

Responsibilities of Individuals Serving as On-site Staff of Education Abroad Programs at Indiana University

Indiana University has a longstanding faculty-led study abroad tradition that dates back to the late 19th century when IU president David Starr Jordan took students abroad during the summer to study biology and languages.

Accompanying students on an educational endeavor abroad, whether they earn credit or not, entails responsibilities that may not be normally exercised in a traditional campus-based classroom situation. Of course, it is a given that the core activity of an academic program abroad is the teaching and learning that take place. The Overseas Study program design process itself guides faculty as to IU's expectations with regards to incorporating the local environment into the course pedagogy while ensuring that students are as intellectually challenged as they would be in a course offered on campus.

Your responsibilities as a faculty advisor or chaperone may include:

- **Teaching students in an international setting and executing the programmatic goals.**
- **Administrative and fiscal duties which will vary, depending on the model of the program.** IU's policies and procedures for fiscal accountability will be provided as part of the orientation process. Other administrative duties may include organizing field trips and excursions, interfacing with hotel and other service providers, purchasing tickets, arranging meals, organizing local transportation for the group, etc.
- **Managing student life issues are an integral part of an education abroad experience.** While abroad, students have no recourse but to turn to their program organizer or director for their personal needs. These needs can be wide ranging and can include needing help for *mild homesickness, acute emotional distress, minor or major health issues, physical or sexual assault, accidents, theft and other unexpected incidents*. Students may also experience moments of self-reflection where they wish to consult the program leader about their own identity (e.g. gender expression or sexual orientation). Students may also experience awkward moments resulting from issues related to group dynamics or culture shock.

It is important that the faculty or staff who commit to serve as on-site program staff realize the extent of the responsibility they will take on through this process. The Office of Overseas Study provides written materials as well as an annual workshop to assist faculty and staff prepare for these circumstances. And the office is prepared to assist you in preparing to respond to a crisis. Some program organizers have not had to deal with crises while others have had to cope with multiple incidents. The staff of Overseas Study is available 24/7 for guidance and advice during moments of crisis. The office will bring in the expertise of other units such as the Dean of Students or Counseling Services, as appropriate, to respond to a crisis. Even with the support of the university resources, faculty must be prepared to be the first responder in any kind of situation. Each school or campus should also be engaged during an emergency, depending on the specifics of the situation. Program organizers are asked to work with their academic unit to finalize an emergency response plan before departing for their program. Decisions related to health, safety and security are made in consultation with the student's family as well as IU administrators. IU ascribes to best practices in these circumstances and will advise faculty or staff regarding legal requirements related to privacy issues (i.e. HIPAA, FERPA, etc.). Indiana University will protect and defend the faculty and staff member if their actions are in consonance with institutional expectations, should a crisis occur. Faculty and staff should be familiar with the [IU Code of Academic Ethics](#).

If faculty or staff do not feel sufficiently prepared to take on these responsibilities, they should decline to serve as on-site program staff. Those with apprehensions can consult with the staff of Overseas Study to discuss their concerns and questions. The best way to combat potential anxiety is to think ahead, be prepared and ask questions before going.

Most faculty and staff find that leading an education abroad program is one of the most satisfying experiences of their careers. However, they need to be prepared for the full scope of eventualities that may occur.