



OFF-CAMPUS STUDY & EXCHANGES

Office Responsibilities for Health and Safety

The health and safety of our study abroad participants are primary concerns at Skidmore College. As a result, these guidelines have been developed for the staff of Skidmore College, study abroad participants, and their families or guardians. Since guidelines alone cannot guarantee the health and safety of participants, the following items address issues of general concern and the responsibilities of all parties. It is, of course, not possible to account for all the inevitable variations in actual cases, so those involved must also rely upon their experience and thoughtful judgment while considering the unique circumstances of each situation.

Responsibilities of Off-Campus Study & Exchanges

1. Conduct periodic assessments of health and safety conditions for Skidmore and non-Skidmore approved programs, including program-sponsored accommodations, classroom facilities, events, excursions and other activities. Monitor possible changes in country conditions. Provide information about changes and advise participants and their families/guardians as needed. Develop and maintain emergency preparedness and crisis response plans.
2. Provide guidelines for program directors and staff with respect to managing emergencies abroad and developing and maintaining appropriate emergency response plans.
3. Provide orientation meetings and materials to participants prior to departure and on-site, which include appropriate information on health, legal, environmental, political, and cultural conditions in the host country. In addition to dealing with health and safety issues, the orientation should address potential health and safety risks and appropriate emergency response measures. Ask students to share this information with their families/guardians so they can make informed decisions concerning preparation, participation, and behavior while on the program.
4. Consider health and safety issues in evaluating the appropriateness of an individual's participation in a specific study abroad program.
5. Provide students with information on the role of and assistance provided by the on-site resident director or program manager.
6. In the participant screening process, consider factors such as disciplinary history that may impact on the safety of the individual or the group. Encourage discussion with students, following their selection but prior to their participation in a study abroad program, regarding their individual health and disciplinary history issues that may have an impact on the safety of the individual or the group.
7. Provide health insurance (including emergency evacuation and repatriation) to participants or assure that participants receive information about how to obtain such coverage. (<http://cms.skidmore.edu/ocse/safety/issues.cfm>)
8. Direct on-site program staff to provide information for participants and their families/guardians regarding available medical and support services, and to help participants obtain the services they may need.
9. Hire vendors and contractors (e.g., travel and tour agents) that have provided reputable services in the country in which the program takes place. Advise such vendors and contractors of Skidmore's expectations with respect to their role in the health and safety of participants.
10. Communicate applicable codes of conduct and the consequences of noncompliance to participants. Take appropriate action when participants are in violation.

11. In cases of serious health problems, injury, or other significant health and safety circumstances, maintain good communication among all program sponsors and representatives.
12. Provide these guidelines to participants and their families/guardians regarding when and where the responsibility of Off-Campus Study & Exchanges ends and the aspects of participants' off-campus experiences that are beyond the control of Study Abroad. In particular, Off-Campus Study & Exchanges generally:
 - a. *Cannot* guarantee or ensure the safety of participants or eliminate all risks from the study abroad environments;
 - b. *Cannot* monitor or control all of the daily personal decisions, choices, and activities of individual participants;
 - c. *Cannot* prevent participants from engaging in illegal, dangerous or unwise activities;
 - d. *Cannot* ensure that U.S. standards of due process apply in overseas legal proceedings or provide or pay for legal representation for participants;
 - e. *Cannot* ensure that home-country cultural values and norms will apply in the host country;
 - f. *Cannot* fully replicate home campus support services at overseas locations;
 - g. *Cannot* assume responsibility for the actions of persons not employed or otherwise engaged by the program, for events that are not part of the program, or that are beyond the control of the program and its subcontractors, or for situations that may arise due to the failure of a participant to disclose pertinent information.

Responsibilities of Student Participants

In study abroad, as in other settings, students can have a major impact on their own health and safety through the decisions they make before and during their program and by their day-to-day choices and behaviors.

Student Participants should:

1. Participate fully in all orientations before departure and on-site, and read and carefully consider all information provided by Off-Campus Study & Exchanges and host providers/institutions that relates to safety and health conditions in host countries.
2. When applying for or accepting a place in a program, consider and carefully assess their physical and mental health and other personal circumstances, and assume responsibility for them after acceptance.
3. Make available to Off-Campus Study & Exchanges accurate and complete physical and mental health information and any other personal data that are necessary in planning for a safe and healthy study abroad experience.
4. Obtain and maintain supplementary health insurance coverage and liability insurance, if required, and abide by any conditions imposed by the carriers.
5. Inform families/guardians, and any others who may need to know, about their participation in the study abroad program, provide them with emergency contact information, and keep them informed on an ongoing basis.
6. Understand and comply with the terms of participation, codes of academic and ethical conduct, and emergency procedures of the program.
7. Obey host country laws.
8. Once on site, be aware of local conditions and customs that may present health or safety risks when making daily choices and decisions. Promptly express any health or safety concerns to the program staff or other appropriate individuals.
9. Become familiar with the procedures for obtaining health and law enforcement services in the host country.
10. Avoid substance abuse of all kinds.

11. Follow the program policies for keeping program staff informed of their whereabouts and well-being, especially when traveling away from the program site.
12. Behave in a manner that is respectful of the rights and well-being of others, and encourage others to behave in a similar manner.
13. Accept responsibility for their own decisions and actions.

Recommendations to Families/Guardians

In study abroad as in other settings, families and guardians can play an important role in the health and safety of participants by helping them make decisions and by influencing their behavior overseas.

Families/guardians should:

1. Be involved in the decision of the participant to enroll in a particular program.
2. Through their student participants, obtain and carefully evaluate health and safety information related to the program, as provided by Off-Campus Study & Exchanges and host providers/institutions.
3. Engage the participant in a thorough discussion of safety and behavior issues, the relevant insurance policy, and emergency procedures related to living abroad.
4. Be responsive to requests from Off-Campus Study & Exchanges for information regarding the participant.
5. Keep in touch with the participant.
6. Be aware that some information may most appropriately be provided by the participant rather than the program.

(This document is adapted from The University of Connecticut's web site and NAFSA's Inter-organizational Task Force on Safety and Responsibility in Study Abroad, 2001.)

Off-Campus Study & Exchanges also stays abreast of the worldwide political and health issues using the following sites:



[United States Department of State](#)



[World Health Organization](#)



[Center for Disease Control Travel](#)