

## WHITE PAPER

# Challenges of operating internationally

Across the learning landscape, international borders are becoming increasingly porous, as a result universities are under increasing pressure to mitigate the risks to students and staff travelling overseas in any college-related capacity.

Whether safeguarding first year students on an art history trip to Paris, the admissions team on a recruitment roadshow to China or postgraduates on post-war reconstruction research in Africa, universities need to take every reasonable precaution to fulfil their duty of care.

In a climate of rising political tensions, regulatory complexity and escalating insurance premiums, keeping students and staff safe while they are overseas can place an overwhelming strain on already stretched resources. Here we explore the challenges and consider what impact the latest mobile technologies are making to minimise the risks while enabling universities to compete more effectively in the global education arena.

## Learning without limits

Throughout the world, higher education institutions are embracing mobility. More students and staff than ever are engaging in international study and research activities and travelling further afield to learn or represent their organisation on the global stage.

In 2011 there were 4.3 million internationally mobile students in the global higher education sector and the figure is rising. In the past two decades U.S. student participation in overseas programs has more than tripled. In 2014 some 283,000 U.S. students studied abroad, an increase of 3.4% over the previous year.



Emerging trends include:

**MORE DYNAMIC  
LEARNING**

Traditional exchange models built around passive attendance at seminars in an overseas lecture theatre are being superseded by more flexible varied learning programmes

**DIFFERENT  
DESTINATIONS**

Well-travelled exchange routes are giving way to less familiar destinations, with a rise in US students visiting China, sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Japan

**BROADER  
SUBJECT SCOPE**

The ever-growing range of disciplines with an international learning element is expanding the breadth of subjects that universities need to cater for.

Students have high expectations and with fierce competition to attract the best applicants, the race is on for universities to boost their credentials by offering a richer international learning experience. But in tandem with this they need to manage their reputations meticulously to ensure that all opportunities for international learning are underpinned with responsible stewardship.

## The challenges of Going Global

While on-campus security for international students has been documented in previous CriticalArc papers, ensuring that individuals have access to all the support and protection they might need on outbound overseas excursions presents a more complex set of challenges.

How, for example, can universities provide effective support to ensure:

- ▣ Safety for large groups of students while travelling on field trips?
- ▣ Peace of mind for lone individuals on overseas work placements?
- ▣ Visual coordination between international research teams in the field?
- ▣ Security for ambassadors representing the college abroad?
- ▣ Fast, effective mass notifications in the event of a major travel disruption?
- ▣ Legal compliance and insurance risk reduction for international assignments?

How easy would it be to maintain safety and minimise disruption to staff or students in transit in the event of an international terror incident, extreme weather event, natural disaster or major travel disruption like the 2010 Icelandic ash cloud? Would you be able to take control quickly, identify all individuals likely to be affected and issue prompt travel updates to minimise uncertainty and confusion?

University Security and Workplace Health and Safety resources are already under immense pressure. Added to this, people can be – or at least feel – more at risk when not on home territory and less sure of how to seek help when they need it.

Scenarios where individuals may be more vulnerable include:

- ┆ Places where they don't speak the local language, cannot describe their location or where cultural barriers could be a deterrent to raising an alarm
- ┆ Politically tense regions or war zones with extreme risk
- ┆ Work placement in sectors more prone to health and safety hazards
- ┆ Women travelling alone or using public transport late at night
- ┆ Those with a health condition that may require fast medical assistance.

## Your international security checklist

To address these issues, your global safety considerations are likely to address questions such as:

- ┆ Can you deliver the same level of safety you have on campus to individuals travelling overseas?
- ┆ Can your safety policies be extended beyond campus and national boundaries?
- ┆ Do you have detailed protocols in place that comply with government guidelines?
- ┆ Are your practices helping to minimise insurance liabilities while maximising protection?
- ┆ Can you ensure that students know how to stay safe in places where attitudes and capacities to deal with medical conditions, disabilities, gender and mental health may impact their risk levels?
- ┆ Do you have the capacity to cope with the growing administrative complexity?

## Next generation student safety

The number one priority for any college or university is to fulfil its duty of care to students, staff and other users. The better prepared an institution to support those in its care, the better equipped it is to maintain their trust and to build on its credibility and reputation. Universities therefore need to maintain robust safety and security policies that provide a consistent level of care, whether an individual is on campus or travelling overseas. But this depends on having a capacity to offer suitable response at any approved study or research location worldwide, no matter how risky or remote.

