

## VCU Education Abroad

Program Director's Handbook

Winter 2009 and Summer 2010



Updated July 2009

## **Education Abroad Office**

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*Virginia Commonwealth University Office of Education Abroad provides opportunities for VCU students to study abroad and participate in international exchanges. We also assist international exchange students who wish to study in the U.S. at VCU.*

*We encourage students from every academic discipline to receive a part of their university education in an international community. Today we live in an international community and studying abroad will help students appreciate multicultural richness, understand the value of knowing another language and compete professionally in the global market.*

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## *Introduction*

Thank you for giving your time and energy to coordinate and lead a study abroad program for VCU students! International educational programs have the potential to transform the lives of our students, and without your effort this would not be possible.

The commitment you've made to direct a study abroad program is usually more challenging than teaching an on-campus course; however the rewards for you and your students are infinitely worth the effort. Students typically return to campus transformed as more responsible, independent, confident, and globally-conscious individuals, not to mention the fact that they return home having studied their field from a unique perspective that may influence their future academic and career choices. Throughout the program you will spend much more time with your students than you would here on campus. You will find yourself relating to the students not just as the professor, but as an advisor, counselor, mentor, friend, parent, disciplinarian and more!

This Program Director Handbook is intended for professors who will coordinate and direct study abroad programs for VCU students (typically in the summer, but also during winter-intersession and spring break). It will be helpful in the planning process as well as during the actual execution of your program. It is grouped by subject to address specific issues that can determine the success of a program, including program development, marketing, budgeting, student selection, preparations and emergency response.

We require that you carry a copy of this handbook at all times as a reference while you are on site. The handbook is also available online at:  
<http://www.international.vcu.edu/abroad/faculty>

In addition to this handbook, we suggest that you also familiarize yourself with the following documents which include VCU policies and procedures and other resources:

**VCU Administrative toolkit:** <http://www.toolkit.vcu.edu/>  
(Financial, operational and administrative policies and procedures of VCU)

**State Department Travel Info:** [http://travel.state.gov/travel/travel\\_1744.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/travel_1744.html)

**Center for Disease Control** travel information: <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/>

This handbook is updated annually and we welcome your suggestions for changes or ideas on how it can be more useful for program directors.

Thank you again for your time and dedication to international education at VCU!

*VCU Education Abroad Staff*

## *Calendar for 2009-2010*

- July - September** Initial meeting with interested professors  
Explain OIE procedures and Program Director's responsibilities  
Program Directors develop programs
- September 4** **Proposal deadline for new winter and summer programs**  
**Repeat program notifications due**  
Program Proposal and Recommendation Form must be submitted.
- September 16** **VCU Education Abroad Fair**  
Advertise programs to a wide audience of students at outside fair
- October 2** **Program and budget deadline for winter programs**  
Program Directors sign contracts; program budgets are due;  
application deadlines are set; course offerings are finalized; Directors  
submit program details to EAO
- November 2** Deadline for sending photos & information for promotional materials
- November & December** EAO produces printed promotional materials and  
updates website with online registration
- November 30** Winter programs registration deadline
- December 11** EAO will have VCU Summer 2010 website completed
- December** EAO begins accepting registrations for summer programs
- February/March** Program Directors Workshop  
Fiscal Management Seminar
- February 12** EAO scholarship application deadline
- March 26** Program registration deadline (for most programs)
- March/April** Pre-departure orientations  
Financial aid applications are available in EAO  
EAO registers students in courses on Banner
- Travel authorizations prepared  
Administration issues, promotions issues, liability issues addressed
- Reimbursement requests, vendor invoices due to EAO fiscal staff  
Professors sign travel authorizations.
- June, July and August . . . Programs take off!**

**August/September** Student evaluations are collected and shared

*Upon your return you will need to submit grades and complete travel  
expense reimbursement process.*

## Checklist at a Glance

- Read this handbook
- Conduct site visit, if possible
- Define program parameters and discuss with department chairs and deans
- Submit program proposal and recommendation form
- Submit Director's contract
- Finalize course offerings and syllabi
- Submit course maintenance forms to department to update dates for the course
- Complete budget planning form and make appointment with EAO fiscal staff
- Submit program details to Education Abroad
- Submit photos to Education Abroad
- Promote program at fall fair, in-classroom presentations, info sessions, etc.
- Submit emergency evacuation plan to Education Abroad
- Obtain corporate travel card, if desired
- Attend all mandatory workshops and meetings
- Order program cell phone
- Notify Stephanie to activate Blackboard site, if desired
- Schedule orientation meetings for participants
- Make appointment with EAO fiscal staff to complete your program travel authorization after program enrollment finalized
- Provide Education Abroad with your contact information while abroad

**In the event of an emergency, call Stephanie (Office: 804-828-8406; Cell: 804-319-9821)**

## I. The Office of International Education

### OIE Staff

**R. McKenna Brown, Ph.D.**

**Executive Director, Office of International Education**

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**Stephanie Davenport**

**Director, Education Abroad**

*For questions concerning program development, application procedures, planning details, marketing issues, crisis management, etc.*

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**Paul Ginder**

**Fiscal Assistant, Office of International Education**

*For questions concerning budget development, vendor payments, travel reimbursements and any financial unpredictable, unusual problems!*

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817 West Franklin Street, Room 155 (Franklin Street Gym)

## **Office of International Education Responsibilities**

- Provide Program Directors with guidance on the development process from program idea to day of departure
- Produce marketing and publicity materials
- Create VCU summer programs website with online registration forms
- Organize and manage the study abroad registration process
- Register students for the courses and process all paperwork for student registration
- Provide students with financial aid information
- Administer Education Abroad scholarship
- Assist Program Directors by providing management for all financial transactions including vendor payment and travel reimbursements
- Provide all study abroad students with pre-departure information and an International Student Identification Card, which carries some limited health insurance
- Do just about everything else within our power to help the program director provide a safe and high-quality educational experience abroad!

