



VCU

Global Education Office

VCU Education Abroad
Faculty-Led Programs

Handbook for Faculty Program Leaders
2018-2019

Updated May 2018



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Virginia Commonwealth University Education Abroad provides opportunities for VCU students to study abroad and participate in international exchanges. We also assist international exchange students who wish to study in the U.S. at VCU.

We encourage students from every academic discipline to pursue a part of their university education in an international community. Tomorrow's graduates will face an increasingly globalized marketplace and studying abroad will help students gain the knowledge, skills and experience to compete and succeed in the profession of their choice.

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Message from the Executive Director

Thank you for giving your time and energy to coordinate and lead a study abroad program for VCU students! International educational programs have the potential to transform the lives of our students, and without your effort this would not be possible. By providing our students the opportunity to gain this valuable experience, you play an important role in internationalizing our University!

R. McKenna Brown

Message from the Director of Education Abroad

The commitment you've made to direct a study abroad program is usually more challenging than teaching an on-campus course; however the rewards for you and your students are fully worth the effort. Students typically return to campus transformed as more responsible, independent, confident, and globally-conscious individuals, not to mention the fact that they return home having studied their field from a unique perspective that may influence their future academic and career choices. Throughout the program you will spend much more time with your students than you would here on campus. You will find yourself relating to the students not just as the professor, but as an advisor, counselor, mentor, friend, parent, disciplinarian and more!

This Faculty Leader Handbook will be helpful in the planning process as well as during the actual execution of your program. It is grouped by subject to address specific issues that can determine the success of a program, including program development, marketing, budgeting, student selection, preparation and emergency response.

We require that you carry a copy of this handbook at all times as a reference while you are on site. The handbook is also available online on our website under Community > Faculty.

In addition to this handbook, we suggest that you also familiarize yourself with the following documents which include VCU policies and procedures and other resources:

VCU Administrative Toolkit: <http://www.toolkit.vcu.edu/>

(Financial, operational and administrative policies and procedures of VCU)

State Department Travel Info: <https://travel.state.gov>

Centers for Disease Control travel information: <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/>

This handbook is updated annually and we welcome your suggestions for changes or ideas on how it can be more useful for faculty leaders.

Thank you again for your time and dedication to international education at VCU!

Stephanie E. Tignor

Calendar for 2018-2019

2018

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| September 7 | Deadline for winter session and spring break programs |
| June - September | Faculty leaders develop programs |
| Mid-August | Gilman Scholarship “early application” opens |
| August 15-17 | MANDATORY Program Development Meetings; link to proposal application will be made available after attendance |
| September 17 | Proposal deadline for new and repeat programs; final budgets must be included in proposal |
| October | Faculty will be notified within two weeks of submitting a complete proposal |
| October 29 | Deadline for submitting photos and content for website in order for programs to be posted before Thanksgiving break |
| Early October | Gilman Scholarship “early application” deadline |
| November 1-9 | Suggested registration deadlines for winter and spring programs |
| November 9 | Application deadlines are set, course offerings are finalized, photos and all information for promotional materials submitted |
| November 12-16 | International Education Week and Coffee Bar (TBD) |
| End of fall semester | Webpage for each program should be live on Education Abroad site; begin processing applications |
| December-March | Winter and spring programs’ faculty training, online pre-departure orientation, travel authorizations, payments to vendors |

2019

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| January | Winter programs’ student evaluations are collected and shared |
| Mid-January | Gilman Scholarship application opens |
| February 1-March 31 | Suggested summer programs student application deadlines |
| February | Spring study abroad fair featuring faculty-led programs |
| Early March | Gilman Scholarship application deadline |
| Mid-March | Spring break programs’ student evaluations are collected and shared |
| Mid/late March | Faculty leader pre-departure training |

- March/April** Pre-departure orientations held by faculty leaders; Education Abroad online pre-departure orientation for students; Financial aid applications are available; EA registers students in courses on Banner; Travel authorizations prepared in Chrome River; Administration issues, promotions issues, liability issues addressed; Reimbursement requests, vendor invoices due to EA fiscal staff; Sign travel authorizations and contracts
- Early May** Gilman applicants are notified of status of their application
- June, July and August . . . Programs take off!**
- August** Summer programs' student evaluations are collected and shared

Upon your return you will need to submit grades and complete travel expense reimbursement process.

Checklist at a Glance

- Read this handbook
- Define program parameters and discuss with department chairs and deans
- Finalize course offerings and syllabi
- Submit program proposal and recommendation form with final budget
- Submit photos to Education Abroad for website and flyer PDF
- Promote program at fairs, in-classroom presentations, info sessions, etc.
- Attend mandatory faculty training
- Work with EA fiscal staff to complete your program travel authorization after program enrollment finalized, make advance payments to vendors, and book airfare
- Secure cell phone for use in country and provide the office with your contact information while abroad
- Schedule orientation meetings for participants
- Sign contract with GEO HR manager, Jessica Abernathy, before departure (if applicable)
- Inform Education Abroad when you and students have arrived safely
- Keep Education Abroad informed if/when any urgent or emergency situations arise
- Submit receipts to Education Abroad fiscal manager to process reimbursement upon your return within two weeks

I. The Global Education Office

Administration

Osama Alami, Associate Director, Global Education Office

oalami@vcu.edu Phone: 827-3422 (direct); 912 W Grace Street, 4th floor

Stephanie Tignor, Director, Education Abroad

Overall administration of the education abroad program, crisis management
davenportse@vcu.edu Phone: 828-8406 (direct); 912 W Grace Street, 4th floor

Education Abroad Office Program Liaisons:

For questions concerning program development, planning details, application procedures, marketing issues, etc.

Annia Dowell-Wiltshire, Advisor, Education Abroad

lasdowellwilt@vcu.edu Phone: 828-6958 (direct); 912 W Grace Street, 4th floor

Simone Biasuzzi, Advisor, Education Abroad

sabiasuzzi@vcu.edu Phone: 827-4561 (direct); 912 W Grace Street, 4th floor

Sarah Young Carrier, Returnee Student Advisor, Education Abroad

syoung8@vcu.edu Phone: 828-1228 (direct); 912 W Grace Street, 4th floor

Fiscal and Human Resources:

Paul Ginder, Fiscal Manager, Global Education Office

For questions concerning budget development, vendor payments, travel reimbursements and any financial concerns

pgginder@vcu.edu Phone: 828-3734 (direct); 912 W Grace Street, 4th floor

Jessica Abernathy, Executive Assistant/Director of Human Resources, Global Education Office

For questions concerning contracts

jereid@vcu.edu Phone: 828-8346 (direct); 912 W Grace Street, 4th floor

Global Education Office Summary of Responsibilities

- Provide faculty leaders with guidance on the development and administration of programs from program conception to return
- Produce marketing and publicity materials
- Create webpage for program and administer application process through online system, TerraDotta Software (StudioAbroad)
- Register students for the courses and process all paperwork for student registration
- Provide students with financial aid information
- Advise students on funding options such as the Gilman scholarship
- Assist faculty leaders by providing management for all financial transactions including vendor payment and travel reimbursements
- Provide pre-departure training to faculty
- Provide all study abroad students with online pre-departure orientation and an International Student Identification Card, which carries some limited health insurance
- Assist in connecting faculty to vendors, foreign host institutions, and/or third party custom study abroad program providers to facilitate all in-country logistics and more
- Do just about everything else within our power to help the faculty leader provide a safe and high-quality educational experience abroad

Fees

The Global Education Office charges a \$150 fee to each student participant for these services. This fee is non-refundable and is assessed to each program participant at the time of application. The fee is factored into the program fee budget.

