Business and Personal Travel Policy During COVID-19

Introduction

1. Singapore has recently launched the Vaccinated Travel Framework (VTF) to facilitate the re-opening of its borders. Under the VTF arrangement, fully vaccinated individuals will be permitted to enter Singapore without the need for quarantine if travelling from countries/region in the General Travel Category[1]. They will continue to be subjected to a pre-departure test (PDT) within 2 days before departure for Singapore but will no longer be required to serve a Stay-Home Notice (SHN) or undergo an unsupervised Antigen Rapid Test (ART) after arriving in Singapore.

2. At the same time, the current COVID-19 global situation continues to present risks and uncertainties for international travellers.

3. This document aims to provide policy guidance for employees on overseas business trips and personal travel in order to safeguard the well-being of the SUTD community as well as ensure business and operational continuity for the University.

4. The policy may be adjusted from time to time based on developments in the COVID-19 situation and travel advisories issued by the Singapore Government.

Official/Business trip

5. In line with the national strategy to reopen the country and restore connectivity, the University will resume overseas official and business trips with immediate effect.

6. Employees proceeding for official and business trips must be fully vaccinated according to the prevailing criteria (Vaccinated Status for Travel to Singapore (ica.gov.sg)) defined by the Singapore Government.

7. Employees are encouraged to take note and comply with the travel advisories issued by the relevant public agencies in Singapore. (See section on Other Information below.)

8. Policies governing official/business trips to countries under the General Travel Category of the VTF are as follows:

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[1] Under the VTF, there are 2 categories of countries: (1) General Travel Category and (2) Restricted Category. Currently, there is no country placed under the Restricted Category where more stringent border measures will apply.

Official /Business Travel	Trips to General Travel Category countries under VTF
1. **Vaccine Status**	Must be fully vaccinated as defined by prevailing Singapore Government critera to proceed for official/business trips.
2. **Approving authority for official/business trip and for attending conferences, training and staff development programmes.** **PIs using their own research grants must seek prior approval to proceed for the overseas trips.**	Head of Department (HoD)/Head of Pillar (HoP)/Head of Cluster (HoC)/Research Centre Director
3. **Consideration for approval**	Meets a business need based on stated purpose of trip and subject to exigencies of service.
4. **Multiple destination travel**	Must **not** include itinerary to countries outside the General Travel Category (even if the destination is part of personal travel). Currently all countries are in the General Travel Category.
5. **Employees sent by University for official/business trips (e.g., signing of MOUs, overseas recruitment trips):**	Mandatory COVID-19 related costs (such as for swab tests and, if applicable, quarantine / SHN-dedicated accommodation) will be borne by the University (including tapping soft funds from industry/research grants, where applicable.)
6. **Employees proceeding for overseas conference /training/ staff development programmes:**	Mandatory COVID-19 related costs will be borne by the employee (self-funding), unless the faculty or research staff can use their own grants for such expenses.
7. **Protocol after return from business/official trips**	- No isolation period or ART test is needed once the SUTD employee clears the prevailing entry requirements at Singapore airport. - Employees must observe prevailing work protocols issued by the Incident Commanders for all employees working on campus. For example: 1. follow Protocol 1 or 2 if tested COVID positive.

	2. if an employee has received a Health Risk Notice, he/she will need to do a self-test daily for the next 5 days. The employee can only come to campus if he/she tested negative for the day of returning to campus.

9. The following procedures will apply when seeking approval for official/business travel to **countries in the General Travel Category of VTF**:

   (1) The application must be submitted to the Head of Department/Head of Pillar /Head of Cluster/ Research Centre Director (hereafter collectively designated HoD) for consideration and approval using the "Trip Request Form" (attached EXCEL file).

   (2) PIs using their own research budget/grant for official/business trips must also seek HoD's approval.

   (3) All other documentary requirements, where applicable such as a budget memo, must be submitted. However, information that has already been provided in the Trip Request Form need not be repeated and can be referenced to as supporting document.

   (4) Declaration of overseas travel via the Travel Declaration System is required.

Personal Travel

10. Employees are to use vacation leave for personal travel overseas. All leave applications will be approved by the appropriate authority (ie HoD/HoP/HoC or reporting manager) as per current practice. Leave applications are also subject to exigencies of service.

11. Employees should take note of the following instructions relating to personal travel overseas:

Personal Travel	General Travel Category (ie currently all countries)
1. Notification of Overseas Travel	Notify HoD/HoP/HoC (or leave approving officer) via the leave application system. (Indicate in the comments section the period of overseas leave.)
2. Declaration of Overseas Travel via the Travel Declaration system	Required to do the travel declaration.
3. Protocol after return from personal travel	▪ No unsupervised ART test required on arrival in Singapore and no isolation period. ▪ Other requirements based on the prevailing work protocols issued by the Incident Commanders for all employees working in campus. (For instance, follow Protocol 1 or 2 if COVID positive; or if an employee

		has received a Health Risk Notice, he/she will need to do a self-test daily for the next 5 days. The employee can only come to campus if tested negative for the day of visit.)
4.	If employee contracted COVID-19 and fell ill during personal travel	HR policy (see Leave policies at SUTD Central) as pertains to sick/hospitalization leave will apply.

12. Employees who are delayed from returning to Singapore for reasons beyond their control such as a lockdown in the country of their visit or travel restrictions imposed by the Singapore government must inform their respective HoD. They must use their annual leave (or be placed on no pay leave if annual leave is insufficient) to cover any required extended period of the stay in the overseas country.

Coverage of Duties and Remote Work

13. If staffing issues arise due to para 12 above, employees should discuss with their HoD on cover arrangements and how they can fulfil their work responsibilities. However, there is a limit to which employees can be allowed to remain overseas, especially for faculty members with teaching duties and research staff with critical project deadlines to meet. Employees should make every effort to return to Singapore as soon as the travel restrictions by the authorities are eased.

14. If remote work is possible, the HoD may approve such arrangement up to a maximum period of 6 months. Unless there are extenuating circumstances or factors beyond the control of employee, extension of remote work arrangements exceeding 6 months would typically not be allowed. Approval for an extension beyond the 6 months must be sought from the relevant HoD as well as the Provost for faculty and research staff, and the CHRO for administrative staff. The application must be submitted 1 month before the expiry of the current remote work arrangement and provide a definite plan and time for return to Singapore.

15. The approved period of remote work arrangements would not count towards the use of an employee's annual leave eligibility.

Violations

16. The University takes a serious view of non-compliance with this policy and employees found breaching the policy may be subject to disciplinary action, including termination of service.

17. Employees will also be personally liable for any charges that may arise for not being able to proceed with a booked trip because of non-compliance with this policy.

<u>Other Information</u>

18. Travel advisories and important updates are issued by the relevant public agencies (see links below) and all employees are strongly encouraged to take note the information in planning for international travels.

   - [Immigration and Checkpoints Authority](#)
   - [Vaccinated Travel Framework (VTF) Overview (ica.gov.sg)](#)
   - [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#)   /   [MFA Travel Information](#)
   - [Ministry of Health](#)

19. Travel declaration is mandatory and must be made for all travel plans (official and personal) and/or upcoming trips.

20. Employees returning must comply strictly with the regulatory measures and obligations that the Singapore Government has introduced for the countries visited and applicable from the date of return. Additionally, returning employees must also comply with safe management measures applicable for international travellers before they are permitted back on campus.

<u>Review</u>

21. The University reserves the right to review and update this policy as deem necessary.