

# STANDARDS OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR EDUCATION ABROAD

*5th Edition, 2015*

THE  
FORUM  
ON EDUCATION  
ABROAD



## MISSION STATEMENT

The Forum on Education Abroad develops and disseminates comprehensive *Standards of Good Practice* for the field of education abroad. It promotes best practices and excellence in curricular design, engages in data collection and research, conducts program assessment and quality improvement, and advocates on behalf of its members and the field of education abroad. The Forum serves institutions and organizations that sponsor and support education abroad programs for students enrolled at U.S. colleges and universities. The Forum also collaborates with international member institutions and organizations to identify and facilitate best practices and standards for education abroad.

## ABOUT THE FORUM ON EDUCATION ABROAD

The Forum on Education Abroad is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, membership association recognized by the U.S. Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission as the Standards Development Organization (SDO) for the field of education abroad. The Forum provides training and resources to education abroad professionals and its *Standards of Good Practice* are recognized as the definitive means by which the quality of education abroad programs may be judged. The Quality Improvement Program for Education Abroad (QUIP) and The Professional Certification for Education Abroad Program provide quality assurance for the field through use of the *Standards* in rigorous self-study and peer reviews for institutions and professional certification for individuals.

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## INTRODUCTION

As we set out to draft the fifth edition of the *Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad*, we realized that we wanted this new document to reflect where the field—and The Forum—are today.

As a field and as a membership association, we have matured, we have become more self-assured, we have a greater sense of our own expertise and unique place within higher education. We have accumulated knowledge—theoretical and experiential, abstract and hands-on—and gained confidence in our know-how, both collective and individual. We have also blossomed as a field that embraces its diversity—we realize that it takes many different kinds of organizations, partnerships, program models, philosophies and pedagogies to serve an ever-expanding and more diverse student population. The field is enriched by this diversity of approach, and any set of standards that is to guide and inspire it must be broad and comprehensive enough to allow for a wide range of activities and outlooks.

At the same time, The Forum as a designated Standards Development Organization (SDO) must put forth standards that are normative, that can hold us accountable, and that provide a clear denominator of basic best practices that should be observed by everyone operating within the field. As with prior editions of the *Standards*, we needed to maintain setting a bar.

Last but not least, the times have changed since the first edition. We no longer operate in long documents, but through shorter, more accessible segments that lend themselves to web-based platforms, hyper-linking and clicking through to deeper layers of content.

Given all of these considerations, we felt it was time to take a fresh approach to the *Standards*—a process of slashing and styling that could better foreground the essential content, streamline the core principles, and ask the hard questions. We wanted a lean, elegant, concise, and accessible document, the simplicity of which belies the many complexities that inform it.

If you read closely, you will see that no content from the Fourth Edition has been lost. The language is at once more sparse and more dense; key words and concepts have layers of meaning that are further unpacked in the web-based Toolbox interface on The Forum's new website. For those who want more, the web interface offers multiple layers of content—for those who want the basic principles, they are there, clear and concise, to be applied to your context, your education abroad programming, your values and mission, in a way that you deem right.

In closing, we emphasize that this revision was a broad effort by colleagues from across the field. Special recognition goes to the members of the Standards Committee, of course, but committee members in turn reached out broadly through their networks of colleagues, and drafts went through several rounds of both member and public comment. We thank all who participated in this process, and are proud of the document that we created together. We hope that, though lighter, it speaks to the strength and the confidence of a mature, established field, and though slimmer, it leaves wide open spaces for the creativity and diversity that continue to characterize the best of what we do.

Andrea Custodi  
*The Alliance for Global Education*

Mark Lenhart  
*CET Academic Programs*

# FORM AND FUNCTION: WORKING WITH THE STANDARDS OF GOOD PRACTICE

*The Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad* support the complex responsibilities inherent in offering education abroad opportunities to students. They act as a means to develop, manage, assess and improve education abroad programming. As a commonly-developed and accepted set of standards, they provide a framework for accountability.

The Forum has chosen a multi-level approach to the *Standards*. This fifth edition of the *Standards* sets forth the *Standards* as principles of practice, and places the details of fundamental elements of implementing the *Standards* as an interactive feature on The Forum website.

## **Each Standard is structured by**

- **Statements:** A broad principle followed by detailed bullet points. These define the baseline best practices that should be observed by any entity operating within the field of education abroad, according to its type of education abroad activity.
- a set of **Queries** following the Statements: prompts for evaluation, designed to elicit a response that demonstrates how the Standard is being met and encourages discussion rather than a yes or no answer.