### **Fees**

The Office of International Education charges a \$250 fee for these services. This charge is non-refundable and is billed to each program participant. This fee is included in the budget.

## II. Program Development

Planning a study abroad program requires faculty Directors to go far beyond the usual realm of course planning and take on many roles such as coordinator, counselor, companion, travel agent, crisis manager, first aid administrator, and obviously educator. Program Directors should possess leadership skills, familiarity with proposed area of travel, and basic financial and accounting abilities. Program Directors should be committed 100% to planning the program, recruiting participants, and following up on all of the logistical considerations involved with a study abroad program.

### **Program Directors Responsibilities at a Glance**

- Conduct site visit to inspect classroom facilities (where applicable), housing arrangements, as well as possible excursions and cultural events. Note: OIE does not provide funding for site visits
- Plan accordingly in areas of the world where travel may not be without an element of danger. Program Directors must be aware of all travel warnings and public announcements from the Department of State (<http://travel.state.gov/>) for their area of travel. Excursions that include transportation on dangerous routes or in locations with known poor road conditions or other specific dangers should be excluded from travel itineraries.
- Complete *Education Abroad Program Proposal and Recommendation Forms*
- Read and sign the *Contract of Agreement*
- Create the guidelines for your program including syllabi
- Submit the budget by the assigned date each fall
- Submit program details by the assigned date each fall
- Complete the necessary forms for course initiation through your department before the program is advertised
- Attend Program Directors' meetings; if unable to attend meetings, a separate appointment will be made to discuss missed information
- Be an active participant in promoting your program
- Respond to EAO with student acceptances and rejections within a week during program registration process
- Post itinerary and travel arrangements on the Blackboard site
- Obtain a cell phone where students can reach you 24 hours a day and distribute this phone number to the participants and EAO
- Organize at least one pre-departure orientation for all participants. *The Program Director is responsible for all communication with their participants regarding the*

*itinerary, travel and accommodation arrangements, academic requirements, and meeting schedules. It is recommended that this orientation be considered a part of the final grade for VCU students*

- Complete travel authorization one month prior to departure
- Remit organized receipts within one week of the end of the program
- Submit grade reports in a timely manner upon return from the program
- Follow all state and federal regulations in the area of fiscal management (with our help . . . of course!)
- Make yourself available to program participants throughout the duration of the program
- Initiate contact with Stephanie and EAO in case of any emergencies or unusual events during the course of the program, and provide your contact information to us while overseas
- Provide students with a safe, organized and educationally sound international learning experience

## **Program Development**

### **Academic Considerations**

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. Make sure to answer these questions:

#### ***What courses will be offered? 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 program directors will allow non-VCU 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 registered for at least 3 credits of the program course.

***Many students rely on financial aid for study abroad and therefore must be registered for full-time credit. Will six undergraduate credits be possible within this program?***

Generally, 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.

Some programs will offer variable credit. Students can opt to take the program for three credits, generally to save money, or six credits if they need to earn the credit for graduation.

Lastly, Directors should be prepared to work with students to make up assignments should the student be required to terminate the program early due to an illness or other emergency.

## **Programmatic Considerations**

***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.

***What is the length of the program?***

Typical summer study abroad programs are 4 weeks long and offer 6 credits. Some longer programs offer 9-10 credits, and shorter programs (1-2 weeks) 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? Will meals be provided?***

Many programs prefer not to include airfare in the program fee, especially to destinations in Europe. 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.

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 be the itinerary?***

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 Program Director 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 and youth 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.

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 a hotel reservation. Dealing with an unhappy student can take time as well, because the Program Director might serve as mediator and also may need to spend time locating another host family.

***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 program director salaries are based on the total number of credits taken by the participants; therefore, the less students you have on your program, the lower the salary may be.

***Is your program affordable?***

Past experience shows that \$1,000 - \$1,200 per week (including airfare, program fee, and tuition) is the breaking point for students.

**Study Abroad Program Providers**

A big question is whether to arrange the logistics yourself or partner with an organization to handle the logistics for you. 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 Program Director up to concentrate on content.

The main disadvantage to using a provider is that there is a charge for the services which can prohibitively increase the program cost. The provider's fee is usually determined after you submit a proposal outlining your course duration and objectives. The fee can usually be negotiated if there are a certain number of participants, usually 15 minimum. Professors who have used these services in the past have found them to be very helpful, as they minimize stress and worry. They also provide a structure which can be helpful if you run into any problems. VCU Education Abroad can provide you with names of faculty members who have used service providers, and assistance with choosing a program provider if desired.

