



## MERCER ABROAD

Dear Faculty,

Thank you for choosing to lead a study abroad program. Your service to students in providing this experiential opportunity beyond the classroom, contributing to the global mindset of the student, and sacrificing your personal time and energy is truly appreciated. Without your dedication, our students' potential for living the full Mercer experience would surely be limited.

Students who have participated in faculty led study abroad programs have gone on to achieve greatness. From Peace Corps assignments to Fulbright research scholarships, Rangel fellowships, our students continue on to expand the global journey that most often begins with you.

We, in the Mercer Abroad office, take great pride in being part of the process for our students' growth and development. We are also dedicated to ensuring that our students understand their place in and contribute to a global community. We are committed to the ideals of professional organizations such as the [Forum on Education Abroad](#), the [Institute for International Education](#), and [NAFSA](#), the largest international organization for international educators. We are also committed to ensuring that Mercer University abides by the [Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad](#) in the field of study abroad.

This handbook provides guidance and support for faculty, staff, and approved volunteers who are interested in leading or participating in study abroad programs through Mercer University.

The policies and procedures articulated in this handbook have been developed according to best practices in the fields of Study Abroad and Emergency Management Planning and with the best interest of students, program participants, including faculty and staff, and the University in mind.

Mercer Abroad and the Office of Global Education welcomes any feedback on the policies and procedures included in this handbook. We are committed to providing the most efficient and effective support services possible to the entire Mercer University community while remaining true to the ideals and principles of international education and to the mission of Mercer University.

Sincerely,

Mr. Felix Jelen, Assistant Vice President, Global Engagement

Ms. Emily Dunn, Assistant Director, Global Education

## Table of Contents

Program Development .....	4
Canvas Course .....	4
Development and Assessment Timeline.....	4
Annual Proposal Deadline.....	4
Program Recruitment .....	5
Student Application Deadlines.....	5
Final Payment Deadline .....	6
Program Orientations .....	6
Budget Reconciliations and Incident Reports .....	6
Location & Risk Assessment .....	7
Academic Requirements.....	8
Spring Break/Fall Break Options .....	8
Summer Options .....	8
Semester Options.....	9
Mercer University Credit Hour Policy.....	9
Learning Outcomes .....	9
Program Planning & Itinerary.....	9
Budgeting .....	10
Program Providers.....	11
Benefits of Working with a Provider: .....	11
Disadvantages of Working with a Provider: .....	11
Program Provider Services.....	12
Approved Third-party Vendors .....	12
Proposal Process.....	12
Program Participants.....	13
Program Leaders .....	13
Mercer Students .....	14
Student Leaders .....	14
Non-Mercer Students.....	15
Lifelong Learners .....	15
Spouses/Partners .....	15
Minor Children .....	16
Marketing .....	16
Mercer Abroad Recruiting Tasks .....	17
Program Leader Recruiting Tasks .....	17
Student Application and Course Registration.....	17
Terra Dotta.....	17
Nexus and MyMercer.....	18
Student Payments.....	18

Financial Aid .....	18
Medical and Travel Insurance.....	19
Program Financial Accounting .....	20
Service Contracts .....	20
Managing Program Costs .....	20
Requests for Payment for Program Funds .....	20
Cash Advances of Program Funds.....	20
Faculty Reimbursement.....	21
University Purchasing Cards .....	21
Reconciliation .....	22
Refunds .....	22
Workshop for Program Leaders .....	22
Pre-Departure Orientation .....	23
Faculty/Program Topics:.....	23
Mercer Abroad Topics: .....	23
STEP .....	23
Emergency Contact Info .....	23
Program Logistics .....	24
Initial and End Travel.....	24
On-site Orientation.....	24
Vehicle Rental.....	25
Accidents .....	25
Emergency Information.....	25
Crisis Response .....	26
On Call International.....	26
The Mercer Abroad Office .....	27
Federal and University Policies .....	27
Title IX .....	27
The Clery Act.....	27
FERPA.....	27
Student Accommodations .....	28
Student Code of Conduct .....	28
Travel Beyond Program Dates.....	28
International Travel with Students (Non-Course Related).....	28
Developing International Partnerships and Agreements.....	30
Program Reports.....	30
Program Assessment .....	30
Appendices .....	31

# Faculty-Led Study Abroad Handbook

Faculty-led study abroad programs are defined as any program of study in which students travel with Mercer University faculty to locations abroad for the purpose of experiential and/or service-learning. These programs are associated with one or more academic courses. These programs are managed out of the Office of Global Education.

## Program Development

The Mercer Abroad office has developed several general guidelines for program development and management based on best practices in the study abroad field, supporting the University's mission and goals, and our experiences with what works and what doesn't work. All faculty wishing to lead programs abroad must comply with these guidelines to receive the support of the Mercer Abroad office.

Faculty or staff members wishing to lead a group of students abroad must follow the policies and procedures included in this handbook when proposing and executing study abroad programs. Program leaders who do not show a commitment to maintaining the standards outlined in these guidelines may be disqualified from leading future programs.

There are several issues to consider before submitting a program proposal. This section introduces tools and guidance for use in the conceptual stage of program development.

### Canvas Course

If you are new to faculty-led study abroad program planning, or if you just need a refresher, please complete the [Faculty-Led Study Abroad Training](#) Canvas course. This course introduces faculty to the culture of study abroad at Mercer and provides topics for reflection and creative program development, including recruitment and risk management.

All program leaders must complete this course before program proposals receive final approval.

### Development and Assessment Timeline

Most faculty-led study abroad programs take place either during spring break\* or during one or more of the summer\* terms.

Program design and planning should be completed more than a year in advance in order to meet program proposal deadlines, which are set two terms before the program launch date.

### Annual Proposal Deadline

**May 31** is the deadline for ALL programs taking place in the upcoming academic year.

Initially, faculty may submit a preliminary proposal, which must include a) the program proposal form with dean's signature of approval, b) a draft budget worksheet, and c) a volunteer agreement for any non-faculty or staff secondary program leaders. The forms associated with the complete program proposal can be found on the [Mercer Abroad Faculty/Staff Resources](#) page.

All courses associated with a study abroad program must be approved by the department chair and dean **before** Mercer Abroad can review the proposal. The dean must sign off on the

program, ensuring the faculty will receive appropriate compensation and the course will be listed in the course schedule for the term. Once courses and associated salaries are approved, Mercer Abroad will review the proposal according to the guidelines. Incomplete or underdeveloped proposals will be returned to the lead faculty member for revision.

Because proposals are expected far in advance of the program launch, it is expected that all details regarding itinerary and budget will be estimated in the initial proposal. Final drafts of program proposal itineraries and budgets will be completed in collaboration with the Mercer Abroad office and before program recruitment begins.

Proposals are approved on a rolling basis, depending on proposal completion. **Late program submissions risk postponement to the following year.**

### **Program Recruitment**

Once Mercer Abroad approves the program, the itinerary and budget must be finalized as soon as possible, but BEFORE recruitment begins in order to ensure that all payment methods are established, courses are coded appropriately, and all recruitment materials are accurate and consistent.

All spring break programs are listed on the Mercer Abroad website as early as **June** of the previous year in order to build excitement for the program. All program applications will open at the start of the fall semester.

Summer programs are listed on the Mercer Abroad website as early as **July**, before applications open, of the previous year. This allows for recruitment over the summer before the applications open at the start of the fall semester.

Recruitment is an ongoing process and typically may not end until after a program application deadline, especially if student enrollment is low. Detailed information regarding recruitment practices is located in Section 3 of this handbook.

### **Student Application Deadlines**

**October 15:** Spring Break Programs

**February 15:** Summer Programs

All program participants are required to complete an application through the Mercer Abroad website via a platform called Terra Dotta. This platform allows the collection of associated program documents. Faculty leaders can access students' applications via Terra Dotta after completing training with the Mercer Abroad office and will be able to issue program acceptances to students directly through the platform. Once the following deadlines pass, students will no longer be able to submit program applications; however, Mercer Abroad can work with faculty members to extend deadlines by a week or two if it seems that enrollment goals are nearly met.

