



# STANDARDS OF GOOD PRACTICE

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FOR SHORT-TERM  
EDUCATION ABROAD  
PROGRAMS

THE FORUM ON EDUCATION ABROAD

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Forum on Education Abroad recognizes the work of the Forum Council Standards Committee on this important initiative, and in particular thanks Michael Steinberg, Committee Chair for his leadership.

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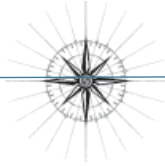
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FOR SHORT-TERM EDUCATION ABROAD PROGRAMS



THE  
FORUM  
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ABROAD

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## INTRODUCTION

Student participation in short-term\* programs abroad (both credit and non-credit) has grown exponentially in recent years and now represents the primary international experience for a significant percentage of U.S. college and university students. Recognizing this, the Forum Standards Committee saw a need for a more specific set of standards that apply to short-term programs.

The Standards for Short-Term Education Abroad Programs were formed by keeping the framework of the nine Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad and extracting those elements from them that apply most directly to short-term education abroad programs. These elements were then reworked and enhanced to address the specific qualities and characteristics of short-term programs. The Standards for Short-Term Programs are not a substitute for the more general standards; they are intended to be utilized together as companions to provide the most comprehensive guidance for short-term program management. Users of the Standards for Short-Term Programs should regularly refer back to the general standards, which provide the broader context for this new set of standards.

Users will note that these standards are not in the query-based format characteristic of the Standards of Good Practice. This change in approach reflects the Standards Committee's decision that the Standards for Short-Term Programs should be written in a more directive way. However, the intent of the Standards for Short-Term Programs is the same: they are meant to provide a means to assess and improve the programs to which they refer. In this regard, users should view them as a tool to help evaluate the quality of their programs.

Over the past several months, drafts of these standards have been made available to Forum members, international education professionals, and the general public for comments, suggestions and improvements. They have been presented and discussed at meetings, in conference sessions, and have been posted on the Forum web site. The Forum Standards Committee has overseen the series of revisions that have been made during this comment period.

Short-term programs greatly expand study abroad participation by attracting students from groups that are less likely to study abroad for a semester or full-year, whether for financial, academic or personal reasons. This includes students from underrepresented groups, such as ethnic minorities, first generation

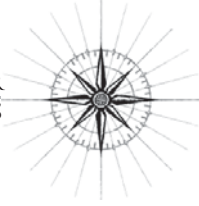
\*"Short-term" is defined as any education abroad program that is eight weeks or shorter.

students, non-traditional students, students in fields with extensive course requirements, community college students, student athletes, and males. Well-designed short-term programs can have a profound impact on participants and may provide students with an initial experience that encourages them to consider future study or work overseas.

While some short-term programs are well-established and repeated regularly, others are *ad hoc* ventures that are designed and led by faculty members, campus internship and volunteer offices, or others who may have little or no experience with the standards for designing and managing education abroad programs. Because of the brevity of short-term programs, it is all the more important for program organizers to learn from experienced study abroad administrators so that the programs they develop maximize student learning opportunities and make every moment count.

These short-term program standards are designed to encourage discussion between education abroad professionals and others on campus and within organizations about program planning and management. Like the Standards of Good Practice, they provide a means to assess and improve programs by ensuring that they include those essential elements that will maximize students' learning and personal development while assuring their safety and well-being.

As with the *Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad*, these standards will undergo periodic revisions based on the feedback from those who utilize them. The Forum welcomes continued comments and suggestions for improving these standards from both Forum members and non-members alike. We also welcome specific examples of best practices related to short-term programs that we may include in the Standards Toolbox. The Toolbox provides model approaches to meeting the Standards of Good Practice and access to it is a Forum member benefit.



## STANDARDS OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR SHORT-TERM EDUCATION ABROAD PROGRAMS

**1. Mission, Objectives and Purpose:** The program relates to the education abroad mission of the organization and has well-defined academic and/or experiential objectives.

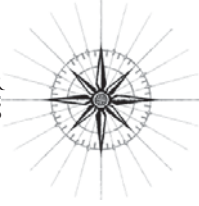
- a. Institutional Policies: The program is organized according to the mission and policies of the sponsoring institution.
- b. Purpose: The program has a clearly-defined purpose and clearly-defined academic and/or experiential goals.
- c. Appropriateness: The focus of the program is appropriate to the site chosen.

**2. Student Learning and Development:** The program is reviewed in the light of its stated educational purpose for fostering student learning and development.

- a. Student Development: The program provides opportunities that encourage student development (e.g., leadership skills, service orientation, maturity, tolerance for ambiguity, growth in cultural awareness).
- b. Learning Outcomes: The program fosters discipline-specific and/ or interdisciplinary learning outcomes appropriate to the curriculum, site, and program goals.
- c. Language and Intercultural Development: The program provides language and intercultural development opportunities appropriate to its mission.
- d. Intrapersonal Development: The program includes opportunities for reflection during and after the experience.
- e. Environmental and Cultural Responsibility: The organization fosters faculty, staff and student awareness and minimization of harmful individual and program-related environmental and social-cultural impacts.
- f. Assessment: The student learning outcomes and overall student experience are assessed at the program's conclusion so that subsequent programs are improved based on this assessment.