**Cell Phone Requirement**

VCU Education Abroad requires that every study abroad program provide at least one cell phone number to OIE prior to departure. The cell must work internationally and the

Program Director must be available at all times. Program Directors may choose from a variety of options to comply with this policy. If you do not have a cell phone already, you must add the cost of one to your budget.

Options:

- Convert personal cell phone for use abroad and give OIE the phone number
- Arrange with an on-site contact to rent or purchase a phone on your behalf and provide OIE with that number.
- Rent or purchase a cell phone immediately upon arrival and provide OIE with the number
- Education Abroad has established a website for faculty members to rent cell phones through PicCell wireless. Faculty interested in this option should visit [www.piccellwireless.com/vcufaculty](http://www.piccellwireless.com/vcufaculty). The phone rental fees are waived and you pay only for incoming calls.

## Liability Issues

As the Program Director, you need to be the expert on the following areas:

- What are the dangers involved in travel within the host country?
- What diseases are prevalent? Do students need immunizations to travel there?
- What is the State Department's official stance on travel within and outside of the host country?
- What visas are required for entrance?
- What is the political situation in the country in which you will be visiting . . . current and in past (recent) history?

**Liability is addressed in the "Agreement and Release" portion of the registration. All other liability is best avoided by being well prepared in advance.**

## Passports

Make sure you have a passport that is valid for at least six months beyond your travel dates! Make copies of your passport and leave a copy behind with the EAO and friends and family. Students will be instructed to obtain their passports immediately upon registering for your program. For more information on obtaining a passport, please consult the US Department of State website: <http://travel.state.gov/passport>

## Visas

It is your responsibility to inquire about the visa requirements for all countries that you will be visiting during the program. The Education Abroad Office can assist when needed in obtaining group visas. Remember that not all VCU students are US citizens! Students with citizenship in countries other than the US may have different entry requirements for the host country. To determine whether a visa is required for entry for US citizen, visit: [http://travel.state.gov/travel/travel\\_1744.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/travel_1744.html)

## VCU Course Administration

The program may offer between 3 and 10 credits. **You should require that all program participants enroll in at least 3 credits.**

You may offer courses that are already a part of the current VCU curriculum (as approved by the department chair in that field of study) OR you may create a new course. Due to the time involved in creating a new course, many program directors choose to create new sections of courses that are already 'on the books' (491 Topics courses, for example).

1. To create a new course, a course initiation form must be completed and filed with the University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee. Online forms are available on the Curriculum Committee website. This procedure only needs to be done once, as programs that repeat will automatically carry over from year to year.

2. To initiate a course section, you must have your department complete a course maintenance form and turn it on to the Course Scheduling Office in Records and Registration. When filling out the course maintenance form:

**Please use an off-campus code for the course (section begins with "C").**

**Example: HIST 491-C90**

**\*Please mark enrollment at 0 so that students cannot register on their own!**

Please have all of your sections created by early February if possible. The Course Scheduling Office will allow additions to the summer schedule after this date, but it is preferable to submit your requests by the university-wide deadline.

If you are creating a new course, then your department's Curriculum Committee must first approve course numbers and titles. Once the course initiation form has been completed and signed by the department, it may be submitted. This procedure allows for courses to be listed in the VCU catalog.

Students will only be able to participate in the course by completing a registration form with our office. **Students do not register for summer abroad programs on their own.**

Once each year you must update the dates of the course. This is important because the dates will affect students' financial aid disbursement. To update the course, please submit a course maintenance form to the coordinator in your department.

3. VCU Education Abroad will enroll the program participants in their requested courses according to their choices indicated on the application form. We will confirm the enrollment at the orientation. No course selection changes are allowed after the program begins!

4. Grades are submitted after the program is over in the same manner as for any other class. Please do not turn in grades to the Education Abroad Office.

## Guidelines for Program Directors with Children and Families

The responsibilities of a Study Abroad Director are vast, and your number one priority must be to the safety and well-being of the students in the program. If you are directing a

summer program and intend to take family members or children along, please adhere to the following guidelines:

1. High-school-age students may attend a program fully as long as they are enrolled in classes.
2. Students younger than high-school age must be accompanied by an adult (other than the program director) at all times.
3. Family members and children who are not participants in the program are not to attend excursions with the group. However, separate transportation and housing arrangements may be made.

### III. Marketing

Marketing to students is an essential part of a successful program. You should begin marketing your program about one year in advance and plan to marketing your program continuously until the application deadline.

A large part of a student's motivation to study abroad comes from the Program Directors themselves. Talking up study abroad programs to your students, encouraging them to explore financial aid and scholarship opportunities and allowing past study abroad students or VCU Education Abroad staff to speak to your classes will be the best sources of recruitment available. Education Abroad will help you to advertise your program through the following:

#### **Website**

Education Abroad will create a website for your program. Information and photos must be provided by the Program Director by **November 2**.

#### **Flyers**

Education Abroad can create a variety of promotional materials including posters, postcards, brochures, and one-page flyers for each program in addition to a comprehensive flyer of all programs. You must supply the necessary information and photos. In the Program Proposal forms, you can indicate what type of materials you would prefer and the number you would like to have printed.

