Scholars at Risk

SCHOLAR GUIDE

A Handbook for Making the Most of a Position
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This publication was made possible by those scholars and campuses who have shared their experiences with us.

We thank the Office of the Provost and New York University for hosting Scholars at Risk, and the many member institutions, associations, partners, and individuals who have gone out of their way to help threatened and refugee scholars, especially those who have helped to arrange visits, hosted events, mentored scholars, or who have otherwise provided help or advice.

We thank our sponsors and partners, whose vision and generosity have helped to build Scholars at Risk into a vibrant, international movement for free inquiry, free expression, and human rights. These include the Vivian G. Prins Foundation, for core support for services for threatened and refugee scholars; the Open Society Foundations; the National Endowment for Democracy; the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; the Carnegie Corporation of New York; the Winston Foundation; Stichting Polar Lights; the Vivian G. Prins Fund for Emigrating Scholars at NYU; the Charina Endowment Fund; Fritt Ord Foundation; the AAUP Foundation; the Microsoft Corporation; Newman’s Own Foundation; our anonymous donors; the members of SAR’s Board, Ambassadors Council, and International Advisory Committee; and SAR’s individual members and supporters, all of who help us each day to protect more scholars.

Scholars at Risk depends on the generous financial support of these and other friends inside and outside higher education communities to sustain our work. Gifts of any size are gratefully appreciated, including matching gifts and bequests. To donate, please visit scholarsatrisk.org.

August 2019
ISBN 978-0-9994844-4-9

© Scholars at Risk 2019. All rights reserved.
For use or information, contact Scholars at Risk at scholarsatrisk@nyu.edu.

Cover image: Zelalem K., a scholar of law and human rights from Ethiopia.
# SCHOLAR GUIDE

A Scholars at Risk Handbook for Making the Most of a Position

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-arrival</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing for your visit</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and security concerns</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving an offer letter</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upon obtaining your visa</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing/accommodations</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrival and adjustment</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The first two weeks</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your administrative mentor</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal requirements</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your faculty mentor</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making the most of your visit</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional life</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public talks and activities</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local community support</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security concerns</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and wellness</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan early! Get ready for post-visit</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan ahead</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return, renew, or move on</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning to return home</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renewing the visit</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving to another SAR host</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding your visit</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

This handbook, designed primarily for scholars assisted by the Scholars at Risk Network (SAR), is a collection of practical information and resources based on the prior experiences of network members, assisted scholars, and SAR staff. In preparing this handbook, we recognize that every visit arrangement between a scholar and an institution presents unique questions. Nevertheless, there are certain common situations and practices that lend themselves to advance cataloging and discussion, which we do here. We believe that addressing these early and in an organized fashion should facilitate a positive experience for the visiting scholar and institution alike.

In the pages that follow you will find information about SAR, what to expect as a scholar, and a guide for each phase of the academic visit process. Resources include examples of SAR informational materials; checklists and evaluation forms for scholars; and other relevant information. The information here represents overarching advice and is not tailored to any particular country, as there will be differences in every country. Still, the general discussion of the scholar visit process, various challenges that may arise, best practices for dealing with situations, and model resources should be useful for scholars in many locations. SAR staff are available to clarify information in the handbook or to assist with any questions not addressed inside.

Finally, as this handbook is based on the prior experiences of participating institutions and assisted scholars, SAR invites scholars to share any information which might be useful to include in future editions.

Why a handbook?

In most cases, academic visits by at-risk scholars are not very different from the academic visits of other international visitors, especially for shorter periods. Scholars who receive placement support from the network are referred to as “SAR scholar(s)” in the following text. At the same time, the fact that SAR scholars have experienced threats at home—or may fear threats in the future—may raise a number of additional considerations. Recognizing these considerations when planning a visit can help to ensure a more positive experience for both the scholar and hosting institution. Such considerations may include:

- Financial challenges are common but not insurmountable. Scholars who have endured harassment (including loss of income) or made hasty departures, frequently do not have much savings, if any. If they do, the savings are usually not available in a new country, making it difficult for scholars to pay in advance for, hotels, etc. and receive payment or reimbursement at a later date;

- Sensitivity to the trauma of forced relocation and past experiences is essential. Most scholars are able to resume their work relatively easily. Some invariably will benefit from meeting with counseling professionals. Scholars may have security concerns, either for themselves upon a return to their home country or for family or colleagues left behind;

- Flight, exile, and procedures around visa restrictions, asylum processes, and work authorization create uncertainties, especially when family are present; and

- Some scholars will face a painful, personal decision concerning their long-term plans. Should they seek asylum or live with the uncertainty of exile, holding on to hopes that change is coming at home? Perhaps, safe return will be possible soon, if not this year, then next? Family issues play a large part in these questions—even scholars who are single generally leave extended family behind. Married scholars are frequently forced to leave spouses and children behind, at least for an initial period while they re-establish themselves.

These issues may not arise in each visit, but they are important to keep in mind. This handbook offers suggestions for addressing these unique considerations of at-risk scholars, along with suggestions for addressing the normal challenges faced by any international visitor.
**Why are scholars threatened?**

SAR has worked with scholars worldwide who have faced a wide variety of academic freedom and human rights violations. Based on these real examples, we see three general reasons why scholars are threatened.

Scholars are threatened because the content of their work, research, or teaching is perceived as threatening by authorities or other groups. Academia by nature requires the development of ideas, exchange of information, and expression of new opinions. Where such ideas, information, and opinions are considered threatening, individual scholars are particularly vulnerable.

Scholars are also threatened because of their status. Because of their education, frequent travel and professional standing, scholars are often prominent members of their community. Where a scholar is a member of a political, ethnic, or religious minority, female, or a member of LGBTQ+ communities, especially in areas where opportunities for advanced education are limited, an attack on an individual scholar may be a highly visible and efficient means for intimidating and silencing an entire community of people.