## **Supporting each Standard on The Forum website are:**

- **Fundamental elements:** a dynamic feature defining essential expectations of implementing the *Standards*;
- **The Standards Toolbox:** a resource featuring best practices, keyed to the *Standards*. These examples are vetted by The Forum's Standards Committee, and are made available exclusively to Forum members,
- **Standards Guidelines:** guidance that contextualizes various specific areas of education abroad practices, particularly where these practices may differ from the same practice in the home-campus context. The Standards Guidelines include guidelines for: Academic Advising for Education Abroad, School of Record Relationships; Volunteer, Internship Experience and Work (VIEW) Programs Abroad; Language Learning Abroad; Undergraduate Global Health Programs Abroad; and Institutional Relations and Marketing.

# THE FORUM ON EDUCATION ABROAD

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## 1. MISSION AND GOALS

**The organization has a mission statement and articulates clear goals for its education abroad programming.**

- The mission statement defines the scope of the organization's work, its objectives, and its aspirations, and it is made available to the organization's internal and external constituents.
- Specific learning goals are articulated for each of the organization's individual programs.
- The organization regularly assesses the degree to which it is achieving its mission and program goals, and uses these findings to pursue continuous improvement of the quality of its programming.

### QUERIES

1. What is your mission statement?
2. Does it define the scope, goals, and aspirations of your organization's work?
3. In what ways do you continually foster understanding and support of your mission statement?
4. What are the learning goals of each of your programs?
5. Do you regularly evaluate the extent to which you are achieving your mission and goals?
6. How do you use the results of these assessments to improve the quality of your programming?

## 2. STUDENT LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

### **The organization's mission, goals, and operations prioritize student learning and development.**

- Educational objectives remain central to program design and management.
- Regular evaluations are conducted to assess student learning and development.
- Organizations seek to create and maintain continuity with student learning and development on the home campus.

### **QUERIES**

1. In what ways do you prioritize student learning and development in the design and management of your programs?
2. How do you measure student learning and development outcomes?
3. How do you use student learning and development assessments to improve your program design and management?
4. How do program offerings support academic objectives of students and their home institutions?
5. To what extent is your program curriculum integrated with curricula of the students' home institutions?
6. In what ways do your pre-program, on-site, and post-program offerings support the continuity of student learning and development?



### 3. ACADEMIC FRAMEWORK

**The organization delivers academic content appropriate to its stated mission and goals, ensures adequate academic supervision and evaluation, and maintains clear and transparent academic policies.**

- Curriculum supports the program's stated goals and leverages the unique learning opportunities offered by the host context.
- Students' academic work is adequately supervised and fairly evaluated by faculty with appropriate training and credentials.
- The organization's policies and procedures related to evaluation, awarding of credit, grade appeals, research ethics, and academic integrity are clear and accessible.

#### QUERIES

1. In what ways does the program curriculum support your program's stated goals?
2. In what ways does the curriculum leverage the unique learning opportunities of your host context?
3. Are faculty credentials and background appropriate for your program? Do they meet local standards or U.S. institutional expectations for higher education?
4. Where appropriate, have faculty been trained to teach in your education abroad context?
5. Is student work supervised and fairly evaluated by faculty?
6. Are your policies and procedures related to evaluation, awarding of credit, grade appeals, research ethics, and academic integrity clearly stated and accessible?

## 4. STUDENT SELECTION, PREPARATION, AND ADVISING

**The organization maintains fair and ethical recruitment and selection processes, adequate student preparation and advising, and ongoing student support.**

- Recruitment and selection processes are fair, ethical, and transparent.
- Students are adequately prepared for the challenges of the education abroad context, with pre-departure training and on-site orientation that equips them to achieve academic success and broader program goals; anticipates personal, health or safety issues that might arise; and where appropriate, re-entry measures that prepare them for their return.
- The organization offers students pre-departure and on-site academic advising, ensures placement in appropriate course and language levels, encourages academic planning and integration of coursework abroad and at the home campus, and integrates career and professional planning where possible and appropriate.

### QUERIES

1. Describe how your recruiting and admissions procedures are fair, ethical, and transparent.
2. How do you confirm that students have sufficient academic preparation before enrolling in the program?
3. In what ways do you prepare students for the challenges of the education abroad context?
4. How do your pre-departure training and on-site orientation equip students to achieve academic success and broader program goals? How do you help students prepare for personal, health, and safety issues that might arise?
5. How does pre-departure and on-site advising encourage academic and professional planning?
6. What kinds of re-entry programming are offered to address student needs?