II. Program Development

Planning a study abroad program requires faculty leaders to go far beyond the usual realm of course planning and take on many roles such as coordinator, counselor, companion, travel agent, crisis manager, first aid administrator, and obviously educator. Faculty leaders should possess leadership skills, familiarity with proposed area of travel, and basic financial and accounting abilities. Faculty leaders should be 100% committed to planning the program, recruiting participants, and following up on all of the logistical considerations involved with a study abroad program.

Faculty Leader's Responsibilities at a Glance

- If necessary, conduct site visit to inspect classroom facilities (where applicable), housing arrangements, as well as possible excursions and cultural events.
- Plan accordingly where travel may not be without an element of danger (this includes every destination!). Faculty leaders must be aware of travel advisories and embassy messages from the Department of State (<http://travel.state.gov/>) for their area of travel. Excursions that include transportation on dangerous routes or in locations with known poor road conditions or other specific dangers should be excluded from travel itineraries. Program proposals in destinations with Department of State Travel Advisories of Level 4 will not be approved; proposals in destinations with Level 3 Travel Advisories will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The Global Education Office reserves the right to reject or cancel any program in the interest of safety.
- Complete *Education Abroad Program Proposal* by deadline, and discuss your program idea/proposal with respective dean and department chairs of the Schools/Departments in which you plan to offer credit
- Create the guidelines for your program including syllabi
- Submit the budget by the assigned date
- Submit photos and other program details necessary for marketing your program by the assigned date
- Communicate with respective Education Abroad office liaisons
- Serve as point of contact between VCU and host institution or third party provider

- Attend faculty leader training; if unable to attend meetings, a separate appointment will be made to discuss missed information
- Be an active leader in promoting your program
- Respond to EA with student acceptances and rejections within a week during program application process
- Post itinerary and travel arrangements on the Blackboard site
- Obtain a cell phone where students can reach you 24 hours a day and distribute this phone number to the participants and the Education Abroad office
- Organize at least one pre-departure orientation for all participants. *The faculty leader is responsible for all communication with their participants regarding the itinerary, travel and accommodation arrangements, academic requirements, and meeting schedules. It is recommended that this orientation be considered a part of the final grade for VCU students*
- Initiate travel authorization in Chrome River as soon as enrollment closes on program
- Remit organized receipts and final report within **14 days** of the last travel date; if receipts are not submitted, processed, and approved by all necessary authorities within 30 days of last travel date, your travel advance may be deducted through payroll
- Assign students' grades in a timely manner upon return from the program
- Follow all state and federal regulations in the area of fiscal management (with our help . . . of course!)
- Make yourself available to program participants throughout the duration of the program
- Initiate contact with the Education Abroad office in case of any emergencies or unusual events during the course of the program, and provide your contact information to us while overseas
- Provide students with a safe, organized and educationally sound international learning experience

Program Development

Academic Considerations

Academic planning requires professors to think innovatively and consider the environment in which students will be learning abroad. Consider the location, and whether the students will be in a classroom, outside, or part of a traveling program. It is also important to consider the amount of reading and the type of assignments that will be required. Make sure to answer these questions:

What courses will be offered?

Programs need to offer courses that will be relevant, useful and appealing to a large number of students. Consider offering a variety of courses and credit options, if possible. Where appropriate, consider offering courses that will count towards students' major requirements and core curriculum, rather than only elective credit.

How will the students be evaluated?

The type of evaluation will depend on the location and subject matter; however all programs should include a defined set of criteria by which the students will be assessed. Simply showing up is not enough! Students may be given assignments before or after the trip to complement their learning abroad. Try to think about when the students would have time to do reading on the trip or whether pre-trip reading is best. Also determine when quizzes will be given and establish your attendance requirements.

Will the course be open to both graduates and undergraduates? To students from other institutions? Members of the community?

Many faculty leaders will allow non-VCU students to register for their program. Some will allow both graduate and undergraduate students to participate. If your program is open to members of the community, they should be expected to participate in the academic program and must register for academic credit.

How many credits will be offered with this program?

Many students rely on financial aid for study abroad and therefore must be registered for full-time credit. During the summer, undergraduate students must be registered for at least six credits in order to be eligible to receive financial aid. Is it possible for you to offer six undergraduate credits within this program?

Generally, study abroad programs must include the same number of contact hours per credit as courses taught on campus. Three credits will generally signify 45 contact hours. However, many programs include excursions related to the academic contact and offer much more than the required number of hours for the credit earned.

Some programs will offer variable credit. Students can opt to take the program for three credits, generally to save money, or six credits if they need to earn the credit for graduation.

Lastly, faculty leaders should be prepared to work with students to make up assignments should the student be required to terminate the program early due to an illness or other emergency.

Programmatic Considerations

What is the best location for this program?

Consider academic appropriateness, demand for the location and whether or not the particular location would require that airfare be included in the cost of the program. Consider the cost of living, the exchange rate, and the cost of travel to/from the country.

What is the length of the program?

Typical summer study abroad programs with 4 in-country weeks offer 6 credits, but this usually includes contact hours before and after the travel. Some longer programs offer 9-10 credits, and shorter programs (1-2 weeks) offer 3 credits. Check the summer session schedule and try to align your program dates so that students can take on-campus classes as well. Consider that many students work jobs in the summertime and may find it easier to study abroad at either the beginning or end of the summer in order for the program to not conflict with their work schedules. Also, try to keep in mind the host country's peak travel season, weather and holidays. Finally, some students prefer to go early in the summer or later (as opposed to in the middle) so that they can pursue jobs, internships, and other activities for the other part of the summer. Also see section titled, "Academic Credit and Program Length".

Remember that students who participate in programs that are at least 28 days in length located in a single country may be eligible to apply for the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program.

Note: Education Abroad will set all course dates for summer study abroad programs to coincide with the university's full summer schedule (i.e. May-August) in order to reflect the fact that students are expected to perform work before and after the travel experience.

What expenses will be included in the program fee? Should fee include airfare? Will meals be provided?

Program fees will not include airfare. Faculty may work with Christopherson to identify a group flight, but students must pay separately and individually for their tickets.

Many programs do include at least some meals or give the students a "stipend" allowance for meals. Most hotels will provide breakfast with the room. Be sure to ask when making hotel reservations! Some programs, especially those that are stationary, do not include lunch and dinner but instead will have several group dinners (usually at the beginning and ending of the program) for the participants, which are included in the budget.

If you do not budget for meals in the cost of your program fee, it is important to provide student with an estimate of the amount of spending money they should bring with them to cover their own meals.

What will the itinerary look like?

Some programs, especially stationary ones, have a routine schedule whereby students meet for classes each morning and/or afternoon, and have the rest of the day to explore the city on their own. On selected afternoons and weekends, the faculty leader will arrange cultural events and excursions for the group. These are usually mandatory and are counted toward the student's grade.

Whether the program is a traveling or stationary program, you will want to provide a daily schedule to potential participants, even if it is a work in progress. Students want to know what to anticipate and also know how many free days there are during a given program.

Where will students be housed?