Scholars are threatened because of their exercise of fundamental human rights belonging to all persons, especially freedom of expression. Academic freedom involves the right of scholars to carry out research and to disseminate and publish the results thereof, to express freely their opinion about the institution or system in which they work, to be free from institutional censorship, and to participate in professional or representative academic bodies. When authorities restrict research, travel, and other means of collaboration, scholars may be unable to advance their work. As a result, scholars may call for greater openness and transparency in society generally, an action that can strengthen an authority’s resolve to restrict scholarship and target individual scholars for persecution.

In addition, threats against scholars may be compounded during situations of internal armed conflict and civil or international wars, where masses of persons may be threatened with indiscriminate violence and where the breakdown of law and public order may facilitate increased levels of targeted attacks against scholars and other specific classes of persons.

**Who threatens scholars?**

There is a tendency to assume that attacks on scholars are committed by a repressive state power—a dictator or junta. Sometimes that perception is correct. But the defense of academic freedom requires a more studied model. In some places the repressive agent is only one branch or wing of a government, like the military, the secret police, a political party, or subnational authority. At other times it may be a non-government agent, including militants and paramilitaries. (Indeed, in some places scholars have come under attack from both the left, in the form of left-wing armed guerilla movements, and the right, in the form of armed paramilitary death squads.) These also include religious authorities, criminal organizations, or even otherwise-legal commercial enterprises.

**What type of threats?**

While any given scholar may suffer one or more types of incidents, frequently scholars experience incidents which escalate in intensity, leaving a scholar vulnerable to more serious, more violent attacks. For example, a scholar may initially suffer some form of harassment, including warnings and surveillance. This may escalate to denial of accesses or permissions, confiscation of documents and computers, professional or personal slander or defamation, or even physical or sexual intimidation. The scholar’s colleagues may themselves be warned to avoid the scholar or may do so of their own volition to avoid a similar fate. This leaves the scholar increasingly vulnerable to more serious pressures, including arbitrary dismissal, exile, arrest on false charges, detention with or without trial, imprisonment, torture, disappearance, and death.

Also worth noting are the types of wider attacks suffered by higher education communities as a whole. These include: ideological pressure and censorship (including imposition of approved national ideology, book burning, and ideological revisionism), closing of schools and universities, suppression of strikes or protests, restrictions on travel and exchange of information, and discriminatory restrictions on academic
resources, including discrimination against women, indigenous peoples, and cultural or ethnic minorities.

**Why a network?**

SAR is an international network of higher education institutions and associations. The network's breadth makes it easier to identify scholars most in need of assistance and provides maximum flexibility in finding support for them, including temporary hosting arrangements. Furthermore, the network facilitates the exchange of ideas and best practices among member institutions, making hosting more effective and less costly than isolated, ad hoc efforts. This maximizes the resources available for threatened scholars and therefore increases the number of scholars who can be helped.

Beyond direct assistance for individual scholars, the network strengthens solidarity within the global higher education community in support of academic freedom and related values. Attacks on these values are a global problem, too numerous and widespread for any single institution or individual to address alone.

A collective response is needed. SAR provides that response.
PRE-ARRIVAL

Preparing for your visit

Before you start your visit, SAR staff and the host institution will be in contact with you about important details, including the terms of the visit (duration, responsibilities, salary or stipend, health care, and more) and arrangements for immigration, travel, and housing. To help in this process, scholars should gather as many necessary documents and other information as possible in advance and should attempt to respond to requests for information promptly, clearly, and completely. This will make the process faster and will make the transition to the new country and host institution smoother and easier. If you have questions about any part of the process, do not be shy! Ask SAR staff and contacts at the host institution about any of the arrangements or any other questions about your visit.

Health and security concerns

If you have any specific medical or security concerns, discuss these with SAR staff or your host institution as early as possible. Special arrangements may need to be made, including for example, securing housing that is appropriate for your needs, or making arrangements to ensure confidentiality of visit details, if there is a concern about risk to you, any family, or colleagues at home.

Receiving an offer letter

The host institution will prepare a formal offer letter containing the proposed terms of the visit. In most cases, this letter is sent to the scholar before their arrival on campus by SAR staff. (If you are preparing for a visit and have not received an offer letter, contact SAR staff to ask for the details of the visit in writing.) Upon receiving an offer letter, you should:

- Read the letter carefully. It should contain all the important information about your visit, including location and description of the visit, start and end dates, your responsibilities during the visit (including teaching, research, speaking, or other activities), salary or stipend, travel or research allowances (if any), health care and other benefits, information about working conditions, and the names and contact information for people at the institution who will be assisting you during your visit;

- If any aspect of the letter is unclear or you do not understand what it means, contact SAR staff for help in reviewing the letter and clarifying the terms of the visit. If already in touch, you may also communicate with your institution contact to request clarification;

- If you understand and are satisfied with the offer, sign the letter and make a copy for yourself, your host, your visa appointment, and your travel. Bring this letter to your visa appointment and keep a copy when you travel;

- Before applying for a visa, discuss your application with SAR staff and your host institution. Depending on the country you will be visiting, the host institution may send you immigration documents to complete and bring to your visa appointment. Depending on diplomatic relations between the country you will be visiting and your home country, you may need to apply for a visa in a third country. This may mean additional travel, expense, and delays; and

- The visa process can be lengthy. Keep your host institution informed at each step of the process so that they will be ready for your arrival as soon as possible after the visa is approved, and so they can help if your visa is delayed or if problems arise with your application. If you do have problems, you are not alone! Contact SAR staff for advice and assistance.
Immigration

All scholars must gain legal entry to the host country before arrival. Every country has its own immigration and work authorization policies, and it is the responsibility of the visitor and sponsoring institution to ensure that proper requirements are met. Most SAR scholars apply for international exchange visas; others may seek refugee status or asylum, or may already have an existing status that will allow them to work abroad. The particular circumstances of each scholar vary. Whenever possible, scholars preparing for a visit should discuss any concerns or preferences about visa options or other statuses with SAR staff and the host institution before arrangements for the visit are finalized.

