Overseas Travel – School Group Policy
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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1. Purpose and Scope................................................................. 3
2. Policy Statement...................................................................... 3
3. Requirements for Overseas Travel........................................... 3
4. School Group In-Principle Agreement...................................... 4
5. Overseas Travel Minute.......................................................... 4
6. Ministerial Approval............................................................... 5
7. Travel Advice.......................................................................... 5
8. Monitoring Travel Advice....................................................... 5
9. Duty of Care for School Groups.............................................. 8
10. Student to Adult Ratios.......................................................... 9
11. Eligible Students.................................................................... 9
12. Informed Consent.................................................................... 10
13. Email Access (Outlook)........................................................... 10
14. Travel Insurance..................................................................... 10
15. Authorised Class of Travel.................................................... 10
16. Personal Leave....................................................................... 10
17. Risk Management................................................................. 11
18. Amendments to Documentation............................................ 11
19. Roles and Responsibilities..................................................... 11
20. Definitions............................................................................. 15
21. Associated Documents and Materials................................. 15
1. Purpose and Scope

This policy for overseas travel applies to all school groups of the Department of Education (DoE), Tasmania, and has been developed to ensure the effective coordination and management of overseas travel. This policy sets out the requirements that must be complied with when school groups wish to travel overseas.

2. Policy Statement

The safety of all school groups participating in overseas travel is of paramount importance to DoE.

DoE supports providing opportunities for school groups to participate in overseas travel where there is a clear educational purpose/outcome, available resources and school groups will not be exposed to unnecessary risk.

Given the different and potentially increased risks inherent in overseas travel, there is a requirement for travel organisers to clearly identify an educational or business purpose for the travel and to fully assess the associated risks and identified mitigations.

All travel, even once approved by the Secretary and Minister for Education and Training may be subject to cancellation or change by the Secretary, based on travel advice including, but not limited to, that provided by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

Please note the following:

- This policy must be adhered to in any instance where school groups are travelling overseas, including instances where outside agencies are also involved e.g. World Challenge. This policy supersedes any other school group overseas travel policy or instruction regarding DoE international student travel including documentation in conjunction with outside agencies e.g. World Challenge.

- Billeting/Homestays in an overseas context are only permitted in exceptional circumstances. Please see the document – Billeting Students Overseas, Guidelines for the Proposal of Exceptional Circumstances – for further information.

3. Requirements for Overseas Travel

An application for Overseas Travel requires the following to be completed:

- School Group In-Principle Agreement to Travel Overseas form
- Checklist for the Overseas Travel Minute and Associated Documents
- Overseas Travel Minute for the Minister
- Employee Travel Warrant and School Group Travel Warrant.
- Consent and Medical Form
- Medical Action Plans for students
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Travel Advice Forms for employees and students.
- Risk Management Planning document (included within the Overseas Travel Minute template) - country specific risks need to be clearly documented, ie country threat level, focus on personal safety such as theft, hydration, etc (refer 9. Travel advice and 10. Monitoring travel advice).
- Communications Plan (included within the Overseas Travel Minute template) - the Crisis Communications Plan is to help prepare the Minister, Agency Executive and the Manager Strategic Media Marketing and Communications with what they should do and say, and who they need to keep informed in the event of a crisis.
• Repatriation Plan (included within the Overseas Travel Minute template) - the Repatriation Plan is to contain trigger points for making decisions on tour, cancellation prior to travel, and the returning home of individuals when the tour is underway e.g. the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade advisory is above Level 2. The Repatriation Plan is about decision-making before and during the trip. It’s about being up-front to say "if X happens, the individual is not travelling, or the individual is coming home straightaway".

• Itinerary

• Destination Map

4. School Group In-Principle Agreement

The School Group In-Principle Agreement to Travel Overseas form must be completed and signed by the Director School Improvement Learning Services, Deputy Secretary and the Secretary before an application for Overseas Travel is submitted. It is required that the form is submitted at least six months prior to travel. It is important to note the form is not approval for overseas travel.

