HSC OP: 10.29, International Programs for Students

PURPOSE: The purpose of this HSC Operating Policy (HSC OP) is to provide guidelines for TTUHSC student participation in courses and programs abroad.

REVIEW: This HSC OP will be reviewed in June of every odd-numbered year (ONY) by the Senior Director of the Office of Global Health and the International Affairs Council, with recommendations for revisions forwarded to the Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs and the President.

POLICY/PROCEDURE:

General Consideration
In full consideration of the added complexity associated with conducting academic courses or programs in an international setting, TTUHSC is committed to ensuring that those courses and programs are:

1. Student-centered;
2. Part of a degree program;
3. In conformity with standards of safety and responsibility as established by recognized academic consortia (e.g., NAFSA: Association for International Educators, Consortium of Universities for Global Health), the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the Texas Administrative Code, and TTUHSC operating policies and procedures;
4. Operated by all TTUHSC academic units in a manner that meets approved operation and program standards;
5. In conformity with the laws, rules and regulations of the host country, the host institution, and TTUHSC; and
6. Of benefit to the host institution, host community, and TTUHSC faculty and students.

1. Definitions
   a. Abroad
      Travel to any country(ies) outside the United States
   b. Approved Sites
      (1) Universities or institutions of higher education with which TTUHSC has a formal agreement; or
      (2) Universities, teaching hospitals, clinics, or health care organizations approved by the dean of the school and the Senior Director of the Office of Global Health.
   c. Exit Survey
      Surveying students who have completed their international program to obtain their evaluation of the program and their experience


d. **Program Administrator**

The contact person at the host institution/organization or faculty member leading the program abroad

e. **Restricted Regions**

A country or area within a country which requires additional review before consideration for approved travel. A Restricted Region includes, but is not limited to a country with a current U.S. Department of State travel advisory level of 3 (Reconsider Travel) or 4 (Do Not Travel)

f. **Acronyms**

ERT—Emergency Response Team
EVPAA—Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs
OGH—Office of Global Health
SDOGH—Senior Director of Office of Global Health

2. **Types of Programs**

a. **Institutional Programs**

Institutional programs are those courses and/or electives that are part of a school’s curriculum, and that are offered at an Approved Site.

b. **Faculty-led Programs**

Faculty-led programs are those established by faculty in their area(s) of expertise to teach TTUHSC students in an environment outside the United States. Faculty design the program in consultation with their school, recruit and select students for the program, accompany the students abroad, administer the program abroad, and are responsible for the educational content of the program.

c. **Self-identified Sites**

Self-identified sites are those programs that are not an Approved Site but that are offered at a university, teaching hospital, or clinic abroad, which a student has identified as meeting a professional or educational goal and for which one-time approval has been received by the dean of the school and the SDOGH for completion of an international program.

3. **Unofficial Travel Activities Involving TTUHSC Faculty and Students**

TTUHSC faculty who travel aboard with students or arrange for students to travel abroad for personal activities including, but not limited to, conferences, study, enrichment, service, or any other non-institutional purpose, shall contact OGH to obtain a “disclaimer and release” form to be signed by the faculty and students. Other than this Section 3, this OP is not applicable to unofficial travel activities and specifically excludes use of TTUHSC personnel, facilities, and resources in support of such activities.

4. **Establishment of International Programs for Students**

a. **Agreements with International Entities**

(1) To promote institution-wide standardization, OGH is available to offer guidance for the establishment of any new degree program, school-specific, or institution-wide agreements between TTUHSC and international institutions or organizations.

(2) Prior to initiating an agreement with an international entity for an international program for students, schools or faculty must complete an International Program Worksheet, which will be provided by OGH, and obtain required approvals.
(3) All agreements between degree programs or schools having to do with international courses and exchanges in those degree programs and schools will be forwarded to OGH for routing through the TTUHSC contracting system.

(4) All institution-wide agreements developed under this policy will be forwarded to the president for signature following review by OGH that the agreement incorporates required standard provisions.

(5) A copy of all fully executed agreements will be provided to OGH, which serves as the institution’s central repository for international programs for students.

b. Proposal for a New Faculty-led International Program

Faculty members interested in establishing a new faculty-led international program must:

(1) Meet with OGH to discuss the procedures and guidelines for establishing such programs. This may include review of the following:

   (a) Location of the international program with reference to:

   ▪ Previously established Approved Sites in the region; and
   ▪ Sustainability of international programs at the proposed location with respect to existing programs;

   (b) Safety/security issues;

   (c) Justification and uniqueness of the proposed program;

   (d) Confirmation that courses to be taught have been approved by the appropriate school.

(2) Complete an International Program Worksheet, which will be provided by OGH, and obtain required approvals.

(3) If the International Program Worksheet is approved, complete a faculty-led program proposal provided by OGH and route for approval.

c. Proposal for Faculty-led International Program at Existing Approved Site

Faculty members interested in leading a faculty-led international program at an existing Approved Site must:

(1) Meet with OGH to discuss the procedures and guidelines for leading a program abroad. This may include discussion of the following:

   (a) Site-specific safety/security issues;

   (b) Team meetings;

   (c) Funding.

(2) Complete a Faculty-led program proposal, which will be provided by OGH, and obtain required approvals.

5. Prior to Departure

   a. Student Responsibilities
(1) All students traveling abroad must abide by the guidelines set forth in HSC OP 77.08, Student Travel Policy.

(2) It is the responsibility of students to meet with their school’s designated program coordinator or advisor before the start of the international program to gain approval for participation in the program abroad and to verify eligibility. Please refer to the OGH website at https://www.ttuhsc.edu/global-health/eligibility-policy.aspx for minimum eligibility requirements. Additional requirements may be necessary as determined by a student’s school.