#### **Classroom Presentations**

Education Abroad will make classroom visits throughout each semester to promote study abroad and advertise your program. Please encourage your colleagues to allow us to take 5-10 minutes of their class time to plug our programs!

#### **Advisors**

Inform and work with academic advisors who advise your target students. Communicate with your department chair, colleagues, and TAs/Grad Assistants so they can help to spread the word. Consider announcing your program to professionals in your field at other institutions if you are interested in attracting non-VCU students.

#### **TelegRam**

The VCU TelegRam (<http://www.vcu.edu/telegRAM/index.html>) is a daily email digest of university news that is distributed to students, staff and faculty. Consider posting an announcement on the telegram to advertise the program or info sessions. Education Abroad will help with this if preferred.

#### **Facebook**

Social networking is the way students communicate! Consider starting a Facebook group or page to advertise your program and announce information to students once they are registered for the program.

#### **VCU News Center**

Contact VCU News to see if they will write an article about your program and maybe feature it on Inside VCU (front page of website).

#### **Student Clubs**

Target specific student clubs that may have a particular interest in your program.

### **Study Abroad Fair**

The fair is held each September. This is an opportunity to promote to a large number of students passing through the event. You can reserve a table to advertise your program in August, and you should recruit returnees to help staff the table and bring photos, souvenirs and stories to share with prospective participants.

### **Information Tables**

The Education Abroad Office will reserve a weekly information table in the Student Commons throughout the academic year. You are welcome to join us to talk to students about your program, or recruit your returnees to sit at the table to share their experiences with passersby.

### **Publications**

Be sure your program is featured in any departmental newsletters, blogs, or websites.

### **Program Information Sessions**

Education Abroad holds bi-weekly General Information Sessions (GIS's) in the office conference room in which we present information on the variety of programs available to VCU students. We will also work with you to hold **at least one** information session specifically for your program.

### **Scholarship Competition**

VCU offers many scholarship opportunities, which are listed on the website. We administer a competition once a year for which summer study abroad participants can apply. Deadline usually falls on or before Valentine's Day in February, so remind your students to apply early!

In addition, the Education Abroad Office administers summer financial aid paperwork to assist students in the process. Be sure students are aware of this as "I can't afford it" is the number one reason we hear as to why students think they can't study abroad.

### **What we need from YOU:**

- a detailed **program description**
- photos**
- participation in the study abroad **fair**
- presentations** to classes in your department
- presentations during information sessions
- budget** information and set program dates as early as possible

## IV. Budget

### Constructing Your Program Budget

Define the parameters of your program.

- What are the start and end dates of your program?
- Will airfare be included? Will everyone be flying together or separately to initial destination?
- What type of accommodations will students be using? Apartments? College dorm space? Host families?
- Will there be "side trips" and what will they cost?
- Will there be admission fees for museums, tours, etc.?
- What ground transportation will be required while you are in country? Any vehicle rentals?
- Will there be program fee charges for each student from an overseas institution?
- Will students be responsible for meals or are meals included in a program fee? Will you provide group dining experiences as part of your program?

After you have defined your program, complete the budget planning form using the guidelines below and make an appointment with EAO fiscal staff 828-3734, [pgginder@vcu.edu](mailto:pgginder@vcu.edu), to construct your final budget and program price. Please bring your planning form when you meet with us.

### Guidelines for Creating the Summer Study Abroad Budget

#### **New programs**

A new program should have a budget based on no more than eight (8) students.

#### **Repeat programs**

If your program took fewer than 12 students the previous year, you must base the following year's budget on the number of students you took.

If you took between 12 and 15 students the previous year, your budget must be based on a maximum of 12.

If you took more than 16 students the previous year, your budget must be based on a maximum of 16.

#### **Deviances in policy**

Any deviances in this policy must be approved by the Executive Director of the Office of International Education and the Director of VCU Education Abroad.

## Program Director's Expenses

When enrollment is sufficient, program budgets are designed to include the airfare, housing, meal expenses and sometimes incidentals for the Program Director.

**Alcohol charges are never covered as they are prohibited by state law.**

Ground transportation and fees for guest speakers are covered in the program budget.

The total of the Program Director's expenses will be divided among the total number of participants and that figure is included in each participant's program fee.

## Compensation Policy

Faculty contracts on summer study abroad programs are determined by **enrollment** numbers because salaries are paid from the tuition that is generated by the students who enroll in the program for credit. **10 students** is the required minimum on all programs for the full salary to be paid. If your registration totals are below the required minimum number of students, you may not be paid a full salary.

**Winter** and **spring break** program directors will not be compensated with a faculty contract; however these program directors may choose to incorporate compensation as a line item in the program budget.

If your program has **multiple program directors** who should receive compensation, you must work with the Education Abroad office to determine the teaching load of each instructor on the program so that each instructor is paid according to the number of credits they are teaching.

Contracts for summer programs are prepared by the Center for Teaching Excellence, Vice Provost for Instruction (Dr. Joseph Marolla); however the Education Abroad office determines how the contracts are prepared, so please address any salary questions to Education Abroad.

If you are not a **US citizen**, please be aware that you are subject to the terms of your employment and visa status at VCU and may only be compensated according to those terms.