5. Overseas Travel Minute

An Overseas Travel Minute should include the following information:

• Destination of proposed travel.

• Dates of proposed travel.

• Employee/s position within DoE and must include who is the travel leader.

• A list of all participants (teachers, students and any accompanying adult/s) must be provided, including who is the travel leader. You must ensure the male/female ratio meets the requirements within this policy (refer to Item 12: Student to adult ratios) and the Procedures for Planning Off-Campus Activities.

• Confirmation that any non-DoE adult, such as accompanying adults, travelling have undergone a Working with Vulnerable People Check prior to travel. (nb. this is not required for students travelling who are over 18)

• How the travel came about e.g. awarded scholarship, applied for study course, conference, school expedition, etc.

• Scholarship/Course/Conference etc. information (copy of what the organisation has provided or print out from a website) if applicable.

• Communication considerations such as when undertaking travel, staff will carry a mobile phone at all times that has data access sufficient enough to enable 24/7 communication and is not reliant on Wi-Fi. (refer also to Section 15 in this document)

• Description of the benefit to DoE/educational value.

• Financial considerations (i.e. cost to DoE if any relief costs are required and the source of funding).

• Acknowledgement that all travellers with medical conditions have sought appropriate advice from a medical practitioner about travelling risks. Specialists can provide a suitable care plan that will take into account external factors.
All overseas travel documentation must first be sent to the relevant Learning Services for approval by the Director Operations (refer to Attachment 1 - Flowchart). On receipt of the documents, the Director Operations will consider the application for overseas travel. If recommended for approval, Learning Services will forward to the Ministerial Services Unit for processing.

6. Ministerial Approval

The application (Overseas Travel Minute and associated documents) for overseas travel is to be provided no later than twelve weeks prior to the proposed travel departure date to the relevant Learning Services unit. Learning Services will then forward to Ministerial Services Unit at ministerial.services@education.tas.gov.au.

Please be advised that applications received by Ministerial Services Unit outside these time frames will not be progressed. If you are unable to meet the timeframes specified in this policy you are required to contact the Secretary directly via email (at OfficeoftheSecretary@education.tas.gov.au) outlining the extenuating circumstances. Based on this information the Secretary will decide whether or not your application should be progressed.

**It should be noted that if this timeframe is not met your travel may not be approved.**

All overseas travel for school groups requires approval from the Secretary and the Minister for Education and Training.

Once approved by the Secretary and the Minister for Education and Training, the traveller/s will be notified by email (with a copy to the Principal/Manager and relevant Learning Services).

7. Travel Advice

Acknowledgement of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trading (DFAT) International Travel Advice form that is required to be signed and returned to the Ministerial Services Unit for all travel participants (employees, students and accompanying adults) – no earlier than two weeks prior to departure (refer to Monitoring travel advice).

8. Monitoring Travel Advice

Overseas travel offers many benefits to participants. However, overseas travel is subject to a number of serious risks. That is why DoE monitors information from a number of sources, including, but not limited to, travel advice from DFAT.

Once travel is approved, if travel advisories (i.e DFAT travel advice) change, or the Secretary determines that the level of risk has changed, the Secretary may cancel travel.

DoE is required to follow the DFAT travel advice and this is why the Ministerial Services Unit requests that the signed DFAT form advising that the travel advice has been noted is to be returned no earlier than two weeks prior to departure. This ensures that the travel advice signed off is current. The Ministerial Services Unit keeps a register of approved travel.

Principals **MUST** monitor the DFAT travel advisories for the duration of the school trip.
Once travel is approved, if travel advisories, including DFAT travel advice, changes, the Secretary may cancel travel, or if already underway, changes may be made to the itinerary which may include returning home at the earliest opportunity. Any such instruction must be followed. Reflecting the high priority placed on the duty of care, failure to do so will result in the initiation of an Internal Code of Conduct investigation.

