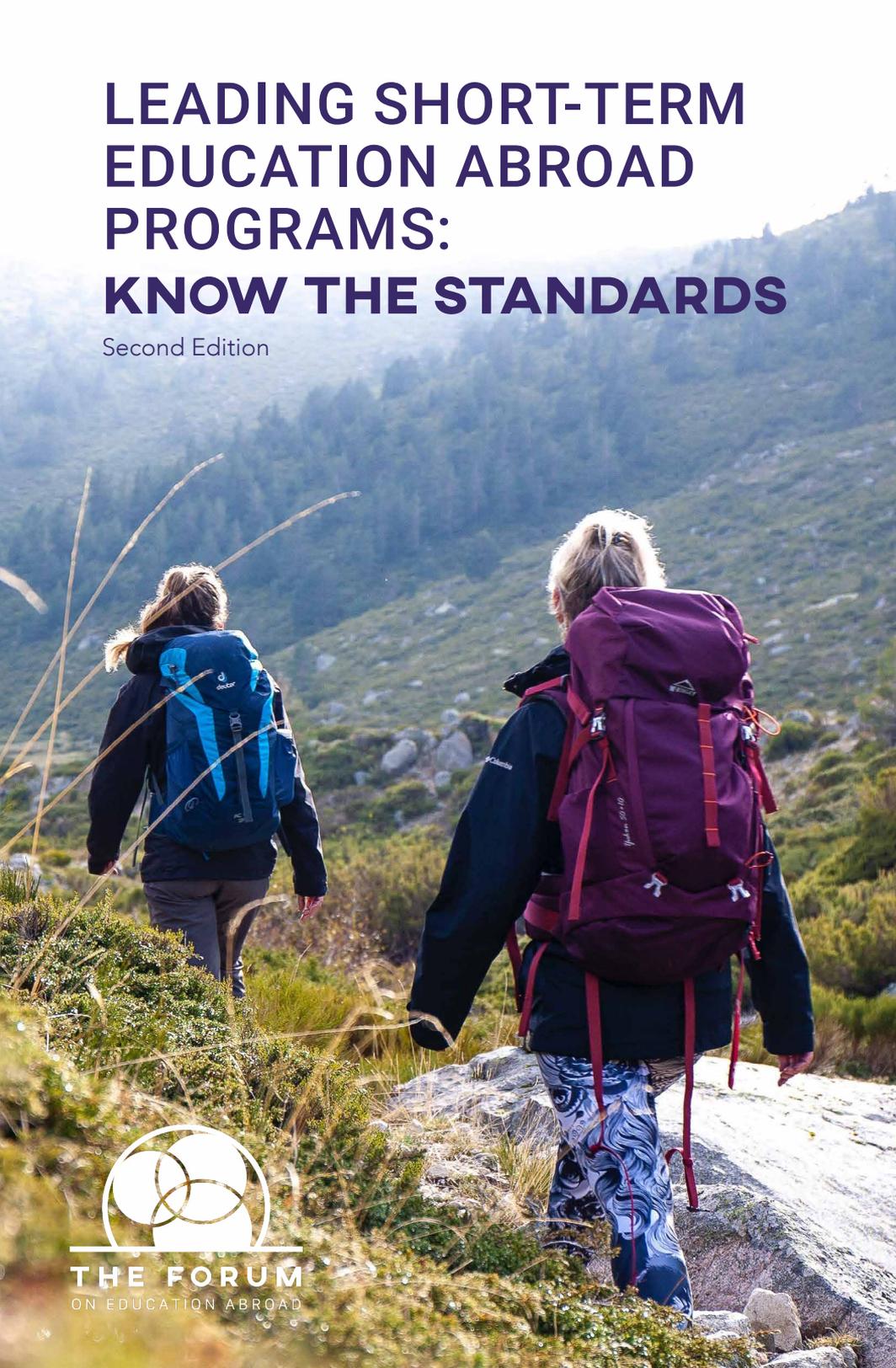# LEADING SHORT-TERM EDUCATION ABROAD PROGRAMS:
KNOW THE STANDARDS

Second Edition

THE FORUM
ON EDUCATION ABROAD

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Second Edition

Educating students abroad may be one of the most impactful and gratifying experiences of your career, if done effectively. This guide for leaders of short-term programs (8 weeks or less) outlines key questions that you will need to address before you lead a program abroad.

There is no single recipe to guide leading a short-term program. Rather, it is a journey that invites you to embrace critically reflective practice in your education abroad work. However, this document provides a framework to guide conversations you need to have with all those involved to increase the likelihood that your program:

- Is educationally meaningful and results in significant learning,

- Is designed with the full range of learners in mind,

- Provides appropriate oversight for the health, safety, and well-being of learners (including you as the program leader),

- Advances institutional goals as well as your own professional goals, and

- Avoids negative impacts to local communities, economies, and the environment.