Scholars and sponsoring institutions should consult with SAR staff, their institution’s International Office, and/or the immigration department of their own country’s government to learn about visiting researcher visas and work permits. Points to keep in mind include:

**Visa/work permit processing delays:** The processes for requesting, reviewing, and issuing visas change regularly, which may result in delays in processing. In recent years, many visa applications have been subjected to heightened scrutiny. Applicants affected by these heightened procedures are told of the need for additional screening only at the time they submit their applications. It is important whenever possible to apply for a visa well in advance of your intended travel date.

**Visa vs. entry:** A visa is not a guarantee of entry to a country. A visa allows a visitor to travel to the port of entry (generally an international airport) and request permission from the national border control authority to enter the country. SAR will work with you and your host institution to make sure that you have all documents required to enter the host country, including an invitation letter and valid passport. Some scholars may have, or be seeking, refugee or asylum status. Scholars with questions about these processes should consult the host country’s immigration department or SAR staff.

Upon obtaining your visa

Once you have received your visa, you should begin preparing for travel to your host institution. Keep the institution informed as you make final preparations, and contact SAR staff or the institution with any questions. We encourage you to take the following steps:

- Let your host institution know as soon as you receive your visa;
- Discuss with your host institution your preferred travel and arrival dates, keeping in mind the start and end dates stated in the offer letter. When practical, take into account the calendar of the host institution, such as the start of classes or vacation periods, and try to time your arrival accordingly;
- If your offer letter states that the host institution is paying for your travel, it may be possible for them to make travel arrangements and buy tickets for you. This will save you from having to pay for the tickets in advance. If the host institution is unable to buy tickets on your behalf, you may have to make your own travel arrangements and submit receipts for reimbursement after your arrival. If you are unable to pay for travel arrangements, please contact SAR staff;
- Regardless of who is paying for your travel, save any travel documents, boarding passes, and receipts. Immigration officials, your host institution, or SAR staff may request copies of these after you arrive;
- Ask your host institution for advice about items to bring with you. These include personal items, such as clothing suitable to the climate and seasons at the host location. This also includes professional items, including any books, articles, research papers, or course syllabi which you may need for your visit and which may be unavailable at the host location;

Further steps on next page →
• As your travel date nears, discuss specific details of your arrival with your host. Share with them your flight information and a copy of your travel documents (visa and passport photo pages). Will an institutional representative meet you at the airport? Where will you meet and how will you be able to identify this individual? If you will not meet at the airport, what instructions do you need to get to the campus? Where will you be staying when you first arrive and how will you get there and inside?

• Even if your host plans to meet you at the airport, ask about transportation options from the airport to the campus in case of delay or miscommunication. Options may include buses, shuttle services, trains, or taxis. If your host has agreed to meet you at the airport, use these services only in an emergency, so that your host is not left looking for you;

• Ask your host for a list of names, emails, and telephone numbers to contact in an emergency, if you miss a flight, or are delayed while traveling. Keep this list with you throughout your travel together with your offer letter and copies of your travel documents;

• Immigration officers will often ask you where you will be staying during your visit. This can be a hotel, temporarily, or a residence, where you will be residing during your visit. Ask your host for this information prior to departure to share with immigration officers;

• If possible, exchange currency before departing for your host country. If this is not practical, you may wish to exchange a small amount of currency at the airport when you arrive for use in an emergency or for small purchases. Fees and exchange rates at airports are generally unfavorable, so best only to exchange a small amount and change more later in a regular bank or currency exchange. ATMs are also widely available in many airports and cities. If you have a bank card from your home country, you may check with the provider to see if it will work in your host country, and what, if any, fees are associated with it; and

• If you own a cell phone, check with your service provider to find out if it will work in your host country. If it will work, give the number to your host institution. Remember, however, that calls to and from cell phones or land lines while traveling can be very expensive. You may want to purchase an international calling card for calls to your home country before you leave. You may also be able to buy international or local calling cards, local SIM cards, or inexpensive cell phones when you arrive, although these are generally more expensive in the airport than in regular shops. These may be useful should you need to call your host from the airport or to call home upon arrival.

Travel

If the terms of the visit include the host institution paying for the scholar’s travel expenses, the scholar should discuss with the host whether the institution can purchase tickets directly on behalf of the scholar. This will save the scholar the difficulty of paying for expensive airline tickets out of limited personal funds. If this is not possible, the scholar may need to purchase their own ticket. In any case, the scholar should keep all receipts, boarding passes, and travel documentation. A scholar seeking reimbursement of expenses should speak with the administrative contact and provide copies of travel documents as soon as possible after arrival.

Housing/accommodations

Where you live can greatly influence whether or not you have a good experience in a new setting. There are many different types of housing, and a scholar should discuss their needs and preferences with the host institution. Types of housing might include dormitories, college-owned apartments, apartment or house shares, and privately rented apartments or houses off-campus. Location should be considered carefully, including factors like the distance to campus, schools (for scholars arriving with children), shopping, and other important services. Most scholars will not have a personal car, which is a major expense, so access to public transportation is also very important. If private housing is preferred, scholars should become familiar with renters’ rights and responsibilities, and other rental issues, including acceptable rent costs and locations, in order to consider all the options and make informed decisions. Scholars may want to
arrange for someone to accompany them when going to meet with prospective landlords or rental agents. If you choose to pursue private housing options, it is strongly advised that you and your host arrange for temporary housing options—a hotel or short-term sublet—for your arrival, allowing you to seek longer-term options once you have arrived. Scholars may also be able to enlist assistance from a campus housing office.
ARRIVAL AND ADJUSTMENT

Arriving at your host institution is an exciting time. It offers an opportunity to make new connections and create community. The arrival period may also be a time of vulnerability and adjustment to a different culture and language, new academic setting and practices, and new colleagues and friends. This section includes information for your first few weeks at your host institution, a time for adjusting to your new environment, and preparing for upcoming academic responsibilities.