DoE employees are covered by travel insurance and if they do not follow travel advice, apart from neglecting their duty of care, DoE employees will not be covered for travel insurance.

Below is a summary of some potential risks/issues:

- Terrorism
- Civil Unrest/Political Tension
- Crime
- Local Travel
- Airline Safety
- Natural Disasters
- Local Customs
- Health/Medical Issues
- Drug/Alcohol issues.

DFAT (through its website) issues travel advisories for the majority of countries. Each advisory is headed by an overall advice level. Most countries have only one advice level but some countries have different advice levels for region/s of the country. The travel advisory level for each country (or region/s of a country) is represented below.

The Ministerial Services Unit may seek additional security advice from the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Office of Security and Emergency Management.

Registration of travel is no longer available on the Smart Traveller (http://www.smartraveller.gov.au) website. Instead, groups must monitor the site daily to check for issues. If a situation occurs DFAT will activate a crisis page for that country/region with information regarding what precautions are necessary and recommendations for action.

If a situation does occur, DFAT recommends contacting the 24-hour Consular Emergency Centre by telephone on +61 2 6261 3305 (from overseas), 1300 555 135 (within Australia), or by SMS +61 421 269 080

The advisory levels reflect DFAT’s assessment as to the overall security situation in the relevant country. They also take into account DFAT’s assessment of the capacity of the relevant foreign government to deal with any risk occurring.

For a full description of the DFAT advice levels refer http://smartraveller.gov.au/resources/pages/travel-advice-explained.aspx#level3
The four advisory levels are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td><strong>Exercise normal safety precautions</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Travel is permitted to countries or regions subject to this advisory level.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td><strong>Exercise a high degree of caution</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Travel is permitted only at the Secretary/Minister’s discretion. A strong case will need to be put forward for consideration.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td><strong>Reconsider your need to travel</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Travel is not permitted to countries or regions subject to this advisory level.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td><strong>Do not travel</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Travel is not permitted to countries or regions subject to this advisory level.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Level 1. Exercise normal safety precautions**

DFAT issues an ‘Exercise normal safety precautions’ advice for a functioning law and order system and stable government – this level indicates an overall security environment similar to a large Australian city.

- If school groups propose to travel to a country (or region/s of a country) for which DFAT has issued an ‘Exercise normal safety precautions’ advisory, such travel will be progressed for approval.

**Level 2. Exercise a high degree of caution**

DFAT issues an ‘Exercise a high degree of caution’ advice when there are numerous or significant risks, such as a weak law and order system (where violent crime is prevalent), or in some cases reflects an underlying volatility where the security environment could change with little warning.

- Travel to a country (or region/s of a country) for which DFAT has issued ‘Exercise a high degree of caution’ advisory, is permitted to attend special events at the Secretary/Minister for Education and Training’s discretion. A strong case will need to be presented as to why this risk should be accepted.
- School groups proposing to travel at ‘Exercise a high degree of caution’ travel advisory, consultation must be held with the Director Operations, Learning Services for advice regarding a decision on the appropriateness of the travel before an Overseas Travel Minute is submitted. It is recommended that this is done before significant planning is undertaken.

Consideration should be given to whether expected outcomes from the travel could be achieved in other countries or regions. If a decision is made to proceed with the application, then this will need to be specifically addressed within the Overseas Travel Minute.

**Level 3. Reconsider your need to travel**

DFAT issues a ‘Reconsider your need to travel’ advice if it considers there is a serious and potential life threatening level of risk, such as ongoing threat of terrorism, frequent incidents of violent crime, ongoing civil unrest, widespread disease, or other safety risks.

DoE will **NOT** permit school groups to travel to countries or regions subject to this advisory level.

Please check the Department’s website to ensure this is the most recent version.
Level 4. Do not travel

DFAT issues a ‘Do not travel’ advice if it considers there is an extremely dangerous security situation, such as a high threat of terrorist attack, ongoing armed conflict, violent social unrest, or critical levels of violent crime.

