Stephen F. Austin State University

Faculty Study Abroad Handbook

Policies and Procedures
# Table of Contents

## Program Development

1.1. Assessing Interest
1.2. Site Selection
1.3. Role of the Office of International Programs
1.4. Role of Faculty Leader
1.5. Academic Issues
1.6. Role and Responsibilities of Student Participants
1.7. Admissions Process and Screening
1.8. Budgeting
1.9. Executing Contracts

## Program Organization & Administration

2.1. Application Packets
2.2. Registration of Students
2.3. Financial Aid
2.4. Insurance for Students and Faculty
2.5. Orientations
2.6. Student Discipline Abroad
2.7. Responsible Use of Alcohol
2.8. Risk Management
2.9. Community Building

## Program Conclusion

3.1. Evaluations
3.2. Preparing for the Return
PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

1.1. Assessing Interest

Before selecting a program site and starting work on program development, it is important to assess the amount of interest among the student population. There are clear patterns of student preference, with destinations in Western Europe by far the most popular. Promoting a program in a geographic or academic area without an existing core of interest is difficult. Through aggressive marketing, it is possible to develop student interest. Please keep in mind that a determined effort and significant preparation time are required.

Some methods of assessing interest include the following:

- Gather evidence from the appropriate departments on the numbers of students enrolling in classes in the subject area or majoring in the subject.
- Determine whether similar programs have been offered at Stephen F. Austin State University (SFA) or elsewhere. Contact the directors of such programs to determine the enrollment history and any problems encountered.
- Survey students to determine interest.

1.2. Site Selection

The most common reasons for choosing a program site involve academic interest and personal contacts. A contact at an institution, however, is not reason enough to launch a study abroad program. Consider the following questions:

- Is there a valid reason for taking a group of students to a particular site?
- Will the environment contribute to the program's course offerings? In other words, does the location contribute to the learning experience in ways that could not be duplicated by the students who stayed at home?
- Will the site compete with any existing SFA programs?
- Does the city offer enough sites to occupy and enrich students' free time? Ideally, the city should provide convenient access to a wide range of sites.
- What is the cost of living? Sometimes staying in large cities is much more expensive for students than staying in small-medium size places. Also, some countries are extremely expensive compared to the U.S. and excessive costs will deter students from participating.
- Will the city host a major event, such as the World Cup Soccer final or the Olympics? This would probably increase the cost of the program due to difficulties in securing housing and transportation and would certainly make it more difficult for students to delve into the local culture.
- Are Americans welcome in the city/country? The city need not roll out the red carpet, but if the locals harbor a significant grievance that manifests itself when dealing with Americans, students will be unhappy and will not be able to move beyond the hostility to learn objectively about the host culture. Check Travel Alerts issued by the U.S. government about short-term conditions that pose risks to travelers: http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa/pa_1766.html.
- Is the region stable enough to insure the safety of the students? If a politically or
otherwise volatile region is chosen for the site, extra attention must be paid to safety concerns. Check the Travel Warnings issued by the U.S government that describe long-term, protracted conditions that make a country dangerous or unstable: http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html.

1.3. Role of the Office of International Programs

One of the functions of the Office of International Programs (OIP) is overseeing all proposals for faculty-led, short-term study abroad programs offered through SFA. OIP welcomes any faculty member with international contacts, experience, or interest to work with our office to develop a program. OIP will facilitate most of the program matters, including logistics and budget. OIP will provide the following services:

- Supply all required forms for the establishment of the program, including program applications
- Assist in the creation and production of the program brochure
- Provide faculty leaders with 100 brochures and 3 posters
- Collect application forms and fees
- Collect student passport copies and ID photos
- Keep faculty leaders updated about student applications and payment status
- Provide scholarship support to eligible study abroad students
- Prepare financial aid budgets for students, as needed
- Prepare and process faculty leader travel requests
- Prepare a payment schedule for students to ensure that all program fees have been collected before students depart. If program fees are the only sources of income, the payment schedule should facilitate OIP’s ability to make timely deposits and payments to vendors/suppliers.
- Make program-related payments to international service providers (hostels, tour companies, etc.)
- Manage the program budget and determine the final cost of the program
- Develop written cancellation refund policies for the following: (1) student cancellation, (2) program cancellation, and (3) cancellation of certain program elements (e.g., excursions or classes). Refund policies should address issues of illness, financial hardship, academic ineligibility, and host country instability.
- Develop written policies related to deposits, defaults, and damages. Applications must include a statement that students will be prevented from registering or receiving official transcripts for non-payment of institutional debts, including for damages to any room overseas.
- Register the group with the American embassy.
- Provide the faculty leader, before departure, with the following: copies of all passports, flight itineraries, student emergency numbers, student medical treatment permission form, student health information sheet, health insurance cards, emergency numbers abroad, cell phones
- Conduct post-program evaluations and provide report to faculty leader(s)
1.4. Role of the Faculty Leader

SFA professors who wish to lead a study abroad program for SFA students must be familiar with SFA procedures and policies (http://www.sfasu.edu/controller/travel/) in regards to foreign travel/study.

In the year prior to the proposed study abroad program, faculty leaders should submit to the OIP a Planning Proposal due on May 1st and a Final Proposal due on September 1st. The Planning Proposal is not meant to be a comprehensive document but rather an outline of the program that you will present in more detail (budget, detailed itinerary, etc.) in the Final Proposal. Faculty leaders of new and existing faculty-led programs must submit both of these proposals.

Templates to be used for both of the proposals are available on the OIP website.

Please keep in mind that OIP will estimate the number and dollar amount of study abroad scholarships based on information from the Planning Proposals received by May 1st. OIP may not have scholarship funds available for programs whose Planning or Final proposals are submitted after the due dates.

Faculty salaries are paid by departmental teaching allocation. Travel cost of the instructor is prorated over the pool of student participants. Students will pay SFA tuition, fees, and their share of the programmatic and travel expenses.

The following is a brief overview of the application process.

