

Study Abroad Policy

1. Introduction and Context

- 1.1 This policy refers to outbound study abroad (SA) mobility. SA mobilities are arrangements made for University of Southampton students to undertake a period of study at an approved study abroad partner institution as part of their undergraduate programme of study. Study abroad partner institutions are Higher Education Institutions with whom the University has a formal agreement to offer study abroad mobilities. An SA mobility may be a full year or one semester in duration. The policy does not apply for:
- 1.1.1 Industrial placements or work abroad; professional and clinical experience placements; year in employment placements. Refer to the [University's Placements Policy](#).
 - 1.1.2 Inbound study abroad mobility, where visiting students spend a semester or year studying at the University. Refer to the University's Visiting Student Policy.
 - 1.1.3 Short-term study abroad mobility such as summer school opportunities.
- 1.2 SA mobility broadens a student's learning experience and provides opportunities for students to develop skills valued by employers. The University aims to foster a global mindset among students and staff and provide extensive opportunities for international experience, integrated into the curricula where possible. This includes developing a variety of attractive SA mobility opportunities for students.

- 1.3 SA mobility has been mapped against the Successful Futures Southampton Skills Model of 14 employability skills most desired by employers. All SA mobility (whether in curriculum or extra-curricular) provides students with the opportunity to develop the following skills self-management, confidence, communication, adaptability, problem-solving and resilience. For definitions, and programme specific content, please refer to the [Sharepoint site Successful Futures SMP - Home](#).
- 1.4 This is a defined policy for all SA mobilities as described in 1.1, although it is recognised that how it is implemented will vary depending on local circumstances.
- 1.5 This policy is for staff involved in supporting SA mobilities and may also be useful to students. It is designed to provide an overarching framework to support, rather than replace, individual Schools' policies for SA mobility. Individual Schools' policies and procedures for SA mobility, where they exist, should be documented and approved by School Programmes Committees (SPC). Schools are responsible for ensuring that these local policies remain aligned to the content of this framework policy.
- 1.6 This policy is informed by the University's regulatory obligations under the [Office for Students \(OfS\)](#), and sector guidance provided by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in the [UK Quality Code Principle 8 Operating partnerships with other organisations](#).
- 1.7 The University will apply the following principles for the development and management of SA mobility. The University will ensure that:
- There are designated University academic staff responsible for the approval, organisation and evaluation of SA mobility.
 - There is appropriate guidance and training for University of Southampton staff directly involved in SA mobility.

- There is a clear and transparent process to approve prospective SA mobility partners to ensure the quality of the learning environment and assess risks.
- Funding opportunities relating to SA mobility are publicised to students and applicants.
- There is a written and legally binding agreement in place for each SA mobility, prior to promotion of the opportunity to the student body. This must set out the rights and obligations of the University and the SA mobility partner and must be reviewed periodically, usually every five years [see section 4 for further information about review].
- Accurate records are maintained of all students undertaking SA mobility.
- An up-to-date list of SA mobility partners is maintained. The list will be reported annually to AQSS.
- There are agreed monitoring and review mechanisms in place to ensure the quality of the student experience, the maintenance of sustainable exchange quotas and the continued appropriateness of each SA mobility arrangement.
- SA mobility capacity, both numbers and range of opportunities, is adequate to meet the needs of the University's portfolio of programmes, student expectations and the ambitions of the University's International Strategy.

2. Governance

2.1 Formal oversight of SA mobility is provided through both the University's education and corporate governance structures.

2.1.1 **International Executive Board (IEB)** has strategic oversight of international recruitment and partnership activities across the University. It is accountable for international partnership strategic approval.

- 2.1.2 **Global Mobility Advisory Group** reports to IEB. It supports the development, monitoring and review of study abroad mobility partnerships and activity.
 - 2.1.3 **Academic Quality and Standards Subcommittee (AQSS)** oversees on behalf of the Education and Student Experience Committee the Quality, Monitoring and Enhancement Framework (to which this policy belongs).
 - 2.1.4 **Faculty Education and Student Experience Subcommittee (FEC)** has strategic oversight of the Faculty's education portfolio.
 - 2.1.5 **School Programmes Committee (SPC)** reports to and supports AQSS in carrying out its delegated responsibilities. It oversees the delivery of educational programmes consistent with the University strategy as it applies to education and student experience.
- 2.2 The University has well-established organisational structures to support the development and management of SA mobility within the Schools, Faculties and the Professional Services. The key teams and roles are listed here, though further staff may be involved depending on local structures:
- 2.2.1 **Global Recruitment, Admissions and Marketing (GRAM)** provides strategic oversight of the University's international partners including management of the process to approve and review the University's SA mobility partners. The Mobility Team coordinates the negotiation of legal agreements with new and renewing SA mobility partners and provides institutional-level advice and guidance to students and academic staff engaged in SA mobility.
 - 2.2.2 **Quality, Standards and Accreditation (QSAT)** supports AQSS in providing oversight of the Quality, Monitoring and

Enhancement Framework (to which this policy belongs) and provides advice and guidance on academic regulations.

