

# Study Abroad Program Annual Reapproval Policy: Summary and Rationale

## 1. Background

Effective immediately, all previously approved faculty-led study abroad programs running Spring 2016 onward will go through an annual reapproval process. The reapproval process will cover academic, financial, and risk management aspects of the program.

This policy is being implemented in conjunction with a number of improvements to UGA's study abroad processes that include:

- The development of a new GoAbroad.uga.edu portal for study abroad that provides a one-stop-shop for program information, recruitment, student applications to programs and scholarships, and resources for faculty leaders and administrators.
- Improved data collection and reporting on study abroad participation at the institutional, college, and departmental level, that will be available directly to academic unit heads and their designees.
- Streamlined financial processes that will allow programs to pre-budget expenditures and focus on the actual costs of running programs.
- Enhanced risk management through improved insurance coverage for all program participants, with OIE handling the enrollment of program participants into the insurance program and the State Department's STEP program.

## 2. Rationale

This reapproval process brings UGA in alignment with guidelines articulated by national organizations such as the Forum on Education Abroad and NAFSA and with best practices at peer and aspirational institutions. The overarching goal is to expand student access to and participation in UGA study abroad programs while ensuring that:

- Programs are academically rigorous, meet unit, college, and university learning goals and objectives and comply with SACS principles for reaccreditation;
- Program budgets are appropriate to support the academic program, follow all UGA budgetary rules, and are mindful of both student affordability and allocation of state resources; and
- Programs consider student and faculty risk management considerations in their design.

### 3. The Reapproval Process

The annual reapproval process begins soon after the conclusion of a study abroad program. Program leaders will initiate the reapproval process through the one-stop GoAbroad.uga.edu portal by submitting the following materials for academic, financial, and risk management review:

a. Academic

Program leaders will submit academic program information, including courses to be offered, instructors, course syllabi, and program itineraries, to ensure it is consistent with approved course information in CAPA and complies with academic policy. These materials will be initially reviewed by Curriculum Systems and forwarded to unit heads of relevant departments/colleges in which these courses are housed for review and approval of academic content.

b. Financial

Program leaders, with help from OIE staff, will develop and submit a budget that reflects both instructional and program costs and incorporates risk management considerations. OIE will provide support for allowable instructional costs for the program. Once OIE has confirmed the amount of support to be provided and the program cost to student has been established, no changes can be made to these amounts without express approval of OIE.

c. Risk Management

Program leaders will submit destination details and a daily itinerary as part of this process. Having this information on hand allows OIE to anticipate any risk factors that need to be considered in advance of approving the program and allowing students to enroll, and be able to provide effective support to program leaders in event of an emergency while abroad. Programs involving travel to countries under the State department travel warning will be additionally reviewed by OIE's Risk Management Board.

Program information submissions will be reviewed and approved as they are received and programs will be informed about approval or for additional information within 4 weeks.

### 4. Responsibilities

a. Faculty leader

The responsibility for initiating the reapproval of a study abroad program resides with the faculty leader of the program. It is his/her responsibility to gather relevant academic materials, secure sign

offs of respective academic unit heads, and develop the budget and destination details for submission.

b. Department heads and deans

It is the responsibility of academic unit heads to review the syllabi and course content of their courses being offered as part of study abroad programs. Their signature denotes that the courses meet the department's requirements in terms of content and credit hours and that the faculty indicated as the instructors of record are qualified to teach the respective courses. In addition the department head and dean of the academic unit in which the program is housed need to sign off on the proposal as a whole indicating that the study abroad program is consistent with the academic mission and goals of the unit. Unit heads will also be given the opportunity to view and comment on the overall program budget.

c. Office of International Education

OIE will be responsible for receiving and reviewing all study abroad program reapproval materials, and keeping program leaders and academic unit heads informed about the status of the review. OIE will consult with program leaders, unit heads, and the Office of the Vice President for Instruction as necessary during this review. The final authority for program reapproval will reside with the Associate Provost for International Education.

## **5. Benefits to the UGA community**

a. Study Abroad Students

As a result of this process, potential study abroad students will have standardized and transparent information about all study abroad programs well in advance of the program being offered. This will increase the likelihood of students choosing UGA programs versus programs of other universities or third party providers. The GoABroad.uga.edu portal will facilitate the receipt of applications, provide comparable financial information, and provide a one-stop-shop for scholarship applications.

b. Study abroad leaders and faculty

The annual program reapproval process will provide assurance to program leaders that their programs and courses have the formal support of relevant academic units. There will be an early determination of OIE financial support for the program, allowing program leaders to make decision regarding program viability/recruitment goals. OIE will have the most up to date and vetted information on the program to display on the GoAbroad.uga.edu portal and allow academic and study abroad advisors to inform potential students about their program. Program leaders will benefit from the functionalities of the GoAbroad.uga.edu portal which will help in recruitment, application management, communication with students, and allow them to generate targeted reports.

As OIE study abroad advisors gain access to the most up-to-date knowledge of their programs, the OIE Education Abroad unit will be better able to align its services to the needs of faculty directors. Faculty leaders can count on ongoing training and assistance from Education Abroad staff on using the GoAbroad portal and on program budgeting and risk management. It should be noted that the program reapproval process will eliminate the need to apply separately for OIE's approval of "major changes" in the program.

c. Department heads and deans

Academic unit heads, as a result of this annual process, will gain full knowledge about their unit's courses that are being taught abroad. This will allow a better integration of study abroad programming with on-campus academic offerings. They will be able to review course content and syllabi to ensure the academic quality of their courses and program. Unit heads will benefit from powerful reporting capabilities that will allow them to view enrollment and credit hour trends over time and view student evaluations to demonstrate successes in their international programs to donors and other stakeholders.