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Risk Assessment Inventory List: GHANA

Safety Is Everyone's Responsibility

Introduction

You and your family have a role to play in minimizing potential dangers and EAP expects you to participate actively in minimizing your risks while abroad. Please share this list with your family and design a personal safety plan for your time abroad. This review of risks is limited in scope and reflects EAP's current information. Circumstances may change over time.

- EAP cannot guarantee the safety of participants or ensure that risk will not, at times, be significantly greater than on a UC campus.
- EAP cannot monitor the daily personal decisions, choices, and activities of individual participants any more than is the case on the home campus.
- You are responsible for gathering information about possible risks, and to make final decisions about participation on EAP.

This list identifies some of the most common hazards associated with particular activities or the environment associated with studying and living in Ghana (e.g., extreme heat or cold, endemic disease, transportation, crime, violence, political instability, lack of electricity, lack of water, etc.). Voluntary risks are those associated with activities that students may decide to undertake (e.g., driving a car, riding a motorcycle, smoking, taking public transportation, abusing drugs/alcohol, etc.). Involuntary risks are those associated with activities that happen to students that are out of their control. (e.g., acts of nature such as being struck by lightning, fires, floods, tornados, etc., and exposure to contaminants, etc.)

United States Department of State, World Health Organization, University of Ghana, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, South African Department of Health, Australian Trade Commission, U.K. Foreign and Commonwealth Office, EAP Annual Reports, UC-Berkeley Campus Police Department, iJET International Intelligent Risk Systems, Inc., and World Bank websites were used as sources for the following risk assessment.

Consider the following hazards and take preventive measures according to the hazards that have been identified.

HEALTH

The U.S. Department of State Country Specific Information for Ghana includes the following:

Motor vehicle accidents, drowning and water-related accidents due to Ghana's rough surf, muggings and other violent attacks, and the development of sexually transmitted diseases—including HIV—are health and safety concerns that have been reported by U.S. citizens and can be at least partially mitigated by using common-sense safety precautions.

Vaccine-Preventable Diseases

CDC vaccine recommendations are based on the best available risk information. Please note that the level of risk for vaccine-preventable diseases can change at any time.

Vaccination or Disease	Recommendations or Requirements for Vaccine-Preventable Diseases
Routine	Recommended if you are not up-to-date with routine shots such as, measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine, poliovirus vaccine, etc.
Yellow Fever	Yellow fever vaccination requirement for travelers to Ghana: Required upon arrival from all countries CDC recommendation: For all travelers >9 months of age Vaccination should be given 10 days before travel and at 10 year intervals if there is on-going risk.
Hepatitis A or immune globulin (IG)	Recommended for all unvaccinated people traveling to or working in countries with an intermediate or high level of hepatitis A virus infection (www.cdc.gov for a map) where exposure might occur through food or water. Cases of travel-related hepatitis A can also occur in travelers to developing countries with "standard" tourist itineraries, accommodations, and food consumption behaviors.
Hepatitis B	Recommended for all unvaccinated persons traveling to or working in countries with intermediate to high levels of endemic HBV (www.cdc.gov for a map), especially those who might be exposed to blood or body fluids, have sexual contact with the local population, or be exposed through medical treatment (e.g., for an accident).
Typhoid	Recommended for all unvaccinated people traveling to or working in West Africa, especially if visiting smaller cities, villages, or rural areas and staying with friends or relatives where exposure might occur through food or water.
Meningococcal (meningitis)	Recommended if you plan to visit countries that experience epidemics of meningococcal disease during December through June (www.cdc.gov for a map).
Rabies	Recommended for travelers spending a lot of time outdoors, especially in rural areas, involved in activities such as bicycling, camping, or hiking. Also recommended for travelers with significant occupational risks (such as veterinarians), for long-term travelers and expatriates living in areas with a significant risk of exposure, and for travelers involved in any activities that might bring them into direct contact with bats, carnivores, and other mammals. Children are considered at higher risk because they tend to play with animals, may receive more severe bites, or may not report bites. Note: Rabies vaccine is temporarily in limited supply.
Polio	Recommended for adult travelers who have received a primary series with either inactivated poliovirus vaccine (IPV) or oral polio vaccine (OPV). They should receive another dose of IPV before departure. For adults, available data do not indicate the need for more than a single lifetime booster dose with IPV.