- 2.2.3 **Associate Dean (International)** steers and oversees the Faculty's international partnership developments, including SA mobility partners. They support Schools to ensure that both proposed and established partners align with Faculty and University strategy.
- 2.2.4 **Deputy Head of School (Education)** chairs the SPC and maintains quality oversight of all education programmes within their School.
- 2.2.5 **Director of Internationalisation (DoI)** are responsible for supporting the ADI with strategic oversight of international partnerships in their School.
- 2.2.6 **Academic Exchange Coordinators (or School/Faculty equivalent)** are responsible for the management of study abroad within their School or department. This includes but is not limited to academic advice and guidance to students before, during and after SA mobility and reviewing the academic suitability (when needed) of all SA mobility partners offered in their School or department.

3. Setting up a new SA Mobility Partner

- 3.1 If a new study abroad mobility partner is identified at School, Faculty or University level, due diligence procedures proportionate to the identified risk, must be followed to confirm the appropriateness of the partner and assure the quality of the student experience. This may include site visits and/or desk-based checks to establish:
 - That the curriculum/academic provision is of equivalent quality and complements eligible student's programmes of study.

- The Higher Education Institution's standing in its own country.
- Any differences arising from the geo-political and cultural context of the partner country.
- That suitably qualified staff are involved in teaching and assessment;
- Accommodation provision.
- Support for disabled students, including anticipatory provision and for individual reasonable adjustments for all aspects of student life.
- Support for student wellbeing.
- Visa support services.
- Partner Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policies.
- That the partner is not from sanctioned countries or other restricted lists.
- Partners policies and processes relating to harassment and sexual misconduct.
- Academic and language support (where applicable).

3.2 The University, coordinated by GRAM, are responsible for ensuring that:

- Due diligence checks described in 3.1 have been made and records kept on the prospective partner.
- There is a written and legally binding agreement in place prior to the offer of SA mobility to any students.

3.3 The School is responsible for ensuring that:

- Students studying at the partner institution can undertake study which will contribute to the learning outcomes of the programme and are offered at the appropriate level and language of study.
- Students are clear how assessments completed during the SA mobility contributes to their award. Where this involves a variation, addition or exemption from the University's harmonised academic regulations, this must be approved by the AQSS Programme Scrutiny Group.

- All planned study abroad activities are noted annually at the first SPC of the year. This should include planned outbound student numbers, their study locations and mobility durations.

3.4 Where programmes require translation of marks for SA mobility, the School is responsible for ensuring that marks conversion has been approved through School Programme Committee and in accordance with the University's Translation of Marks Policy, before any SA mobility takes place.

4. Reviewing SA mobility partners

4.1 SA mobility partners will be reviewed by the University, usually every five years, in line with the requirements for setting up new partners (see section 3 above). Records of this review should be kept by the University.

4.2 Study abroad partner feedback is a valuable resource and the University should ensure that there are mechanisms for inviting and responding (where appropriate) to feedback. Topics could include, student experience abroad, academic preparedness and appropriateness of content taught at partners and differences in academic admission requirements. Feedback collected should be considered by Schools annually.

4.3 Schools, supported by the University, should monitor the ongoing appropriateness and effectiveness of SA mobilities as part of annual monitoring.

5. Student experience: Predeparture

5.1 Before a student starts a SA mobility, the University, supported by the School, is responsible for:

- Ensuring that students participating in a SA mobility meet the University's progression regulations and any additional requirements of the host University at the point of application. This may include a

minimum grade average of 2:1 and/or language qualifications where delivery of programmes is not in English.