### **Student Deposit Deadlines**

**November 1:** Spring Break Programs

**March 1:** Summer Programs

Once students have been accepted into a program, they must pay \$575 by the deposit deadline. This fee includes a) the \$75 study abroad fee, and b) a non-refundable \$500 program deposit. Fees will be collected via the students' Mercer account. Students with owed balances

must reconcile their debt to the University before making deposits for study abroad programs. Should students submit these funds to an account with an outstanding balance, the funds will be applied to that balance and NOT to the study abroad program.

Students must clear all holds on their student accounts before deposits can be collected.

The deposit is a portion of the total program fee, and refundable up until the program deposit deadline, which will be determined between the Mercer Abroad office and the program leader.

After the deposit deadline, program leaders may use these funds to pay portions of the program costs.

### **Final Payment Deadline**

**Spring Tuition Deadline:** Spring Break Programs

**Summer Tuition Deadline:** Summer Programs

After the deposit deadline, the remaining balance of the study abroad program fee will be applied to each student's account. Students may elect to create a payment plan with the bursar in order to reconcile this debt if they are unable to pay the entire balance at this time. All funds must be collected by the final payment deadlines to ensure program costs will be covered before program departure.

### **Program Orientations**

**No fewer than 30 days before departure**, program leaders must submit finalized program itineraries, overseas contact information, emergency contact information, and crisis management plans to the Mercer Abroad office. The final itinerary should be reviewed with the students during pre-departure orientation.

Program leaders must host a mandatory pre-departure orientation with all program participants. Orientations should cover the program itinerary and related program- and country-specific information, include instructions for group travel departure or meeting locations for students traveling independently, and address budgeting issues and crisis planning.

The Mercer Abroad staff will present material relevant to the services offered through Global Education, including program financial matters, health and safety abroad, travel advice, and online resources.

### **Budget Reconciliations and Incident Reports**

**No more than 30 days following a study abroad program end date**, or before June 25 for programs traveling during the Summer 1 term, program leaders must submit all budget reconciliations, including cash advance deposits and receipts and reimbursement requests.

Additionally, any program incident reports must be completed and filed with the Mercer Abroad office within the 30-day post program period. Failure to report student-involved incidents may result in suspension of a faculty member's ability to participate in or lead future programs abroad.

Any program assessments the faculty member would like to share with Mercer Abroad should also be submitted at this time. Assessments are especially helpful in developing recruitment materials for future programs.

## Location & Risk Assessment

When choosing the location for your program abroad, it is important to consider how the location adds value to the course you are teaching, or how the course you will teach will add an academic component to the destination.

Before finalizing your program destination, be sure to check the [U.S. Department of State Travel Advisories](#). University policy related to these travel advisories can impact the feasibility of your trip.

The U.S. State Department assigns each country, or areas within a country, an advisory level associated with the level of potential risk for harm associated with a variety of factors such as crime, violence, disease, and natural disasters. These levels are:

Level 1	(Blue)	Exercise normal precautions
Level 2	(Yellow)	Exercise increased caution
Level 3	(Orange)	Reconsider travel
Level 4	(Red)	Do not travel

Some countries will have multiple travel advisories.

Countries with an overall rating of Level 1 or 2 are generally considered safe for study abroad and are approved. Exceptions would be if a specific area within the country had a higher rating. In that case, Mercer Abroad would review the itinerary more closely to assess the risk of the program.

Countries with an overall rating of Level 3 are considered potentially high-risk. If you are considering a program bound for a country with a Level 3 Travel Advisory, we encourage you to consider whether your objectives could be met in a less sensitive location.

Faculty wishing to move forward with proposals to travel with students to a location with a Level 3 Travel Advisory are required to submit a written justification explaining why the proposed program cannot be completed in a less risky location. The justification will be reviewed by the Mercer Abroad staff and potentially Mercer's general counsel and the Provost. It is expected that the justification addresses whether activities will take place in locations close to or removed from higher-level risk areas.

If the program receives an initial approval, the situation will continue to be monitored by Mercer Abroad; should conditions worsen, the program could be canceled. Additionally, faculty will be expected to work with On Call International to develop a crisis management plan that includes On Call support.

Programs proposed for countries or areas with a Level 4 Travel Advisory are not approved.

If your trip is already in progress when the State Department issues a Level 3 or Level 4 Travel Advisory, Mercer University will make the final decision as to whether or not your trip should continue. These decisions will be made after appropriate consultation with program leaders, host country representatives, and University officials. Once a decision is made to end a program, planning will begin for relocating or evacuating students. It's important to remember that this planning will take first priority for all involved, but may still require patience on the part of the program participants, faculty and staff leaders, and their families here in the U.S. Be prepared to manage the stress level and impatience of all program participants, and manage

communications with Mercer Abroad in case this type of planning must occur during your program.

The Office of Global Education may cancel a program destined for countries or regions for which a Department of State Level 3 or Level 4 Travel Advisory has been posted after the planning for the program is complete. Students must be made aware of the fact that in such a situation, there may be unrecoverable funds for which they will not receive a refund.

All program leaders should be familiar with various levels of crises and appropriate responses before program departure. Please review [Mercer Abroad's Crisis Response Plan](#) before completing this proposal and let us know if you have any questions or concerns. A formal program-specific crisis management plan must be submitted at no fewer than 30 days before program departure.

Any incidents requiring the engagement of crisis management experienced during a program should be formally and appropriately reported to Mercer Abroad no more than 30 days after the program end date. Responses may be reviewed and addressed for learning purposes and before the leading faculty member is approved for another program.

### Academic Requirements

All Mercer University study abroad programs require an academic component resulting in course credit. All courses associated with faculty-led travel programs must first be approved according to departmental/college standards. Below are the approved academic course models for study abroad programs. Please select the model appropriate for the program you want to develop and create a syllabus for the course. You must ensure that the academic component of the course fits both the credit hours you are suggesting and the timeframe in which the program will take place.

### Spring Break/Fall Break Options

1. One-credit Course
  - a. Add-on option for 3-5 credit semester course
  - b. Travel occurs during the break period (Fall/Spring), or immediately after a term (December/May) and is associated with the syllabus of the "parent" course
2. Three-credit Course
  - a. Format Options
    - i. Independent course that includes intensive pre-departure meeting throughout a semester and/or online coursework associated with the travel which occurs during the Fall/Spring break periods or a short period (1 week) at the end of a term (December/May)
    - ii. Independent course traveling for two-three weeks at the end of a term and concluding before the start of the next term (December/May)
  - b. May be included in student's full-time semester load if planned well

### Summer Options

1. Single Course Program (3-4 credits)
2. Multiple Course Program (6-9 credits)
  - a. Courses are taught by more than one faculty member
  - b. Typically ranging from 4-8 weeks in length
3. One-credit Experiential Course Program



- a. Typically associated with students attending or presenting at international conferences

### **Semester Options**

1. Multiple-course Program (3-6 courses) in which
  - a. Courses are taught by more than one faculty member
    - i. Local adjuncts may be employed to create a full-time load for students
  - b. 12-16 weeks in length
  - c. Framework currently available in London
  - d. Development of new framework possible

### **Mercer University Credit Hour Policy**

According to Mercer University policy, each credit requires 2250 minutes of instructional time, either direct or indirect. Study abroad courses fall under this same policy. Direct instruction can include faculty instruction and assigned tasks that occur before, during, or after the period of travel for the program as long as it occurs within the academic term to which the course is attached. Direct instruction abroad may include activities such as academic site visits, tours, etc. Shared meals are generally not included unless the content will be assessed in some way. Please review the [Credit Hour Policy](#) for guidance in determining what activities may be considered instructional for the purpose of developing the course syllabus and assigning the appropriate number of academic credits to the course.

