The University Study Abroad Committee (USAC)
Guidelines for the Proposal of a New Northwestern Program or Affiliation
Approved 3/2012. Update approved 6/2016

The Committee
The University Study Abroad Committee (USAC or the Committee), is charged by the Provost with sole responsibility for reviewing and approving the academic, cultural, linguistic, logistical and administrative components of each proposal for a new undergraduate study abroad program, whether it is sponsored and operated by Northwestern, an exchange program, a consortium, or an affiliation with an existing external program abroad.

The Committee is charged with ensuring that all approved undergraduate study abroad programs are consistent with Northwestern University's educational goals, values, and academic standards and that all programs have been reviewed and approved by the relevant academic and administrative units of the University, including appropriate curricular oversight from the relevant department(s) or school(s) and the Office of the Registrar, with respect to transcripts.

The Committee is also charged with establishing policies related to undergraduate study abroad (e.g.: GPA and foreign language requirements). Further, on behalf of the Committee, advisory staff in the Study Abroad Office, the Office of International Program Development, and the Buffett Institute review and approve (or deny) all applications for permission to study on programs under each unit's purview. If a student wishes to appeal a decision, the unit in question will ask the Committee Chair to review the appeal with another USAC member. Their decision is final.

USAC comprises 9 members selected from all six undergraduate schools, who serve one or two 3-year terms. The Committee meets 6 times each academic year: in early October, early December, late January, early March, late April and mid-June. To ensure a quorum, future meeting dates and times are set by the Director of the Study Abroad Office with the Chair at the end of each academic year. The agenda is prepared by the Director of the Study Abroad Office, in consultation with the USAC Chair and the Directors of the Office of International Program Development and the Buffett Institute, and is emailed to members two weeks prior to each meeting, attached with the minutes of the last meeting and any new program or policy proposals, in order to provide adequate time for Committee members to consider the materials.

Each USAC meeting opens with a discussion of new programs, policy proposals, or pressing issues, with both voting and *ex-officio* members present. The minutes of this portion of the meeting are recorded by the Study Abroad Office Program Assistant. An *in camera* session follows, during which time the voting members discuss each proposal and vote on items ready for a decision. All USAC meeting minutes and its decisions or recommendations will be distributed to Committee members in a timely fashion.

The Process: Submitting a Proposal to USAC for a New Program, Affiliation, or Policy
Units planning to introduce a new program, who feel their concept might benefit from an exploratory "incubator" discussion, should contact the Chair to request agenda time during an upcoming USAC meeting. (This step is recommended, but is not required.) Proposals for new programs (or policies) may be introduced, with the permission of the Chair, at any of the 6 USAC meetings during the academic year. Generally, two USAC meetings are required (in rare cases, a third) before a formal vote is taken.

Completed proposals for Round 1 review (See: the USAC Guidelines and Checklist below) should be submitted to the Director of the Study Abroad Office and the Chair of the University Study Abroad Committee at least two weeks prior to the next scheduled USAC meeting. The Director of the Study Abroad Office, with the Chair, will finalize the meeting agenda (only complete proposals will be scheduled for discussion) and disseminate all related documents to USAC members via email approximately two weeks prior to the next meeting. (USAC members should read the proposal(s) and prepare questions or recommendations prior to the meeting. Members unable to attend are encouraged to email their questions or remarks to the Chair prior to the meeting.)

Nota bene:
(1) Prior to submitting a program proposal for Round 1 review, regardless of the security status of the location, the unit preparing the proposal should inform the Office of Global Safety and Security (OGSS) of its intent by e-mail—well in advance of submission, generally at least a month prior to submitting the proposal, or about 6 weeks before the actual USAC meeting. This will provide the unit and OGSS sufficient time to discuss the site prior to the Round 1 review. (The unit's proposal will, of course, include the required remarks on health and safety, since USAC is concerned about these elements in addition to its primary academic and cultural oversight.) In short, the unit completing the report, should be in communication with the OGSS prior to submitting the proposal for Round 1 review. The OGSS will inform USAC by e-mail prior to the Round 1 USAC review whether it finds the proposed location or aspects of the program to be (a) benign; (b) low concern; or (c) a location of heightened risk, which will always include Destinations on the U.S. DOS Travel Warning list. A program deemed subject to review by the International Risk Assessment Committee (IRAC) at Round 1 will undergo IRAC review before the Round 2 USAC meeting, with a full IRAC report submitted to USAC two weeks prior to that meeting.

(2) Proposals for the *modification* of an existing program or affiliation, such as the addition of new academic offerings, internships, or other programmatic experiences, which are to take place at the same location as an existing program, must be presented to USAC for review and approval. *Significant modifications* of an existing program may require two USAC meetings and, in some instances, a subsequent review by the Office of Global Safety and Security or the International Risk Assessment Committee. Those planning to present program modifications are advised to discuss them with the USAC Chair and the Director of the Study Abroad Office and, as in the case of new program proposals, to plan well in advance of envisioned marketing and program start dates.