Some programs take advantage of local university accommodations, while other programs use hotels, bed & breakfasts, or hostels for the students. If your program will be based in one location and is approximately one month, it is usually possible to rent apartments.

Programs offering language instruction usually house students with local families. The homestay option offers both advantages and disadvantages. Obviously, the students are able to practice their language skills, and there are opportunities to participate in the local culture. Homestays also help to keep program costs low; however, homestays can present unique challenges. The screening and selection process is more involved than making a hotel reservation. Dealing with an unhappy student can take time as well, because the faculty leader might serve as mediator and also may need to spend time locating another host family.

Will you be able to make your minimum student requirement to cover your budget?

Without meeting your minimum enrollment, the course risks cancellation. You must enroll a minimum of 10 students per faculty leader on the program.

Is your program affordable?

Past experience shows that \$1,000 - \$1,500 per week (including airfare, program fee, and tuition) is the breaking point for many students.

Study Abroad Program Providers

A big question is whether to arrange the logistics yourself or partner with an organization to handle the logistics for you. There are many travel agents, vendors, and third party custom study abroad program providers operating in the world today. VCU has affiliation agreements with seven academic providers, but you are not restricted to working with only those seven.

The seven affiliated program providers are:

- API- Academic Programs International
- CAPA International Education
- CEA Study Abroad
- CET Academic Programs
- CIS Abroad
- ISA- International Studies Abroad
- SAI
- USAC

The advantages of using a provider are many: they can arrange all aspects of the program, including transportation, lodging, restaurant reservations, museum tickets, day and overnight tours, classroom facilities, and other details. This frees the faculty leader up to concentrate on content.

The main disadvantage to using a provider is that there is often a charge for the services which may prohibitively increase the program cost. The provider's fee is usually determined after you submit a proposal outlining your course duration and objectives. The fee can usually be negotiated if there are a certain number of participants, usually 10-15 minimum. Faculty who have used these services in the past have found them to be very helpful, as they minimize stress and worry. They also provide a structure which can be helpful if you run into any problems or crises. VCU recommends that first time faculty leaders consider working with a provider if they do not have experience in the host country or previous experience in running international programs; however, **VCU encourages faculty to run programs without providers whenever possible in the interest of program affordability/accessibility.**

Cell Phone Requirement

VCU Education Abroad requires that every study abroad program provide at least one cell phone number to GEO prior to departure. The cell must work internationally and the faculty leader must be available at all times. Faculty leaders may choose from a variety of options to comply with this policy. If you do not have a cell phone already, you must add the cost of one to your budget.

Options:

- Convert personal cell phone for use abroad and give GEO the phone number
- Arrange with an on-site contact to rent or purchase a phone on your behalf and provide GEO with that number.
- Rent or purchase a cell phone immediately upon arrival and provide GEO with the number

Liability Issues

As the faculty leader, you need to be the expert on the following areas:

- What are the dangers involved in travel within the host country?
- What diseases are prevalent? Do students need immunizations to travel there?
- What is the State Department's official stance on travel within and outside of the host country?
- What visas are required for entrance?
- What is the political situation in the country in which you will be visiting . . . current and in past (recent) history?

Your Education Abroad office liaison can help point you to the most accurate resources in educating yourself and students about these issues.

Liability is addressed in the "Agreement and Release" portion of the registration. All other liability is best avoided by being well prepared in advance.

Passports

Make sure you have a passport that is valid for at least six months beyond your travel dates! Make copies of your passport and leave a copy behind with the EA and friends and family. Students will be instructed to obtain their passports immediately upon registering for your program and will be prompted to upload a copy of their passport into StudioAbroad, VCU's online study abroad application system. For more information on obtaining a passport, please consult the US Department of State website: <http://travel.state.gov/passport>

Visas

It is your responsibility to inquire about the visa requirements for all countries that you will be visiting during the program. The Education Abroad office can assist when needed in obtaining group visas. Remember that not all VCU students are US citizens! Students with citizenship in countries other than the US may have different entry requirements for the host country. To determine whether a visa is required for entry for US citizens, visit:

<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/country.html>

Academic Credit and Program Length

All participants in VCU Education Abroad programs must register for academic credit.

VCU seeks to maintain a standard of excellence in compressed classes by holding as closely as possible to the one-credit-in-one-week limitation for both faculty and students during the summer. These standards apply whether an instructor teaches on or off campus or a combination of on and off campus classes.

- Appropriate teaching loads may include:
 - 6 credits in 5 weeks
 - 9 credits in 8 weeks
 - 3 credits in an occasional 2-week workshop
 - 7 credits in 6 weeks
- Inappropriate loads include:
 - 9 credits in either 5 or 6 weeks
 - 6 credits in either 3 or 4 weeks
 - 3 credits in 1 week

Any deviation from this policy must be approved by the Global Education Office.

Note: Program length can be expanded during pre and post travel periods provided substantive learning takes place and is documented.

Education Abroad will set all course dates for summer study abroad programs to coincide with the university's full summer schedule (i.e. May-August) in order to reflect the fact that students are expected to perform work before and after the travel experience.

VCU Course Administration

You may offer courses that are already a part of the current VCU curriculum (as approved by the department chair in that field of study) OR you may create a new course. Due to the time involved in creating a new course, many faculty leaders choose to create new sections of courses that are already 'on the books' (491 Topics courses, for example).

1. To create a new course, a course initiation form must be completed and filed with the University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee. Online forms are available on the Curriculum Committee website. This procedure only needs to be done once, as programs that repeat will automatically carry over from year to year.
2. To initiate a course section, Annia Dowell-Wiltshire in the Education Abroad office will coordinate with your department(s) to complete a course maintenance form and turn it on to the Course Scheduling Office in Records and Registration. When filling out the course maintenance form, **we will mark enrollment at 0 so that students cannot register on their own. We will register the students manually in the Banner system. All student requests for changes (add/drop, etc.), must be made through our office in writing.**

We would like to have all of your sections created in the fall semester if possible. The Course Scheduling Office will allow additions to the summer schedule after this date, but it is preferable to submit requests by the university-wide deadline.

If you are creating a new course, then your department's Curriculum Committee must first approve course numbers and titles. Once the course initiation form has been completed and signed by the department, it may be submitted. This procedure allows for courses to be listed in the VCU catalog.

Students will only be able to participate in the course by completing an online application for the program through our office. **Students do not register for study abroad programs on their own.**

3. VCU Education Abroad will enroll the program participants in their requested courses according to their choices indicated on the application form. We will consult with you and/or the academic unit to determine whether students are eligible to enroll in the course(s) (i.e. met the pre-requisites). Please confirm your students' enrollments by viewing your class lists in Banner. No course selection changes are allowed after the program begins!
4. Students will be concurrently enrolled in a STUA placeholder course which does not generate a tuition charge and does not count towards credit totals. The course may be used as a central course in which all program participants are enrolled in Blackboard. The STUA courses are graded as "NC" (i.e. no credit).
5. Grades are submitted after the program is over in the same manner as for any other class. Please do not turn in grades to the Education Abroad office.

Guidelines for Faculty Leaders with Children and Families

The responsibilities of a study abroad faculty leader are vast, and your number one priority must be to the safety and well-being of the students in the program. If you are directing a summer program and intend to take family members or children along, please adhere to the following guidelines:

1. All minors must be accompanied by an adult (other than the faculty leader) at all times.
2. Family members, children and travel companions who are not participants in the program are not to attend excursions or participate in activities with the group unless their expenses have been paid for separately.