1. Faculty complete the Planning Proposal (including obtaining the signatures of their Chair and Dean) and submit to the OIP for review. The Planning Proposal is due on May 1st.
2. OIP will review the Planning Proposal, make necessary recommendations and sign.
3. OIP will assist faculty with the Final Proposal, as needed. Faculty complete the Final Proposal (including obtaining the signatures of their Chair and Dean) and submit to the OIP for review. The Final Proposal is due on September 1st.
4. OIP will review the Final Proposal, make necessary recommendations and sign.
5. OIP will forward the Final Proposal to the Provost for final on-campus approval.
6. Upon completion, OIP will submit the course/s electronically to the THECB for state approval.
7. Faculty leaders submit to OIP the Pre-departure /Faculty Form by February 1ST
8. Faculty leaders submit to OIP the Pre-departure /Safety and Contingency Plans Form by March 1ST
Special permission of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs is necessary for any program that does not meet the proposal deadline. Summer study abroad programs will be cancelled no later than **March 1** if under-enrolled. Any program scheduled for a summer session that has sufficient enrollment (10 students) in March but falls below 10 students prior to departure will typically be allowed to operate.

Faculty leaders must attend a mandatory orientation session conducted by OIP before going abroad. This rule also applies to former faculty leaders because liability and institutional policies may have changed since their last overseas program. The orientation will typically be held in March.

**A. MANDATORY COMMUNICATED INFORMATION**

Faculty leaders are responsible for communicating to students certain basic information about the process of going overseas. At a minimum, faculty leaders should inform students of the following:

1. **Getting a Passport**
   
   Entry into most foreign countries is impossible without a valid and current passport. Information on acquiring a U.S. passport can be found at: [http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html](http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html). It is the student’s responsibility to obtain and pay for the passport. Since it takes from 4 to 12 weeks for a passport to arrive, students should be encouraged to initiate the process as soon as possible because other documents, such as a visa or rail pass, cannot be secured without a passport in hand. Thus failure to possess a passport in a timely fashion could prevent a student from participating in a study abroad program entirely. This point needs to be emphasized from the beginning during the recruitment process. Even if a program does not make, the exercise is not wasted because passports are generally valid for ten years.

2. **Getting a Visa**

   A visa is an official authorization (stamp) affixed in a passport that allows visitors to enter a country for a specified time period and for an explicit purpose (student, tourist, business, work). Visas are not always mandatory and are seldom a requirement for most West European countries. Information on visa requirements for specific countries can be found at: [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html).

   Depending on the country, a photograph(s) and processing fee may be part of the application as well. If visiting several countries that require a visa, start early because it may take up to four weeks to secure each stamp. It should be noted that almost all countries demand a visa for visitors wanting to work or study for a period longer than three months. Thus be careful about “over-staying” a study abroad period even in nations that have no visa provisions for initial entry. In addition, a visa clearly indicates the purpose for which admission into a country was granted; students should not risk trying to work on a student visa.

   Students who are not U.S. citizens may be required to follow different processes to obtain a visa. The faculty leader should also be aware that non-U.S. citizens may be required to gather special documentation which allows them to depart and re-enter the United States. Faculty leaders should verify the citizenship of each participant well in advance of the departure date to allow for extra processing time that may be required for non-U.S. visa applicants.

   Faculty leaders should do the following regarding visa processes required for their study abroad program:
Verify visa requirements, remittance addresses, and the cost of the visa application.
- Check restrictions such as the duration of time visitors may remain in the country and the number of entries they are permitted.
- Confirm processing times, which are unique to each country and always subject to change.
- Remind students of visa requirements (securing a passport, completing application forms, submitting the application fee, making appointments for personal interviews, picking up the visa, etc).
- Inform students who are non-U.S. citizens of any additional requirements.
- Provide website links to foreign embassies and consulates located in the US.

3. **Vaccinations**
   Disease and sanitary conditions may pose a risk to travelers in certain countries. Check with the Center for Disease Control to receive information on mandatory and recommended vaccinations: [http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list.aspx](http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list.aspx). If a prerequisite for entrance into a particular country, vaccinations must be recorded on an international certificate of vaccination available through passport agencies and some public health offices. The certificate must be presented with one’s passport. Consult a physician about the scheduling and timing of inoculations. We recommend that students visit a travel health professional and review the country-specific information on the CDC website.

**B. PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL**
Aside from administrative concerns, a study abroad program must be carefully planned and implemented to prevent potential legal risks involving the safety and security of participants. The preparation and execution of a study abroad program should seek to address all *foreseeable* risks. The legal standard governing the behavior of a faculty member is to act as would a “reasonable person” under the circumstances. Prior to departure, all known hazards should be analyzed and plans formulated on how to deal with them. It is also necessary that students are fully alerted about any potential risk and instructed on appropriate ways of responding. While overseas, all reasonable steps must be taken to avert foreseeable perils and students should be notified about possible threats to safety.

Promotional materials must be carefully crafted. Specific promises (e.g., a “fun time”) should be avoided. Commitments should not be expressed unless they can be delivered in a concrete and ascertainable manner. Moreover, certain warnings should be contained either in the advertising or application: (1) a disclaimer cautioning that changes in the program could occur and that reasonable substitutions will be made to the best ability of the faculty leader; (2) no refunds are made for activities missed by group members; and (3) damage caused while overseas is the responsibility of the person causing the damage.

**C. INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES**
Study abroad programs offered under the authority of SFA must abide by institutional policies:

- Students must sign a waiver acknowledging the assumption of risk and a program cancellation policy.
- Students must be notified that they are subject to the laws of the country visited.
- SFA course registration for academic credit must be arranged prior to departure, including advisement by the appropriate advisor.
- A pre-departure meeting must be furnished to students. In addition, OIP will furnish three orientations per year and a student must attend one of the sessions.
Students are bound by the SFA Student Code of Conduct even while participating in a study abroad program.

Failure to comply with any of these policies jeopardizes the program.

