

Student Trip Guidelines

Introduction

Field trips, such as site visits, professional meetings, research trips and tours of places of interest, constitute an important academic component of many University classes and programs. A field trip may be part of a course completed for academic credit or a special non-credit opportunity.

Some trips are taken by student groups. Registered student groups include two types: departmental student organizations (DSOs) and independent student organizations (ISOs). Activities of DSOs are considered University-sponsored. Activities of ISOs are not within the control of the University and are therefore not considered University-sponsored or the responsibility of the University.

Field Trips

The following guidelines are intended to clarify best practices with regard to University-sponsored field trips. It is important that the guidelines are followed to ensure consistency and compliance with University policies and to minimize risk.

Definitions

Field Trip – An off-campus student trip sponsored by the University, college, department and/or program as part of the requirements of a class or for which credit will be awarded, or which is substantially planned or supervised by University personnel.

Mandatory Field Trip – All students in the class are expected to participate. Failure to participate has an academic consequence. Only an official absence would be accepted as an excuse for non-participation. In a situation where a student cannot participate in the field trip, an equivalent experience is typically provided.

Optional Field Trip – Students can elect to participate in the field trip with no academic consequence.

Signing an Assumption of Risk and Release

It is usually inappropriate to require a release for mandatory field trips.

For optional field trips, we recommend that students are required to sign an assumption of risk and release. We also recommend that unusual, hidden, or significant risks are expressly stated in the assumption of risk form. Standard forms and assistance tailoring the appropriate form to a specific trip or event may be obtained by contacting the Office of General Counsel.

Transportation

University personnel should take a state vehicle if possible, and provide space for all participants. It could be a Motor Pool vehicle or a department's vehicle, if one is available. The use of such vehicles, permitted drivers, and insurance information is available at: <http://www.k-state.edu/policies/ppm/3040.html>

If any of the students are permitted to travel by personal vehicle, the students who do so should be made aware in a written document that the official field trip for them does not begin until they arrive at the site(s), and it ends when they leave the site(s). It is recommended that such students be required to sign a document acknowledging and agreeing to that understanding, which can be drafted as part of an Assumption of Risk and Release. The document should make clear that students choosing to travel by personal vehicle are responsible for making such travel arrangements and for getting themselves safely to

and from the site(s). If the field trip is mandatory, the University should offer transportation to and from campus and could require that it be used by all participants.

Education Abroad Programs and Trips

The Office of International Programs oversees study abroad programs and University-sponsored international trips for students. Information, applications and conditions of participation, which include assumption of risk and release terms, are available through the Education Abroad office within OIP: <http://www.k-state.edu/abroad/> .

Student Organization Trips

If a DSO takes a trip as part of the organization's activities (as opposed to a separate activity that happens to involve several members of the DSO), then it is considered a University-sponsored event where the University could be held liable for injuries and damages. State vehicles should be used if at all possible, and other reasonable precautions should be taken. Insurance claims can get complicated when private vehicles are used for state business. Since state vehicles are available for University-sponsored events, it is best to go ahead and use them, because the insurance coverage is clear and the University does not have to worry about incurring damages from any vehicular accidents associated with the trip.

Faculty advisors to DSOs are acting within the scope of their job duties in serving as advisors, and so the Kansas Tort Claims Act (our self-insurance law) applies to cover their personal liability. However, their negligent or inappropriate acts on the job can still result in disciplinary action.

If any University employee is involved with an ISO, as an "advisor" or otherwise, that involvement is considered to be outside the scope of his/her University employment, and so the Kansas Tort Claims Act would not apply to cover liability claims.

Any trip planned and carried out by an ISO is not a University-sponsored event and state vehicles are not available. ISOs could take everyone in a private vehicle or the group could rent a vehicle from a private company. The University has no control over or responsibility for any occurrences during the trip. Because ISO trips and other activities are completely separate and distinct from the University, ISO members should not be asked by University administrators to sign an Assumption of Risk and Release form or University employees should not otherwise involve themselves in the trip or planning, unless they are doing so outside the scope of their University employment at their own risk, and it does not present a conflict of interest or time with their University employment.

For more information about ISO and DSO classifications, requirements, and available benefits and resources, please see the Student Organization Policy, PPM Chapter 8540.