



FACULTY-LED STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS HANDBOOK

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Fitchburg State University

Faculty-led Study Abroad Program Handbook

INTRODUCTION

This handbook was created with the goal of providing guidance to Fitchburg State University faculty members who wish to develop and lead a faculty-led program abroad. The handbook outlines procedures to secure necessary university approvals, recruit student participants and serves as a tool to plan an effective faculty-led program.

Studying abroad provides students with unique learning opportunities beyond those taught in a traditional classroom. After their study abroad experience, students often remark that they feel refreshed and invigorated from their experiences, and approach their studies with a new energy and broadened worldview. They may develop new academic interests, change directions or bring a new focus to their studies and their lives. Study abroad participants gain valuable professional skills such as critical-thinking and problem-solving, conflict resolution, and cross-cultural communication, while enhancing the international dimension of their intellectual and career development.

I. What is a Faculty-Led Study Abroad Program?

A faculty-led study abroad program is one in which a faculty member oversees a study abroad experience for students enrolled in a credit-bearing course. Programs can be designed around an established on-campus course and include an experience abroad or can be an entire course taught abroad. Students enroll in the program and associated course to satisfy a degree program requirement. The faculty member, staff from the Office of International Education and an external study abroad International Education Organization (IEO) work together to organize cultural activities and excursions that enhance the educational experience abroad. Faculty-led program lengths vary generally between two and eight weeks.

A faculty-led study abroad program exposes students to a variety of environments and cultivate opportunities for strong mentoring relationships between faculty and students. Such programs help internationalize the campus and invite students to expand their perspectives and enrich their lives.

II. Types of Faculty-led Study Abroad Courses at Fitchburg State University

- A course offered during the Summer Sessions, generally in 4 week formats.
- A course offered in the Fall or Spring with travel embedded during the semester, spring break or at the end of the semester.
- A course offered during the January term, also referred to as “Winter Session.”

III. PREPARING A PROGRAM PROPOSAL

A. Eligibility and Preparedness

A faculty leader must have adequate academic knowledge to fulfill the goals of their proposed course and have the ability to lead a group of students abroad.

In addition, a faculty leader should:

1. Have sufficient expertise in travel to recognize/anticipate the pitfalls, routes, safety concerns, and advantages the proposed destination offers.
2. Be emotionally and physically prepared to deal with the 24/7 presence of a diverse group of students and their varied concerns and needs.
3. Be prepared to deal in a timely and patient manner with the academic, financial and personnel issues involved in the faculty-led program proposal process from planning to final evaluation.
4. Present the course in a timely manner to one's department for discussion and approval as necessary.
5. Be prepared to submit a complete program proposal to the Office of International Education by the posted deadline.

B. Assessing the Need for a Program/Course

We encourage faculty to develop creative programs with strong foundations that provide safe activities for our students. Our best advice is to cast a wide net with the requirements your course will satisfy so that a large number of students can take advantage of the opportunity.

Before planning and developing a program, the following questions should be considered:

1. Will this program enroll at least ten (10) students in order to make it financially feasible to cover program costs? Programs with enrollment of less than 10 students will be cancelled.
2. Does the program fill a curricular need for a major, minor, LA&S requirement or elective?
3. Are prerequisites required for language or other courses?
4. Is there an existing program that already meets these needs?
5. Does the program offer something unique that cannot be accomplished on campus?
6. Is there a specific reason that this program should take place in the specified location?
7. Does the time of year when the program is planned appeal to students? Is the length of the program appropriate for the academic content?
8. Will the cost of the program be reasonable and competitive with similar programs?
9. Are seasonal costs, airfare, lodging, food, etc. higher or lower during the time this program will be offered?
10. Is the political/economic situation stable in the country of destination? Are there any U.S. State Department travel warnings in place for this country?

11. Which students will this program attract (specific majors/minors)? Will the program attract students outside the major/minors department?
12. Would you consider a recruitment plan that extends beyond your department, and include schools participating in the Massachusetts Council for International Education (MaCIE)?

C. Program Location

When considering a location for your program, you should propose a place where you would feel comfortable leading a group of students. This may be a place where you have lived and/or traveled and where you are familiar with the people and resources available to make your program successful.

D. Understanding the needs of students

The study abroad experience may well be the first time travelling outside of the United States for many of the student participants. The Office of International Education encourages any faculty member leading a program for the first time to speak with their peers who have led study-abroad programs to better understand the expectations being placed upon them while leading a faculty-led program at Fitchburg State University.

