



Roles and Responsibilities of WMU Study Abroad Program Directors

Scope of Roles and Responsibilities:

The role of Program Director is multi-faceted, intensive, challenging and highly rewarding. Leading a program provides unique opportunities for personal and professional growth outside the classroom and increased and meaningful interaction with students.

The program director is not only a teacher in this situation but serves as an administrator, leader, decision-maker, and diplomat. The program director must be able to uphold and implement institutional policies while respecting and navigating cultural and academic differences in a foreign setting.

Program directors are responsible for the academic component of a study abroad program. The faculty member designs the syllabus, determines learning outcomes, and follows the curriculum review process established by the department and college, such as submitting the syllabus and supporting materials for review by the chair, the department curriculum committee, and the college curriculum committee, and then forwarding to the dean for approval. When necessary and possible, the program director is expected to assist WMU Study Abroad (SA) with translation of documents related to the program.

WMU (SA) provides the program director with significant support throughout the entire process, including: advising students and faculty, administration of processes (program proposal, application processing, travel registration), cross-department coordination (academic advising, financial aid, registrar, disability services for students, career and student employment services), financial management (program budget development, facilitating payments to vendors, collecting fees from students), and risk management (insurance enrollment, pre-departure orientations, daily monitoring of world events, and serving as the primary point of contact in the event of an emergency).

The Planning Stages:

Discuss the program idea with your department chair. Consider the program's feasibility, including student interest, academic content, students' use of the course toward graduation requirements, departmental support, and potential overlap with existing study abroad programs.

Consult with the director of WMU SA to discuss your idea, and work on your proposal budget and timeline. The program director submits a program proposal to the director of WMU SA via Broncos Abroad to gain final approval. Submit additional information about your program in Broncos Abroad as requested.

Obtain quotes from in-country vendors for required services.

WMU SA responsibilities include training on the use of Broncos Abroad, establishing a program budget based on cost estimates provided by the program director, preparing promotional materials, building an application, and monitoring applicant progress.

Prior to Departure:

The program director is the best recruiter for the program and works with WMU SA and the Haenicke Institute for Global Education (HIGE) Marketing to actively recruit applicants for the program using posters, flyers, daily information sessions, classroom visits, program alumni, student organizations, social media sites, etc.

Help students identify sources of funding.

Review student applications in Broncos Abroad. Informally interview applicants to get to know them, answer their questions, and determine if they are a good fit for the program. The program director determines who to admit into the program.

Once enrollment target is achieved and WMU SA has verified that the program is approved to run, organize lodging, meals, transportation, guides and entrance fees for excursions to be conducted in locations of cultural/historical interest.

Ensure you have a valid passport and visa (if necessary) to travel outside the U.S. The passport must be valid for at least six months beyond the end of the program.

Complete risk management procedures (provide phone number while abroad, designated emergency contacts, health information, etc.) in Broncos Abroad.

Plan at least two student orientations during the semester prior to travel. The orientations should include: program overview and academic requirements, information about university or travel agency hosts assisting with the program, accommodations, access to communication infrastructure, health/safety protocol, program rules/behavioral expectations, group dynamics, the host country educational system, and cross-cultural adaptation, particularly differences students may have a challenging time adjusting to (punctuality, meal time, gender equality, etc.).

Arrange advance payments or deposits with the HIGE budget manager. Collect invoices from vendors and forward to HIGE budget manager and your SA specialist.

Attend the mandatory pre-departure orientation given by WMU SA director.

Use WMU's travel authorization system to arrange travel. Make a flight reservation with AAA.

Develop and communicate your arrival plan to students, such as where and when they should meet the group, how they get to the meeting place, and whom they should contact if unable to arrive on time (e.g. missed flight connection).

WMU SA responsibilities include advising interested students and responding to information requests, providing acceptance letters and other required documentation to designated applicants, course registering and billing of committed participants, facilitating payments to vendors, enrolling all travelers in international health and emergency insurance, facilitating program enrollment for non-WMU student participants, aiding students with questions about scholarships, collecting risk management information (emergency contacts, health conditions, etc.), providing online pre-departure orientations on topics

related to the use of health insurance, smart travel, visiting a healthcare provider before travel, and standards set by WMU Student Conduct.

During the Program:

Serve as facilitator for all communication between WMU SA, the host institution or agency abroad (if applicable), and program participants.

Liaise with different stakeholders: WMU SA, participating students (and potentially their emergency contacts), host families or housing officers, local clinics, institutions, agencies and facilities, and the host culture in general.

Act as the initial responder to logistical, medical, behavioral, and other student inquiries, problems and crises.

Hold the position of administrator and financial manager on-site which includes duties such as confirming logistical arrangements, making payments, managing funds, and keeping financial records.

Behave as a trusted representative of the University abroad and employ dignity, decorum, tact, and discretion in both public behavior and the private handling of student problems, concerns, and personal information.

Retain responsibility for all academic aspects of the program.

Maintain contact with WMU SA staff by confirming safe arrival of program participants, remaining in contact with students throughout the program and assisting with counseling as needed on issues of cultural adjustment, conduct, and other non-academic issues. Regularly consult with WMU SA as needed concerning student problems and concerns and inform WMU SA and participants of emergencies or medical situations.

Make payments from program budget for legitimate program expenses and obtain receipts for all expenditures based on WMU SA accounting guidelines for reimbursement.

WMU SA responsibilities include timely response to inquiries from program participants or the program director, partnering to develop solutions to student issues or crises, payment of any large-sum invoices not paid prior to departure, and regular monitoring of world events to provide travel advice to program directors.

Upon Return:

- Encourage students to complete online program evaluation
- Submit a Clery Report to WMU Public Safety within 30 days of end date of program
- Submit a "Completion Report" via the Broncos Abroad system within 30 days of end date of program.
- Submit travel expense document to HIGE budget team within 30 days of end date of program

WMU SA responsibilities include encouraging students to complete the online program evaluation, responding to inquiries about the paperwork mentioned above, coordinating the reimbursement process for expenses incurred by the program director which were not paid in advance, and scheduling meetings with program directors to improve upon future programs based on feedback from stakeholders.