(3) Students participating in an international program are required to complete an application, meet eligibility requirements, and complete pre-departure requirements, including a pre-departure orientation through OGH. Students are solely responsible for making arrangements with OGH for the pre-departure orientation.

(4) A pre-departure orientation will include the following:

(a) Completion of required emergency and liability forms;

(b) Standardized information regarding international health / MEDEVAC insurance, personal safety, security awareness, emergency preparedness, and practical issues related to travel, packing, and obtaining currency;

(c) Site specific information concerning required and recommended immunizations, suggested modes of in-country transportation, and cultural acclimation; and

(d) Information regarding where students can obtain the most up-to-date information for a country-specific visa.

b. Faculty-led Program Administrator Responsibilities

(1) Faculty-led Program Administrators will have primary responsibility for publicizing the program and recruiting and selecting participants.

(2) Faculty-led Program Administrators will screen applicants to ensure that all requirements and pre-requisites are met. OGH will assist in verifying eligibility of all student participants.

(3) Faculty will provide students with site-specific information, including visa information, at program meetings before departure. Faculty are encouraged to conduct trip-specific orientations beyond what OGH provides. This should include the following:

(a) Safety and security orientations dealing with both routine and emergency procedures for students abroad;

(b) Program-specific orientations dealing with site-specific information including, but not limited to, information on expectations of faculty; organization of classes, programs, and course work; cultural adjustment; practical information on day-to-day living (e.g., how to obtain currency, call home, and health and safety issues that are site-specific); and

(c) General information on travel abroad, health issues abroad, and general cultural adjustment strategies.

(4) Faculty will direct students to OGH to complete an application, pre-departure requirements, and a pre-departure orientation.

6. Restricted Regions

a. It is TTUHSC’s policy that students may not travel to a Restricted Region for academic, professional, or other school-related purposes.
b. Notwithstanding the foregoing, TTUHSC may grant exceptions to this policy on a case-by-case basis. Review of requests for exceptions will be processed by OGH. Requesting a travel exemption and submitting the required documentation for review does not guarantee travel approval.

c. TTUHSC retains the right to withdraw travel approval and/or require return to the U.S. due to changes in conditions or circumstances.

d. No student can be required to travel to a Restricted Region.

7. Funding

Information about available funding to assist in covering some or all of the expenses associated with an international program, including guidelines for International Education Fee disbursement, is available through the Office of Global Health.

Funding for students participating in TTUHSC international programs will not be released until students have:

a. Met all program-specific qualifications;

b. Met with a program coordinator or advisor in their degree program to receive approval of courses to be taken in the international program;

c. Completed and submitted all forms required by OGH; and

d. Completed the OGH pre-departure requirements.

8. Exit Survey

Upon return from participation in an international program, students must complete an Exit Survey administered by OGH.

9. Emergency Procedures

a. The Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center Planned Response to Emergencies Abroad (Attachment A) will be used to guide response by the home institution to emergencies facing international programs.

When students are abroad, the Office of Global Health can be contacted for urgent matters at (806) 743-2901.

b. Members of ERT are:

- Senior Director of the Office of Global Health
- Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Dean(s) of the School(s)
- International Affairs Council Members
- Faculty member(s) onsite or Program Administrator, when possible

10. Suspending International Programs

a. Suspension of an International Program in Progress
(1) OGH receives information provided by the Department of State and other resources regarding international travel safety. When OGH receives notification that a Department of State’s advisory level is upgraded resulting in the location becoming a Restricted Region, the SDOGH and EVPAA will convene a meeting of the TTUHSC Emergency Response Team (ERT) to determine and implement an appropriate response.

(2) If OGH receives information from a contact or Program Administrator at the site reporting that there is an imminent threat of safety or harm at the international program site, the SDOGH and EVPAA will convene a meeting of the members of the ERT to consider moving the program to an alternate site within the country or bringing the students home.

(3) If parents or other outside interested parties contact OGH and express concern regarding the international program, the SDOGH will contact the Program Administrator to ascertain the facts and determine whether or not the SDOGH and EVPAA will convene a meeting of the ERT to determine and implement any appropriate response.

b. Suspension of an International Program Prior to the Program Start Date

(1) The decision to suspend a TTUHSC international program can have serious consequences, and it should be considered carefully in view of how the cancellation will affect participants and other TTUHSC international programs.

(2) If a program does not have a sufficient number of participants to meet the goals of the program, the decision of whether or not to suspend the program should be made by the Program Administrator in consultation with the SDOGH.

(3) If a question regarding whether or not to suspend a TTUHSC international program concerns issues of safety or security of TTUHSC students, the SDOGH must be consulted. OGH receives information provided by the Department of State and other resources regarding international travel safety, and will be able to provide timely information if concerns arise. In the event the Department of State’s advisory level is upgraded, resulting in the location becoming a Restricted Region, it may be considered a valid reason to suspend a program.

If no such advisory exists, counterparts at the site should be contacted to determine if there is a compelling reason to suspend the program, and such information may form the basis for a decision.

(4) If parents or other outside interested parties contact OGH and express concern regarding the international program, the SDOGH will contact counterparts at the site to ascertain the facts and determine whether or not the SDOGH and EVPAA will convene a meeting of the ERT to determine and implement any appropriate response.

(5) If a faculty leader is unable or otherwise determines to not take students abroad, the school has an obligation to the participants of the program to find an alternate leader or to make every effort to accommodate the students in a comparable program. In the event it is not feasible to make such arrangements or accommodations, the international program may be suspended. The decision of whether or not to suspend the program should be made by the Program Administrator in consultation with the SDOGH.