### **Learning Outcomes**

While Mercer Abroad does not currently independently assess learning outcomes for study abroad programs, we strongly encourage faculty to consider including appropriate global learning goals that incorporate outcomes and assessment from the Association of American Colleges and Universities [Global Learning Value Rubric](#).

Many opportunities for research on student global learning through study abroad are missed when faculty are not purposefully including such outcomes and assessment in the course planning for study abroad. These missed opportunities are also missed opportunities in terms of demonstrating Mercer University's ability to achieve stated global imperatives within the current University [strategic plan](#).

### **Program Planning & Itinerary**

Programs should be designed and conducted in order to maximize students' exposure to and/or experience with the values and customs of the local community in a thoughtful and respectful manner.

While a complete itinerary is not necessary at the proposal stage, a general outline will help the Mercer Abroad staff determine how to advise the program leader moving forward. However, it is important to note at this stage that any program organized and led by a Mercer University faculty member without the assistance of a third-party provider **MUST** begin and end within the established academic term dates. For example, a summer program may not begin before the official Summer 1 start date or end after the Summer 2 term begins. Please note that student financial aid awards for the program will be negatively impacted if the program start and/or end dates fall outside of an established academic term date.

Once the program is approved, a full itinerary must be completed before the program is approved for recruitment. Please consider the following questions in building the itinerary:

1. How do the planned activities serve the learning outcomes of the program?
2. Do any of the planned activities involve potential risk or liability; if so, are those risks covered by the University insurance policy, or are they excluded?
3. How will any scheduled student free time be managed?
4. Is the individual student cost (direct and indirect) of all planned activities included in the program budget?
5. Has the cost of faculty/leader participation in scheduled activities included in the budget?
6. If some costs are not included in the budget, how will students be made aware of the additional costs?
7. Are optional activities or activities with additional costs necessary for achieving the program/course objectives and learning outcomes?
8. Are all activities appropriate for students who may need accommodations?
9. Is the time allotted for each activity realistic?

### Budgeting

A frugal, yet all-inclusive budget is vital to both the success of the study abroad program recruitment, and student satisfaction. You can use the [Estimated Budget Worksheet](#) provided on the Mercer Abroad website under Faculty/Staff Resources for ease in calculating costs.

You will need to consider budgeting from two directions: the faculty program leader perspective, and the student/participant perspective. It is the student/participant budget you will need to use to recruit for your program as students need only know their individual costs, but it is the total program budget for which you will be ultimately responsible in reconciling.

Please consider the following questions in developing the PROGRAM BUDGET:

1. Have you considered all transportation needs: Flights, airport transfer (both ways), daily transportation in country, parking (in terms of additional costs), vehicle rentals, etc.?
2. Will students need/have access to laundry facilities? Are these costs included?
3. Have you considered all food and lodging needs?
4. Have the costs of each daily activity (entry fees, etc.) in the program itinerary been included?
5. Are all the travel expenses of program leaders budgeted for (flights, transportation, accommodations, meals, luggage fees, international cell phone plan, etc.) in the program fee?
6. Have you budgeted for marketing, tips, and incidentals?
7. Did you include the \$75 study abroad fee (to cover On Call International and application fee) for all of the students?

For spring break faculty-led programs, the most successful are able to keep the total program fee to \$3,000 or less per student and be all inclusive (flights, accommodations, in-country transportation, program excursions, most meals, study abroad fee, etc.).

For summer programs, the cost varies depending on location and time frame but try to shoot for around the \$3,000-\$3,500 range or less (flight not included).

Once the program budget is final and the individual student costs are determined, but BEFORE you begin recruiting for the program, please consider these additional questions in developing the STUDENT/PARTICIPANT BUDGET:

1. Is the cost of tuition included in the final individual student budget?
2. Are any costs NOT associated with the program budget included in the student budget (i.e.: flights, food, laundry, activity fees, souvenirs, etc.)?
3. Is it clear to the students what portion of the budget is fixed (i.e. tuition and program costs) vs. estimated (#2 in student participation budget)?
4. Is it clear to the parents what the total student cost will be for participation?

NOTE: The Mercer Abroad staff is ready to assist you in planning for the following budget-related issues:

1. Setting and managing deadlines for student deposits and program payments
2. Accessing and managing the program funds from abroad
3. Planning for cash advances and fund reimbursements
4. Managing the financial implications of student withdrawal from the program
5. Managing communication regarding student finances and the program budget

### Program Providers

Did you know that you can outsource the course development and/or travel planning for your study abroad program? There is an entire industry dedicated to building study abroad programs for faculty just like you. As you will see, there is a lot of planning and detail required when putting together a study abroad program. Although some faculty prefer to make all of the arrangements and schedules themselves, many other faculty members choose to work with a Mercer-approved program provider (also called vendors). Some vendors are for-profit businesses, and others are non-profit educational organizations. There is no right or wrong choice for how you develop your program; it's simply a matter of preference. Below are some of the pros and cons of working with a provider to help you plan.

### Benefits of Working with a Provider:

- Reduced faculty workload
- Potentially lower trip cost
- Access to local expertise
- Ability to negotiate best price

### Disadvantages of Working with a Provider:

- Trust is required
- Potentially higher costs

Depending on the company, the destination, the requested activities, and the number of students you are targeting for enrollment, prices vary. It's important to be aware that working with a provider means you may encounter administrative fees, commission costs, or other unexpected logistical costs. It's important to ask about these costs in the beginning stages of planning with a company so that you can anticipate overhead costs. Be forthcoming with your budget range. Providers are accustomed to working within financial limits and may be able to find discounts that you would not be eligible for on your own.

As you weigh the value of paying a program provider to assist in the planning of your program, be sure to take *your* time into account. How much time will it take for you to do the research, planning, booking, and budgeting? If you are unsure about whether or not you want to use a vendor, talk to the Mercer Abroad staff. We can connect you to one of our approved vendors,

assist you in getting the conversation started, help you shop around, and we can help you make the decision that is right for you.

### Program Provider Services

You can expect a range of services from providers. Take a look at the list below as you think about what kinds of activities you want to include in your program and keep these in mind for your preliminary conversations with a provider. Remember that there may be added costs for certain services, so ask about fees.

- **Planning and Pre-departure**
  - Planning and booking activities and excursions
  - Hosting orientations for faculty and/or students
  - Recommending/booking guest speakers and classroom locations
  - Making university connections
  - Finding adjuncts or co-teachers
  - Marketing the program and recruiting students
  - Making travel insurance arrangements
  - Booking travel (including airfare)
  - Collecting payments
- **In-Country Services**
  - Managing transportation logistics (for daily commutes or for excursions)
  - Managing unexpected crisis, healthcare, and safety
  - Managing accommodations and/or meals
  - Managing finances

### Approved Third-party Vendors

Mercer University has a policy and a process for engaging with third-party vendors, and Global Education is responsible for managing that process in terms of study abroad programming.

The following companies are approved providers for Mercer faculty-led study abroad programs. Feel free to research their offerings, or let us know if you'd like to discuss our experiences with these organizations.

- [Center for Cross Cultural Studies: Spanish Studies Abroad](#)
- [API](#)
- [AIFS](#)
- [CIS Abroad](#)
- [ISA: International Studies Abroad](#)
- [CAPA: The Global Education Network](#)

These vendors are approved because we have experience working with them, have long-term relationships with them, and have signed agreements already on file with them. If you have found a provider that is not listed above, please contact us about using that vendor before signing any agreements. We will need to work with you to have the vendor of your choice appropriately approved.

### Proposal Process

All programs must be formally proposed and approved through the Mercer Abroad office. The office of Global Education website includes a page for [faculty-led study abroad](#). This is a great

resource for reviewing the process and downloading the forms necessary for submitting a complete proposal.

