Study Tour Proposal Policy

Office of Study Abroad
**Getting Started: What’s Involved?**

Faculty-led study tours are a tradition at Bridgewater State University and are supported by the Office of Study Abroad (OSA) and the Division of External Affairs. Over time, several academic departments have offered credit-bearing study tours, and in a given year more than half of all study abroad participants are enrolled in a study tour. These programs provide a variety of benefits for students: an overseas program directly linked to their course work at BSU; the security of traveling with known and respected faculty members; and a shorter program that fits into students’ budgets and academic plans.

Many students who participate in study tours have never left the U.S. and probably would not during their time at BSU if not for these programs. OSA often find that students who first experience international travel on a study tour return to our office to pursue other opportunities abroad.

The first step towards coordinating a program is to become familiar with the information provided here and make an appointment with the Office of Study Abroad to discuss the proposed program. When this is done in a timely manner, it allows OSA staff to provide valuable feedback in the planning stages.

Before going further, faculty should consider the following:

**Is the position of Faculty Leader one that you will be comfortable filling?**

Faculty Leaders (FLs) must have:

- Full-time BSU faculty status
- Firsthand experience in the country/ies involved OR plan to work with a customized program provider and have appropriate knowledge of the country/ies involved to achieve the goals of the program and ensure the health and safety of participants.
- Academic expertise in the content areas covered by the courses for which credit will be awarded.
- Organizational and planning skills.
- Ability to recruit and promote the program—in coordination with OSA.
- Leadership qualities and willingness to take charge in any situation where students need to be directed rather than consulted.
- Appreciation for the increased contact with students that is inevitable in an overseas setting.

Running a study tour is a full-time commitment for the duration of the program, including predeparture meetings and follow up upon return. It is very different from, and more demanding than, teaching on campus. Consequently, in selecting faculty, we look for applicants with the variety of talents and skills necessary to cope with the diverse responsibilities the program demands. Faculty Leaders are also expected to set a good example for participants and are required to follow the policies, procedures, and code of conduct of Bridgewater State University, host institution policy, U.S. law and host country law. In essence, you are responsible 100% of the time for all student participants.
A Faculty Leader will wear many different hats as you plan, facilitate, and return from a study tour. Preparation involves a combination of paperwork, legwork, and teamwork. While abroad, FLs are instructors, logistical coordinators, and at times, counselors (both academic and personal). FLs will serve as the primary contact between BSU and any vendors while abroad (hotels, tour guide operators, etc.). Upon return from a study tour, FLs will be required to submit a program summary report to OSA, submit final grades to the Registrar’s Office, and hold post-travel wrap up with the student participants.

## Developing a Study Tour

OSA and FLs share four main areas of concern for the development of new study tours:

**Safety and Security:** We consider the safety and security of our students and Faculty Leaders while overseas to be of primary importance in developing and administering study tours. Therefore, OSA does not support study tours in areas of the world listed on the State Department travel warning list. Any requested exceptions to this policy must be submitted in writing to the Office of Study Abroad along with a completed study tour proposal. The FL must feel comfortable and confident that they can ensure the safety and security of all students in the study tour location.

**Academic Integrity:** BSU courses delivered overseas must adhere to the same high standards of development, content, departmental approval and delivery as courses taught on campus. Syllabi for courses offered as part of the program are submitted as part of the study tour proposal. Included should be any information regarding CORE requirements that can be fulfilled through this course. The academic experience of student participants is the primary purpose of these programs; therefore faculty research only occurs in programs where students participate in, and contribute to, the research project.

**Fiscal and Budgetary Responsibility:** Most BSU students face considerable financial pressures in carrying out their studies and OSA recognizes that study abroad may create additional financial burdens. OSA works to control the costs for all overseas programs and maintains strong relationships with the Office of Financial Aid as well as other BSU offices that assist students in meeting their study abroad goals. All study tours need to provide the highest quality program at the most conservative cost. Program budgets are developed in cooperation with OSA, the Division of External Affairs, and the Division of Administration and Finance, and funds expended for the tours are carefully monitored and accounted for at all stages of program development and implementation.

