

I. COURSE APPROVAL

MERCER ABROAD GUIDELINES	FOR DEPARTMENTAL CONSIDERATION
<p>Study abroad programs require course credit for approval. Below are the current approved models for study abroad programs. Please select the model appropriate for the program you want to develop and create a syllabus for the course. You must ensure that the academic component of the course fits both the credit hours you are suggesting and the timeframe in which the program will take place.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One-credit optional travel <u>add on to a regular 3-4 credit semester course.</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Travel may occur during a semester break (fall or spring), b. Or at the completion of a term (December or May). 2. Three-credit “stand alone” travel course during spring break. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. With advanced planning, students could include this course within the term and it would count toward their full-time status. b. Intensive pre-departure meetings or online coursework may be necessary to satisfy the academic work necessary to qualify for three credits. 3. Multiple-course program (2-4 courses) in which courses are taught by more than one faculty member. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. These programs are typically summer programs ranging from 4-8 weeks in length. b. If planned well in advance, a semester-long program is an option as long as participating students maintain full-time status (by enrolling in at least 12 credit hours). 4. One-credit travel course. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. These programs are typically associated with students attending or presenting at international conferences and earning experiential credit. 	<input type="checkbox"/> Is this course an overload? <input type="checkbox"/> Who is paying for the teaching? <input type="checkbox"/> Are there enrollment benchmarks? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the course already exist? <input type="checkbox"/> Is the course section coded for travel? <input type="checkbox"/> Is this course satisfying graduation requirements?

II. PROGRAM DATES

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In general, the dates of a travel program should not overlap university classes in session. 2. Additionally, dates should fall within defined academic terms. 3. When programs are planning to depart after the official end of a term (as in 1.b. above), dates must be reviewed by the registrar, and approved, before recruitment for the program begins. 	<input type="checkbox"/> If the travel overlaps semester/term dates, will students be excused for missing classes? <input type="checkbox"/> Is the timeframe appropriate for the amount of credit assigned?
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III. PROGRAM LEADER(S)

<p>All faculty led programs abroad require two program leaders to ensure student safety and program quality. A variety of options is available for fulfilling this requirement:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Primary: Teaching faculty member; Secondary: Assisting faculty member (1 course) 2. Primary: Teaching faculty member; Secondary: Teaching faculty member (2+ courses) 3. Primary: Teaching faculty member; Secondary: Mercer University staff member* 4. Primary: Teaching faculty member; Secondary: Approved volunteer* 5. Primary: Teaching faculty member; Secondary: Third party provider support person* <p>Best practice for the student: faculty ratio for programs abroad is 12:1. Programs with a student: faculty ratio smaller than 8:1 may not be financially feasible.</p> <p>*See the <i>Policy on Non-Faculty Program Leaders for Study Abroad</i> for details.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> How will the cost of the program leaders be covered? <input type="checkbox"/> What are the incentives for non-teaching faculty/staff to participate? <input type="checkbox"/> Do staff members have to use vacation time to participate?
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IV. PROGRAM PLANNING & ITINERARY

While a complete itinerary is not necessary at the proposal stage, a general outline will help the OIP staff determine how to advise the program leader moving forward. Once the program is approved, **a full itinerary must be completed before the program is approved for recruitment.** Please consider the following points in building the itinerary:

1. How do the planned activities serve the learning outcomes of the program?
2. Do any of the planned activities involve potential risk or liability; if so, are those risks covered by the University insurance policy, or are they excluded?
3. How will any scheduled student free time be managed?
4. Is the individual student cost (direct and indirect) of all planned activities included in the program budget?
5. Has the cost of faculty/leader participation in scheduled activities included in the budget?
6. If some costs are not included in the budget, how will students be made aware of the additional costs?
7. Are optional activities or activities with additional costs necessary for achieving the program/course objectives and learning outcomes?
8. Are all activities appropriate for students who may need accommodations?
9. Is the time allotted for each activity realistic?

- Is the complete program itinerary required as part of the course syllabus?
- Should student engagement in program activities be considered in the assessment of student outcomes?
- Do changes in program itinerary need to be communicated according to policy governing changes to a syllabus?

V. PROGRAM BUDGET

A frugal, yet all-inclusive budget is vital to both the success of the study abroad program recruitment, and student satisfaction.

You can use the *Estimated Budget Worksheet* provided on the [Mercer Abroad website](#) under *Faculty Resources* for ease in calculating costs.

Please consider the following questions in developing the **PROGRAM BUDGET**:

1. Have you considered all transportation needs: Flights, airport transfer (both ways), daily transportation in country, parking (in terms of additional costs), vehicle rentals, etc.
2. Will students need/have access to laundry facilities? Are these costs included?
3. Have you considered all food and lodging needs?
4. Have the costs of each daily activity (entry fees, etc.) in the program itinerary been included?
5. Are all the costs of all program leaders' participation needs included?

Once the program budget is final and the individual student costs are determined, but **BEFORE** you begin recruiting for the program, please consider these **additional questions** in developing the **STUDENT PARTICIPATION BUDGET**:

1. Is the cost of tuition included in the final individual student budget?
2. Are any costs NOT associated with the program budget included in the student budget (i.e.: flights, food, laundry, activity fees, souvenirs, etc.)?
3. **Is it clear to the students what portion of the budget is fixed (i.e. tuition and program costs) vs. estimated (#2 in student participation budget).**
4. Is it clear to the parents what the total student cost will be for participation?