Leading a group of students in this type of program is a commitment of time and energy. Faculty leaders are involved in every aspect of the program and are often on call 24 hours a day when leading a group overseas. The NAFSA Association of International Educators Guide to Successful Short-Term Programs Abroad states that “Study abroad faculty must be true leaders, skilled in diplomacy, logistics, and group dynamics.”

E. Compensation

Faculty are compensated for the course being taught according to their faculty contract. If the course is part of the day schedule in the fall or spring semesters, the faculty member will teach the course as part of their regular load. If the course is being offered through Graduate and Continuing Education (GCE), the faculty member will be compensated at the DGCE faculty contract rates. In addition, assuming enrollment meets the minimum participant requirement, faculty travel (including housing accommodations) will be covered through the program budget.

F. Adhering to Ethical Standards

The *Forum on Education Abroad* has developed standards of good practice for the field of education abroad. According to them, “[t]he purpose of the Code of Ethics is to provide a guide for making ethical decisions to ensure that those in the education abroad field provide services in accord with the highest ethical standards, with the ultimate goal of ensuring that students’ international educational experiences are as rich and meaningful as possible.”

Full document is available at: <https://forumea.org/resources/standards-of-good-practice/>

Faculty are responsible for maintaining the strict codes of conduct as outlined in the [Fitchburg State University Employee Policies Handbook](#) while performing their duties during a study abroad program, and are reminded of the on-the-job restrictions as outlined in the [Conflict of Interest Law for State Employees, Section 3 a-g](#).

IV. PROGRAM APPROVAL PROCESS

Full-time faculty members are eligible to submit a proposal for a faculty-led study abroad program. Faculty must begin developing their proposed program at least 18 months prior to anticipated travel.

The program and course approval process begins at the academic departmental level, similar to the process for any on-campus course. Faculty must adhere to the following steps:

A. Program Proposal

1. Complete a faculty-led study abroad proposal form by deadline:

(See Appendix B for the application form). Website link:

<http://www.fitchburgstate.edu/offices-services-directory/international-education/study-abroad/faculty-resources/>

The proposal must include course description, syllabus, location, and all other pertinent information.

2. Secure department chair support – Program proposal and timelines must be approved by department chair (signature on proposal form required).
3. Secure divisional dean support – Program proposal must be reviewed and approved by the appropriate dean (signature on proposal form required).
4. International Education Director approval – Program proposal must be reviewed and approved by the Director of the Office of International Education (signature on proposal form required).
5. Academic Affairs approval – Once the Department, Dean and the Office of International Education have reviewed the program proposal, it will be forwarded to Academic Affairs for final approval (signature on proposal form required).

B. Course Scheduling

Once the study abroad proposal has been approved, the course(s) to be offered as part of the program must be scheduled through the regular scheduling process. Courses may be

offered in the regular day schedule as part of full-time faculty member's load or through Graduate and Continuing Education (GCE) as overload.

V. PROGRAM PLANNING

Once the faculty-led study abroad program has been approved, a meeting should be scheduled with the Office of International Education to begin planning.

Important: All Faculty-led Programs at Fitchburg State University must be supported by a study abroad/International Education Organization provider (IEO).

The OIE at Fitchburg State University works closely with a number of study abroad providers (IEOs) to support our faculty-led programs. This support includes liability, on-the-ground logistics, and crisis and risk management. Each program will have an on-site director that will be your contact in country. The on-site director is there to help make this program a success for you and the students, and will work in tandem with you to satisfy this goal.

At the initial meeting with OIE, the faculty member will work with OIE staff to develop program details to facilitate identifying the best suited study abroad IEO provider to support their program. OIE will send information out for bids to study abroad IEO providers if applicable. Once an initial proposal is received from the provider(s) and the best option is determined, the proposal will be shared with the faculty member. Then, the faculty member, OIE staff, and the study abroad IEO provider will collaborate to develop housing options, organized excursions, itinerary for class meetings, and timelines for excursions.

OIE staff will negotiate costs with the provider to ensure the best price and services.