NOTE: All EAP students are required to complete the online UCEAP Travel Health Certification course through MyEAP and strongly encouraged to follow through about vaccine recommendations with a travel health professional.

MENINGITIS

Meningococcal disease is an acute bacterial infection characterized by sudden onset with fever, intense headache, nausea, vomiting, stiff neck, and, frequently, a rash with pink spots. Sporadic cases and outbreaks of meningococcal disease occur throughout the world. In the sub-Saharan African “meningitis belt,” which extends from Mali to Ethiopia, peaks of meningococcal disease occur regularly during the dry season (December through June). The WHO Multi-Disease Surveillance Centre in Ouagadougou (MDSC - Burkina Faso) is monitoring the meningitis situation in the African meningitis belt throughout the epidemic season and in particular, in 13 countries under enhanced seasonal surveillance: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Togo.

Risk Assessment

- Ghana is a country in the meningitis belt.
- Students may be at risk for meningococcal disease, especially during the dry season and if they will have prolonged contact with local populations.
- Students could get sick, temporarily or permanently.
- Meningococcal disease is potentially fatal and should always be viewed as a medical emergency.
- The following increase the risk of meningitis: Poor overall health, having a birth defect of the skull, a head injury, or brain surgery, having other infections such as upper respiratory infections, Lyme disease, etc., having cochlear implant; having had meningitis in the past; having impaired immune system.

Risk mitigation

- All EAP students are required to complete the online UCEAP Travel Health Certification course through MyEAP and strongly encouraged to follow through about vaccine recommendations with a travel health professional.
- Avoid close human contact in crowded areas
- Frequent hand washing with soap and water.

MALARIA

Prevention requires **A, B, C** and **D**: Awareness of risk. Bite avoidance. Chemoprophylaxis. Diagnosis made promptly with early treatment of an infected case.

Risk assessment

- Malaria is prevalent in Ghana.
- Students could get critically sick, temporarily or permanently.
- Medical complications are a possibility.
- The trip could be cut short because of the possibility of a medical evacuation.
- There is potentially high risk if prophylaxis is not adhered to and personal protective measures are not observed.
- Students stop malaria prophylaxis because they are afraid of long-term adverse effects, conflicting advice, side effects, etc.
- Drugs purchased overseas may not be manufactured according to United States standards and may not be effective. They also may be dangerous, contain counterfeit medications or contaminants, or be combinations of drugs that are not safe to use.
- EAP students have become seriously ill with malaria due to ineffective adherence to anti-malarial pills and lack of follow up with effective personal protective measures.
- No vaccine is currently available.
- No method can protect completely against the risk for contracting malaria.

Risk mitigation for students

- Prevention of malaria is a complex issue and requires expert advice from travel medicine specialists. Recommendations for prevention of malaria must be individualized.
- Students are required to complete the UCEAP Online Travel Health Education Certification course and strongly recommended to meet with a travel health specialist after the course to understand about the health risks of this disease, get necessary medication based on length of stay and current medical condition, and learn how diseases are transmitted.
- Spray insecticide on walls to kill adult mosquitoes that come inside
- Students not staying in well-screened or air-conditioned rooms are advised to use a pyrethroid-containing flying-insect spray in living and sleeping areas during evening and nighttime hours.
- Students should understand behaviors to minimize exposure to mosquitoes (e.g. stay indoors during active biting times, always stay in screened accommodations), barrier clothing (Cover as much skin as possible: wear long sleeves, long trousers, socks, shoes/boots and hat. Avoid sandals, and tuck shirts into pants and pant legs into socks.), insecticide-impregnated bed nets, spraying of residence with insecticide, and application of effective insect DEET containing repellent.
- Taking an appropriate antimalarial drug regimen exactly as prescribed and carefully following anti-mosquito measures.
- Students sign a mandatory Malaria Prophylaxis Agreement form agreeing to treat oneself with anti-malarial medication as prescribed by a physician to participate in the program and as required by the University of Ghana. Students who do not comply with this agreement may be dismissed.
- EAP student health insurance provides adequate coverage and medical evacuation benefits, if medically necessary.
- For the best protection against malaria, it is important to continue taking the medication as recommended after leaving the malaria-risk area (4 weeks for mefloquine, doxycycline, or chloroquine; 7 days for atovaquone/proguanil or primaquine). Otherwise, you can develop malaria.

