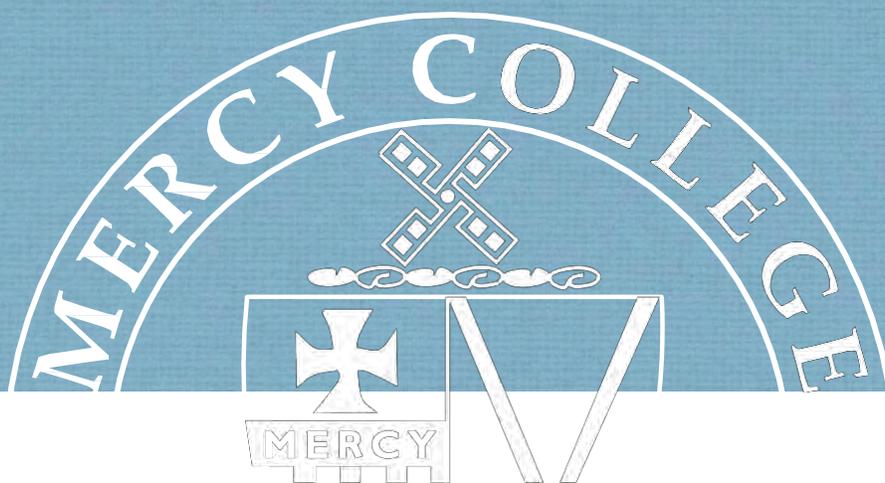


# MERCY COLLEGE

## **Faculty-led Study Abroad Handbook**



## Purpose

The purpose of this handbook is to outline policies related to for-credit and non-credit travel outside of the United States for Mercy College employees and students. It is designed to help protect faculty, students and the college by stating the responsibilities of parties involved in faculty-led study abroad programs. The handbook has been developed primarily by the Center for Global Engagement and the College's legal counsel.

## Introduction

Educators agree that a robust understanding of the world is a valuable element of a quality college education. Faculty-led study abroad does not attempt to replicate the classroom environment; rather, the experience provides enriching opportunities for students to experience first-hand what it is like to live and study in other cultures and communities. An increasing number of students prefer to study abroad in group programs sponsored by their college, where an experienced professor may carefully integrate subject matter for students into an international setting. In this way, study abroad represents a unique learning experience that cannot be achieved by traveling alone.

When determining the program's subject and course content, faculty should consider how the designated location complements academic studies. Although some locations fit naturally with academic coursework, other pairings may require stronger justification or research.

Early planning ensures the success of a faculty-led study abroad program. Planning should begin at least seven months prior to the start of the program. Tasks that should be completed during this period of time include the preparation of a proposal which fully demonstrates the academic, professional and cultural relevancy of the proposed program for both you and your students. You may find that, if your program complements another professor's course, it may be advantageous to create an interdisciplinary approach to the study abroad program.



# Questions and Answers

## 1. What are Short-term Faculty-led Study abroad Programs?

These are classes that are primarily hosted at Mercy College's New York campuses, with a smaller portion of the course held at an international destination pertinent to coursework and led by the faculty member teaching the course. The international component of the short-term faculty-led study abroad programs typically occurs at the end of the term. The international portion of the class is typically one to three weeks, and travel is usually done during scheduled breaks in the school year so as to not interfere with students' academic work. These courses are typically designed around a faculty member's own experiences. These programs are different from other study abroad programs in that a professor from the home institution leads students in their travel and learning while abroad.

## 2. Getting Started: Writing the Proposal and Getting the Program Approved.

Each academic year, up to two faculty members per school may propose and develop a faculty-led study abroad program. Before beginning the planning process, please consult with your department chair, program head and dean to discuss the validity of the program you would like to propose.

Following these initial inquiries, complete your proposal and submit it, along with a course syllabus and letters of support, for review by the Office of the Provost. These documents should be submitted at least seven months in advance of the start date.

