

SAVANNAH STATE UNIVERSITY
INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION CENTER



ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING A STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM
A PROCEDURE MANUAL

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Study Abroad Programs

The purpose of this Manual is to provide Savannah State faculty with information and procedures that apply to the establishment and maintenance of a Study Abroad program. The policies and procedures outlined in this Manual are consistent with the University System of Georgia's Handbook for Developing and Maintaining Study Abroad Programs.

Study Abroad Programs have become one of the instruments designed to increase the global competence of students in this 21st century. Colleges and Universities throughout the United States of America and the world are developing study abroad programs to promote the global education of their students. This trend is the result of various studies that have reached the conclusion that students who acquire international experiences through the study abroad program increase their potential to be successful in life. Hence the establishing and maintenance of various study abroad programs in different Colleges and Universities. Some universities have over 20 study abroad programs giving students the opportunity to study in all continents. It is with this understanding that Savannah State University is shaping its study abroad programs. Our students can currently go to Ghana, Egypt, Trinidad-Tobago, China, and Brazil. In addition, students have the opportunity to join other study abroad programs offered by other institutions that are members of the University System of Georgia. The International Education Center is committed to expanding opportunities for Savannah State University students through active involvement of faculty who can establish and maintain additional study abroad programs.

Faculty Involvement

Any Savannah State Professor can establish and maintain a study program. Once done, the professor becomes the program director for that specific program. However, there are procedures and rules that must be followed. These rules and procedures are clearly outlined in the USG Handbook for Developing and Maintaining Study Abroad programs. The steps that should be followed to establish and maintain a study abroad program are as follows:

1. Needs Assessment

A faculty member should establish a study abroad program to meet the needs and interest of their specific departments and students. The departmental support to the program is crucial to obtain the institutional support. If the study abroad program is intended for Africa or Latin America, the faculty must explain the rationale as to why that specific country and how such a program responds to the needs and interest of the students and faculty. After all, the

departmental approval is the first step to move the proposal forward. As elaborated in the USG Handbook (page 11), a formal assessment needs should include the following information:

- *An examination of the goals and mission of the institution and department sponsoring the program*
- *The means by which a study abroad program might achieve these goals*
- *A survey of the interests of faculty and students*
- *Determination of the type of study abroad program needed to fit these goals and interests.*

Usually, faculty members consider elements such as high demand for additional study abroad programs from students. The faculty must also examine whether a major field study needs to be added in a country where there is already a study abroad program in another field of study. In every situation, the faculty must pay attention to the security and determine whether the country is not considered dangerous by the state department.

2. Approval Process

Proposals to establish a study abroad program must be submitted by October 1. The proposal must describe the assessment needs for such a program and the rationale for selecting the country where the program will be offered. The proposal must also give an estimate of the cost of the program. This proposal must go through the Department Chair and the Dean. Once approved by the Dean, the proposal is sent to the International Education Center. The Director of the International education Center will contact the host institution abroad to schedule a site visit. The president or the Vice President of Academic Affairs or any other official designated by the President will visit the host institution in June or July. After the site visit a decision regarding the proposal will be made. In short the process to establish a study abroad program is as follows:

- A. Draft a proposal that outline the need for such a program.
- B. Submit the proposal to the Department Chair
- C. The Chair approves the proposal after getting a positive recommendation from the faculty
- D. The proposal is sent to the Dean

- E. Once approved, the Dean sends the proposal to the Director of the International Education Center who makes the recommendation after consulting with the Study Abroad advisory Committee.
- F. The Director of the International Education Center contacts the host institution to schedule a site visit.
- G. One or two officials of Savannah State University visits the host institution in June or July
- H. A decision to approve or reject the proposal is made in August and the Study Abroad Program Approval Form is submitted to the Board of Regents.
- I. The program can begin in Spring or Summer of the following year.

