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USA OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION *ACADEMIC ADVISING FOR STUDY ABROAD*

ACADEMIC ADVISING FOR STUDY ABROAD: Some Basics For Faculty and Staff

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Faculty are encouraged to foster and assist students who may be interested in studying, interning, service learning, doing research or doing clinical rotations abroad. The following talking points are recommended for such conversations:

First, it is recognized that advisors are responsible:

- To the students and individuals they serve
- To the college and department in which they work
- To their professional role as advisors
- For involving others, as appropriate, in the advising process

For the purposes of USA study abroad, advisors should consider the following:

A. USA Sponsored student activities abroad which are supported through the Office of International Education come under two general rubrics:

- a. Academic Credit: Study abroad, defined in its most global terms: traditional study, research experiences, service learning and community service projects, internships, clinical rotations/preceptorships, work/volunteering abroad, etc. for USA academic credit.
- b. Non-Academic credit sponsored, supported, fostered by a USA unit or faculty/staff: A USA sponsored activity abroad that is not for credit can include conference attendance, group experience program such as a music or dramatic arts performance, recreation program, etc.

B. When advising a student consider

- a. Asking how the student is doing in the major, minor, overall?
- b. Asking how classes are going (Problems? Developing interests?).
- c. Checking the status of student's overall progress (check transcript).
- d. Asking about the proposed program activities/courses 1) connected with a major? Minor? Electives? 2) Courses that fulfill graduation requirements? 3) How does the program fit other interests (personal, family, career, etc)?
- e. Asking if the student has been through advising in the USA Office of International Education?
- f. Emailing, calling OIE to update them and to find out their advice.

Some added considerations to cover, as necessary:



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- Provide advisees with current USA academic information about procedures, policies and requirements as well as alternatives, limitations, and possible outcomes of academic choices.
- Assist students in selecting an appropriate program for their academic and individual needs. Advisors are welcome to discuss program questions directly with the host program(s) and with the USA Office of International Education.
- Become well acquainted with each advisee's specific (major/minor) as well as overall academic and educational needs. For USA study abroad does the advisee have an overall GPA of 2.5 or higher? First semester freshmen should wait until they have a full semester on the USA campus to determine the best timing for their experience. Transfer students may have an academic record for a previous university however it is also advisable to have a full semester in place on the USA campus before going abroad. For students with a GPA of 2.0 to 2.5 here are some added considerations:
 1. What are the current semester expectations for the student's GPA? Have student bring notices from current instructors on what the grade appears to be for the given semester. Does it appear as if the student will be maintaining or positively improving on his/her GPA. There should be no decline in GPA indicated if the student wishes to study abroad in the following term. AND
 2. What are the factors that have led to the GPA being between 2.0 and 2.5? Are these onetime events and has the student maintained a stable GPA since that event or has the student consistently struggled each semester? Are these factors academic or non academic? Is the student under the misperception that by going abroad the situation will get better?
 3. What does the student know about the instructional methods in the host country? Is the student prepared to take courses in a foreign language or in a completely different instructional style? How well will this student adapt to an unstructured instructional model where the student is expected to take full responsibility for active learning? Will this student do well in courses that may rely strictly on one exam at the end of the term or one assignment to be turned in at the end of the program?
 4. What does the student know about the housing, living conditions, etc.? Does the student demonstrate an ability to work independently and adapt to change? Has the student carefully considered the "experience" factors such as local transportation, excursions, security, communications, etc.
 5. Does the student have any special accommodation needs? Has the student discussed this with the USA Office of Special Student Services? Has this information been provided to the USA Office of International Education? Has the student clearly discussed this information with the host program? What are the student's expectations? Students with special needs should consider reviewing information provided by Mobility International – www.miusa.org . Under no condition should students be encouraged to delay informing the host program of any needs. Expectations about ability to support student needs abroad should not be based on US standards, there are significant barriers,



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challenges, etc. that may exist in getting to the host site, living/studying at the host site, and in the host culture.