WHO ARE PROGRAM LEADERS?

Program leaders may be faculty or instructors of all ranks, education abroad professionals, student affairs professionals, or other college/university professionals appointed to lead an education abroad program. They typically have responsibilities pre-departure, on-site, and upon return. Program leaders hold many roles over the course of a program such as instructional designers, program planners, administrators, mentors, and learners. In some cases, you may hold multiple roles simultaneously. Each of these roles draws on varying strengths and assets that program leaders may bring to their work on short-term programs. At the same time, these roles also provide opportunities to challenge and stretch program leaders.

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WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES?

In education abroad, instructional design, curriculum planning, assessment, and program administration are woven together in ways you might not have previously experienced. As a program leader, it is important to know who is responsible for every aspect of your program and how to work with those responsible parties to create an impactful experience for all.

Depending on your institution's approach to education abroad, you may have:

HIGH RESPONSIBILITY

The program leader is responsible for all aspects of the program, from ideation through assessment. This could include partnership development, instructional design, curriculum development, as well as responsibility for student affairs and students' health, safety, and wellbeing.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

The program leader collaborates with offices across the institution, and in some cases external partners such as community-based organizations or international education organizations, which coordinate some operational aspects of the program.

LIMITED RESPONSIBILITY

The program leader responsible for curriculum and instruction only; everything else is entrusted primarily to an international education organization (independent program provider).

MOVING FROM MY COURSE TO OUR PROGRAM:
LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS IN EDUCATION ABROAD

A distinguishing feature of education abroad as compared to traditional forms of teaching and learning is that the design and facilitation of these learning opportunities is not an individual practice; rather, leading a program abroad involves a variety of cooperative and collaborative relationships to be safe, effective, and educationally meaningful.

In education abroad, faculty, staff, students, international education organizations, and local communities are all partners in learning. Similarly, program leaders, like students, staff, and community colleagues, are simultaneously learners and knowers. Each bring relevant knowledge and skill to developing powerful learning opportunities in short-term programs. Tapping into this collective know-how invites each of us to consider the values and goals within our teaching philosophies and to enter our work with a sense of humility, flexibility, and curiosity.

Developing a sense of who your potential partners are in order to develop, administer, and improve these learning opportunities is vital not only to student outcomes. Developing relationships with others as partners in learning can also aid in attending to concerns of well-being, equity, workload, and mutual benefit that impact you as the program leader, as well as others (e.g. education abroad staff, on-site faculty and administrators, host families, etc.).

FINDING PARTNERS:
LOOKING BEYOND THE USUAL SUSPECTS

The education abroad office at your institution is available as a resource to support you. They have expertise in all aspects of program planning, risk management, student recruitment, and implementation. In addition, your institution may have additional auxiliary sources of support to aid with specific dimensions of your program as it evolves. These include but aren't limited to:

- your local teaching and learning center (ex., strengthen instructional design and curriculum design, learning assessment, online learning),

- the experiential learning or high impact practices or civic engagement office (ex., design and assessment of experiential learning, local partnership development; local risk and liability; evaluation, funding),

- the diversity, equity and inclusion office (ex., working with students from diverse backgrounds, inclusive practices, adaptive services),

- and the office of sustainability.

It may be that the education abroad office can point you to specific contacts in these offices so make sure to ask.

STANDARDS OF GOOD PRACTICE:

WHAT ARE THEY AND HOW CAN THEY HELP ME?

[Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad](#) are established by The Forum on Education Abroad, recognized by the U.S. Department of Justice and Federal Trade Commission as the Standards Development Organization (SDO) for the field. They are higher education's benchmark for education abroad program excellence and accountability.

The *Standards* provide a framework to make visible specific ways that leading a program abroad is different than teaching a course. The *Standards* help to:

- Protect you from liability

- Be intentional in teaching and planning, by enriching the classroom experience through program design

- Understand the connections between instructional design and program logistics

- Enhance the quality of education abroad as a high-impact practice

- Advocate for resources and support

Looking for Inspiration?

The Forum offers course and program profiles shared by faculty and education abroad professionals.