## 5. STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINARY MEASURES

### **The organization articulates clear and accessible guidelines for student behavior and consequences resulting from violations.**

- Expectations for student conduct are provided to students both prior to departure and on-site, with clearly articulated policies regarding drug and alcohol use, culturally-appropriate behavior, sexual harassment or assault, rules related to travel and housing, and any other policies that would carry disciplinary sanctions if violated.
- Sanctions for the violation of policies governing student conduct are clearly defined and shared with students prior to departure and onsite.
- An appeal process for disciplinary measures exists and is accessible to students.

### **QUERIES**

1. What are your policies for student behavior and how are they made accessible?
2. Do your policies effectively represent your expectations concerning drug and alcohol use, culturally-appropriate behavior, sexual harassment or assault, travel and housing, or any other behavior that might result in disciplinary action?
3. Do you inform students about your behavioral guidelines both before departure and on-site?
4. Do students understand the potential sanctions they would face for disciplinary violations?
5. What is the appeal process for decisions about code of conduct violations?

## 6. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

**The organization has well-defined and clearly-articulated policies and procedures that govern its programs and practices, ensures that they are fairly and consistently implemented, and conducts regular reviews to assess their effectiveness.**

- The organization has transparent and accessible policies that govern student affairs and student finances.
- The organization has transparent and accessible employment policies regarding staff and faculty.
- The organization has guidelines governing its marketing practices, partnerships, and institutional relations.

### QUERIES

1. How are your policies governing student affairs detailed?
2. How are program costs and financial policies made available to students and other stakeholders?
3. In what ways do you make financial aid and scholarship sources accessible to students?
4. What are your policies governing staff and faculty hiring, training, compensation, benefits, evaluation?
5. How do you ensure that these policies are fairly and consistently implemented, and regularly reviewed?
6. What are your organization's guidelines governing marketing practices, partnerships, and institutional relations?

## 7. ORGANIZATIONAL AND PROGRAM RESOURCES

### The organization ensures that its programs are adequately funded and staffed.

- Faculty and staff are qualified for their roles, fairly compensated, and appropriately trained, with workloads that enable them to support the educational goals of the program and devote sufficient time to their students.
- Programs are funded at levels that ensure safe, clean, and hospitable student housing; co- or extra-curricular activities that support the program's educational aims, and responsible health, safety, and security measures.
- Facilities and infrastructure are suited to realizing the goals of the program, providing a safe environment that is conducive to learning, and accommodating students of varying needs and abilities.

### QUERIES

1. What are your staffing and faculty needs? How do you determine the appropriate qualifications and training to fill those needs?
2. Are your positions structured to provide staff and faculty reasonable workloads and enough time to support the goals of your program?
3. Do you compensate staff and faculty fairly, taking into account local standards and cost of living?
4. Are your programs sufficiently funded at all times, including times of low enrollment?
5. Does your operating budget ensure safe, clean, hospitable housing; activities that support the program's educational goals; and responsible health, safety, and security measures?
6. What facilities and infrastructure are needed to realize the goals of the program?
7. Do these facilities provide a safe environment that is conducive to learning and can accommodate students of varying needs and abilities?

## 8. HEALTH, SAFETY, SECURITY, AND RISK MANAGEMENT

**The organization prioritizes the health, safety, and security of its students through policies, procedures, advising, orientation, and training.**

- The organization prioritizes health, safety, and security in program development, implementation, and management, conducting appropriate risk assessments for program sites and activities, maintaining written emergency plans and protocols, and identifying and leveraging relevant authorities, networks and resources.
- Staff are trained to anticipate and respond responsibly to student health, safety, or security issues; students are trained to responsibly manage their own health, safety, and security while abroad; and measures are in place for ongoing monitoring of and advising on health, safety, and security issues through a range of U.S. Department of State and other appropriate resources.
- The organization maintains appropriate kinds of insurance at recommended levels, operates in compliance with local laws, and follows best practices in reporting on critical incidents.

### QUERIES

1. What are the health, safety, and security risks that your students face? How are these risks considered in program development, implementation, and management?
2. Do you regularly conduct risk assessments for program sites and activities?
3. Do you maintain written emergency plans and protocols, and do they utilize both U.S. and local authorities and resources?
4. How does your organization routinely access a range of resources, including but not limited to, the U.S. Department of State and other applicable U.S. and in-country governmental agencies, to monitor and advise on health, safety, and security issues? How do you ensure that all participants receive timely updates on health, safety, and security issues?
5. How are staff trained to anticipate and respond to student health, safety, and security risks?
6. How are your students trained to responsibly manage their own health, safety, and security while abroad?
7. What measures are in place to routinely monitor and advise students on health, safety, and security risks?
8. Do you maintain appropriate kinds of insurance for your programs at recommended levels?
9. Do you operate in compliance with local laws and regulations?
10. What are your procedures for reporting critical incidents? Are these procedures aligned with best practices and applicable laws?