6. What are the chances that this student will succeed overall and be able to return to successfully graduate from USA? Do no harm is a good principle to work from. Although individual students may have misperceptions about the potential positive effects of going abroad these should be mitigated and addressed up front.
- Direct advisees to available campus resources according to their individual needs – For USA International Education – the Office of International Education, 320 AHE, 460-7053.
 - Study, discuss, and verify advisee’s academic plans and documentation for study abroad. This may take the following form:
 - Early on a written message to the Office of International Education explaining the conditions under which academic credit from abroad will be considered. This is most often done in the early planning stages when the specific courses are still be chosen and/or the program abroad has not posted all its course listings.
 - Ultimately the USA registrar will need a USA Transient Credit Approval form completed. This form will be signed by the advisor and appropriate administrative units of the college and Office of International Education.
 - Sign the academic approval documentation and send to the USA Office of International Education. USA OIE is the designated responsible office for signing/approving all host program documentation ultimately approving the activity as a USA reviewed and approved program. This approval includes the following documentation:
 - Academic course approvals
 - Dean of Students – non-academic standing review
 - Special Student Services – special needs/accommodations requirements
 - USA Study Abroad documentation including proof of health insurance, liability releases, student responsibility documentation, emergency contact information, copies of host program applications, etc.
 - Visa application and review as applicable
 - Host program emergency contacts
 - Program specific reviews and other as appropriate for the specific proposed activities
 - Pre-departure orientation activities
 - Academic record processing: Assist OIE in an effort to expedite the evaluation of their transfer credits, as necessary upon the conclusion of the student’s program. Students may also request advising while abroad especially when course enrollments change or when struggling in a given class or activity. Note that upon



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return transcript process will be initiated by the Office of International Education. Foreign transcripts often come weeks or even months after the completion of the program. Students who are graduating are advised to make sure all host contacts are notified of their need for an expedited transcript or course documentation. Students are all advised to bring back copies of the course materials, assignments, graded papers, etc. in case such are needed as part of the advising process. When an ORIGINAL transcript is received OIE immediately creates a transmittal document by matching the preapproved coursework with courses taken, converts the grade and credit hours to US equivalents and identifies any courses that may not have been pre-approved. A final review document is sent to the appropriate academic units for review, assessment and signature. The final original document and equivalency document is then sent to the registrar for posting to the student's transcript. The timeline for this from program completion to final posting can be 1 to 6 months depending on the chosen host program (average 3 months).

- Become familiar with the dynamics of studying in a different educational environment and culture, as well as of preparing for the overall "abroad" experience, and other challenges that students may experience during their experience abroad.

Some resources to consider:

What's up with Culture? University of the Pacific Online Course <http://www2.pacific.edu/sis/culture/>

"This material was developed to support and enhance a student's ability to make successful cultural adjustments both before going overseas and upon returning home from studying abroad. It was produced primarily for traditional-aged, undergraduate US-American university students. Those preparing to participate in a study abroad program will find the first seven sections useful while those who are about to, or have, returned home from an international program can refer to the final four sections. The focus is generally on the concept of culture and how it impacts one's ability to understand and function in a new and unfamiliar environment. It concentrates on the skills, attitudes, and behaviors which all study abroad students, regardless of their specific destination, will find useful."

Students Abroad. US Department of State <http://studentsabroad.state.gov/>

"When traveling abroad, you need more than just maps and flip flops. That's where we come in. We're here to make sure you...."

Study Abroad Student Handbook. How to get there and back. The Center for Global Education
<http://www.studentsabroad.com/>

"This Handbook includes information, checklists, questions, and resources to help you review the type of study abroad program you will choose/have chosen, available support services, and ways for you to be prepared to study abroad."



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SAFETI Adaptation of Peace Corps Resources Safety Abroad First - Educational Travel Information
<http://www.gloaled.us/peacecorps/index.html>

“The number of students participating in study abroad programs has increased significantly over the past ten years. At the same time, a number of high profile examples of student injury and death on study abroad have brought to the forefront the challenges of international study and travel. In an effort to assist institutions in supporting health and safety in study abroad, SAFETI has adapted the Peace Corps literature for college and university study abroad programs and made it available on this web site.”

USA Gateway page to all things international: www.usouthal.edu/international

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