NOTE: Please also consider the following budgetary points during the program development. The OIP staff is ready to assist you in planning for these issues:

1. Setting and managing deadlines for student deposits and program payments
2. Accessing and managing the program funds from abroad
3. Planning for cash advances and fund reimbursements
4. Managing the financial implications of student withdrawal from the program
5. Managing communication regarding student finances and the program budget

- Are the courses associated with this program part of the faculty member's annual teaching load?
- Do you have funds budgeted to cover the cost of faculty payments for teaching this course if it is an overload or an adjunct assignment?
- Is there a minimum requirement for the number of students enrolled for this course related to the salary for teaching the course?
- Can the teaching stipend be built into the program budget?
- How and when will the payment for teaching courses associated with this program be distributed?

VI. LOCATION & RISK ASSESSMENT

When choosing the location for your program abroad, it is important to consider how the location adds value to the course you are teaching, or how the course you will teach will add an academic component to the destination.

If the location is assigned a LEVEL 3 Travel Advisory by the U.S. Department of State as a, we encourage you to consider whether your objectives could be met in a less sensitive location and expect that most activities will take place in locations removed from higher-level risk areas.

If the U.S. Department of State assigns your proposed location a LEVEL 4 Travel Advisory, your proposal will not be approved without the review of the University general counsel and a detailed crisis management plan.

[Visit the U.S. Department of State Travel Advisories webpage for detailed information.](#)

VII. CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

All program leaders should be familiar with various levels of crises and appropriate responses before program departure. Please review Mercer Abroad's *Crisis Response Plan* before completing this proposal and let us know if you have any questions or concerns. Once the proposal is approved, a formalized plan will be developed with the assistance of OIP staff.

Additionally, any crises experienced during a program should be formally and appropriately reported. Responses may be reviewed and addressed for learning purposes and before the leading faculty member is approved for another program.

- Have all program leaders participated in the University's required Title IX Training?
- Do you have any experience with/training in leading others through a crisis?

VIII. PROGRAM APPROVAL

All courses associated with a study abroad program must be approved by the department chair and dean before the OIP can review the proposal. Once courses and associated salaries are approved, the OIP will review the proposal according to the above guidelines. Incomplete or underdeveloped proposals will be returned to the lead faculty member for revision, though it is expected that all details regarding itinerary and budget may not be included in the initial proposal.

Once the OIP approves the program, the itinerary and budget must be finalized as soon as possible, but BEFORE recruitment begins in order to ensure that all payment methods are established, courses are coded appropriately, and all recruitment materials are accurate and consistent.

- Is the syllabus in draft or final format?
- Does the syllabus for this course meet all departmental / University guidelines?
- Has the compensation for this course been budgeted appropriately?

IX. RECRUITMENT PLAN

The success of a study abroad program hinges on whether or not enough students participate in the program to meet both budgetary needs and academic outcomes of the program. Knowing your audience during the beginning stages of the program development will facilitate methods for attracting students to your program once the proposal phase of the process is complete.

Mercer Abroad staff can assist in the development and implementation of the recruitment plan, including designing advertisements and conducting information sessions. See the *Recruitment Planning Worksheet* for detailed points of consideration. Faculty leader engagement in recruitment is pivotal in achieving desired program enrollment.

One vital point to remember is that not all students who express interest in the program initially will follow through with committing and participating. Set your recruitment goal higher than your enrollment goal to ensure you meet your target.

- Courses that meet general education requirements will reach a wider audience.
- INT courses tend to travel well.
- Major-specific courses often face difficulty in recruiting with less popular majors unless the travel course is built into the curriculum.

X. PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

Study abroad program assessment is multi-faceted. One type of assessment might measure student satisfaction with the organization of the program, the costs associated with the program, and the students' perceived value of the program.

Another common assessment practice is measuring learning outcomes associated with intercultural competence, language acquisition, or other outcomes typically associated with study abroad programming as a high impact practice in order to benchmark an institution's success in delivering a valuable education to its students.

Some assessments are designed to bring insight into the value of study abroad in terms of it being a high-impact practice of higher education and to add to the discourse in the field of education abroad.

It is common for the assessment of programs abroad to be qualitative in nature. Some assessments are driven by surveys, others employ focus groups or interviews with returned students. Additionally, some institutions rely on trusted, standardized measurements such as the *Global Perspectives Inventory*, or the *Intercultural Development Inventory*.

Mercer Abroad is currently in the process of planning for a standard strategy for program assessment on an institutional level. This assessment will be focused on logistics and student satisfaction (short-term) and eventually focus on learning outcomes attributed to high impact practices. In the meantime, faculty leaders may want to do individual program assessment or focus program assessment on a specific research question. Whatever assessment you choose to pursue with your program, it is important that the tool be decided upon and fully developed before the start of the program recruitment, especially if IRB approval is necessary.

If you have any questions regarding the assessment of your program, or if you are interested in collaborating with the Office of International Programs to develop, administer, and/or analyze your assessment, please let us know. We would be happy to assist.

Does the syllabus include learning outcomes associated with the location/culture/language of the program destination?

Does the department require the assessment of student achievement of these outcomes?

Are any of the "study abroad" outcomes included in the syllabus part of the discussion of outcomes associated with high impact practices?

Are you interested in using or learning more about standardized measurements of student growth in intercultural awareness?