Faculty leaders, in addition to academic responsibilities, are responsible for:

- Publicizing and recruiting for the program.
- Conducting a comprehensive and mandatory pre-departure meeting for student participants as well as an on-site orientation upon arrival.
- Communicating with potential applicants regarding program cost, itinerary, travel and accommodation arrangements, assignments, grading policies, program evaluation and student assessment, and final reports.
- Informing students of their role during the program and of the expectations regarding academics and appropriate behavior.
- Reviewing country-specific safety and health issues, including necessary immunizations. Please remember that only a travel clinic can consider a student's unique situation/medical history and CDC recommendations on vaccines/medications.
- Providing information to participants' parents (where appropriate), including the program brochure and country-specific information from the U.S. Department of State (see http://travel.state.gov/travel). An information packet for parents should include the following:
  - An outline of the program highlighting academic and behavioral expectations.
  - A detailed itinerary of the program for the entire period, indicating contact information for hotels or other accommodations.
  - Emergency contact information for the faculty leader and SFA contacts.
  - A copy of the Terms and Conditions Form.
  - A request that parents impress upon their children to act responsibly throughout the entire period of the trip.
- Staying in regular contact with program applicants/participants prior to the start of the program and maintaining daily contact with program participants while abroad;
- Advising students of changes in previously agreed upon travel, accommodations, or other course-related arrangements;
- Providing participants and OIP before departure with a detailed program itinerary that includes emergency contact addresses and telephone numbers.
- Maintaining contact with OIP while abroad.
- Administering required evaluation and assessment instruments provided by OIP.
- Contacting OIP as soon as possible of any emergency related to, or injury to, a program participant or third party who might be considered to be SFA responsibility. All reports will be followed by a detailed written account from the faculty leader submitted to OIP for delivery to the General Counsel for legal assessment.
- Complying with governmental regulations regarding travel, study, and research in the host country. For example, if approval is required for a site visit, it is the faculty leader's responsibility to obtain the approval and include any costs in the program budget.

Faculty leaders are responsible for leading the students from their arrival at the airport in Texas until their return to the Texas airport. Students may extend their stays overseas but these arrangements have to be made in advance of departure with OIP. At least one faculty leader is expected to meet students at the airport and accompany them during the plane flight overseas. If a return flight is
direct, faculty leaders—at a minimum—must accompany students to the overseas airport and remain with them through booking. If the return flight contains a stop-over, at least one faculty leader must accompany the students during the entire flight to Texas.

**D. DRIVING OVERSEAS**

Typically, short-term study abroad programs do not require faculty leaders to drive students while abroad. If driving will occur, SFA students should never be allowed to operate a vehicle as part of the program. Where feasible, OIP staff will arrange for a contract with a transportation company that will provide a professional driver to operate vehicles at all times. In most cases, it is recommended that mass public transportation should be used for group travel. Travelers should learn to distinguish between official taxis and so-called "gypsy" cabs in which travelers in some locations abroad have been robbed. Information on identifying official taxis can be obtained from the local U.S. embassy.

In the event that advance arrangements are not possible and group transportation needs to be arranged after arrival in the country, care should be taken to verify that the driver has a valid license, that the vehicle appears to be well maintained, and that there is insurance covering the vehicle. Request to see the driver’s license and a certificate or statement as evidence of insurance coverage.

**1.5. Academic Issues**

Faculty leaders must be especially vigilant in the area of academic integrity. At a minimum, the following academic rules apply:

1. Courses taught abroad should have the same number of contact hours as on-campus courses. If a program’s duration is less than a regular academic semester, students will have to attend courses more often than if on campus. However, the calculation of “contact hours” can include site visits and other cultural activities not typically elements of on-campus courses. Accommodating both the need for cultural immersion and the required number of class contact hours takes creative scheduling. It is good practice to make excursions a required part of coursework to ensure that students will take full advantage of those experiences. It is not uncommon for faculty leaders to schedule longer class times during the week in order to accommodate a weekend excursion. Deadlines and expectations for assignments regarding field trips—whether these assignments are journals, reports, or major papers—should be clearly explained to students and included in the course syllabus.

2. Attendance records must be kept. Instructors should be vigilant in enforcing an attendance policy and should have a written statement about returning home for excessive absences.

3. Students must remain in good academic standing during the term prior to their study abroad experience. Students not in good academic standing may be disqualified from participation. Students on probation may be allowed to study abroad, pending the approval of their college dean. Students on academic suspension may not participate in study abroad. Any funds paid toward the program costs will be forfeited.

4. If a student withdraws from the study program while overseas, the student must submit a
signed and dated statement of explanation to the faculty leader. This statement must indicate the student’s understanding that, effective the date indicated, he or she will no longer be considered a participant in the program or an SFA student, and must return home at his/her own expense and own arrangements. In addition to receiving a bill for the dropped credits associated with the withdrawal, there may be additional billing, particularly if a student has received federal financial aid and/or scholarship funds intended to cover the entire semester educational costs. The student will be refunded any pre-paid costs that SFA can recoup. If a student withdraws and fails to inform the faculty leader, SFA is not liable for the student from the point of withdrawal; the student must repay scholarship and financial aid funds and may be subject to SFA disciplinary action on return. OIP should be immediately informed of any student who has withdrawn from the program while abroad.

5. Program participants who depart early due to serious illness, injury, or personal emergency generally are not entitled to incompletes or partial credit. Exceptions may be made when a student departs very near to the end of the semester. In those cases, an incomplete may be granted with a written agreement of the timeframe for completing assignments (generally no more than a few weeks). Incompletes cannot be granted for experiential learning program components (e.g., internships).

6. Faculty leaders must give students a course syllabus, required reading list, and the initial homework assignment prior to departure to enable them an opportunity to prepare in advance.

7. Course evaluations must be completed for all courses taught overseas. Arrangements should be made to obtain evaluation forms for distribution upon the conclusion of each course. Completed forms should be collected by a student, placed in a sealed envelope signed by the student, and delivered to OIP by the student.

