



OFFICE OF
INTERNATIONAL
SERVICES

Emergency Response and Preparedness Handbook

A handbook designed in an effort to ensure that all faculty taking students abroad be equipped with the necessary tools to handle whatever situation may arise

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Mission

Programs Abroad, in partnership with various units of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, strives to provide support and services to the programs abroad community of students, faculty, staff and parents. Our goal is to prevent emergencies and respond appropriately to crises abroad. We provide and facilitate health and safety education through access to information, expertise and resources.

Goals: Prevent, Prepare, & Respond

1. **Prevent foreseeable harm:** We want to anticipate – to the greatest extent possible – the things that might be a problem for you and your students while you are abroad. By being proactive – and this involves everything from looking at State Dept advisories, to registering your group with the State Dept, to requiring physical exams and insurance for your students – we can feel comfortable knowing that you are starting out prepared. The better we prepare the way, the less we have to deal with down the road.
2. **Prepare for conceivable emergencies:** In an ideal world, emergencies wouldn't happen while you are giving your students a great experience abroad. But realistically, we know those things do happen: a fall results in a sprained ankle, a passport is lost, a wallet stolen, a mildly depressed student suddenly takes a turn for the worse. All of these things, and some much worse, can and do happen to students studying abroad. Our goal is to help you know how to deal with those situations as they arise, and the procedures to follow to bring the incident to a close with the least impact possible to the group.
3. **Respond to the needs of parents, spouses, students, faculty and staff:** As many of you are acutely aware, families are more involved than ever in almost every aspect of your students' lives. Our office strives to keep them informed to the extent we can, given the restrictions placed on all of us by FERPA, so they feel comfortable that we are providing a safe and healthy environment for the students. Students, too, need assurance that their experience abroad will be a positive one. And of course, without you, the faculty, these experiences wouldn't happen at all. And so the Programs Abroad office is here for everyone involved.

A Guide to Faculty Liability Issues

I. Working Assumptions

For purposes of this Guide it is assumed: 1) that the study abroad programs in which faculty are involved are sponsored by the University of Arkansas at Little Rock; 2) that faculty are participating in them as a part of their official duties as paid employees of UALR; and 3) that the law of the State of Arkansas, not those of another jurisdiction or a foreign country are applicable. The Guide does not address faculty members who "volunteer" to go on University sponsored study abroad programs (something that should not occur), those who accompany a University-sponsored program for personal (recreational) reasons, or those who are involved with non-University sponsored programs.

II. Disclaimers and Caveats

The intent of this document is to provide general information and advice to faculty on the topic of state employee liability and indemnification; it is not a substitute for professional legal counsel. The document does not purport to be official University policy; nor a complete statement of state law, and any discrepancy between its contents and University policy or state law is not intentional. Finally, because there are so many open questions concerning the laws in the area of employee liability (e.g., what happens if an employee is sued in foreign country?), the document cannot be a comprehensive description and interpretation of the state laws that govern the area.

III. Conditions of Coverage

The State of Arkansas anticipates that its employees, including faculty of public institutions, may be sued for discretionary actions they undertook, or failed to take, in the good faith performance of their job duties. For that reason, it has created a statutory plan that provides for the representation and indemnification for those of its employees who were: 1) doing the job that they were hired and paid to do (i.e., be acting with the course and scope of employment); 2) performing the duties of that job in an objectively reasonable fashion; and 3) acting in good faith in the performance of those duties.

IV. Course and Scope of Duties

The scope of a faculty member's official duties while leading a University sponsored or organized study abroad program is defined by a number of variables that can include the following: the nature of the individual's employment with The University, the purpose of a specific program, the location of the program, the representations made about the program in documents provided by The University (usually through the professor), the age and number of students participating in the program, and the understandings and agreements with the students concerning their duties and responsibilities and those of the program director.

As faculty study abroad leaders, you will be acting as an agent of The University. The ability to lead study groups is a privilege that is extended to you as faculty members in the Department of International and Second Language Studies. Along with this privilege comes a great responsibility.

