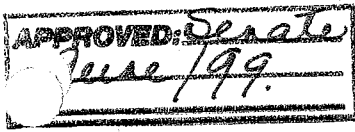


Guidelines for the Conduct of Semesters Abroad



Report of the Semester Abroad Sub-Committee February 24, 1999

Semester Abroad programs are formal University of Guelph semesters conducted overseas. The courses are taught by Guelph faculty or by on-site faculty contracted by Guelph to specifications articulated in the University of Guelph calendar and faculty policies. Students participating in the semester abroad program are accompanied by an academic coordinator. The University assumes full responsibility for the semester and takes every precaution to ensure that students enjoy a full and safe learning experience. To this end, the Senate International Committee makes the following recommendations:

1. Semester Abroad Committees

In accordance with the Guidelines for the Review of Semesters Abroad which were approved by the Senate International Committee (SIC) and received by Senate for information, all semester abroad programs must be overseen by a Semester Abroad Committee which reports to a dean or program committee. There are currently no prescribed terms for the membership of these committees nor are there mandates or procedures for the striking of these committees.

Recommendation #1:

Each fall, the dean responsible for the semester abroad program shall strike a semester abroad committee and provide the committee with an overview of its responsibilities. The dean shall be responsible for selecting the members of this committee subject to SIC approval.

Guidelines for the Membership of Semester Abroad Committees

Membership of Semester Abroad Committees should include at a minimum:

- the Committee chair, normally a former coordinator
- the immediate past coordinator of the program
- the future coordinator
- two students who have participated in the program
- a representative from the Centre for International Programs (CIP)
- a program counsellor or their designate

The committee can be expanded to include other members, as appropriate.

When considering membership, the dean should attempt to provide both for continuity and for new input and involvement. It is recommended that membership terms on a Semester Abroad Committees should be two years, renewable at the discretion of the dean. The term of the chair should also be for two years, with the possibility of renewal. Appointment to the chair shall, whenever possible, rotate among the previous coordinators of the program.

Responsibilities of Semester Abroad Committees

The Semester Abroad Committee will be charged with the selection and orientation of the academic coordinator

for the annual offering of the semester abroad program. The Committee will ensure that course and semester evaluation forms are completed by the student participants and returned to the University in a timely fashion. Semester Abroad Committees will review the coordinator's report following the completion of the semester abroad offerings to ensure that objectives are being met and problems solved. The Committee will then refer the end-of-semester report to the Senate International Committee and to the dean for information. The Committee is responsible for maintaining a record of decisions made in previous semesters and ensure that such information is made available to future committees and co-ordinators.

2. Responsibilities of the Coordinator:

The responsibilities of the on-site coordinator are extensive, beginning some time before the students depart for the semester abroad. The University has taken steps to reduce the responsibilities of the co-ordinator by assigning many of the administrative tasks to the Centre for International Programs (CIP). Upon being appointed co-ordinator one of the first tasks should be to contact CIP to discuss how best CIP can support the co-ordinator. Coordinators may have to act as academic program chair, residence manager, academic counsellor, personal counsellor, mentor, business manager, recreational and entertainment manager, and registrar in the foreign environment. Coordinators are responsible for ensuring the academic program adheres to the Learning Objectives of the University. Given the tasks included in the responsibilities of the coordinator and the intended time-line for completion, and given contractual limitations of some bargaining groups, the committee recommends that faculty coordinators be selected from among full-time and not sessional faculty.

The sub-committee recommends that the responsibilities of the Coordinator be clearly articulated to the coordinator and be referenced in the evaluation of the semester abroad offering.

Recommendation #2:

That the Semester Abroad Committee ensure that the co-ordinator is aware of the responsibilities of the position, and provided with sufficient orientation.

General Responsibilities of a Semester Abroad Co-ordinator

Administration of the Semester Abroad:

In conjunction with the Centre for International Programs, the coordinator will:

1. oversee the selection of students to the semester abroad
2. publicize the semester abroad to create student interest
3. interview potential participants

In conjunction with the dean responsible for the semester abroad, the coordinator is responsible for:

4. negotiating contracts with on-site sessional faculty
5. managing the semester abroad budget

The coordinator is also responsible for:

6. making all arrangements to ensure appropriate accommodation for students and working with CIP, ensure that food and lodging meet acceptable standards
7. providing a complete list of student participants to the Centre for International Programs

Academic

8. Ensuring that the academic semester abroad adheres to the Learning Objectives of the University
9. Preparing the Guelph course offerings
10. Ensuring the courses taught by on-site faculty support the semester abroad program objectives and Learning Objectives

11. Overseeing registration of students in the program in consultation with program counsellors
12. Supervising the delivery of courses by on-site faculty
13. Ensuring that students are assessed in accordance with the University's grading resolutions
14. Ensuring that students complete the appropriate course selection and pre-registration for the following semester

Student Mentoring

15. providing on-site student counselling, including the provision of referrals to other services, where appropriate
16. facilitating team building and encouraging positive group dynamics
17. managing crises in conjunction with the support systems available at the University of Guelph

Public Relations

18. maintaining the good reputation of the University of Guelph academic experience
19. ensuring cordial relationships between the University of Guelph and the host institution

On-Site Risk Management

20. There may be the potential for on-site risks. CIP will orient the co-ordinator as to possible risks and ensure that procedures are established for dealing with any such incidents.