PARASITIC INFECTION

Risk Assessment

- All freshwater in southern and sub-Saharan Africa—including the great lakes and rivers as well as smaller bodies of water—is considered to be at risk for schistosomiasis (a disease caused by parasitic worms transmission).
- Infection occurs when skin comes in contact with contaminated freshwater in which certain types of snails that carry schistosomes are living.
- Schistosoma parasites can penetrate the skin of persons who are wading, swimming, bathing, or washing in contaminated water. Within several weeks, worms grow inside the blood vessels of the body and produce eggs. Some of these eggs travel to the bladder or intestines and are passed into the urine or stool.
- Occasionally, eggs may be deposited in the brain or spinal cord, leading to seizures or paralysis.
- Although schistosomiasis (SHIS-toe-SO-my-uh-sis) is not found in the United States, more than 200 million people are infected worldwide.
- If skin comes in contact with freshwater from canals, rivers, streams, or lakes, there is a risk of getting schistosomiasis.
- No vaccine is available.
- No drugs for preventing infection are available.
- Untreated piped water coming directly from freshwater sources may contain cercariae larvae.
- Risk Mitigation for Students
- Avoid swimming or wading in freshwater when you are in Ghana and other countries in which schistosomiasis occurs.

- Drink safe water. Because there is no way to make sure that water coming directly from canals, lakes, rivers, streams or springs is safe, you should either boil water for 1 minute or filter water before drinking it. Boiling water for at least 1 minute will kill any harmful parasites, bacteria, or viruses present. Iodine treatment alone WILL NOT GUARANTEE that water is safe and free of all parasites.
- Do not bathe in water unless it has been treated with chlorine or filtered with fine-mesh filters. Bath water should be heated for 5 minutes at 150°F. Water held in a storage tank for at least 48 hours should be safe for showering.
- If you accidentally come into contact with fresh water, vigorous towel drying after a very brief water exposure may help to prevent the Schistosoma parasite from penetrating the skin. You should NOT rely on vigorous towel drying to prevent schistosomiasis.

RABIES

Rabies is found on all continents except Antarctica and is endemic in most African countries. Rabies is a preventable and acute viral disease of the central nervous system, most often transmitted through the bite of a rabid animal.

Risk assessment

- People usually get rabies from the bite of a rabid animal. It is also possible, but quite rare, that people may get rabies if infectious material from a rabid animal, such as saliva, gets directly into their eyes, nose, mouth, or a wound.
- The risk of rabies in an encounter with an animal and the precautions necessary to prevent rabies are the same as they are in the United States.
- Risk mitigation for students.
- Consult with a health care professional after the required UCEAP online Travel Health Education Certification course.
- Consider getting a rabies vaccine if your activities will put you in contact with animals (approximately \$160 at UC Student Health Services).
- It is always prudent to avoid approaching any wild or domestic animals.
- Avoid all contact with animals, especially stray dogs and cats.
- If you are bitten or scratched, wash the wound immediately with soap and water (and povidone iodine, if available), and seek medical attention immediately to determine if medication or anti-rabies vaccine is needed. Immediate local treatment will substantially reduce the risk of rabies.
- Treat any bite from a potentially rabid animal as a medical emergency.

INSECT PRECAUTIONS

Immunizations and medications may afford protection against some travel-related diseases transmitted by insects such as yellow fever and malaria, but there are many other serious diseases transmitted by insects that require careful avoidance and use of protective measures. Travelers visiting rural areas or engaging in camping, hiking or adventure travel are at the greatest risk of exposure to mosquitoes, ticks, mites, fleas and other disease-carrying insects, but even urban visitors need to take precautions to avoid insect exposure in some areas.

Risk mitigation for students

Know the disease risks in the area of travel, the insect that transmits the disease and times of highest activity. Examples:

- Dengue fever is transmitted by mosquitoes active during the day and usually present in urban areas.
- Sand flies transmit leishmaniasis and are commonly active in forested areas from dusk to dawn.
- Mosquitoes that transmit malaria are active from dusk to dawn.
- Cover as much skin as possible: wear long sleeves, long trousers, socks, shoes/boots and
- Avoid sandals, and tuck shirts into pants and pant legs into socks.