A. Program Itinerary Considerations

Plan your program to allow students to have the opportunity for downtime, self-exploration, shopping, socializing, and doing what appeals to them. Students need time to experience the host culture to get the full benefit of being abroad. When applicable, please address the following elements in your program:

1. Instruction by local scholars and experts if applicable
2. Opportunities for student interaction with people from the host culture
3. Opportunities for experiential learning
4. Exercises for focused reflection on learning experience
5. Plans to connect with any alumni who are from the host country or currently working in the vicinity of the program
6. Journaling about the students' experiences
7. Debriefing sessions with the group

B. Overview of Faculty Responsibilities During the Execution of the Program

1. At least one faculty (or staff) member is required to escort the students to and from the overseas destination
2. Work collaboratively and openly with the Office of International Education, the selected IEO provider and on-site coordinator
3. Submit itineraries to the OIE and IEO Provider
4. Serve as the communication liaison with OIE staff while abroad
5. Accompany students during all “academic” and scheduled social portions of the trip
6. Understand and follow emergency protocols for the safety and security of participants
7. Understand University purchasing regulations before utilizing the University credit card (if allowed)
8. Provide assistance when a student is in need, and intervene when appropriate
9. Maintain daily contact with program participants and the IEO provider while abroad
10. Stay in regular contact with program applicants/participants prior to the start of the program and follow-up with them after the program ends.
11. Provide participants with a detailed program itinerary that includes emergency contact addresses and telephone numbers and advise students of all changes
12. Administer required evaluation instruments
13. Contact the on-site director in case of any emergency situation

C. Overview of the Responsibilities of the Office of International Education

1. Assist in actively marketing the program on campus
2. Identify a knowledgeable, reliable and compatible IEO provider to confirm in-country logistic arrangements
3. Examine prices and alternatives of each IEO provider in order to keep the program fee financially feasible for students.
4. Submit participant rosters to Student Accounts, Student Development Office and AVPAA
5. Develop a financially sound program budget incorporating an emergency fee and enough of a margin to offset unforeseen expenses like currency fluctuations, airline surcharges, etc.
6. Facilitate administrative processes and adhere to institutional policies
7. Provide pre-departure orientation
8. Be the official contact person at the University
9. Liaise between IEO provider and the University, faculty support and the administration.

VI. MARKETING AND RECRUITMENT

Faculty must market the program to the student body at large, collaborating with the OIE to create effective marketing materials. The OIE will develop webpages to highlight the program and disseminate pertinent information and provide other assistance to effectively market programs. Previous programs have demonstrated that faculty are the best recruiters for their programs. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the faculty leader to fill the course associated with a program.

Any marketing materials must be approved by the OIE. OIE will work with appropriate university offices.

A. Determining Enrollment Potential

The faculty member leading the program is responsible for filling the course with assistance from the Office of International Education. Any course that does not meet minimum course enrollment guidelines set by the University may be cancelled. Program budgets are developed using ten students as the minimum. Typically, if more than ten students enroll in the program, the budget can be adjusted to potentially lower the student cost and/or enhancements can be made to the cultural excursions and activities.

Faculty will work with the Office of International Education to determine the optimal faculty to student ratio. If two faculty are needed to support the program, the budget will be adjusted as needed. The OIE works closely with the study abroad provider to negotiate rates and support for faculty leading the program.

VII. STUDENT INQUIRIES AND APPLICATION PROCESS

The OIE will work with faculty leads to establish contact persons for program participation inquiries. OIE staff are available to answer program specific questions, in addition to the faculty lead and the program webpage.

Students can apply to faculty-led programs through OIE's online application system. Links to the applications can be found on the OIE website and on the individual program webpages. <https://www.fitchburgstate.edu/offices-services-directory/international-education/study-abroad/>

Admission to programs is contingent upon proof of an acceptable GPA (2.0 minimum, with some programs at 2.5)

Students can work with the Office of Financial Aid to identify any assistance available to defray costs when applicable. The OIE webpage will promote any scholarships available to students on any particular program when applicable.

VIII. PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

A. Registration

Once the minimum number of required students are enrolled (typically 10 students), the OIE can request a contract from the IEO provider. The contract will need to be approved by AVPAA and signed by Vice President of Finance and Administration.

Upon registration, Students Accounts will bill each student for the course/transportation costs associated with the program. Payment schedules will be posted on the OIE website. All payments will be made to Fitchburg State University via the Office of Student Accounts. All invoices from IEO providers are received and paid through the Office of Student Accounts.

Syllabi and Book orders: *Please inform the bookstore when placing your book order that the books are for a study abroad course, and should be made available for students to purchase in advance if the course is to be taught abroad in its entirety.* The syllabi should follow university approved guidelines.

Attendance Policy: Based on the comments of professors who have participated in programs in the past, a clear mandatory attendance policy for the period abroad is one of the most important considerations recommended for building a strong foundation for a successful program.

