



# TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER

## Operating Policy and Procedure

**HSC OP:** 10.29, **International Programs for Students**

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this HSC Operating Policy/Procedure (HSC OP) is to enable students to participate in TTUHSC international courses and programs by ensuring that those programs are:

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

**REVIEW:** This OP will be reviewed in February of every odd-numbered year (ONY) by the Manager of International Affairs and the International Affairs Council, with recommendations for revisions forwarded to the Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs and the President.

### **POLICY/PROCEDURE:**

#### **1. Definitions**

a. Abroad

Travel to countries outside the United States

b. Advising

Guiding students in choices among program options (where and when to go) and assisting students in the completion of applications

c. Exit Counseling

Debriefing students who have completed their international program to obtain their evaluation of the program and their experience; including reentry adjustment

d. Funding

Scholarships, grants, and financial aid that are available to TTUHSC students to assist them in covering all or some of the expenses associated with their international programs

e. Orientation

- (1) Safety and security orientations dealing with both routine and emergency procedures for students abroad

- (2) Program-specific orientations dealing with site-specific information including, but not limited to, information on expectations of faculty, organization of classes, 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)
- (3) General orientations providing general information on health issues abroad and general cultural adjustment strategies

f. Visa Information

Providing information to students regarding where they can obtain the most up-to-date information for a country-specific visa; providing assistance when visa requirements include students taking the visa application with them when they travel abroad and/or picking up the passport with the visa in person

g. Recruiting

Encouraging students to participate in approved international programs

h. Screening

Evaluating and selecting applicants by schools and departments

i. Approved Sites

- (1) Universities or institutes of higher education with which TTUHSC has a formal agreement or memorandum of understanding (MOU);
- (2) International organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the United Nations (UN), etc. where the U.S. has representation;
- (3) Teaching hospitals or health care organizations approved by the dean of the school and the Manager of International Affairs; and/or
- (4) One-time-sites of special pedagogic interest, provided prior approval of the dean of the school and the Manager of International Affairs has been acquired.

j. Acronyms

ART—Assessment and Response Team  
 OIA—Office of International Affairs  
 SRVPAA—Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs  
 MOIA—Manager of International Affairs  
 MOU—Memorandum of Understanding

**Emergency response procedures are found in section 6 of this HSC OP and in Attachment B. The emergency contact telephone number is (806) 252-4173.**

**2. Types of Programs**

a. Institutional Programs

Institutional programs are those required courses and/or electives that are part of a school's curriculum, and that are offered at an approved site. The course may be conducted by faculty of the institution abroad, previously identified and approved by TTUHSC for the purposes of leading the course and/or students.

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 students for the program, accompany the students abroad, administer the program abroad, and are responsible for the educational content of the program.

c. Unofficial Travel Activities Involving TTUHSC Faculty

TTUHSC faculty who take 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 OIA to obtain a "disclaimer and release" form to be signed by the faculty and students. Other than this Section 2.c., this OP is not applicable to unofficial travel activities and specifically excludes use of TTUHSC personnel, facilities, and resources in support of such activities.

3. **Establishment of Programs**

a. Inaugurating Agreements with Foreign Entities

- (1) To promote university-wide standardization, the OIA is available to offer guidance for the establishment of any new department-, college-, or university-wide agreements between TTUHSC and foreign institutions or organizations.
- (2) **All** agreements between departments or colleges having to do with international courses and exchanges in those departments and colleges will be forwarded to OIA for routing through the TTUHSC contracting system.
- (3) **All** university-wide agreements will be forwarded to the president for signature following signed certification by OIA that the agreement incorporates required standard provisions.
- (4) The signed original of all written agreements will be provided to OIA, which serves as the university's central repository for international programs for students.

b. Faculty-led International Program Proposals

Steps for faculty members interested in establishing a faculty-led international program, not necessarily in the following order, are:

- (1) Meet with OIA to discuss the procedures and guidelines for establishing such programs. Items to consider:
  - (a) Location of the international program site with reference to:
    - Established TTUHSC programs already at the site; and
    - Sustainability of international programs at the site with respect to reciprocal programs requiring the exchange of an equal number of students from both institutions;
  - (b) Safety/security issues;
  - (c) Justification of the proposed site;
  - (d) Confirmation that courses to be taught are in the TTUHSC inventory and are approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to be taught off campus.
- (2) Discuss the proposal with the chair of the department and the dean, as appropriate,

addressing such issues as academic merit and use of faculty and other resources.