For legal reasons, no one other than SFA faculty, students, and staff are allowed to participate in any study abroad program unless they are receiving academic credit. A faculty member may bring a spouse, but such individuals cannot be treated as a program participant and no fees related to these individuals can be channeled through SFA.

1.6. Role and Responsibilities of Student Participants

Faculty leaders and students on SFA short-term study abroad programs are regarded as representatives of Stephen F. Austin State University, the State of Texas, and the United States of America. As a part of their General Study Abroad Application, all students are required to sign a statement of Student Responsibilities that outlines expected standards of behavior and measures for poor behavior.

In general, the expectations for participation in any study abroad program are as follows:

- Complete and submit all required paperwork and travel documentation.
- Attend the mandatory pre-departure orientation session(s).
- Participate in all scheduled program events and lectures.
- Complete all required readings before and during program.
• Complete all required written work by the specified deadline.
• Attend a debriefing meeting upon return to SFA.
• Obey all laws and regulations of the host country(ies) and host institution(s).
• Show respect for the culture(s) in which the study abroad program is embedded.
• Comply with all program requests/directives of the faculty leader(s).
• Become familiar with emergency procedures and apply these procedures as appropriate.
• Provide all emergency contact information prior to departure.
• Inform the faculty leader(s) of their whereabouts while abroad.
• Complete the program evaluation instrument.
• Maintain personal responsibility for their own health and safety while abroad.

1.7. Admissions Process and Screening

A typical application includes personal data, an official transcript, a faculty recommendation, and a statement that indicates the academic and personal reasons for selecting the particular program. Interviews of program applicants are strongly recommended.

All eligibility criteria should be stated clearly in program publicity and informational materials, at information meetings, and on the program’s website. Program materials should mention that applications may be reviewed by the Dean of Student Affairs to evaluate applicants’ disciplinary records and determine a student’s eligibility for the program.

Due to the need to exercise reasonable care:

• All students in the program must complete the same admission process.
• Even if a student is well known by the faculty leader, it is necessary to secure letters of recommendation, transcripts, etc.

Along with the standard criteria of academic preparedness, academic achievement, and demonstrated interest in the region and program, faculty leaders may want to consider a student’s:

• Ability to participate in a small group setting: Ask applicants about experience in groups (lab or design groups, committees, trips with friends).
• Attitude: Is the student willing to try new things, even if he or she is nervous? Potential red flags include reluctance to accept responsibility in a group role and requests for exceptions.
• Group diversity: Group discussions and hours spent together traveling will be more productive and enjoyable if the group includes both introverts and extroverts.

1.8. Budgeting

Budgets will be prepared by the faculty leader in collaboration with OIP. The budget will include estimated revenue and estimated student and faculty expenditures. The budget document will be signed by the faculty leader and OIP. Any leftover funds will either be returned to the students or, if individual refunds would be less than 2% of student cost, the leftover will remain in OIP’s budget to be used to support future study abroad programs.
A. Revenue
All participants pay tuition fees. Tuition fees will vary depending on the number of credit hours taken. The total cost for each study abroad program will vary depending upon the features of a particular program. Sufficient revenue should be generated to support all program activities except those specifically excluded on the application form. Students can be assessed the following expenses: airfare, housing, meals, local transportation costs, faculty expenses, excursions, health insurance, and books. If certain activities will not be covered in entirety (such as meals or transportation), the proposed budget and accompanying advertising must clearly indicate the exceptions. An application fee ($75) must also be paid to the OIP, but this expense is not part of the money reserved for the program's operation.

B. Expenditures
Expenditures include all fees the program will pay on behalf of the students, faculty expenses, classroom rental, site visit(s), guest speakers, and staff on site.

It is recommended that the current exchange rate should be used when calculating expenses; however, an additional 15-20% should be included to account for fluctuations in exchange rates and unexpected expenses. A program's budget must show that its revenues will be sufficient to cover all expenditures.

C. Faculty Salaries & Expenses
Study abroad programs vary widely in terms of structure and method of operation. For this reason, it is difficult for SFA to specify a single system of faculty compensation for participation in study abroad programs. Each program must negotiate a separate agreement with the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs on matters involving allowable faculty salaries and expenses.

D. Travel Vouchers
Travel requests will be completed by OIP; however, each faculty leader must submit his or her own travel voucher to OIP within 15 days after the last day of the program. In order to receive reimbursement, travel expenditures must be documented on the Travel Voucher approved by the Travel Office (available online at the travel website) and signed by the traveler. If the voucher exceeds the original request by more than $50, a revised Travel Request must be approved at all applicable levels. The Travel Voucher must reflect the total reimbursable expenses paid by the employee, regardless of whether advance travel funds were received. Expenses paid by the university should not be on the Travel Voucher. **Original receipts are required for all travel expenses.** In the case of meal expenses for group travel, the sponsor/advisor must provide documentation of how the funds were expended. The Travel Voucher must be submitted, with original receipts attached, to the Controller's Office within 15 days from the ending date of the trip. No reimbursements will be made and all prior year encumbrances will be cancelled 15 days after the end of the fiscal year.

All amounts listed on the Travel Voucher must be converted to U.S. dollars using the rate applicable on the date of the expenditure. A foreign currency conversion table is available online at the travel website. Documentation of the conversion calculation must be attached to the Travel Voucher. Receipts are required for all reimbursed expenses. In lieu of providing receipts and foreign currency conversions for foreign meals, travelers may elect to be reimbursed at Texas per diem rates.
1.9. Executing Contracts

Faculty leaders are responsible for reviewing all program-related contracts and notifying OIP of any concerns or issues before obtaining approval signatures. No member of the faculty or staff may sign an agreement without the specific written authorization from the President. In the context of study abroad programs, any contract with a foreign institution, the owner of a property abroad (such as an apartment which a program will rent), or a travel provider must be sent to the President for review and subsequently signed by someone duly authorized to sign such agreements. Persons entering into agreements without authorization become personally liable for any amounts under those agreements.
2.1. Application Packets

All students must complete an application that includes a Waiver of Liability, the Student Responsibilities, Authorization to Discuss /Release Confidential Student Academic Information, the Out of State/Study Abroad Acceptance, the Release and Waiver Form, Health Information Form, and the Health Insurance Enrollment Form. These documents are available on the OIP website.

