



**Angelo State University**  
**Operating Policy and Procedure**

**OP 10.14: Study Abroad Programs**

**DATE:** February 2, 2018

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this Operating Policy/Procedure (OP) is to enable more students to participate in ASU study abroad programs by ensuring that those programs are:

- Student-centered;
- In conformity with standards of safety and responsibility in study abroad as established by recognized academic consortia (e.g., National Association of Foreign Student Advisors [NAFSA], Association for International Educators), the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the Texas Tech University System, the Texas Administrative Code, and ASU operating policies and procedures; and
- Operated by all ASU academic units in a manner that meets certain operation and program standards.

**REVIEW:** This OP will be reviewed in April every three years, or as needed. The Director of the Center for International Studies will coordinate revisions within the Center for International Studies (CIS). Recommended revisions will be forwarded through the provost and vice president for academic affairs to the president by May 15.

**POLICY/PROCEDURE**

**1. Definitions**

- a. Advising – Guiding students in choices both among program options (where and when to go) and within programs (will courses fit their degree program); giving students ASU equivalents for the courses they will take abroad; and assisting students in the completion of applications.
- b. Credit Processing
  - (1) Course credit within degree program;
  - (2) Course equivalence determination.
- c. Exit Counseling – Debriefing students who have completed their study abroad program to obtain their evaluation of the program and their experience, including reentry adjustment

- d. Fee Collection
  - (1) CIS administrative fees;
  - (2) Program fees—for ASU sponsored programs; the fees cover the customary cost of programs expenses.
- e. Funding – Scholarships, grants, and financial aid that are available to ASU students to assist them in paying for study abroad programs.
- f. Logistics – Assisting students with the application process, living arrangements, travel arrangements, and any other information pertinent to living at a specific site. Much of the site-specific material is furnished by the partner institution or program.
- g. Orientation
  - (1) Safety and security orientations dealing with both routine and emergency procedures for students abroad;
  - (2) Program-specific orientations dealing with site-specific information including information on expectations of faculty, organization of classes, cultural adjustment, practical information on day-to-day living (e.g., how to obtain money, call home, and health and safety issues that are site-specific);
  - (3) General orientation providing general information on health issues abroad and general cultural adjustment strategies.
- h. Passport Information – Assisting students with the passport application, payment of process fees and documentation.
- i. Visa Information – Providing information to students on where they can obtain the most up-to-date information for a country-specific visa; providing assistance when visa requirements include students taking the visa application with them when they travel abroad and/or picking up the passport with the visa in person.
- j. Recruiting – Encouraging students to participate in study abroad programs.
- k. Screening – Evaluating and selecting applicants by departments and the CIS.
- l. Acronyms

CIS – Center for International Studies

EXCH – Exchange

ISTD – International Studies

NAFSA – National Association of Foreign Student Advisors

**Emergency response procedures are found in Section 6 of this OP. The emergency contact telephone number for the Angelo State University Police Department is 325-942-2071.**

## 2. Types of Programs

### a. Faculty-Led Programs

Faculty-Led Programs are those established by faculty in their area(s) of expertise to teach ASU students in an environment outside the United States. Faculty design the program in consultation with the CIS, recruit students for the program, accompany the students abroad, administer the program abroad, and, in most cases, teach the students. Students register directly at ASU in the courses they will take while abroad and receive credit and grades for the course work they complete.

### b. Reciprocal Exchange Programs

Reciprocal exchange programs are those in which, through an agreement with a foreign institution, ASU students pay tuition and fees at ASU, international students pay tuition and fees at their home institution. A balance in the numbers of students, credit hours, etc., exchanged must be maintained. Student participants are registered in international studies exchange (EXCH) classes. When the CIS receives the students' transcripts, ASU course equivalents are identified by the department in which the course would be taught at ASU and the students receive credit for the course work they have successfully completed abroad. Credit for these courses are not calculated into the student's GPA; however, they are documented as earned hours toward degree completion.