3. Program Design

When developing a study abroad program, the following factors must be taken into account:

- A. Your course proposal does not replicate another program offered in the University System of Georgia.
- B. The student learning outcome is clearly outlined in the proposal
- C. Credits to be awarded must be consistent with the curriculum and contact hours. In the case of study abroad, the common practice is to reduce the classroom contact hours because of the field excursions. Indeed, two hours of field excursions are the equivalent of one hour of classroom instruction.
- D. No more than one-half of the contact hours should be spent for field experiences (37.5 hours for 3 credit course).
- E. There must be a strong student interest in your proposed program
- F. Make preliminary contacts with the host institution to negotiate the fees.
- G. Develop a recruitment plan for the program
- H. The standard evaluation form developed by the International Education Center should be used at the end of the program

4. Recruitment

The International Education Center is committed to promoting the international experiences of our students. Therefore, the recruitment of students will be done conjointly by the faculty and the International Education Center. The Center will use a portion of its budget for advertisement and the printing of brochures and flyers. In addition, the Study Abroad Fair organized by the International Education center will be a good place to recruit students. Some of the ways to recruit students for the study abroad programs are the following:

- A. Using colleagues faculty: Through the various classes taught by different faculty members, the program can be advertised. Students are strongly influenced by their instructors. Therefore, the support of colleague faculty members is crucial. Faculty members can invite the program director to visit the class to make a presentation about the program or they can distribute flyers to students.
- B. Student organizations and Residence Halls can also be used for recruitment purpose
- C. Study Abroad fair where all various programs are exposed to students and professors should be invited to bring their classes.
- D. Distribution of brochures, posters, flyers
- E. Use of local media, especially the Savannah State University Radio
- F. Development of websites etc.

Transient Students

Students from other institutions can enroll in the SSU study abroad program as transient students. The USG encourages the 35 institution members of the USG to open their programs to students from other institutions. Savannah State University can recruit students from other institutions. However, the transient form should be signed by the study abroad advisor of the student home institution in order to ensure that the credits earned in the study abroad course will be accepted by the student home institution. Program directors should not enroll students in a study abroad course whose credits may not be accepted by the student's home institution. Likewise, SSU students who enroll in a study abroad program offered by another USG institution must comply with this policy.

The Established Study Abroad programs

Faculty of Savannah State University can propose to teach a course in the summer study abroad programs already established by the International education Center. Savannah State University has currently four 4-week summer abroad programs in Ghana, Brazil, China, and Trinidad and Tobago. Faculty interested in teaching in any of these four programs must follow these procedures:

- A. Submit a course proposal by September 30 through the Department Chair and the Dean
- B. Once approved, the proposal goes the Study Abroad Advisory Committee
- C. Upon recommendation of the Study Abroad Advisory Committee, the Director of the International Education Center informs the faculty to begin the recruitment process
- D. The International Education Center will advertise the program during the study abroad fair in October.

- E. Students submit their application with a non-refundable application fees that will be credited in the student's account
- F. The student will adhere to the payment deadline set in the student's study abroad handbook
- G. The faculty will be able to travel with the students when the number of the participants is at least 5 depending on the cost of the program.
- H. All instructions and guidelines pertaining to the trip are outlined in the Study Abroad Handbook which will be provided to students and the faculty.

SSU faculty teaching SSU courses abroad through other institutions must submit their course proposals to their respective chairs. Once approved, the chair forwards the proposal to the Dean. After the Dean's approval, the International Education Center will help the professor advertise the course by printing flyers and brochures. Furthermore, application forms for students applying for study abroad through other institutions will be made available through the International Education Center. Only permanent full time faculty can teach a study abroad course. However, the vice president of academic affairs can grant this privilege to non permanent full time faculty for their remarkable services to the university.

Faculty to student ratio on study abroad

A minimum of 10 students per faculty is highly recommended for all study abroad programs. This 10:1 ratio allows the faculty to maintain some level of summer salary. The number of students can fluctuate between 5 to 15 students. However, faculty will have to accept a reduced salary for a number less than 10 students.

Budgeting

Handling the fiscal matters that relate to the study abroad program may be complex. The involvement of the office of fiscal affairs is necessary to help the program director avoid making decisions that may violates the federal, state, and institutional guidelines. In this context, the International Education Center works with an official designated by the Vice President of Fiscal affairs.

There are two types of accounts that relate to study abroad programs: Agency Account and General Funds (Tuition) account. Study Abroad students must make payments to both accounts. In preparing the budget, the program director must outline the estimated income and expenses for the program. Once, the total cost of the program is determined, the program

director can divide the total cost by the number of students to assess the amount to be paid by each participant.