**Participants:** OSA seeks to increase the diversity of students studying overseas to the point that it reflects the diversity of the student body on campus. This includes underrepresented groups of students and under-represented departments or colleges. Study tours provide an option for students in certain majors, with limited time or resources, or who feel most comfortable traveling with a BSU faculty member. Upon approval from OSA, the Faculty Leaders are expected to collaborate in the recruitment of students by holding information sessions, attending the Study Abroad Fair, and responding to student
inquiries. Study tours can also attract participants from outside the BSU community, and can help a program reach its minimum requirement of participants.

**Preferred characteristics for all programs:**

- The Faculty Leader has identified a topic of relevance, an adequate pool of students on which to draw, and an appropriate location for the program. The program seeks to offer a new opportunity to BSU students, rather than duplicating previously developed study abroad programs. As such, OSA will strive to avoid study tour duplications of location or field of study during the same time period.
- The program has been planned with a balance of fiscal responsibility, logistics, and academic content, to maximize both the opportunity for student learning and the opportunity for participation by BSU students who rely on financial aid to fund their studies.
- The course syllabus clearly incorporates academic content relating to the host country, culture, economy, and/or history in order to justify offering the program overseas.
- The program provides substantive orientation programs, including predeparture and in-country components, to prepare students for living and studying abroad.
- Field trips, site visits, and other cultural activities are integrated into the course material to provide an in-depth view of the host country in order to enhance the classroom experience.
- If multiple locations are visited, the program itinerary neither exhausts the participants or Faculty Leader, nor inflates the cost of the program unnecessarily, and provides an in-depth experience in each location.

**Initial Planning: Academics and Logistics**

**Academics:** Department chairs and deans are responsible for reviewing the program proposal, prior to submission to OSA, to ensure that it meets the academic standards of the department and college. Approval of the program proposal indicates support from the department and college for the program. Study tours are offered as 3-credit courses, and can include guest lectures and experiential learning activities. Study tours can be offered for both undergraduate and graduate credit.

**Accommodations and Meals:** Study tour accommodations can include hotels, dormitories or homestays, and are based on double-occupancy. A single room will be provided for the FL. The type of housing provided for each program depends in large part on cost, practicality, and availability. BSU has many international partners which may be able to provide housing, which often proves to be more economical. Faculty members are encouraged to utilize international partnerships when possible.

Past study tours have ranged from all meals included to virtually no meals provided in the program cost. Study tours are not required to provide meals, but OSA encourages FLs to include a few group meals in the program itinerary; a welcome and farewell dinner is strongly recommended by OSA. If the majority
of meals are not included in the program, FLs should include information regarding food options and estimated costs in the study tour proposal.

*Site visits:* Incorporating cultural site visits is an integral part of study tours and should be included in the program proposal, including costs. The site visited should be relevant to the study tour course content and should be realistic in terms of time and cost.

**Submitting a Study Tour Proposal**

A completed proposal consists of four parts:

- International Study Tour Course Proposal Form, endorsed by the Department Chair and College Dean, which should include a program overview, academic information, and program budget
- Detailed program itinerary
- Syllabus for each proposed course to be taught abroad
- Course number(s) and description

Proposals for winter 2015 study tours are due February 1, 2014. Proposals for summer 2015 study tours are due March 1, 2014. Proposals will be reviewed promptly and approved by committee.

FLs who have executed successful study tours in previous years may propose the tour for another term. These proposals must adhere to the same deadlines as new study tour proposals and will be reviewed by committee for approval.

Completed study tour proposals should be submitted to the Office of Study Abroad, Maxwell 330. Electronic and/or hard copies will be accepted. Photographs to include in marketing materials are greatly appreciated and can be emailed to studyabroad@bridgew.edu.

**The Role of the Office of Study Abroad**

OSA staff support FLs in all aspects of a Study Tour:

- **Program development**
  - Provide general support in the development of faculty-led study tours
  - Assist faculty in developing a strong, thoroughly prepared study tour proposal
  - Provide guidance on program budget development to ensure that budgets are fiscally responsibly and in compliance with BSU policy and state law.

- **Program promotion**
  - Develop a comprehensive marketing brochure for use by faculty
  - Assist in promoting information sessions led by the FLs
  - Promote programs to eligible students who seek study abroad information for OSA
- Host a campus-wide Study Abroad Fair each semester. FLs are required to attend or send a representative.