### c. Associated Programs

Associated programs are those for which ASU has an agreement with a foreign institution or organization, and ASU students pay tuition and fees directly to the foreign institution or organization (not to ASU). Participating students receive credit and a grade for the completed course. The course credit is listed on the ASU transcript as an ASU course equivalent, and the grade is calculated into the student's GPA. Credit for ASU degree requirements is determined by the applicable department for each course. ASU students who receive national/international scholarships such as, but not limited to, Fulbright and Rotary will be registered during their participation in the program. Credit and grades come back to ASU with course equivalents being determined by the department in which that course would be taught at ASU. As with all associated studies, the grade is calculated into the ASU GPA.

### d. Consortium Programs

Consortium programs are those programs in which a department or college of ASU joins a consortium of other schools to pool resources in order to offer study abroad experiences to all of the institutions' students. Usually, a program fee covers the cost of running the program. Some consortium programs operate like other affiliated studies programs. Some involve teaching by ASU faculty, in which case ASU students are able to register directly in ASU courses.

### 3. Establishment of Programs

#### a. Inaugurating Agreements with Foreign Entities

- (1) To promote university-wide standardization, the Center for International Studies is available to offer guidance for the establishment of any new department-, college-, or university-wide agreements between ASU and foreign institutions or organizations.
- (2) All university-wide agreements will be forwarded first to the CIS Director for contract review and then to the ASU President for signature and returned to the CIS for any additional external signatures.
- (3) The signed original of all written agreements should be provided to the CIS, which serves as the university's central repository.

#### b. Faculty-Led Study Abroad Program Proposals

Steps for faculty members interested in establishing a faculty-led study abroad program, not necessarily in the following order, are:

- (1) Meet with the CIS Director to obtain a *Program Development Guide* and discuss the procedures and guidelines for establishing such programs. Items to consider:
  - (a) Location of the study abroad site with reference to:
    - 1) Whether or not ASU already has programs at the site;
    - 2) Whether a study abroad program or an additional program at the site is sustainable; and
    - 3) Whether it would create balance problems with reciprocal programs at the same site if an additional program were established. In a reciprocal exchange program, an equal number of students must be exchanged. If a new program is established at a location where a reciprocal exchange program already exists, there may not be enough participants to sustain both.
  - (b) Safety/security issues;
  - (c) Justification of the proposed site;
  - (d) Assurance that enough ASU students can be recruited to support the program; and
  - (e) Confirmation that courses to be taught are in the ASU inventory and are approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to be taught off campus.
- (2) Discuss the proposal with the department chair and the dean, as appropriate, addressing such issues as academic merit and use of faculty.

- (3) Complete a program proposal and meet with the CIS Director to discuss procedures that need to be followed, as discussed in this OP.
- (4) Complete a study abroad program proposal sheet with required signatures from department chair and dean.

c. Establishing a Reciprocal Program

- (1) A reciprocal exchange agreement may be established at the university, college, or department level.
- (2) A reciprocal program requires that an equal number of students or credit hours be exchanged, usually over a five-year period. Therefore, it is critical that some investigation be made into the number of students who might be exchanged—how many students will likely participate in the program and, consequently, how many students ASU would be able to accept in a given period.
- (3) Because of the importance of balance in a reciprocal exchange, it is crucial that curriculum be reviewed carefully to ascertain whether there are enough course equivalencies between the two partners to allow an adequate exchange of students. For example, many equivalencies on one side and few on the other would be an indication that the side with fewer equivalencies might have more difficulty in recruiting students.
- (4) The CIS Director is responsible for monitoring the balance in all ASU reciprocal programs. If an imbalance occurs, the director will consult with the ASU department or college with whom the agreement has been signed to discuss remedies. The program will be opened to other ASU departments and colleges in an effort to recruit more students, with the exception of joint and dual degree programs. If balance becomes unfeasible, a decision will be reached through consultation.
- (5) Dual degree programs based on a reciprocal agreement must follow the same procedures as any other reciprocal program.

d. Establishing an Associated Program with a Single Institution

An associated agreement with a single institution is one in which the receiving institution agrees to consider ASU applicants for participation in its program as it would any other applicant. The agreement allows ASU students to remain enrolled in a non-tuition paying registration status (associated studies) while participating in the associated program abroad. This registration status ensures that the student remains eligible for ASU financial aid and scholarships, that the student does not need to apply for readmission, and that the credit for course work completed while on the program will be accepted at ASU. The student's home department will determine how this credit will be applied toward her/his degree. The name of the foreign course, the credit, and the grade will appear on the ASU transcript; the grade is not calculated in the student's ASU GPA.