- Perform body tick checks at the end of the day when traveling in areas with tick-borne diseases.
- Sleep in protected areas with screens or air conditioning or use a permethrin-impregnated sleeping bed net. Ensure there are no tears in the netting and that it is tucked in securely around the bed area. Check and eliminate any mosquitoes from inside rooms and sleeping areas prior to retiring. This is especially important in areas with malaria.
- Insecticide sprays may be used to clear rooms of mosquitoes. Coils should be only used outdoors; avoid using coils that contain DDT. Be aware that many foreign-produced repellents and insecticides are extremely toxic.
- Use an insect repellent that contains (around 35%) on exposed areas of skin and on clothing. Avoid eyes and inhalation of the spray. Repellent products that do not contain DEET are not likely to offer the same degree of protection from mosquito bites as products containing DEET.
- Repellents containing permethrin can be sprayed on clothing, bed nets and camping gear. This is an effective repellent for mosquitoes, ticks and other insects. Permethrin remains effective even with repeated washings.

FOOD/WATER SAFETY

- Drink only known brands of bottled water, making sure that the bottle cap has not been tampered with or are unbroken before you open it. Local water supplies are limited and contaminated with raw sewage, pesticides and industrial waste.
- Eat in well-established, clean restaurants and eat only well-cooked food that is served hot.
- Avoid salads and buffets. Cooked foods that have been left at room temperature are particularly hazardous.
- Do not eat fruits or vegetables unless they have been peeled or cooked.
- Avoid cooked foods that are no longer piping hot.
- Avoid buying food from street vendors. Studies (July 2001) indicate that approximately 6 percent of street vendors in Accra were medically unfit to handle foods.
- Do not drink tap water unless it has been boiled, filtered, or chemically disinfected.
- Do not drink unbottled beverages or drinks with ice.
- Avoid unpasteurized milk and any products that might have been made from unpasteurized milk, such as ice cream.
- Do not eat raw or undercooked meat or fish. Some types of fish may contain poisonous biotoxins even when cooked. Barracuda in particular should never be eaten. Other fish that may contain toxins include red snapper, grouper, amberjack, and sea bass.

MEDICAL FACILITIES

Medical services in Ghana are provided by the central government, local institutions, missionary institutions (Private-non-profit agencies), and a relatively small number of Private-for-profit practitioners.

Risk assessment

- Medical facilities are limited in Accra and may be nonexistent elsewhere.
- Most doctors and hospitals will expect payment in cash, regardless of whether students have travel health insurance. The standard of care available may be below international standards.
- Emergency facilities are extremely limited. In the event of a serious illness or accident, medical evacuation to a destination with suitable facilities would be necessary.
- Ambulance service is basic or unavailable in Ghana. Several hospitals in Accra operate ambulance services, but the service can provide transportation and only the most basic of medical care.
- Students can get seriously sick and require hospitalization.

- Medical supplies (including staff) are short.
- As water and electricity supply in Accra are erratic, the hospital may be affected by water and electricity shortages.
- Health facilities are directly affected by shortages of electricity which render equipment nonfunctional and make it difficult to keep vaccines, samples, and medications at the appropriate temperature.
- Congested roads and limited fleets affect the status of ambulance services.
- There are differing cultural expectations in Ghana. The role of family and friends is stronger and dependent upon in the hospital system. For example, bringing meals and comfort items such as fresh water and clean clothes is considered the role of the family and friends.