*www.forumea.org/resources/curriculum

STUDENTS

PROGRAM ABROAD

STUDENT LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK

After

During

Before

Mission & Goals

Collaboration & Transparency

Ethics

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

Financial & Human Resources

Policies, Procedures & Guidelines
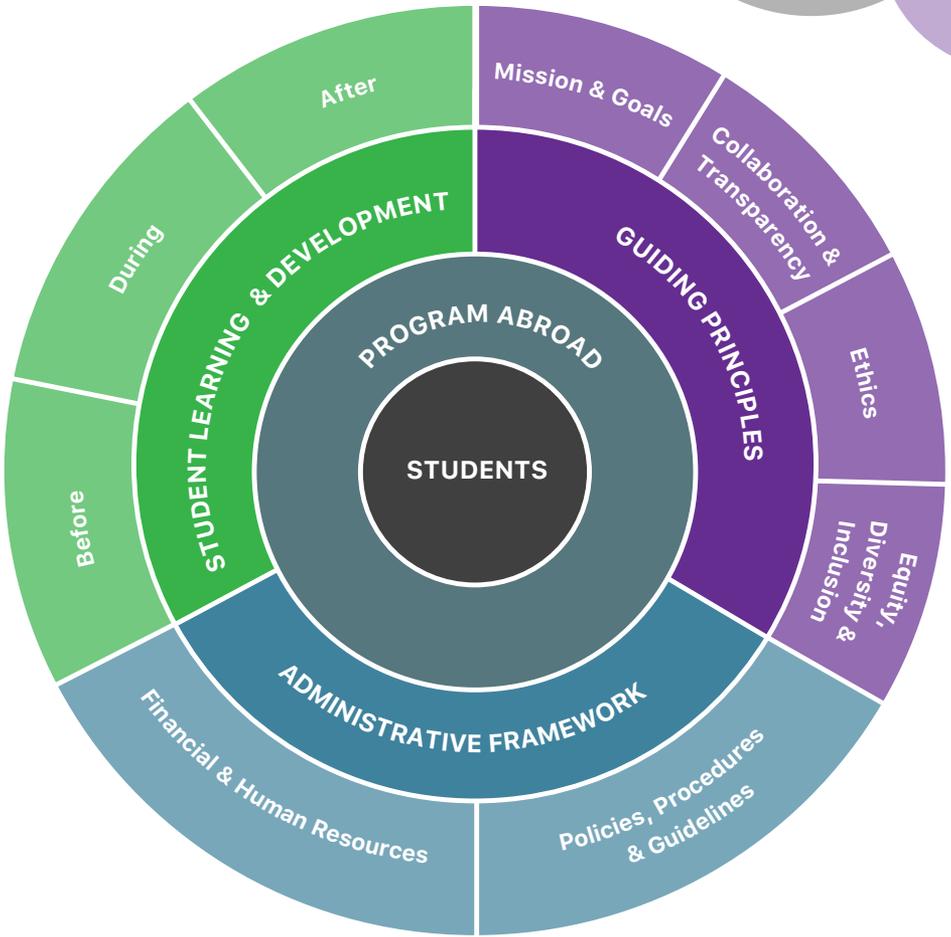
The *Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad* are available at www.forumea.org.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

Addressing the questions below, informed by the *Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad*, is the way to begin, whether this is the first time you are leading a program or the tenth.

PROGRAM CONCEPTUALIZATION AND PROPOSAL

- How does this program align with my professional, disciplinary and/or institutional goals?

- What is the program proposal process?

- Who can I collaborate with at my institution and in the community to develop this program?

- What are the learning goals of my program?

- How will my program leverage the unique learning opportunities of the destination?

- How will I support students' academic and personal growth, intercultural development, civic and global learning, and professional skill development?

- How will I prompt students to reflect on their learning in and outside of the structured experience?

- How will I monitor, assess and evaluate student learning in this program?

- How will I support the continuity of student learning pre-departure, on-site, and post-program?

- How familiar am I with the cultural values, norms, and language of the host community and the implications of these for facilitating the program?

- How will my program respect the values and norms of the host community and avoid imposing an undue burden on its resources?

- How will my program support students' understanding of the social, historical, political, economic, linguistic, cultural, and environmental contexts of the destination, and the impact of their presence on the local communities?

- What instructional frameworks do I plan to draw on in my design or facilitation of the program?

- How does the curriculum and co-curriculum include diverse perspectives and practice inclusive pedagogy?

- Will local infrastructure support a safe and effective program (transportation, housing, health care)?

- What are the risks associated with this destination for students, program leaders, and community members? Who determines whether these risks are acceptable?

- What requirements do students need to meet to participate?

- What requirements do others (staff, community members, etc.) need to meet to participate?

- How will students interact with people of different backgrounds?

PLANNING AND BUDGETING

- Who creates and approves the budget?

- How will the program be funded? How will low enrollment affect the program?

- What does the program fee include (credits, flights, meals, excursions, transportation, visas)?

- What financial aid or scholarships might be available to students?

- Is the program designed to be accessible to students with disabilities?

- How will I pay for necessary goods and services while abroad?

- Who arranges appropriate insurance for my program? What is covered by program insurance, and how is it accessed?

- Is my program sufficiently staffed to achieve program and learning goals and respond to emergencies?

- Will I need to hire local experts and/or service providers? How will they be vetted?