- (1) Discussions with the target institution should be held to ascertain whether the target institution is interested in or can enter into an associated agreement.

- (2) The syllabi for courses offered at the target institution should be examined by ASU faculty in the department(s) where the course(s) would be taught at ASU to determine whether the courses are equivalent to those taught at ASU and whether credit could be awarded to ASU students who complete course work at the target institution.
  - (3) If the syllabi are found to be equivalent to course work at ASU, an associated agreement will be presented to the Center for International Studies for signature following signed certification by the General Counsel that the agreement meets all requirements. All associated agreements are then forwarded to the president of the university for approval and signature.
  - (4) The course equivalents will be posted to the tables of course equivalents so that this information is available to advisors and students.
- e. Complying with Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Policies and Guidelines

All programs must conform with applicable SACS policies and guidelines, including but not limited to those on substantive changes and joint curricular ventures. The ASU SACS liaison will be responsible for contacting SACS for clarification should questions arise and for notification of substantive changes if required.

#### **4. Prior to Departure**

- a. Faculty-Led Study Abroad Programs
- (1) For faculty-led study abroad programs, the program director(s) will have primary responsibility for publicizing the program and recruiting participants.
  - (2) Faculty-led program leaders will be responsible for:
    - (a) Screening applicants to ensure that certain requirements are met (e.g., minimum GPA requirements, no academic or other probation, etc.);
    - (b) Providing students with site-specific information at program meetings throughout the semester before departure. Program directors may conduct any trip-specific orientation beyond what the CIS provides;
    - (c) Providing students with information on how to obtain a passport and visa;
    - (d) Providing the CIS with a plan of evacuation should the site become unsafe for ASU students. A decision to remove students from a site is made in conjunction with the CIS Director and others, as listed in section 6, "Emergency Procedures;"
    - (e) Coordinating payment of mandatory health insurance fees to the CIS as set forth in OP 70.10, International Travel Insurance Program.
  - (3) For faculty-led study abroad programs, the program directors should direct students to the CIS, which is responsible for:

- (a) Providing all students standardized information on emergency and liability issues, insurance information, and standard forms required by ASU of all students who participate in ASU study abroad programs;
- (b) Providing a mandatory pre-departure orientation on issues of personal safety, security awareness, health, cultural adjustment, differences in academic expectations, organization of foreign institutions, and practical issues related to travel, packing, obtaining money, and communicating with home; and
- (c) Providing funding information such as financial aid verification, study abroad competitive scholarship guidance, and national/international scholarship advice;
- (d) Collecting passport copies and health insurance payments.

b. Reciprocal and Associated Study Abroad Programs

- (1) The student's academic advisor is responsible for advising students on course equivalencies between ASU courses and those offered at the foreign institution (see section 5, "Study Abroad Credit Procedures"). If the student wants to take classes outside his/her major, the academic advisor will contact the relevant department that would be teaching an equivalent course to obtain advice on course equivalency (e.g., if the student is a history major and wants to take a course listed as an economics course at the foreign institution, the student should go to the economics department for advising on the ASU equivalent to that course).
- (2) The CIS is the primary academic contact for the host institution.
- (3) In the interest of university-wide standardization, students interested in Study Abroad should be directed to the CIS, which is responsible for:
  - (a) Assisting students in the application process:
    - 1) Students should apply first through the CIS and after approval, will proceed with normal application/admission procedures and advising by the appropriate department or college;
    - 2) For non-degree reciprocal programs and affiliated programs, the CIS will direct the entire application process.
  - (b) Screening applicants to ensure that they comply with student life and academic requirements;
  - (c) Informing the student of emergency and liability issues, providing insurance information, and supplying standard forms required by ASU of all students who participate in ASU study abroad programs;
  - (d) Providing a mandatory pre-departure orientation on issues of personal safety, security awareness, health, cultural adjustment, differences in academic expectations, organization of foreign institutions, and practical issues related to travel, packing, obtaining money, and communicating with home. This should be done at a time that does not interfere with finals;

