Faculty Resource Guide

Guidelines for Short-Term Programs Abroad

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Acknowledgements

This resource guide is adapted from the NAFSA publication, *The Guide to Successful Short-Term Programs Abroad*. Additionally, it is a compilation of ideas from the Global Education Office staff members, faculty and administrators from university campus units, collections from national conferences, and resource documents.

We gratefully acknowledge the following resources:

- *The Guide to Successful Short-Term Programs Abroad*, NAFSA: Association of International Educators
- *Faculty-led 360: Guide to Successful Study Abroad*, Melanie McCallon and Bill Holmes
- *Guide to Education Abroad for Advisers and Administrators*, NAFSA: Association of International Educators

How to Use This Handbook

This handbook is designed to assist faculty throughout the development and implementation phases associated with successful short-term global education programs. There are many factors involved in offering programs abroad. The VT Global Education Office works directly with faculty in developing programs abroad. It is recommended that an appointment be made with Rachel Fitzgerald, Assistant Director for Program Management, in order to initiate the conversation.

Leading a group of students in this type of endeavor is indeed rewarding. It is also a commitment of time and energy. Faculty Leaders should realize that they are involved in every aspect of the program and are often on duty 24 hours a day. 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. The responsibilities and information contained within this handbook constitute a job description and expectations of a faculty leader for a short-term global education program.
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Virginia Tech's Global Education Office challenges students to engage with the world by providing study abroad opportunities that are academically, culturally, and personally enriching. We are pleased that you are interested in assisting in or providing an international experience for Virginia Tech students. About 1,200 Virginia Tech students study abroad every year for academic credit, and dozens of Virginia Tech faculty and staff work very hard to make that happen.

At Virginia Tech, the Global Education Office has been charged with the responsibility of coordinating many aspects of global education programs within the university. This handbook has been designed as a reference manual to assist faculty and staff in understanding how short-term faculty-led global education programs work at Virginia Tech.

We encourage faculty who are considering designing a global education program to start the process by meeting with us. We can assist you with many aspects of program planning, budgeting, marketing and recruiting students, and processing required documentation. Please look to us as a resource and ally who can assist you in this endeavor. The beneficiaries, of course, are our students, who increasingly need international experience, inter-cultural competency and global expertise for their personal and professional development.

If we can assist in any way with your global education program, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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A main tenant of designing a global education program is identifying the foundational course content, academic goals and learning outcomes of the program keeping in mind not only the students’ academic and professional development, but their strides toward becoming more interculturally competent. Intercultural competency can be measured by student development in three general areas:

**Knowledge**

Students will increase their knowledge about an academic discipline or disciplines while abroad. Students will be able to synthesize their academic study with real world phenomena to create a global frame of reference. In other words, students will develop an ability to translate theory into practice and apply an international perspective towards their future work, both academic and professional.

**Cultural Attitudes**

Students will understand, respect, and appreciate the differences among diverse cultures. Students will develop an interest in and be willing to interact with people of different societal norms and cultural backgrounds. International goodwill and global citizenship will be developed in each student.

**Self-Reflection**

Students will demonstrate a greater understanding of their self-identity, values, and culture as a result of studying abroad. Students will undergo personal growth, such as building independence, self-confidence, and self-awareness. Students will develop a tolerance for ambiguity and be able to cope and adapt to diverse settings and challenging situations.
Intercultural Competence

When students of all backgrounds and disciplines explore, learn, and engage with other cultures, they begin to challenge their assumptions, broaden their perspectives, and understand what it means to become responsible citizens of their nation and of the world. By studying abroad, students gain the ability to understand other cultures in relation to their own. The knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to effectively and appropriately communicate in an increasingly globalized society is referred to as intercultural competence, and can be an as equally important component of studying abroad as the academic curriculum.

For students to develop intercultural competence, physical presence abroad alone does not result in intercultural learning. Instead, the new environment and culture must be incorporated into the program in order to have an impact on student development and identity. Multiple theories of intercultural development exist, most of which can be applied on three levels: cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. Cognitive is the academic level and most commonly associated with study abroad; it is usually the primary justification for a program. The interpersonal level concerns relationships between people that can transcend stereotypes and misconceptions to lead to true intercultural understanding. The intrapersonal level encompasses self-understanding and reflection. The ability to understand one’s own reactions and thoughts to new and different situations, uncertainty, and risk is key to intercultural development.

Awareness and acceptance of cultural differences should be a primary goal of study abroad programs; it is important to consider how to incorporate opportunities for intercultural learning into your program. To encourage guided self-reflection, the faculty director can help students develop skills for functioning effectively within another culture and an appreciation for cultural differences. This gives them new confidence, and they become better prepared to work in international and/or multicultural settings. They should also begin to develop a more sophisticated worldview that allows them to approach communication, conflict and interpersonal relations from a cultural perspective. Although becoming bilingual and/or bicultural is a lengthy and challenging process, study abroad programs also provide the potential for advancing towards these goals. Incorporating opportunities for intercultural learning significantly strengthens the rationale for offering the program and increases the educational benefits. Building intercultural opportunities into a short travel program only occurs with advance planning. With careful use of your time, you will find that there are many opportunities that are ripe for cultural learning.
Suggested Activities for Intercultural Development

Journaling
Journal writing encourages reflection as a portion of student learning. Journaling is an intellectually stimulating and emotionally soothing activity; it can be an excellent method for contemplation and interpersonal development, especially when processing new cultural interactions. Journaling provides information not only on what the students have learned in the course but also on their progress in achieving the previously described learning outcomes. Journaling can be a required assignment or something you encourage the students to do on their own. Prompt students to document what they are learning, both in the classroom and in the community. Remind students that this is an invaluable way to capture details of their experience that can quickly fade after they return home.

Sample Journal Prompt:
Keep a weekly journal in which you reflect on your understanding of intercultural competence. Keep in mind your own development of knowledge, cultural attitudes, and self-reflection. What are you learning as a result of your coursework, interaction with the host culture, or travel? What concepts guide your thinking?

Scavenger Hunt
The goal of this activity is to allow your students some time for both intercultural communication and exploration of the host country outside of the group dynamic. In groups, give students a list of things to accomplish or places to go within a set amount of time. It is okay if the students are challenged—this feeling can result in significant learning about the host country, as well as some personal learning. Once everyone is back, spend some time processing the activity. This will help the students articulate their experiences and put it into a cultural context rather than simply reporting what they saw.

Group Reflection
Periodic group reflection sessions can be a time for students to share insights, concerns, or questions with each other and the faculty director. Readings, classes, activities, and site visits can be discussed, and give participants a chance to reflect on what they have learned and experienced.

Other Activities
- Homestays with local families.
- Observation of or participation in local cultural activities.
- Formal or informal meetings, meals, or gatherings with local students or employees of institutions visited.
Timeline

Planning ahead as far as possible is important for study abroad programs. The following is an estimated timeline for program development.

Program Development I (18 – 12 months)
A year and a half out is a good time to start planning a new program. Use this time to determine program feasibility, make a site visit, decide on academic content and credit issues with concern given to the instructional credit/contact hour following the Registrar’s Office policy in addition to verifying the eligibility of financial aid based on the structure and design, detail the budget and logistics and confirm program support on campus and within your department and college. Program providers should be secured during this time and a marketing plan drafted. All contracts for service must be vetted and approved by University Legal Counsel before proceeding.

Program Development II (15 – 6 months)
Program deadlines should be established in addition to payment amounts and installments. Publicity and recruitment begins. Faculty can begin training and itineraries are finalized. Logistical arrangements are confirmed.

Recruitment & Enrollment (8 – 3 months)
Participants are recruited, advised, and selected. Deposits are collected. Coordinate with program providers, travel agencies, or other organizations to reserve airline seats and hotels.

Payment Period (90 – 60 days)
Collect final payments and pay program providers, airlines, or on-site organizations.

Pre-Departure (60 – 30 days)
Confirm that visas have arrived (if required). Orientation session/s, communication from faculty directors, lectures, and registration should occur at this time. Contingency funds are finalized and air tickets issued.

30 days prior to departure, Presidential Policy 225, Global Education Checklist is due into the Global Education Office with all supporting documentation.

Day of Departure
It is helpful, if possible, to arrange for airport assistance for the group. Last minute problems such as lost passports or cancelled flights are addressed and solved.

Return
Submit financial paperwork and final reports. Review evaluations and assessments. Hold debriefing sessions.
Program Leader Roles & Responsibilities

Planning and directing a study abroad program can require faculty to go far beyond the usual realm of classroom teaching and tackle such administrative tasks as logistics, enrollment, and financial matters. A program leader can expect difficult and ambiguous situations requiring strong leadership, interpretation, diplomacy, and decision-making abilities. The following are examples of the many roles a program leader faces:

**Developer**
Addresses the academic side of programming, integrating site and curriculum as well as logistics and financial planning.

**Recruiter**
The faculty director is the most essential recruiter for study abroad programs. They represent the fundamental value of the program and act as the guide for the new experience; students need the opportunity to interact with the director before committing to the experience.

**Administrator & Financial Manager**
Responsible for on-site logistical arrangements, payments, managing funds, financial records, and enrollment changes.

**Institutional Representative**
Establishes and maintains institutional relationships with all constituents, governs participant behavior, upholds institutional policies, and communicates with the home institution.

**Adviser**
Establishes a positive group dynamic, prepares students for departure, assists and refers students when needed, prevents issues from becoming problems, and facilitates intercultural activities.

**Crisis Manager**
Provide strength, direction, communication, and good judgment in the face of unexpected crises abroad.

However, they must remain first and foremost educators. Study abroad program planners must ensure that the program contributes not only to widening students’ experiences and enhancing their understanding of culture, but also to furthering their academic aspirations. Planners are encouraged to work with their department heads early on in the program development process to ensure adherence to department and college expectations and procedures for academic planning.
Academic & Programmatic Planning

Program Design

Course Content
In planning your program subject and course content, first consider how the location of the program will complement the course content. What relevant academic, professional, and/or cultural site visits, tours, lectures, or interviews might be planned? What contacts do you or your department have that may be of assistance? When you have determined your academic and cultural concentration for the program, begin thinking about the course syllabus design: readings, discussions and interviews with experts, excursions, tours of sites, journal assignments, and lectures. Coordinate the timing of assigned readings and related discussions to complement site visits. It is important to confirm the academic quality of planned events by speaking with on-site representatives, making advance site visits and by carefully reviewing all other available information sources.

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 especially when delivering a program “on the road.”

