

GUIDELINES FOR THE REVIEW OF SEMESTERS ABROAD

10 April 1997

This document is intended for use in the review and ranking of proposals to fund Semester Abroad programs. As the University of Guelph is able to fund only a limited number of Semesters Abroad using MET dollars, it is expected that the number of proposals, from new and established programs, will exceed the funds available. At the same time, it is important that the limited funding not stifle innovative proposals. Therefore, the University must review proposals for new Semesters Abroad in concert with established proposals to ensure that the most appropriate programs are funded. These criteria will be applied to new proposals seeking funding as well to previously mounted programs seeking continued funding. The Associate Vice-President, Academic has the final decision on the funding for these programs.

Semesters Abroad are an integral component of the University of Guelph's Study Abroad programs. In a Semester Abroad program University of Guelph courses are taught in the host country, and the students are accompanied overseas by a academic coordinator. Semesters Abroad are an important component of Guelph's international offerings because they meet the identified needs of certain cohorts of students, and because they fulfil the academic needs of degree programs in the University.

As curricular programs, Semesters Abroad require Senate approval of their academic content. This places Semester Abroad proposals under closer scrutiny than is the case with other Study Abroad options, such as Exchange Programs. Exchange Programs involve University to University contracts between the University of Guelph and accredited institutions in the host country. Students take courses offered at the host institution and are not accompanied by a faculty member (although a coordinator is assigned at each institution to deal with problems).

Semester Abroad proposals must therefore meet two levels of approval. Once Senate has approved the academic content of the program, the Semester Abroad proposal must then be ranked against other proposals for funding in a given budget cycle.

Semesters Abroad are more costly to the institution than are Exchange Programs. For that reason, proposals for Semesters Abroad must clearly articulate pedagogical and curricular objectives, and demonstrate why they cannot be met through other Study Abroad options. For their part, Program Committees may find Exchange Program proposals more feasible to propose, easier to initiate and less costly to implement.

CRITERIA FOR THE RANKING OF SEMESTER ABROAD PROGRAMS

Academic Rationale

Semester Abroad Programs must:

- be in keeping with the mission of the University
- include specified goals that support the objectives of the program
- have the support of at least one program committee
- include a statement from the program committees involved regarding the academic objectives and curriculum of the Semester Abroad
- must explain why other Study Abroad options cannot fulfil the academic objectives.
- incorporate the Learning Objectives
- illustrate how the location of the program contributes to its academic goals
- ensure that the academic and social environment provides an opportunity for Guelph students to have a high level of contact with the host culture and country and people
- be evaluated on a regular basis to ensure the academic goals are being achieved
- offer opportunities for reflective practise
- include a strategy for ensuring that students have the necessary basic language training where necessary.

Administration:

Semester Abroad programs require ongoing and active oversight at the College or Program level.

Semester Abroad programs must:

- be overseen by a Semester Abroad Committee reporting to a Dean or Program Committee
- include a mechanism for selection and training/orientation of faculty coordinators
- include a mechanism for selection of the committee membership and chair
- include student input
- consider the feasibility of biennial or triennial offerings, and consider if and how local arrangements in the host country (including residence and local instructors) can be readily reactivated.

Accessibility

Semesters Abroad Programs should:

- be designed to be compatible with as many program requirements as possible so that students from across various programs and disciplines would be able to participate without severely restricting their ability to graduate in a timely fashion
- provide evidence of adequate student demand for the program.

Collaboration

Semester Abroad Programs should be designed to enhance collaborative opportunities. To this end:

- the involvement of more than one college of the university in the design and acceptance of the program is strongly encouraged

- where possible, efforts should be made to collaborate with other universities
- the program should provide opportunities for teaching or research enhancement for participating faculty.

Location

Semester Abroad Programs must fully justify the choice of location. Because the number of Semesters Abroad will be restricted by limited funds, the University must select its locations strategically. It is to be expected that the University will keep in mind the desire for a reasonable spread of offerings across geographic locations and between locations traditionally categorized as developed and less developed countries.

Semester Abroad proposals should

- establish a linkage with a university or appropriately recognized post-secondary institution in the host country;
- consider means of dealing with language or cultural differences
- explain how the program relates to any other University of Guelph programs in the host country.

Duty of Care

All Semester Abroad Programs must be designed to:

- demonstrably minimize risks to students if political, cultural or economic conditions impact on student safety
- ensure that food and lodgings meet the minimal acceptable Canadian equivalent
- include an orientation program for students prior to their departure, and where necessary, a debriefing session upon their return.

Cost to the Student and to the University

The Semester Abroad Program should be designed to minimize costs to both the student and the university. All proposals for Semesters Abroad must, therefore demonstrate that the program has been designed to be as cost effective as possible, while still maintaining academic quality. Ways to reduce costs include:

- collaboration with other universities in Canada
- collaboration with institutions in the host country
- collaboration with cultural organizations in either Canada or the host country
- offering the program on a flexible basis which complements the University's other Semester Abroad Programs (e.g., alternate years)
- acquiring financial support from individuals or corporate donors
- Regular reviews to determine whether less costly options (such as Exchange Programs) might meet the academic objectives of the program.