The first two weeks

When you discuss your travel arrangements with the host institution, try to allow at least two weeks between your arrival and the first day of classes or other responsibilities. During these first two weeks you should be focused on getting settled in the community, learning how to access campus services, and preparing for your academic experience. Mentors at the host campus and SAR staff are available to help. Many institutions also provide orientation sessions, tours, and contacts with pertinent departments and services. Ask if these are available at your host institution.

During your first two weeks you will settle into your accommodations, open a bank account, get a campus ID card, set up an institutional e-mail account, and complete any necessary paperwork related to legal, immigration, tax, or employment status.

During this time, remember to thank your hosts for what they have done to make your visit possible. Ask which individuals helped organize and prepare for your visit, and try to thank each faculty member and staff person individually.

Your administrative mentor

The administrative mentor within your host school, department, or center is an important source of information. Upon your arrival, set up a meeting with your administrative mentor to discuss any details of your visit, including travel reimbursements; orientation sessions; opening a bank account; obtaining contact information for key persons in human resources (personnel or hiring) and benefits offices; library and internet access; setting up an e-mail account and phone number; and accessing the space where you will work. You can also discuss arrangements made to accommodate any specific health or security concerns you raised earlier or which may have arisen since. Your administrative mentor can also provide you with basic information about your institution, including a campus or community map; public transportation schedules; an events calendar; a contact list of faculty in your school, department, or center; as well as faculty training resources and information on institutional policies, especially those pertaining to teaching and grading (if you will be teaching during your visit). Should you have any questions about the institution or the day-to-day details of your visit, your administrative mentor is the first person you should approach.

Legal requirements

Ask your host department’s administrator about legal requirements upon arrival. (In the United States, if you are holding a J-1 visa, you are required to check in within 10 days of arrival on campus or your legal status could be compromised.) Generally, scholars must provide copies of a visa and work authorization documents. Any paperwork related to payroll, health insurance, and other benefits should also be taken care of as soon as possible. Similar regulations apply in most host countries.
Many institutions have an international office that will help you with these issues. Among their areas of expertise are:

**Obtaining identification:** Most international scholars will need to obtain an official identification card and/or number upon arrival in the host country. This may include an institutional identification card, a government-issued identification, or both.

**Travel signatures:** If travel outside the host country is necessary, you may need to obtain permission from the host institution or government. This will allow you to re-enter the host country after your travel. Scholars in the United States on a J-1 visa must obtain a signature on the DS2019 form (the basic document used in the administration of the Exchange Visitor Program) from a designated officer in the International Office. If you are unaware if you should travel on your current legal status in the host country, please consult your host institution or SAR staff.

**Opening a bank account:** Banks generally require proof from the host institution of a visitor’s legal immigration status. The International Office can provide this proof.

**Getting a driver’s license:** If you plan to drive a car during your visit, you must obtain a valid driver’s license from the appropriate government office. The host institution cannot provide a license for you, but a designated officer in the International Office can help by providing verification of legal immigration status, employment, or residence.

**Occasional outside work:** Depending on legal status in the host country, scholars may need official permission to work for income outside of the host institution.

**Support for spouses and children:** The International Office can connect spouses and partners to local groups for social support and networking. Such groups may offer advice about part-time work, childcare, schooling, religious observances, or other family issues.

**Language courses:** The International Office may provide information on host country language courses for the scholar and any accompanying family. These may be held off-campus, but frequently, international offices organize or sponsor on-campus language courses for international visitors and their families.

**Health insurance:** While some sponsoring institutions provide health insurance, others may offer assistance finding local providers through the International Office. Some visas require health insurance coverage, so please consult with your International Office about whether this applies to you.

**Your faculty mentor**

Your faculty mentor is the person who will help you understand academic standards and expectations at your host institution. Upon your arrival, meet with your faculty mentor. Discuss the teaching, research, or writing that you will be doing while visiting the institution. If you will be teaching, request sample syllabi to reference when developing syllabi for the courses you will be teaching. Ask your faculty mentor whether there are any specific policies with regards to teaching or grading that you should review. Your faculty mentor can also share with you any classroom norms and best practices. If you are conducting research, supervising theses, or writing, you might ask your faculty mentor for any advice on research sources, standards, reputable publishing houses or journals, etc.
MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR VISIT

Higher education institutions are large and busy places with interesting people and activities. Do not get lost in the shuffle! Make an effort to meet new people and show you are interested in what they do. Attend and participate in campus and community events. Nurture academic and social contacts, especially earlier in your visit. These contacts can help you in your adjustment, and you can share with them your unique experiences. This section includes advice on making the most of your visit, personally and professionally.

Professional life

The primary goal for your visit is to help you continue to do your professional work in safety. It also includes helping you to plan for continuing your professional work after your visit has ended. The most important factor in this is meeting people working in your field or related fields who might help connect you with future opportunities. It is simple: the more people that know what you are looking for, the better chance you will have to find it. Following are several places to meet people who may be able to help you in your professional life:

Your host school, department, or center: Your host school, department, or center is the most likely place to find supportive people interested in you and your work. Meet as many people in this area as possible. Participate in discussions, workshops, seminars, and other activities organized by your host. Let your faculty colleagues know that you are interested in giving guest lectures, participating in panel discussions, or sharing your expertise and experience at informal events. Sign up for email lists about announcements of upcoming events and opportunities. Ask faculty colleagues about any individuals or groups who share your professional interests, any online or other resources, or any fellowships or positions that may be coming up.