In your proposal, indicate the country to be visited, length of visit, staffing requirements and cultural component complementing the academic program, in addition to addressing the following prompts listed below:

- Provide a compelling academic reason for hosting the study abroad experience in a particular international location.
- Describe how the program will integrate course content with on-site living and learning opportunities, including all planned excursions.
- Using the documents you've provided, demonstrate that your program is viable.
- Identify specific benefits that students will gain by studying abroad.
- Provide a budget with estimated costs for Mercy College and for students, indicating how the program will remain affordable for Mercy College students (see note below on budget).
- Identify any available financial resources.
- Indicate whether you have visited the site and whether you can prove that it has the necessary resources and support for participants.
- Indicate that the study abroad location does not fall under a US State Department travel warning.
- Indicate whether you plan to organize and lead such a program annually.
- Provide an Emergency Action Plan which will assure the safety and security of students, faculty and staff who are developing and administering programs abroad (refer to Section 8).

Letters of support from your department chair and dean are required and should illustrate their level of support and commitment to the proposal. The dean's letter should discuss how the proposal contributes to the values and goals of the study abroad program and to the international aims of the college. The department chair's letter should describe why the proposed program is relevant in terms of the topic and location for the course being taught and how the program effectively fills a need in the department.

Please note: As with standard on-campus courses, short-term study abroad programs are subject to assessment relative to student learning outcomes, teacher effectiveness and other quality and satisfaction factors.

In summary, the proposal process includes:

- Faculty members interested in directing a faculty-led study abroad program should contact CGE for initial information and Patricia Sabatino for itinerary planning. They can provide more complete information regarding proposing and directing a program.
- The faculty member should complete the program proposal and is encouraged to consult with the Center for Global Engagement during the development process.
- The department head and the dean will review and endorse the proposal.
- The program proposal is then presented to the provost's office for review. The provost's office will approve or disapprove the program.
- Once approved, the CGE will organize and manage the program with the faculty member.

### 3. Developing a budget.

When planning the program budget, include airfare, room and board, and all trip related expenses for group activities (museum admission, group meals, tips, etc.) Once all expenses have been considered, estimate a "per student" fee. The costs should include the program costs for the faculty leaders, which are then incorporated into the student costs.

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Round-trip Airfare                         | \$ |
| Airport Transfers                          | \$ |
| Housing                                    | \$ |
| Meals                                      | \$ |
| In-country Transportation                  | \$ |
| In-country Travel                          | \$ |
| Entrance Fees                              | \$ |
| Anticipated Out-of-Pocket Faculty Expenses | \$ |
| Other Fees/Expenses                        | \$ |

### 4. Process to design and Implement the Program (Including Timeline For Program Development).

After submitting your proposal, your planning process becomes more detailed:

- Review relevant travel information about the location you plan to visit.
- Explore popular approaches to study and travel programs for the location in question by looking at other colleges' websites that offer study abroad opportunities in that particular area.
- Determine your ideal itinerary and preferred dates for the program.
- Continue to develop the educational content of the study abroad element of the class.
- Continue to reinforce seamless integration of the study abroad program with the rest of the standard course content.
- Refine and outline the expected student learning outcomes connected to the experience.
- Balance the educational component of study abroad with limited downtime for students to explore their new surroundings by themselves.
- Continue to design the experience around the goal of maximum student immersion in the culture.
- Familiarize yourself with the local language, the customs, laws and culture (if you don't know it already).

## 5. Financial Information and Management.

You are required to include a reasonable budget, with estimated costs, in your proposal. Your financial planning will continue after submitting a successful proposal. You should research whether there are possible external sources of funding for the program, including financial assistance for both the faculty as well as for students.

You will also need to start working with the college's finance office to manage the program's financial details.

### Program account

After program approval, the finance office will establish an account for the faculty leader that can be used to deposit payments and to pay expenses as listed in the budget. All Mercy College purchasing policies and procedures are in effect with this account. The faculty leader should apply for a college credit card. Any deficits incurred by the program shall be the responsibility of the affiliated departmental and dean's offices. Unused fees shall be dispensed at the discretion of the faculty leader, in consultation with the department chair and program head.

### Student Payment

The faculty leader shall submit complete invoices for each student on the program roster. The invoices must reflect the total program cost. The faculty leader must put in writing the payment/refund policy for program funds and ensure that students are fully informed of the policy.