Risk mitigation for students

- The EAP student health insurance adequately covers medical evacuation from Ghana to the U.S. or to a country with suitable facilities.
- The U.S. Embassy has a list of medical services provides available on their website. <http://ghana.usembassy.gov/root/pdfs/wwwfmedlist.pdf>
- Students need to be prepared for the inevitable cultural differences in medical services.
- Students who need a particular type of medical care should find out in advance whether such care is available.
- Laws governing availability of medications vary widely. Prescription medications are often not available in the needed formulations or strengths. Students may want to consider bringing a supply sufficient for their stay abroad.
- The Korle Bu Teaching Hospital is located just west of Accra's Ring Road and is the best-known hospital in Ghana. With the university at Kumasi, it serves to educate Ghanaian doctors.
- Students and their families should inform themselves about health management while in Ghana.
- Students should discuss health options with their health care provider.
- Students with diabetes, or other chronic conditions, need to consult carefully with a physician in the U.S. before departure. For example, some medical devices, such as insulin pumps, may not be available. Students requiring these devices should take extras. In addition, certain formulations of drugs, such as insulin, may not be available. Be aware of alternative substitute formulations. There are instances where "type A" of insulin is available locally, but, not "type B" or "type C," which may include the kind that a student may currently be taking.
- If student needs to keep medicine/medical equipment refrigerated, access to a freezer/refrigerator for some medical equipment/medication may be difficult as electricity is sporadic throughout Ghana. The student dorms are not equipped with fridges or freezers. Summer months are quite warm and humid in Accra and there is no air conditioning in the classrooms or dormitories.
- The UC Study Center staff will be present to assist students if they get sick or injured.
- Students should complete all routine and required medical exams before coming to Accra and obtain all required and recommended immunization. Yellow fever vaccine is required to enter Ghana.
- Students should refer to the document issued by the U.S. Department of State, which details general health information: http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/tips_1232.html#health
- Students should follow advice acquired during the Online UCEAP Travel Health Certification course through MyEAP and strongly encouraged to follow through about vaccine recommendations with a travel health professional.

The U.S. Department of State includes the following information in the Ghana Country Specific Information page:

Medical facilities are limited, particularly outside Accra, the capital. Travelers should carry a supply of any needed prescription medicines, along with copies of the prescriptions, including the generic name for the drugs, and a supply of preferred over-the-counter medications.

MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is part of the primary health care system. Informal community care for Ghanaians plays an important role in psychiatric management. The Government of Ghana gave approval in 2006 to the Ministry of Health (MOH) to revise 19 outmoded health related laws in order to improve health service delivery in the country. Mental health care in Ghana is based in the south. Some medication is only first generation psychotropic drugs through the Ghanaian Health System. Better, more effective, modern drugs are available on the open market but these are very expensive.

Risk mitigation for students

- Students with recent or ongoing mental health concerns are responsible for documenting in advance of the EAP health clearance, and travel, what her/his detailed plan (e.g. identified therapist in Accra; emergency contact person for communication in case of continued problem, etc.) is for continuing care while away.
- The EAP student health insurance covers outpatient counseling up to 30 visits.
- If students will need care, the U.S. Embassy provides a list of counselors and can help UC Study Center staff to establish contact to provide confidential treatment.
- If a student is seeing a counselor/therapist in the U.S., the student should consult carefully about health and medication management before departure.
- Student should bring adequate supply of prescription medication to last through the stay along with a doctor's prescription and a letter indicating condition. We do not recommend sending prescription medication through the mail as packages can take weeks to arrive at their destination and it may be held up in customs for an indeterminate amount of time.
- Students need to be prepared for the inevitable cultural differences in medical services. Students who need a particular type of medical care should find out in advance whether such care is available. Students should discuss options with their health care provider

ILLCIT DRUGS

Illicit drugs are becoming a concern for the local authorities because of the increasing availability and variety. The unlawful possession, use, or distribution of alcohol by students or employees on University of Ghana premises or as part of any University of Ghana activities is prohibited.

The possession of, distribution, or use of drugs is a crime in Ghana.

The unlawful possession, use, or distribution of alcohol by students or employees on University/College premises or as part of any University/College activities is prohibited. Anyone found in possession of or using such drugs on University property will be severely dealt with and suspended from the University, in addition to facing criminal charges.

Risk Assessment

- Penalties for drug offences, including possession, are severe in Ghana and may carry mandatory prison sentences.
- If a student is found with prohibited narcotic drugs (cannabis-\$6.00 an ounce; easy to purchase and popular to smoke, morphine, heroin, valium, cocaine, etc.), without a prescription, he/she is committing an offense under Ghanaian law.
- When students are in an environment where they perceive an easier way to get away with smoking marijuana in public, for example, they may become lax and irresponsible about their choice to smoke and where to smoke it.