A person with a disability is not on the basis of that disability denied full and equal access to and the enjoyment of academic programs and co-curricular activities. Students with declared disabilities who are considering overseas studies should consult with the Office of Disability Services (Human Services Building, Room 325) to review their possible participation in an overseas program. They should also make certain that all their documents for obtaining services at the institution are current and complete.

2.2. Registration of Students

The faculty leader is responsible for ensuring that the study abroad courses are properly included in the registration system. The faculty leader should also advise students of any special arrangements that must be made in order to participate in the program. However, students have the ultimate responsibility for registering for the courses taken while abroad.

Non-SFA students must apply and be accepted by the Admissions Office as transient students in order to participate in a study abroad program. Non-SFA students must also complete the application package. Fees for study abroad programs should be paid to the Business Office.

2.3. Financial Aid

There are four primary sources of aid for students: federal, state, institutional, and private. Students commonly receive aid from more than one source and these funds are bundled together to form the student’s financial aid package. The sum total of the package is usually fixed for the award year unless the student’s financial circumstances change. Thus, during the course of an academic year, an increase in one source of funds (e.g., private scholarships) may lead to a decrease in another source of funds (e.g., funds from federal programs), depending on regulations.

Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 allows federal student financial aid to be used for study abroad so long as the credit earned is approved by the home institution. The most common federal financial aid programs are Federal Direct Subsidized and Unsubsidized Loans, Perkins Loan, Federal Direct PLUS, Student Incentive Grant (SIG), the Federal Pell Grant, and the Federal Work-Study program. Institutions cannot legally prohibit a student from using federal financial aid for study abroad. The amount of aid students receive depends on a number of factors:

- previous income
- earnings history
- the type of aid program they will use
- federal funding formulas
Students may receive an award based on the estimated cost of attending their home institutions or based on the estimated cost of attending the study abroad program (assuming this cost is higher). As permitted by federal laws and regulations, student financial aid officials have discretion in such matters. If the Financial Aid Office calculates awards based on the higher cost of attending the study abroad program, the financial aid officer will need a complete student budget that includes detailed information on all expenses related to participation in the study abroad program. Faculty leaders who fail to supply this information to students may negatively affect their recruiting efforts, as students will not be able to adjust their award packages in compliance with financial aid regulations.

Most types of financial aid cannot be awarded until ten (10) business days before the first day of classes and some aid cannot be disbursed until after SFA's new fiscal year. Sometimes the delayed disbursement of aid and payment deadlines for study abroad programs create financial hardships for students, and occasionally students ask faculty leaders to defer payment of tuition and program fees until they receive their aid. In such cases, the faculty leader should ask students to provide a copy of their student financial aid award letter that applies to the period they will be abroad. This letter will provide documentation of the amount of aid that a student is likely to receive (provided the student continues to meet eligibility requirements at the time of disbursement). The faculty leader can use the information in making an informed decision whether to allow the payment deferral.

Because students may receive two disbursements of aid during a semester (e.g., half of their semester award at the beginning of the term and the remaining half at midterm), verifying ongoing enrollment is an important issue for financial aid officers. To defer payment, students need to have their Financial Aid officer complete the Financial Aid Deferral Form. The complete form has to be attached to the Study Abroad Application. Payment will be deferred up to the aid amount until 10 business days from the date the aid is disbursed. Balance beyond transferable aid remains due on the payment due date. This form does NOT eliminate the requirement to pay the $50 application fee and the program deposit on the regular payment schedule.

In addition to loans and financial aid, many study abroad scholarships are also available from various government agencies and private foundations and organizations. Although many of these scholarships do not tend to provide assistance for short-term or summer study, they do offer significant opportunities for students who wish to study for a semester or an academic year. Students must often apply for these scholarships a year or more in advance.

SFA scholarships are available for students enrolling for three or more credit hours of study abroad coursework. The scholarship amount varies annually depending on available funds. To be eligible, students must meet the GPA requirement (2.5 for undergraduates and 3.3 graduate students, with no rounding up) and must have enrolled at SFA for at least one semester during the academic year prior to the program. The scholarships are awarded by OIP.

### 2.4. Insurance for Students and Faculty

In order to ensure that all SFA students participating on a faculty-led program have necessary health insurance while abroad, OIP has instituted a policy that all students and faculty participating on a
college-related travel abroad program must purchase Accident & Illness Insurance administered by AMA & Associates. The cost of this insurance will be included in the program cost. The plan offers coverage above and beyond typical U.S. health plans. For example, it covers repatriation of remains, emergency medical evacuation, emergency medical reunion and 24-support assistance service. Study abroad participants should, however, always consider their own health condition, talk with their physician, and ensure adequate coverage exists to meet their personal needs on top of this insurance. Note that pre-existing conditions are excluded from coverage.

Be aware that in the event of injury or illness, the student needs to:

- Report the problem at once to the faculty leader who will accompany the student to the nearest doctor/hospital.
- Be prepared to pay the expenses upfront.
- Secure a claim form from the faculty leader. Fill in the necessary information, attach all itemized bills showing claimant’s name, nature of illness/injury, and description and charge for each service provided. Fax the form to OIP who will contact AMA & Associates.

2.5. Orientations

Orientations help students to prepare for the experience of going abroad and enable them to reap the greatest benefits of the opportunity. There are three mandatory orientation sessions students must attend: (1) a general orientation by OIP, (2) a pre-departure meeting on the SFA campus conducted by the faculty leader, and (3) an on-site orientation upon arrival overseas.