- (3) Complete a program proposal (see attachment A) and meet with OIA to discuss procedures that need to be followed, as referenced in this OP.

c. Other Programs

Other programs such as Reciprocal Exchange Programs, TTUHSC Centers Abroad, Affiliated Programs, Joint Degree Programs, and/or Consortium Programs may be added to this OP in the future, as these programs become incorporated in TTUHSC's international activities.

**4. Prior to Departure**

a. Institutional Programs

- (1) Students participating in TTUHSC international programs are required to attend a pre-departure orientation through OIA. Students are solely responsible for making arrangements with OIA for the orientation.
- (2) 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, export controls, suggested modes of in-country transportation, and cultural acclimation; and
  - (d) Funding information such as availability of scholarships.

A follow-up consultation with OIA may be necessary to demonstrate proof of international health / MEDEVAC insurance and immunizations.

b. Faculty-led International Programs

- (1) For faculty-led international programs, the department will have primary responsibility for publicizing the program and recruiting participants.
- (2) Faculty-led program leaders will be responsible for:
  - (a) Screening applicants to ensure that all requirements and pre-requisites are met (e.g., minimum GPA requirements, non-existence of academic or other probation);
  - (b) Providing students with site-specific information at program meetings before departure. Departments are encouraged to conduct trip-specific orientations beyond what OIA provides;
  - (c) Directing students to the OIA office to complete a pre-departure orientation; and
  - (d) Providing OIA with a plan of evacuation should the site become unsafe for TTUHSC students. A decision to remove students from a site is made in conjunction with OIA and others, as provided under "Emergency Procedures."
- (3) For faculty-led international programs, the department should direct students to OIA for a pre-departure orientation, which will include:

- (a) Completion of required emergency and liability forms;
  - (b) Standardized information on 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, export controls, suggested modes of in-country transportation, and cultural acclimation; and
  - (d) Funding information such as availability of scholarships.
- c. Funding for students participating in TTUHSC international programs will not be released until students have:
- (1) Met all program qualifications;
  - (2) Met with an academic advisor in their department to receive counseling and approval of courses to be taken in the international program;
  - (3) Completed and submitted all forms required by OIA; and
  - (4) Participated in the OIA pre-departure orientation session.
- d. International Travel by Students
- (1) All students traveling abroad must abide by the guidelines set forth in TTUHSC OP 77.08, Student Travel Policy OP.
  - (2) Students are not permitted to travel to a nation that is subject to a Travel Warning issued by the United States Department of State. To determine if a country is the subject of such a travel advisory, students must contact OIA or the U.S. Department of State Office in Washington, DC at (202) 647-4000 or through the web at [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/tw/tw\\_1764.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html). In the event the Department of State issues a travel advisory for a country to which students will be traveling, OIA will contact those students immediately. If the country has been placed on the Travel Warning list, students must cancel the trip.
  - (3) It is the responsibility of students to meet with an academic advisor before the start of the international program to gain pre-approval for participation in the program abroad.

## 5. Exit Counseling

Upon return from participation in an international program, students will be required to attend an “exit counseling” interview session with an advisor in OIA. The following information will be covered in the exit counseling:

- a. An evaluation of the program to be completed by the students;
- b. A volunteer form to be completed by the students; and
- c. Information on reentry “culture shock”.

## 6. Emergency Procedures

- a. Before reacting to an emergency situation, it must be determined whether the emergency is real or perceived. Both types of emergencies require a response from the home institution, and that

response will be most effective if it is grounded in a well-reasoned master plan. Although no single plan will apply to every situation, a common set of factors must be examined in every case. The Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center Planned Response to Emergencies Abroad (see Attachment B) will be used to guide response by the home institution to emergencies facing international programs.

b. Policy on Canceling Programs in Progress

- (1) OIA monitors State Department advisories and other safety information. When a State Department warning is issued advising U.S. citizens not to travel to a specific location, the SRVPAA will convene a meeting of the Assessment and Response Team (ART) to determine and implement an appropriate response.
- (2) If OIA receives information from a contact or program administrator at the site reporting that the international program site is dangerous for TTUHSC students, the SRVPAA will convene a meeting of the members of the ART 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 OIA and express concern regarding something they have heard from the international program participant, the MOIA will contact the resident director, faculty leader, or site contact to ascertain the facts of the situation and then contact the parents or other interested party.

