



## Tips for Developing a Successful Short-term Study Abroad Program

### PROGRAM LOGISTICS

*Can you follow through on your responsibilities as a Faculty Leader?*

- If you haven't led a group of students overseas before, give serious consideration to whether or not you are up to the challenge. Your duties as Faculty Leader of a study abroad program stretch beyond those of professor - you will be a recruiter, administrator, financial manager, institutional representative, advisor, facilitator and crisis manager.
- Faculty Leaders should, ideally, be familiar with the social, economic, and political environment as well as the local customs. Generally, the International Programs Office (IPO) does not recommend that you choose a program location unless you are already familiar with it yourself.
- Visit the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs website at <http://travel.state.gov> to make sure the U.S. Department of State has not issued a travel warning for the country or countries you wish to visit. You should also visit this site to gather country-specific information on security, health and safety issues, international travel, travel alerts and travel warnings, international travel safety for students, the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (Travel Registration), and more.
- You may want to consider using a third-party custom program provider who can offer you 24/7 program support and take care of the logistical and local lodging and travel arrangements on-site - especially if you are a first-time Faculty Leader. IPO can provide you with a list of suggested providers and help you solicit program proposals and price quotes.

*Can the program attract a sufficient number of participants?*

- If yours is a new program and/or if you have never run a Westfield study abroad program before, we advise you to build your program with a target enrollment of fifteen (15) students.
- IPO will suggest recruitment strategies to help you reach target enrollment.
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*Can the program be offered at a reasonable cost that is not prohibitive for students?*

- For some programs, visits to multiple destinations/countries may be necessary. However, keep in mind that traveling from place to place (by plane, coach, or train) can be very

expensive and difficult to coordinate. Participants should not be expected to spend excessive time on buses, planes, and trains getting to the next place. Be intentional about how you plan your itinerary.

- The excursions you plan will have an impact on the overall cost of the program. Ask yourself if the added value to the course content is worth cost of getting to a particular site.
- When arranging lodging, please consider the following:
- Will faculty housing be complimentary? Will you be housed in the same place as your students?
- If students will be staying in student residences (dorms), are there cooking facilities available? Is bedding provided (sheets, towels, etc.)?
- Is there a cafeteria? If so, approximately how much do meals cost? Or, will some of the meals be covered in the lodging costs?
- Are bathrooms private or shared?
- Is there a laundry facility available in-house or close by?
- Is there Wi-Fi Internet access in the rooms or in the building? Is there a supplemental charge for internet service?
- Consider the availability of cell service and costs.
- Should students purchase inexpensive phones abroad or use their own phones with an international plan?
- Are there apps that will allow students to communicate with family and friends for free (Whats App, Skype, Viber, etc.)? Will your cell phone work abroad, or will you need to make alternative arrangements?
- What will your communication plan be with students?
- Will your program require classroom space? Do you have university contacts in the host country who might be able to help you acquire space for free or at a reduced rate?
- Will you arrange for arrival and departure transportation to and from airports?

## ACADEMIC COMPONENTS

*Are the content and delivery of the course(s) enhanced by the international location?*

Do proposed excursions or field trips have academic relevance to the course?

- The goal of global education is to help participants engage in their learning within the context of the culture they will be in while abroad. Program activities should relate to your discipline as well as to the program's course content.

How many credits will you offer on your program?

- The length of your program should correspond with the number of credit hours that you will be offering. Thirty-seven point five (37.5) contact hours are required for a three (3)-credit course.
- Study abroad is highly experiential. Students will be "in class" for longer periods of time than they normally would be back here in Massachusetts - not necessarily in the classroom, but on buses, field trips, excursions, site visits, and experiencing and engaging with the local culture.
- Are you requiring pre- and/or post-coursework around the actual abroad component? If so, factor that in to the contact hours as well.

Academic units have the final say regarding course offerings and course content.

When designing your course (if it will be a new one) or re-purposing an existing WSU course, capitalize on the fact that you will be abroad.

- Choose course topics that appeal to a wider audience or are particularly relevant due to international or pop culture news coverage. (Ex., a New Zealand film studies class that focuses on Peter Jackson and The Lord of the Rings movies or a political science program to Brussels that focuses on the European Union.)
- Use your professional network to make connections or gain entry to cultural sites for students.
- Build in experiential components. Instead of only lecturing about a particular topic, can you take the students on a field trip that will illustrate first-hand the points that you are conveying? Sometimes actually experiencing something viscerally is more powerful than words. Take advantage of your location to make the course material even more impactful for students.
- Incorporate observation and reflection into your course activities and student deliverables.
- Consider including “compare and contrast” exercises that prompt the students to analyze what they are learning and observing about the host culture in relation to their own culture.
- Make deeper connections and give students opportunities to dig below the surface level of what they are experiencing on site. (Ex., the UK Food & Culture program looks at the importance of food and how British imperialism influenced British food and even the royal botanical gardens.)

To make your program more attractive to students, offer courses that do the following:

- Fulfill Westfield Core requirement. This will attract students across the University and not just from your discipline. Make sure to plan ahead—[approvals for Core designations](#) happen well in advance.
- Fulfill major/minor, or certificate requirements.
- Special Topics(ST) courses are fine, but it is not always immediately obvious to students how they will work with their program of study. Paint this picture for them in your marketing materials, class talks, info sessions, and orientation meetings.
  - o If offering Special Topics courses, how are you leveling them: lower division or upper division? Many students often reach a point where they need upper division electives to fulfill graduation requirements, so skew toward that.

Use study abroad coursework to solve problems:

- Are there required or popular courses that your academic unit offers that are enrollment capped and difficult for student to get into? If so, *consider offering an abroad option.*