- The School provides academic advice to students on the suitability of the SA mobility. Study abroad brings benefits but also challenges for students, including the academic demands of adapting to study in a new academic structure and within an unfamiliar socio/cultural environment. Students must meet the academic requirements of their UoS programme at the point of application to study abroad in order to demonstrate their capability to meet these additional demands. This means that students must not be required to complete a period of referral and must not have uncompensated fails, unless there is an approved exemption specified in the programme regulations.
- Reviewing and approving each student's completed risk assessment, including checking the partner country against [Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office Travel Advice](#).
- Reviewing the due diligence checks when the arrangement with the partner institution was first set up and ensuring that there are no known changes of circumstances that may impact the suitability of continuing to offer SA mobility with the partner.
- Briefing students about the period of SA. Depending on the arrangement, this may include:
 - Details on what they should study when abroad (subject, level of study, number of credits);
 - Details of how the student will be able to evaluate their SA mobility, and agreed academic learning outcomes;
 - A description of the contact the student must maintain with the University of Southampton during their time at the partner institution. This may vary from regular site visits to occasional email communication.
 - Any roles or responsibilities required of the student in the written agreement between the University and the partner institution.

- Guidance on how to raise any concerns with the period of SA with the School.
- Details of how to contact the University of Southampton in an emergency.
- Full information on health & safety matters (see section 8 below).
- For students whose SA mobility involves a research component, advice about research integrity, misconduct and compliance. Students must not engage in research involving sanctioned individuals, countries or controlled technologies in violation of applicable sanctions or export control laws.
- Clear, written information (for instance in their Individual Learning Agreement, where applicable, or Programme or Module specifications), in accordance with the [University's Translation of Marks Policy](#), on the progression regulations that apply to their SA mobility. Specifically, to explain their rights to compensation, referral and (where applicable) the marks conversion scheme in place.
- For disabled students who have reported a disability and students known to Student Wellbeing services, ensure that additional planning and consideration will take place in conjunction with the Student Support teams to ensure reasonable adjustments can be made to support the student and that any known concerns relating to the student's wellbeing are addressed in the pre-departure risk assessment.
- Details of how to report harassment or sexual misconduct, including through the Report and Support mechanism, but also in relation to the partner's own policies and processes.

5.2 The University should also ensure that students are aware that they are responsible for:

- Informing themselves about the partner's Code of Conduct or equivalent, and adhering to this for the duration of their SA mobility.
- Ensuring that any conditions connected with their Student visa (for international students) have been met. Students should be referred to the Visa and Immigration Student Advice Service for further support and guidance.
- Acquiring a visa for their location of study where required. Students should be referred to the partner's equivalent service for Visa and Immigration for support and guidance.

5.3 Before a student starts a SA mobility, the University is responsible for:

- Conducting a fair and transparent application and selection process for students to allocate the available SA mobility opportunities, in consultation with the relevant School. Confirming that there is an appropriate agreement in place with the SA mobility partner.
- Checking completed student risk assessments for accuracy, and escalating any concerns that arise from the risk assessment in relation to the disclosure of a disability and/or student safety and mental wellbeing.
- Checking that students have completed insurance documentation.
- Providing predeparture briefing information sessions for students.
- Administering government funding schemes for students, where available.
- Liaising with partner institutions to confirm each student's SA mobility.
- Providing advice and guidance to Academic Exchange Coordinators about the administration of SA mobility.

6. Student Experience: during the period of SA mobility

6.1 Whilst the student is participating in SA mobility, the University and School collaboratively is responsible for:

- Maintaining contact with the student, as outlined to the student before they left Southampton. This may vary between regular site visits to an occasional email communication, depending on the nature of the period away from the University of Southampton.
- Maintaining records of students participating in SA mobility, including contact details, the address of their host, and dates of the time to be spent away from the University.
- Ensuring that the student continues to have an appropriate learning environment and/or working with the student to find a solution in the event of an issue beyond the student or university's control (civil disturbance, natural disaster, etc.) which may prematurely terminate the study abroad. See section 8.5 for information about the University's Emergency Response Procedures.
- Notifying the University where there is concern over a student's engagement, in accordance with the [University's Attendance and Engagement Policy](#).

6.2 Whilst the student is participating in SA mobility, the School is responsible for:

- Maintaining a student's record on Banner using the [appropriate coding](#). All SA mobilities should be listed under a module code in Banner which will feature on the student's transcript.
- Providing advice on student's academic options for progression in the event of early termination of a student's SA mobility.

7. Student Experience: After the period of SA mobility

7.1 Once a student has returned to the University after participating in SA mobility, the University and School collaboratively is responsible for responding to the student's evaluation of their experience.

7.2 The School is responsible for translating marks gained during the SA mobility (where applicable) and in accordance with the University's Translation of Marks Policy.