- Program administration
  - Set a timeline for program application and acceptance process to facilitate successful recruitment and program administration
  - Maintain the study tour applications and determine eligibility for participants in conjunction with the FLs
  - Collect all application and post-acceptance materials and provide a program packet with faculty prior to departure
  - Work with the Registrar’s Office to enroll students in the study tour course
  - Prepare all travel paperwork
  - Apply for any necessary visas and permits on behalf of the student participants and the FLs
  - Lead a general predeparture orientation for all study abroad participants

- Fiscal matters
  - Set the final program price, with the approval of the Vice President of External Affairs and the Division of Administration and Finance
  - Submit all deposits and payments to vendors and agencies providing services for study tours
  - Work with the Student Accounts Office to place charges on student accounts
  - Reconcile program expenses against budget
  - Provide any required reimbursements to FLs for out-of-pocket expenses incurred while abroad
  - Determine scholarship availability and allocate scholarships based on need and merit, in collaboration with the Financial Aid Office and External Affairs.

**Developing the Budget:** OSA develops a conservative program budget, which does not allow for changes once the group is on-site, except in the case of emergencies. The final budget is set by OSA and FLs should not inform students about possible program costs without first consulting with OSA. While FLs are expected to provide accurate budget information as a part of the proposal, OSA will add additional student expenses, including faculty travel costs and faculty stipends. A maximum of one stipend will be applied to each study tour. If two FLs decide to co-direct a tour, even if from different departments, one stipend will be awarded. It is up to the FLs to determine how the stipend will be divided.

**Minimum enrollment:** Tours conducted with a single FL require a minimum enrollment of 10 students. A minimum enrollment ensures that the program is not a financial burden on participants. FLs will be consulted during the planning process regarding tour numbers and eligible participants. Adding community participants may help a study tour reach its enrollment requirement and can also add unique perspectives to the group.

It is common for study tours to have two FLs, especially for interdisciplinary programs. In these cases, a study tour’s minimum enrollment is 15 students. Travel expenses for two FLs will be built into the
program budget (e.g. airfare, housing, etc.). A single stipend will be built into the budget and the FLs will determine, in advance, how they wish to split the stipend, and will inform OSA.

If a study tour does not have the minimum number of required applicants after the application deadline, the study tour will be canceled. OSA will notify the FLs and the applicants. These students will have an opportunity to select another study tour, provided that it has not reached its maximum capacity.

If a study tour does not have the minimum number of required deposited participants after the deposit deadline, the tour will be canceled. OSA will notify the FLs and the students. The students will have the opportunity to transfer their deposit to another study tour, provided that it has not reached its maximum capacity. Students also have the option to have their deposit refunded if they choose not to participate in another study tour.

Marketing and Recruitment

*Marketing Materials:* Once the proposal has been approved, OSA will produce a brochure to advertise the study tour. Any FL wishing to create their own marketing materials must submit a draft to OSA for review and approval before distribution.

*Recruitment:* Once a proposal has been approved, the FL must begin recruitment. This recruitment is often the difference between a successful tour and one that does not meet its minimum enrollment target. Here are some tips for recruitment:

- Host an information session well before the OSA application deadline.
- Announce the study tour in all classes taught, and encourage colleagues to do the same.
- Attend the Study Abroad Fair or send a representative.
- Stay in touch with interested students.
- Consider recruiting non-BSU students and how to best market to them.

*FAQs from Students:* During the process, FLs should become an expert on all aspects of their study tour, as will the OSA staff. As FLs begin recruiting students, they should be prepared for the most common issues of concern for students. Here are some of the most common questions, along with topics student want to know about but may not think to ask:

- What is the housing like?
- Do we share a room?
- I don’t speak the language; is that a problem?
- What does the trip cost?
- What isn’t included in that cost?
- How do I pay for the tour?
- Will financial aid cover this?
What credits will I earn and what can they count towards?
Will we have free time in country?
Do I have to register for the course?