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-VT 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. Non-VT students must be admitted to Virginia Tech as non-degree seeking students. Students can obtain an application at the Office of Undergraduate Admissions. Once admitted, students are then registered and will receive the tuition reduction.

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?
• 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.

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 4-5 in-country weeks offer 6 credits, but this usually includes contact hours before and after the travel. 2 week programs 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. 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.

What expenses will be included in the program fee? Is it reasonable to include airfare, or does that make the logistics more complicated?
• Many programs prefer not to include airfare in the program fee. This is for several reasons. Many students prefer to travel before or after the program and thus need to book tickets on dates other than the program dates. Also, students prefer to search for the best deal by themselves, which may not be available as part of a group airfare.
• Lastly, it becomes time-consuming and costly to arrange airfare for a group, especially when the group is still being assembled as students are purchasing tickets.

Will meals be provided?
• 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.

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 or partner with a local university.
- 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 other accommodation reservations.
- Accommodation at the Steger Center and Ecological Foundation is subject to availability and has a fixed rate per night.

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

- If not, budget adjustments will be required or the course risks cancellation. Keep in mind that procedures related to instructional expenses (such as the faculty leader salary) varies based on the department/college. Seek out your department chair or college’s international programs liaison for more information. You must enroll a minimum of 10 students. Your department/college reserves the right to set a higher standard.

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.
- Federal aid and scholarships are eligible to transfer for to programs where VT tuition and fees are assessed, but generally limited and highly dependent upon the individual student’s eligibility/circumstance. If the program is not assessing VT tuition and fees and alternatively working with a foreign institution or service provider for transfer credit, then the VA 529 tuition plan and other waiver programs will not apply. Verify that financial aid is eligible based on the financial structure of your program and the number of credits offered well in advance of advertising.
- VT tuition & fees (although discounted 20%) are billed per credit hour. See http://www.bursar.vt.edu/#totalstable for full details.

Program design considerations at large may include:

- Have you incorporated intercultural development into your program model? How will VT students have the opportunity to engage with students or people from the host culture? How will inter-cultural interaction be built into the program design, curriculum and activities?
- How specifically will the course abroad redefine the Blacksburg classroom? Programs should include coursework that would be enhanced by the international location.
- How many professors will be required to teach the offered courses? What other support is needed (e.g. graduate assistants)? Who’s in charge of the group in case there is an emergency involving one student?
- Who will provide on-site coordination, administration, and support?
• Target number of students? Target population? Is there interest in this field and location? How many students are required for the program to “make”? How many is too many to navigate the country you’re traveling in?
• Have you considered the health, safety & risk management concerns associated with the geographic location or leading students abroad in general? Is the country safe? What are the U.S. Department of State, Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, and World Health Organization’s recommendations for traveling in the region?
• How can pre- and post-travel meetings add to the learning experience? Faculty who hold pre-departure meetings that stimulate learning about the destination before departure and encourage students to independently research the program’s destination, history and culture find that it is a worthwhile investment. Students who have taken a study abroad course in previous years enliven pre-departure meetings by reporting on academic projects they completed in conjunction with the program.
• How can the program facilitate the reflection upon experience and re-entry into the United States? Debriefing sessions and resources upon return to campus help students assimilate what they have experienced.
• Will your program explore the local host language? Consider including an introductory/conversational language component relevant to the country of your program. This enhances the integrity of the program, and has immeasurable benefits for both the reputation of your program in the host country and for the students as they learn about the culture.

Be sure to consider what other programs in your department or college are already running or are currently being designed. If your program is similar to another, you may be competing for the same target student population, which could affect the recruitment of students for your own program.

Credits and Program Length
Global Education programs must include the same number of contact hours per credit as courses taught on campus; three credits generally signify 45 contact hours. The challenge is in how to count hours in a program in which students are moving from site to site.

To be sure there is adequate academic content, it is beneficial to have the program based at a stationary location for one or two weeks during the program. This provides opportunities to complete lectures, readings and assignments before moving on to a travel itinerary and also allows students to gain an overview of what they will be experiencing later in the program.

If a schedule with more travel is preferred, try to arrange suitable space for lectures without distractions (i.e. do not try to give a serious lecture while standing at a busy tourist site) and invite guest lecturers. Virginia Tech’s Global Education Office can assist you by suggesting locations arranged through exchange partners and international contacts. At the absolute minimum, ensure regular sessions where all students are able to listen to the lecturer and/or take notes and have uninterrupted time for independent study.

Although the length of Global Education Office programs varies considerably, most typical summer programs are 4-5 weeks and 6 credits. Experience indicates that a 6-credit travel program cannot be done in fewer than four weeks. Generally, the minimum number of credits that can be billed for a summer session is three. For first or second summer session, the definition of “full-time,” for fee purposes, is five credits, and will be billed per credit hour (see “Financial Management”).
For programs operating during **fall or spring break**, registration is done as one of the students’ courses in the fall or spring semester. If the course is to award 3 credits, additional meetings and work are generally required before or after the travel period.

**Wintermester**, or programs that operate during the January term, generally travel for 2 weeks and offer 3 credits. Tuition is billed per credit hour for undergraduate students and at tiers on the graduate level: 1-3 credit hours, 4 credit hours and 5 or more credit hours.

Many program directors offer both graduate and undergraduate credit for their international course. Some also incorporate a variable credit independent study option into their program plan. As you would, with courses taught on campus, consider what prerequisites may be required.

**Selecting the Time and Dates**
Summer courses may be listed during either Summer Session I or II; choose the session that best matches your program dates.

Keep in mind when planning summer programs, many students prefer to go early or late in order to take additional summer courses, or summer jobs before or after the program. Also consider factors such as host country holidays, weather, and peak tourist times, as well.

**Itinerary**
The itinerary of your program, be it in one or several countries, should complement your academic plan as noted above, and vice versa. Programs vary in form from those held at one location or foreign institution to those that incorporate travel throughout a region, such as Eastern Europe. Your itinerary will depend on your interest and willingness to travel with a large group of students. Consider whether your itinerary includes group travel or opportunities for students to travel independently. You may want to consider including days of rest and relaxation at the end of the program as an incentive for students.

**Evaluation**
Students should be required to perform tasks that can be graded. Methods for evaluation of performance might include: research or reflection papers, essays, reports, projects or journals. For journals, think about when students would have time to write entries and whether or not a periodic review might be required. You may wish to consider scheduling review time at the end of each day or every 2-3 days. Additionally, you should determine when quizzes and tests will be given, and establish your attendance and participation requirements.

**Course Registration**

**Course Numbers and Program Approval**
Programs are approved within the individual departments of the university. Consult with your department head from the beginning of your program planning. Some departments are new to the process and request help. The following are some suggestions:

There are at least two ways to establish a course number for a Global Education Office program - using the 3954 Study Abroad course number or by using an already existing course number.
The 3954 Study Abroad course number allows variable credit and automatically has an “X” grade, providing flexible time for course completion and grade reporting. If your department does not have the 3954 course number, it can be established with little difficulty. Once the departmental negotiation is completed and course criteria are established, the department head may send a memo to the Registrar, requesting this new course addition and indicating that the course criteria are in place. This does not have to go through University Governance.

Some programs choose to use a course number already offered within the department. This is a satisfactory option, but if the course content varies considerably from what is taught on campus, it may be advisable to use the 3954 option.

**Listing the Course**
Work with your department head to ensure that your course and index number are listed for the appropriate semester or session. Faculty who set class size at 0 and then “force add” students as a means to ensure that they pay and attend required pre-departure sessions should remember to inform all students about this procedure, so they will not think the course is full.

**Student Registration**
In order for students to be correctly billed at the reduced Global Education Office rate and without comprehensive fees, VT program leaders must confirm the final participant roster with the Global Education Office (vtabroad@vt.edu, mail code 0378; FAX 231-5164). Student rosters can also be verified in Studio Abroad.

**All students must be registered either by the departments or by themselves. The Global Education Office cannot register students. The Global Education Office only enters the rate code for the reduced study abroad fee.**

The deadlines for getting this information to the Global Education Office, before the bills are mailed to students, are as follows:

- Summer Session I: first week of April
- Summer Session II: first week of May
- Fall Semester: first week of July
- Spring Semester: first week of November

The reduced study abroad tuition rate often does not apply to short-term programs in which students are registered in the fall or spring Semesters.
Financial Management

Developing the Budget & Setting Student Program Costs

It is crucial that you develop your budget early, before announcing the course. Study abroad budgeting is a complicated task because there are so many details. Building a budget can be a time-consuming, meticulous task because minor errors can be very costly.

Budget Goals:
- Build budgets with sufficient funds to support quality academic programs
- Keep costs affordable for students without sacrificing academic quality;
- Allocate our students’ money, which makes up our budgets, efficiently; and
- Ensure that all bills are paid in a timely manner.

Here is a GEO Sample Faculty-led Program Budget.xls. Below are some tips for developing a budget and setting the student program costs.

Your budget must include:
- The cost of Virginia Tech’s Board of Visitor mandated insurance for each participant. Click here for full details. Coverage costs of the comprehensive travel medical insurance are $8.50 per week until 1 month is reached for which insurance cost are then billed at a monthly rate of $34.
- + overall 10% contingency

If you encounter unbudgeted costs while abroad, funds must come from the department or college sponsoring the program.

Calculate group versus individual costs. Program costs are calculated as either individual or group costs. Group costs are fees charged the entire group independent of the number of students. Examples include a bus prices for the day, classroom/facilities charge, speaker’s honorarium, etc. All faculty costs are group costs meaning that the faculty program leader’s cost should be absorbed by the student program fees. Group costs include accommodation, airfare, entrance fees, and per diem food costs, etc.

Decide what the program will cover and what students will provide with their own additional funds. Key decisions include: How many meals the program will cover and what admission fees will be covered? Many programs include breakfast and dinner in the students’ program costs, and advise students to bring money to pay for their own lunches. The advantage is that it can save time in the middle of a busy day. You may wish to include the admission costs of sites or events integral to the course in the program costs, and allow students to select and pay for other events themselves. It is best to include in the program cost any function for which attendance is required.

List anticipated expenditures. Try to anticipate all possible expenditures in building the budget. In-country contacts if you have them or travel agents can aid in estimating costs. Before making a commitment for services, read the section about “Purchasing Group Travel,”
because all expenditures must be made in accordance with university travel procedures. The following items are typically included in the total group budget:

- Airfare,
- Rail, Metro, or Bus Passes,
- Chartered Transportation,
- Lodging,
- Meals,
- Admission Fees,
- Cellphone,
- Group Communications,
- Travel Materials,
- Gifts,
- Tips,
- Miscellaneous Costs,
- Emergencies,
- Don’t forget to include taxes!