If your VCU employment status is:

**Adjunct** – If you teach a course for VCU undergraduate credit, you will be paid \$2,835 (10 students minimum) from the Summer Studies Program for each three credits of instruction. If your enrollment is fewer than 10 participants, your salary will be prorated, i.e., six participants will mean about 60 percent of the \$2,835. Salary amount is based on information from Summer 2009 and is subject to change.

**Nine-month FTE Faculty** – VCU compensates your summer employment using a formula which will amount to approximately 7 percent of your full-time salary for a VCU three-credit course (10 students minimum). No salary line item needs to be added to your budget. If your enrollment is fewer than 10 participants, your salary will be prorated.

If you are not teaching a course for VCU credit, any salary you receive will come from program revenues and you will need to add a line item for salary in the program director's expense box. We will calculate your benefit amount (8.21 percent for this fiscal year) and add to your program budget.

**12-month FTE Faculty** – Whether you are teaching a VCU course in an international setting or directing a program for transfer credits, your university salary will be unchanged. No salary line item will be added to your budget.

## State-approved Travel

- Airfare – If paid with your travel authorization, tickets must be purchased from a state contract agency. If purchased off-contract, you will be reimbursed when reimbursement request is submitted after program is completed.
- After the finance workshop for faculty Program Directors is held in February and after your enrollment numbers are finalized, you will need to make an appointment with EAO fiscal staff (828-3734) to complete your program travel authorization.
- Vendor payments – No vendor payments can be made without an approved travel authorization and an accurate invoice from your vendors. Vendor payments will be thoroughly discussed in the February finance workshop. If you need help obtaining an invoice and/or wire instructions, please contact EAO fiscal staff.
- VCU corporate travel cards no longer offer the flexibility required by study abroad programs and are not a requirement for Program Directors. On-site funding for program activities are funded using an approved travel advance from the university. At the conclusion of the program, activity receipts will be submitted and the travel advance settled during the reimbursement process.
- There is **no** reimbursement for alcoholic beverages.
- You must purchase auto insurance for rentals outside of the U.S.A. except Canada. The VCU Office of Risk Management advises that Program Directors purchase vehicle liability and physical damage insurance from the rental car company in the host country so that the rental insurance will be consistent with local laws and customs. If needed, VCU insurance will in most cases be excess to the limit provided by the rental agency.
- State per diem amounts are almost never used for Summer Study Abroad Programs as they would contribute to non-competitive program prices. Usually a nominal meal allowance is listed.
- If you have any questions about the financial aspects of your program, please call EAO fiscal staff at 828-3734 or [baddngt@vcu.edu](mailto:baddngt@vcu.edu).

## Using a Travel Agency for Air Tickets

There are three state-/university-approved travel agencies that are equipped to process transactions with state government. They are:

Covington International Travel – 343-2267 (Kathy)  
 American World Tours Inc. – 231-7351 (Richard)  
 Crossroads Travel Advisors LLC – 358-4300 (Dan)

1. Group flights can be booked through a state-approved travel agency when airfare is included in the cost of the program. If airfare is *not* included in the cost of the

program then travel agencies may also be used to book flights, but students will be responsible for paying the agent directly.

2. Group Directors must provide travel agents with arrival and departure information for each student on the program, as well as a compiled list of passport and visa information for each participant.
3. There may be some flexibility with group bookings, so that individuals within the group can arrive/depart within three days of the actual program dates.
4. The travel agency will quote a price well in advance of the travel dates. They will then renegotiate that price (or a lower amount) once more before the tickets are issued. There is no guarantee that the cost will be lowered, but the effort is made.
5. You **must** use a state-approved travel agency if you intend to have the university pay for the tickets in advance. Otherwise, you pay for the tickets and are reimbursed at a later date.
6. Some travel agencies will provide the following services for group travel:
  - a. Ground transportation to and from Richmond and the airport
  - b. 24-hour emergency travel helpline
  - c. A packet containing information about the areas where you will be traveling (history, geography, advisories, statistics, sightseeing, landmarks and historical sights, shopping, entertainment, hotels, restaurants, communications, and embassy listings)

In any case, it is to your great advantage to understand the difference between **refundable** and **nonrefundable** tickets, to compare the risks and rewards of each before purchasing, and to **always** make any changes to dates on a ticket **prior** to the departure date listed on the ticket.

## V. Student Selection and Enrollment

Students are required to complete an online application form and submit the non-refundable \$250 program deposit and supporting forms (refund policy, agreement & release, financial aid form and color photo) to the Education Abroad office on or before the deadline. The online application form includes the student's class standing, GPA, major, and an essay. Depending on how you have determined the method of accepting participants on your program, we will forward you a copy of the application via email and it will either be marked "for your approval" or "for your records."

All students must have a GPA of 2.0 or higher at the time of application and are admitted on a first-come, first-serve rolling basis. **If you wish to establish additional eligibility criteria, communicate the criteria clearly in all program-related publicity (i.e. flyers, applications, presentations, website, and informational meetings.)**

**Additional eligibility criteria must be clearly established before the application process begins and must be clearly articulated to students.** Students must be judged on objective criteria such as: depth and purpose of essay, knowledge of host culture, class standing, GPA, course pre-requisites, and/or evidence of general maturity.