3. Extent of the Coordinator's Authority

The extent of a coordinator's authority while abroad is a legal issue. In order to protect the interests of the student and coordinator students are required to provide the University and coordinator with a contact person who can be reached in case of emergency.

The Committee recommends the development of Terms of Participation which must be signed by students participating in semester abroad programs as part of the pre-departure orientation. The Terms of Participation would provide a two-way contract stating the conditions of continued participation by students and the expectations of the coordinator and University in the administration of the program.

Recommendation #3:

That CIP draft a Terms of Participation agreement for approval by the Senate International Committee, and that students be required to sign the Terms prior to participating in the semester abroad.

Recommendation #4:

That the Terms of Participation provide the co-ordinator with authority to act, following due process, in the event of a student's violation of the terms.

The following process is recommended for coordinators to adhere to when the student's well-being, or the well-being of other student participants, and continuation in the program are being questioned. In all cases, it is the responsibility of the coordinator to carefully document the circumstances leading to the action.

Violation of the Terms of Participation:

1. When the student is exhibiting disruptive, abusive or "at risk" behaviour which is in violation of the Terms of Participation, it is the responsibility of the coordinator to notify the student that the behaviour must be stopped
2. If the behaviour continues, the coordinator will consult with the Associate Vice-President Academic regarding a recommendation for the removal of the student from the program.

Medical or Psychological Emergencies:

1. If, in the opinion of the coordinator, a student is involved in a medical or psychological emergency which puts the student or other students in danger, the coordinator will contact the student's emergency contact to determine the next course of action
2. If the recommendation is to remove the student from the semester abroad program, the final decision must be made in consultation with the Associate Vice President Academic.

A process needs to be established to allow students to appeal such an occurrence.

4. Emergency Response:

It is recommended that SIC develop an emergency response protocol which defines the circumstances under students would be evacuated from a semester abroad due to political unrest, revolutions and natural disasters. In cases where the semester abroad is not proceeding as planned, the Committee recommends that the dean or the AVPA responsible for the program be authorized to decide the appropriate action.

5. Selection of Faculty

On-site faculty hired by the University are required to abide by the University of Guelph's academic policies and the broader University policies, including academic sexual harassment policies, grading resolutions and policies on the accommodation of students with disabilities.

Recommendation #5

That on-site faculty be made acquainted with pertinent academic policies of the University.

6. Policy on Release Time

There are differing practices in departments on the availability of release time for co-ordinators. This matter should be discussed with the Associate Vice-President Academic.

7. Policy on the Assessment of the Program by Students

Study Abroad Programs need to be reviewed on an annual basis, both as a mechanism for making improvements in subsequent years, and to aid with SIC's three year reviews to determine funding. In addition, the courses offered on these semesters are University of Guelph courses and, therefore, as per University policy, students must be provided with an opportunity to assess the course and the instructor. This evaluation of teaching forms part of the information used in the evaluation of the faculty member's contribution in the area of teaching for tenure and promotion purposes.. Although all University of Guelph courses must be assessed, there is no mechanism currently in place which protects the interest of both the students and the coordinator for the assessment of courses while abroad. Presently, students complete their end-of-semester course reviews while on-site, leaving the evaluations to be returned to the University by the academic coordinator.

Recommendation #6:

That the Semester Abroad Committee be responsible for ensuring that course and semester evaluations are completed and returned to the University in the semester immediately following the semester abroad and that the evaluations of the faculty are forwarded to the appropriate department for T&P purposes.

This academic assessment of the program and its courses will complement the assessment of the program conducted by the Centre for International Programs.

8. Policy on the Selection of Students

Most semester abroad programs select student participants on the basis of a generic application and statement of intent, a minimum academic standing (normally 70%), and where applicable, an interview.

Recommendation #7

That the Centre for International Programs develop a standard template for student applications. The selection of student participants would remain the purview of the coordinator. This application form would state the normal requirements for admission to a semester abroad program and would also inform students what recourse would occur if, subsequent to their selection to the program, they were placed on probationary status or required to withdraw from the University.