Embedding risk management, emergency procedures and crisis communications capabilities into routine safety and security operations can significantly reduce vulnerability, whether students are studying on campus or further afield. Thanks to recent advances in mobile communications technology, it is becoming easier to minimise the administrative and financial burden while maximising the level of safety and support for students, wherever they are.

This is facilitated via three key technology advances:

- ┆ Uptake of smartphones among students and staff to near ubiquitous levels
- ┆ Accessibility, reliability and speed of cloud-based mobile computing solutions
- ┆ High availability of communications channels that can connect people worldwide.

## Global protection, local response

By 2020 six billion smartphones will be in use globally<sup>1</sup>. Widely used by their health and safety teams, staff and students, universities can now harness the latest cloud-based distributed command and control (DCC) solutions that leverage smartphones as an integral part of their security operations.

Designed to multiply and extend investment in fixed security and human resources, DCC solutions can dramatically improve incident response without further capital investment. On campus, by combining a comprehensive situational awareness system for response teams with a smartphone app for students and staff, a DCC solution extends the reach of first responders with transformative effect. With this framework in place, the same capability can be extended to provide emergency support to students and staff in defined geographic zones anywhere in the world, wherever an appropriate level of response can be provided – externally or internally.



## The SafeZone solution

SafeZone™ from CriticalArc is a leading example of how the mobile DCC approach is transforming student security in the higher education sector. As a cloud-based managed software service it uses location intelligence to give Security and H&S teams a complete situational view by automatically sharing relevant data about live incidents in real time.

A free smartphone app puts a help point or panic alarm in the pocket of every student and staff member, enabling them to tap the app to easily raise an alert or request for help. Everyone who downloads the app registers their basic personal details, ensuring that when they activate an alert the security team automatically receives the relevant information about their location, identity and any special medical or access needs. This also overcomes language issues and other potential barriers to incident reporting.



<sup>1</sup> Ericsson Mobility Report - <http://www.ericsson.com/mobility-report>

Using a subscription model, cloud services offer numerous benefits without the ties and costs of traditional licensed software or owned-infrastructure. The model assumes the vendor takes all responsibility for managing, operating and supporting the computing environment as well as securing the confidentiality and availability of any user data. This means universities need no additional dedicated in-house IT infrastructure or resources, enabling rapid implementation within days. Support, maintenance, upgrades and updates are included and can ensure ongoing compliance with regulatory requirements.

## Passport to safer student travel

Implementing a SafeZone DCC solution enables a university to extend the same level of protection available to its students on campus to registered app users at any designated SafeZone location in the world. Security coordinators can set up a geofenced SafeZone region in seconds, which becomes immediately applicable to all of their travelling SafeZone users globally.

### Key features

SafeZone has a straightforward approach, with multiple features that make it much easier for any university to maintain a safer 24/7 global learning and research culture as part of its Health, Safety and Security strategy.

- ┆ Set up SafeZone regions where users can easily activate alerts for emergency, help and first aid assistance or Check-In to share their location if working alone
- ┆ Map SafeZone regions that are temporary or permanent, any size, any shape, anywhere on the planet
- ┆ Define the response team jurisdiction in line with risk, regulatory and insurance requirements
- ┆ Integrate campus security policies with local third party service providers in the host country
- ┆ Configure alarms to automatically default to local responders or emergency services as appropriate
- ┆ Set up location-specific safety information and emergency procedures that can be recalled with a single click, and is relevant to the user's current location
- ┆ Tailor response personnel and protocols to each region
- ┆ Establish a live alert/response communications channel for individuals or groups
- ┆ Maximise resilience with multi-channel communications Wi-Fi, phone and satellite networks.

### Benefits include:

By providing instant coverage to enhance protection without additional investment in staff or fixed infrastructure, SafeZone delivers numerous benefits to university teams and students alike:

- ┆ Real-time, geo-located single-button alerts that eliminate language and cultural barriers, make it easy for students to request help
- ┆ Capacity for targeted mass-communication to multiple global audiences with updates and instructions
- ┆ Reduced administration, improved efficiency and lower insurance premiums
- ┆ Having SafeZone is considered a significant competitive advantage by those students and families who consider safety to be a high priority in their choice of education provider

┆ Comprehensive data capture for full reporting, compliance and Continuous Service Improvement

┆ Demonstrable commitment to duty of care, building higher levels of trust, credibility and reputation.

## University of York Goes Global: SafeZone in action



The University of York collaborates with academic institutions worldwide through partnerships, networks and research. It offers its 16,000 students – 40% from 84 overseas nations – and staff a wide range of opportunities to benefit from an international experience, from study exchanges and placements to summer schools and business travel for seminars etc.