Application Procedures

Eligibility for study abroad: All BSU study abroad programs have a minimum eligibility level. Study tours will follow these requirements and may establish higher or more specific requirements as needed. The basic requirements are:

- Minimum 2.5 GPA
- Good standing at BSU (both academic and disciplinary)
- Completed application: online application, unofficial transcript, copy of passport, two recommendations, $25 application fee—nonrefundable

OSA staff will review all applications to ensure they meet basic eligibility requirements and will invite FLs to review them as well. OSA staff will send out acceptance materials to approved students. Students will then be required to pay the $500 deposit, by the established deadline, which ensures their participation on the study tour.

Wait-listing students: OSA will maintain a wait list in the event that there are more qualified applicants than a study tour can accommodate. Wait-listed students have the option to switch to a different study tour that still has space, or wait to be notified should spaces become available.

Late applicants: FLs will not encourage students to apply after the application deadline, as they will not be accepted. OSA has established application deadlines just ahead of deadlines to finalize and book flights and in-country arrangements. OSA cannot accommodate late applications.

Withdrawals: All withdrawals from a study tour must be made in writing. The refund process is as follows: if a student withdraws from a study tour prior to paying a deposit, there is not financial consequence. If a student withdraws after paying the $500 deposit, the student must inform OSA in writing. They will be financially responsible for any expenses already paid in their name for the study tour. The deposit is refundable only if OSA has canceled the study tour. The $25 application fee is nonrefundable.

On-Site Responsibilities

Travel: At least one FL is required to travel to and from the study tour location with the group. The FLs are required to notify OSA—via call, email, or text—upon safely arriving at their destination. The FL must immediately notify OSA if any students did not make the flight or miss any in-country required programming.
**Increased responsibility:** Due to the nature of a study tour experience, FLs will have more day-to-day contact with students than here at BSU. Issues such as homesickness, roommate disputes, criminal incidents, and illnesses may occur while abroad. These are all issues that the FLs will need to address and facilitate resolutions. If any major issues occur, the FLs must be prepared to handle the problems quickly and immediately notify OSA. FLs are provided forms for reporting any such problems and are provided emergency contact information for OSA and External Affairs. OSA should be the first BSU office notified of any incidents.

**Liability and Study Abroad**

Liability is, of course, a major consideration for any university-sponsored activity. The objective of OSA guidelines is not to restrict, but to protect the interests of all parties involved.

OSA maintains that all program documents are contractual in nature. Release and waiver forms are reviewed and updated as appropriate. OSA welcomes faculty suggestions and input.

Promotional materials are reviewed carefully to ensure that the program is accurately represented. Disclaimers to publicity and promotional materials are added to protect the FL, the program sponsor, and BSU against unforeseen changes in program arrangements, including currency fluctuations or increasing airfare charges.

OSA informs all participants about the risk associated with study abroad programs, and the standard program application designed by OSA contains a “Program Participation Agreement” that must be signed by all participants. Participants also fill out a health information form that is carried by the FL during the study tour.

BSU programs that are conducted overseas operate in the name of BSU, which is legally liable for the outcome. For this reason, all new programs are subject to approval by OSA and External Affairs, and continuing programs are subject to annual review and re-approval. These programs are promoted on the main campus and are an extension of courses offered on campus. All overseas study programs through OSA are credit-bearing, and, as such, must adhere to established and accepted standards for credit courses.
Study Tour Policy Acknowledgement

Faculty-led study tours have proven in the past to be rewarding experiences for students and faculty alike. The guidelines set forth in this manual are intended to ensure academic excellence in international study. For many students, participation in a study tour will be their first experience traveling outside of the United States or even the region. Study abroad opportunities led by faculty offer participants the high standard of academic integrity that BSU students have come to expect.

Please complete this form and return to the Office of Study Abroad along with your completed study tour proposal.

I, _________________________, understand and accept the responsibilities I will be assigned should my study tour proposal to __________________ be accepted and should the tour run. I understand that these responsibilities begin with the development and promotion of the study tour, include significant additional in-country responsibilities, and are not completed until final grades are submitted and a program summary report is submitted to the Office of Study Abroad, within 2 weeks of returning from the study tour.

________________________________________
Faculty Leader name (printed)

________________________________________
Faculty Leader signature                  Date

Received by Office of Study Abroad __________

Date