A. Agency Account

The Agency account is established to cover the fees associated with the program. These fees include air fare, excursions, lodging etc. The total cost of the program should reflect all fees that relate to the program. Elements to be listed in the total cost of the program include:

1. International Travel
2. In-country travel
3. Accommodations
4. Meals
5. Guided tours
6. Medical Insurance
7. Facilities rental
8. Guest Lecturers
9. Printing
10. Program supplies
11. Reserve funds (5% of the cost)

Therefore, on the basis of these costs, a budget will be established and the total cost of the program will be divided by the number of students. Students' payments will include the following: application fees and down payment plus the remaining individual balance of the program costs.

The Agency account cannot be used to cover faculty's expenses such as air travel, salaries and meals. Faculty will have to submit a travel authorization form and their expenses will be covered by another account (General Funds). In addition, no funds can be transferred from the General Funds account to Agency account. Furthermore, the study abroad must remain active every year. This account is closed when the study abroad is not active for 18 months. In this case, the remaining funds will have to be transferred to another account.

Students make all their payments to the cashier who will post them in the agency account which will reflect each student's payment record. All payments must meet the deadline so that the air plane tickets can be purchased on time. Payments of the program fees to the host institutions vary according to the country. Bank transfers, money order, traveler checks or other means can be used to make the payment.

Sample Budget

Item	Cost	Number	Total Cost
Air fare	800	10	8000
Ground Transportation	40	10	400
Accommodation (28 days @ \$20.00)	560	10	5600
Meals (28 days @\$10)	280	10	2800
Guided Tours			1000
Medical Insurance	30		300
Guest Lecturers			500
Printing			200
Program Supplies			300
Facilities			400
Program Coordination			1500
Reserve funds (5%)			1050

Total Cost: \$22050

Cost per student: \$ 2, 205.00

Package cost to be advertised: \$2,205.00 + Tuition

Other fees may or may not be included in the program costs. These fees relate to charges pertaining to passports, visas, laundry services etc.

As stated in the USG Handbook, once a budget is established, the program director must consult with the business officer who will explain the fiscal management practices to be followed. Note that tuition is managed by another account.

B. General Funds Account

Tuition that students pay for the general study abroad program is kept in the General Funds account. While program fees are managed by the Agency account, tuition is handled by the General Funds account. According to the BOR policy, tuition funds held in the General Funds account must be spent by the end of the fiscal year (June 30). Faculty traveling abroad with students must submit a travel authorization form and the fees and salaries of the faculty are covered by the General Funds Account. These funds cannot be transferred to the Agency Account in order to cover the program fees. Once the study abroad program has been approved, the International Education Center will inform the Bursar so that tuition payments

for a specific program are held in the General Funds Account. Charges for tuition will appear on students' accounts and students pay their tuition directly to the cashier. The Bursar will remove the charges associated to health, student activity, technology and athletic fees given the fact that study abroad students will not be on campus while taking their courses abroad. This is consistent with the policy of the BOR. Also non-resident students are not charged full non-resident tuition. According to the USG Handbook, "The Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia has provided that USG institutions may set the out-of-state fee at a maximum of \$250 for study abroad participants from out-of-state. Thus, these students pay in-state tuition plus the fee set by each institution. Further, students coming to your institution through direct, one-to-one exchange program also pay in-state tuition". (USA handbook, p.49).

Financial Aid

A Financial Aid officer will work with the International education Center to provide assistance to study abroad students. Usually Hope scholarships and Federal Aid can be used to cover the costs of study abroad programs. The Financial Aid officer will meet with every study abroad student who needs financial Aid to determine how Hope scholarship and Federal Aid can be used for the program the student is enrolled for.

As stipulated in the USG Handbook, "Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, which is reauthorized every five years by Congress, makes it legal for federal student financial aid money to be used for study abroad if the credit earned is approved by the home institution. Examples of federal financial aid programs are Federal Direct Subsidized and Unsubsidized Loans, Perkins Loan, Federal Direct PLUS, Student Incentive Grant (SIG), the Federal Pell Grant, and the Federal Work-Study program. Institutions cannot legally prohibit a student from using federal financial aid for study abroad" (USG Handbook, pp. 24-25).

