Research in an International Setting

CSU researchers who will be conducting research abroad should keep in mind the following important tips:

* **You must obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval before your study can begin.**

Whether you are a CSU faculty member, staff or student, your human subjects’ research study must be approved by the IRB before it can be implemented. We suggest you apply to the IRB at least **two months before** you leave to ensure adequate time for review and approval before you leave the country. Bring your written IRB approval with you on your trip.

* **Demonstrate cultural understanding and sensitivity.**

In preparing your research project, consider that you may encounter cultural barriers. For example, obtaining signed consent from human subjects may not be culturally acceptable in the country where you will be conducting your research. Using picture boards or videos may be appropriate for your population. Your protocol should describe any anticipated cultural sensitivities in conducting your research and how you intend to overcome those barriers. Special consideration will need to given to: local laws, customs, political factors and sensitivities, licensing for special equipment (e.g., video and voice recordings), language (including whether you will need a translator), and the literacy level of your subjects. The IRB can help you develop alternative methods for consent (or other issues) to ensure your research practices are ethically sound and respectful of the culture you are studying.

* **Understand the research ethics and guidelines of the host country.**

In addition to CSU IRB approval, you may need to obtain approval from the local IRB/Ethics Committee or research permits from the country in which you will be conducting research. This process can take several months or more. This approval must be on file with the IRB prior to IRB approval being granted. Please refer to the *2014 Edition of the International Compilation of Human Research Protections* from the Office of Human Research Protections.

**Contact the embassy in the host country.**

Contact the embassy of the country you will be working in to find out what their research requirements are and to whom you must apply for a permit (if required). Alternatively, you may find you are able to partner with a local researcher or organization with an active permit in order to proceed in a timely fashion. Please submit this research permit with your IRB protocol.

* **If possible, please contact the IRB while abroad if you encounter any problems or need to change your IRB-approved protocol.**

If you find that upon arrival in the host country, some aspects of your research study must be modified for whatever reason, please notify the IRB office immediately. The IRB will do its best to quickly respond to your notification with further instructions and guidance. Please wait to hear back from the IRB before making any changes to your protocol unless the participant would be put at risk. Student researchers: Remember to keep your advisor in the loop as well! Before you leave the country, develop a communication plan with your advisor so that s/he can continue to oversee the research.

* **All employees of CSU must register with the CSU Office of Risk Management and Insurance before international travel can be approved.**

“Colorado State University’s insurance policy which covers CSU employees traveling internationally on official business requires registration with risk management prior to departure. Without this registration, there is a risk that the insurance coverage could be compromised.” Employees taking students with them for travel must consult with the Office of International Programs/International Education to determine what level of review must be completed for approval to proceed with the trip. This includes the review of travel advisories and warnings in particular locations.

* **All students are required to register through the Office of International Programs before travel can be authorized.**

Call (970) 491-2961 or email Laura.Thornes@colostate.edu for more information. This process should begin several months prior to the group’s departure to allow time for travelers to obtain all necessary documents, including passport, visas, immunizations and health consultations, research permits, etc. If the university is providing funding for students’ travel the Provost’s Office must sign all international travel approval forms *prior to departure*.

International Education/Office of International Programs

**Laura Thornes**  
Director, Study Aboard  
Laura.Thornes@colostate.edu  
(970) 491-2964

Additional references:

* <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/international/>
* <http://bioethics.od.nih.gov/internationalresthics.html>
* <https://webapps.sph.harvard.edu/live/gremap/index_main.cfm?CFID=3922061&CFTOKEN=84434800>