3) Units planning to develop a new program or to propose a new affiliation are strongly advised to allow sufficient lead time for the development, review and formal approval of their proposal by both USAC and the OGSS (or IRAC) in order to ensure sufficient time to promote the program prior to the envisioned application deadline and program start date.

Round 1: The Initial Review

At the first meeting, the sponsor(s) of a new proposal will provide an executive summary of the proposed program. Following the summary, the Chair will open the floor for questions and discussion, providing Committee members every opportunity for constructive input—and the program sponsors sufficient time to respond to the Committee's questions and recommendations. This ensures that USAC members carry out due diligence, fulfilling the University's expectation of program excellence.

Promptly following the *in camera* session, the Chair will relay any decisions reached or requests for more information to the Director of the Study Abroad Office, who will share this action with the appropriate unit. (In *extremely* rare instances, at the committee's discretion, an *in camera* vote may be taken to approve a proposal without the need for Round 2.)

The respective unit will then supply USAC with any requested information at least two weeks prior to the next USAC meeting—and should be prepared to discuss the proposal further during the open session at the next USAC meeting.

Round 2: Final Review and USAC Vote

At the next scheduled USAC meeting, after the proposal sponsor(s) have provided any additional support materials, updates, or information requested, the Committee will conduct a final discussion and formal vote during the *in camera* session. If warranted, the Committee may require further discussion of a proposal at a third meeting.

Nota bene:

Only after USAC and OGSS (or IRAC) approval is the program considered formally "affiliated." No announcements or promotional materials (print or web-based) may be distributed to students until both Committees have approved the program.

The Guidelines and Checklist for New Program Proposals

The guidelines and checklist below outline the Committee's expectations for units planning to seek formal approval for a new program (term-length, full academic year, summer, or exchange), whether it is organized and solely administered by Northwestern University or a new affiliation with an existing external program abroad.

In order to ensure that the Committee has all the information required to carry out the Provost's charge, a *complete* USAC program proposal will conform to a uniform proposal structure and must contain the following elements:
1) Program Summary (1 page)
2) Program Details (3-5 pages)
3) Program Evaluations and Endorsements, summarized (2 pages)
4) Appendix (optional, no page limit, but not encyclopedic)

A complete proposal will generally be 5-6 pages in length but no longer than 8-10 pages. Supplemental proposal materials should be included in an optional Appendix. Proposals will differ significantly in the level of detail expected, depending on the nature of the program. For example, considerably more detail would be expected in a proposal for a program that is administered by Northwestern—and different information expected in proposals for an exchange program, a direct enrollment link, a third-party program, or a consortium model.

(E.g.: an exchange proposal should provide information regarding visa and health care management for outbound as well as inbound students. And a program administered solely by Northwestern should provide details about private firms hired on-site for excursion transportation.) As a general rule, USAC would not approve a for-profit program or an external program that has not been in operation for at least one year, nor would it approve a program that had been dropped from our affiliated list in the past three years. Finally, proposals for the approval of a significant modification of an existing affiliated program (e.g.: a new site or academic track) should be reported to USAC—and, in those cases, where the program modification raises questions about student safety or security, to the OGSS.

The Checklist for a New Program Proposal
Units submitting a proposal should check each item below to ensure that their program report is complete. The Committee understands that not all program elements pertain to every program model. Similarly, it recognizes that some items on this list will require greater detail in the case of some program models. (e.g.: Not all programs offer family home-stays and the description of a field study program operated by Northwestern would be expected to provide more details about on-site logistics.)

1) **Program Summary (1 page)**
   _____ **Concept**, rationale, long-range goals
   _____ **Institutional context**: NU mission and academic goals; uniqueness; impact on existing programs or programs in development; sponsoring NU unit and/or academic "home department"
   _____ **Projected learning outcomes**

2) **Program Details (3-5 pages)**
   _____ **Program Type** as defined at: http://www.northwestern.edu/studyabroad/programs/program-types/index.html (to help with Clery Act classification and compliance)
   _____ **Location**
   City; country; location of university; classrooms; main office; housing
   _____ Note if the **Location is under a** revised U.S. DOS Travel Warning or CDC Travel Notice Warning Level 3: Avoid Nonessential Travel which invokes the Undergraduate International Travel Policy
   _____ **Administration**
   Structure; contact information (US and abroad); if applicable: program director, duties (CVs in Appendix); support staff in the US and/or on-site
   _____ **Faculty**
   NU programs: faculty risk/emergency training; Non-NU program faculty: background; affiliation; qualifications; specialties; CVs, if extant
   _____ **Host institution**
   Reputation, description—or, if appropriate to the program model: describe the institutional partner(s) in the U. S. and/or abroad, the nature of the relationship with the institution(s); the professionalism of the on-site support staff (e.g.: prompt transcript or grade reports, health/safety information, on-site orientations, ground support, student services, housing and emergency response)
   _____ **Application**
   Process; deadline; method of selection (essay/interview); eligibility: GPA