### Interview Guidelines

If students are interviewed, objective and clearly stated criteria must be used. Interviews should be conducted by at least two people (past participants, study abroad staff, teaching assistants).

### Admitting Students

Program Directors who choose to review applications must notify Education Abroad of a student's approval within one week of receipt of application. In case of a waiting list, please rank order the students. This will enable EA to quickly notify these students in case of a withdraw.

### Application Deadlines

We recommend that program directors set the registration deadline *after* Spring Break so students have a chance to decide with their families whether they can afford to participate in the program.

The preferred deadline for summer 2010 programs will be: **March 26, 2010**

For various reasons, some programs may need earlier or later deadlines. These requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

### Late Applications

Students are encouraged to apply as early as possible. Please do not encourage students to apply after the program deadline. Accepting late applicants has several consequences such as: insufficient time for the students to purchase airline tickets, to obtain passports and visas, to attend pre-departure orientations, and to apply for financial aid.

### Withdraw Policy

If you learn that a student wishes to withdraw, inform him/her that he/she must notify EA **in writing**. Telling you is not enough! We often encounter upset students who have informed their Program Director but did not inform Education Abroad and who are then held financially responsible for the program fee. Students must adhere to the withdrawal and refund policy.

### **Refund Policy**

April 15 is the withdrawal deadline. From the time students submit completed applications until the withdrawal deadline of **April 15**, we may be making payments to the vendors on the students' behalf. Because of this, students are held responsible for any funds we've committed on their behalf and if they withdraw before April 15, we will still charge the student's account for those funds. After April 15, students are held accountable for the entire program fee *even if* they choose not to go on the program.

THAT IS WHY WE WANT STUDENTS TO WAIT TO REGISTER UNTIL THEY ARE 100% SURE THEY WILL GO ON THE PROGRAM! Every year there are students who sign up and then later change their minds. At this point they realize that they either pay for the program and go, or pay for the program and don't go (in other words, they pay for the program whether they go or not).

### **Financial Aid Process**

If students have a FAFSA on file for 2009-2010, then they *may* be eligible to use aid in the summer, but it depends on whether they have access to any aid, or if they have already used up their maximum aid allowed during the fall 2009 and spring 2010 semesters. Note that many students have maxed out on their federal aid by summertime, so the only option may be alternative loans or parent plus loans. In order to figure out whether students have any aid available to them, they must take the Financial Aid form included as an attachment on the application to the Financial Aid office during the application process, and the counselor will tell the student what the total estimated budget for the program is, and how much aid is currently available to the student. Students can complete this process before committing to the program so that they know whether or not they can afford it.

Financial aid is disbursed in the summertime and should coincide with the billing of the program fee and tuition. If students are eligible for aid in excess of the amount of the program fee and tuition (to cover expenses like airfare, spending money, supplies, etc.), then those funds will be refunded to the student in the form of a refund check (mailed to the home address) OR direct deposit (direct deposit is preferable to most students so that the funds are available to them once they are overseas, but students must set this up with Student Accounting). Students should not rely on financial aid funding to provide funds prior to departure because disbursement dates vary and may not coincide with departure dates; therefore, financial aid should be thought of as a reimbursement.

## VI. Pre-Departure Preparations

### Pre-departure Orientation

After your program participants are chosen, you will schedule **at least one** pre-departure orientation. Please schedule this orientation during the early part of April. Education Abroad can help you to reserve a room and contact the students about the day and time of the orientation.

During the orientation please present students with information about the logistics, arrival time, daily itinerary, housing, meals, and a suggested packing list. This is also a good time to review the academic and behavioral requirements of the program and emphasize your expectations.

You may also want to address dating among program participants as well as with locals. Also, drugs and alcohol abuse should be addressed. Alcohol is a major cause of behavioral problems during study abroad programs. Many participants are under legal drinking age, and when they arrive in their host country they are suddenly able to drink alcohol legally.

Your orientation should also include information on the health, legal, environmental, political, cultural and religious conditions in the host country. You should also go over potential health and safety risks and emergency response measures.

Please also make sure you are familiar with the health insurance coverage provided for the program. Provide all students in your group with a written list of reputable local medical clinics or hospitals and English-speaking doctors.

In addition, Education Abroad will schedule a general orientation for all of the summer study abroad students in early April and in November for winter programs. During this session we will go over passports, visas, travel arrangements, health insurance, immunizations, packing tips, course enrollment and cultural tips. All of your program participants will be expected to attend both sessions.

### **Group Building**

Short-term programs are, by nature, intensive and require group cohesion. Each year we find that the biggest challenges abroad are often student behavior problems. We recommend that you discuss conduct expectations before the program and upon arrival. During the orientation, discuss issues related to group travel and make sure that the participants know that the group interests are a priority. Reinforce the message that student abroad is an academic experience (hence the word "study") and the academic obligations triumph personal interests.

The students should also discuss their expectations and ideas for the program.

### Blackboard

All VCU Study Abroad programs **must** post the following information on Blackboard, and each Program Director is responsible for maintaining a Blackboard site for his/her program.

VCU Education Abroad will establish your website, but you are responsible for adding the information.

