Faculty-Led Study Abroad Programs Guidelines

Standards for Academic Rigor, Instructional Accountability, and Institutional Prestige

This document outlines the standards used to evaluate faculty-led study abroad proposals. Its purpose is to ensure academic rigor, instructional accountability, cost efficiency, ethical engagement, and institutional prestige.

I. Clear Academic Rationale

Programs must be grounded in a coherent academic theme or problem that is discipline-based or intentionally interdisciplinary.

The international location must be essential to achieving the program's learning outcomes.

Program content must align with catalog course descriptions and applicable degree requirements.

Itineraries must provide sufficient time for students to complete readings and assignments, engage in substantive discussions, and reflect on course content.

II. Instructional Delivery: Location, Structure, and Accountability

Explanation of How and Where Instruction Occurs
All proposals must clearly explain where lectures, seminars, and instructional activities will take place.
Faculty must specify instructional frequency, format, and the balance between direct instruction, site-based learning, and independent work.
Instruction must not rely primarily on hotels, buses, or unstructured travel time.

III. Credit Hours and Academic Workload

Credit Alignment
Credits must correspond to documented instructional hours and academic workload.
Programs offering multiple courses or more than six credits require separate syllabi and justification.

IV. Relationship with Host Higher Education Institutions (Preferred)

Institutional Collaboration
Collaboration with a recognized host higher education institution is strongly encouraged but not mandatory.
Preferred practices include teaching on campus facilities and developing ongoing

partnerships.
Programs without a host institution must demonstrate equivalent instructional rigor and facilities.

V. Local Academic Participation

Programs are encouraged to incorporate guest lectures and academic contributions from local scholars, community leaders, and professionals with relevant expertise. Primary responsibility for course instruction, academic oversight, and assessment must remain with the instructor of record.

Before field trips, students must receive course-relevant preparation that identifies the activity's purpose and connection to course learning outcomes.

Tours led by third parties must be followed by a structured discussion or reflection session led by the instructor of record to connect the experience to course content and critically examine the information presented.

Guest contributions and field experiences must be integrated into the course's academic framework and identified in the syllabus, including their relationship to learning outcomes and associated assignments.

VI. Site-Based Instruction

Academic excursions must include pre-visit preparation, guided instruction, and post-visit analytical work aligned with course learning outcomes.

Cultural activities that lack instructional oversight and assessment by the instructor of record do not qualify as academic instruction.

All program activities, transportation, and accommodations must be planned and reviewed to prioritize student safety throughout the program and comply with applicable UTEP policies and requirements. Program plans must address foreseeable risks, emergency procedures, communication protocols, and students' accessibility needs.

VII. Community Engagement and Service Learning

Community Service
When included, community service must follow service-learning principles, align with course objectives, and include structured reflection. Service may not replace academic instruction or inflate credit hours.

VIII. Faculty Qualifications

Faculty leaders must demonstrate subject-matter expertise, teaching experience, and preparation for the host context.
First-time leaders are encouraged to co-lead with experienced faculty and complete pre-application information sessions.
Each course must meet the minimum enrollment requirement established by the college.

IX. Cultural Engagement

Culture as Academic Content
Cultural activities must be treated as objects of scholarly analysis and linked to readings, theory, and assessment.

X. Cost Efficiency and Ethics

Responsible Program Design
Programs must justify costs, prioritize accessibility, and provide information on scholarships or funds available to students.
Ethical and reciprocal engagement with host communities is expected.

XI. Assessment and Sustainability

Programs that can be offered regularly and are integrated into the curriculum are strongly preferred.

XII. Program Approval and Resource Considerations

Program approval is contingent upon meeting the academic, safety, enrollment, and administrative requirements outlined above, as well as demonstrating financial feasibility and reasonable costs to students.

When more than two programs are proposed for the same geographic area, proposals will undergo a comparative review using consistent criteria: academic quality, the educational value of the location, alignment with degree requirements, student demand, safety planning, accessibility, and total student cost. Priority will be given to programs that best meet students' educational needs, support timely degree completion, and provide strong learning opportunities at a reasonable cost.

Approval decisions will also consider overlapping offerings and competition for enrollment to reduce the risk of cancellations and avoidable financial losses to students. The basis for selection will be documented and communicated to applicants.