## 9. ETHICS

### **The organization operates its programs in accordance with ethical principles, and trains its staff and students in ethical decision-making and practices.**

- The organization has adopted its own code of ethics or that of The Forum on Education Abroad.
- The organization conducts its activities and advises students in an ethically responsible manner; faculty adhere to ethical practices in teaching and student research; and students are sensitized to the ethical implications of their academic work and activities abroad.
- The organization promotes respect for the cultures and values of the communities in which it operates.

### **QUERIES**

1. Does your organization have a code of ethics? How have you trained your staff to adhere to it?
2. Do you advise students in an ethically responsible manner?
3. Do your faculty follow ethical practices in teaching and student research?
4. In what ways do you sensitize students to the ethical implications of their academic work and activities abroad?
5. How do you actively promote respect for the cultures and values of the communities in which you operate?
6. How are your partnerships with local institutions mutually beneficial, and how do you support your partners in their pursuit of their goals?

# THE FORUM ON EDUCATION ABROAD DEVELOPING THE STANDARDS OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR EDUCATION ABROAD\*

**F**rom its founding in 2001, standards of good practice for education abroad have been an expressed priority of The Forum on Education Abroad. In November of 2002, The Forum's Standards Committee began to lead the development of a set standards for the field of education abroad, with the involvement of constituents from across the field. The Standards Committee took a distinctive approach, choosing to structure the *Standards* by stating each Standard, followed by a set of queries designed to be used for assessment. The work, with guidance from Dr. Larry Braskamp (former executive director of the Commission for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and primary author of IES's Model Assessment Practice), produced the first formal edition of the *Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad* in November 2004.

In 2005, the U.S. Department of the Justice, Anti-Trust Division, and the Federal Trade Commission announced a process for entities to become the Standards Development Organization (SDO) of their fields. Through these organizations, the U.S. government encourages self-regulation and compliance with standards developed by professionals with specialized knowledge of their own fields of endeavor. The Forum applied for, and was granted, SDO status in 2005. SDOs must exhibit the following elements:

**Openness:** the opportunity for involvement by all parties known to be affected by the particular standards development activity;

**Balance:** balancing interests so that standards development activities are not dominated by any single group of interested parties;

**Transparency:** readily available access to essential information regarding proposed and final standards;

**Consensus:** substantial agreement is reached on all material points after the consideration of all views and objections; and

**Due Process:** the right to express a position, to have it considered, and to appeal an adverse decision.

The SDO status, and its required processes, have since defined the ethos of The Forum's work in developing, disseminating, applying, and training institutions and individuals in the *Standards*, and its work in periodically revising the *Standards*.



Subsequent editions of the *Standards of Good Practice* (2005, 2008, 2011) were developed in response to feedback from education abroad professionals, various higher education groups and government officials, and institutions and organizations around the world. These later editions strengthened the *Standards*, based on evolving understandings of effective practices, changing on-site realities and input from an ever-expanding range of constituents. In 2011, The Forum developed an online *Standards* Toolbox, a resource created to support Forum member institutions in their implementation of the *Standards* by supplying vetted examples of real-life best practices.

Alongside its development of standards, The Forum has created two signature programs of quality assurance for education abroad, the Quality Improvement Program (QUIP) and the Professional Certification in Education Abroad, as the primary ways that the *Standards of Good Practice* are implemented to benefit institutions and organizations, the field of education abroad, and students. Based on U.S. higher education processes, QUIP provides Forum member institutions with a means of knowing if their education abroad programs are in conformity with the *Standards*. The Professional Certification in Education Abroad further enhances quality assurance by validating that individuals have knowledge of and expertise in applying the *Standards of Good Practice*.

The Forum's role as a Standards Development Organization has evolved and matured over nearly ten years of effort to improve the education abroad field's practices. This work of developing a common set of *Standards* that are recognized as the definitive means by which education abroad programs may be evaluated is ongoing. The Forum continues to create new and expanded ways to educate and train institutions, organizations and individuals so that they continuously improve how they develop, manage, evaluate education abroad programming. Ultimately, the result of The Forum's efforts help ensure that students' education abroad experiences are as rewarding and meaningful as possible. To quote Kathleen Sideli (Indiana University, founding Board Chair and President of The Forum), "Our students deserve no less."

\*Adapted from "The Development of Standards of Good Practice by the Forum on Education Abroad" by Kathleen Sideli (2011).

# THE FORUM ON EDUCATION ABROAD

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This fifth edition of the *Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad* was made possible by the many colleagues who contributed to the development of previous editions of the Standards, and by influential resources, such as IES Abroad's Model Assessment Practice (MAP©).





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