International Studies Office

University Travel Restriction on Student Travel to Western Uganda

Restriction implemented: July 11, 2019
The University is restricting student travel for University-related purposes to Western Uganda and within 30 miles of the borders with the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan according to its authority to issue a “University Travel Restriction” in the Policy on Student International Travel.

Rationale

Western Uganda. The World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed the first cases of ebola in the Uganda Western Region in June: a family crossing the border from the Democratic Republic of Congo, where an ebola outbreak, compounded by civil violence and extreme state instability, has been steadily worsening. The family was rapidly attended to, with three deaths and other members returning to the DRC, but the event has served to heighten the risk that the outbreak will spread across the border. With the frontline of Ugandan ebola treatment centers located in the Western Region, the risk to healthcare workers is considered very high, and School of Medicine colleagues in Mbarara, where the University has a long-standing partnership, are currently deferring travel to the region until further notice.

DRC and South Sudan Borders. 2019 has also seen an escalation in militia violence and banditry in the DRC and South Sudan along the Uganda borders, with occasional spillover including the widely-reported case of a US citizen kidnapped and ransomed in April. The US State Department advises Level 4 – Do Not Travel to the DRC and South Sudan borders, and the UK, French, and Australian governments advise avoiding the area to within 30 miles on the Uganda side as well (see map here).

Exemptions

Exemptions to the restriction may be requested by undergraduate or graduate students. See “Petitioning for Exemptions” in Policy on Student International Travel.

University International Travel Risk Management Committee
Members include the vice provost for global affairs and representatives from the Office of University Counsel, Office of Property and Liability Risk Management, Office of the Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, International Studies Office, Elson Student Health Center, Office of the Dean of Students, Office of the Vice President for Research, and at least three members of the faculty from schools with a particularly high level of student travel abroad programs, who each serve for three years.

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Resources
U.S. Department of State International Travel Resources
U.S. Department of State Travel Advisories
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
World Health Organization