1. Dates that accommodations begin and end
2. Meeting day and time and departure day and time
3. Course description and materials list
4. Packing tips
5. Itinerary for the entire program (if events are flexible please mark the itinerary accordingly)
6. A suggested flight for students to take and a "buy-by" date. A good faith effort at searching for lowest fares is expected. In most cases, this flight should be the same flight that one or both of the program directors will be on. (This is not necessary if airfare is included in the cost of the program.)
7. Emergency contact information
8. Syllabus

Blackboard training is available at various times throughout the year. To register for training go to <http://www.pubinfo.vcu.edu/training/it> and enter keyword "Blackboard."

## VII. During the Program

### Role of the Program Director

As the Program Director, you assume multiple roles during the program. You are the professor, advisor, counselor, coordinator, facilitator, dean, and liaison all at once.

One of the first roles is as liaison with VCU. Once you have assembled all of the program participants on-site, notify the Education Abroad office immediately.

Make yourself available during the program! You should check in with students everyday and be available to meet with students regularly. Students must have your contact information.

Be aware of culture shock and its effect on students. Some students will exhibit signs of culture shock more than others. Signs include: appetite change, feelings of helplessness, irritability, homesickness, sleeping more than usual, feeling depressed, getting angry easily, boredom, or stereotyping of host culture. Encourage students to eat and sleep well and to take care of their health during the program.

### Behavior Problems

One of the biggest complaints/challenges that VCU Program Directors mention is the behavior of the participants. Most often, Directors are challenged by students who display a poor attitude and/or do not want to participate in the course.

Most of the problems can be resolved; however, the Program Directors must be prepared to act as disciplinarian. Behavior problems of one individual can have a negative effect on the entire group and may escalate if not addressed promptly. Examples of *minor* behavior problems include:

- lateness to class or activities
- rude behavior toward Program Director or other participants
- indifference toward class and/or acting rudely during class

Program Directors must issue students a **verbal warning**. The best remedy is often a frank discussion with the student and repeating your expectations for behavior.

Program Directors should also keep a **written log** of each incident/offense. Telling the student that you are keeping a log is often an effective way to prevent future incidents. This also serves as a record should you need to take further corrective action.

\*Please keep any personal issues or problems that you encounter with students confidential and do not share this information with any of the other program participants. It is important not to ostracize a member of the group by informing the others of his/her behavior/academic/personal problems.

## **Dismissal from a Program**

Major behavior problems are grounds for dismissal from the program. Grounds include, but are not limited to:

- Behavior that is disruptive and detrimental to the group (repeated offenses)
- Behavior that disturbs the other participants
- Alcohol misuse
- Physical or sexual assault
- Harassment
- Possession, use or distribution of illegal drugs
- Theft
- Repeated bad or offensive behavior for which the student has been warned

The best way to avoid dismissing a student from a program is to continuously discuss behavior expectations before and during the program. Program Directors can also have students sign a contract at the beginning of the program that outlines the expectations. However, in cases of repeated behavior offenses, the Program Director should be prepared to take corrective action and dismiss a student from the program.

If you have not already done so, at the time of dismissal document the violation(s) in writing. Have the student sign a statement that acknowledges that she or he is no longer a participant and must vacate the housing by the designated date. Please review all dismissals with Education Abroad.

## **Voluntary Withdrawal**

Inevitably some students return early from a program for personal or family reasons, or because they simply no longer wish to be a part of the program. If a student decides to withdraw, he or she should consult with you to determine whether a solution can be reached that would allow the student to stay.

If the student decides to withdraw after the consultation, he or she must sign a written statement that he or she is no longer a part of the program effective on the designated date and that the withdrawal is voluntary. The statement must also indicate that the student understands that all expenses from that point forward are his or her own responsibility, including housing and transportation home. No student will be allowed to remain in the program accommodations after withdraw.

Please fax this statement to the Education Abroad office. In no case should the Program Director promise any refund of program fees or tuition. The student is still liable for both the program fee and the tuition.

If the student must return home for a family or medical emergency, it is at the Program Director's discretion whether to continue to work with the student in order to assign a grade for the course. Education Abroad strongly recommends that Program Directors have a contingency plan to work with students in these cases.

## VIII. Safety and emergency procedures

VCU Program Directors must adhere to the following guidelines:

### Pre-departure preparations

1. All VCU program participants are issued an International Student Identification Card. Program Directors should be familiar with the insurance provided by this card.
2. Disclosure of risks must be made (see following section).
3. Program directors **must** obtain an international cell phone for the duration of the program.
4. A list of faculty and students must be sent before the trip to the country's U.S. Consulate with itinerary and contact information.
5. The program director is responsible for providing VCU Education Abroad with a list of participants and their contact information during the course of a program. This applies to home stays, hotels and students in apartments/dorms. Education Abroad must also have the contact information for the Program Director at all times.
6. Program Directors are responsible for having a copy of the front page (photo page) of each participant's passport on hand in case of emergency.
7. Program Directors are responsible for having a copy of the participant's emergency contact information, health conditions and prescription medications (provided by the student in the online application which is forwarded by email each time a student submits an application).

### **Emergency response plan**

Each Program Director should have an emergency response plan in place in case of an unforeseen event.