- Have I been trained on emergency plans and protocols, financial policies, student conduct and disciplinary policies?

- What are my institution's policies related to sexual harassment, assault, and bias incidents? Am I aware of current federal guidelines and obligations in reporting incidents of sex-based harassment or discrimination?

- What is my institution's policy regarding accompanying partners, dependents, and family?

Best Practice Resources

Find samples of best practices supporting all areas of program development and administration:

*www.forumea.org/standards

STUDENT ADVISING, RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

- Are recruitment and selection equitable, inclusive, ethical, transparent, and accessible?

- What are the policies for academic eligibility, conduct, and health concerns?

- Who makes admissions decisions?

- Who communicates policies related to learning assessment and evaluation, awarding of credit, grade appeals, research ethics, and academic integrity to students?

- Are participant costs communicated clearly?

- How will you recruit and advise students from all segments of the student population, including those that are historically underserved?

- How are students informed of the significance of identities (including but not limited to race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, religion, ability, and socioeconomic status) and how their identities might impact their experience in the program location?

STUDENT PREPARATION AND PRE-DEPARTURE ORIENTATION

- Are the program goals clearly articulated to students? How will I prepare students to achieve those goals?

- Are the learning goals and objectives clearly articulated? How will I prepare students to achieve these objectives?

- How are students asked to familiarize themselves with social, historical, political, economic, linguistic, cultural and environmental context of their destination?

- How will I prepare students and myself to engage in culturally relevant, ethical, and reciprocally beneficial activities in the local context? Is there a framework I plan to use or adapt to aid learning and ethical practice in the local context?

- How will I sensitize students to the impact of their presence on the communities and environments they visit?

- How will I communicate expectations, policies, and potential sanctions related to housing and independent travel, drug and alcohol use, culturally-appropriate behavior, and sexual misconduct?

- Who prepares students to anticipate health or safety risks, and familiarizes them with:

  - Emergency plans and protocols, including crisis communication;
  - Phone numbers for local ambulance, fire, police, U.S. Consulate or Embassy;
  - Required travel documentation (passports, visas, immunization records, prescriptions);
  - Health preparations (international health insurance, immunizations, medications, voluntary disclosure of pre-existing conditions);
  - Healthcare options on-site?

- Who will register participants, including yourself, with the U.S. Department of State Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) and other risk monitoring services?

Pre-Departure Resources

www.state.gov/travel

www.cdc.gov/travel

www.globaled.us/safeti

www.asirt.org

www.saraswish.org

www.firesafetyfoundation.org

See your study abroad office for more resources.

DURING THE PROGRAM

- What are my role(s) on-site?

- Who provides on-site orientation?

- How do I support participants to interact in a respectful, ethical, mindful, and sustainable way?

- How do I address discrimination abroad, both in the local community and among participants?

- What opportunities are available to students that encourage responsible use of non-scheduled time?

- Have I communicated to students the risks specific to our location?

- Have I reviewed the emergency communication plan with students?

- Whom do I contact in the event of a hospitalization, death, mental health crisis, disappearance, sexual assault?

- What emergency protocols are in place for this program in situations of civil unrest, acts of terrorism, and natural disasters?

- What is the contingency planning process for scheduled activities and transportation?

- How will I support student adjustment and moderate group dynamics? How often do I check in with my students to ensure that I am aware of issues?

Common Risks

Swimming in unguarded areas
Traveling in unlicensed cabs
Riding motorbikes or scooters
Food and water safety
Lack of awareness of surroundings
Petty crime
High-crime areas and trouble spots
Hiking and adventure activities

STUDENT RETURN AND TRANSITION

- What kinds of re-entry programming and support are offered?

- What opportunities are there for students to reflect on and share their experiences?

- Who assists students in applying their education abroad experience to their academic, professional, and personal progress?

- How will I share opportunities for additional culturally relevant, ethical global engagement activities?

- How is the program evaluated to assess the extent to which it is achieving its mission, goals, objectives, and outcomes? How are the results used to improve the program?

- How is the program budget reconciled?

- Can the experience be used to strengthen my tenure or promotion dossier by demonstrating contributions to institutional or departmental goals?

WAYS THE FORUM CAN SUPPORT YOU

In addition to your campus partners, The Forum on Education Abroad is also available as a resource to support your program.

Take advantage of these opportunities to strengthen your programs and your peace of mind:

- Attend a Forum event to network, to access additional resources on teaching, learning and program administration.

- Consider completing one of our certification or badge programs to level up your skills.

- Subscribe to *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, an open-access, peer reviewed journal, to stay on top of the latest research in education abroad and global learning.

- Join the community of practitioner-scholars in education abroad. Present on your work at an upcoming Forum conference.

*If your institution is a Forum member, you have access to these and other resources.
Visit www.forumea.org/access