Below is a checklist of each of the components required and optional for a complete proposal:

- [Faculty-led Study Abroad Program Proposal](#)
- Vendor Proposal (if applicable)
- [Program Budget Worksheet](#)
- [Volunteer Agreement \(If applicable\)](#)
- Course Syllabus/Syllabi
- Draft Itinerary

If you have run the same program in previous years, you will still need to attach all the necessary documents to your proposal upon submission. Please be up to date on all documents for the proposed term. Documents from previous programs will not be accepted if not appropriately updated.

## Program Participants

All persons associated with any Mercer University faculty led program must fall within one of the following defined participant categories: 1) program leader, 2) Mercer student, 3) non-Mercer student, or 4) Lifelong learner.

The lead faculty member proposing the program is responsible for ensuring that every associated person adheres to the guidelines for the appropriate participant category. Faculty members who allow participation falling outside of these guidelines may lose the privilege of leading future programs abroad.

### Program Leaders

All faculty led programs abroad require at least **two** program leaders to ensure student safety and program quality. The primary leader shall be the faculty member proposing the course and shall be the primary teaching faculty member for the associated course. Regarding the secondary leader, a variety of options is available for fulfilling this requirement:

1. Assisting person (1 course)
  - a. Assisting faculty member or adjunct faculty
  - b. Mercer University staff member
  - c. Approved volunteer
  - d. Program provider support person
2. Secondary teaching faculty member (2+ courses)

While it is preferable that the primary leader on the program is a full-time faculty member of one of Mercer's 12 colleges or schools, adjunct faculty have led programs abroad. Adjunct faculty who wish to lead programs should have a conversation with the dean of the college or school before approaching the Mercer Abroad office with a program proposal.

Other points to keep in mind regarding program leadership include the following:

1. Best practices recommend a student to faculty ratio of 10: 1. Our policy requires at least two program leaders. Programs exceeding 20 participants should include a third faculty leader or support person.

2. Programs with a student: faculty ratio smaller than 8:1 may not be financially feasible.
3. The Mercer Abroad office does not offer financial compensation for program leadership.
4. Compensation for teaching faculty and non-teaching faculty leaders alike should be determined by the department chair or dean of the faculty member's college.
5. Secondary faculty do not necessarily need to teach a course for the program.
6. University staff members must receive supervisor approval before signing on to a program proposal.
7. No compensation will be provided for non-faculty members outside of travel expenses.
8. Approval of volunteer leaders rests of the candidate's ability to meet the following requirements:
  - a. Possess relevant expertise such as credentials in the academic subject, cultural competency in the proposed location, etc.
  - b. Pass a background check
  - c. Agree to perform responsibilities as specified by the program leader in the volunteer proposal and agreement document

### **Mercer Students**

All undergraduate, graduate, and professional degree-seeking students enrolled at Mercer University and participating in a faculty-led study abroad program must be enrolled in the course(s) associated with the program.

The minimum University requirements for student eligibility for participation in study abroad programming include 1) students are maintaining a minimum 2.5 GPA, and 2) students are in good academic and financial standing with the university. Faculty leaders have the authority to accept or decline program participants, as long as students meet these minimum eligibility standards. Faculty leaders may choose to add additional requirements student eligibility for program participation as long as those requirements do not conflict with University or governmental policies regarding student participation in educational activities.

Part-time students are eligible to apply to participate in study abroad programs; however, part-time student applications may not be considered until all full-time student applications have been reviewed. Full-time students meeting all eligibility requirements may not be excluded from participation based on a part-time student's placement in the program.

### **Student Leaders**

It is somewhat common practice for faculty to invite students who have participated in the program abroad in the past to participate again in a leadership role. This practice is supported as long as two conditions are met:

1. The cost of the student leader does not increase the cost of any participating students—this typically means that student leaders are required to pay all associated program fees, equal to those of the enrolled students.
2. Student leaders are receiving academic credit for the leadership experience. CLA ISA 101 may be used for such purposes if no internship course, independent study course, or other leadership-type course is available within the college.

## Non-Mercer Students

Students from other schools must [apply for transient student status](#) in order to participate. No exceptions are available for this rule. The purpose of the rule is to ensure consistency in program advising and to ensure compliance with federal financial aid regulations.

## Lifelong Learners

If faculty leaders would like to invite non-students, such as alumni, community members, or professionals in a field related to the academic field of study associated with the program, to participate in a faculty-led study abroad program the guests must be enrolled in the Lifelong Learner Enrichment Abroad Program.

All LLEA program participants will have access to the Canvas course(s) associated with the program and will be required to adhere to the same behavioral and procedural guidelines as the students enrolled in the course. Any LLEA program to be associated with a faculty-led study abroad program must be proposed at the same time the program is proposed in order to allow for proper set-up and management of the program.

Lifelong Learners will also need to [create a profile](#) on the Mercer Abroad website and complete a program application as a non-Mercer student.

The fee for the program will vary from college to college and program to program. Participants will pay for the LLEA program via the University's E-Store.

The participation of Lifelong Learners in any program shall neither displace any degree-seeking student from participation nor increase the program cost for any degree students.

Lifelong Learner participants shall not share accommodations with students. Should Lifelong Learners require individual housing, any additional costs for the deviation from student housing will be at the Lifelong Learner's personal expense.

## Spouses/Partners

Spouses/partners will be required to create a profile on the Mercer Abroad website and register as a Lifelong Learner. The spouse/partner must pay all the associated travel fees for the program, and may be required to pay an additional Lifelong Learner fee.

The participation of any spouse/partner shall not disallow any degree-seeking student from participation. Additionally, the cost of spousal/partner participation shall not increase the program costs for degree-seeking students.

Spouses/partners may share accommodations with the faculty leader. However, only the cost of single housing accommodations for the faculty member will be included in the program budget from which student participant costs are derived. Any additional costs for upgrading living space to accommodate for a spouse or partner must be covered as a personal expense for the program leader or spouse/partner.

Faculty leaders and their spouses or partners shall not share accommodations with students. Should spouses/partners require individual housing, any additional costs will be at their personal expense.

## Minor Children

Traditional, short-term faculty led study abroad programs are typically not designed to accommodate young children. Faculty leaders who wish to bring minor children with them on a study abroad program must arrange for adult supervision of the children that does not involve the leadership team of the program. Neither the child nor the child's appointed guardian may displace a Mercer student on the program.

Spouses, partners, or other trusted adults who will accompany faculty in order to supervise minor children must enroll in the program as a Lifelong Learner, especially if the adult supervisor and minor children will be accompanying the program for all events. Any participation expenses for minor children and their supervising adult must be paid at the expense of the parent of the children.

We strongly discourage Lifelong Learner program participants from bringing minor children along. However, if a Lifelong Learner intends to join the group periodically while vacationing with family in the same location, then the Lifelong Learner shall arrange for housing and transportation independently from the program. In this case, the Lifelong Learner will be exempt from those portions of the program fees. Also, in this case, the supervisor and children shall not be considered part of the program or covered by any crisis management insurance for the group. The Lifelong Learner will be required to complete a statement of understanding regarding his/her own participation and the presence of his/her family members as non-participants.

In all cases, the presence of minor children or other traveling companions must not disrupt the learning experience for the enrolled students. Additionally, at no time should any enrolled undergraduate, graduate, or professional student be asked or expected to assume responsibility for the wellbeing or safety of another person's child/children.

## Marketing

Faculty leader engagement in recruitment is pivotal in achieving desired program enrollment.

The success of a study abroad program hinges on whether or not enough students participate in the program to meet both budgetary needs and academic outcomes of the program. Knowing your audience during the beginning stages of program development will facilitate methods for attracting students to your program, once the proposal phase of the process is complete.