### local transportation

Faculty and students should use public transportation, whenever available; local drivers (private bus) are suitable for other occasions. Faculty should not rent or drive a vehicle for program purposes.

## 6. Pre-departure orientation.

The faculty leader is responsible for diligently managing the travel program. While the Center for Global Engagement conducts a general Mercy College orientation for study abroad students, that session shall complement (not replace) program-specific orientation provided by the faculty leader. It is critical to carefully plan the meeting that you have with your students before the trip. Consider how meetings can add to the learning experience as well as set the stage for the experience. Thoughtfully planned pre-departure meetings stimulate active learning about the destination prior to departure. In some cases, you may want to invite students' family members to learn more about the upcoming trip.

During the orientation, faculty should address topics such as:

- housing
- behavior
- academic expectations
- program logistics
- health and safety issues
- immigration requirements
- crisis management issues
- contact information for emergencies while abroad
- hotel contact information (share with family)
- cultural issues
- itinerary
- money matters and requirements
- course materials and requirements



Students should also be provided with a preliminary version of the itinerary, program-specific policies, requirements and guidelines, all relevant deadlines, travel and housing information, relevant medical and health information, a “what to pack” list, money handling information, any forms required by the college and notices of the college’s refund policy, behavioral expectations and alcohol and drug policies. The Center for Global Engagement should receive all such information from the faculty leader as well.

Students should be asked to complete these forms:

- Insurance application to receive insurance card.
- Signed code of conduct contract.
- FERPA waiver (to give parents information while away).
- Emergency contact information.
- Luggage rules.

Faculty should discuss the importance of cultural immersion for the educational experience and stress that this is not a vacation or a field trip. It is a good idea to review the educational components and stress to the students what is expected academically in order to be successful in the international portion of the class.

Upon return to campus, faculty members should conduct debriefing sessions to help students integrate what they have learned. Upon their return, students should expect to share their experiences through public speaking and PowerPoint presentations.

## 7. Faculty leader responsibilities.

During the program, faculty will supervise and be responsible for their students, making health and safety a primary concern.

In addition, faculty are required to ensure that students receive appropriate instruction in order to justify the receipt of academic credits. Students should receive (separately) the portion of the syllabus pertaining to the trip.

In general, your responsibilities will include:

- Understanding the culture in which the program is conducted.
- Familiarizing yourself with the handbook for faculty-led study abroad (provided by the Center for Global Engagement).
- Exercising caution before engaging the services of local tour operators or local transportation companies.
- Planning ahead for potential risks, and creating an emergency plan which describes the appropriate steps to take in the event of an emergency.
- Explaining your role, responsibilities and program requirements to students.
- Adhering to standards of professional conduct while acting prudently and reasonably.
- Overseeing the academic portion of the program.
- Performing appropriate investigation and follow-up concerning behavioral issues and complaints.
- Completing and evaluating your program and sharing it with the Center for Global Engagement for the benefit of future travel study programs.
- Collecting FERPA forms, signed waivers, copies of students’ passports and insurance information.



The college requires that faculty study abroad leaders accept and fulfill all such responsibilities on their short-term international programs.

## 8. Students' Disabilities Act.

Faculty leaders are advised that the American Disabilities Act rarely applies to students outside the United States. Accommodations and accessibility may be very different outside the United States and should be investigated by faculty leaders prior to program registration. Faculty leaders are advised that students registered with Mercy College's Office of ACCESSibility are encouraged to meet with that Office prior to departure.

## 9. Safety issues and travel assistance.

Promoting safety while overseas is a critical task. The college will engage the services of a travel assistance company (e.g., iNext) to provide coverage for Mercy College faculty and students participating in faculty-led study abroad programs. The company will enable participants to obtain immediate assistance for emergency and health needs while abroad. Such organizations are on call 24/7 and offer a wide variety of services such as health, travel and evacuation insurance.