III. Marketing

Please see the faculty study abroad marketing toolkit online for tools to promote your program:

<https://rampages.us/facultytoolkit/>

Marketing to students is an essential part of a successful program. You should begin marketing your program about one year in advance and plan to marketing your program continuously until the application deadline.

A large part of a student's motivation to study abroad comes from the faculty leaders themselves. Talking up study abroad programs to your students, encouraging them to explore financial aid and scholarship opportunities and allowing past study abroad students or VCU Education Abroad staff to speak to your classes will be the best sources of recruitment available. Education Abroad will help you to advertise your program through the following:

Website

Education Abroad will create a website for your program. Information and photos must be provided by the faculty leader to their liaison by **October 26** for the program website to be available before Thanksgiving break.

Flyer PDF

Education Abroad can create a quarter-page flyer PDF for your program. You must supply the necessary information and photos by October 26. In the Program Proposal forms, you can request additional materials.

Classroom Presentations

Education Abroad can make classroom visits throughout each semester to promote study abroad and advertise your program. Please encourage your colleagues to allow us to take 5-10 minutes of their class time to plug our programs!

You should also make visits to classrooms to speak to students about your program. Take advantage of speaking about your program with your own students. You and your returned students are, by far, the best spokespeople for your program.

Advisors

Inform and work with academic advisors who advise your target students. Communicate with your department chair, colleagues, and TAs/Grad Assistants so they can help to spread the word. Consider announcing your program to professionals in your field at other institutions if you are interested in attracting non-VCU students.

TelegRam

The VCU TelegRam (<http://www.telegram.vcu.edu>) is a daily email digest of university news that is distributed to students, staff and faculty. Consider posting an announcement on the telegram to advertise the program or info sessions. Education Abroad can help with this if needed.

Social Media

Social media is a primary way students communicate! Consider starting a Facebook group or page to advertise your program and announce information to students once they are registered for the program. Education Abroad uses Facebook (become a fan of the page called "VCU Education Abroad") and will re-post information regarding your program on the group and page if desired. VCU Education Abroad is also on Instagram and Twitter. Use #vcustudyabroad when posting about your program. Work with your department's communications/PR contact to post announcements or stories on your department's social media accounts about your study abroad program.

VCU News Center

Each spring, Education Abroad coordinates with VCU News to feature all of our programs as an Inside VCU feature on the front page of the website.

Student Clubs

Target specific student clubs that may have a particular interest in your program.

Study Abroad Fairs

Two events/fairs will be held – one in November and one in February. These are opportunities to promote to a large number of students passing through the event. You can reserve a table to advertise your program and you should recruit returnees to help staff the table and bring photos, souvenirs and stories to share with prospective participants.

Information Tables

The Education Abroad office can reserve an information table for you in the Student Commons, Shafer Dining Hall, University College, and other select locations on campus throughout the academic year.

Publications

Be sure your program is featured in any departmental newsletters, blogs, or websites.

Program Information Sessions

Education Abroad holds daily First Advising Sessions (also known as FAS, and formerly called General Information Sessions) in the office conference room in which we present information on the variety of programs available to VCU students. We can also work with you to hold **at least one** information session specifically for your program.

Scholarship Competition

VCU promotes many study abroad scholarship opportunities, which are listed on the website.

Students who participate in programs that are at least 28 days in length located in a single country may be eligible to apply for the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program. Deadline for summer programs is in early March. For more details, visit <http://www.iie.org/programs/gilman-scholarship-program>

In addition, the Education Abroad office administers summer financial aid paperwork to assist students in the process. Be sure students are aware of this as “I can’t afford it” is a major reason we hear as to why students think they can’t study abroad.

In order to successfully promote your program, we need you to make a good faith effort to:

- Provide us with your program details and photos by October 26
- Participate in the Study Abroad Fair
- Present to at least 10 classes in your department and beyond
- Present at least 3 information sessions
- Post the link to your program on Blackboard
- Share the program information via social media
- Promote the program to a university student club

IV. Financial Responsibilities/Expectations, Budgets, and Compensation

Financial Expectations and Responsibilities

As the Faculty Leader you will direct all aspects of the program, supervise the instruction of all courses and/or teach one or more courses, assign the final grades for your course, and submit grades for all courses within 48 hours from the end date of your travel, per the university's grading policy.

As the faculty leader, it is your responsibility to remain on-site for the duration of the summer program to ensure proper supervision of the student group at all times, including program excursions. At the end of the program, you are required to ensure that all students complete course evaluations (please note that Education Abroad will ask students to complete an online program survey, but this should not replace the standard university course evaluation process).

You will also be expected to submit a final report to the study abroad office. This report, due on the same day as your expense log and receipts, should cover program highlights along with administrative and student issues including health, safety, and any behavioral problems with students. You should also note any recommendations you may have for improvements in the future, if applicable.

In addition to being responsible for providing student support and academic oversight of the program, you are also fully responsible for managing your program budget and accounting for all program-related expenses. During the fall semester, you must work with the financial manager of GEO to calculate your program budget and advertised program fee. Once your program deadline has passed and you have met your minimum number of participants, you must work with the financial manager of GEO to initiate a travel authorization in Chrome River, the university's travel management system.

Prior to your departure, you must coordinate with the financial manager of GEO to:

- Arrange advance payments that must be done via wire transfer.

- Review the budget and determine the amount of cash, if any, you will receive via travel advance. This meeting should take place at minimum two weeks prior to your departure.

While you are abroad, it is your responsibility to track all expenses and receipts, and keep expenses within the budgeted amounts. Your expense log and all cash and procurement card receipts must be turned in to the GEO **within fourteen days** of the last day of travel on your Travel Authorization; if receipts are not submitted, processed, and approved by all necessary authorities within 30 days of last travel date, your travel advance may be deducted through payroll.

Failure to comply with the academic and budgetary responsibilities outlined in this handbook may jeopardize your ability to direct a VCU Education Abroad program in the future.

Operating Costs

When proposing your program, please provide as much detail as possible for the budget. This will help us anticipate costs as well as ensure that you have sufficient funds for all the activities that you have planned.

Once your budget is finalized, a complete breakdown of all anticipated participant costs will be available from Education Abroad and automatically forwarded to VCU Financial Aid for the students.

Any contract documents should be provided to GEO upon approval of the program or as soon as it is available to provide sufficient time for approval. The best way to avoid difficulty in making payments abroad is to have as many program expenses as possible paid in advance via GEO. These items, such as student housing, and class trips, may be required to be paid for well before departure. You will need to secure an invoice from the local vendor, itemizing the amount due. Submit this to the financial manager to initiate payment. **We cannot guarantee payments will be made in fewer than four weeks, assuming there are no major issues with the legal department.** Please check with the financial manager to determine the most appropriate method of payment and ensure that invoices clearly state the preferred method of payment with all the necessary banking information.

“Instructional costs” includes salaries, stipends, instructional facilities, and honoraria. Due to budgetary restraints, it is no longer feasible for the Global Education Office to offer programs for which we pay a host institution to deliver instruction in addition to compensating VCU faculty to lead the program. For programs that are affected by this change, we invite faculty to explore direct-enroll options for their students at host institutions abroad.

