

College of Education
Academic Field Trips/Group Travel with Students (Domestic Trips)

Frequently Asked Questions

The questions listed below provide additional guidance for planning field trips:

How is an academic field trip differentiated from other trips (i.e., student organization trips)?

An academic field trip is defined as an academic experience sponsored by the University. By definition, the University is in direct control of the event if they are sponsoring the trip.

What if the event is not “academic” in nature, but is more a “social” experience that is still sponsored by the University?

If the University is the official sponsor of the event, then the University needs to be in direct control and assume responsibility for the event.

How is “direct control” defined?

If the University sponsors the event, the University is responsible for properly supervising the activities of the event.

If a student organization sponsors a field trip, is this under the “direct control” of the University?

Risk Management defines a field trip to mean an academic class experience under the control of a Penn State faculty employee and, therefore, by definition no student organization can sponsor a field trip.

Is a University employee required to accompany a group if the field trip is an academic requirement or a University sponsored academic experience?

YES

Risk Management approves charter bus agreements. If a department or group charters a bus for an event (i.e., a Penn State football game), is the trip “sponsored” by the University?

Risk Management reviews any Bus Charter agreements that are in the name of the University and it is presumed that a University employee accompanies the charter. If an employee is not accompanying the charter, the bus trip should not occur.

Is the University responsible for an individual's behavior on a field trip? Should a "Standards of Conduct Agreement" be utilized?

The University is not responsible for behavior of individuals. The University currently does not require a Conduct Agreement for Domestic Field Trips, but it may be considered for use by an individual department, college or campus.

The College of Education has developed a "Code of Conduct" and a "Memorandum of Understanding" that are required for students who participate in group travel with an overnight stay and for international group travel.

Can personal vehicles be used to transport individuals to a University-sponsored field trip?

NO - If the activity is sponsored and planned by the University, travel is to be provided by the University and requires that an employee accompany the group to and from the activity. In other words, the University has a duty to provide safe transportation for University sponsored events. The Risk Management web site provides very detailed information on auto liability for University-owned vehicles and as well as personal vehicles. Refer to the Risk Management website at <http://www.controller.psu.edu/Divisions/RiskManagement/index.html/>

If there are seats available in the bus, can we open the trip to others? For example, can we permit other faculty and staff who are employees to attend? Can we permit other PSU students (not in the class) to attend?

Individuals who are employees or students at Penn State can attend, provided that room is available and the department head approves. These individuals must be affiliated with Penn State, either as faculty, staff or Penn State students who are not in the class.

What type of emergency preparedness or communications is required for field trips?

Emergency communications should be available at all times on a field trip. A working cell phone is sufficient for this purpose. If the field trip is in a remote location, emergency transportation should be available at all times during the field trip.

What if a student does not show up to catch the bus home?

The employee in charge has a responsibility to use prudence to determine the whereabouts of that student. If the student has a cell phone #, try to contact the student to assess the situation. Continue to try to locate the student. If you are unable to contact the student, you should wait a reasonable amount of time (45 minutes to an hour). This will delay the return trip by an hour or more. If you are not able to contact the student and cannot account for the student's whereabouts, contact the University Police at 814-863-1111.

After contacting the University Police, the employee in charge must contact **one** of the College administrators:

Gerald Henry 814-865-2523 office or 814-404-6039 cell,
Jacqueline Edmondson 814-865-2524 office or 814-360-6071 cell

Only after contacting the University Police and the College administration, should the faculty-in-charge and the remainder of the group travel back to campus, or proceed as instructed by the University Police and College administrators. Depending on the circumstances, the University Police may request that one faculty member remain in at the field trip location while another employee accompanies the remaining students back to University Park.