One vital point to remember is that not all students who express interest in the program initially will follow through with committing and participating. Set your recruitment goal higher than your enrollment goal to ensure you meet your target.

In sales, it is often said that it takes 7 points of contact before a deal is closed. Keep this in mind when planning your marketing strategy. Don't go for just one option. Pick several strategies that will first introduce students to your program and then encourage them to sign up.

Faculty leaders who want to be reimbursed for their marketing expenses must build the cost into their program budgets. This can cover items such as printing, food, etc.

Feeling lost? See the [Recruitment Planning Worksheet](#) for detailed points of consideration. Additionally, Mercer Abroad staff can assist in the development and implementation of the recruitment plan, including designing advertisements and conducting information sessions.



Below is a break-down of what you can expect from us and what we expect from you in terms of recruiting responsibilities:

### **Mercer Abroad Recruiting Tasks**

Here is a list of some of the promotion strategies that the Mercer Abroad Office can do on your behalf to get the word out about your program:

1. List the program on the study abroad website: [www.mercerabroad.com](http://www.mercerabroad.com).
2. Post about the program on Mercer Abroad social media pages (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter).
3. Create and/or post program flyers (around campus, on social media, in the study abroad office, etc.).
4. Hold study abroad fairs held at the beginning of both fall and spring semesters.
5. Present about study abroad in general and/or talk specifically about your study abroad program, including financial aid options, during class visits.
6. Recruit and train study abroad ambassadors to share their experiences with their peers.
7. Talk about your program during advising sessions with students.
8. Send out emails to campus connections.
9. Post in consortium of universities about your program, if you are open to outside students.

### **Program Leader Recruiting Tasks**

Below are listed some suggestions for ways in which you can market your own program.

1. Add a link to your program listing on the Mercer Abroad website in your email signature.
2. Add an advertisement for the program to each of your current Canvas courses, and include a link to the program application on the Mercer Abroad website.
3. Attend the study abroad fairs. Mercer Abroad will provide you with a table. You may want to bring your own promotional materials, photos, souvenirs from your destination, and maybe treats to hand out to the students.
4. Reserve a table in the Connell Student Center to catch the attention of students coming and going from lunch and answer questions about the program.
5. Post on social media about your program. Consider developing an Instagram account for your program if you haven't already. Make sure to tag @mercerabroad in your posts and Mercer Abroad will share it on our social media stories as well.
6. Add your program to the University calendar online with a link to the program listing on the Mercer Abroad website
7. Ask other faculty members if you can visit their classes to talk about your program or distribute a flyer.
8. Ask former participants to present their experience in your current classes.
9. Create and distribute/post program flyers.

## **Student Application and Course Registration**

### **Terra Dotta**

All students, including non-Mercer students, student volunteers, and Lifelong Learners, must apply for faculty-led study abroad programs through the [Mercer Abroad website](http://www.mercerabroad.com). This platform allows us to manage student participation records and all documents associated with the

student application and participation, including copies of student passports and emergency contact information. Faculty leaders have the option of using the platform to review applications. We will provide training for faculty members interesting in using this platform.

### Nexus and MyMercer

Mercer Abroad will work with the associate dean of each participating college to ensure that the courses associated with a faculty-led program abroad are correctly coded and added to the appropriate term in Nexus. Faculty members are responsible for advising students on which course codes to register for.

Faculty members should verify that the course listing is included in the schedule of courses for the term before student registration begins. Additionally, faculty members should unlock registration permissions for students who have been accepted into the program.

All matriculated Mercer University students will need to complete the [Faculty-led Program Degree Audit](#) form to ensure that their program participation is eligible for financial aid funding.

When the semester or summer term registration opens, students must register for the academic course(s) associated with their study abroad program. Failure to register appropriately may jeopardize student financial aid and program safety in the event of a crisis; therefore, the Mercer Abroad office will work with the faculty member to reconcile registration rolls. **All students must be appropriately registered by the program orientation date.**

## Student Payments

Once program leaders have decided to accept a student's application, the Mercer Abroad office will add a non-refundable \$575 fee, which includes the \$75 study abroad fee and a \$500 program deposit fee, to the student's account. Students will be able to pay these fees through the MyMercer portal. Once the deposit has been paid, the Mercer Abroad office will then add the remaining program fee to the student's account.

If students have holds on their accounts, then they must satisfy requirements for that hold before making study abroad payments.

Theoretically, as soon as students pay the fees, the funds will be available for the faculty member in order to pay program expenses. However, should a student carry a balance on their account, any fees the student submits to Mercer University will first be attached to the student's debt. This means that funds for a program may not actually be available even when all students have paid their deposits. The Mercer Abroad office will monitor the students' accounts carefully and communicate with the faculty leader regarding the availability of funds. We will also be sure to make students aware of these complications in terms of making study abroad program deposits or paying program fees. Ultimately, at the time of departure, if a student account is outstanding and the student had not enrolled in a payment plan, the student will be prohibited from participating in the study abroad program. We require the faculty leader's assistance in enforcing this policy.

### Financial Aid

In developing your study abroad program, it's important to be mindful of how your targeted student market will finance program participation.

In order for students to be eligible for federal financial aid, they must be taking courses that count toward their degree. Mercer Abroad requires the [Faculty-led Program Degree Audit](#) form to be completed by the student and verified by the academic advisor in order to clearly determine whether or not the program course credit is applicable toward the student's degree to confirm degree credit.

Additionally, students MUST be enrolled full-time, either in the summer (6 credits) or during an academic semester (12 credits), in order to be eligible for financial aid, which may be applied to the program fees portion of the study abroad program costs in addition to tuition costs.

If a study abroad program occurs during the regular fall or spring semester, such as over spring break, tuition for the credit hours associated with the study abroad program will be included in the regular semester tuition for full-time students. It's important for students to be mindful of the semester load. If the study abroad program adds credit that exceeds the 18-hour limit for the semester tuition rate, students will be charged for any additional credits at the per hour rate.

In addition to traditional federal and state financial aid, some students may be eligible for scholarship or grants for study abroad. The Gilman scholarship, which is available to Pell Grant eligible students, is a competitive scholarship for programs that are at least 21 days in duration. Mercer students have been very successful in achieving these scholarships in recent years.

For a full list of study abroad scholarship options, please direct inquiries to either the [Mercer Abroad office](#) or the [Office of Fellowships and Scholarships](#).

### Medical and Travel Insurance

All faculty and students participating in Mercer University programs and activities abroad are required to be enrolled in a comprehensive international insurance plan. Faculty who are covered through Core, and students who are enrolled in the Mercer University student insurance (MUSHIP) have coverage that meets these requirements.

All faculty and students who are not enrolled in Core or MUSHIP must verify that their private insurance policies cover any medical expenses they may incur while abroad, especially those that would be unrelated to travel, such as appendicitis. Students are required to submit a form through Terra Dotta verifying that their current medical insurance covers treatment and hospitalization abroad.

Mercer University is enrolled in a travel assistance program managed by On Call International. This is not an insurance policy, but it does provide logistical assistance in crisis situations. This emergency management policy is not in any way a substitute for medical insurance. Once faculty proposals have been accepted, the Mercer Abroad office will orient the faculty to the benefits and limits of On Call International's services and provide instructions for its use.

Mercer University does not insure faculty or students' property while abroad. Students should investigate their parents' homeowner's insurance to verify if all the items to be brought on the trip will be covered by their policy. It is recommended that all valuable items (e.g. cell phones, laptops) be insured for the entire duration of their stay abroad or simply left at home when travelling. Any loss of cash obtained through a faculty cash advance is the faculty's responsibility. If cash is stolen, the faculty leader should file a police report.

Students and program participants should consider purchasing trip cancellation insurance. Trip cancellation insurance is effective in the case of a sudden illness or injury that necessitates canceling or interrupting a program. Most policies provide this coverage in instances of a wide variety of unforeseen events.