Outside your host school, department, or center: Departmental or disciplinary boundaries vary from place to place, so explore other schools, departments, and centers at your host institution to look for colleagues in related fields and activities related to your work. Frequently, SAR scholars find that their discipline or specific expertise is housed within a different department in the host institution. (For example, economic development issues might be housed within an economics department in one institution and within an anthropology department in another.) Faculty and students in these other areas may be interested in your work, and may be organizing talks, workshops, or other events of interest to you.

Regional and topical studies programs and centers—including, for example, Middle East studies, Latin American studies, human rights programs, development studies programs, and gender studies centers—tend to be interdisciplinary and open to scholars seeking new contacts and opportunities.

Research, teaching, and publication: Developing new research, teaching skills, and publications in your host country (especially in the local language, if relevant), can strengthen your professional profile and lead to new opportunities, including invitations to publish future papers, to speak at conferences, to guest lecture or teach (full- or part-time), and to apply for future fellowships and positions. Discuss your interest in research and publication opportunities with your faculty mentor and other colleagues. Ask for information about the leading journals and resources in your field, as well as about publishing houses or presses that tend to publish work in your field. Make an appointment to meet with a research librarian or other subject specialist to learn more about current research sources, tools, and resources, especially rare collections or online collections which may be available at your host institution or nearby. If you plan to publish during or soon after your visit, share your work with faculty colleagues and ask for their help in reviewing and editing. If you are teaching during your visit, ask about services for enhancing or developing new teaching skills, especially incorporating new teaching technologies and online resources into your classroom. If you are not scheduled to teach during your visit but are interested in teaching in the future, inquire about opportunities to guest lecture or to organize an informal seminar so that you can begin to develop these
"People at institutions need to know what you want to do with your life. Clear communication with your host is key."
-SAR scholar from the Ivory Coast, currently a professor in the United States

skills and demonstrate your comfort with teaching in your new environment.

**Professional associations and meetings:** Professional associations and academic societies are often excellent resources for meeting colleagues interested in your area of expertise. Most large associations and societies are international in membership and interests. They often include smaller sections or "interest groups" that focus on specific topics. Most maintain email lists of websites with announcements of new research, events, fellowships, and job postings. (Some require payment of a membership fee for access to these services, although scholars may usually request a waiver of the fee based on financial hardship. If you would like to request a waiver, SAR staff may be able to help.) Most also hold an annual meeting or other, smaller meetings, which may provide opportunities to make contacts and present your work. Discuss the main professional associations or societies in your field with your faculty mentor and other colleagues, including whether joining or attending the annual or smaller meetings would be a good way to enrich your current visit or to seek future opportunities.

**Public talks and activities**

Speaking publicly about your experiences and perspective can be an important part of a visit. Public awareness is the first step to building international support and pressure for change at home. Some scholars may want to share their experiences through on-campus or local events, traveling to events to give talks, or meeting with media and public officials. SAR scholars are invited to participate in the network-wide Vivian G. Prins/SAR Speaker Series and can learn more about getting involved in public activities by connecting with their main point of contact at SAR.

Scholars who are traveling outside the host country for a speaking engagement are encouraged to seek out travel insurance for their trip. This needs to be purchased independently and is not generally provided by the host institution.

**Local community support**

Participating in on-campus organizations, community civic organizations, local diaspora groups composed of members from your home country, and other social groups may help ease culture shock and help you make the most of your visit. When looking to connect with such groups, cultural differences and expectations may be an added challenge, but be persistent. Make the effort and show that you are interested in their activities, and this will ease your entry. You can ask your administrative mentor, International Office, or others at the host institution about such groups or any special events and activities, especially those focusing on global or cross-cultural exchange which may be more receptive to visitors.

Take advantage of opportunities throughout the campus and local community to help ease your adjustment to the new environment.

**Security concerns**

Most SAR scholars do not have any specific security concerns once outside of their home country. But as a visitor to a new country, it is always a good idea to ask about local security issues and practices. Your administrative mentor, the International Office, or the campus Security Office may be able to provide you with standard security guidelines. These generally include common sense practices such as avoiding walking alone late at night on dark streets, keeping your computer and bank passwords secure, and locking
your doors when you leave your residence. If you have questions about general security at your host institution, you should ask your administrative mentor.

Some SAR scholars have heightened security concerns stemming from the risks they experienced in their home country. Some worry about retaliation against family or colleagues left behind, others worry about surveillance (usually of emails), or others worry about intimidation or harassment even while they are away from home.

If you have heightened security concerns, discuss these with SAR staff, your administrative mentor, and/or faculty mentor. Together with you they can develop a security plan that addresses any issues, such as reviewing office, housing, or teaching arrangements; ensuring confidentiality of visit details, such as removing a scholar’s name from public websites or conference programs; or setting up a secure email account. Having a suitable security plan in place will help you feel better and make it easier for you and your host to make the most of your visit. Things to consider when developing a security plan include:

- Whether you would like your name to appear on your host institution’s website, departmental directories, ID card, course listings, event posters, etc. Discuss your preferences with your administrative mentor and ask for help from SAR staff if there is uncertainty as to how the institution might address your preferences;

- Your faculty colleagues and administrative mentor may wish to introduce you to colleagues in other departments, experts in your field, or others. Share with your administrative and faculty mentors any preferences you have for these introductions. Should your colleagues check with you before making any introductions? Would you prefer that all introductions be made via email or in person? As you know, introductions and referrals to friends and professional colleagues at your host institution and at other institutions can be vitally important in helping find future academic opportunities, but do not be shy about stating your preferences for such introductions;

- Ask your administrative mentor for a list, in writing, of names and contact details of key contacts at your institution for administrative, security, and professional concerns. Ask who you can approach should any of these primary contacts become unreachable or unavailable;

- Create a list of family and friends in the area, and possibly in your home country, who the host department can contact should you become unreachable or unavailable. Share this list with your host and with SAR staff;

- Keep trusted colleagues and family informed of your whereabouts, especially any trips, extended absences, or changes in routine. If you travel during a SAR post, please alert SAR staff so we are aware;

- Report to your primary contact at the host institution any unusual phone calls or incidents. In most cases, such incidents will have harmless explanations but better to over-report any concerns rather than under-report;

- Schedule a time to meet with your administrative mentor on a regular basis to share any updates regarding confidentiality or security concerns; and

- Develop a close relationship with SAR staff, including reporting any confidentiality or security concerns or other issues regarding the visit. Having two or more avenues for communication and reporting of concerns may increase the likelihood of finding out about any issues earlier, which generally allows for an easier and more satisfactory response.