8. Health and Safety

- 8.1 There should be a suitable process in place within Schools that describe how SA mobility is organised and implemented with specific roles and responsibilities of key personnel clearly identified.
- 8.2 A risk assessment should identify key hazards of all aspects of the SA mobility from travel and accommodation to local laws and customs that is to be undertaken at the time. To assist with this, staff should refer to the central [University International Travel toolkit](#). The risk assessment should be reviewed where there are significant changes to the SA mobility, such as a change in location.
- 8.3 Schools should ensure that their students are given briefings and information on the outcomes of the SA mobility risk assessment. Students should also go through a checklist of actions developed by the University that identifies key information for students to be aware of, actions they must take and expectations around their conduct.
- 8.4 The [University Risk Assessment template](#) should be used. This could be given to the partner institution should they wish. The sign off process of risk assessments should be approved through Schools. Care should be taken to ensure that completed student risk assessments:
 - Are checked for accuracy, particularly if a student has changed destination.
 - Are escalated to Student Support teams where there are any concerns that arise from the risk assessment in relation to the disclosure of a disability and/or student safety and mental wellbeing so that any relevant risks may be managed or mitigated through appropriate planning.

- Pay particular attention to the information provided by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office for a country or region they are going to, and include reflections on sociocultural differences that may impact the student's wellbeing.

8.5 The University has an Emergency Response Procedure to ensure student safety in the event of an international alert. The University will convene a Case Conference to determine appropriate course of action where immediate risk to student safety is identified. Refer to Annexe 1 for the process flowchart.

9. Equality and Diversity

- 9.1 Any SA mobility that is an integral part of a higher education programme must adhere to the [University's Inclusion and Respectful Behaviour Policy](#). This provides the framework to deliver the University's commitment to creating an inclusive university community where everyone feels that they belong, and which is free from bullying, harassment and discrimination.
- 9.2 Schools must remind students that if they experience harassment, bullying or hate crime, they can report this via the [Report and Support platform](#) as well as in accordance with any local policies. Schools must be pro-active in locating suitable SA mobility partners for those students with protected characteristics and vigilant that no discrimination occurs while identifying, providing or assessing the SA mobility. Schools should work with the Student Disability and Inclusion team to plan for individual reasonable adjustments for students who have reported a disability.
- 9.3 Partner institutions should be provided with information about individual students' needs (with the student's explicit permission and as per the [University's Data Protection Policy](#)) in order to plan for their learning. They must not be allowed to discriminate by refusing to take the student on placement without reasonable

grounds or by providing a substantially different experience than that offered to other non-disabled students. The laws for non-UK providers may be different, but it is important that the University establishes a position of protecting students enrolled on its programmes from discrimination and enabling maximum participation. The University should consider whether to terminate a relationship with a partner which is unable to offer SA mobility opportunities suitable for all of its students and Schools are encouraged to seek legal advice on this matter where necessary.

10. Insurance

10.1 All students attending SA mobility must have appropriate insurance cover. Mandatory pre-departure information provided by the University outlines insurance expectations which can vary depending on the particulars of the SA mobility.

10.2 Students attending SA mobility must apply to the University's Insurance team for travel and personal accident cover before travelling. Full details can be found on the [University's Travel Insurance page](#). Once an application is completed the Insurance Department will review and provide a certificate of insurance to the student.

10.3 Students are responsible for arranging any additional insurance cover that may be required by the specific country that they are visiting.

10.4 The University travel insurance policy does not include holiday insurance. Should students be travelling for leisure purposes during their SA mobility, separate insurance will need to be arranged by the student for this part of their trip. This cover cannot be arranged via the University and is the student's responsibility.

10.5 The University travel insurance is compliant with J-1 visa requirements, but some host institutions may require the additional

purchase of local private medical insurance. Specific requirements by host institutions can be referred to the [Insurance Team](#) for guidance.

11. Confidentiality and Data Protection

11.1 Before disclosing information about a student, the School must ensure that it complies with the University’s Data Protection Policy. In practice this means that:

- A data sharing agreement must be in place with the partner prior to the disclosure of any information. This will be negotiated as part of the legal agreement, required when setting up or renewing all SA mobility partners.
- At the start of their programmes, Schools must inform students (the data subjects) of the type of information it is deemed necessary to disclose.
- Explicit consent must be sought with the student prior to disclosure of sensitive or special category data, including for example: ethnicity; disability; religious beliefs; gender identification and sexual orientation; medical conditions and criminal convictions.