Risk mitigation for students

- Students must decide to act responsibly.
- University of Ghana expects students to comport themselves in a manner consistent with University policy and that they must conduct themselves in a lawful manner at all times.
- Violation of University of Ghana and University of California policies subjects students to disciplinary procedures.
- Violation of country laws exposes the student to criminal charges and/or arrest.

TRAVEL/TRANSPORTATION

ROAD SAFETY

Infrastructure

According to the World Bank, Ghana's transportation system relies heavily on the road network. The paved road network mainly covers the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area. Good road conditions, as defined by Ghana Highway Authority (GHA) and the World Bank, exist within the metropolitan area. Most primary roads are paved and well maintained; however, roads outside the major cities are in poor condition. The road from metropolitan Accra to the central region tourist area of Cape Coast continues to be the site of many accidents. Travel at dark, particularly outside the major cities, is extremely hazardous, due to poor street lighting and the unpredictable behavior of pedestrians, bicyclists, and farm animals such as goats and pigs. The safety standards of the small private buses that transit roads and highways are uncertain. Ghana's transportation system received the following rankings from the US State Department:

Safety of public transportation:	fair
Urban road conditions/maintenance:	fair
Rural road conditions/maintenance:	poor
Availability of roadside assistance:	poor

Risk assessment

- Roads are mainly in a poor condition, particularly in rural areas.
- Road travel can be extremely hazardous due to poor driving practices, poorly maintained vehicles, insufficient street lighting, roaming livestock, pedestrians and cyclists.
- Safety standards on small private buses and taxis are often low and do not meet US standards.
- Travel to tourist and historic areas of the country is popular and generally safe, although incidents of machete robberies occur on rural roads. There are occasional reports of clashes between government forces and bandits; however, foreigners are normally not affected.
- Road traffic accidents may be one of the main threats facing students.

Risk mitigation for students

- Students should avoid traveling by road outside the main towns after dark, when the risk of accidents and robbery is greater.
- Students should check with local staff before venturing off main roads in outlying areas.
- Due to poor driving conditions and the poor mechanical state of many vehicles in Ghana, that vehicular travel after dark outside Accra should be avoided.

TRO-TROS

Risk assessment

- Tro-Tros are the cheapest way to get around Accra.
- Tro-tros are usually made from converted minibuses and are designed to fit as many people, possessions, and occasionally livestock, as possible.
- Tro-tros have no schedules, stopping randomly and without notice and generally leave when very full.
- They have a questionable safety record and frequently breakdown.
- Tro-tro accidents are quite common due to unidentified speed limits, disregard of stop signs and lack of general defensive driving.
- Informal and loosely regulated routes engender fierce competition and reckless driving that injures, and sometimes kills, thousands of passengers, pedestrians and cyclists every year.
- Because profits are so low, operators run tires until the treads are so bare the tire explodes.

Risk mitigation for EAP and students:

- Do not travel by tro-tros, especially when it is dark.

TAXI

Risk assessment

- Criminals sometimes use taxis to rob patrons.
- The operation of streetlights in Ghana at night is inconsistent and dark areas become prime targets for criminals.
- The potential for carjacking exists in Ghana and there have been some reported armed robberies and snatching of taxis from drivers.
- The Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) requires all taxi drivers to wear a sea blue shirt and dark blue trousers as their uniform.
- Also, drivers are required to register their vehicles with the Assembly to get a special serial number consisting of only three digits to be embossed with reflectors on both sides of the front doors to make identification easy even at night. This measure has been implemented to further enhance security for both taxi patrons and owners.

Risk mitigation for students

- Exercise caution when traveling in taxis.
- Students should confirm that the taxi has sufficient gas before hiring it, because drivers will lure taxi occupants to gas stations to be robbed by awaiting criminals.
- Never board a taxi with all male occupants already in or a female passenger and two male passengers as they could be decoys to rob you.

GENDER ISSUES

Risk assessment

- Ghanaian law criminalizes homosexuality.
- Lesbians and gays face widespread discrimination, as well as police harassment and extortion attempts.
- There is a minimum misdemeanor charge for homosexual activity.
- There is a small gay community.
- There is a lot of stigma towards gay men and lesbians living in Ghana. A large portion of Ghanaian society does not accept that such activity exists.
- A gay social life exists, mostly in the form of house parties, and a few queer-friendly clubs in Accra, but there are risks.