**Health and wellness**

It is not uncommon for persons living under stressful conditions to develop a variety of health issues, ranging from anxiety to difficulty sleeping to fluctuations in weight. Many of these issues will resolve themselves over time, once a person is removed from the stressful conditions they were experiencing. More serious or prolonged health issues require timely intervention.
Discuss any serious health issues with contacts at your host institution or SAR staff as early as possible so that they can help to devise a suitable plan for addressing them.

Medical coverage: Depending on the country you are visiting, medical care may be provided through a public agency for free to all persons, private companies for a fee, public or private insurance programs, or some combination of these. It is important that you understand how medical care is provided in the country you are visiting. If the terms of your visit include a public or private medical benefits plan, it is important that you understand the terms of the plan, including what services are included, what services are not included, and at what cost to you. If you have questions, ask your administrative mentor to give you the contact information for a benefits specialist who can explain your particular plan. Most plans cover immediate treatment for any emergency condition and scheduled treatment for illnesses or chronic ailments. Most also include some preventative measures, such as regular wellness checkups. If you have family or other dependents joining you on your visit, ask if they are also covered by your benefits plan.

Acclimation and “culture shock”: It can be very overwhelming and disorienting to be in a new and unfamiliar environment, even if being in that new environment has been a long-held desire. It is stressful to be in a new situation, and there are mild emotional and physical reactions to adjustment that are routine and will dissipate over time. Strong negative emotional and physical reactions to a new environment are often referred to as “culture shock.” Some emotional and physical reactions to culture shock include feelings of loneliness and alienation, feeling constantly fatigued, wanting to remain withdrawn and being uncertain about how to reach out to others, finding it difficult to hold a normal conversation, and feeling frustrated and angry.

There is great relief in seeking help. If you think that perhaps you are experiencing culture shock, ask for help. Alumni SAR scholars have asked their host institution for help dealing with culture shock; others have asked SAR staff. Talk with whomever you feel most comfortable. They can help you overcome culture shock before it interferes with your visit.

Stress/emotional trauma treatment: The experience of being forced into exile; separated from family, friends, and colleagues; and struggling to restart a career in a new country and environment can be emotionally and physically stressful. Some SAR scholars can find this stress overwhelming. Some SAR scholars have also experienced serious threats and persecution before their visit, or have witnessed the persecution of others, resulting in physical, mental, and emotional trauma. Stress and trauma can interfere with your health and well-being, and undermine your visit.

If you are experiencing heightened stress or have experienced past trauma, please tell SAR staff or an appropriate colleague at your host institution. They can discuss with you appropriate treatment options and identify resources available to you at your host institution or elsewhere. For example, host institutions may offer counselling services or referrals to appropriate medical professionals with experience working with survivors. Many countries have trauma or torture treatment centers that offer specialized medical, psychological, psychiatric, and social services for survivors of abuse. These centers may also be able to assist survivors with medical, legal, educational, job training, or other needs.
PLAN AHEAD! GET READY FOR POST-VISIT

Temporary visits can have a very positive impact, but they do end. Plan ahead for what comes after your visit: this will help minimize uncertainties and increase your chances of finding new opportunities. This section provides advice on thinking about what happens after your visit.

Plan ahead

To make the post-visit transition as smooth as possible, it is important to address issues related to the end of your visit early—at least six months before the end of a visit. At this point in the visit, you should share with SAR staff your thoughts and plans for the time following your temporary position. Having this discussion long before your position ends provides SAR staff with time to work with you on your next steps. In your conversations with staff, you will want to discuss the following:

Security: Before making any decisions about your next steps, assess the situation in your home country. Have conditions improved since you left? Have the threats eased? Have you recovered from past stresses or traumas enough to return? What do your family and colleagues back home report? Discuss with them whether returning might be a safe option.

Scholarship: Consider what options you might have to continue your academic work within your host country, home country, and elsewhere. Consider possible fellowship or job openings for which you might qualify, and begin thinking about faculty contacts who might be able to serve as references or who might be able to help you in your search for another academic post. While it may seem too early for this, it is important that you begin contemplating your long-term academic options early. Does your expertise fill a niche in your host country, or is your academic background best suited to another country? When assessing this, consider your language skills, academic contacts, opportunities for collaboration on articles or research, ability to sustain yourself financially, and of course, your ability to pursue your work in safety.

Family: Some SAR scholars travel to a host country with their family, while most SAR scholars have family living back home. Before determining your next steps, talk with your family about your options. If you have family with you, consider their language needs and social opportunities. If you have children, consider schooling needs.

Legal status: For most SAR scholars, legal status in the host country is tied to an academic position. If you and your family cannot return home safely, you should consider whether your legal status can be transferred to another sponsoring institution or changed to a different visa status that is not employer-dependent (depending on the nature of your work and situation), or to another longer-term legal status (such as permanent residency or political asylum).

Moving: Consider whether you and your family are prepared to move to another country—or even another town—in order to take up an academic position.