## **Program Financial Accounting**

Mercer Abroad staff will assist faculty in managing the accounting of their study abroad programs, but the responsibility for the program finances ultimately falls upon the faculty leader's shoulders. Many issues require the program leader's attention to ensure that the program runs smoothly and funds are accounted for appropriately.

### **Service Contracts**

If you are working with a third party, contracts need to be sent to the Office of Global Education to be reviewed and funneled through the contract approval process, which includes a review by Mercer University's general counsel and approval by the Chief Financial Officer.

Most vendors are paid through an RFP (Request for Payment) process. Through this process, either a check is cut or a bank transfer is arranged. In some cases, vendors may be paid with a University purchasing card. Mercer Abroad will initiate all RFPs and manage the approval process for these payments. All vendors paid through this method will need to submit a current W-9 IRS tax form before funds may be dispersed.

### **Managing Program Costs**

There are a variety of ways in which to pay for program costs. Below are listed the possible payment methods along with instructions.

### **Requests for Payment for Program Funds**

The Mercer Abroad Office can process invoices for third-party payments using program funds. We will communicate with faculty leaders regularly regarding what portion of student payments is available for use. Please keep in mind that these request for payments typically require at least two weeks for processing. Submitted invoices must be complete, including addresses, amounts, and payment instructions, and be accompanied by a current W9 (for domestic businesses). The University can either disperse requested funds via check or wire transfer.

### **Cash Advances of Program Funds**

Some destinations in the world are still cash dependent, and we fully expect that some faculty leaders will need to travel with cash. Faculty leaders may work with the Mercer Abroad office to request a cash advance on the program funds. This request must be made no less than one month before program departure. Plan early!

All cash advance requests must include a description of how the faculty leader plans to use the funds. Cash advances that exceed \$1,000 require especially detailed justifications, including invoices when possible.

The reconciliation of cash advances requires that faculty leaders submit original receipts for all transactions. **Any cash that cannot be officially accounted for with receipts will require repayment from the faculty program leader.** If you suspect that paper receipts will be difficult to obtain in your location, the Mercer Abroad office can supply you with a receipt book.

## Faculty Reimbursement

Program leaders may choose to pay for expenses with personal funds. In this case, faculty may submit a travel reconciliation form to the Mercer Abroad office at the conclusion of the program to request reimbursement. In order to be approved for reimbursement, all expenses must be accompanied by original receipts. The University does not reimburse for personal items or controlled substances such as alcohol. Please see the University's [travel reimbursement policy](#) for details.

Additional fees, such as international transaction fees, are not reimbursable expenses. Therefore, if you plan on using your own credit card abroad, please be mindful of international fees. Check with your bank before going and make sure to let them know the dates that you will be overseas.

## University Purchasing Cards

Using a University purchasing card for a study abroad program is an option, but it doesn't come without complications. There are essentially two options for faculty members to use purchasing cards (p-cards): 1) If they already have a card assigned through the academic department, that may be used, or 2) they can apply for a card specifically for use with study abroad programs.

NOTE: If you decide to use a p-card overseas, be mindful of international fees. Check with Purchasing before departure to find out what you might be personally responsible for in terms of reconciling the purchases.

You will also need to contact the bank before departure and submit your travel destinations and dates to ensure the account is not locked for fraudulent activity while you are abroad.

### *Departmental Cards*

If a faculty leader wants to use their departmental p-card, they must discuss this with the department chair. The charges going on to the card will always default to the department's budget, and unless the purchases are coded correctly to reflect the study abroad program budget at the end of the month during p-card reconciliation, the department's resources will be impacted. Should this happen, the mistake can be corrected via interdepartmental transfer, but these processes may be time sensitive and can sometimes result in a loss of funds for either the department or the University. Only the most fiscally responsible faculty members with an understanding of the budget reconciliation process should consider this option.

If a department chair chooses to allow department funds to be used to pay invoices and reimburse the department with funds from the study abroad account at a later date, this information must be communicated to the Mercer Abroad office beforehand. The Mercer Abroad office will need to sign off on any transfer of funds from a study abroad program account to a departmental account. In order for any funds to be reconciled, all receipts are required, along with a description and dollar amount for each transaction.

## Study Abroad Program Cards

If a faculty leader does not have a p-card and does not want to use a personal credit card for incidental payments during the program, they can work with the Mercer Abroad office to request a card for use during the program. The assistant director of Global Education will need to sign off on the request form. Study abroad p-cards will be turned on prior to departure and then turned off again once reconciliation is complete.

## Reconciliation

Faculty/staff program leaders should submit the Travel Expense Report form with corresponding receipts to Mercer Abroad within 30 days of program end date. All receipts should be originals. Tape all receipts in chronological order by section (i.e. Mercer p-card, Cash Advance), to 8.5x11 pieces of paper, and include a written description of the purpose of the purchase on each receipt, or in the white space next to the receipt. Submit these receipts with the Travel Expense Report form on top to the office of Global Education. Please contact Mercer Abroad regarding additional questions on completing the [Travel Expense Report](#).

## Refunds

All students who complete the online application for a study abroad program at Mercer University are assessed a \$75 study abroad fee. This fee is non-refundable, unless the program is canceled before the deposit payment deadline due to under-enrollment.

The \$75 fee is attached to the \$500 program deposit fee that students are assessed when accepted to a program. This \$500 deposit is part of the total program fee and is non-refundable after the deposit deadline. Should a program be canceled due to unforeseen circumstances, student refunds will be dispersed based on recoverable funds only and may not equal the full \$500.

Students intending to withdraw from a faculty led study abroad program must notify the study abroad office in writing by emailing [studyabroad@mercer.edu](mailto:studyabroad@mercer.edu) in order to be eligible for any refund or partial refund of the program fee balance. This includes any required withdrawal due to academic or disciplinary misconduct.

In the event that a program is canceled due to events beyond the University's control, all recoverable funds will be returned to students, with the exception of the study abroad fee. The \$75 non-refundable fee can be applied to future program applications.

Upon return from the successful completion of a program and account reconciliations, any remaining funds in the excess of \$50 per person will be refunded to the students. Should the account balance be equal than less than \$50 per participant, faculty may apply the surplus to fund program related activities such as serving food at a debrief, dining out together, or creating t-shirts. All unused funds not returned to the students will be assumed by the University at the end of the fiscal year. No funds may be saved for future programs, according to accounting regulations.

The Mercer Abroad staff will work with the Bursar's Office to process student refunds.

## Workshop for Program Leaders

At the beginning of each spring semester, the Office of Global Education will host a workshop for faculty-led study abroad program leaders. This workshop is mandatory for program leaders who have program departure dates scheduled for that calendar year and will include the following:

- Emergency and crisis management training (to include Title IX and Clery Act)
- Disability and diversity training
- Study abroad resources (including time for seasoned faculty-led program veterans to give tips to new program leaders)

- Questions and feedback for the Office of Global Education

Details will be sent out to faculty with approved programs towards the end of the fall semester by Mercer Abroad.

## **Pre-Departure Orientation**

University policy requires that faculty and staff program leaders must provide country or site-specific safety sessions with students before a program departs from the United States. You may be asked to do a second session once you reach the country, too. Please make sure to coordinate your session with the Office of Global Education.

### **Faculty/Program Topics:**

- Country-specific info
  - Visa & vaccine requirements (Be mindful that some international students may have visa requirements that differ from U.S. citizens)
  - Travel: arrival and departure, itinerary, etc.
  - Housing
  - Packing list
  - Laundry services
  - Phones & internet
  - Money (currency exchange, debit/credit cards, etc.)
  - Food
  - Culture & etiquette
  - Emergency info, plan
- Course information
- Program policies

### **Mercer Abroad Topics:**

- Business items (applications complete, fees paid, etc.)
- General health & safety abroad
  - Title IX
  - University policies
  - STEP ([Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#))
- General travel tips

### **STEP**

Both students and program leaders should register for [STEP](#) (Smart Traveler Enrollment Program) before leaving for their study abroad program. Provided through the U.S. Department of State, this service allows the closest U.S. Embassy or Consulate to be able to help U.S. citizens overseas in case of an emergency. The Embassy will also provide enrollees with updates about the safety conditions of their country of destination.