**3. Academic Framework** (for programs offering credit): The organization maintains clearly stated and publicly available policies on academic matters related to education abroad.

- a. **Academic Credit:** When credit is awarded, the program has been approved by the institution for academic credit according to the institution's policies.
- b. **Length:** The length of the program is appropriate to the amount of credit granted.
- c. **Curricular Integration:** If organized by a college or university, the program should be designed to fulfill a graduation, general education or major requirement.
- d. **Academic Guidelines:** Policies on enrollment changes, withdrawal, and the awarding of academic credit are clearly stated.
- e. **Academic Coursework:** The program is academically rigorous and provides an interculturally enriching learning experience.
- f. **Academic Evaluation:** Students are evaluated by methods that measure how the site is used effectively in the integration of readings, site visits, discussions, and cultural activities.
- g. **Field Study:** The program makes effective use of the host locations for structured experiential learning.
- h. **Internships and Field Research:** When offered for credit, internships and field research have appropriate academic and field supervision.
- i. **On-Site Advising:** The program advises students in their academic endeavors in collaboration with the students' home campus advisers.
- j. **Academic Integration:** The program seeks to integrate student overseas learning with requirements and learning at the students' home institutions.



**4. Extra-Academic Framework:** The organization maintains clearly stated policies on non-academic matters related to the educational experience abroad.

- a. For programs involving extensive travel:
  - i. Faculty and program sponsors should consider carefully the number of sites proposed to visit, their geographical proximity to each other and the time spent traveling between them. More emphasis should be given to having full, in-depth experiences at each site rather than on “seeing everything” by visiting multiple sites and spending only short amounts of time on each site.
  - ii. Faculty and sponsors should justify the amount of travel proposed. Visiting a large number of sites and/or countries does not necessarily provide an optimal educational experience.
- b. For volunteer and work abroad programs:
  - i. The program should be offered in collaboration with well-established, trusted, and known community-based agencies, private firms, or other organizations located in the host communities.

**5. Preparation for the Learning Environment Abroad:** The program or its sponsoring institution provides advising and orientation support that is consistent with the program’s mission and the needs of its students.

- a. Orientation: The program provides orientation for students prior to departure and upon arrival that includes discussion of the academic program, health and safety issues, adjustment to the host culture, and information about the host location and society.
- b. Ongoing Orientation: The program provides students with a continuous “orientation” to the host culture by providing them with information about the host location and culture in order to maximize their experience and learning.
- c. Advising: The program provides appropriate academic and non-academic advising support to meet changing student needs before and throughout the period abroad.
- d. Returning Student Support: The home institution and/or the program provide support for students returning from abroad.

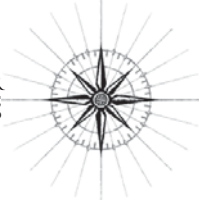


**6. Student Selection and Code of Conduct:** The program maintains, and makes publicly accessible, its commitment to fair and appropriate policies regarding student selection and conduct.

- a. Student Selection: The prerequisites, recruitment and selection processes are transparent, published, and fair and consistent with general institutional standards and the specific criteria that program leaders may choose for their program.
- b. Diversity/Non-Discrimination: The program welcomes and acts with respect towards students regardless of race, sex, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion, or national and ethnic origin.
- c. Affordability: The program seeks to keep the program affordable for the greatest number of students.
- d. Financial Assistance: The program and/or its sponsor proactively assists students and families by informing them of internal and/or external financial support.
- e. Code of Conduct: The program informs students of its student code of conduct, disciplinary processes and the consequences of violations prior to the beginning of the program, and consistently applies them during the program.
- f. Enforcement of Discipline: The program staff is provided with protocols and procedures for the handling of disciplinary issues.

**7. Organizational and Program Resources:** The program has adequate financial and personnel resources.

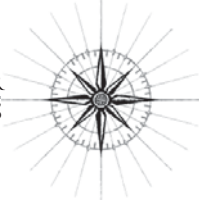
- a. On-Site Administration: The sponsor provides adequate administrative support for the program and its students.
- b. Personnel: Personnel are selected according to the policies of the sponsoring institution and their responsibilities are clearly defined.
- c. There are a sufficient number of Academic and Administrative personnel relative to the number of student participants.
- d. Personnel-Academic: Program faculty members have the qualifications, knowledge and an appropriate level of commitment and engagement to support the curriculum and the student learning environment both inside and outside the classroom. They should understand that, especially for short-term programs, the entire experience in the host culture forms the class.