c. Suspension of a TTUHSC International Program due to Safety Concerns before Departure from the United States

- (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 other TTUHSC international programs.
- (2) If a program does not have a sufficient number of participants to proceed, the decision of whether or not to suspend the program temporarily should be made by the chair of the department, in consultation with the appropriate dean.
- (3) If a question regarding whether or not to temporarily suspend or cancel a TTUHSC international program concerns issues of safety or security of TTUHSC students, the MOIA must be consulted. OIA closely monitors the most recent safety information available from the U.S. Department of State and other sources, including insurance providers for the program, and will be able to provide the most timely information if concerns arise. (A State Department warning or alert advising U.S. citizens to avoid travel to a specific locale is a valid reason to cancel a program.)
  - (a) If no such warning exists, counterparts at the site should be contacted to determine if there is a compelling reason to cancel the program, and such information may form the basis for a decision.
  - (b) If a faculty leader decides that he/she does not want to take the students abroad for personal reasons, the department 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.
  - (c) If parents contact OIA to voice concerns about issues related to the trip, especially something they have heard from their son/daughter, the MOIA will contact the program administrator, faculty leader, or counterpart at the site to seek first-hand information. This information will enable the ART to make a decision as to whether the program should be suspended or delayed.

c. When an emergency occurs (see Attachment B—TTUHSC Planned Response to Emergencies

Abroad)

- (1) The MOIA will contact the program administrator abroad to determine whether the situation poses a real danger to students and staff. The program administrator will gather locally available information, including advice from the U.S. Embassy responsible for the site and insurance providers involved, and make an immediate recommendation to the MOIA. (If the emergency constitutes an immediate threat to the safety/security of the group, the program administrator will take all steps necessary to remove the group from danger as quickly as possible and will advise TTUHSC officials when feasible.)
- (2) In the event of less immediate life-threatening situations in which the MOIA determines that there is risk to the group, he/she will assemble the ART as quickly as possible to begin evaluation of the situation and to implement an appropriate response.
- (3) The MOIA will also contact the U.S. State Department's Citizen Emergency Center at (202) 647-5225 for information and assistance.
- (4) The MOIA will contact U.S. offices of other institutions that have students in the affected location to coordinate information and to devise a common action plan. The MOIA will maintain coordination throughout the emergency.
- (5) Once the essential facts have been gathered for non-exigency situations, the SRVPAA will convene a meeting of those members of the ART who need to be involved to make a decision regarding what action is needed. This decision must be made by the MOIA, the SRVPAA, and the Dean(s) of the respective school(s).

The group will consider:

- (a) Any immediate measures needed to preserve the safety and welfare of students and staff;
- (b) Additional issues of health, security, academics, financial aid, public relations, and legal liability;
- (c) The appropriate course of action to be taken overseas, e.g., dealing with initial panic, recommending appropriate behavior, developing a written course of action, having students acknowledge in writing receipt of such directive;
- (d) Developing and assisting with an appropriate evacuation plan, if necessary, e.g., considering the safety of various modes and routes of travel, the costs of evacuation and the method of meeting those costs, the possibility of reducing the level of threat by dispersing students in small groups to reconvene later in another locale, available in-country resources;
- (e) Designating one individual as point-of-contact to assume responsibility for the situation at the home institution;
- (f) Developing a written strategy to be used by all individuals involved (consistency is crucial);
- (g) Preparing a contact list of individuals to be alerted when the entire plan is ready;
- (h) Developing a daily communication plan;
- (i) Coordinating with a TTUHSC media spokesperson;
- (j) Providing appropriate individuals with a daily situation report until the crisis is over; and

- (k) Preparing an "After Action" report to assess and document the impact of the event and document all actions taken.
- (6) The initial members of the Assessment and Response Team will be:
  - (a) Manager of International Affairs
  - (b) Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
  - (c) Dean(s) of the School(s)
  - (d) Faculty member(s) onsite, when possible
  - (e) Department Chair or designee