**DoE will NOT permit school groups to travel to countries or regions subject to this advisory level.**

Change in Advisory PRIOR TO DEPARTURE

If, after travel has been approved, but prior to departure, DFAT changes the advisory in respect to a country (or region/s of a country) to above Level 1 – Exercise normal safety precautions, or if the Secretary determines that the level of risk has changed, the travel must be:

- assessed as per DFAT Level 2 – Exercise a high degree of caution advisory requirements; or
- re-routed so that the itinerary no longer includes travel to any countries (or region/s of countries) which are above DFAT Level 1 – Exercise normal safety precautions advisory; or
- postponed (until such time as the travel organiser is able to satisfy their Principal/General Manager Learning Services that the travel will not pose an undue level of risk to the school group – for example, if the travel advisory is changed to reflect a lower assessment of risk); or
- cancelled as a last resort.

Change in Advisory AFTER DEPARTURE

If, while overseas travel is underway, DFAT changes the advisory in respect to a country (or region/s of a country) to above Level 1 – Exercise normal safety precautions, or if the Secretary determines that the level of risk has changed, the travel leader must consult with their Principal/Director School Improvement Learning Services to determine whether it is safest to:

- continue with the overseas travel as planned; or
- re-route the overseas travel; or
- return home at the earliest opportunity.

The Travel Leader is required to exercise their own duty of care; however, the Travel Leader must comply with any directives issued by the Director Operations, Learning Services (and other senior departmental staff).

The Director Operations, Learning Services will consult with the Deputy Secretary Learning and keep them informed at all times. The Deputy Secretary Learning will ensure the Secretary, the Ministerial Services Unit and Strategic Media Marketing and Communications are kept up to date.

9. Duty of Care for School Groups

DoE must ensure school groups are adequately supervised on travel expeditions, with many requirements to be met beforehand including:

- Schools must communicate to parents that travel is subject to DFAT travel advice (refer 9. Travel advice) and DoE reserves the right to request that the travel arrangements be revised or cancelled if there is an unreasonable risk to those travelling.
• At least one DoE employee must travel on all school expeditions, with schools having the option to travel with more – refer 12. Student to adult ratios.

• Any non-DoE adult, such as accompanying adults travelling must have a Working with Vulnerable People clearance prior to travel. For further information on this please contact Conduct and Investigations on telephone 6165 6260.

• Mature aged students known to DoE do not require a RWVP, although a new mature aged student not known to DoE, for example, transferring from interstate/private will require a RWVP.

• Assessment of the capabilities and needs of the students involved, including their physical and emotional maturity should also take place.

• Consideration of the gender balance among the school group and its implications for staffing. Where there are male and female students travelling, there must be at least one male and one female adult teacher/leader from the school community accompanying them. For single gender groups, at least one adult from DoE or the school community must be of the same gender – refer 12 Student to adult ratios.

• An evaluation of the skills, knowledge and experience of all the employees involved and their capacity to manage emergency situations, including relevant first aid qualifications.

10. Student to Adult Ratios

• The ratio of students to adults will vary according to the location, age of students, program and other conditions such as the weather, duration of the expedition and the nature of the activities involved.

• In most situations a minimum of one adult to every eight students. The ratio of teachers to adult volunteers should be at least two to one.

• For single gender groups, at least one DoE staff member, of at least teacher level, must be of the same gender.

• Mixed gender groups must have at least one male and one female DoE staff member, of at least teacher level, accompany the group.

• Where it is deemed appropriate, adult community members of either gender who hold current RWVP may accompany the school group.

• If the school experiences difficulties meeting the staff gender requirement, the principal must contact the relevant Director Operations, Learning Services, to discuss.

• For further information refer to the Procedures for Planning off Campus Activities.

11. Eligible Students

• Travel Groups can only include students attending non-government schools if a participating non-government teacher/s is participating. Any application including non-government students must specifically detail parent/guardian agreed communication and repatriation considerations for these students, what processes will be in place in case of an emergency and lead personnel/contacts.