In addition, study abroad students can also receive state financial aid through the STARS (Student Abroad with Regents' Support) Program. This program is jointly funded by the Board of Regents and the college and universities of the University System of Georgia.

Study Abroad Scholarships

The Office of International Education is committed to helping students who may not be able to participate in study abroad program due to financial constraints. Therefore, a study abroad scholarship fund is in the process of being established. Students can submit their applications to the study abroad scholarship committee which makes decisions on case by case basis.

Fundraising

Students and faculty may organize activities designed to help students raise enough money to cover some of the program costs. Organizing fundraising requires the approval of the office of Institutional advancement. Therefore, before engaging in fundraising activities, faculty can fill out the fundraising form and submit it to the appropriate offices for signatures. Once approved, fundraising activities begin. These activities range from bake sale, dinners to letters to Alumni, churches or business organizations.

Travel Arrangement

The International Education Center works closely with the SSU Purchasing Office to secure air plane tickets at the group rate. If faculty or students have contacts with travel agencies that offer lower prices, they can provide the information to the purchasing office. In any case, finding the cheapest air fare will be the goal of the purchasing Office and the Office of International Education.

Insurance

All students traveling abroad need insurance coverage. According to the USG Handbook, “ it is imperative that students carry adequate health insurance while abroad. A health policy should cover treatment for accidents, illness (including health illness), hospitalization, and medical emergencies. Students should also have a policy that cover medical evacuation and repatriation remains” (USG handbook, pp 59-60).

The Cultural Insurance Service International (CISI) is the current provider used by the USG institutions. SSU and all USG institutions use the CISI as insurance provider for study abroad students. Students may be able to purchase additional insurance through traveler agencies to cover other cases such as trip cancellation or luggage loss.

Liability Release Form

All students traveling in or outside the United States must sign a liability form provided by the office of Student Affairs. The form clearly indicates that “Savannah State University encourages students to strengthen their education and cultural competencies through participation in University sponsored off-campus events. When students travel to and from University sanctioned events in a University owned or leased vehicle, or privately owned vehicle, Savannah State University requires you to assume all liability for your personal safety and well

being". In any case, The International Education Center and professors traveling with students will make the safety of students one of their most important priorities.

Travel Authorization Form

Faculty traveling with student abroad must submit the Travel Authorization form through their respective department chairs. Once approved, all faculty expenses (travel, lodging, salary etc.) will be covered by the General Funds account. The Agency account cannot be used to support the faculty's travel expenses. At the end of the study abroad program, the faculty must submit an itemized accounting of payments with receipts to the Finance Office. Therefore, it is imperative that faculty keep all their receipts. When the receipts are in foreign language, the faculty must provide the monetary figures and exchange rate. Copies of the Travel Authorization form and Expense report must be submitted to the International education Center.

Pre-Departure Orientation

To help students prepare for studying abroad, the Director of the International Education Center and the professor traveling with students will conduct a series of two or three workshops on campus. During the orientation, students will obtain information about:

- History, politics, geography of the country and the culture of the people;
- Travel inside the country, visa, health, housing, transfer of credits for transient students etc.
- Currency and exchange rate
- The contact information abroad
- What to do in case of emergency

This orientation will also allow students to meet other participants so that they can get acquainted with each other before the trip.

Attendance of this orientation is mandatory and parents, relatives, friends, spouses are encouraged to attend. The Director of the International Education center will remain in contact with the parents to keep them posted about the whereabouts of their loved ones.

Evaluation

A standardized evaluation form must be completed by all study abroad program students. The form is designed to help SSU improve its study abroad programs. The evaluation refers to all components of the study abroad program including the pre-departure orientation, accommodations, field trips, course contents, food, transportation etc.

Risk Management

The Board of Regents advises study abroad program directors to be mindful of the risk management issues. All program directors are encouraged to read the guidelines issued by NAFSA, the Association of International Educators. The document is entitled: "Responsible Study Abroad: Good Practices for Health and safety". It can be found on the NAFSA website in the following link:

http://www.nafsa.org/knowledge_community_network.sec/education_abroad_1/developing_and_managing/practice_resources_36/guidelines_for_health

Record Retention Policies

All the records regarding a specific study abroad program (student application, waivers etc) must be kept for 7 years, except the copies of passport that must be returned to students.