As one of the UK's most internationally engaged universities, York has taken a progressive approach to uphold its duty of care to its students and staff, wherever their studies take them. Denis Fowler, Director of Health, Safety and Security at the University of York explains.

**“ SafeZone also gives us an easy channel to stay in constant contact with travellers – either one-to-one or via mass messaging – to update them on new risks, changes to travel plans or what to do if an emergency or unexpected event occurs.”**

- DENIS FOWLER, DIRECTOR OF HEALTH, SAFETY AND SECURITY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF YORK

*“Internationalisation exchange is a significant area of growth for the university, with greater mobilisation than ever before, including business travel to high-risk areas. Our operations now extend to virtually every world nation, with only two countries with business travel restrictions in place. Over the years we have developed robust health and safety policies detailing clear steps and precautions to support our departments with each international travel request. After checking the authenticity of the overseas host organisation, each travel itinerary is thoroughly risk assessed. Along with guidance from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), we work closely with a specialist intelligence agency, Red24, who advise on the security risk measures and contingencies required for every trip, for example, whether armed escorts are recommended in certain circumstances.*

*Whatever the scenario, we take every practical measure to maximise personal safety in line with the most up-to-date knowledge of the security risk levels. However, until recently, the administration to meet the regulatory requirements and satisfy our insurers that all appropriate safety measures were being implemented had been becoming increasingly labour-intensive. But since introducing CriticalArc's SafeZone solution in January 2015 to enhance campus safety, we have been able to add a new layer of security to students and staff representing the University overseas, while greatly reducing the administrative load.*

*We are using SafeZone to extend the same level of safety and security support available on campus to our students and staff worldwide. We can easily set up geographically defined temporary safezones for an individual traveller or group aligned to their travel itinerary. It takes a matter of minutes to map the area, configure the relevant links and put in place the default settings. For example, we can put in place pre-defined check-in times and ensure that any emergency call alert is automatically routed to the local emergency services. In the event*

that a user activates an emergency alert, the SafeZone command system detects that they aren't on our York campus and automatically re-routes the alert to the local emergency services along with the user's location data and basic personal information.

SafeZone also gives us an easy channel to stay in constant contact with travellers – either one-to-one or via mass messaging – to update them on new risks, changes to travel plans or what to do if an emergency or unexpected event occurs. Using our conventional methods and paper-based systems, it could take around three weeks to gain full travel clearance but assisted by SafeZone we can turn around travel requests and give fully risk-assessed clearance within 18 hours from start to completion – which is an enormous efficiency saving.

By transforming our ability to safeguard students and staff when they are far from home, SafeZone is helping the university and our affiliates to maintain our duty of care to students and staff, enhance our international reputation and support our global ambitions whilst maintaining high quality traveller experience.”

### SafeZone scenarios

SafeZone is benefiting University of York students and staff on visits to virtually every corner of the world.

- When the York team got a call at 8pm with a request for an academic expert to travel to Afghanistan at 9.30am the next morning it was all systems go. Using SafeZone, the traveller's routes around Kabul were plotted, geofenced and combined with the necessary checks and protocols via the SafeZone app to satisfy our insurance requirements, the appropriate safety measures were in place for the trip. Official clearance to travel was given ten minutes before the airport check-in desk closed. By the time the individual had boarded the plane, the traveller's detailed itinerary had been confirmed and delivered via the SafeZone app to his smartphone before it had to be switched to flight mode.
- During the June 2015 shootings on Sousse resort, Tunisia, the health and safety team at York kept in touch with an exchange student staying nearby via the SafeZone app, providing timely reassurance, advice and updates to his travel schedule, for example, telling him not to go straight to the airport until the risk of a secondary attack had subsided.
- After breaking her phone while on an assignment in Iraq, a female traveller called on a Saturday night worried that she'd be without the SafeZone protection she was used to back home. However, the York-based team gave her full reassurance and re-installed the app on her new phone to reinstate the same level of protection as before, giving her added confidence for the rest of her trip.



Image: University of York/John Houllihan



## About CriticalArc

A global technology innovator, CriticalArc designs and delivers the distributed command and control solution, SafeZone™, which is revolutionising the way organisations manage security operations. Deployed in hours, SafeZone combines complete situational awareness with the mobile control needed for an efficient and coordinated response to incidents from every-day processes and events through to full-scale emergencies. Headquartered near Sydney, Australia, CriticalArc has offices and operations in the USA, UK and Middle East providing an international delivery capability and reach.

To discover how SafeZone could safeguard your students and staff, please contact:

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