OIP will offer three orientation sessions during an academic year. Students enrolling in a study abroad program must attend one of these sessions in order to travel abroad. This orientation is designed to review basic information about overseas travel. The topics and recommendations include the following:

**Packing:** Don’t put everything in one place! Never pack essential documents, medicine—anything one could not do without in checked luggage. Put them in the carry-on bag. On international flights, a person is allowed to check two bags and to take one carry-on bag aboard the plane. Each piece of checked luggage cannot exceed 62 inches in circumference (length + width + height) or weigh more than 70 pounds. Penalties for excess, oversize, or overweight suitcases are extremely high and may even include refusal by the airline to accept the baggage. The carry-on piece must fit easily under the seat in front of a person or in the overhead compartment, generally about 62 inches in circumference. Some tips:

- YOU must carry your own luggage; there will be no one to help you. Do you want to carry 70 pounds plus a carry-on? Pack what you think you want to take; then carry your luggage around the block. Can you handle it easily?
- You'll want to buy souvenirs. What you buy will be added to what you already have, and the return weight is also limited to 70 pounds. Leave room for things you want to buy!
- You'll have access to washing machines and dryers; do NOT bring excessive clothes.
- Keep jewelry to a minimum; leave at home any jewelry/watches you can't bear to lose.
- Bring a battery-operated or wind-up travel alarm clock.
- Bring an extra towel and a couple of washcloths.
- If you must bring a hair dryer, try to share with others who are going. If you intend to
use a hair dryer or other electrical products, you'll have to buy an electrical converter and an adapter. These are available at Radio Shack. The easiest thing to do is wait until you are overseas and buy an inexpensive dryer there.

- Take any medicines you require in sufficient quantities to last the whole trip. Ask your doctor for copies of generic prescriptions of any medicines you take that require prescriptions. Also bring something for diarrhea and for pain.
- Bring an extra pair of eyeglasses or contact lenses as well as a prescription in case you need new glasses or lenses.

**Carry-on luggage:** Plan carefully what you take in your carry-on bag; include essentials, like medicines, as well as your camera. Take your school books, maps, and a change of clothing (at least underwear, socks, and a shirt or top—in case luggage is delayed). Choose as carry-on luggage something you can use for overnight field trips and excursions.

**Luggage transportation:** Mark all luggage inside and out with one’s name and address. Put a copy of the itinerary in each bag and carry the list with other documents. Mark all bags in a distinctive way so they are easily found.

**Insurance:** It may be necessary to contact insurance agents while abroad, so keep all relevant names, phone numbers, and policy numbers in a safe place.

**Health issues:** Check CDC recommendations regarding country-specific safety and health issues (immunizations, vaccinations and medications).

**Medicines:** Take everything needed for the trip, along with copies of all prescriptions and the generic names of drugs. Keep medicines in the original drugstore containers. Take extra eyeglasses and a lens prescription.

**Passport:** Carry two extra passport pictures, a copy of the passport, a certified copy (not the original) of one's birth certificate or an expired passport, and the State Department's documentation of the passport. If the passport is lost, report the loss to local police; get written confirmation of the police report, and take the above documents to the nearest U.S. consulate and apply for a new passport.

**Ticket:** Make a photocopy of the plane ticket or list its numbers and all flights along with the name/address of the agency that issued it. Keep this information separate from the ticket.

**Money:** How to carry money? The options are cash, credit cards, or traveler's checks. Cash is easy, but it cannot be recovered if lost. Traveler's checks are safe, but often require going to a specific location for cashing them; there is usually a fee for cashing them unless you have American Express checks and take them to an American Express office. Moreover, many businesses overseas will not accept a traveler's check to pay for a purchase. ATM cards are probably the easiest way to get cash. If your ATM card is linked to the PLUS (Visa) or Cirrus (MasterCard) networks, you can obtain cash in over 210 countries. Before leaving, make sure your ATM's network is available at your destination. Here are some suggestions:

- Never carry large amounts of cash. Use a neck pouch for immediate cash needs.
- Take only the credit cards that will be used on the trip. Keep a list or a copy of cards, numbers, and emergency replacement procedures. Discover cards are not accepted overseas. Be aware that most credit card issuers charge 3% if you use their card
outside the United States.

- If you plan to use a credit card, you must find out from your credit card company whether the card can be used in the countries to be visited to get money out of ATMs. In some cases, you will need an extra PIN number in order to use U.S. cards.

**Exchange rates:** An exchange rate tells you how much a dollar is worth in a foreign currency, and vice versa. You will almost always get the best interbank exchange rate when buying foreign currency with either ATM cards or credit cards. Typically, money obtained in one country cannot be used in another country, meaning you will have to exchange currency if visiting several countries during your travels.

**Phone calls:** According to travel expert Clark Howard, the first requirement of using a cell phone overseas is to have a phone that uses GSM (Global System Mobile) technology. T-Mobile phones, as well as some Cingular and AT&T Wireless phones, are equipped with this technology. You need the "unlock codes" to unlock your phone and use it overseas. For $5, you can get the codes from thetravelinsider.info. Finally, you will need to buy minutes from the company to where you are traveling. You can buy pre-paid minutes from telestial.com. The company will send you a chip that you use to replace the current chip inside your phone. Make sure that the power adapter will work with the voltage at your destination. You may need a plug adapter to fit the local power outlet. As an alternative, you can usually purchase a prepaid phone at the overseas destination upon arrival. These phones are limited to phone calls and text messaging, not email and web access.

**Laptops:** According to Volker Poelzl, “laptops do not require an electrical transformer to work overseas. Most laptop power adapters can convert voltage from 110-240 to power your computer. All you need is a plug adapter to accommodate the type of electrical plug used at your destination. To be sure, read the labels on your power adapter, which will tell you the input voltage range of your unit.”

