal liability related to such use.

- 6.3.3. System employees may be reimbursed for mileage at the official state rate when a personal vehicle is used for University business whether local or outside the University's area in accordance with [SAM 01.C.13](#).

6.4. Use of Personal Vehicles by Students

- 6.4.1. The Universities highly discourages the use of personal vehicles by students.

- 6.4.2. All students who are approved to drive for organized student travel must have their Motor Vehicle Report approved by Risk Management. See Section 3.2.

- 6.4.3. Students driving privately-owned vehicles for organized student travel (as defined in the Purpose) within the U. S. must be at least 18 years of age, have a valid Texas or other state driver license, and possess personal automobile insurance coverage as mandated by the state of Texas, and their vehicles must have a current state inspection and registration.

- 6.4.4. Students driving privately-owned vehicles for organized student travel taking place outside the U.S. must be at least 18 years of age and have all appropriate licenses, certificates and insurance as required by the country in which travel occurs. The operation of motor vehicles abroad is highly discouraged by the University.

7. REIMBURSEMENT OF STUDENT TRAVEL EXPENSES

Each University is responsible for developing policies and procedures for addressing the reimbursement of reasonable student travel expenses.

8. DOCUMENTATION

Universities should establish a system of record keeping for student travel in excess of 25 miles to University sponsored and organized events where the student travel is organized, arranged, or coordinated by a University's department, employee or registered student organization sponsor. For such trips, student travelers should complete an official University [Release and Indemnification Agreement](#), verifying that they understand and accept the risks involved in participating in the travel activity and assume responsibility for their behavior. Records should include the identity of travelers, dates of travel, mode of travel, destination, purpose of trip and completed waivers.

9. REVIEW AND RESPONSIBILITY

Responsible Parties: Associate Vice Chancellor for Finance

Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students