**Emergency Action Plan** – The safety and security of our students, faculty, and staff are of primary importance when developing and administering programs abroad. For this reason, the college does not support proposed programs in areas of the world currently listed on the US Department of State travel warning list. Before departure, you should actively monitor travel advisories and consular information sheets available at the US Department of State website (<http://travel.state.gov>). You can register for updates at

<http://www.state.gov/misc/echannels>. However, emergencies may arise while a program is abroad. For this reason, each program proposed should have an Emergency Action Plan that includes the following elements:

**Communication Protocol** – Faculty leaders shall use every means possible to contact Mercy College to report an unexpected event, including (but not limited to) hospitalization, major injuries or trauma, crime, civil unrest, major natural disasters or evacuation from the location. The faculty leader shall outline a local emergency plan for program participants, which includes procedures and designated locations in case of emergencies. Students should receive wallet-sized emergency cards outlining the procedures in case of an emergency. The faculty adviser will have access to a cell phone in order to contact students, parents, the college, etc., as needed.

**US embassies and consulates** – When traveling overseas, registration with the US State Department makes your presence and whereabouts known. This is especially useful if it becomes necessary for a consular officer to contact you during an emergency. Each individual must complete the registration online [http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/registration/registration\\_4789.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/registration/registration_4789.html). Traveling faculty should also locate the following information prior to departure:

- Local police telephone number.
- Nearest U.S. Embassy/Consulate telephone number.
- Directions for dialing to the US.
- Telephone number where you can be reached.

## 10. Health Issues and Medical Insurance.

All students participating in the program are required to purchase international medical insurance from iNext. Students pay a fee based on the number of days spent abroad on the program. With a group policy, students should receive comprehensive health insurance at a significant discount. Faculty members have options as to which coverage to purchase, based on a review of their own personal situation and preferred coverage plans. Accompanying Mercy College employees will also be required to purchase insurance at their own expense. The International Teacher Identity Card may provide sufficient coverage.

Faculty leaders should inform students of the possible risks involved with international travel, making it clear that the university does not carry any responsibility for the medical expenses incurred by students studying abroad. If a student becomes hospitalized while abroad, it is their sole responsibility to pay all fees, not the university. Students who have severe medical conditions should consult their physician prior to participating.

## **Prescriptions**

If a student takes any medication, he/she will need to have enough to last the duration of the course. It is also a good idea for students with medical issues to obtain a note from their doctor explaining their prescription needs in the event that additional medication is required during travel. This also includes optical prescriptions.

## **11. Student Behavior.**

Appropriate student behavior is paramount to academic learning and program health and safety. Though students on your program may be over 18, they are still subject to your program rules and regulations, as well as those dictated by the college. It is unacceptable for any student to disregard your authority because they are of legal age. As you are responsible for them, they are responsible for adhering to the rules and regulations that you have established. Because students are perceived as representatives of Mercy College while abroad, you have the obligation and the right to dictate behavioral expectations and standards. Students will sign Mercy College's code of conduct contract. As the faculty leader, you will go over what behavior is expected of students studying abroad and how they are bound by the rules of Mercy College and the judicial laws of the countries visited.

### **Common Sense to Share with Your Students**

1. Student behavior that interferes with the program and the group will be cause for dismissal .
2. Use the "buddy system" at all times .
3. Do not walk in poorly lit areas.
4. Never leave a fellow student behind alone.
5. Be aware of pick pockets and scam artists offering tours or bargains .
6. Be sensible about how you dress .
7. Conceal your valuables .
8. Use taxis with official markings only .
9. Know how to contact the group leader should you find yourself in trouble .

## **12. Risk Management.**

A faculty member leading a program abroad is charged not only with delivering the content of the courses that are part of the program but also with assuming the role of primary disciplinarian, advisor and counselor whom students may rely on, especially in the case of emergencies. It is therefore critical that any faculty member traveling abroad on an approved program has the opportunity to learn from colleagues and peers as s/he prepares for this large undertaking. The Center for Global Engagement will coordinate program leader preparation sessions to serve this purpose.

As the departure date nears, the Center for Global Engagement holds a workshop for faculty trip leaders on risk management, student health and safety issues. The faculty members who participate in the programs must also attend an orientation program for participating students that covers cultural and safety issues. Support from the Center for Global Engagement continues off-site. The office provides trip leaders with guidance for dealing with emergencies. Staff are available around the clock should any problems arise. Faculty members who lead trips are also asked to keep handwritten logs of any incidents or problems that occur during the program. The CGE will provide the appropriate forms. This information, along with feedback gathered during debriefing meetings after the participants' return, will be used to update and revise the university's procedures and crisis-management protocols.