1. Program directors must have a "three-phase" plan regarding regrouping of the faculty member and students (in other words, what if the hotel was impossible to return to, then . . ., then if this section of a city was not possible, then . . ., etc.).
2. Program Directors and students should always know where the nearest U.S. Embassy and/or Consular office is located and the phone number. This information is provided in the student's acceptance packet; however a wallet sheet with this information would be helpful to give all students. Depending upon the countries and circumstances, students should understand that this is the most secure and, logistically, the most central area for them to return to providing it is still accessible.
3. Again, a list of faculty and students must be sent before the trip to the country's U.S. Consulate with itinerary and contact information.

### **Drugs and alcohol**

Students participating in a VCU study abroad program are not held to U.S. alcohol and drug laws, but rather to those laws of the country in which they are visiting. Faculty members should advise students of the risks of drug and alcohol use.

Program directors are, under **no** circumstances, allowed to purchase drugs or alcohol for program participants. Faculty members are not to use personal, state or any part of the budget funds to purchase alcohol for students.

*Faculty members are expected to lead by example.*

### Disclosure of risks

In the case where an activity during the course of a program may necessitate warnings, it is the responsibility of the Program Director that those risks have been made clear. Warnings must be obvious and direct, specific and comprehensible.

When making a warning obvious and direct, use words like “**do not**” and “**cannot**” instead of “**should not.**” Warnings are not suggestions, but rules to be abided by.

Warnings should be specific to the risk. Instructing or allowing students to proceed “at their own risk” means nothing if those risks have not been outlined for them.

The language of a warning must be comprehensible. This is an especially important issue for students whose native language may not be the same as that of the Program Director.

Keep in mind that a part of the pre-departure orientation that VCU Education Abroad provides for is disclosure of warnings and risks. Program participants are provided with the U.S. State Department’s consular information sheet and worldwide caution in their registration acceptance form. However, it is the responsibility of the Program Director to inform students of particular risk while the program is in progress.

*Professors are not responsible for a student’s behavior during their free time. This point (that students are held responsible for their own actions) must be made to students clearly — before and during a program.*

### Cell Phone Requirement

Program directors **must** obtain an international cell phone for the duration of the program.

## During the Program

### Crisis response

A variety of situations can constitute a crisis. The guidelines below are to be used in response to the following:

- Arrest of a student
- Crime against a student not including sexual assault
- Death of a student
- Infectious disease outbreak among program participants
- Missing student
- Political emergencies and natural disasters
- Psychiatric/mental health emergency
- Serious injury/illness/hospitalization of a student
- Sexual assault

*No matter what the situation, be sure that the crisis response has been carried out before students are allowed to call or send e-mails home. Many times a snowball effect can be much worse than the original situation would have been.*

### **In all cases:**

Step I:

The program director must first contact VCU. If it is during work hours, contact Stephanie Davenport at (804) 828-7882 or via e-mail at [davenportse@vcu.edu](mailto:davenportse@vcu.edu). If it

is after hours, the program director must contact **Stephanie's emergency-only mobile: 804-319-9821 or VCU Police at 804-828-1234.**

**Step II:**

When a student is injured or ill, it is the responsibility of the Program Director to get him/her to the appropriate care facility and try to identify a hospital staff member who speaks English.

If a student is in a life-threatening condition, initial contact with the parents should be made through VCU Education Abroad. Complete details of the situation must be provided.

The Program Director is under no circumstances to release the name of the student or make statements on behalf of VCU. The standard response should be, *"My first responsibility is to the students in this program, to their families and to the University. Thank you for understanding."*

All public statements are to be made **only** by Pam Lepley, Director of VCU University News Services (phone: 828-6057, pager: 750-7800).

**Step III:**

Begin keeping a written log of actions taken and update it as the crisis progresses.

**Step IV:**

Contact local police, embassies and consulates as necessary.

**Step V:**

When the situation has been assessed and these steps have been completed, Program Directors should inform students that they may then contact family and friends via phone and e-mail. *In the case of sexual assault, program participants who know about the incident should receive counsel on how to respect and protect the victim's identity before they are allowed to call home.*

It is the responsibility of VCU University News Services and the Office of International Education to make any public statements about a crisis occurring during the course of a program.

**In the case of a terror attack:**

Collect the group and get to the nearest embassy for evacuation. Contact VCU Education Abroad. Allow students to contact family members and inform them of evacuation plans. VCU Education Abroad will be in contact with the embassy as well.

**State Department definition of terms** (from [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)):

*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.

*Public Announcements* are a means to disseminate information about terrorist threats and other relatively short-term and/or transnational 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.

*Consular Information Sheets* are available for every country of the world. 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." In limited instances, 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.

### **VCU Education Abroad Program Cancellation**

1. Students who wish to cancel or return home in response to a war-related or terrorist action do so of their own accord **unless** the U.S. State Department has issued a travel warning for the area in which a program takes place.
2. In the case of a "worldwide state of war," which would be declared by the U.S. State Department, all programs will be canceled. However, it must be understood that having the U.S. military involved in conflict **does not** constitute a world war.
3. Students have signed, as a part of the registration form, an agreement and release. This is a binding contract, and Program Directors should be familiar with its contents.
4. A State Department public announcement is a short-term warning of possible danger and does not constitute the cancellation of a program by the university.