

University of Pittsburgh

Guidelines for Developing New Study Abroad Programs

The Study Abroad Advisory Committee (SAAC) reviews faculty initiated proposals for new and modified University-sponsored study abroad programs, and if appropriate, recommends those programs be endorsed by relevant deans and the Director of UCIS before forwarding them to the Provost for approval. The SAAC takes as its mission the review of proposals for study abroad programs from the perspective of:

1. the fit with the institutional and programmatic goals noted below;
2. appropriateness of the curricula to the benefits and limitations of a study abroad experience, including arrangements for language training;
3. appropriateness of travel and housing arrangements;
4. health, safety and security concerns in a study abroad context;
5. cost and other management concerns related to a positive study abroad experience
6. potential for sustainability and continuity of programs after they are established.

All new courses proposed for study abroad must go through the usual process for the development of, and approval of new courses in the schools in which they will be offered. While it is sometimes appropriate to design a new study abroad program using special topics numbers for courses, this should only be used as in the first year of program. All new courses should be approved through the usual departmental and school procedures.

Background

Institutional Goals for New Study Abroad Programs

New programs should be developed in response to the following institutional and programmatic objectives:

1. To develop overseas opportunities in a broader range of disciplines and geographical areas, including developing countries and non-European sites;
2. To develop programs which have curricular links with existing on campus University of Pittsburgh academic programs and that will strengthen the existing academic program;
3. To hold program costs to an amount comparable to tuition, room and board in residence, so all students can afford to participate;
4. To develop overseas opportunities that attract the diverse ethnic communities and underrepresented groups at the University of Pittsburgh and its regional campuses.

Initiation of Study Abroad Programs

Faculty responsibility

Any faculty member may propose a new summer or semester study abroad program. A faculty member or a team of faculty members must be willing to invest a significant amount of time in developing a program. The faculty member should be very familiar with the area in which the program is to run. The faculty member should already have some contacts in the area. It is an advantage if the faculty member has research interests in the area. The Study Abroad Faculty Development Fund can provide limited financial support for site visits in the early developmental phase of a program. The Study Abroad Office and SAAC can provide suggestions for program development. The Study Abroad Office in UCIS has syllabi, related program material, and student evaluations from previous programs (Pitt and non-Pitt), which may be of use in assessing student perceptions of what works well and what doesn't in a program abroad.

Responsibilities of the Proposing Faculty during the program

- Insure the academic and extracurricular quality of the program;
- Oversee the arrangements for health, safety, and security of the participants;
- Communicate on a regular/as needed basis with the Study Abroad Office;
- Coordinate with the host institution;
- Recognize and address the varying needs of students who may range from experienced to inexperienced travelers;
- Avoid all situations that would
 - a. jeopardize the well being of the participants
 - b. incur the liability of the University
- Assure that there is an accessible representative of the University on site at all times to deal with emergencies

Departmental responsibility

New programs should be based in departments, which will assume responsibility for making a serious effort to maintain them over time. There should be more than one faculty member from host departments who are willing to work with the program, in order to facilitate sustainability and continuity of the program.

If a program is established as a joint venture of more than one department, the departments involved then share responsibility for the program. The details of any such arrangements should be put in writing and agreed to by the chairs.

The faculty member initiating and providing a program should keep the department chair informed of all phases of program development.

The Study Abroad Proposal

Proposals for new study abroad programs should have the following components:

Rationale:

The rationale for the program should address institutional and programmatic objectives above. It should answer the following questions:

- How does the program complement the existing study abroad programs? How does it expand the range of settings and the disciplines included in our study abroad offerings?
- How does it complement on campus course work in the department(s) that hosts the program?
- How does participation in the program affect the student's course load in the department upon returning to campus?
- To what extent is the program designed for students majoring in the subject of the host department vs. those who do not?
- Are there programs abroad associated with other universities to which our students have access that could be used instead? If so, are our students likely to attend those programs?
- In the case of a joint venture between departments, is it clear why the program should be developed jointly?
- How does this program enhance the accessibility of study abroad opportunities for students from groups and disciplines historically underrepresented in study abroad?

Program Description/Curriculum:

Discussion of curricula for new programs should address issues of concern in the development of any new course or program. The pedagogical merits of the program should be discussed and the specific course content should be provided. Both proposals that use existing courses as well as those that are proposing new courses should include syllabi. Course syllabi should be full descriptions of courses, as if it were being offered on campus, with the indication of how study abroad activities will be interwoven. New courses must be proposed and approved following the usual procedures established in the schools in which they will be taught. As with all new programs and courses, the host department should review proposals and assess the extent to which they meet departmental goals and standards.