Compensation Policy

Faculty members who are involved in leading study abroad programs are responsible for various aspects of the program that include time and energy spent before, during and after the travel. Faculty leaders on **summer programs only** are compensated not only for teaching, grading and the academic supervision (i.e. instructional responsibilities) of the study abroad

course(s), but also for program development and administration, recruitment of participants, and in-country site director services (i.e. programmatic responsibilities).

If you are a **12-month FTE Faculty**, your university salary will be unchanged and you will not (and cannot) receive additional compensation for leading a study abroad program. **9-month faculty** should bear in mind that university policy limits the total amount of supplements (including stipend and salary) to 33.33% of the 9 month faculty member's contractual salary in any academic year and summer (August 16 to August 15) including the study abroad and any other courses taught during that time.

The compensation policy intentionally ties faculty pay to enrollment to reflect the increased amount of work involved in leading a program with a larger number of students. As VCU Education Abroad seeks to increase the number of students who are studying abroad each year, faculty leaders are rewarded for enrolling higher numbers of students in their programs. GEO will monitor and may limit student to faculty ratio if safety or other concerns warrant the need to do so.

Pay for Instructional and Programmatic Responsibilities

Subject to all applicable VCU payroll and HR policies, an eligible faculty member will be compensated \$4,000 for teaching a 3 credit course with a minimum of 10 undergraduate (8 graduate) students enrolled and \$150 per each additional student. Faculty salary is based on actual enrollment in each course taught.

Additionally, the program leader receives coach flight ticket to and from program destination, accommodations, and 50% of the U.S. State Department Per Diem rate for that location.

If a program is led by more than one faculty member, then the compensation must be divided among the faculty involved in the instructional and programmatic leadership of the program. Faculty must communicate their plans for how they plan to split the compensation during the formulation of the program.

Please note that all faculty and teaching assistants must be approved by Education Abroad and they must attend all mandatory workshops and training.

The Global Education Office prepares all contracts for summer programs. Please address any questions regarding your salary to Jessica Abernathy, Director of Human Resources.

Your contract will reflect your employment status at the time of travel (i.e. 9 month, 12 month, or adjunct).

If you are not a **U.S. citizen**, please be aware that you are subject to the terms of your employment and visa status at VCU and may only be compensated according to those terms.

Faculty Leaders' Expenses

If your program meets budgeted enrollment goals and is conducted, GEO will reimburse you after the program for housing and meals up to one-half the current U.S. State Department daily rate (http://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp) for the number of foreign travel days. GEO will book your roundtrip airfare from Richmond to your final destination in advance per state guidelines through Christopherson, the university's approved travel provider. If you would like to add on personal travel before or after the period of the study abroad program, you are responsible for booking and paying for your travel through Christopherson; GEO will reimburse you after you return.

Keep in mind that the total of the faculty leader's expenses will be divided among the total number of participants and that figure is included in each participant's program fee. In order to offer affordable, accessible programs to VCU students, GEO strives to keep program costs, including faculty leader expenses, to a minimum. Each faculty leaders' travel and program expenses should total no more than approximately \$400 per student (with 1:10 faculty:student ratio).

Note: neither you nor the students should purchase airline tickets until the program is confirmed.

Alcohol charges are never covered as they are prohibited by state law.

Ground transportation should be covered in the program budget.

Constructing Your Program Budget

Define the parameters of your program.

- What are the start and end dates of your program?
- Will airfare be included? Will everyone be flying together or separately to initial destination?
- What type of accommodations will students be using? Apartments? College dorm space? Host families?
- Will there be "side trips" and what will they cost?
- Will there be admission fees for museums, tours, etc.?
- What ground transportation will be required while you are in country? Any vehicle rentals?
- Will there be program fee charges for each student from an overseas institution?

- Will students be responsible for meals or are meals included in a program fee? Will you provide group dining experiences as part of your program?

State-approved Travel

- Airfare – All tickets must be purchased from VCU's contract agency, [Christopherson](#) unless you've received written permission from Procurement to do otherwise. For faculty who wish to book airfare which includes non-Business travel, you must receive a comparison quote at the time of booking. If your flight costs any more than the comparison quote, you must pay the cost of the flight yourself upfront.
- After faculty training in the spring and after your enrollment numbers are finalized, you will need to make an appointment with Paul Ginder (828-3734) to complete your program travel authorization.
- Vendor payments – No vendor payments can be made without an approved travel authorization and an accurate invoice from your vendors. Vendor payments will be thoroughly discussed in faculty training. If you need help obtaining an invoice and/or wire instructions, please contact EA fiscal staff.
- VCU corporate travel cards no longer offer the flexibility required by study abroad programs and are not a requirement for faculty leaders. On-site funding for program activities should be paid for in advance through the Global Education Office fiscal manager via wire transfer; otherwise, costs are funded using an approved travel advance from the university. At the conclusion of the program, activity receipts will be submitted and the travel advance settled during the reimbursement process.
- There are **no** reimbursements for alcoholic beverages.
- You must purchase auto insurance for vehicles rented outside of the U.S.A. and Canada. Faculty leaders are advised to purchase the Collision Damage Waiver (CDW) and liability coverage offered by the rental car company in the host country so that the coverage will be consistent with local laws and customs. Be advised that the CDW and liability coverage are the only rental vehicle insurance that is reimbursable as a travel expense. Any questions regarding reimbursable rental vehicle coverage should be directed to Travel and Reimbursement Services.
- State per diem amounts are almost never used for summer study abroad programs as they would contribute to prohibitively expensive program prices for students. A nominal meal allowance is listed.
- If you have any questions about the financial aspects of your program, please call Paul Ginder at 828-3734 or pgginder@vcu.edu

Using Christopherson for Group Tickets

Christopherson may be used to book group flights, but students will be responsible for paying the agent directly as airfare may not be included in program fees. It is recommended, but not required, that students book through Christopherson regardless because this will allow you to coordinate the travel plans for each student.

In any case, it is to your great advantage to understand the difference between **refundable** and **nonrefundable** tickets, to compare the risks and rewards of each before purchasing, and to **always** make any changes to dates on a ticket **prior** to the departure date listed on the ticket.

V. Student Selection and Enrollment

Students are required to complete an online application and submit the non-refundable \$150 GEO fee and \$100 deposit to the Education Abroad office on or before the application deadline. The online application includes the student's class standing, GPA, major, and an essay. You will be granted access to the online application system, StudioAbroad, to review and approve applicants to your program.

All students must have at least a GPA of 2.0 at the time of application and are admitted on a first-come, first-serve rolling basis. **If you wish to establish additional eligibility criteria, you must communicate those criteria clearly in all program-related publicity (e.g. flyers, applications, presentations, website, and informational meetings.)**

Additional eligibility criteria must be clearly established before the application process begins and must be clearly articulated to students. Students must be judged on objective criteria such as: depth and purpose of essay, knowledge of host culture, class standing, GPA, course pre-requisites, and/or evidence of general maturity.

Please accept students on a rolling basis as soon as you are able. Students are now held to a graduated refund policy which holds them responsible for a portion or all of the program fee on a timeline based on the first date of the program.

Interview Guidelines

If students are interviewed, objective and clearly stated criteria must be used. Interviews should be conducted by at least two people (e.g. past participants, study abroad staff, teaching assistants).

Admitting Students

Faculty leaders who choose to review applications must notify Education Abroad of a student's approval within one week of receipt of application. In case of a waiting list, please rank order the students. This will enable EA to quickly notify these students in case of a withdrawal.