B. Pre-departure orientation

OIE will work with the faculty to provide a pre-departure orientation (PDO) for the program. This PDO will be offered at a time appropriate for all involved in the program. Some PDOs are offered during class time, while others are offered during the Tuesday 3:30 pm meeting hour.

Attendance at the PDO is mandatory for the faculty leading a program and the students. Parents can be extremely nervous prior to their children leaving and while they are away; this should be kept in mind if/when communicating with them. Encourage parents to partner with their student to learn about topics covered during PDO.

All participants in the faculty-led program must have a **passport valid for at least six months after** their return date. Many countries will deny entry at border or port of entry if the passport is not valid for at least 6 months after the return date.

C. Airport Transportation

Faculty participates in organizing transportation to Boston Logan Airport, *when applicable*, and meets students/parents at the airport. Faculty leaders must indicate transportation arrangements to Logan airport during the development phase in order to develop a realistic budget.

Faculty must arrive/depart with students. If two faculty members are participating, arrangements can be made between faculty leaders regarding sharing this responsibility. Any alternate arrangements must be approved by the OIE.

Faculty collaborate with the study abroad provider's on-site directors and all pertinent offices on campus to ensure students safety while abroad.

D. Emergencies & Crisis Management

Emergencies do happen, whether at home or abroad, which is why each program is supported by an IEO provider who has a crisis management protocol in place. A strong relationship with the on-site director and the OIE staff will help guide faculty through any eventuality that may occur.

E. After Arrival at the Site

- **Institutional Liaising:** Faculty are representatives of Fitchburg State University at all times on this program. Past program participants have done an excellent job of building relationships based on respect and courtesy with both the on-site director and the citizenry. Faculty are encouraged to make choices that will sustain these relationships, and therefore provide students with the opportunity to attend this program in the future.
- **Settling In:** Faculty should tour the facilities and become familiar with the classrooms, computers and other resources, if applicable. We strongly recommend that faculty adjust their expectations to accommodate what is provided abroad. For example, computer resources are not always the same and students have less access to them. This could impact assignment formats and research options as well as students' attitudes.
- **Teach:** Enjoy relaying the information about the wonderful area you are an expert in to your students! Manage all classroom teaching responsibilities as you would on campus, maintaining all students' course records using Blackboard. Inform OIE immediately of any IT issues so that we can work to resolve them on our end.

- **Excursion Readiness:** Work with the on-site director to prepare students for the excursions including etiquette, cultural sensitivity, and expected outcomes of the visits. **Do not attempt to change the excursions without consulting the on-site director and OIE. Changes in the itinerary should be avoided in order to maintain the budget that has been carefully developed.**
- **Student Health:** Faculty should collaborate with the on-site director to ensure students maintain overall good health, making sure students stay well hydrated throughout the program. Take note of the physical conditions of students and consult with the on-site director for any medical needs. Consult with Counseling Services if you have any questions or concerns.
- **Study Abroad Student Agreement and Release:** Communicate with students your expectations with which they will comply and state clear stipulations in the *Study Abroad Student Agreement and Release* document signed before departure. Advise on-site staff and OIE immediately of current or potential worrisome student behaviors so we can work together to provide resources when necessary.

F. After Return to Fitchburg State University

- Submit final grades
- Submit necessary evaluations
- Hold debriefing meeting/activity for program participants on campus

Resources:

The Guide to Successful Short-Term Programs Abroad, NAFSA: Association of International Educators

Code of Ethics for Education Abroad; Forum on Education Abroad

The Forum's Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad, Forum on Education Abroad

APPENDIX A

OVERVIEW OF TIMELINES FOR COURSE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

At least 1.5 years from departure	11-10 months from departure	9 months from departure	8-7 months from departure	6-5 months from departure	
<p>Department chair and divisional dean must be consulted to gain support for the program concept.</p> <p>Course must be approved by department chair and appropriate dean and VPAA.</p> <p>Meet with the Director of International Education and Coordinator of Study Abroad to discuss your program proposal, syllabus, itinerary, and initial budget considerations.</p> <p>Complete the Survey to submit the course Proposal</p>	<p>Develop program framework, itinerary, and objectives. OIE will consult with study abroad providers regarding available services and costs.</p> <p>Further develop academic aspects of the program, including course description.</p> <p>Submit Faculty-Led Study Abroad Course AVPAA for approval.</p>	<p>Finalize program itinerary to submit to the IEO.</p> <p>IEO will determine final program costs and OIE set a program fee.</p> <p>Establish application procedures and deadlines.</p> <p>IEO will finalize agreement for review and signature of AVPAA and VP</p>	<p>Finalize program itinerary to submit to the IEO.</p> <p>IEO will determine final program costs and OIE set a program fee.</p> <p>Establish application procedures and deadlines.</p> <p>IEO will finalize agreement for review and signature of AVPAA and VP</p>	<p>Determine and activate marketing plan.</p> <p>Develop marketing materials for the program (flyers, posters, brochures, web text, etc.); staff of the OIE and the IEO can assist you.</p> <p>Begin promoting program and recruiting students</p>	