The course and scope of your responsibilities while leading the study groups includes the activities of an employee that are in furtherance of duties that are owed to an employer and where the employer is, or could be, exercising some control, directly or indirectly, over the activities of the employee.

Under the doctrine of respondent superior, a principle (The University) is liable for the torts, civil wrongs, of an agent (the study abroad group leader) committed within the ambit of the agent's occupation.

The scope of employment includes all acts reasonably necessary or incident to the performance of work, including matters of personal convenience and comfort that do not conflict with specific instructions. As official agents of the university, you must, at all times, act within the course and scope of your employment being careful not to exceed this range.

Finally, The University's Rules on Student Discipline and Conduct, which apply to students while on field trips or study abroad programs, as well as any written codes of conduct provided by individual programs, may also provide additional guidance for faculty in determining the limits of appropriate student behavior and what their obligations are in relation to the conduct of the students enrolled in the program.

V. The General Standard of Care

Faculty members who, in course and scope of their employment, conduct University sponsored field trips or study abroad programs are obligated to exercise reasonable care in the performance of all their official duties. There is no bright line rule as to what "reasonable care" means in all situations; rather, faculty are expected to use their best judgment in deciding what is appropriate conduct in a given situation.

VI. Risk Avoidance Recommendations

Professors who direct trips can best protect themselves from liability by careful pre-trip planning and preparation, including clear written statements to participants of what will be required of them. Once on site, they need to remain alert to conditions and current events in the host country or region; and be aware of, and responsive to, problems that students may experience.

BEFORE DEPARTURE

Documentation and Forms: Students who are traveling abroad must

- Complete the Programs Abroad Application including all liability and waiver forms
- Attend a Mandatory Pre-departure Orientation
- Be reminded of the code of conduct and your expectations for them while their abroad

Emergency Action Plan: The Faculty Member must create an **Emergency Action Plan**

1. Discuss the potential crises that could occur in your area
2. Designate a **Primary** and **Secondary** meeting place
3. Agree when, where, and how to meet (and to check in with the Office of International Services)
4. Encourage students to check in with their families
5. Designate a student who can be relied on in case you are incapacitated

See Appendix A for sample

International Cell Phone: Faculty should build the cost of a pre-paid international cellphone into the program budget. Activate the phone as soon as you arrive - keep it on you and charged at all times. Be sure to share the phone number with your students upon arrival.

US State Department Travel Warnings and Alerts: Check the state department website for travel warnings and alerts on a regular basis. Reassess travel plans and arrangements as needed. Alert Students to all warnings and alerts that exist in country(ies) of travel.

WHILE ABROAD

Upon Arrival:

- notify OIS immediately if all Students' do not arrive
- Have an On-Site Orientation for Students

During the On-Site Orientation session, be sure to inform students of the following:

- Your cell phone number
- Students' cell number if they have one abroad
- Local equivalent of "911"
- International access code and calling collect
- Buddy System
- Risks and areas to avoid
- Emergency Action Plan

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

What is a Medical Emergency?

- ANY HOSPITALIZATION - no matter how brief
- Rape or sexual assault
- Severe food poisoning or a severe allergic reaction
- Anything of a psychiatric nature
- Any incident involving injuries or potential injuries

Responding to Medical Emergencies

UALR Faculty and Staff Must:

1. Seek appropriate Medical care
2. Remember to keep all receipts to submit to Lewermark Insurance within 60 days.
3. Notify OIS of the situation: 001-501-683- 7566 during office hours and 001-501 -569-3400 after hours
4. Work with OIS to maintain contact with Lewer and the local treatment facility. OIS will coordinate with UALR officials and the student's emergency contact.
5. Protect the student's right to privacy. Share only necessary details on a need to know basis. FERPA and HIPPA - You may not discuss a student's medical condition, or share any other information regarding that student. Without the student's permission, you may not share information with the parents except in a life or death situation.