Application Deadlines

We recommend that faculty leaders set the application deadline for summer study abroad programs *after* Spring Break so students have a chance to decide with their families whether they can afford to participate in the program.

The latest suggested deadline for summer 2019 programs is: **March 29, 2019**

For various reasons, some programs may need earlier or later deadlines. These requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Acceptable application deadlines for summer study abroad programs are anytime between February 1 – April 1, 2019.

Late Applications

Students are encouraged to apply as early as possible. Please do not encourage students to apply after the program deadline. Accepting late applicants has several consequences such as: insufficient time for students to purchase airline tickets, obtain passports and visas, attend pre-departure orientations, and apply for financial aid.

Withdrawal Policy

If you learn that a student wishes to withdraw, inform him/her that he/she must notify EA **in writing**. Telling you is not enough! We often encounter upset students who have informed their faculty leader but did not inform Education Abroad and who are then held financially responsible for the program fee. Students must adhere to the withdrawal and refund policy.

Refund Policy

Students who apply for a program must pay a \$150 GEO fee and \$100 deposit toward the program fee. This fee and deposit are non-refundable, even if a student decides that he/she no longer wishes to participate in the program abroad. After committing to the program, students deciding to withdraw will be held accountable for a portion of or the entire program fee based on the following schedule:

- Formal withdrawal submitted **later than 30 days** before the first day of the program abroad: 100% of the program fee will be charged
- Formal withdrawal submitted **within 30-60 days** before the first day of the program abroad: 75% of the program fee will be charged
- Formal withdrawal submitted **within 60-90 days** before the first day of the program abroad: 50% of the program fee will be charged

In the event an unexpected emergency occurs within 30 days before the first day of the program abroad, students must provide a physician's certification that his/her condition prohibits participation. In this case, refunds will be limited to only those funds VCU is able to recover or that have not already been spent on behalf of the student.

If an applicant is rejected from the program, the \$250 application fee and deposit will be refunded.

This is why we want students to wait to register until they are 100% sure they will go on the program. Every year there are students who sign up and then later change their minds. At this point they realize that they either pay for the program and go, or pay for the program and don't go (in other words, they pay for the program whether they go or not).

Financial Aid Process

If students have a FAFSA on file for 2018-2019, then they *may* be eligible to use aid in the summer, but it depends on whether they have access to any aid, or if they have already used up their maximum aid allowed during the fall 2018 and spring 2019 semesters. Note that many students have maxed out on their federal aid by summertime, so the only option may be alternative loans or parent plus loans. In order to figure out whether students have any aid available to them, they must take the Financial Aid form included as an attachment on the application to the Financial Aid office during the application process, and the counselor will tell the student what the total estimated budget for the program is, and how much aid is currently available to the student. Students can complete this process before committing to the program so that they know whether or not they can afford it.

Financial aid is disbursed in the summertime and should coincide with the billing of the program fee and tuition. If students are eligible for aid in excess of the amount of the program fee and tuition (to cover expenses like airfare, spending money, supplies, etc.), then those funds will be refunded to the student in the form of a refund check (mailed to the home address) OR direct deposit (direct deposit is preferable to most students so that the funds are available to them once they are overseas, but students must set this up with Student Accounting). Students should not rely on financial aid funding to provide funds prior to departure because disbursement dates vary and may not coincide with departure dates; therefore, financial aid should be thought of as a reimbursement.

VI. Pre-Departure Preparations

Pre-departure Orientation

After your program participants are chosen, you will schedule **at least one** pre-departure orientation. Education Abroad can help you reserve a room and contact the students about the day and time of the orientation.

During the orientation please present students with information about the logistics, arrival time, daily itinerary, housing, meals, and a suggested packing list. This is also a good time to review the academic and behavioral requirements of the program and emphasize your expectations.

You may also want to address dating among program participants as well as with locals. Also, drugs and alcohol abuse should be addressed. Alcohol is a major cause of behavioral problems during study abroad programs. Many participants are under legal drinking age, and when they arrive in their host country they are suddenly able to drink alcohol legally.

Your orientation should also include information on the health, legal, environmental, political, cultural and religious conditions in the host country. You should also go over potential health and safety risks and emergency response measures.

During orientation, be sure to tell students that they should disclose to you any conditions (e.g. mental health concerns, medications, allergies, pre-existing conditions, etc.) that they may not have chosen to disclose in the online application. Oftentimes students are wary of documenting a pre-existing condition or medication in an online application, but are more comfortable informing you privately.

Please also make sure you are familiar with the health insurance coverage provided for the program. Provide all students in your group with a written list of reputable local medical clinics or hospitals and English-speaking doctors.

In addition, Education Abroad will require all students to complete the online pre-departure orientation and assessment prior to departure. This session covers passports, visas, travel arrangements, health insurance, immunizations, packing tips, course enrollment and cultural tips. All of your program participants will be expected to attend both your Pre-Departure Orientation and participate in the Education Abroad online pre-departure orientation. If there is a strong rationale, your Education Abroad liaison may attend your Pre-Departure Orientation meeting to provide the same information discussed in the online orientation.

Group Building

Short-term programs are, by nature, intensive and require group cohesion. Each year we find that the biggest challenges abroad are often student behavior problems. We recommend that you discuss conduct expectations before the program and upon arrival. During the orientation, discuss issues related to group travel and make sure that the participants know that the group interests are a priority. Reinforce the message that study abroad is an academic experience (hence the word “study”) and the academic obligations outweigh personal interests.

The students should also discuss their expectations and ideas for the program.

Blackboard

All VCU Study Abroad programs **should** post the following information on Blackboard, and each faculty leader is responsible for maintaining a Blackboard site for his/her program. VCU Education Abroad can establish your Blackboard site, but you are responsible for adding the information.

1. Dates that accommodations begin and end
2. Meeting day and time
3. Departure day and time
4. Course description and materials list
5. Packing tips
6. Itinerary for the entire program (if events are flexible please mark the itinerary accordingly)

7. A suggested flight for students to take and a “buy-by” date. A good faith effort at searching for lowest fares is expected. In most cases, this flight should be the same flight that one or both of the faculty leaders will be on. (This is not necessary if airfare is included in the cost of the program.)
8. Emergency contact information
9. Syllabus

Blackboard training is available at various times throughout the year. To register for training go to <https://training.vcu.edu/> and enter keyword “Blackboard.”

VII. During the Program

Role of the Faculty Leader

As the faculty leader, you assume multiple roles during the program. You are the professor, advisor, counselor, coordinator, facilitator, dean, and liaison all at once.

One of the first roles is as liaison with VCU. Once you have assembled all of the program participants on-site, notify the Education Abroad office immediately.

Make yourself available during the program! You should check in with students everyday and be available to meet with students regularly. Students must have your contact information.

Be aware of culture shock and its effect on students. Some students will exhibit visible signs of culture shock more than others. This may be a sign of a deeper mental health concern. Mental health will be discussed in the faculty leader training prior to departure. Concerning signs might include: appetite change, feelings of helplessness, irritability, homesickness, sleeping more than usual, feeling depressed, getting angry easily, boredom, or stereotyping of host culture.

Encourage students to eat and sleep well and to take care of their health during the program.

