

Preparing to Manage Students Abroad

Being a Group Leader

The responsibilities of a faculty leader on a study abroad program differ from the duties of an on-campus faculty member. While on campus, professors do not frequently have to concern themselves with the welfare of their students outside of the classroom. On a group study abroad trip, the faculty leader should consider student safety in planning group activities and take responsibility for aiding students with health needs or in other emergency situations. Of course, the students are legally adults and faculty leaders are not expected to behave as parental monitors or to anticipate all possible problems.

While most group study abroad programs run smoothly, emergencies occasionally arise. Students may experience minor or serious medical emergencies or become victims of crime, for example. Since few students are prepared to deal with such situations in a foreign culture and perhaps a foreign language, a faculty leader should act as a resource and aid in this area. In addition, in the case of an emergency, the faculty member should act as a liaison to Kansas State University.

Faculty as Mentor

Faculty leaders must often provide more “hand-holding” and personal attention than is called for in the Kansas State classroom. It is likely that some students on your program will never have traveled outside of the country; and a few may never have been on an airplane. As they encounter situations such as homesickness and culture shock, they might turn to you for advice and reassurance. You may be asked to be the cultural interpreter and analyst helping students understand the foreign culture. They may turn to you with a variety of questions about the local culture and customs, perhaps asking about restaurant etiquette or how to work the machines at the laundromat. Faculty should be prepared to be cheerful and supportive to their students, not simply authority figures.

Be aware of your students’ attitudes and watch for any drastic change in behavior. Encourage your students to report any problem – physical, emotional, or financial – to you or another student.

Addressing Health and Safety Issues

You should follow the news for information pertaining to current events in your country or countries of destination. Most importantly, check for travel warnings or health risks. You may want to regularly access the U.S. State Department Web site (<http://travel.state.gov/>) for possible travel warnings. For some study abroad locations, you may want to consult the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/>) for updates on health risks.

Be familiar with your students. It is helpful to know if any students have special needs or health concerns, including allergies. You can find out this information from the application materials.

Make a list of important phone numbers and addresses, including local consulates and embassies. Familiarize yourself with the procedures for placing collect calls from your location.

Health Issues. Students may need health care while abroad. Travel abroad can bring out a variety of minor illnesses and ailments, and medical catastrophes are always possible. Routine illnesses (such as the flu or a toothache) or minor accidents (a broken limb) can be much more frightening and disorienting in a foreign culture. The faculty leader should be prepared to respond to student questions about local health care, such as how to locate doctors, clinics, or emergency medical help, and how to obtain medications. In addition, the faculty leader should have handy at all times a basic First Aid kit.

Faculty leaders may also want to familiarize themselves with and advise students on the differences that exist between the United States and foreign countries in terms of medical facilities and cultural ideas about medical care (for example, assumptions about the point at which medical treatment is needed, or differences in the doctor-patient relationship).

Managing Students While Abroad

While traveling as a group, encourage students to stay together. Always decide on a meeting point for regrouping or in case someone gets lost. In addition, frequently do head counts. You should keep a list of all students on the program and their emergency contact numbers on you at all times. This will aid you in keeping track of students while on outings or traveling. While the protocol in an emergency (see below) is that the Dean of Students will contact the student's family and handle all communications, occasions may arise in which you must contact the student's emergency contact (for example, if you are unable to contact anyone at KSU). In these instances, you must use your own judgment.

To minimize the students' anxieties about being in an unfamiliar setting, communicate frequently with all members of the group, work to build group cohesion, and establish a sensible pacing of program activities to reduce fatigue.

It is important to emphasize what is expected of each participant and how imperative his/her behavior and cooperation is to the overall success of the program. Generally, student misconduct may be defined as any situation in which participants have jeopardized their own welfare, that of their fellow participants, or of the program, have willfully violated regulations governing the host country, or any other behavior which directly impinges upon the right of others.

Students should be reminded that they are guests in someone else's country and as guests, should observe the host's laws and customs. It is each individual participant's responsibility, and in fact one of the objectives of a study abroad experience, to understand these different laws and customs as well as to observe them. Ignorance of the law is no excuse. If a student's behavior is unacceptable and is interfering repeatedly with the safety or success of the program, it may be necessary to contact OIP, and in consultation with OIP, to discipline or remove the student. Students must assume any cost incurred toward returning home.

Please review with your students proper rules of conduct and make them aware of laws specific to the country you are visiting. One issue to address is student responsibility in terms of alcohol usage, as some students might abuse alcohol due to a lower drinking age or increased sense of freedom due to being abroad. You should also discuss with students other relevant cultural issues that may impact safety – for example, traffic patterns, drug laws, local dress codes, sexual behavior and walking alone at night in a foreign city. In general, advise your students to be cautious, careful, and to use common sense. In addition, ask them to keep you informed of their personal travel plans.

Be "on call" for student emergencies, and make sure students have the information necessary in an emergency situation.

While the group is abroad, the faculty leader is in some ways “on call” twenty-four hours a day. Students should know how to reach the faculty leader at all times, day or night, in the event of an emergency. If your contact information changes, be sure to inform all students of the changes as soon as possible and make sure they write down this information on their emergency cards.