Site:

The specific site for the proposed program should be discussed. This discussion should address the institutional and programmatic objectives. It should also include a description of the host institution or agency, including a detailed report of any site visits.

It should address the following questions:

- How was the site chosen?
- Does the site offer opportunities that are not available on the home campus?
- How will the program's design allow it to take advantage of the site?
- Are there institutions or local programs that the Pitt program can take advantage of?
- What was learned from any site visits?
- What living arrangements are there?
- What are the health, safety and security issues and plans to insure the wellbeing of the students?

Budget:

The proposal should contain a detailed budget that adequately anticipates the costs of the program, and a cost breakdown for the students. The program should, if possible, cost about the same as the combined charges for tuition, room, and board on the Oakland campus for the same amount of credits over the same amount of time. The program must pay for itself, i.e., enough students must participate at a fee that is high enough to generate monies to cover all items in the budget.

The Study Abroad Office in UCIS provides assistance in exploring budgetary options and models, and developing a realistic budget.

Preparers should bear in mind that internal scholarships are available through the Study Abroad Scholarship Program, the Provost Scholarship Program, and the Nationality Rooms Committee to offset the cost of the program for some of the students.

Qualifications of the Faculty

The proposal should include the c.v.'s of any participating faculty. It should also include a discussion of the faculty member's familiarity with the foreign site and any experience leading groups or traveling abroad.

Indication of departmental Support

The proposal should include a statement of departmental support signed by the department chair.

Steps In The Process Of Proposing Faculty Initiated Study Abroad Programs

The following action need to be carried out in a timely fashion in order to develop a successful program proposal. The process varies somewhat for summer and academic semester –long programs.

1. **Contact the Director of the Study Abroad Office of the University Center for International Studies to discuss objectives of the proposed program and determine feasibility. (Approximately 2 years prior to the proposed start date.)** The Study Abroad Office has a great deal of expertise in the development of key components of a new study abroad program. Also, if you have a specific idea about developing a study abroad program but no contact overseas, the Study Abroad Office may be able to suggest potential agencies or institutions that can assist you. (Add an additional 4 months to the process.)
2. **Contact potential host country collaborators. (Approximately 2 years prior to proposed start date.)** You may already have a contact with an individual or institution overseas that could host the program, provide administrative support, provide or assist with housing and with development. Contact them immediately to begin preliminary discussion and to determine their interest and willingness to provide assistance. Establish as clearly as possible the responsibilities of the two organizations, i.e. Pitt and the host institution. Remember that language difference may obscure meanings on occasion.
3. **Discuss your plans with your Department Chairperson to gain departmental support (1.5 years prior.)** It is very difficult to proceed without support and interest from your department. It is also important at this time to discuss salary requirements and allocations of sections.
 - a. If the proposed course(s) is already a departmental offering, your Department Chairperson must notify the Study Abroad Office in writing that the department has agreed to teach the course overseas.
 - b. If a new course will be offered overseas, a detailed syllabus must undergo the usual approval process in the school in which it will be offered. The course may be approved as a Special Topics Course for the first time it is offered.
4. **Present a written proposal (see above for format) to the Study Abroad Advisory Committee. (10 months prior. Proposals for summer programs are due to the Study Abroad Office by September 1 of the Academic Year in which they will be offered. Proposals for academic year programs should be submitted by October 1, for fall term programs and March 1 for spring term programs.)** SAAC will review all proposals and request further clarification and information if required. SAAC will then make a

- recommendation to the appropriate dean. With the Dean's approval the proposal will be forwarded to the Provost's office for approval and the assignment of fee codes.
- 5. Develop a marketing plan in collaboration with the Study Abroad Office.** Marketing plans should begin to be developed, as soon as the program is approved. A staff member from the Study Abroad Office will assist with the following:
- a. Writing and distribution of advertising materials, including flyers, brochures, advertisements, choosing and obtaining mailing lists and press releases (7-8 months prior). Active faculty recruitment is essential.
 - b. Student recruitment through classroom visits, workshops, and mailings (6-7 months prior)
 - c. Coordination of informational meetings (4-5 months prior)
 - d. Designing, writing, and distribution of inquiry packets (4-5 months prior) and acceptance packets (2-3 months prior)
 - e. Arranging for travel, including negotiating airfare and special travel arrangements, help with student registration, and phone contact with students.
- 6. Conduct pre-departure Orientation (1 month to 1 week prior)**
- 7. Follow-up.** A complete report should be written and submitted to the Study Abroad Office. It should address any successes and/or problems of the program and make recommendations for future programs utilizing the model, site, or agency. Evaluations should be collected from all students who participated. A standard evaluation form is available for the program by the Study Abroad Office. Each year the Advisory Committee must be notified if the program is to run again, and if there are any changes in curriculum, cost, etc.