At the orientation, students will also be made aware of the potential risks associated with studying abroad and will be informed that SFA cannot promise any of the following:

1. Guarantee the safety of participants.
2. Assure that risk will not be greater than at home.
3. Monitor the daily personal decisions, choices, and activities of individual participants.
4. Stand in loco parentis.
5. Prevent participants from engaging in illegal, dangerous, or unwise activities.
6. Represent the interests of participants accused of illegal activities.
7. Assume responsibility for the actions of persons not employed by or otherwise engaged by the institution.
8. Assume responsibility for events that are beyond the control of the institution and its subcontractees.
9. Assure that participants will only be accepted to sites that are appropriate to their personal limitations.
10. Assume responsibility for situations which arise due to the failure of a participant to make full disclosure of pertinent information prior to departure.
11. Assure the adherence to U.S. norms of appropriate and acceptable behavior in matters of due process, individual rights, and sensitivity, relationships between the sexes and among diverse racial, cultural, and ethnic groups.
At least one month prior to departure, the faculty leaders should schedule a mandatory meeting with students participating in the study abroad program. The objectives of this meeting are the following: (1) to discuss important logistical information, including passport and visa requirements, travel arrangements, communications, and financial aid; (2) to explain the components of the program, including study and grading requirements; (3) to create a forum to discuss expectations for the experience; (4) to develop an intercultural and personal cultural awareness; (5) to understand safety, security, and healthcare issues abroad; and (6) to cultivate an understanding of the host country and its culture. All programs should create and distribute a packet that includes site-specific information, maps, schedules, contacts, etc. It should also review the academic and behavioral standards of the program. It is advisable to address health-related concerns at the pre-departure orientation session and again during your on-site orientation.

Students should be supplied with copies of the following information to take with them:

- Contact information on the faculty leader and housing sites throughout the visit
- Currency and exchange rate updates
- A daily itinerary
- Meal and housing information
- Directions how to get to and from the airport
- Field trip details

On the day of arrival overseas, the faculty leader should provide an on-site orientation to review information that students have previously received about the program and host country. During the on-site orientation, the faculty leader should go over the program requirements, the daily schedule, and ground rules for behavior. Students should be informed of local laws, regulations, customs of the host country, community, etc. Orientation for a faculty-led program is best viewed as an ongoing process, starting well in advance of departure and continuing throughout the program and even upon the students’ return to campus.

2.6. Student Discipline Abroad

Students on faculty-led programs are considered to be SFA students, and are subject to the SFA Student Code of Conduct. Students are also subject to the laws of the host country and the rules of any host institution.

Most discipline issues should be resolved in-country by the faculty leader to ensure that behavior concerns do not affect the success of the program. The faculty leader has the authority to address any discipline issues that arise. If a serious incident occurs on a faculty-led program, SFA’s Director of OIP shall serve as the point of contact between the faculty member, the student, and the Dean of Student Affairs. The Director of OIP shall consult with appropriate campus entities to evaluate the incident and determine the appropriate university response (if any). If an infraction is serious but does not merit dismissal from the program, the SFA faculty member will have the discretion to make a judicial referral to the Dean of Student Affairs. It is understood that such referrals will be investigated once the group returns from the study abroad location.

Dismissal from any program has the following consequences:

- The student forfeits program fees and tuition paid to SFA, the host institution, or the program provider;
The student does not receive academic credit for the program;
The student assumes transportation costs associated with early return from the program
(purchase of a new return flight or fees assessed for changing flight details).

The student assumes responsibility for the dismissal including, if applicable, dealing with his/her family, financial aid consequences, and possible further judicial action upon return to SFA.

Minor behavioral problems are not serious enough to warrant immediate dismissal from a program but can have a negative effect on the group. Inappropriate behavior that is allowed to continue may affect the atmosphere and morale of the entire group. Minor problems may escalate into major problems. Examples of minor behavior problems include:
- Excessive tardiness to class or class activities.
- Personality conflicts between program participants.
- Indifferent or rude behavior towards guests or invited speakers.

Although warnings can and should be issued, one should err on the side of strictness when facing a disciplinary problem overseas. Depending on the circumstances, the faculty leader may wish to discuss the problem individually with the students individually or allow an open discussion with the entire group.

Whether the behavioral problems are minor or significant, make a written record of observations and discussions with the student. Be sure to document any verbal and written warnings that were issued. Should the behavior persist, the OIP Director will assist in assessing the situation and, if necessary, will facilitate the dismissal of a student from the program.

Students should be reminded that handling complaints is one of the faculty leader’s responsibilities and that the faculty leader will communicate participants’ needs and desires to the appropriate party (e.g., staff at a host university, a hired guide or driver, hotel staff) in both academic and non-academic settings. Again, the faculty leader should document all student complaints and the program’s response to them.

2.7. Responsible Use of Alcohol

Responsible use of alcohol should be emphasized at the pre-departure orientation and should also be discussed during the on-site orientation. Students should be encouraged to use sound judgment if consuming alcohol at private homes or other accommodations during non-program hours. If members of the group are misusing or abusing alcohol, students should be encouraged to discuss these issues with the faculty leader. Peers should look out for one another and keep each other safe. In addition to posing a health and safety risk, alcohol misuse and abuse are the primary sources of behavioral problems and personality conflicts among group members.

University representatives are prohibited from providing alcohol to or purchasing alcohol for students participating in a study abroad program. While students can consume alcohol if age-appropriate under the host country’s law and can purchase alcoholic beverages at program meals, faculty leaders should not buy students alcoholic beverages ever!
- Faculty leaders should alert flight attendants that students are part of the passenger group and they should use caution when offering alcoholic beverages.
- In choosing facilities to provide meal services for students, Faculty leaders should seek to avoid facilities that allow unlimited self-service of alcoholic beverages included in the price for
meals. In addition, to the extent possible, University representatives should clarify to the facility and the students that pre-paid meals do not include alcohol.

- If students are individually purchasing alcohol at a group function, it is the responsibility of the University representative to monitor responsible alcohol consumption and discourage excessive consumption of alcohol. In addition, as a University representative, the faculty leader is in a position of authority and responsibility and must be capable of addressing an emergency should it arise.

- Unless otherwise specified, students are expected to comply with SFA’s alcohol policies.

- Students are expected to know and abide by the legal drinking age of the country or countries in which they are studying.