- (e) Providing logistical information on housing, transportation, and costs at the site;
- (f) Students will be registered only by the CIS into course designations for a variable amount of credit hours based on full-time status during the term in which they plan to study. Usually this will be 12 to 15 hours for the regular fall or spring semester, and 3 to 6 hours for each summer session or intercession;
- (g) Students participating in ASU study abroad will not be registered until they have:
  - 1) Met all program qualifications;
  - 2) Met with an academic adviser in their department to receive counseling and approval of courses to be taken in the study abroad program and further received approval of the courses to be taken in the study abroad program from their department chair and dean. Department chair and dean indicate approval by signing a course substitution form;
  - 3) Paid any required deposits or payments to the CIS;
  - 4) Completed and submitted all forms required by the CIS; and
  - 5) Participated in the CIS pre-departure orientation session.
- (h) Initiating the process of obtaining ASU credit for the course work completed abroad (see section 5 below); and
- (i) Maintaining an accurate and up-to-date database of all past and present study abroad participants.

## **5. Study Abroad Credit Procedures**

### **a. Pre-approval Process**

- (1) It is the student's responsibility to meet with an academic advisor before the start of the study abroad program to gain pre-approval for courses taken abroad.
- (2) During this meeting, the academic advisor should verify the ASU course equivalents for the courses the student wishes to take abroad with the CIS.
- (3) If, during this meeting, the academic advisor determines that a course the student wishes to take does not have an ASU course equivalent, the student must be informed of such.
- (4) The program director(s) will provide the student with a description of the study abroad class and the class syllabus. From this, the academic advisor will determine an ASU course equivalent for the class.
- (5) If a student chooses to participate in a study abroad course that does not have a ASU course equivalent, and a ASU course equivalent is not determined prior to the student's enrollment/departure, the student must be informed prior to

enrollment/departure that there is no guarantee that the course will qualify for a ASU equivalent and/or ASU credit hour.

b. Post Program

- (1) Students who participate in a study abroad program that are not faculty led are responsible for having official transcripts (an original transcript with the emblem and seal of the institution) from the institution at which they have studied sent directly to the CIS upon the completion of their program of study.
- (2) Upon receipt of the official transcript, the CIS will verify the courses and apply credit as indicated. The CIS will communicate with the student when the course credit has been applied.

**6. Emergency Procedures**

- a. Before reacting to a situation, it must be determined whether the emergency is real or perceived. Both types of emergencies require a response from the home institution, and that response will be most effective if it is grounded in a well-reasoned master plan. Although no plan will apply to every situation, a common set of factors must be examined in every case.

b. Policy on Canceling Programs in Progress

- (1) The CIS monitors State Department advisories and other safety information. When a State Department warning is issued advising U.S. citizens not to travel to a specific location, the CIS Director will contact the university Provost to discuss how to bring the students home.
- (2) If the CIS receives information from a contact or program director reporting that the study abroad site is dangerous for ASU students, the CIS Director will contact the university Provost to discuss moving the program to an alternate site within the country or bringing students home.
- (3) If parents or other outside interested parties call the CIS and express concern about something they have heard from the study abroad student, the CIS Director will contact the program director or site contact to determine the facts of the situation and then contact the parents or other interested party.

- c. Cancellation of an ASU Study Abroad Program for a semester or term because of safety concerns before departure from the United States.

- (1) The decision to suspend an ASU study abroad program for a semester or term can have serious consequences, and it should be considered carefully in view of how the cancellation will affect other ASU international programs.
- (2) If a program does not have a sufficient number of participants to proceed, the decision of whether or not to suspend the program temporarily should be made by the Director of the Center for International Studies, in consultation with the appropriate program director(s), respective dean(s) and department chair(s).