### **Emergency Contact Info**

Program leaders should send their emergency contact information to the Mercer Abroad Office before leaving on the study abroad program. The Mercer Abroad Office will reach out at least a month in advance with a form for the program leaders to complete. This form requires the

following information: overseas contact info (including the addresses of all overnight locations), final itinerary, and flight and passport information.

As a part of their initial application, students will fill out an emergency contact information form. Once they have officially been accepted to the program, the Mercer Abroad office will change their status on Terra Dotta to “accepted,” at which point they must submit passport information and the pre- and post-travel intent form.

## Program Logistics

### Initial and End Travel

Faculty leaders have the option of traveling to and from the program location with the group or requiring students to travel independently and meet on location on a specific date at a specific time. Typically, when faculty travel together with the group, the program fees include flight costs.

Airplane tickets can be booked by the faculty leaders, a third-party provider, or by Mercer Abroad. If the program has enough students, group flights can be purchased, which allows you to hold seats at a lower rate with a deposit. This can also give you flexibility to change the number of tickets or names for the tickets for an extended period of time before departure.

Faculty leaders may arrange transportation to and from the Atlanta airport with students, or require program participants to gather at the airport. If you are planning on traveling to the airport with students, please make sure to carefully consider the vehicle rental policy listed below.

While public transportation from the destination airport to overnight accommodations may be available, consider whether this is a feasible expectation for the group upon arrival. You may want to book a charter bus (also called a group coach) to initially transport the group and the group’s luggage.

If you are planning to use public transportation, be sure to check accessibility from the airport, fare cost, and accessibility to your overnight accommodations. You’ll also want to know if you need to change currency before you purchase a ticket and *how* to purchase a ticket.

**REMEMBER** – many students have not experienced public transportation before and may not understand how it works. If this is your travel plan, be sure to brief your students in their pre-departure orientation on what to expect.

Taxis are also a common transportation option. If you want to recommend taxi transport to students, identify a few trustworthy taxi companies that students can hire. Depending on the destination country, there may or may not be regulation on taxi fare and charges. Be sure to find out, and if fares are negotiable you will want to know what a reasonable fare is for the distance from the airport to your accommodation. You also want to make sure and find out whether fares can be paid with credit cards or cash only. *Review the Department of State travel information for your destination to ensure travel via taxi is safe before you recommend it, especially if students are traveling alone.*

### On-site Orientation

Once you have arrived in-country with your students, it is best to do an on-site orientation the first or second day that you are there. This orientation should provide students with location



specifics, such as housing, safety, geography, program guidelines, and cultural adjustment. If you are working with a third-party provider they will most likely already have this planned in your schedule.

## Vehicle Rental

If you plan to rent a vehicle during your program, whether it is to transport just you or to transport you and your students, you **must** acquire Mercer University Approved Driver status **before** you leave the United States. Drivers who are not Mercer Approved Drivers are not authorized to drive vehicles for Mercer business reasons. This means that if you rent a car and get into an accident while leading a program, Mercer insurance will not cover the costs associated with the accident, either to property or person.

Getting your Approved Driver card is straightforward. The process is overseen by the Benefits Office. You can view the policy and download the application here: [Mercer University Approved Driver Application](#).

The preferred vendor for rental vehicles, if renting from Macon, is Economy Rent-A-Car on Riverside Dr. If renting out of anywhere but Macon, Enterprise is the preferred vendor. We have standing agreements with these vendors for superior rates and also terms within the agreements to offset some insurance costs. When renting domestically through either of these vendors “buying extra insurance” at the time of the rental is not necessary.

Just a note – if you plan to rent a vehicle outside of the United States, **always** purchase full insurance, if available, from the rental vendor. The laws of other countries (including insurance laws) vary from country to country, so to keep things simple and safe, it is best to buy the insurance on a foreign rental. Don’t forget to calculate this cost in your budget!

## Accidents

In the event of an accident in any scenario, Mercer personnel should do the following in this order:

1. If there is any medical emergency as a result of the accident (to yourself or others) dial the local equivalent of 911 to access first responders.
2. Contact local authorities, (i.e. police) to document the accident. This includes foreign authorities if overseas. If the accident is on Mercer campus, contact Mercer Police.
3. Contact the Office of Global Education immediately.
4. Before leaving any accident site, take pictures of all vehicles or relevant evidence involved (pothole, hazard, etc.).
5. If not already done in step 2, contact MERPO or the Mercer Office of Benefits & Payroll to file an internal Mercer incident report.
6. Complete a [Program Incident Report Form](#)

## Emergency Information

Of utmost importance when undertaking any of these types of programs or activities is the health and safety of the participants. The following guidelines for crisis management apply to all programs involving Mercer community members, i.e. faculty, staff and students, abroad.

In case of an emergency, the course of action must be based on accurate information. Emergencies can include political unrest, acts of terrorism, natural disasters, accidents, arrests,

personal attacks, sexual harassment and assault, severe illness, psychological emergencies, animal bites or lost documents. While each emergency situation requires a unique action plan specific to the event at hand, there are some basic steps that help in assessing the situation and establishing an appropriate course of action.

## Crisis Response

There are established procedures for a variety of crisis situations ranging from medical emergencies to the death of a faculty member or student. You can find specific crisis management protocols and case studies in the [Faculty-Led Study Abroad Training](#) Canvas course.

Although there are some specific steps required depending on the type of crisis, you should note that there are essentially three phases to crisis management when leading a study abroad program:

### 1. Assess the situation.

How serious is it? Do you need to call emergency services? Are you or your students in immediate danger? What steps do you need to take immediately?

### 2. Secure your students.

Whether the crisis involved one student or the entire group, you need to prioritize the safety and security of the students. This is why all trips must have at least two faculty/chaperones.

### 3. Communicate with each other, with local authorities, with the U.S. State Department, and with Mercer.

Always, *always*, always keep Mercer Abroad abreast of any developments in crisis situations. We can provide advice, support, and other resources depending upon the type of situation. If the need arises, we can also send a staff person to meet you in-country for additional support.

**Remember:** when managing a crisis, document your actions! Submit an Incident Report Form to the Office of Global Education as soon as possible.

**DOWNLOAD** Mercer Abroad's [Crisis Response Plan](#) to your phone for quick access to guidance and important contact information while you are abroad!

## On Call International

On Call is a vendor that provides travel risk management assistance services. Mercer University partners with On Call to provide you with access to immediate support should you experience any challenges when you are traveling. We want to make sure you have access to expert guidance in program preparation and in navigating any crisis so that you can continue your academic travels and get home safely.

Not only does On Call provide pre-departure assessment and information, On Call also assists during critical emergencies like critical illness, injury or assault, and in situations that may result in an evacuation to a location that has adequate care. They can also assist with smaller problems such as returning home to join sick family members, lost or stolen document replacement, and assistance with locating lost luggage.

## The Mercer Abroad Office

should be one of your first points of contact in case of an emergency. Emily Dunn, the assistant director of Global Education, is the primary emergency contact. You can reach the Study Abroad Office at (478) 301-5964 or [studyabroad@mercer.edu](mailto:studyabroad@mercer.edu).

## Federal and University Policies

Program leaders must be mindful of all stakeholder policies that may govern student participation in a study abroad program or govern the University's response to incidents that occur during a program abroad. A lack of awareness of such policies does not eliminate the University from any liabilities associated with these policies. Additionally, including the consideration of these policies during the program planning stage is a way to ensure that all students are provided with equal opportunities to Mercer Abroad experiences.