Risk mitigation for students

- Further information is available from the Gay and Lesbian Association of Ghana or Behind the Mask (<http://www.mask.org.za/index.php?page=home>)

CRIME (source: U.S. Embassy)

Risk assessment

- Crime is an ongoing concern. Crimes that are most commonly reported in Ghana are home invasions, police roadblocks, and armed/unarmed robberies.
- Street theft is the most common crime reported by western visitors. Street persons asking for handouts may grab jewelry or other items from one's neck or wrist, or distract the victim for a pickpocket. Criminals will sometimes use motorcycles to drive by unsuspecting pedestrians and snatch their bags.
- There also have been some reports of muggings carried out by groups of men.
- Armed robbery (machete) is also a growing trend in Accra. These robberies tend to occur at night in dark areas. The assailants typically use machetes or handguns.
- Home invasions are prevalent throughout Ghana. The criminals are sometimes armed and the police response to the incident varies based on resource availability.
- Police officers will also establish fraudulent road blocks throughout the country in attempts to extort money.
- Students could be a victim of any of the crimes mentioned. The U.S. Embassy in Accra reports that crimes against American citizens have been nonviolent in nature.
- Even though there is visible police presence in Accra, the Ghana police force is poorly trained and equipped and lacks adequate manpower to successfully investigate crime, but is for the most part professional in behavior. Police response is very slow.
- Theft of unattended property is common in Ghana.

Risk mitigation for students

- Students should be vigilant at all times and never venture out alone.
- Use the buddy system; go in groups. Walking alone anywhere, especially in remote areas, is not advised. Should you feel in any way at risk, proceed to a location (e.g. police, shopping center or service station) where help is available.
- Pay close attention to your personal security at all times and monitor the media for information about possible new safety or security risks.
- If confronted by would-be assailants, comply. There have been several incidents where people have resisted trying to hang on to their purse/bag, or it was perceived as resistance and they were seriously injured.
- Exercise caution and monitor developments that might affect safety in Ghana because of the risk of criminal activity.
- Stay in well-lit areas, walk midpoint between curbs and buildings, away from alleys, entries and bushes.
- Carry only necessary credit cards and money; you have no need of your air ticket until the time you make your return flight.
- If you are followed, act suspicious. Keep looking behind you and you may discourage the follower.
- Never hitchhike.
- Be discreet in your public behavior.
- Avoid uncontrolled crowds.
- Look like you know where you are going; do not wander into unknown areas.
- Do not accept lifts from strangers.
- Exercise caution with strangers.
- Ensure that others know of your whereabouts.
- Plan the safest route to your destination and use it, keeping to well lit busy areas.
- Keep valuable property e.g. your passport, laptop, electronics, etc., under lock and key.

- Keep a vigilant eye on your bags and other property.
- Carry your money in several locations on your person, not just in your safety wallet and consider carrying a “fake wallet” that holds a small amount of cash.
- Do not accept drinks from strangers.
- Trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable in any place or situation, leave it.
- Limit purchases or cash advances using your credit cards, as credit card fraud is a serious problem. Do not allow anyone to take your credit card out of your sight.
- Do not carry or flash excessive amounts of money.
- Take extra care protecting cell phones.
- Students are advised to avoid areas known for crime. When in doubt, ask Study Center staff for advice.
- Students are advised to be constantly aware of their surroundings, especially in crowded streets and shopping/market areas.
- Read the U.S. Department of State, Country Specific Information on Ghana at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1124.html#

CREDIT CARD SCAMS

Risk assessment

- Credit card skimming is a concern throughout most of Africa.
- It is especially prevalent in Ghana.

Risk mitigation for students

- Only use credit cards in reputable restaurants or shops.
- Ask to be present during the transaction process. If they refuse, consider not using a credit card.
- Retain and destroy all receipts and carbons.
- Keep accurate records of any transactions.
- Notify your bank’s fraud department immediately if you suspect fraudulent charges.

SECURITY ON CAMPUS

The campus is extremely large and there are numerous points of entry beyond the official, guarded gates. Lighting on certain parts of the campus is substandard.