- e. Personnel-Administration, Advising and Support: Program staff members have the qualifications, training, knowledge and an appropriate level of commitment and engagement to administer the program effectively and provide academic advising and support services to promote the development, learning, health, and well-being of students.
- f. Personnel-General: Academic and Administrative personnel are fully informed about their responsibilities with respect to the program.
- g. Protocols: Program personnel are provided with protocols for handling issues that may arise in the course of a program.
- h. Personnel-Support: Academic and Administrative personnel receive adequate compensation.
- i. Training: Academic and Administrative personnel have appropriate training in the areas of health, safety, and security; student affairs; disciplinary procedures; academic advising; and operating in the host environment.
- j. Communication with the Home Campus: Guidelines and protocols are established for communication between the program and the home institution(s).
- k. Communication Media: The program has adequate means for effective communication with the home campus and among and between in-country staff and student participants.
- l. Financial Resources: The sponsoring institution devotes sufficient financial resources to the program to assure its academic success and the well-being of the students.
- m. Learning and Academic Support Facilities: The program has or utilizes adequate facilities as appropriate to the goals of the program and the host environment and culture.
- n. Accommodation: The program seeks to accommodate students with physical or learning disabilities.
- o. Student Housing: Students are housed in safe, clean, and culturally-appropriate lodgings, and are provided with appropriate orientation to their housing situation.
- p. Environmental and Cultural Responsibility: The organization considers and responds to local environmental, economic, and cultural consequences of its presence (or disappearance) in the design and management of its programs.
- q. Assessment: The program personnel and financial resources are assessed at the program's conclusion so that subsequent programs are improved based on this assessment.

**8. Health, Safety, and Security:** The program has established and continuously maintains effective health, safety, security and risk management policies, procedures and faculty/staff training.

- a. Safety and Security: The program follows appropriate safety and security policies.
- b. Health: The program leadership is aware of student health issues prior to departure and is well prepared to handle student, faculty, and staff health issues that may arise.
- c. Local Resources: The program has contact information at the location to assist with emergencies and health and safety issues, including the police, U.S. overseas representatives, physicians, hospitals, and mental health professionals.
- d. Liability: The program has adequate insurance coverage.
- e. Insurance: Students have health insurance coverage that is applicable in-country, and in the countries visited by the program.
- f. Risk Management: The program is organized with close attention to risk management issues.
- g. Emergency Communications: The program has adequate and clearly defined emergency communications plans that are periodically tested and assessed.
- h. Student Emergencies: The program has emergency contacts for individual students in case of emergencies, as well as contingency plans.
- i. Group Emergencies: The program has emergency contacts and contingency plans in case of an emergency that impacts the entire program.
- j. Emergency Procedures: Students are well informed about what to do in the case of emergencies
- k. Supervision: The program has sufficient on-site staff to manage a crisis and provide support in case of emergencies.
- l. Program Assessment: The program logistics and health and safety protocols are assessed at the program's conclusion so that subsequent programs are improved based on this assessment.



**9. Ethics and Integrity:** The program is organized in conformity with ethical principles and practices by using the Forum's *Code of Ethics for Education Abroad* as a guide. In particular, the elements below are especially important to short-term programs, but the full Code of Ethics should be reviewed.

- a. Operations: The program is organized in accordance with ethical principles.
- b. Program Staff: Program staff advise students in an ethically responsible way.
- c. Cultural Sensitivity: The program acts with sensitivity to and respect for differences between local cultural norms and those of the home culture.
  - i. Program operators are aware of the economic, social, and environmental impact of the program on the local community and endeavor to create a relationship that is mutually beneficial, and minimize any negative effects on the host society.
  - ii. The program provides effective orientation of students, faculty and staff so that they are aware of applicable host and home country ethical and legal practices, and understand the host society, in order to avoid actions that negatively impact that society or the image of the host country.
- d. Avoidance of Conflicts of Interest: The program avoids conflicts of interest in its operations.
- e. Law: The program operates in accordance with U.S. and international laws.
- f. Marketing: The program is marketed precisely and truthfully.

## ABOUT THE FORUM ON EDUCATION ABROAD

The Forum on Education Abroad is the only organization whose exclusive purpose is to serve the field of education abroad. Incorporated in 2001, the Forum holds 501 (c)(3) non-profit status and is recognized by the U.S. Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission as the Standards Development Organization (SDO) for education abroad.

Forum members include U.S. colleges and universities, overseas institutions, consortia, agencies, and education abroad provider organizations. The Forum membership includes more than 350 institutions that together account for approximately 90 percent of U.S. students studying abroad.

The Forum develops and implements standards of good practice, promotes and supports research initiatives, and offers educational programs and resources to its members. The Forum's members, represented by the Forum Council and its goals committees, determine the scope and direction of these initiatives. The Forum's annual conference is known for its distinctive format that fosters thought-provoking dialogue, and promotes collegiality and the vibrant exchange of ideas.

## THE FORUM ON EDUCATION ABROAD MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Forum on Education Abroad is to promote high quality and effective education abroad programs on behalf of students at U.S. colleges and universities through providing opportunities for global discourse and information sharing among the educational institutions, faculty and staff, consortia, agencies and organizations that are its members.

By providing opportunities for discourse and information sharing, the Forum promotes high quality and effective programming through:

- Advocating standards of good practice,
- Promoting excellence in curricular development and academic design,
- Encouraging outcomes assessment and other research,
- Facilitating data collection, and
- Advocating education abroad at all levels.



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