Behavior Problems

One of the biggest complaints/challenges that VCU faculty leaders mention is the behavior of the participants. Oftentimes faculty leaders are challenged by students who display a poor attitude and/or do not want to participate in the course. Alcohol is often to blame in behavioral problems on study abroad programs.

Most of the problems can be resolved; however, the faculty leaders must be prepared to act as disciplinarian. Behavior problems of one individual can have a negative effect on the entire group and may escalate if not addressed promptly. Examples of *minor* behavior problems include:

--lateness to class or activities

--rude behavior toward faculty leader or other participants

--indifference toward class and/or acting rudely during class

Faculty leaders must issue students a **verbal warning**. The best remedy is often a frank discussion with the student and repeating your expectations for behavior.

Faculty leaders should also keep a **written log** of each incident/offense. Telling the student that you are keeping a log is often an effective way to prevent future incidents. This also serves as a record should you need to take further corrective action.

*Please keep any personal issues or problems that you encounter with students confidential and do not share this information with any of the other program participants. It is important not to ostracize a member of the group by informing the others of his/her behavior/academic/personal problems.

Dismissal from a Program

Major behavior problems are grounds for dismissal from the program. Grounds include, but are not limited to:

- Behavior that is disruptive and detrimental to the group (repeated offenses)
- Behavior that disturbs the other participants
- Alcohol misuse
- Physical or sexual assault
- Harassment
- Possession, use or distribution of illegal drugs
- Theft
- Repeated bad or offensive behavior for which the student has been warned

The best way to avoid dismissing a student from a program is to continuously discuss behavior expectations before and during the program. Faculty leaders can also have students sign a contract at the beginning of the program that outlines the expectations. However, in cases of repeated behavior offenses, the faculty leader should be prepared to take corrective action and dismiss a student from the program.

If you have not already done so, at the time of dismissal document the violation(s) in writing. Have the student sign a statement that acknowledges that she or he is no longer a participant and must vacate the housing by the designated date. Please review all dismissals with Education Abroad.

Voluntary Withdrawal

Inevitably some students return early from a program for personal or family reasons, or because they simply no longer wish to be a part of the program. If a student decides to withdraw, he or

she should consult with you to determine whether a solution can be reached that would allow the student to stay.

If the student decides to withdraw after the consultation, he or she should sign a written statement that he or she is no longer a part of the program effective on the designated date and that the withdrawal is voluntary. The statement should also indicate that the student understands that all expenses from that point forward are his or her own responsibility, including housing and transportation home. No student will be allowed to remain in the program accommodations after formal withdrawal.

Please send a copy of this statement to the Education Abroad office. In no case should the faculty leader promise any refund of program fees or tuition. The student is still liable for both the program fee and the tuition.

If the student must return home for a family or medical emergency, it is at the faculty leader's discretion whether to continue to work with the student in order to assign a grade for the course. Education Abroad strongly recommends that faculty leaders have a contingency plan to work with students in these cases.

VIII. Safety and emergency procedures

VCU faculty leaders must adhere to the following guidelines:

Pre-departure preparations

1. All VCU program participants are issued an International Student Identification Card. faculty leaders should be familiar with the insurance provided by this card. See appendix.
2. Disclosure of risks must be made (see following section).
3. Faculty leaders **must** obtain an international cell phone for the duration of the program.
4. Itinerary and in-country contact information must be submitted before departure in order for the Education Abroad office to register the group in the Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP Enrollment).
5. Education Abroad must also have the contact information for the faculty leader at all times.
6. Faculty leaders are responsible for having a copy of the front page (photo page) of each participant's passport on hand in case of emergency. Students will be prompted to upload their passport photo in the online application system, StudioAbroad.
7. Faculty leaders are responsible for having a copy of the participant's emergency contact information, health conditions and prescription medications (provided by the student in the online application which is forwarded by email each time a student submits an application).
8. Contact VCU Student Health before Pre-Departure Orientation (Christine Charbonneau, cpcharbo@vcu.edu, is an excellent resource; also Bernadette Ucci (bucci@vcu.edu) and Karen Kirby (klkirby@vcu.edu)) to schedule a meeting to discuss health risks and strategies.

Emergency response plan

Each faculty leader should have an emergency response plan in place in case of an unforeseen event.

1. Faculty leaders must have a "three-phase" plan regarding regrouping of the faculty member and students (in other words, what if the hotel was impossible to return to, then . . ., then if this section of a city was not possible, then . . ., etc.).
2. Faculty leaders and students should always know where the nearest U.S. Embassy and/or Consular office is located and the phone number. This information is provided in the student's acceptance email; however a wallet sheet with this information would be helpful to give all students. Depending upon the countries and circumstances, students should understand that this is the most secure and, logistically, the most central area for them to return to providing it is still accessible.
3. Again, itinerary and in-country contact information must be submitted in order for the Education Abroad office to register the group in the Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP Enrollment).

Drugs and alcohol

Students participating in a VCU study abroad program are not held to U.S. alcohol and drug laws, but rather to those laws of the country in which they are visiting. Faculty members should advise students of the risks of drug and alcohol use.

Faculty leaders are, under **no** circumstances, allowed to purchase drugs or alcohol for program participants. Faculty members are not to use personal, state or any part of the budget funds to purchase alcohol for students.

Faculty members are expected to lead by example.

Students are reminded that they are subject to the same on-campus VCU rules and regulations while on a study abroad program; if they are accused of violating the university student code of conduct or honor policy, they may be subject to the university's judicial proceedings.

Disclosure of risks

In the case where an activity during the course of a program may necessitate warnings, it is the responsibility of the faculty leader that those risks have been made clear. Warnings must be obvious and direct, specific and comprehensible.

When making a warning obvious and direct, use words like “**do not**” and “**cannot**” instead of “**should not.**” Warnings are not suggestions, but rules by which to abide.

Warnings should be specific to the risk. Instructing or allowing students to proceed “at their own risk” means nothing if those risks have not been outlined for them.

The language of a warning must be comprehensible. This is an especially important issue for students whose native language may not be the same as that of the faculty leader.

Keep in mind that a part of the Study Abroad Meeting that VCU Education Abroad provides is disclosure of warnings and risks. Program participants are provided with the U.S. State Department's consular information sheet and worldwide caution in their registration acceptance form. However, it is the responsibility of the faculty leader to inform students of particular risk while the program is in progress.

Faculty are not responsible for a student's behavior during their free time. The point that 'students are held responsible for their own actions' must be made to students clearly — before and during a program.

Cell Phone Requirement

Faculty leaders **must** obtain an international cell phone for the duration of the program.

Health Insurance

Employees and students are advised to contact their health care provider prior to travel abroad to ensure they have coverage through their plan and to determine how to use their plan in the country where they will be traveling.

Faculty who subscribe the university's health insurance plan through Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield should visit <http://www.bcbs.com/> and click on "Find a Doctor or Hospital" and then "Locate Doctors Worldwide" to learn where they can receive care while abroad.

Medical Emergencies

For those who travel on VCU and VCU Health System business outside of the United States, emergency medical evacuation services are provided by Travel Assist. If you suffer a serious injury or sickness while traveling on University business, Travel Assist will coordinate your medically necessary emergency evacuation. Travel up to 365 consecutive days in duration is covered, including up to 14 days of leisure travel before, during, or after the university authorized trip.