Adjusting to a new place takes time. If you do not want to move, what are your job and legal status options where you are? If you would be open to moving, where would you consider going? What are the visa requirements for the countries where you might consider living? What are the job opportunities in those countries? Discuss possibilities early and allow plenty of time to plan accordingly. Be proactive during this stage of planning.
Return, renew, or move on

Some SAR scholars may be able to return to their home country immediately after their visit. For these scholars, planning ahead can make returning home easier, and can help guard against potential future problems. Other SAR scholars are unlikely to be able to return immediately because of ongoing threats in their home country. While returning home remains their objective, these scholars may need to seek another opportunity to extend their stay abroad. In some cases it might be possible to extend your visit at your current host institution. In most cases, this means finding a new opportunity with a new host institution, possibly in a new country.

Planning to return home

After speaking with contacts at home and in your host country, if you decide that returning home is the best option for you, there are several issues that you may wish to address prior to your return:

Make good use of your time: Even though you will be leaving, it is important to make good use of your last few months in your host country. Meet new people and create contacts in your academic field. These contacts will likely prove useful once you have left for your home country. On an academic level, these contacts may serve as future research collaborators, academic references and peer reviewers, and they may invite you to future conferences or to events relevant to your field. In short, these contacts may be helpful as you continue to build your career in your academic field. On a personal level, contacts in your host country may be helpful should you experience any unexpected threat when you return home, as they may be willing to work with SAR and others to help you and your family find a safe place to live and work.

Secure a job at home: Before you return home, you should explore your employment options within your field in your home country. Some SAR scholars find ways to keep their academic jobs while abroad, either by going on sabbatical or taking unpaid leave. If you have been able to do this, then returning to your home institution may be the simplest route. Of course, you may also wish to explore other job opportunities. Regardless, you should begin exploring opportunities and secure a job before returning home, if possible. Some SAR scholars have found that it is helpful to ask colleagues in the host country to write letters explaining the scholar's research and role in the host country. These letters may also be useful if your home institution asks for details on your work while on leave.

Consider security: As you prepare for a return home, consider what security needs you may have upon your arrival. Depending on your situation, you may wish to set up a secure email account, obtain a secure cell phone, or explore secure transportation options. SAR staff will be happy to offer advice regarding available security resources.

Share contact information: When SAR scholars return home, SAR staff generally asks for emergency contact information for the scholar and for close relatives or colleagues. When completing this form, keep in mind that SAR staff will not contact your relatives or colleagues unless the staff is unable to get in touch with you. In addition to letting SAR staff know how to reach you upon your return, you should communicate your plans to key contacts at academic institutions, your host country's government (if applicable), and human rights organizations. In most cases, the more trusted people who know of your plan to return, the more people who will be able to act should you need help once in your home country. It is also recommended that you work with SAR staff to set up time for a check in on several dates following your return home. These check ins (email or phone/Skype) serve as an opportunity for you to share developments with staff after your return, and if your security situation is deteriorating and you are unable to make these calls, this will serve as a signal to SAR staff that you may be in need of help.
Back-up plans: While most SAR scholars who choose to return home are able to do so without any trouble, it is wise to prepare an alternative or back-up plan in case you find that you need to leave home quickly again. Before you leave your host country, SAR recommends that you share with SAR staff an updated CV, copies of your travel documents, your address in your home country, and any other information that the office may need in order to help should you require assistance after your return home. Upon your return home, make sure your travel documents remain current, and keep in touch with your contacts outside of your home country. If you believe you are at great risk of being targeted upon your return, speak with SAR staff about emergency back-up plans, such as arranging for a visa out of your home country even before you return.

As you plan for your return, keep SAR staff informed of your plans, as staff will work with you on addressing the above concerns.

Renewing your visit

In most cases, host institutions are unable to renew or extend a SAR scholar's visit, and the scholar's position will end as scheduled.

If you're asked to stay: In some cases, however, SAR scholars have been asked to stay on at the institution for a longer period of time. If your institution has discussed this possibility with you, and if you are interested in extending your position, be sure to express your clear interest as early as possible, providing the institution with as much time as necessary to make arrangements for your extension. Your institution will likely need to issue a new invitation letter to you, apply for an extension of your visa, explore any teaching needs they may have (and explore any teaching interests you may have), and reserve an office for you, among other tasks. In addition to assisting your institution with these steps, you may also want to identify or extend housing assignments, enroll your children in school for the extension period (if applicable), apply for extended leave from your home country institution (if applicable), and possibly other tasks. As you work with your host to arrange an extension, remember that even if you and your colleagues want to extend your visit, in the end it may not be financially possible. Keep exploring other alternatives and make back-up plans in case the extension does not happen.

Meet with your faculty mentor: Whether you will extend your visit or not, SAR recommends that you meet with your faculty mentor to discuss your academic contributions and any areas for improvement. Your mentor may be able to provide helpful suggestions that will guide you in your teaching, research, or writing. If your institution conducts teaching or research evaluations, ask your mentor how they would evaluate your work. If your institution conducts student evaluations, ask your mentor how you can get copies to review. As you continue to pursue your scholarship and teaching in a new country, such guidance and feedback can be critical when applying for future job openings, submitting papers for publication, and presenting at conferences. Remember also to thank your mentor and other colleagues involved in your visit, as you may benefit from their help again in the future.