The following are some essential ethical guidelines that faculty/directors must follow.

1. Keep student needs and education as your primary objective. Study abroad programs are not a means to accomplish personal goals, such as travel or visiting family.
2. Fully disclose all program rules to students before collecting non-refundable deposits.
3. Faculty director must be present at the program's location from the program's beginning to end.
4. The faculty director cannot arrive late or leave early. At least one faculty director (if there are more than one within a specific program) must attend all excursions, even if they are led by a third-party organization.

The following guidelines should assist faculty when attempting to manage the risk of study abroad programs.

### **Minimize the possibility for a crisis or situation**

The first step to having a successful and safe study abroad program is to minimize the number of opportunities available for a crisis to occur. The following are tips for reducing the likelihood of crisis situations.

- Share both the students' and your contact information with all traveling participants so that everyone can remain in close communication with each other throughout the study abroad program.
- Share the travel itinerary, consulate information, local contacts and hotel information with students before you leave. Include an address and phone number for each contact.
- Create check-in times and locations during student free time.
- Discuss university policies regarding alcohol.
- Provide your students with relevant cultural information concerning the country you are visiting in order to help them deal with problems they may encounter.
- Check in regularly (upon arrival, after significant travel, before departure) with the Center for Global Engagement.



### **Know the difference between real emergencies and perceived emergencies**

It is important that students and faculty members be able to distinguish between real emergencies and perceived emergencies. Real emergencies pose a genuine and immediate risk to the well-being of the participants. Examples of real emergencies include natural disasters, serious illness, physical assault and terrorist attacks. Perceived emergencies pose no significant threat to the health, safety, and well being of the program participants. Examples of common perceived emergencies are nervous family members, missing luggage and lost passports.

While both types of emergencies can be stressful, perceived emergencies usually do not affect the group as a whole and can be solved through additional communication with our office, the student and the student's family. We recommend that faculty contact us in the event of a perceived emergency so that we can expedite the flow of communication and ensure that we are aware that an issue has occurred.

### **React appropriately and confidently to real emergencies and crises**

The Center for Global Engagement is here to assist you in the event of a crisis. We register each group with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) offered by the Department of State. (<https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>). If an incident occurs, we will contact the local embassy or consulate in order to assist you. We will also utilize other contacts that we may have in the country in order to provide further aid. Maintaining communication with our office, however, is a crucial element of responding to a real emergency. In the event of an emergency situation, follow the procedural steps below:

1. Stay calm, assess the situation and act (make use of local resources).
2. Make sure your group is safe and remains informed of the situation as needed.
3. Contact the Center for Global Engagement.
4. Continue the program or modify plans as needed.

The Center for Global Engagement deals with crises using the following operating principles:

1. All responses to a crisis will be undertaken with the highest concern for the health, safety, and well-being of program participants and staff
2. All reasonable and prudent measures will be taken to limit the college's legal liabilities, while at the same time conforming to the standards of ethical practice for study abroad.
3. Mercy College will exercise caution and restraint in deciding when, and with whom, information about an emergency should be shared.

### **13. Contact Information.**

Faculty leaders should also include information concerning medical facilities in the areas where travel will occur. Please list relevant addresses and contact information in order to demonstrate adequate preparation for a medical-related situation or emergency, should it arise. It would be helpful to include the location of the nearest embassy and any other useful safety information. A checklist is included in the appendix of the handbook.

### **14. Drug and Alcohol Policy.**

New York state has a zero tolerance policy regarding the possession, use, manufacture, production, sale, exchange, or distribution of illegal drugs by students participating in any Mercy College study abroad program. It is illegal for a student to possess, consume, furnish, manufacture, sell, exchange or otherwise distribute any alcoholic beverages except as permitted by host country laws and local institutional regulations. Alcohol misuse and abuse are not tolerated anywhere in the world and will not be tolerated on Mercy College study abroad programs. Violation of local laws and/or Mercy College regulations or policies may result in immediate dismissal from the program and disciplinary action upon return to campus.