Please note that telecommunication expenses should be pre-approved by CNS. If part of your time is spent at the Steger Center For International Scholarship, Virginia Tech’s center in Switzerland, or the Caribbean Center for Education & Research in Punta Cana in the Dominican Republic you will have a set rate for lodging and meals, but you will need to remember to add the cost of using transportation, phone calls and other extra services you may request.

**Purchase Group Travel.** It is possible to work with travel agents or third party program providers to arrange logistics, which can include a certain number of days in hotels, meals, group transportation and special services such as luggage transfer or guides. Group travel must be purchased using the university purchasing procedures mandated by the Virginia Public Procurement Act. The following options are available:

**Travel Agencies on University Contract**
Refer to the “Travel Arrangements and Transportation” section for more information. See the Controller’s Office website for a current list of agencies.

**Direct Payment Procedures**
When arranging group travel in foreign countries use these Direct Payment Procedures. Such services may include but are not limited to air travel, ground transportation, hotels, meals, admission to events, etc. In accordance with the direct payment policies, the university Office of Legal Counsel must review all such contracts before the department head signs the agreement.

**Internet Purchases**
Departments may purchase airline tickets online using the procedures for Bank of America VISA Purchase Card. Procedures are documented on the Procurement Department website.

**Plan for contingencies and err on the high side.** Setting the per student price is difficult. If it’s too high, students will be priced out of the program. If the price is set too low, you’ll have to assess a surcharge later. Additional charges after final payments should be avoided. Although it is necessary to keep the program as affordable as possible for students, it is important that program fees you collect are adequate. Build in a small contingency amount (such as $100 per student) to compensate for rising costs, changes in exchange rates, varied number of participants or costs you may have overlooked. Program money left at the end of the program can be returned to the students in accordance with procedures in the “Accounting & Payment Procedures” section of this manual.
If you return to the States with over 10% of your total collected program fees, you are required to issue a refund to students.

It’s important to be transparent in what is included in the program fee and what is not included in addition to what is billable by the university and what is to be paid independently. Advertise estimated program costs with a range of costs that give a minimum and maximum price.

**Determine the minimum group size and set the per-student program cost.** The program cost is the cost you will charge each student for the program. To estimate the minimum cost per student, determine the minimum number of students that can support the program. If your department or college has established a minimum without which the program will not be permitted to operate, that will be your number for budgeting purposes. First-time programs, especially those to less common destinations or in disciplines having several competing programs, should expect a smaller than average number of students. The Global Education Office sets a minimum standard of 10 participants for a program to be offered. Some departments support a new program by permitting it to run with fewer than ten, with the understanding that the department will cover some of the costs rather than increase the cost per student. Once the minimum student number is set, add yourself and any other faculty members whose costs you expect the students to bear.

Be sure to be very clear in all program publicity about what the program cost covers and does not cover. Course tuition and mandatory fees are best listed on a separate line from the program cost because of tuition variations for in-state and out-of-state students and graduate and undergraduate students.

**Adjust for outside revenue.** Some departments or colleges have small amounts of funds available to assist global education programs. Generally, department operating funds cannot be used for global education expenses. One exception to this limitation is that payment of travel expenses, (i.e. transportation, lodging, and meals for one faculty member in charge of the group may be charged to departmental operating funds). Additionally, the faculty member’s salary may be charged to departmental funds.

**Continue to monitor exchange rate fluctuations** and update your budget as new information becomes available. An electronic currency converter can be helpful.

**Salaries** for nine-month employees are generally handled as though the employees were teaching a summer course on campus. This should be clarified early with the department head. There are instances in which nine-month professors have chosen to teach a summer or vacation period course abroad without pay, but we would discourage it. Besides establishing an unhealthy precedent, this has liability implications (see chapter on “Liability and Risk Management”).

### Handling Funds

**Travel Loans**

Group leaders usually take out a travel loan before departure to pay program expenses. The Virginia Tech Foundation does not provide cash advances for global education programs. All faculty and staff members taking an international trip on official university business are eligible for a travel loan. Your department head must approve the loan, and the request form must be
received with adequate itemized description of expenses in the Controller’s Office at least three working days before the check is desired. In case of theft or other kinds of loss, notify the Offices of the Controller and Risk Management. Questions concerning travel loans should be directed to the travel section of the Controller’s Office.

**Pre-departure Payments**

Some previous faculty directors highly recommend prepaying for expenses such as hotel bills whenever possible. This is more convenient and reduces the amount of money you need to take abroad. Normally faculty and staff cannot prepay for more than one night’s lodging; however, for study abroad programs, prepayments are possible without such a limit when a “local fund” (fund number starting with a “6”) is used. The travel agents on contract with the University can make the reservations and charge the expense directly to your fund.

If the contract travel agents are not used, departments may make prepayments by contracting with the travel agency in accordance with university procurement procedures by entering the purchase request in the HokieMart and then submitting an invoice to the University Controller’s Office for payment. All prepayment information, including bank routing numbers, forms of currency, and/or bank draft requirements must be clearly stated on the HokieMart purchase order and must be supported with an invoice/contract from the travel agency.

Use caution when making prepayments. Although it reduces the amount of cash you need to carry, there is some inherent risk in making prepayments because you are dependent on a contract for services. General public policy exists to require that the service be provided before making payment, thus protecting the funds. There are cases where prepayments are acceptable, but you want to be certain the agreements are valid and have been reviewed by University Legal Counsel.

**Monitoring and Reporting Expenses**

During your program, collect and keep all receipts. After the program, you will be required to complete an expense report using the Travel Voucher form, located on the Controller’s Office webpage under the Travel heading; you will need to provide a daily accounting of activities. If you use a spreadsheet record, this document can be submitted with the expense report. Expenses of up to $10 can be reimbursed without receipts. However, they should be included in the daily activity report and documented thoroughly. Explain the expenditure and how it fits into the program. To receive reimbursement for a gift or tip, you may provide a statement explaining the local custom regarding services rendered (acknowledgement of receipt is required). All expenses must be in accordance with university travel expenditure policy to conform to the Internal Revenue Service regulations. That is important because it permits the university to reimburse your expenses without having to treat them as taxable income to you.

**Per Diem**

The per diem system can be used for students as well as faculty. In global education, it often is not used for either. Here is more information on the per diem system.

If you have questions about reporting expenses or travel policies and procedures, please consult the Travel section of the Controller’s Office website.
Handling Money Abroad

To avoid financial difficulties, it is best not to carry large amounts of cash and be able to receive money or make payments abroad. Methods for accomplishing these two goals vary depending on location, so it is important to identify which methods will be most useful prior to departure. Identifying more than one method for handling money is wise; our recommendation is to use a mixture of cash and credit cards.

*The Virginia Tech Bank of America Visa Corporate Travel Card* offers an array of travel and emergency assistance services to travelers at no additional charge, including assistance with handling money abroad. For detailed information about a VTC Travel Card, please refer to the travel area of the [Controller’s Website](#).

*Personal credit or debit cards* offer similar advantages to the VTC Travel card and in many instances can be the easiest way to pay; for group expenses be sure to get an itemized receipt to attach to your expense report. A credit card also provides backup documentation if a receipt is lost. Many banks permit a cash advance, and you can use credit and debit cards to get cash at ATM locations. You will also want to be aware of your daily withdrawal limits. Taking more than one card will increase your chances that one will be accepted. If you are taking the VTC Travel card, consider either MasterCard or American Express for your second card. They tend to be the most widely accepted in Europe. Be sure to inform your credit card company of your travels; they will note that on your record and will be less likely to refuse charges from “unusual” locations. Be aware that some hotels, restaurants and means of transportation may not accept credit cards.

*Cash* is sometimes the only acceptable method of payment, so it is important to have a sensible amount of cash on hand. You can protect cash on your person by using a money belt or neck pouch. When traveling, many advocate dividing your cash between your person and hand luggage or other bags.

Accounting & Payment Procedures

**Accounting**

Your department will need to establish a fund in the university’s Banner Finance System into which student payments will be made and from which program expenses will be paid. Global Education programs are set up in ledger 6 (Banner fund starting with a “6”) meaning that they are public funds and the department is responsible for expending those funds in accordance with university policies and procedures.

The department must contact the General Accounting section of the Controller’s Office to request that a new Banner fund be established for each program every year in which the program takes place. To initiate the requisition for a local fund, complete the [Study Abroad Request Form](#) for New Funds Form and return to Global Education. Each trip is to stand on its own and the faculty member responsible for the program is accountable to the department for all of the
expenses in the fund. A detail code is needed from the Bursar’s Office for each new fund, so that the department can establish charges on student accounts. Click here to download the University Bursar Detail Code Request Form.

The faculty responsible for the trip will send the necessary registration information (i.e. name of trip, term of trip, student name, and student number) to the Global Education Office (Attn: Shannon Dove). The GEO will then enter the study abroad rate code in the Banner student system so that the study abroad tuition and fees discount will be assessed to the student. Also, if the department charges an additional fee, the department will enter the applicable charges on the student’s account using the detail code assigned by the Bursar’s Office for the study abroad trip. When students make their payments to the Bursar’s Office, they are automatically credited into the departmental Banner fund established for the trip. Students with financial aid can have their financial aid applied directly to the global education charges. Credits from other sources can be deposited directly into the Banner fund. Departments should not collect student payments directly. The goal of the Bursar’s Office is to train departmental staff to enter charges on the accounts receivable system.

The Banner fund should be reconciled monthly, and since global education funds do not have budgets, the cash balance needs to be monitored as opposed to the budget balance. Banner screen FGITBAL will display the cash balance (account code 6100). Invoices should never be processed on the fund unless there is enough cash in the fund to cover the expense. Departments can run the Finance Web Reports titled “General Ledger Activity” and “Transaction Operating Report” to view the activity on the fund. These reports should be run monthly as a part of the reconciliation process.

After all expenses have been paid and all revenues collected, the faculty member should work with the department fiscal officer to close out the Banner fund. The fund should be closed within six months after the program ends. If revenues exceed the expenses by less than 10% of total revenues collected and the department plans to offer the program again the next year, the funds can be transferred into the Banner fund to be applied to expenses of the upcoming program. If the program is offered on alternating years and the revenues exceed the expenses by less than 10% of total revenues collected, the department can create a new study abroad local fund to house the overage for the following year. If revenues exceed expenses by more than 10% of total revenues collected, the department should work with the Bursar’s Office to reimburse the students the amount of the overage. If each refund amount is less than $25, the administrative cost of processing the refund exceeds the value of the refund and the Controller’s Office may authorize the additional amount to be carried into the next year. If expenses exceed revenues, the department can fund the trip from other non-public sources or bill the students for the amount of the shortage.