Moving to another SAR host

Scholars who cannot yet return home may be able to identify a second visit to a SAR host campus. Although a follow-up position is not guaranteed, many SAR scholars have been successful in finding suitable opportunities after the end of their first visit. SAR is most successful in finding follow-up positions when the scholar is actively involved in the process. As such, if you believe you cannot return home safely, and if your host institution cannot extend your position (which is normal), let SAR staff know that you would like to work to identify a second position at another SAR host campus. It takes time to identify a follow-up position, so beginning this process as early as possible during your first visit is very important. Be sure to share with SAR staff details regarding your travel capabilities, teaching abilities, and other details that SAR staff should take into consideration when seeking a new position for you. Share your most recent
CV, articles you have written during your first visit, information on any courses you taught during your first visit, an updated list of academic references, and updated information on the situation in your home country, including updated risk factors. It is also helpful to provide SAR staff with a list of new academic contacts—perhaps made through networking during your first visit—that might be helpful in identifying another position for you. Depending on your relationship with these contacts, SAR staff will work with you to reach out to them and explore any possibilities for the following year. Concurrently, SAR staff will reach out to universities in the network to explore possible positions.

**Independent applications:** You should also be seeking job openings in your host country (or in any other country in which you might be able to live and work in safety) for which you might qualify. Apply for as many jobs as possible, and share a list of these jobs with SAR staff and with your close academic colleagues at your host institution. If you would like help with various aspects of the application process—letters of recommendation, proofreading teaching philosophy statements, etc.—contact SAR staff.

**Resources:** Take advantage of employment assistance services or career resources at your current host institution, both on- and off-campus. A campus Career Center may provide assistance with researching job opportunities and applying for positions, including honing skills such as standard resume formatting and writing letters of inquiry. Writing classes or labs may provide editorial assistance, publication resources, and language training/translation services.

**Make connections:** Talk to colleagues, contacts, and friends and share with them your efforts to identify a second position. This will help them know how to help you if they can. These talks need not be formal. Request letters of recommendation, introductions, or referrals from colleagues at your host institution. Ask for advice regarding signing up for email lists or websites that share announcements of open positions in your field.

Approach the head of your department to ask whether there might be research or adjunct positions available at the host institution during the next academic year. (Note: while adjunct positions usually will not be sufficient to live on, the salary could be combined with a non-academic job or a salary from a neighboring institution.)

Once you have secured a follow-up position, you will likely need to work with your current and future host institutions to transfer your visa or apply for a new one, make the necessary travel and housing arrangements, switch your children’s schools (if applicable), among other things. Every transition period is different. SAR staff will be happy to help you and your host institution with the various details.
CONCLUDING YOUR VISIT

The end of a visit can be an exciting time as you look to the future. It can also be a time of great uncertainty, particularly if returning to your home country is not an option or if you have not secured a position for the coming year.

As you make plans to move on from the host institution, remember to thank your colleagues and friends who made your visit possible. Stay in touch with your colleagues as you take on a new position or return to your home country; the relationship will not end. Your colleagues at your host institution may remain valuable in helping you to make publishing contacts, identifying possible teaching opportunities, and writing additional letters of reference for you in the future.

As you prepare for your departure, ask close colleagues within your department or field for letters of recommendation, as these may be helpful to have on file as you continue your academic career in your home country or at another institution. Approach your faculty mentor to request an evaluation of your academic work; this can be an informal conversation or, if you taught a course, it may be a written report to which students may have contributed. Regardless, it will be helpful for you to know your strengths and weaknesses as you move on. If you are applying for academic jobs outside of your home country, you may find that you are requested to submit these evaluations as part of your application packet.

Contact SAR staff to discuss your experience and share your thoughts about your visit. At the end of each visit, SAR staff asks that scholars complete an evaluation form, assessing the visit.

The end-of-year report provides you with the opportunity to share information on your academic activities undertaken during your visit (lectures given, articles published, classes taught, conferences attended); SAR-related activities undertaken (media interviews, speaking events, workshops); details about your plans following the visit, including follow-up contact information; and any advice for SAR staff when arranging future opportunities for scholars. This information will help SAR staff to stay updated about your next steps and to make more successful matches between host institutions and scholars in the future.

As you begin to move on from your host institution, we hope you will already be in touch with SAR staff regarding your job search. If you need extra support, or are feeling nervous, contact the staff for help. SAR staff serves as a clearinghouse of information and, as such, is best positioned to provide up-to-date advice and help as you determine your next steps.
RESOURCES

The following resources may be helpful for scholars to review when preparing for, undertaking, and completing a host position. All can be found online at scholarsatrisk.org.

Scholar Checklist
Scholar Mid-Year Report
Scholar End-of-Year Report
Scholar Resources

PUBLICATIONS

These SAR publications and others can be found online at scholarsatrisk.org.

Scholar Guide
How to Host
Vivian G. Prins/SAR Speaker Series
Promoting Higher Education Values Guide
Getting Involved
Free to Think 2018
Scholars at Risk (SAR) is an international network of institutions and individuals whose mission it is to protect scholars, promote academic freedom, and defend everyone’s right to think, question, and share ideas freely and safely.

By offering temporary academic positions to professors, lecturers, researchers, and other intellectuals who suffer dangerous conditions in their home country, SAR members help scholars to continue their important work. In return, scholars contribute to their host campuses through teaching, research, lectures, and other activities. The benefits are clear: scholars are free to live and work without fear. SAR members gain talented academics and inspiring, courageous educators. The world benefits from greater awareness of current threats to academic freedom and of the vital role of higher education in free societies.

SAR also advises scholars and hosts, campaigns for scholars who are imprisoned or silenced in their home countries, monitors attacks on higher education communities worldwide, and provides leadership in deploying new tools and strategies for promoting academic freedom and improving respect for university values everywhere.

Institutions and individuals who share in these values are invited to contact SAR about opportunities to get involved including hosting threatened scholars, advocating for imprisoned academics, monitoring attacks on higher education, and participating in workshops, trainings, conferences, and working groups, among other activities.

SAR depends on the generous financial support of friends inside and outside higher education communities to sustain our work. Gifts of any size are gratefully appreciated, including gifts in honor or memory of others, matching gifts, and legacies.

To learn more, get involved, or make a gift to help sustain SAR’s work, visit scholarsatrisk.org.