_____ **Student cohort**
Size and realistic NU enrollment; student profile: likely fields of study;
class; enrollment projections for the first three years. For an NU program,
sustainable minimum and maximum enrollment; non-NU enrollment

_____ **Courses**
Required and optional courses; course credit; pre-requisites; provide
web-links or, if extant, course syllabi (add these to the Appendix);
language of instruction; method of assessment of student work; describe
tutorials available for specialties: e.g.: music, language buddies, etc.;
letter of endorsement from the NU department and/or school in fields
where credit will be awarded, with indication whether credits will meet
major or minor requirements

_____ **Foreign language acquisition/requirements**
Pre-requisites; language of instruction (host language and/or English;
does the program offer/require on-site language instruction?); NU
language faculty support/relevance to the courses for a major or minor

_____ **Academic opportunities**
Independent research; volunteer opportunities; excursions, etc.

_____ **Experiential or service learning, internships**
Describe in full and method for student evaluation if credit is awarded

_____ **Student life on-site**
On-site support: accommodation for students with disabilities (e.g.
physical disabilities, visual or hearing impairments, learning disabilities);
ability to support LGBTQ students (e.g. resources, housing, etc.)

_____ **Cultural immersion and extra-curricular offerings**

_____ **Credit**
Semester/quarter credit, ECTS; transcripts, school of record (note if
approved by the Registrar, relevant academic unit or curriculum committee)

_____ **Housing and meals**
Describe housing options (residential college, dormitory, home-stay) and
how they are administered (host family selection, screening)

_____ **Financials: Program cost to student**
Administrative and course fees/insurance fees; personal expenses; required
/recommended vaccines or prophylactic medications grants and/or financial
aid; withdrawal refund policy

_____ **Financials: Program budget**
Funding for additional advisory staff, legal fees; in the case of NU programs,
assurances that the program has budgeted for periodic advisory staff site-
visits and, for a formal USAC review of each program every 8-10 years, by
relevant faculty and/or administrators

_____ **Health and Safety (Pastoral Care)**
Description of who is expected to provide pastoral care on-site, particularly
after hours, and, if applicable, the number of NU-accompanying faculty or
staff who will require trip leader training prior to departure

_____ **Health and Safety (Risk Profile and Mitigation)**
Local health resources (where possible, obtain referrals from HTH
Worldwide), including mental health, e.g.: campus clinic or relationship with
local provider, and, if relevant, nearest hospital; summary of risk information
relevant to the site (If relevant, links to U.S. Department of State Country

Information Sheets; International SOS Country Profile; OSAC Crime & Safety Reports; and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Travelers' Health page. Note any costs associated with required or likely recommended vaccines in the "Financials: Program costs to students" section. Highlight foreseeable risks/mitigation strategies associated with the location in terms of road transportation, crime and potential water hazards.

_____ **Miscellaneous**
Commitment to the Forum on Education Abroad Standards and the Code of Ethics; Indication that sponsors have contacted relevant administrative units on campus: Office of the Registrar; Office of the General Counsel; Office of Global Safety and Security, etc.

3)   Program Evaluations and Endorsements--*Summarized* (2 pages)

_____ **Program Evaluations and Endorsements**
Summary of statements provided by returnees (students from Northwestern and/or other sending institutions)

_____ **Academic and Administrative Certification**
Summaries of faculty letters of endorsement from appropriate faculty (e.g.: Senior faculty, Department Chair, and Director of Undergraduate Study) indicating a clear fit and departmental or school commitment to promote the program and transfer eligible credit for the major or minor. When warranted, a letter from the Dean of the School or, if relevant, the appropriate curriculum review Committee. If applicable, USAC would welcome reference letters from other institutions or some other indication of performance, rank, or reputation and the quality of the host institution or organization

_____ **Outcomes Assessment**
Describe the method of program evaluation as well as plans for financing and carrying out periodic program visits and external reviews. The program evaluation plan should encompass student learning/outcomes. (USAC expects each study abroad unit to report on their programs each fall and to update the Committee, as warranted, during the academic year of any noteworthy or material program changes.)

4)   Appendix (optional, no page limit, not encyclopedic)
May include (scanned): maps; CVs; original copies of items summarized in the proposal, such as: site visit reports; program evaluations; director's reports; letters of reference; data; program information; budget statements; program-specific agreement forms.

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