Non student groups, such as faculty/staff, faculty development or other special programs can also be run through Continuing and Professional Education.

Advance Deposits
You should require a substantial non-refundable deposit from your students well in advance of the date of departure; we recommend $500. This deposit should be applied as a credit toward the
students’ total program cost. Selecting your deadline for the deposit can be tricky. An early deadline allows you to easily make accurate and timely arrangements for your program; however, if this deadline is too early, then you may not get enough applicants for your program. It is possible to extend an already established deadline, but if publications indicate an earlier date, then students are likely to think that they are unable to apply after that date. One important guideline is the deadline imposed by the travel agent or airline. In general, deadlines range from 10 to 20 weeks before departure. Here is a sample student financial agreement approved by University Legal Counsel. Students are required to sign and submit such a form electronically through Studio Abroad in conjunction with their program deposit. If you would like to request to make significant changes, then it would be wise to request the feedback of University Legal Counsel. Be aware that the statements in section 4 about refunds do not require you to return refunds or other incurred expenses, but they give you the option of doing so. For example, if a student who has paid the deposit becomes too ill to travel, and another student fills the place, then you may wish to return the first student’s money. If the department has entered charges on the student’s account, the department will need to send an account receivable adjustment form to the Bursar’s Office to have these charges removed from the student’s account.

**Student Program Costs**

You will need to establish a date for final payment of all program fees. For this final deadline, you should consider the dates by which you must make your final payments. Typical examples are two to four weeks before departure. You will find it is necessary to make special arrangements for students with financial aid. However, you should not permit a student to depart with the group without making a significant down payment.

Occasionally programs conclude with an unpaid student debt. This can occur either because the student had not made the full payment before departure or because of an unforeseen problem such as a robbery or medical emergency during the program. In such cases, the Accounts Receivable section of the Bursar’s Office will continue to bill the student for the charge, and if payment is not received by the due date, then a hold will be placed on the student’s record. Such a hold will prevent registration activities as well as prevent the student from receiving a transcript and/or diploma until payment is received. Please contact the Bursar’s Office if you need assistance in the student billing/collection process.

**Student Tuition and Fees**

For Virginia Tech short-term global education programs, students are charged a reduced tuition fee, usually 80% of the full rate, be it the in-state or out-of-state rate plus the mandatory Virginia Tech technology fee, academic fee and capital fee, if applicable. As usual, students will receive a tuition bill from the Office of the University Bursar and they will send their payments directly to the Bursar. The reduced rate is more easily applied during one of the summer sessions, wintermester or for a short course incorporated with fall or spring semesters.

Likewise, students in a spring break course abroad are likely to be enrolled for the course as one of several spring semester courses. If the student is taking on-campus credits that semester that equal or exceed the number of credits considered full-time for billing (9 for graduate students and 12 for undergraduates), then there is no additional tuition charge for the additional Global Education Office course. Therefore, there is no tuition. No study abroad rate code should be
entered by the Global Education Office for these students. If you have questions about the reduced rate, contact the Bursar’s Office or call 231-6277. Please refer to the Office of the University Bursar for the most current information regarding tuition and fee costs.

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**Service 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 program providers operating in the world today. Typically, service providers are best utilized by programs that are more residential than travel-oriented.

**Advantages**
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 academic content. Service providers can save costs, time, worry, and risk. Many have established centers and are staffed by educators with experience leading programs and knowledge of local culture. They also have up-to-date logistical information that can be difficult to obtain domestically. Many operate their own dormitory and classroom facilities, while others rent from local universities. Because of their experience, knowledge and access, they can remove some of the worries most commonly associated with global education.

**Disadvantages**
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. In some cases, using a provider can still save you money by leveraging good rates on services. However, some faculty directors have felt that they could get meals, lodging and other services for students at better rates than the provider could. Others point out that whether providers save you money can depend on whether you count your own time as a cost. Despite the costs, another consideration to make is whether a provider will enhance the program with their expertise.

**Local Universities**
Many universities are closed during the summer, and are willing to make dormitories and classrooms available for a reasonable fee. Local universities are also an excellent source of knowledgeable lecturers who can approach the discipline from the perspective of the local culture. For contact information on universities with whom VT has a student exchange agreement, contact the Global Education Office.

**Independent Arrangements**
It is essential to have knowledge of the destination through previous experience or advance site visits. Even faculty who know a country well will benefit from having a second group leader
able to handle logistics and assist with emergencies. Use of a provider is strongly encouraged, especially for first time program leaders. Otherwise, it is advisable to take a second faculty or staff member to assist with the course. Consider enlisting the support of graduate assistants as program support staff. You may place them under contract with your department assigning them a leadership role for the benefit of having another VT support staff while abroad.

Also, all program leaders should identify a back-up faculty who has a valid passport and a visa (if required) who is available to come and provide support in case the primary program leader is incapacitated or assistance is needed.
Marketing and Student Recruitment

Effective marketing and student recruitment is a critical part of implementing a study abroad program. It requires persistence and employing a variety of methods. You will get the best results if you start early and promote your program often. During all of your recruitment activities, we encourage you to maintain a list of interested students. Listed below are methods that have been used in the past to promote study abroad programs.

Program Brochure
Brochures are a tangible way to provide interested students and parents with information about your program. Program leaders are responsible for creating their own program brochures. The GEO communications and marketing team can provide consultation and some assistance with marketing design. There are general templates available. Typically, in July, the Global Education Office will request brochures for the annual Fall Fair on the Drillfield and to keep in house at the office. Brochures should be finalized and sent to the GEO prior to the Fall Fair in September. For further information about program brochures, please contact GEO.

Webpage
Individual program webpages are an effective method for informing students from Virginia Tech and other universities. The Global Education Office utilizes a program management system called Studio Abroad for this purpose. In July, program leaders and coordinators will be asked to submit program updates. In order to maintain program profiles, please provide us updates and photos as they become available.

Global Education Recruiting Events
The VT Global Education Fair is held annually in September on the Drillfield. Nearly 80 program tables are represented at the Fair including faculty-led, bilateral exchanges, third-party providers, and campus offices. Invitations to register for the Fall Fair are typically sent in July via the program leaders and administrators newsletter list. You must RSVP in order to be provided table space to display your program!

Early in spring semester, the Global Education Office Expo is held on campus. The Expo is a much smaller event in comparison to the Fall Fair. Nearly 40 programs participate in the Expo. Invitations to register for the event will also be sent via the program leaders and administrators newsletter list.

Consider asking students who have participated in your programs to attend the recruiting events. Past participants are often the best ambassadors to speak about your program. Also, if you are unable to be at the events for the entire duration, ask students to volunteer on behalf of your program.

Visiting Classes
Professors have a great influence on students’ awareness of and decision to participate in international opportunities. Making frequent announcements and updates in your own classes is a
must. Informing faculty and staff members is another important recruitment strategy. Ask colleagues to allow you to visit their classes and encourage them to promote your program in conversations with students.

Additionally, class presentations on study abroad can be scheduled through the Global Education Office. Please contact us to arrange for a five-minute Study Abroad 101 class presentation. More extensive presentations are available by request.

**Information Sessions**
Faculty directors are welcome to attend Global Education Office information sessions each semester. Faculty are also encouraged to hold their own program-specific information sessions. Please keep the Global Education Office informed of your information session dates, so announcements can be placed on the website and sent to our listserv.

**Past Program Participants**
The most influential factor for raising interest in study abroad programs is returning students. They can assist in a variety of ways, such as speaking at information sessions, class visits, or the Global Education Fair.

**Posters, Table Cards & Flyers**
Flyers or posters are most effective when they contain graphics and information that capture students’ curiosity and attention at a quick glance. Basic program information including contact information is important, but avoid overwhelming readers with too much detail.

Virginia Tech registered student organizations, colleges and departments may request permission to place table cards in Dining Services managed dining centers that can be used to advertise relevant activities and events. Commercial advertising is not permitted. Table card reservations must be made in advance.

There are templates available for general promotional material at the Global Education Office. Please contact the communications and marketing team for more information.

**Student Organizations**
Targeting student organizations that might be interested in your particular program can be a good recruitment strategy. A list of student organizations and their contact information can be found at GobblerConnect.

**Email**
Program information can be sent to relevant listservs. You can also set up your own program listserv for past participants and prospective students, allowing the new students to get their questions answered from their peers who have been there.

**Social Media**
The Global Education Office maintains several social media accounts including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest. We are happy to promote your programs on our social media channels. Interesting photos or participant testimonials tend to receive the most attention. Please
send us details about information sessions at least a week prior, so that they can be placed on the communication schedule. Creating pages on social media for your group, would also be an effective way to create a forum for programs.

**Other Universities**
You can use your contacts at other institutions to promote your program to non-VT students. Before making the decision to accept these students, you may wish to talk with others who have done so. Past troubles have been reported of unpaid debts and poor performance and behavior from non-VT students. However, many program have relied on outside students to help with low fill rates and have had positive experiences. Because neither Virginia Tech nor any other institution can provide the ideal Global Education Office program for each student’s needs and interests, it is to our students’ advantage when other institutions accept them into their programs. We should be prepared to do the same when size constraints permit.

If you are leading a summer program, students from outside universities should contact the [Office of Summer Sessions](#) to request a summer-only non-degree admission form. If your program runs in the fall or spring semesters, students from outside universities should contact the [Office of Undergraduate Admissions](#) to request a non-degree undergraduate application.

**Additional Strategies & Tactics**
- Distribute information /brochures to campus offices, bulletin boards, and general spaces
- Place table card reservations at dining halls
- Hold Squires information booths
- Hold information tables on the Drillfield
- Arrange regular Squires display cases throughout the academic year
- Place promotional slides in McComas Hall and Johnston Student Center
- Hold information sessions
- Place advertisements
  - Collegiate Times
  - VTTV
  - Blacksburg Transit
  - BreakZone
  - The Lyric
Eligibility
Most financial aid available to Virginia Tech students requires submission of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Students complete the FAFSA each academic year at www.fafsa.gov. The academic year consists of a fall (winter session is included as part of fall), spring, and two summer terms. The FAFSA is available January 1st of each year and students are encouraged to file the FAFSA by the March 1st priority deadline each year. Meeting this deadline ensures they are considered for the maximum amount of financial aid.