• Responsibility for the care and control of those students will not be assumed by DoE.
12. Informed Consent

- Parents need to be provided with full details of the planned travel well in advance of the date to enable them to make an informed decision about their child’s participation.

- For all school group travel, the Principal **MUST** utilise DoE resources and facilitate a briefing for all travellers (and parents of students) reviewing the risks and the proposed risk management treatments, to ensure all travellers are making fully informed decisions to proceed with travel or otherwise.

- This meeting **MUST** take place prior to the Overseas Travel Minute being submitted to the Ministerial Services Unit.

13. Email Access (Outlook)

The Tasmanian Government has implemented a block on access to Outlook Web Access (OWA) from outside Australia and New Zealand, except to “whitelisted” users to increase the security of the email service.

By default, all users are blocked from accessing OWA from overseas. This means you will not be able to access your DoE staff email via the [http://mail.connect.tas.gov.au](http://mail.connect.tas.gov.au) web access.

Users are able to access email via ActiveSync and/or other methods as normal. Only OWA is impacted by this change.

If you are travelling overseas and need to access email via OWA you will need to log a request with the ITS Helpdesk [https://help.education.tas.gov.au](https://help.education.tas.gov.au) to enable your account to be added to the ‘whitelist’. Once you return from your overseas travelling your account will be changed again and removed from the ‘whitelist’ so that your account is more secure.

14. Travel Insurance

Travel cover and assistance for travel approved by DoE in Tasmania is provided by Accident and Health International (AHI) under the Corporate Travel AHI ASSIST policy [www.acchealth.com.au](http://www.acchealth.com.au).

Refer DoE Travel Policy.

Please note only employee/s of DoE (undertaking work responsibilities) are covered by this insurance. The insurance will not cover students or accompanying adults (unless a spouse or dependent of the DoE employee).

In the email confirming your travel has been approved, you will receive advice from the Ministerial Services Unit regarding travel insurance. The Ministerial Services Unit will provide you with an electronic copy of the business travel insurance schedule and letter.

15. Authorised Class of Travel

All travel must be economical and travel arrangements as efficient as possible. The following limits apply to the class of travel:

- Heads of Agency (and other officers with a relevant provision in their contract of employment) – up to business class.

- Other officers and employees – economy class, unless specific approval by the Head of Agency.

16. Personal Leave

If an employee decides to undertake personal leave before or after their work-related duties while overseas, then that employee is responsible for any
additional costs incurred by DoE as a result, including Fringe Benefits tax. For further information please contact the Director Finance and Budget Services by telephone on 6165 5657.

17. Risk Management

It is essential for travel leaders to complete a Risk Management Plan (including the Crisis Communications Plan and Repatriation Plan).

Travel leaders must base their risk planning on the particular risks of travelling to a destination in the context of the students in the school group. Risk assessment plans will not be accepted if individual needs of staff/students are not considered.

On **ALL** trips, at least one participating staff member **MUST** have a current First Aid Certificate. If there is any type of water activity included on the itinerary (including cruises or other commercial water activity) then at least one staff member **MUST** have a current Perform Basic Water Rescue qualification.

18. Amendments to Documentation

If there are amendments e.g. changes to dates, employees/students travelling, it is a requirement that the Ministerial Services Unit is advised (ministerial.services@education.tas.gov.au) so it can be recorded for insurance purposes.