Remind all students on your program to carry around the Study Abroad Emergency Card designed by OIP. This card will contain the names, addresses, emails, and contact numbers for their emergency contacts at the U.S. Embassy and at Kansas State University.

Upon arrival at a program site, you should find the telephone number and address of a hospital, a doctor, a pharmacy, an ambulance service, a taxi service, and a U.S. Embassy or Consulate. You should have this information and should share some of it with your students. You should offer your students general principles for finding emergency help. Tell them how to contact emergency services in the country (i.e. the local “911”) and how to ask for emergency care. If your program is fixed in a single location for more than a week, tell your students how to locate the nearest emergency room. If you are unsure of such information, you may want to look at the State Department’s website on services to U.S. Citizens abroad (http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health_1185.html). This site lists hospitals and doctors for a large number of countries.

Emergency Procedures

During the program, it is important to be alert to your environment, in terms of safety. Be aware of any changes in your environment and take any necessary steps to ensure the well-being of your group. If your environment becomes life-threatening to the group, contact OIP and immediately relocate the group.

Safeguarding the well-being of study abroad students is a top priority. In a crisis, you should first do whatever is necessary to do protect the student(s), whether this means obtaining prompt and appropriate medical attention, or contacting the U.S. embassy or police for assistance. In the event of a death or serious medical condition, the leader should seek the assistance of the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

You should follow the KSU emergency notification system in the case of an emergency or crisis abroad. Immediately after you have done what is feasible to see to the health and safety of the student (or students), you should contact the Director of Study Abroad at home or at the Office of Study Abroad and the University Police (contact the number that is answered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week). The University Police and the Director of Study Abroad will then contact other relevant University personnel (such as the President, Provost, Dean of Students and Associate Provost for International Programs) and offices (such as Legal Affairs, University Relations and the Counseling Center).

KSU Contacts:

Office of International Programs

(785) 532-5990

Liz Ward, Director of Study Abroad

(785) 532-5990; lizward@ksu.edu

Rose Redington, Coordinator for Faculty-Led Group Study Abroad

(785) 532-5990; rosered@ksu.edu

Kansas State University Police

(785) 532-6412

From that point on, the Director of Study Abroad will become the Crisis Coordinator, and will handle communication with the Study Abroad Program staff and students at the crisis site for the duration of the crisis. University Relations will handle communication (internal, external, media, etc.) for the University. The Dean of Students will contact family members in the event of a death or serious injury and will be responsible for communication with the family.

Most crises can be resolved by the faculty leader and any other personnel on-site. However, if a K-State presence is necessary or advisable, a member of the Office of Study Abroad will go to the scene. In the case of student injury or death, the Crisis Committee will determine if one or both parents will also be sent to the scene.

In the event of a crisis or emergency situation abroad, the faculty leader should immediately begin to keep a detailed log of events. This is crucial for passing information to Kansas State or other relevant parties and for future reference.

Guidelines and Recommendations

General

- If a passport should get lost, report it immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. Individual students must assume the cost of passport replacement.
- If you are staying at an educational institution abroad, make an immediate contact with your liaison to report your arrival in the country and reconfirm your scheduled arrival at the institution.
- If you plan to stay for more than a couple weeks, you might want to contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or consulate and register your students with the Embassy or Consulate.

Hotel/Lodging Information

- Upon arrival to hotel, please check with front desk personnel regarding closing times. Many hotels lock their doors after sunset. In addition, reconfirm any special arrangements for storage of luggage upon arrival or departure, before check-in time or after check-out time.
- Please make sure that any costs incurred by individual participants for room service, telephone calls, etc., are paid by students prior to hotel check out. Preferably, this should be done the evening prior to check out to avoid delay.

Make Notes and Gather Information

- It is a good idea to make notes about hotels, transportations, scheduled visits, etc., for future trips. These notes may include, but should not be limited to, problems encountered, quality of lodgings and services, evaluations of land transportation, etc. It is also a good idea to gather information as you go along about hotels, restaurants, and museums. You may want to collect business cards, museum brochures, bus and subway maps, etc.

Record Expenses

- Keep track of all expenditures and receipts. All expenses should be accounted for and should be justified by a receipt. Please number your receipts and record expenditures in the Expense Report. Keeping good record of your expenditures daily will allow you and the OIP to know when, where, and how the money was spent. Daily recording will also be less stressful than trying to sort receipts after your return to the United States. It will also help you keep track of your expenses and make sure you are not spending more money than budgeted.

Check in Periodically with OIP

- It is recommended to make contact with OIP on a regular basis, especially for programs of more than two weeks duration. A brief e-mail or fax indicating that everything is going well is adequate. You should contact Rose Redington, the faculty-led group study abroad coordinator (rosered@ksu.edu).
- Obviously, serious incidents such as sickness, injury, loss of passport or air tickets, serious traveling problems should be reported immediately to OIP. Any deviation from original travel plans (change of hotels, bus companies, prolonged stay in one location, etc.) should be immediately reported to OIP.