The financial aid office follows the eligibility rules set forth by the Dept. of Education in awarding financial aid to eligibility students. Most financial aid requires a student to maintain full time enrollment. Limited types of financial aid are available as long as a student maintains half-time enrollment (6 credits for undergraduates & 5 credits for graduate). Students must also meet Reasonable Academic Progress (RAP) standards to maintain eligibility for financial aid.

Students may be able to apply financial aid, including loans, toward programs sponsored by other institutions or for any credits not registered through Virginia Tech. However there are certain types of financial aid like the Virginia529 College Savings Plan and other tuition waiver programs that cannot be used if a student is participating in a Non-VT program or a program where enrollment is occurring at a foreign institution or through a third-party provider. If a portion of the credits offered by your program are through a source other than VT, you should alert financial aid recipients early so that they can meet with the Education Abroad office and the Office of University Scholarships and Financial Aid (USFA).

Also, students not seeking a degree from Virginia Tech cannot receive financial aid through this institution. They should consult the financial aid office at their home institution.

Virginia Tech students who are not eligible for federal, state, or institutional financial aid may want to consider using private/alternative loans. Students interested in these loans can find more information on our website (http://www.finaid.vt.edu/types_of_aid/loans/alternative/index.html) or contact our office for information on the loan process.

Processing Financial Aid for a Study Abroad Trip
Prior to each term, the Global Education Office will provide a standard list of costs and list of students participating in each program to USFA. This cost should also include the amount a student will need to bring for their personal expenses. Once we have this information, we will compare the cost of the program abroad with a student’s cost of attendance (COA) if they were attending a normal semester. Our office will then adjust the student’s COA to match the cost for the program abroad. USFA will review the student’s financial aid award and make any adjustments necessary. However in most cases, a student participating in a program abroad will not automatically receive additional financial aid. If a student needs additional financial aid, we encourage students to check the following options:

- Scholarship opportunities – mainly through their college/department or the Education Abroad office
- Federal Parent PLUS Loan – this loan is available to undergraduate students, and is one parent’s name. An approved credit check is required. More information is available on our website.
- Private/Alternative Loans – this is an education loan through a private company. It is in the student’s name, but almost always requires a co-signer. These loans typically have a higher interest rate than federal loans. More information is available on our website.
It is the student’s responsibility to complete their paperwork on time. Failure to do so may result in a delay in the release of their financial aid, loss of previously awarded financial aid, or student loans entering repayment.

For a student whose financial aid exceeds his or her university charges, a refund is issued by the Bursar’s office. The Bursar’s office strongly encourages students to enroll in direct deposit so the excess funds can be electronically deposited into the student’s account. If no direct deposit account is set up, a check will be printed and mailed to the student’s permanent address listed on the HokieSPA.

Timing of Financial Aid
Per federal regulation, financial aid awards cannot be released more than 10 days prior to the start of the Virginia Tech semester or session during which the education abroad program occurs—whichever is later. The earliest a student would receive a refund, assuming all aid requirements are complete, is the Thursday prior to the start of the Virginia Tech term. Therefore, students typically will not receive their financial aid refunds before payment deadlines and sometimes not even before the departure date.

The faculty member can insist that all payments be made on time and suggest that students obtain temporary funding from their parents or other options. Students can then be reimbursed when their financial aid is disbursed.

Students who are attending a Non-VT program or program where enrollment occurs elsewhere will have an additional delay in receiving their financial aid. Before their aid can be released, the student must have arrived at their host institution and begun classes. The institution abroad must notify the VT Global Education Office of the student’s enrollment. Global Education will then update University Scholarships and Financial Aid (USFA) so that funds can be released.

The most important piece of information is to encourage students to contact USFA well in advance of their departure date. USFA office staff can review a student’s current aid and provide them with their options for additional aid if possible.
Insurance

Insurance coverage is now a university requirement for all Virginia Tech students studying abroad and an important topic for faculty leading programs. Virginia Tech has contracted with Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI), a leading provider of insurance for study abroad, to offer comprehensive travel medical insurance and security evacuation coverage that meets the university’s minimum requirements at very reasonable rates (it costs approximately $35 per student per month, regardless of age or destination).

Enrollment Steps for Faculty-led Groups
Students participating on faculty-led programs should be enrolled and the cost budgeted by faculty leaders. Please follow the steps below to enroll your group. Proof of enrollment (i.e., your insurance invoice or detail) should be submitted as part of the Global Education Program Leader Pre-Departure Checklist at least one month prior to your group’s departure.

1. Download the enrollment spreadsheet
VT Faculty-Led Travel Insurance Enrollment Spreadsheet

2. Complete the spreadsheet
Fill out the following columns (highlighted in white on the spreadsheet): Last Name, First Name, Birth Date (all dates must be in the following format: 01/01/12 to be accepted), Gender (select from drop down menu), Start Date (Program Start Date), End Date (Program End Date), Enrollment Cell Code (select length of policy needed from drop-down menu-- one week/two weeks/three weeks/monthly), Country of Destination (click on the Sheet 2 tab at the bottom of the spreadsheet for a list of country codes), and Student Email. All other fields can be left blank.

3. Submit the spreadsheet
In order to adhere to FERPA guidelines for safeguarding student information, please DO NOT e-mail your spreadsheet. Instead, please submit it to us via the Dropbox on the VT Global Education Office Scholar site.

If you have any questions or concerns during the process you may contact vtabroad@vt.edu or call (540) 231-5888.
US Passports and Foreign Entry Requirements

US Passports

Application Procedures
It is important to urge students to begin the application process for a passport as soon as possible. Passports are usually processed in approximately 4-6 weeks from the time of application. We recommend you ask if students have a passport on the application form, so they are aware early on that they will need one.

Students may begin the application process online at the Department of State webpage. When the online portion is complete, applicants must apply in person at one of the thirteen Passport Agencies in the US or at certain post offices and courts. Click here to find a local acceptance facility.

Passport Precautions
Ask students to make two copies of the identification page of their passport. They should keep one, in a separate place from their passport, throughout the program. You should collect a second copy from each student and keep it throughout the program. This will be very useful to you if a student has an accident or emergency and his/her passport is not available. A photocopy will also make it is easier to receive a new passport if the original is lost or stolen. In such cases, the student should take the photocopied information to the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate and make an application for a new passport.

Foreign Entry Requirements

Details about visas and other foreign entry requirements can also be found on the Department of State website.

If you are traveling to countries that require visas for any of your students, we strongly recommend that you send application materials for all participants together. Insist that students get their passports early and apply for the visas as soon as possible. Study abroad professionals across the country continue to report difficulties in obtaining visas for some countries. There have been many cases where visas have arrived the day prior to or after the planned date of departure. There are also visa services that deal directly with the Embassy in obtaining timely visas for a group.

It is important to remember that while non-US participants generally already have their passports, they may need visas where US students do not. We recommend that you ask for the student’s citizenship on the program application form. This will provide you with early information that you must check on the visa requirements for people of other nationalities.
Travel Arrangements and Transportation

Travel Agents
The university contracts with several local travel agents to provide services. See the Controller’s Office website for a current list of agencies. To use these travel agencies, the department provides a HokieMart Purchase Order form to the travel agency. The travel agency books the tickets, makes other requested reservations, and charges the travel expenses directly to the local fund listed on the HokieMart Purchase Order.

The advantages of using one of them are:
- They bill our accounts directly.
- They will try to match or beat any price quote we get elsewhere.
- Flight insurance ranging from $400,000 to $700,000 is automatically provided.
- It is not necessary to incur a risk by making a pre-payment or deposit before the tickets are issued.

You can use a travel agent to pre-pay for hotels, buses, and other travel arrangements in Europe. This will enable you to significantly reduce the amount of money you will need to carry with you during the program. For non-European destinations, ask your travel agent whether this might be possible. You may also want to inquire about what trip cancellation insurance is available to you at these agencies.

Independent Travel
Many students elect to travel independently either before or after the official program dates. If you are purchasing tickets for the group, please tell the students that they may have to pay a fee (usually $50--$100) to change their tickets. You are not responsible for any occurrences related to independent travel.

Transportation

Air
When using travel agents for international flights, be sure to get the following information:
- Deposit deadlines
- Minimum number of people for the cost you were quoted
- Policies/costs for changing the return date and/or departure location for individuals who do not wish to return with the group

For trans-Atlantic travel, we recommend that you book the students’ flights from Washington D.C. rather than Roanoke, except for programs with dates that do not permit students to go home first, such as a semester break program. Students can come to Washington on their own from their homes. Many of our students live closer to Washington, D.C. than to Roanoke, so this is more convenient and less costly for them, as well as less work for you.
**Trains**
For programs based in Europe, the rail system will probably be a primary transportation mode for you. **Eurail passes** are a flexible way to move around Europe and can be included in your pre-paid package with a travel agent. Eurail passes must be purchased prior to leaving the US, and it is advisable to purchase individual rail passes rather than group passes, so the group will not be required to stay together. Several countries, such as the UK, are not included in the Eurail pass. National rail passes may be a good option in these cases.

Don’t overlook overnight train schedules to get to your next itinerary site. This is an efficient way to save daylight hours for other purposes, and save money as well, since a sleeper car is usually less expensive than a hotel room. Check with your travel agent for details.

**Ground Transportation**
Especially outside of Europe, your travels will involve more than just trains. Depending on your country, you may be using any of the following or a variety: public bus, tour bus, rental vans, boats, or ferries. For travel within or between cities we suggest considering a charter bus, which provides door to door service, reduces transportation uncertainty, sometimes enables you to prepay for transportation, and reduces the amount of time spent lugging baggage. As much as possible, we recommend you have a travel agent make these arrangements for you. If you do not find a US travel agent who is able or willing to do this, you may want to try making contact with a travel agent abroad.
Lodging

Typical lodging and housing can differ considerably from one culture to the next. If the lodging or homestay your students will be using is very different from what is normally expected in the US, we recommend that you provide the students with the best available information during your pre-departure sessions to help them develop realistic expectations.

Selecting Lodging

There are a variety of options available, including hotels, dormitories, youth hostels, and homestays. Your travel agent or international contacts should be able to help you with most of the options. If you are interested in using either of Virginia Tech’s center in Switzerland or the Dominican Republic, please the Global Education Office.

There are several factors to consider when choosing program lodging, including cost, location, services, and opportunities for cultural learning. If the location is far from the sites you will be visiting, determine whether public transportation is easily accessible. Ask whether meals are available, especially breakfast. Some housing options offer more opportunities for cultural learning than others. For example bed and breakfast type establishments would offer students much more exposure to the culture than a business hotel.