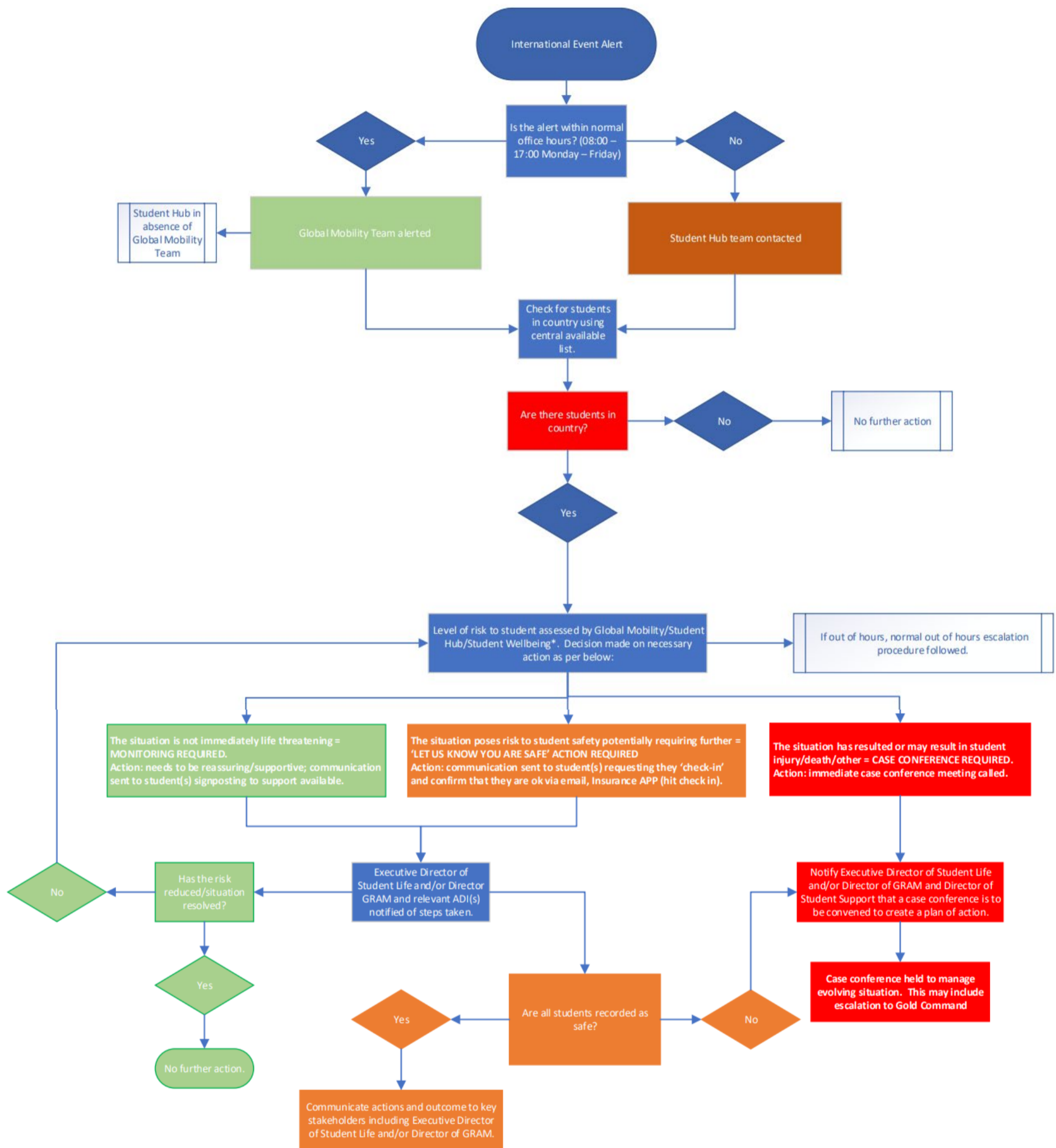
12. Related Policies and Useful References

- [Marks Translation Policy](#)
- [Visiting Students Policy](#)
- [Placements Policy](#)
- [Student-facing information about SA mobility](#)
- [Travel Insurance information](#)

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Annexe 1: Emergency Procedures Flowchart



* key considerations when assessing level of risk and therefore action to be taken include:

- Does action need to be taken immediately?
- How probable is the risk of harm to students?
- Is additional information required to make a decision?
- What is the cause of the situation (are external factors under control or are they likely to change)?
- Is it appropriate for me to make this decision (in relation to severity)?
- What is the scale/scope of impact (how many students are at risk)?