Dear Student,

You are receiving this message as according to our records you are currently undertaking an international placement and are doing so in the host country (rather than remotely from your home country).

We hope that despite all of the current challenges you are benefiting from your time abroad and are beginning to feel settled/at home in your host country.

As we are fast approaching the end of the year, we wanted to touch base regarding Christmas/the holiday season. It goes without saying that in most countries this will not be the kind of Christmas/holiday season we are all used to and that many of the usual celebrations will be cancelled entirely or more limited in how they take place. However, we very much hope that at some level you will be able to engage with the local traditions in your host country and enjoy some elements of the festivities. Do start to think about your plans now both so that you can make the most of those opportunities that are available but also so that you have a plan and are not left feeling isolated at what can be both a wonderful time of year or a very lonely time of year depending on your circumstances.

We are very conscious that the vacations, particularly Christmas, are often a time when many students studying/working abroad travel within their host country region or indeed travel home. There are a number of very important issues for you to consider in making any decision to travel this year:

**General Considerations**

- Think now about your plans for the holiday season so that you are not isolated – if you have a household bubble in your host country see if you can all plan something together; if there is the option under current Covid-19 restrictions to spend time with a family in your host country make sure you understand the local traditions and also work out how you will ensure that you protect their safety and your own if you visit especially if they have older/more vulnerable family members;
- Personal travel that is not required as part of your placement is NOT covered by the University travel insurance.

**Covid-19 Considerations**


- Local travel restrictions in place in your host country that preclude/discourage travel and/or requirements that need to be met in order to travel in country;
- The rules and restrictions that will apply if you return to the UK/your home country eg. mandatory quarantine (potentially requiring your whole household in your home country to
Will you be able to return to your host country if you leave and have you considered all the implications of this possibility with regard to accommodation arrangements/costs, returning belongings, study/work arrangements?

- Entry rules for your host country may have changed since you entered/may change whilst you are absent – entry by particular nationals may be restricted, you may be required to quarantine on your return to your host country (and may have to cover the costs of this depending on the local arrangements);

- If the FCDO has moved to ‘advising against all but essential travel’ since you commenced your placement or changes its position to ‘advise against all but essential travel’ for your host country whilst you are absent then this may affect the validity of your travel insurance going forward;

- If you are undertaking a placement in Europe, are in receipt of Erasmus+ funding and you are unable to return to the host country for Semester 2, you will no longer be eligible for further funding and you may be required to repay some or all of the funding you have already received.

- Due to ongoing uncertainty and international travel bans, there may be limited flights available, or flights maybe cancelled at very short notice. PLEASE make sure that you have signed-up to receive updates from the FCDO for your location and look at the advice for securing your return. You are strongly encouraged to sign-up to the social media feeds for the British (or your own national) Embassy in your host country.

Brexit Considerations (for students who are undertaking placements in mainland Europe)

- Please be aware of our Brexit webpage which is regularly updated - http://www.goabroad.manchester.ac.uk/preparing-to-go/brexit/

- You are advised to sign up to the Living in Guide updates for your country, so that you can check the implications for your immigration and healthcare arrangements after 31 December 2020.

- Depending on your host country the implications of not being resident in your host country on 31 December 2020 may be more or less significant in terms of the requirements that you will need to meet – you should specifically check in detail any re-entry and visa requirements that will apply if you leave over the holiday season.

- Students already abroad prior to 31 December 2020 may be eligible to apply for a new EHIC which would be valid in your host country only once your current EHIC expires on 31 December. For full information including how to apply, see https://services.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/cra/start We would recommend submitting your application as soon as possible to avoid delays.

We appreciate there is a lot to think about so please do not hesitate to speak to your Placement co-ordinator/IPO Country Adviser if you have any questions or concerns. We very much hope that you will have a wonderful holiday season, however different it may be this year.

Take care and stay safe,

Dr Caroline Whitehand
Manager, International Programmes Office