Primary responsibility for security on campus resides with the University Security Office of the University. The University Security services have the authority and duty to enforce order, protect life and property, make arrests as provided by law, conduct investigations, and exercise powers similar to the police. The administrative office is located at the Main Entrance of the University and runs a 24-hour, seven-days-a-week schedule. Security is staffed by non-commissioned security guards, usually ex-military or ex-police force personnel.

University Security is on duty 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and in constant communication with the main Security centre. All reports of criminal activity made to University Security are investigated and coordinated with appropriate area law enforcement agencies as needed. University Security initiates all criminal prosecutions with respect to offences taking place on the campus of the University of Ghana.

The University security guards patrol the exterior areas of the campus, twenty-four hours a day. In some cases, additional regular tours of the interior of the residence halls to check lounges, corridors and other common residence areas are carried. Guards, assisted by Porters or other resident staff members, may confront residents and visitors suspected of violations of University policy.

Generally, University personnel, without the permission of the student, will not enter resident rooms nor will student’s personal possessions be searched. However, in cases directly relevant to the welfare of individuals or the safety of property or if reasonable cause exists to believe that University policy has been violated, housing and resident staff members are authorized to enter student rooms without permission of the resident(s).

Student activity in violation of campus policy and Ghanaian law may result in both internal and external judicial action being taken. The Dean of Students initiates disciplinary action in accordance with the University Statutes for violators who are students. Cases of incidents involving international students are initially dealt with by a specific committee of inquiry constituted by the Office of the Dean of International Programs.

Packages and bags as well as unannounced vehicles, without a valid parking decal/permit, entering the campus may be subject to search.

All students are required to carry ID cards at all times on the University Campus. Photo ID cards must be obtained from the Photo ID Centre within a reasonable time following initial registration. This card must be validated every semester, and must be kept on the student's person during times that the student is on campus.

Risk mitigation

- Lock doors and windows at all times; including while asleep.
- Do not answer the door to anyone after a certain time at night.
- Ask to change locks if robbed.
- Avoid isolated footpaths and shortcuts.
- Avoid the services of errand boys, who can monitor information and provide it to accomplices.
- Walk in pairs, groups, and in well-lit areas; use the buddy system as much as possible.
- Conspicuous displays of wealth are inappropriate and endanger the safety of all.
- If at any time you are threatened at knife or gun point, do not resist or act in a confrontational manner.

In the classroom:

- 1 Avoid working or studying alone in a building at night.
- 2 Keep your purse and petty cash in a locked cabinet or drawer.
- 3 While in class or in the library keep personal belongings in view.
- 4 Use the Shuttle bus at night. A free shuttle bus links the International Students' Hostel and other parts of the campus every evening from 7 p.m. until 11:00 p.m.
- 5 Report anyone who behaves suspiciously to University Security Guards.

Living on campus:

- 1 Cohabitation is not permitted in the residence halls.
- 2 Do not entertain hawkers.
- 3 Keep doors locked, even if you are away for a few minutes. Remember that most losses occur during the day.
- 4 Keep emergency phone numbers in your phone and in a secure place.
- 5 Use the peepholes in residence doors (if available) before permitting entry to anyone. If the peephole is broken or missing, notify the residence hall director.
- 6 There are un-employed youths who perform personal services for students such as washing clothes etc. We encourage you not to use them.
- 7 If you return to your residence and suspect that it has been illegally entered, do not enter. Call University Security or a Porter immediately.
- 8 If someone you don't know tries to enter a building behind you, or asks to go past the Porter checkpoint with you for any reason, say NO.
- 9 A significant proportion of incidents involving foreign students originate from "friendships" made through cursory contacts in town. Do not give out personal information, i.e., room numbers, home address details, telephone numbers etc. unnecessarily.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

Photography at airports, railway stations, naval bases, air bases, military installations, public water and energy plants, police stations, harbors, mines and bridges is prohibited in Ghana.

Risk Assessment

- Laws are strictly enforced and all restrictions should be observed.
- Students could be fined or jailed.

Risk Mitigation for Students

- Risk is preventable. Awareness of the laws is the key to avoiding trouble.
- Foreigners are more likely to be at risk than locals.
- Students should research the legal system in Ghana to be aware of penalties and other laws, e.g., laws relating to drugs/alcohol, sexuality; severity of punishment for crimes; nature of the legal system; obtaining legal assistance.

Revised: 2/4/2010