GENERAL EMERGENCIES

What is a General Emergency?

- Volcanic Eruption (Ecuador '03, Iceland '10)
- Terrorist Bombing (London '05, Madrid '06)
- Hurricanes (Jamaica '05)
- Protests/Civil Unrest (France '06)
- Armed Conflict (Israel/Lebanon '06)
- Foiled Terrorist Plot (London '06, '07)
- Military Coup (Bangkok '06)
- Earthquake (Haiti '10)

Anything "newsworthy" regardless of its actual impact on students or programs

Responding to General Emergencies

UALR Faculty and Staff Must:

1. Secure a safe location (Emergency Action Plan)
2. Contact or respond to directions of local authorities
3. Notify OIS of our location and status: 001-501-683-7566 during office hours, 001-501 - 569- 3400 after hours - if cell service is not working - email is the next best option
4. Wait for further instructions from the OIS, who will coordinate with UALR officials.
5. Communicate UALR instructions/information to students

FINANCIAL EMERGENCIES

What is a Financial Emergency?

- An unforeseen event that causes a financial burden on faculty leading students abroad
- Transportation breaks down must stay at an unplanned hotel for the evening

A financial emergency is NOT failure to adequately plan for program expenses

Responding to Financial Emergencies?

We are here for you 24 hours a day/7days a week if you find yourself in a situation (financial emergency) where you do not have enough funds - we will work with UALR to get you the money you need to carry on your program.

DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS

What about discipline problems?

- Keep us informed - we can assist with assessment and response
- Be consistent
- Egregious violations allow for immediate dismissal
- Other violations:
 - 1st offense: Verbal Warning (advise OIS)
 - 2nd offense: Written Warning (copy OIS)
 - 3rd offense: Dismissal from program
- OIS can help guide you through the process and provide template warning letters

Office of international Services Priorities in a Crisis

- Account for all students, faculty, and staff
- Respond to concerned callers
- Provide UALR officials with regular updates
- Continually assess safety of location for continued program presence
- Communicate assessment to faculty/students

LIABILITY

Personal Liability: You are covered while working on behalf of the university as long as you respond to emergencies with reasonableness and good faith.

Protect UALR from potential liability - Federal Laws are applicable abroad

- FERPA/HIPPA: protect students privacy
- Title IX Prohibition Against Sex Discrimination
 - Student's should not be in your hotel room for any reason/ nor you in theirs
 - Student's of opposite sex are not allowed to share accommodations - even if consensual
- Americans with Disabilities Act: Contact Office of Disability Services for more information – 501-569-3143
 - Do not discourage students with disabilities from studying abroad
 - However, do not promise the ability to provide the same accommodations to the disability while abroad as the student has here
 - Be factual about certain challenges (such as curb cuts for wheelchairs), but do not impose judgments on the student's ability to meet such challenges

INSURANCE

Emergency Medical Insurance is provide through Lewermark.

Students have the option of additionally purchasing an International Student ID Card. A basic summary of what is included with the ISIC card that may impact your group:

- Flight delay (if more that 6 hours) - some reimbursement for reasonable expenses
- Baggage delay (if delayed 24 hours or more) – reimburse reasonable personal articles and clothing
- Sickness/Hospital Benefit \$165/day up to 61 days
- \$25,000 Accident related medical insurance

KEEP ALL RECEIPTS

Appendix A

Emergency Action Plan

1) In case of an Emergency when the group is separated, the group will meet at:

Example:

- At the US Consulate
- At the arranged hotel or lodging

2) The nearest US Consulate is: _____

3) The nearest Hospital/Medical Facility is: _____

4) The local equivalent of “911” is: _____

5) The nearest police station is: _____

If a student is injured or attacked when they are not with the group – they should:

- Get to the nearest Hospital
- Call the Faculty trip leader – Cell phone number
- Call OIS 001-501-683-7566 or 001-501-569-3400