- (3) If the decision of whether or not to suspend an ASU study abroad program temporarily concerns issues of safety or security of ASU students, the university Provost and President must be consulted. The CIS closely monitors the most recent safety information available from the U.S. Department of State and other sources, including insurance providers for the program, and will be able to provide the most timely information if concerns arise. (A State Department warning advising U.S. citizens to avoid travel to a specific locale is one reason to cancel a program.)
  - (a) If no such warning exists, counterparts at the site should be contacted to determine if there is a compelling reason to cancel the program, and such information may form the basis for a decision.
  - (b) If a program director decides that he/she does not want to take the students abroad for personal reasons, the CIS, in consultation with the department, has an obligation to the program participants to find an alternate director or to make every effort to accommodate the students in a comparable program.
  - (c) If parents call the CIS to voice concerns about issues related to the trip, especially something they have heard from their son/daughter, the CIS Director will contact the program director or counterpart at the site to ask for first-hand information. This information will enable the CIS Director and university Provost to make a decision as to whether the program should be suspended or delayed.
- d. When an emergency occurs:
  - (1) The CIS Director will contact the program director abroad to determine whether this situation poses a real danger to students and staff. The program director will gather locally available information, including advice from the U.S. Embassy responsible for the site and insurance providers involved, and make an immediate recommendation to the CIS Director. If the emergency constitutes an immediate threat to the safety/security of the group, the program director will take all steps necessary to remove the group from danger as quickly as possible and will advise ASU officials when feasible.
  - (2) ASU will follow these procedural steps, when an emergency occurs:
    - (a) The program director contacts the Angelo State University Police (1-325-942-2071). The ASU Police Department will contact the CIS staff member who is on-call after hours.
    - (b) The CIS Director consults the program director to determine whether this situation poses a real danger to students and faculty. The program director/local CIS Director gathers as much information locally from the nearest consulate and local contacts such as police, government officials, and local university officials regarding:
      - 1) The event's proximity to students and faculty
      - 2) Its impact on the availability of food, water, and medical supplies

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- 3) The target of unrest, if the event is political
  - 4) The intensity of the emergency or of the political unrest
  - 5) The presence of military or emergency personnel
  - 6) The feasibility of continuing classes
  - 7) The ability of students and faculty to travel the nation
  - 8) The advice of the nearest U.S. Consulate
- (c) The CIS Director calls the U.S. State Department's Citizen Emergency Center at (202) 647-5225 for suggestions and assistance.
- (d) The CIS Director calls U.S. offices of other institutions with students in the affected location to coordinate information and to devise a common action plan. The CIS Director maintains coordination throughout the emergency.
- (e) Once the essential facts have been gathered, the CIS Director discusses the situation with the university Provost and calls a meeting of ASU faculty or staff who may need to be involved. The group must consider:
- 1) any immediate measures needed to preserve the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff;
  - 2) additional issues of health, safety, academics, financial aid, public relations, and legal liability;
  - 3) the appropriate course of action overseas (dealing with initial student panic; recommending appropriate student behaviors, developing a written course of action, and having students acknowledge in writing receipt of such information);
  - 4) developing and assisting with an evacuation plan, if necessary (considering the safety of various modes and routes of travel, the costs of evacuation and the method of meeting those costs, the possibility of reducing the level of threat by dispersing students in small groups to reconvene later in another locale, and available in-country resources);
  - 5) designating an individual to assume responsibility for the situation at the home institution;
  - 6) developing a communication document to be utilized by all individuals involved (consistency is crucial);
  - 7) preparing a list of individuals to be alerted once the entire plan is in place;
  - 8) developing a daily communication plan;

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- 9) coordinating with a Communications and Marketing spokesperson;
- 10) providing appropriate individuals with a daily bulletin until the crisis is over;
- 11) assessing the impact of the event once ended and documenting all actions taken in an after-action written report.