Quality versus cost is an important consideration for many program organizers. If the cost is high it can hamper your ability to recruit students. Those hoping to sacrifice some or most quality considerations to keep costs low must be very mindful of two important criteria at the absolute minimum: adequate security and the capacity to provide the students with sufficient rest. Remember also that a poor location at a good price may increase transportation costs and reduce the time available for site visits.

Homestays

Advantages

The homestay option offers many important benefits. First, they help keep program costs low. They also offer the highest level of cultural exposure. Host families can offer students support, advice, and opportunities to experience the typical lifestyle of the culture and in some cases a chance to practice their foreign language skills. Professors report that host families have helped students with homesickness. Homestays also provide a feeling of security to parents and can be a positive factor in their decision to send their children on the program.

Disadvantages

On the negative side, homestays also present challenges. The process of arranging for homestays is more involved than the process of making a hotel reservation, and if a homestay does not work out it can seriously detract from the student’s overall experience. It is difficult to ensure that every host family will provide the high quality experience students hope for. From another perspective, if a student behaves inappropriately it can cause the group leader more discomfort or trouble than if the student were in a hotel.
Organizing and Supervising Homestays
Homestays can be arranged through your own international contacts or through homestay organizations. If you choose to use a homestay organization, research it and seek to confirm the quality of the homestays offered. Ask for experienced families and ask for information about each family, whether you are screening families yourself or using a homestay organization. It is useful to get certain basic information about the families and the students before assigning students to their families. Smoking preferences and eating habits are especially important.

Be sure to give both families and students a clear set of expectations about activities, schedules, behaviors, and what will be provided during the homestay. During the program, if a student expresses a concern about his/her homestay, you should listen carefully to his or her concerns. Be sure to obtain as much information as you can regarding the situation before taking any action.

Homestay Problems
If students are living with local families at any point during the program, you should prepare yourself to act quickly if a student’s complaint indicates a possible threat to his/her security or health. Advise the students before embarking that they should inform the faculty leader if members of the host family behave in a way that makes them uncomfortable. If a student informs you of a problem, it is important that you believe the student and remove the student from the home immediately. Students should be made to understand that behavior considered inappropriate in our culture is usually inappropriate behavior in the new culture. Attempts to be “culturally sensitive” or polite to one’s host should not influence a student to accept significantly uncomfortable situations.

Health Preparations
Planning ahead to learn about recommended or required vaccinations and health preparation helps take the stress out of international travel. The safest way to explore is to determine what health-related considerations await you in your destination and make decisions before you leave—it is also important to properly inform students.

Pre-Travel Preparation for Students
It takes time for vaccines/medications to take effect. Students should prepare and schedule an appointment early, so that they can be properly upon arrival. Schiffert Health Center offers a number of travel-specific vaccinations by appointment for those students who are leaving the country. Before making an appointment, become familiar with the CDC’s travel information and be sure to read the Travel Information Sheet while planning your trip.

Pre-Travel Preparation for Faculty
Since Schiffert Health Center is a student service facility, the Montgomery County Health Department is one local resource for faculty. Appointment can be scheduled by calling 540-585-3300. The Montgomery County Health Department and District Office are located in Christiansburg, on Pepper Street in the same building as Montgomery County Social Services.
Leading a study abroad program involves a variety of risks, and a diverse range of legal issues could arise from these risks. The likelihood that an individual will take legal action against the University or any of its representatives should be a deterrent to leading an overseas program. Nevertheless, there are a variety of actions that should be taken to reduce risk and liability including meeting all of the university requirements and attending risk management faculty program leader orientation events and workshops sponsored by GEO.

Virginia Tech is committed to assisting you in your efforts to reduce risk and address liability issues. Risk Management and University Legal Counsel are willing to meet with faculty members at any time to discuss their concerns.

**Personal Liability**

As a faculty member leading a Virginia Tech study abroad program, you are acting as an employee of the university. Virginia Tech acknowledges the scope of duties for program leaders is greater on global education programs than on campus. A few of these additional duties include but are not limited to: marketing and recruiting; arranging transportation, lodging, meals, out-of-classroom tours, and field studies; financial and budgetary management, pre-departure preparations; emergency and crisis management. With this in mind, it is suggested that program proposals include a descriptive summary of all activities occurring during the program. A detailed itinerary, all supporting documentation for the Faculty Program Leader Pre-Departure Checklist along with the department or college approval must be received by the Global Education Office prior to departure. There has never been an instance in which a Virginia Tech employee performing his/her duties in a reasonable manner not been supported by the University. If your actions appear to be independent of the university, you are exposed to a higher level of personal liability. Thus, your personal liability is reduced by virtue of the approval process for global education programs. You can further clarify this distinction by asking your department head to acknowledge your role as a leader of the program in writing, as an addition to your job description or in a simple written statement to you. You should be cautious about designing your program in such a way that you disassociate yourself and the program from the university. If you permit non-VT students or non-students to participate in your program without paying tuition, you may be exposing yourself to significant amount of personal liability. All non-VT students or individuals must enroll as non-degree seeking students in order to participate in a global education program, be eligible to receive credit, be billed for program fees, and be eligible to enroll in VT’s travel medical insurance.

Faculty member’s spouse or other person not having an official affiliation with Virginia Tech must be under university contract to be able to serve the program in an official capacity and be subject to the university’s indemnification. To start the process, inquire with your department head. Faculty members with nine-month appointments who do not receive compensation from
the university for their work on a summer program are also advised to obtain a letter of recognition from their department head.

**Disclosure of Risks and Liability Waivers**

Disclosure of risks reduces personal and University exposure to liability. When courts review institutional warnings or lack of warnings, they consider whether the warnings are obvious and direct, specific to the risk and comprehensible.

The issue of ‘failure to warn’ has become an increasingly potent weapon for a plaintiff’s attorney. Thus, even if an activity is conducted in a reasonably prudent manner, there still may be liability predicated upon the failure to warn of the specific risks inherent in an activity. This requisite of full disclosure rests on the premise that participants need full information regarding the risks of an activity in order to make a truly informed decision about participation. Betty van der Smissen in *Legal Liability and Risk Management for Public and Private Entities* (Anderson Publishing, 1990) sets forth the following criteria for effective warnings:

- **Obvious and Direct**: Avoid subtlety in giving warnings. Make sure that contradictory messages are not conveyed to participants.
- **Specific to the Risk**: A warning must be specific to the risk at hand so the person can make an informed decision. Advising people to proceed at “their own risk” is without value if the person does not know what the risks are.
- **Comprehensible**: The warning language must be understandable to the persons being warned. This issue includes the question of terminology and the “native” language of the participants. Also, use a variety of methods to convey warnings, e.g., oral warnings by supervisors, written warnings in Agreements to participate, and signage.

Using a liability waiver form is one effective method of disclosing risks to students and thus reducing liability. The *Liability Agreement form* covers a wide range of issues common to all Virginia Tech global education programs and has been approved by the University Legal Counsel. The timing of disclosure is also important. If you do not warn students of the risks until after they have already made substantial non-refundable payments or just prior to departure, liability will increase. Faculty members are advised to include the waiver form in their registration packet for students.

We also recommend that you discuss responsibility and liability issues in your pre-departure orientation sessions, which are an ideal forum for disclosing risks. Topics to be discussed in detail include but are not limited to: *expectations of behavior on the part of the students, cultural issues including awareness and sensitivity, security precautions and procedure plans, and health and safety issues associated with foreign study and travel*. During these sessions, you should inform the students of what things they should or should not do. You should also inform them both orally and via the waiver that you have no responsibility for what they do during their free time. It is a good idea to put all the points you make orally about responsibility and liability issues during your pre-departure sessions in writing as well to serve as proof of disclosure.

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If you have questions regarding risks associated with your program, please feel free to contact Risk Management.

**Health Risks**

It is important to include health risks when disclosing risks. Always point students toward the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s resources, the Department of State travel site and World Health Organization for more information and country-related specifics. Encourage students to meet with a staff member at VT’s Schiffert Health Center as an effective method of disclosing health risks. For countries that require immunizations, you should require that students show proof of immunization.

Virginia Tech’s Student Health Services advises that since students are usually of the legal age of consent (18 years), parental permission for medical treatment is not required.

**Alcohol and Drug Risks**

As all experienced program leaders know, when students who are too young to drink legally in the US go to a country where their drinking is legal, their response may be similar to that of freshmen first arriving on campus when they have never been allowed to drink at home. For some students an overseas experience becomes a positive lesson on appropriate use of alcohol. For others it may not be so positive. Students should be seriously warned of the vulnerable state they put themselves in by becoming drunk in a foreign country where they do not know the surroundings, culture, language and other clues that help them avoid trouble at home. The mental and physical changes caused by alcohol use can make them easy targets for robbery or sexual assault or may cause accidents.

The risks are compounded with drug use. Not only are they more vulnerable to attack or accidents while under the influence of illegal drugs, but they expose themselves to legal difficulties as well. Students should receive clear and firm warnings against any use of illegal drugs during the program.

**Crisis Response**

The manner in which a crisis is handled also creates liability issues. The following chapter deals specifically with crisis management. Having effective procedures for managing a crisis is critical for the well-being of your students and yourself. An ineffective crisis response increases exposure to liability. For this reason, be sure to call and permit Virginia Tech’s trained response personnel to assist you when an emergency occurs.

Making written notes is also important. “If an accident does occur, it is crucial to investigate what happened on site as thoroughly and quickly as possible so as to establish a verbatim record that contains the facts of the incident. Memories can often be faulty, so accurate and timely notes offer an important degree of credibility.”

In summary, it is important to be aware of the risks relevant to your program, inform the students of these risks and be prepared to respond to a crisis if one occurs. In a crisis, do not let your fear of legal consequences paralyze you to the extent that you fail to act quickly and responsibly.

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Safety and Crisis Management

The likelihood of a crisis occurring during a Virginia Tech study abroad program is low. However, appropriate knowledge and proper pre-departure preparation can reduce the likelihood of a crisis and improve your ability to manage a crisis if one occurs.