19. Roles and Responsibilities

DoE is accountable to the school community, and broader community, through the Minister for Education and Training, for ensuring appropriate and safe overseas travel:

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<th>Roles and Responsibilities</th>
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<td><strong>The Minister for Education and Training:</strong></td>
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<td>Strategic Media Marketing and Communications:</td>
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<td>Director Operations, Learning Services:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents:</td>
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<td>• Provide all required consent forms for their child.</td>
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<td>• Ensure that medical conditions are disclosed and that they have sought medical advice from an appropriate medical practitioner prior to travelling.</td>
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<td>• If participating in the overseas travel, have a Working with Vulnerable People Check and provide a duty of care to all participants.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Arrange Travel Insurance for their child.</td>
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</table>
20. Definitions

**Overseas travel**
Travel outside of Australia by DoE school groups.

**Parent**
Includes a guardian or other person having the care and control of a child.

**Volunteer**
A person who freely offers to take part in an organisation or undertake a task.

**School group**
Teacher/s and student/s undertaking overseas travel as part of their learning program.

21. Associated Documents and Materials

- DoE International Travel Advice Form for Employees (DFAT)
- DoE International Travel Advice Form for Students (DFAT)
- Employee Travel Warrant
- Student Billeting Guidelines
- Major Excursion Consent and Medical Information Form – Off Campus Excursions
- Procedures for Planning Off Campus Activities
- School Group In-Principle Agreement to Travel Overseas Form
- School Group Travel Warrant
- Tasmanian Government Overseas Travel Policy and Guidelines
- Template - Overseas Travel Minute to the Minister
- Travel Policy
- Checklist for the Overseas Travel Minute and Associated Documents – School Groups
Attachment 1. Approval Flowchart for School Groups

**STEP 1:** School Group Overseas Travel Policy
- Travel Leader consults with the principal on intention to travel overseas.
- Travel Leader reviews School Group Travel Policy.

**STEP 2:** School Group IPA
- Travel Leader submits IPA to Learning Services (LS).
- Learning Services submits form to MSU.
- MSU submits form to Deputy Secretary Learning & Secretary for approval.
- Once finalised, MSU returns form to school/Travel Leader.
- THIS IS NOT FINAL APPROVAL FOR TRAVEL.

**Step 3:** Planning phase
- Travel Leader undertakes process to plan travel.
- Principal facilitates briefing of benefits/risks/costs of travel to parents, students, and staff.
- Travel Leader prepares Overseas Travel Minute using the Checklist as a guide.
- Principal checks Minute for accuracy and completion before submitting to LS.

**Step 4:** Travel Approval
- LS checks Minute and Associated Documents for accuracy and ensures all required information is provided. Director Operations recommends approval for Minute.
- LS submit complete Minute to MSU. MSU quality controls Minute and submits to the Deputy Secretary Learning and the Secretary for approval.
- Once approved, MSU submits Minute to the Minister for final approval.

**Step 5:** Travel Insurance
- Once signed by the Minister, MSU returns signed documents to principal, Travel Leader, LS, and Deputy Secretary Learning. This email will contain information regarding travel insurance for staff, and letters to staff and parents.

**Step 6:** DFAT Travel Advice
- A final DFAT advice form MUST be signed by all participating staff, students and their parents. These forms must be submitted together no sooner than 2 weeks prior to travel.
- Schools MUST monitor DFAT advice prior to, and during travel.
- Principals MUST monitor DFAT advice while their school group is overseas.
- Any concerns MUST be discussed with Director Operations LS.

**Change in Travel Advisory Level including DFAT**
- In consultation with Deputy Secretary Learning and Director Operations LS, the Secretary makes a decision on travel (cancel, change itinerary, or repatriation).
- The travel leader MUST obey any directive given to them by the Secretary, Deputy Secretary Learning, Director Operations LS, or any senior staff member.
- The Travel Leader MUST be contactable at ALL times.
- Crisis Communications and Repatriation Plans must be adhered to.
Attachment 2. Chain of Command
The following diagram outlines the line of command for decisions to be made during overseas travel. As outlined in the Overseas Travel Policy all directives to DoE employees participating in overseas travel must be adhered to:

- Decision
  - Secretary

- Through
  - Deputy Secretary Learning
  - Director Operations Learning Services
  - Senior DoE Staff

All decisions followed by
- Principal
- Travel Leader
- All participating Staff