Additional services available through Travel Assist include:

- Travel Medical Assistance
- Worldwide Travel Assistance
- Security Assistance Services
- Identity Theft Assistance

Employees, students, and other authorized travelers of VCU and the VCU Health System who are traveling abroad on an authorized trip should bring with them a Travel Assist brochure which outlines the Travel Assist services, or the Travel Assist ID Card. Both include the following contact information:

Toll Free (within the U.S.): 1-877-244-6871

Collect/Reverse Charge (outside the U.S.): +1-715-346-0859

Email: travelassist@aigbenefits.com

Note: Travel Assist services specifically exclude the cost of medical care. VCU travelers are responsible for their personal health care coverage.

For more information, contact VCU Insurance & Risk Management, 700 W. Grace Street, Suite 3200, Richmond 23284. Mgr, David Mattox (804-828-7531)/Asst. Mgr, Steve Kessinger (804-828-4989)

During the Program

Crisis response

A variety of situations can constitute a crisis. The guidelines below are to be used in response to the following:

Arrest of a student

Crime against a student not including sexual assault

Death of a student

Infectious disease outbreak among program participants

Missing student

Political emergencies and natural disasters

Psychiatric/mental health emergency

Serious injury/illness/hospitalization of a student

Sexual assault

No matter what the situation, be sure that the crisis response has been carried out before students are allowed to call or send e-mails home. Many times a snowball effect can be much worse than the original situation would have been.

In all cases:

Step I:

The faculty leader must contact VCU. If it is during work hours, contact Stephanie Tignor at (804) 827-7882 or via e-mail at davenportse@vcu.edu. If it is after hours, the faculty leader must contact **Stephanie's emergency-only mobile: 434-996-2816 or VCU Police at 804-828-1234.**

Step II:

When a student is injured or ill, it is the responsibility of the faculty leader to get him/her to the appropriate care facility and try to identify a hospital staff member who speaks English.

If a student is in a life-threatening condition, initial contact with the parents should be made through VCU Education Abroad. Complete details of the situation must be provided.

The faculty leader is under no circumstances to release the name of the student or make statements on behalf of VCU. The standard response should be, *"My first responsibility is to the students in this program, to their families and to the University. Thank you for understanding."*

All public statements must be coordinated through the Division of University Relations: Pamela Lepley, Vice President of University Relations, 828-6057 or Anne Buckley, Senior Director of Public Affairs, 828-6052. Both can also be reached at pager 804-759-7675 (on call/24-hour pager).

Step III:

Begin keeping a written log of actions taken and update it as the crisis progresses.

Step IV:

Contact local police, embassies and consulates as necessary.

Step V:

When the situation has been assessed and these steps have been completed, faculty leaders should inform students that they may then contact family and friends via phone and e-mail. *In the case of sexual assault, program participants who know about the incident should receive counsel on how to respect and protect the victim's identity before they are allowed to call home.*

It is the responsibility of VCU University News Services and the Global Education Office to make any public statements about a crisis occurring during the course of a program.

In the case of a terrorist attack:

Collect the group and get to the nearest embassy for evacuation. Contact VCU Education Abroad. Allow students to contact family members and inform them of evacuation plans. VCU Education Abroad will be in contact with the embassy as well.

State Department definition of terms (from <https://travel.state.gov/>)*Travel Advisory*

Starting in 2018, the Department of State issues a Travel Advisory for each country of the world. The Travel Advisory system replaces/updates the previous Consular Information Sheets and Travel Warnings.

Travel Advisories follow a consistent format and use plain language to help US citizens find and use important security information. Travel advisors apply up to four standard levels of advice, give a description of the risks, and provide clear actions US citizens should take to help ensure their safety. To see a complete list of Travel Advisories for every country in the world, see travel.state.gov/traveladvisories. Click on the [color-coded world map](#) for a global view.

Levels 1-4

The Travel Advisory appears at the top of each country page, with a color corresponding to each level:

- 1- Exercise normal precautions
- 2- Exercise increased caution
- 3- Reconsider travel
- 4- Do not travel

Level 1 - Exercise Normal Precautions: This is the lowest advisory level for safety and security risk. There is some risk in any international travel. Conditions in other countries may differ from those in the United States and may change at any time.

Level 2 - Exercise Increased Caution: Be aware of heightened risks to safety and security. The Department of State provides additional advice for travelers in these areas in the Travel Advisory. Conditions in any country may change at any time.

Level 3 - Reconsider Travel: Avoid travel due to serious risks to safety and security. The Department of State provides additional advice for travelers in these areas in the Travel Advisory. Conditions in any country may change at any time.

Level 4 – Do Not Travel: This is the highest advisory level due to greater likelihood of life-threatening risks. During an emergency, the U.S. government may have very limited ability to provide assistance. The Department of State advises that U.S. citizens not travel to the country or to leave as soon as it is safe to do so. The Department of State provides additional advice for travelers in these areas in the Travel Advisory. Conditions in any country may change at any time.

Varying Levels

We issue an overall Travel Advisory level for a country, but levels of advice may vary for specific locations or areas within a country. For instance, we may advise U.S. citizens to “Exercise Increased Caution” (Level 2) in a country, but to “Reconsider Travel” (Level 3) to a particular area within the country.

Risk Indicators

Travel Advisories at Levels 2-4 will contain clear reasons for the level assigned, using established risk indicators and specific advice to U.S. citizens who choose to travel there. These are:

- *C – Crime:* Widespread violent or organized crime is present in areas of the country. Local law enforcement may have limited ability to respond to serious crimes.
- *T – Terrorism:* Terrorist attacks have occurred and/or specific threats against civilians, groups, or other targets may exist.
- *U – Civil Unrest:* Political, economic, religious, and/or ethnic instability exists and may cause violence, major disruptions, and/or safety risks.
- *H – Health:* Health risks, including current disease outbreaks or a crisis that disrupts a country’s medical infrastructure, are present. The issuance of a Centers for Disease Control Travel Notice may also be a factor.
- *N - Natural Disaster:* A natural disaster, or its aftermath, poses danger.
- *E - Time-limited Event:* Short-term event, such as elections, sporting events, or other incidents that may pose safety risks.
- *O – Other:* There are potential risks not covered by previous risk indicators. Read the country’s Travel Advisory for details.

Interactive Map

An interactive map is on each country page. Click on “*View Larger Map*” to see countries color coded with the Travel Advisory levels. Countries with varying levels of advice will be striped to indicate you should read the whole travel advisory for more details.

Alerts

U.S. embassies and consulates abroad issue Alerts to inform U.S. citizens of specific safety and security concerns in a country, such as demonstrations, crime trends, and weather events. A standard, easy-to-read format makes them easy to access, understand, and take action. Recent Alerts for a country appear below the Travel Advisory.

VCU Education Abroad Program Cancellation

The Global Education Office reserves the right to reject or cancel any program in the interest of safety.

1. Students who wish to cancel or return home in response to a war-related or terrorist action do so of their own accord **unless** the U.S. State Department has issued a Travel Advisory Level 4 for the area in which a program takes place.
2. In the case of a “worldwide state of war,” which would be declared by the U.S. State Department, all programs will be canceled. However, it must be understood that having the U.S. military involved in conflict **does not** constitute a world war.
3. Students have signed, as a part of the registration form, an agreement and release. This is a binding contract, and faculty leaders should be familiar with its contents.
4. A State Department Alerts of a short-term warning of possible danger does not constitute the cancellation of a program by the university.