Pre-departure Preparations

Faculty leaders are encouraged to become as familiar as possible with the types of crime, illness and emergencies that occur in the host country and the appropriate preventive measures. This information can be gained from a variety of sources. Making site visits to the study abroad destinations is one effective method for gaining information. Information can also be gained by consulting other institutions that have study abroad programs in the same location. The U.S. State Department is an excellent resources on online with which all program leaders should be familiar, as follows:

Consular Information Sheets

Consular Information Sheets for every country are maintained by the U.S. State Department. They include such information as “location of the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in the subject country, unusual immigration practices, health conditions, minor political disturbances, unusual currency and entry regulations, crime and security information, and drug penalties. If an unstable condition exists in a country that is not severe enough to warrant a Travel Warning, a description of the condition(s) may be included under an optional section entitled "Safety/Security." On limited occasions, we also restate in this section any U.S. Embassy advice given to official employees. Consular Information Sheets generally do not include advice, but present information in a factual manner so the traveler can make his or her own decisions concerning travel to a particular country.”

Travel Alerts

Travel Alerts are a means to disseminate information about terrorist threats and other relatively short-term and/or trans-national conditions posing significant risks to the security of American travelers. They are made any time there is a perceived threat and usually have Americans as a particular target group. In the past, Public Announcements have been issued to deal with short-term coups, bomb threats to airlines, violence by terrorists and anniversary dates of specific terrorist events. Due to the fact that the level of threat can vary with a public announcement, the faculty leader must use his/her judgment to determine an action plan.

Faculty leaders should work with their department chairs and deans as they evaluate the conditions in the host country (countries). A travel advisory does not necessarily mean that the program must be cancelled. Faculty leaders should monitor the conditions, be in touch with their host country contacts, and obtain as much information as possible. If a program’s locations comes under travel advisory, a university-wide committee for global travel oversight will meet to determine the program’s emergency contingency plan and assess risks. The global travel oversight committee reserves the right to cancel the program or make programmatic changes if deemed necessary.
In addition, the department chair, dean, etc. does have the option to cancel a program. In order to minimize the threat of a last minute cancellation, be sure that your department head and dean are comfortable with your choices. Be sure to inform students of the risks inherent in international travel (including a last minute cancellation or itinerary change) and advise them of how to minimize these risks. You can assist in minimizing the financial risk to the student by purchasing trip cancellation insurance for your airline tickets or purchasing refundable airline tickets.

**Travel Warnings**

*Travel Warnings* are issued when the State Department decides, based on all relevant information, to recommend that Americans avoid travel to a certain country. Countries where avoidance of travel is recommended will have Travel Warnings as well as Consular Information Sheets.

You may also want to consult the following additional sources of information:

- **The Center for Disease Control and Prevention** also provides helpful country and health information for international travelers.
- **NAFSA**: Association of International Educators, formed an inter-organizational task force on safety and responsibility on education abroad. This group developed a set of guidelines for *safety in education abroad*.
- The **Virginia Tech Travel Clinic** is able to provide information on both health issues and safety.
- Other useful sources of information include travel guides, US and foreign embassies, international newspapers and periodicals. Conditions change rapidly in some countries, so it would be prudent to regularly monitor information sources.

Faculty leaders may want to consider carrying a first aid kit or suggest that students carry their own first aid kit containing the following items:

- Adhesive bandages or gauze
- Antibacterial soap, hand wipes or waterless gel
- Anti-fungal ointment or powder
- Ace wraps for sprains and strains
- Candles and matches
- Cough lozenges
- Disinfectant
- Electrical plug adapter, current converter
- Flashlight and batteries
- Hydrocortisone cream for itching, bites and skin irritation
- Thermometer
It has also been suggested that faculty leaders consider receiving basic first aid training. At no point should a faculty member administer or make health related suggestions to students while abroad. Always consult a health professional or VT’s travel medical insurance provider.

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**Emergency Response Manual**

The following are procedures you are expected to follow should an emergency occur while you are overseas. Your immediate response, as well as the lines of communication between you and Virginia Tech, have been outlined below.

Please note that in most responses, you will need to remember only one Virginia Tech phone number while you are away, **Virginia Tech Campus Police: (540) 231-6411**. This is a 24-hour emergency number. The police will contact the Dean of Students representative who is on call. Dependent on the particular emergency, the Dean of Students will get in touch with the most appropriate individuals, including the Student Health Center and the Global Education Office.

**Best Practices for Emergencies**

- Communicate with VTGEO (early, if possible).
- Never leave students alone without appropriate supervision.
- Account for all students, staff and faculty.
- Respond to concerned and worried callers.
- Provide VTGEO with regular updates.
- Assess safety for continued program.
- Communicate assessment to students.

**Mental Health Crisis Response**

When responding to a student with a mental health crisis while abroad whose symptoms may include:

- Inability to communicate clearly
- Changed patterns of interaction (avoiding participation, anxious when called upon, dominating discussions when this was not normal before)
- Extreme fluctuations in behavior
- Depressed or lethargic mood
- Excessively active or talkative (very rapid speech)
- Swollen or red eyes
- Marked change in personal dress and hygiene
- Sweating (when room is not hot)
- Falling asleep inappropriately

Faculty leader’s response should include:
• If a student self-discloses a mental health issue before departure, strongly encourage them to consult with doctor/CCC.
• If a student discloses a mental health issue while abroad or exhibits signs of distress, resist urge to diagnose.
• Instead, focus on disruptive or harmful behaviors and their impact on the learning environment.
• Get students attention they need—CISI can help
• VT is standing by to assist.

Student Conduct Crisis Response

When responding to a student conduct emergency while abroad which common misbehaviors may include:
• Excessive drinking
• Illegal drug use
• Trusting predators
• Cheating
• Taking high profile risks
• Breaking rules
• Exercising poor judgment/decision-making

Faculty leader’s response should include:
• Set clear ground rules and define expectations clearly in advance.
• Depending on situation, issue:
  • Verbal warning
  • Written warning
  • Removal from program
• For severe situations, no warning is required. Don’t allow students to test limits.
• VT Dean of Students has authority to remove students. Avoid citing unsubstantiated reasons as causes for removal.
• Keep detailed records of incidents.

Medical Emergency Response

When responding to a medical emergency which may include hospitalization (not matter how brief), rape or sexual assault, severe food poisoning, severe allergic reaction, anything of a psychiatric nature, any incident involving injuries or potential injuries:

1. Seek appropriate medical care.
2. Call CISI’s Emergency Assistance Provider 24/7.
3. Notify VTGEO of your location and status.
4. Work with VTGEO to maintain communications with CISI and the local treatment facilities.
5. Protect student’s right to medical privacy.
6. File the appropriate report with VT.
General Emergency Response

When responding to a general emergency which may include: detained Student, missing student, student death, natural disasters, terrorist attacks, protests/civil unrest, foiled terrorist plot, military coups, widespread riots:

1. Secure a safe location.
2. Account for all students.
3. Contact or respond to directions of local authorities.
4. Notify VTGEO of your location and status (e-mail or text message may be easiest)
5. Wait for further instructions from VT.
6. Communicate instructions/information to students.
7. Maintain communication with VT.

Emergency contact cards have been created listing all Virginia Tech emergency telephone numbers. Faculty leaders are advised to carry this with them at all times. Contact the Global Education Office in order to obtain this card.

Communications Alert
Remember that in this day of instantaneous electronic communication, it can be difficult to inform all of the involved parties in a linear fashion. It is entirely conceivable that when you are involved in the immediacy of an emergency or crisis, students on your program could email their friends and/or family in the U.S and tell them (perhaps inaccurately) what is happening. The “snowball effect” could then take place—all before you have had the chance to make a single phone call. This is something that has happened on other universities’ programs, the worst case being a set of parents finding out their daughter had been killed in India from another set of parents, who had received an email from their daughter. All of this transpired before the university could carry out its own crisis plan.

It may be worthwhile to have a conversation with your participants about this at your pre-departure session or early on in the program. Chances are, if you explain how potentially damaging the snowball effect can be, they will understand. Caution them to wait to make phone calls and send emails home until you have carried out your own response plan. Be sure to let them know when it is all right for them to get in touch with their support system in the U.S. This can be very comforting for them if the entire group has been through a traumatic event.

Global Education Office and Your Department
For both medical and non-medical emergencies, please contact the Global Education Office and your department, or ask the Dean of Students Office to do so as soon as possible after all necessary emergency responses are implemented. During an emergency abroad, these two offices are likely to receive telephone calls from parents and others, so it is important that they be adequately informed of the situation.

Responsibility 101
1. Prevent foreseeable harm
2. Prepare for conceivable emergencies by providing information, tools and resources
3. Respond to needs of students, parents, faculty, and staff in a timely fashion

**Important Resources**
- [Travel.State.Gov](https://travel.state.gov)
- [Center for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov)
- WHO
- SAFETI – Safety Abroad First Educational Travel Information
- OSAC – The Overseas Security Advisory Council
- ASIRT – Association for Safe International Road Travel

**Codes to be Familiar With**

**FERPA**
- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (1974), also known as the Buckley Amendment, is a federal law that protects the privacy of student information records.

**HIPAA**

**Title IX**
- Title IX – Prohibition Against Sex Discrimination in Education (1972).
- Safety of student is paramount.
- Immediately report any complaints to Title IX Office.
- Program leaders should be careful to avoid any behavior which could be interpreted as inappropriate (i.e., don’t hold office hours in your hotel room; don’t room or drink with students, etc.).

**Americans with Disabilities Act**
- The Rehabilitation Act (1973) states that no otherwise qualified individual with a disability shall be excluded from the participation in any federally funded program or activity.
- Encourage students to contact SSD, physician and insurance company prior to departure to develop a travel plan.
- Mobility International, a non-profit dedicated to collecting and disseminating information about overseas travel for disabled individuals is another good resource.

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**Students with Disabilities**

Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, global education organizations cannot inquire about an applicant’s disability prior to accepting that person into a program. Once a participant has been accepted, an organization may inquire about a disability in order to facilitate program adaptations.

Applicants with disabilities should be evaluated based on the same qualifications as any other potential participant. International organizations should not make any assumptions about an applicant’s abilities or intelligence based on knowledge of a disability.
As a program leader there are sure to be questions regarding your responsibility to students with disabilities. Please know there are support services and departments on campus, including the Global Education Office and the Dean of Students Office, which are prepared to help you with any questions or concerns you may have.

The following information and guidelines will assist you in administering a program attended by students with disabilities.

- Faculty are encouraged to have a statement on their program applications for students with disabilities. Our statement reads: “If you are a person with a disability who may need accommodations to participate in a study abroad program, please contact the Global Education Office or the Dean of Students Office.”
- Faculty are encouraged to also announce this information to their classes.
- The Dean of Students Office has samples of syllabus statements for faculty use. These statements allow for accommodations to students with disabilities.

Identifying Students with Disabilities
Determining whether or not a student has a disability is not as easy as it may seem. Essentially there are two classifications of disabilities: students with visible disabilities and students with invisible disabilities.