5-2 months from departure OIE will provide list of accepted students to Dean of Student Development. Accepted students will send deposits to Student Accounts Be sure there is a minimum of ten students registered	1 month from departure OIE will provide a mandatory pre-departure orientation Provide students with required liability forms, to be submitted to International Education Office by agreed-upon deadline	The day before departure Remind students exact time to meet at the airport and location to meet Remind students with things to bring such as passport, etc. Communicate with students about transportation to go to the airport	The day of departure Must be in the airport three (3) hours before departure Meet and greet students and parents at the airport Check the number of students (have a good count)	At the site Work with the IEO site director Be the point of contact of your home institution Enjoy your class 1 week after RETURN Submit final grades 2 weeks after return Submit all financial documents, if necessary (receipts, etc.) to the OIE 1 month after return Submit student evaluations and program report to the OIE Hold debriefing meeting/activity for program participants on campus

APPENDIX B—Faculty Led Study Abroad Proposal

FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY **FACULTY-LED STUDY ABROAD PROPOSAL**

Please include a syllabus if available. If not submitted with this submission, it will be requested later.

Faculty Name: _____ Phone #: _____
E-mail Address: _____ Academic Division: _____
Academic Department: _____
Faculty Partner Name(s) (if applicable): _____

Program Location: _____
The Office of International Education at Fitchburg State University works closely with a number of study abroad providers (IEOs) to support our faculty-led programs. This support includes liability, on-the-ground logistics, and crisis and risk management. Each program will have an on-site director that will be your contact in country. The on-site director is there to help make this program a success for you and the students, and will work in tandem with you to satisfy this goal.

Proposed Course (27 characters or fewer): _____ Number of Credits: _____
The course will be scheduled through: ☐ GCE ☐ Day
Course Number (if an existing course): _____
The course will be taught as: ☐ Part of day load ☐ Overload
Study Abroad Program Length: _____ Start Date: _____ End Date: _____
Course Length (if different from program): _____ Start Date: _____ End Date: _____
Reoccurrence/Rotation (if you are proposing a recurring program, please indicate the potential rotation and the student advantages of this rotation.): _____

Program Description, Educational Objectives and Outcomes (Please describe the program goals, purpose and potential activities that would facilitate a meaningful cross-cultural experience for students, faculty and the host community.): _____

Travel/Leading Experience (Briefly describe your previous travel experience and experience leading student groups): _____

Type directly into this 2 page PDF
that is linked off of the Faculty
Resource Page of our website.
fitchburgstate.edu/studyabroad

FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY **FACULTY-LED STUDY ABROAD PROPOSAL**

If any of the trips you led were through Fitchburg State please give an overview of that program and include the number of students who participated: _____

Language Please describe your level of proficiency in the Principal Language of the Program Location: _____

If the course will be conducted in English, explain how you would maximize students' integration to the local language/culture? _____

Enrollment Is the course Open to all Majors? ☐ Yes ☐ No
(If not open, which student populations would be eligible to participate?): _____

Will this course satisfy a Liberal Arts and Sciences requirement? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Will the program be open to students from other universities? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Will the program be open to both undergraduate and graduate students? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Additional Information Please list anything you would like to include about this program. _____

Signatures

Signatures below indicate approval of this proposal.

Department Head
Name typed/printed: _____
Department Head Signature: _____ Date: _____

Dean
Name typed/printed: _____
Dean Signature: _____ Date: _____

Director of International Ed.
Name typed/printed: _____
Director of International Ed. Signature: _____ Date: _____

Associate VP Academic Affairs
Name typed/printed: _____
Assoc. VP Academic Affairs Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: INT 2020 018

The Office of International Education would like to sincerely thank the International Advisory committee members of 2016-2017 for their contributions to this handbook. Their assistance has helped shape the process of creating and running successful faculty-led study abroad programs.

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