### 2.8. Risk-Crisis Management

In all study abroad programs administered by SFA, students are expected to act in a mature and responsible manner as guests of another country. The same discipline and academic integrity policies remain in effect as apply on campus. However, the laws of the host country may override certain university policies in individual cases. It is the responsibility of the student to behave reasonably in all situations. The Vice President for University Affairs or designee may dismiss a student from a study abroad program pending a judicial hearing. If a student is dismissed and the judicial proceeding finds insufficient reason to support the action, a full refund will be provided.

SFA prescribes a series of steps to be taken in the event of an emergency overseas. If a specific emergency does not fall into these categories, an immediate telephone call should be made to the Director of International Programs and to the Vice President for University Affairs. The general rule in all crisis situations is to act as would a reasonable person under the circumstances.

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<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
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<td>Killed</td>
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A. Notify parents, spouse, or other designated emergency contact person.
B. Call local law enforcement agency.
C. Call closest U.S. embassy or consulate.
D. Take the person to a hospital and assist with medical insurance paperwork.
E. Notify the Director of the Office of International programs and Dean of Student Affairs at SFA.
F. Assist person in obtaining additional money, if necessary. Note the SFA will not repay loans made to students so please do not use personal or institutional funds.

G. Get person to call his/her emergency contact person. If person unable to do so, place the call yourself and, if possible, obtain the student’s permission prior to the call.

H. Help the person (if requested or required) return home.

I. Other responses
   (a) Visit person in jail; find out what happened.
   (b) Arrange for repatriation to the person’s home.
   (c) Help victim get counseling, if available in English.

If contacted by the media during an emergency or incident when there has been no contact with the University, please use the following statement:

   My responsibility is to the students on this program, their families, and Stephen F. Austin State University. I will be happy to discuss this matter with you after I have contacted these parties. Thank you for your understanding.

Do not release the name of students or speak on SFA’s behalf without contacting the Office of Public Affairs, which will provide support and assistance in developing responses to media inquires.

2.9. Community Building

Seasoned faculty leaders often report that their biggest challenges abroad are not emergency situations, public transportation strikes, fluctuating currencies, or language barriers, but problems with student behavior. Those who have successfully traveled with students for many years advocate discussing appropriate student conduct and behavior related problems in the pre-departure orientation as well as upon arrival.

To begin, emphasize that study abroad is an academic experience, and that academic responsibilities take priority over personal interests. Planting this idea helps to combat the occasional notion that study abroad is a travel vacation. Also, refrain from referring to the experience as “a trip,” but instead refer to it as a program or course to emphasize educational goals.

While abroad, the faculty leader should meet with students regularly to discuss non-academic issues, such as language issues, accommodations, health concerns, and personal difficulties. It is a good idea to hold a required mid-program meeting in which students evaluate and discuss the academic and non-academic aspects of the program. Faculty leaders have reported highly successful sessions specifically arranged to share and discuss impressions, cross-cultural adjustment, personal activities, inappropriate behavior, etc. These sessions can also help to build group cohesiveness, alleviate possible cliques and divisions, and manage students’ expectations.

Reinforce the concept of students as “cultural ambassadors” and emphasize that their conduct will be seen as representative of the U.S. and of SFA. Students need to be reminded that while the consequences of poor behavior at SFA usually reflect solely on themselves, their misconduct abroad will be attributed to the entire group. In addition, be honest with the students about how their poor behavior reflects poorly on the faculty leader to local colleagues. Most importantly, participants need to understand that the viability of a program rests in their hands.

Consider creating a “student-faculty” contract, specifically tailored to the program. These can be created in advance or collaboratively with the participants to identify acceptable and unacceptable
behaviors. In addition to the expected (“don’t be late for bus departures”), ask students to decide on actions to avoid such situations. For example, students can agree to check that everyone is awake at a certain time or phone a classmate after an alarm has rung. The students may also agree upon consequences and/or group response to behavior that undermines the smooth operation of the program. Students should be informed of the procedures to follow if experiencing the consequences of such behavior (for instance, if they are left behind because they miss a field trip departure). There is no need for complete agreement—consensus should be the desired goal.

It may be more important to emphasize what the students should do rather than what they should not do. This rule applies to peer interactions as well. For instance, if one student sees another student displaying inappropriate behavior, that student should step forward to stop it. Encourage this type of response and allow a healthy kind of peer pressure to flourish. Ask students to discuss how personality conflicts can undermine the atmosphere of the program. Although it may seem like common sense, the faculty leader may need to regularly remind students to:

- Be polite and listen to one another.
- Respect each other, leaders, and local people.
- Honor diversity and differences within the group.
- Fight fair and attack the problem, not people.
- Look for compromises.
- Be aware of stress related to group travel.

The faculty leader has primary responsibility for mediating conflicts among students. Be alert to group dynamics and address any perceived concerns. It is important to follow up on any announced consequences when students violate agreed-upon rules.
3. 1. Evaluations

All participants should complete an evaluation of the study abroad program. Evaluations help continuously improve programs, help assure that the quality of all services and facilities remains high, and can be used in marketing for the following year(s).

For the highest rate of return, evaluations should be completed on the last day of class or on the last occasion that all students are together. Evaluations can be completed once students return to campus; however, return rates are normally very low in these circumstances.

3.2. Preparing for the Return

U.S. customs regulations permit $400 worth of articles duty free. A 10% duty is assessed on the next $1,000 of purchases. On the plane, passengers will be handed a customs declaration form on which everything acquired abroad must be reported at the price paid, including gifts. Failing to declare or understating the value of items can result in penalties. Do not take any unwise risks to save money. It is possible that a customs officer will search one’s luggage and person on arrival in the United States. Purchases mailed to the United States while abroad do not have to be declared at this time. However, duty will be paid on these items when received in the country.

Some items cannot be brought into the United States and will be seized upon entry. Other penalties may be imposed as well. Here is partial listing of such items: biological materials, unauthorized reprints of copyrighted books, liquor-filled candy, firearms and ammunition, fruits, plants, vegetables, goods from North Korea or Cuba, hazardous articles like fireworks, narcotics, pornography, pets, and switchblade knives.