### Title IX

*No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.* --Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972

Not only do Title IX regulations govern equal opportunity for all students, but they also govern the University's response to instances of reported sexual discrimination or assault.

We will provide a detailed overview of the implications of Title IX during the spring workshop for program leaders. In the meantime, it's important to remember that all Mercer University employees are mandatory reporters and are expected to immediately report any violation of Title IX as soon as they become aware of it. Only the university minister and CAPS (Counseling and Psychological Services) are exempt from this. Faculty members must respond appropriately in the event of sexual assault during a study abroad program.

For more information, please contact Mercer's Title IX Coordinator:

**Sharon Stellato, JD**, (478) 301-2788, [stellato\\_sl@mercer.edu](mailto:stellato_sl@mercer.edu)

### The Clery Act

In 2013, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was reauthorized and included amendments to section 485(f) of the Higher Education Act (HEA), otherwise known as the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act. These amendments have specific implications for study abroad, as discussed in the [Handbook for Campus Safety and Security Reporting](#). In order to comply with the regulations of the Clery Act, Mercer University must make a good faith effort to report crime statistics for locations where our faculty led programs will occur.

Your role in this compliance is simple. You MUST report the mailing address(es) for all locations where you lodge for one night or longer during your program and report the number of nights you stayed in the location(s). The Mercer Abroad office will work with Mercer's office of the General Counsel to manage the remaining tasks associated with this compliance.

### FERPA

All student records and activities related to a study abroad program fall under the protection of FERPA.

The Family Educational Rights and Protection Act (FERPA) of 1974:

1. Permits students to inspect their education records
2. Limits disclosure to others of personally identifiable information from education records without the student's prior written consent to such disclosure
3. Provides students the opportunity to seek correction of their education records where appropriate

According to FERPA, educational records are defined as those records directly related to a student and maintained by the institution or by a party acting for or authorized to keep records for the institution. They may be handwritten or in the form of print, magnetic tape, disks, film, on-line computer access files, or some other medium contained in records, files, documents, and all other data directly related to students.

If you intend to discuss a student's participation with a parent or guardian, please make sure that that person has been authorized by the student to have access to his or her educational records. If you intend to share aspects of your program via social media, please consider having students complete a [media release form](#) to ensure that you are not violating any of your students' privacy rights by using their images in your posts.

### **Student Accommodations**

Students with approved accommodations through the Mercer University's Access and Accommodations Office are encouraged to participate in study abroad programs. Should any student seek special accommodations for a study abroad program, the Access and Accommodations Office will contact the instructor and/or the Mercer Abroad office to ensure the students' needs are met. All faculty must include a disability statement on their syllabi, as outlined by the Access and Accommodations Office.

### **Student Code of Conduct**

Students are expected to adhere to the code of conduct outlined in the Mercer University Student Handbook while on a study abroad program. The policies apply to all students regardless of geographical location.

### **Travel Beyond Program Dates**

Students traveling separately from the group prior to or following the program dates are required to complete the Travel Intent Form within their program application in the study abroad portal, Terra Dotta.

Faculty travel with students beyond the dates of the program and to venues outside the program itinerary must be requested in writing and approved in writing by the Office of Global Education. The request should be submitted at least 60 days prior to departure and should include a detailed description of the non-program travel and the names of the students participating.

### **International Travel with Students (Non-Course Related)**

From time to time, faculty will travel with students for non-study purposes. These occasions should be rare, and must be approved by a University official and documented appropriately. Examples of such instances include attending a conference abroad or participating in special service-related programs through *Mercer On Mission*.

In the event that approval is gained for traveling with students for non-course-related programming, the following guidelines apply:

Each traveler, faculty, staff, and/or student, must register the travel at least one week in advance of the departure date through the [Travel Registry Website](#).

When registering your travel, be sure to complete ALL THREE travel registry sections:

1. Travel Abroad Registration
2. Trip Information
3. Contact Information

Registered faculty, staff, and students will be contacted by the Mercer Abroad Office for consultation regarding safety and security abroad.

All registered University community members will have access to the University's emergency assistance program and will receive the benefit of services provided by On Call International.

**Faculty and staff who do not register their travel risk denial of financial reimbursement requests.**

Faculty and staff are strongly encouraged to do the following prior to departure for the non-credit University-sponsored international travel:

1. Register with the [Department of State Smart Traveler Program](#)
2. Review terms of usage for On Call International
3. Review expense reimbursement policy for departments, programs, and the accounting office. Submission of original receipts is required for expense reimbursement, p-card, and cash advance reconciliation.

Finally, faculty traveling with students for non-course related purposes are considered chaperones, and must be mindful of the following responsibilities for student safety and support:

- Faculty and staff chaperoning students must review emergency management and crisis management information.
- Faculty and staff chaperoning students must be up-to-date with Title IX training.
- Faculty and staff must ensure that all students participating in the non-course activity also register their travel through the [Travel Registry Website](#).
- Chaperoning faculty and staff must ensure that students register with the [Department of State Smart Traveler Program](#)
- Chaperoning faculty and staff must review terms of usage for On Call International and Emergency Management Plan with participating students.
- Should any incidents of misbehavior or the compromise of student health or safety occur during the travel, faculty must submit an incident report to the office of Global Education within 15 days of return.
- Any non-university persons wishing to act as a program chaperone must undergo Mercer Abroad approval and clear a background check.

## Developing International Partnerships and Agreements

If the purpose of international travel is to begin a relationship with another institution, review the Office of Global Education website to ensure understanding of the [approval process](#) for agreements with international institutions and [contact us](#) for the appropriate paperwork.

## Program Reports

A program report should be submitted by the primary program leader to Mercer Abroad office within 30 days of program completion. The Mercer Abroad office will send returned faculty a link to a Qualtrics survey which serves as the program report. Failure to submit this survey may prohibit future program leadership.

## Program Assessment

Study abroad program assessment is multi-faceted. One type of assessment might measure student satisfaction with the organization of the program, the costs associated with the program, and the students' perceived value of the program.

Another common assessment practice is measuring learning outcomes associated with intercultural competence, language acquisition, or other outcomes typically associated with study abroad programming as a high impact practice in order to benchmark an institution's success in delivering a valuable education to its students and to add to the discourse in the field of education abroad.

While Mercer Abroad does not currently independently assess learning outcomes for study abroad programs, we strongly encourage faculty to consider including appropriate global learning goals that incorporate outcomes and assessment from the Association of American Colleges and Universities [Global Learning Value Rubric](#).

It is common for the assessment of programs abroad to be qualitative in nature. Some assessments are driven by surveys, others employ focus groups or interviews with returned students. Additionally, some institutions rely on trusted, standardized measurements such as the [Global Perspectives Inventory](#), or the [Intercultural Development Inventory](#) to specifically measure students' growth in developing globally-minded attitudes.

Faculty leaders may want to do individual program assessment or focus program assessment on a specific research question. Whatever assessment you choose to pursue with your program, it is important that the tool be decided upon and fully developed before the start of the program recruitment, especially if IRB approval is necessary.

If you have any questions regarding the assessment of your program, or if you are interested in collaborating with the Office of Global Education to develop, administer, and/or analyze your assessment, please let us know. We would be happy to assist.

## Appendices

- A. [Program Development Guidelines](#)
- B. [Program Participant Policy](#)
- C. [Program Proposal Form](#)
- D. [Program Budget Worksheet](#)
- E. [Approved Volunteer Form](#)
- F. [Approved Driver Form](#)
- G. [Recruitment Planning Worksheet](#)
- H. [Media Release Form](#)
- I. [On-Call International](#)
- J. [Emergency Plan](#)
- K. [Travel Expense Report](#)
- L. [Program Incident Report Form](#)