Visible disabilities are observable. These typically include paralysis, loss of limb, Cerebral Palsy and blindness to name a few. Invisible disabilities are often unnoticeable. These disabilities include, hearing deficiencies, some forms of blindness, cardiac conditions, learning disabilities, Attention Deficit Disorder, cancer, diabetes, kidney disease, and the many forms of psychiatric, behavioral and seizure disorders.

Some students with disabilities will self-identify and disclose their disabilities immediately. Others, most often those with the “invisible” disabilities, may decide not to inform anyone because of embarrassment or what they believe others may think of them. It is these students that may have the most difficult time academically and socially on a study abroad program.

It is important to remember that once a student discloses their disability to you, you may not relay that information to other persons, department, etc. without his or her approval. The student has a right to confidentiality. In this case, please encourage the student to talk with the Global Education Office or the Dean of Students Office.

Program leaders with concerns related to students with disabilities may wish to contact the Dean of Students Office. Susan Angle, Director of Services for Students with Disabilities, oversees services for students with disabilities. Please remember that the best source of information comes from the students. The Global Education Office highly encourages you to have your students complete an “end of program” evaluation. Information in the evaluation may help you the next time you have a student with a disability attend your program. In fact, it may help your entire program in the end.

The following information may help you in planning your program for students with disabilities.
**Mobility International USA** (MIUSA) is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting equal opportunities for persons with disabilities in international educational exchange, leadership development, disability-rights training, travel and community service. In addition to conducting international exchange programs, MIUSA consults with other organizations to help them include persons with disabilities in their exchange and leadership programs.

**The Association of Higher Education and Disability** (AHEAD) is an international, multi-cultural organization of professionals committed to full participation in higher education for persons with disabilities.

**Access Abroad**
The Access Abroad site is devoted to making existing abroad opportunities accessible to college students with disabilities, in accordance with ADA regulations and was developed by the University of Minnesota.

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### Information for Parents

Faculty leaders should consider what information should be provided to the parents of students participating in their program. Since parents are often involved in paying for the program, they are anxious to be well informed about it. The program brochure and U.S. State Department Consular Information Sheets may not be enough to meet their need for information. You may want to create a separate information packet or letter specifically for parents.

An information packet for parents should, among other things, include the following:

- Detailed itinerary of the program for the entire period indicating contact information of hotels or other accommodation arrangements made.

- Detailed estimate of the complete program cost including anticipated personal expenses per student. This information is helpful for financial aid planning.

- List of all individuals responsible for planning the program should be provided. This is to ensure that parents know whom to contact at all times, both at Virginia Tech and in the foreign country site.

- Outline of the program highlighting academic and professional expectations. This should include the courses to be taken, credit hours, syllabi, narratives, required textbooks and presentation requirements.

- Virginia Tech’s required participant forms and required travel medical insurance information

- A request that parents instill in their children the need to act responsibly throughout the entire period of the trip.
Safety Guidelines for Faculty & Students

Studying abroad in a particular region of the world means you must take greater precautions. However, as we know, it is impossible to determine future events and their impact on the world. Please use all available resources to determine whether or not a program location is ideal for you. These guidelines are intended to help you be better prepared for an unanticipated situation(s) abroad. The Global Education Office is happy to discuss any concern or address any questions you may have regarding a program or location. If we do not have the answer we will help you find an answer.

Global Education Office recommends the following safety guidelines to all faculty and students participating in global education programs:

- Avoid going places alone. Always go places in pairs if possible.
- Be alert. Avoid situations where there may be danger, such as political demonstrations.
- Be aware of your surroundings. Watch for people who seem too friendly. Be cautious of anyone who may be following you. Be cautious of unusual activity near your living quarters. Report any unusual activities to the faculty leader/local authorities as necessary.
- Keep a very low profile. Do not wear clothing that calls attention to you. Try to blend in with the locals if possible. DO NOT wear articles of clothing with American symbols.
- If you feel uncomfortable in your surroundings, act like you know what you’re doing and where you’re going. Go to a familiar place if possible. Avoid getting drawn into a debate or conversation that might lead to a dangerous situation.
- Remember to keep all of your government documents with you or in a secure location such as your hotel safe if possible. DO NOT keep your money and documents in just one place or in your luggage. Keep a copy of your passport with a family member in the U.S., and another copy somewhere in a safe place during your studies abroad. In case it gets stolen, your copies will facilitate replacement.
- Avoid places where large numbers of Americans gather if possible.
- Always register with the nearest U.S. Embassy while you are abroad. The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a free service to allow U.S. citizens and nationals traveling abroad to enroll their trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.
Required Policies

All university employees planning university-affiliated international travel for student groups are required to adhere to the following policies:

- 288 University Travel Policy Regarding Countries with CDC Travel Warnings
- 287 Voluntary Health Disclosure Form for Education Abroad
- 281 University-Affiliated International Travel for Student Groups
- 225 Administrative Responsibilities for Education Abroad Programming
- Resolution on International Travel Insurance
- Policy on Student Responsibilities for Education Abroad

Required Forms

Global Education Program Leader Pre-Departure Checklist

To comply with these policies, program leaders are responsible for distributing and collecting the requirements detailed on the Global Education Program Leader Pre-Departure Checklist. The following checklist and supporting documentation must be received by the Virginia Tech Global Education Office at least one month prior to program departure. All questions may be directed to GEO via phone (540) 231-5888 or email vtabroad@vt.edu.

- Global Education Program Leader Pre-Departure Checklist

All student forms are collected online via Global Education’s online system. The only document GEO requires in the original is the signed checklist.

The attached forms are samples only. Please do not distribute them to students; forms must be completed online.

Other Required Forms

As a faculty leader, you are required to enroll students in the CISI Insurance program and send a completed CISI Insurance Enrollment Spreadsheet to the Global Education Office prior to departure (via the VT Global Education Scholar site). For more information, click here.

The following forms are required depending on the student or the program in which they are enrolled.

- Financial Aid Documentation Form. For more information, click here.
• Virginia Tech Study Abroad Steger Center Citizenship Agreement

Pre-Departure Orientation Sessions

Proper pre-departure preparation is an important part of any global education program. Listed below are some topics that you may wish to include in your orientation sessions.

**Academic Issues**
- Courses and grading system
- Class requirements and evaluation
- Reading materials
- Suggestions for effective study and academic progress
- Honor code

**Program Logistics**
- Passports
- Visas
- International Student Identification Cards
- Travel arrangements
- Program itinerary
- Program fees and payment dates
- Financial aid
- Handling money

**Communication**
- Mail, e-mail, faxing, phone
- Contacting Virginia Tech
- Emergency contact information

**Safety & Security**
- Customs and political situations
- Expectations of women and men with regard to drinking
- Protecting valuables
- Crime
- Demonstrations
- Drugs
- Legal issues
- Consequences of being arrested

**Health Care Issues**
- General health care
- Health insurance
- Medical emergencies
- Virginia Tech Travel Clinic
- HIV and STD precautions
Prescriptions
Precautions against malaria, water-born parasites and other illnesses, where necessary
Precaution against leaving the group

Packing Tips
Stress to students who have not traveled before what “packing lightly” means. They may believe that ramps are as prevalent as in the U.S., and if they have done most of their traveling in cars, they have never thought about how far they can carry their luggage themselves.

Cultural Issues
Intercultural communication
Language issues
Cultural adjustment theory
US culture versus host culture
Cultural sensitivity
Reentry adjustment
(Global Education Office staff members may be called upon to present information about cultural issues)

The Global Education Office Pre-Departure Orientation Guide (contact GEO to request a copy) contains logistical and cultural information.

It is wise to state expectations that students will develop the independence to handle their own banking needs, get around on their own during free time, etc. It is also important to inform the students of your expectations of both their academic and personal behavior. You may want to provide them with explicit guidelines for expected behavior, and you should remind them that they are still bound by the Virginia Tech Student Code of Conduct as well as the laws of the host country.

Feel free to invite representatives from Global Education Office to present information at your pre-departure information sessions. Topics we are sometimes asked to address include students’ responsibilities during a global education program (to themselves, parents, other members of the group and the program leader) and issues in crossing cultures, using various presentation methods to guide discussion.
NAFSA PUBLICATIONS [http://www.nafsa.org/publication.sec]

NAFSA: Association of International Educators has a long tradition of publishing books, monographs, and other works for international educators. Many titles are practical guides to specific aspects of daily work. Others share "big picture" thinking and offer food for thought. The following are particularly useful for program development and implementation.

**Abroad by Design**
By Maryélise Lamet
Discover the nuts and bolts of the study abroad program through a collection of model programs, sample budgets, health and safety guidelines, and institutional best practices representing colleges, universities, and organizations worldwide.

**Best Practices in Addressing Mental Health Issues Affecting Education Abroad Participants**
By Barbara Lindeman, Editor
This e-Publication, available in PDF, provides education abroad professionals (located both in and outside the United States) with a better understanding of how to identify and help education abroad participants facing mental health challenges.

**The Guide to Successful Short-Term Programs Abroad**
By Sarah E. Spencer and Kathy Tuma
Designed as a practical guide for practitioners who direct and administer short-term programs. Readers can use the tools provided in the book to build successful short-term programs tailored to their own institutions. First considered as year-long, and then for a semester, they are now considered one-to-eight week programs (less than a term), usually faculty-directed and sponsored by a home institution. This book helps one build and maintain a successful short-term program.

**Crisis Management in a Cross-Cultural Setting**
By Patricia A. Burak and William W. Hoffa, Editors
An essential sourcebook, designed to prepare international educators and others to respond appropriately, expeditiously, and comprehensively to crises
that befall students and scholars living and learning a long way from where they call ‘home.’ Its thesis is simple: advance planning and cross-cultural sensitivity can make all the difference.

**NAFSA's Guide to Education Abroad for Advisers and Administrators, Third Edition**  
By Joseph L. Brockington, William W. Hoffa, Patricia C. Martin, Editors  
Substantially revised and expanded, this new edition of the Guide has notably enhanced a book that was already regarded as indispensable by education abroad professionals. Extensive chapters on such topics as short-term programs, intercultural learning, underrepresented constituencies, and community colleges have been added. Three chapters deal with issues specific to overseas program direction.

**Faculty-Led 360: Guide to Successful Study Abroad**  
By Melanie McCallon and Bill Holmes  
The complete guide to develop, market, and lead study abroad programs. If you are a faculty member interested in education abroad programming, or starting a study abroad office at your college or university, this is the one book that will help you get there.