

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY ON
PROGRAM MANAGEMENT IN
EDUCATION ABROAD

OCTOBER 2007

The Forum on Education Abroad would like to thank Kim Kreutzer of the University of Colorado, Boulder, for her leadership in developing the Survey on Program Management in Education Abroad, together with her colleagues on the Forum Council, and the Council's Data Committee and Standards Committee.

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Purpose of the Survey

In an effort to assess the latest practices in the field of education abroad and provide information to its members, the field of education abroad, and the media, the Forum on Education Abroad's Data Committee, under the leadership of its chair, Kim Kreutzer, designed a survey on study abroad program management. The Data Committee was assisted in this effort by the Forum's Standards Committee and the Forum Council.

A secondary goal was to provide information useful to the work of drafting a code of ethics for education abroad, a project that was begun at an Ethics Meeting convened at the Forum offices in Carlisle, PA on September 23 – 25, 2007.

A further goal of the survey is to help inform the Forum's work in the area of Standards of Good Practice. Recognized by the U.S. Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission as a Standards Development Organization for education abroad, the Forum develops and disseminates best practices and, through its Quality Improvement Program (QUIP), assists Forum member institutions to improve the quality of their education abroad programs.

Response to the Survey

A total of 269 Forum member organizations were notified about the survey on September 10 and encouraged to complete the survey by September 17, 2007 through a third-party web service. All responses were anonymous with no record of which organizations completed the survey.

A total of 75 U.S. colleges and universities and 20 study abroad provider organizations, host institutions and programs located outside of the United States responded to the survey. An additional response was received from a consortium of U.S. universities, bringing the total number of respondents to 96, making the response rate for the survey 36%.

The 75 U.S. institutions that responded to the survey reported a total of 46,420 students that studied abroad in 2006-07. The provider organizations reported a student enrollment of 25,647 in the same time period. While there is overlap in enrollments between colleges/universities and provider programs (both may be counting and reporting some of the same students), the survey did not identify individual students, so we cannot know how many students may have been counted by both their institution and by a provider. The survey data collected indicates that institutions and providers had a significant hand in 72,067 education abroad experiences. Even with the likely overlap of students, this represents a significant proportion of U.S. study abroad activity.

A total of 76 of the respondents identified themselves as U.S. higher education institutions; 47 respondents identified themselves as private institutions; and 29 identified themselves as public institutions (including one consortium of public institutions). A total of 18 institutions reported offering only bachelor's degrees; 16 reported offering master's degrees but not doctoral degrees; and 41 reported offering doctoral degrees. The Forum has approximately 200 U.S. colleges and universities as members, and therefore the survey responses account for 38% of Forum members that are a U.S. college or university.

A total of 20 study abroad providers and host institutions responded to the survey. Of these, nine identified themselves as non-profit program providers; five as for-profit program providers; two as non-profit independent programs; two as for-profit independent programs; one as a host institution located

outside the United States; and 1 as a consortium of colleges. The Forum has approximately 56 provider organizations overall as members, and therefore the survey responses account for 36% of Forum members that are this type of organization.

Summary of Results

The survey results reveal that there is tremendous variety in the ways that institutions manage study abroad programs. The types of programs offered, policies for awarding academic credit, structuring of study abroad program fees, systems for funding the study abroad office, program evaluation methods, and other areas of program management vary widely.

Likewise, the results show that there is great variation in the ways institutions and providers relate to each other, although the top consideration reported by institutions regarding whether or not to affiliate with or approve a study abroad program is academic quality. The survey also shows that the practices that have drawn recent media attention are relatively uncommon.

For purposes of analysis, the results of the survey can be divided into five thematic areas: 1) Institutional Responses to the Public Scrutiny of Education Abroad; 2) A Complex Field with Diverse Practices; 3) Relations Between Institutions and Program Providers; 4) Program Evaluation and Site Visits; and 5) Study Abroad Finances.

Institutional Responses to the Public Scrutiny of Education Abroad

Forum member institutions are being proactive in their responses to the recent public scrutiny of education abroad practices. The actions that institutions have taken reflect the seriousness with which U.S. colleges and universities are addressing the issue. 93% of Forum representatives at colleges and universities that completed the survey report that they have conferred with senior administration/management at their institution, while nearly half of the respondents reported that they have conferred with their media relations office and legal counsel. A smaller number of institutions took additional steps such as posting information on their web site (14%), written to constituents (11%), wrote a letter to the editor (7%) or issued a press release (2%). These steps present possible actions for institutions considering additional ways to respond.

Virtually every institution and provider organization responding to the survey (98%) supports the Forum's development of a code of ethics with specific guidelines pertaining to relationships between third-party providers and colleges and universities. This is a project that the Forum has underway and is expected to complete in spring, 2008 (<http://www.forumea.org/standards-index.cfm>).

A Complex Field with Diverse Practices

The survey reveals the complex nature of education abroad and the diverse practices that characterize the field. This diversity is demonstrated in the different approaches to the awarding of academic credit for study abroad. While 26% of institutions report that they "always" give academic credit for programs that are not approved by their institutions, and 39% "sometimes" do, 36% of institutions report that they never give academic credit when students participate in study abroad programs not approved by the institution. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of institutions report that academic credit is always given when students participate in programs administered by (97%) or approved by (99%) the institution.

Variation is also seen in the types of study abroad programs offered by institutions. For example, over 85% of U.S. colleges and universities report that they offer multiple types of education abroad programs: programs with at least one special course developed for U.S. or other international students on the program (93%); integrated university study where students take regular university courses (93%); reciprocal exchange (89%); and faculty-led, short-term (less than a quarter or semester) programs (86%). Additionally, over half the institutions offer faculty-led, long-term (one quarter/semester or longer) programs (55%), while there are a number of cases where faculty take students abroad for course work on sojourns that are not formally approved study abroad programs (53%).

The majority of study abroad programs offered by provider organizations are programs with at least one special course (95%), followed by integrated university study (60%), faculty-led, short-term (50%), reciprocal exchange (30%), and faculty-led, long-term programs (10%).

Not only are there a wide variety of study abroad programs being offered by both institutions and provider organizations, but also there are a variety of ways in which education abroad programs are approved on campuses. For most colleges and universities (70%) education abroad staff are directly involved in the approval process, and the majority of institutions also utilize an academic oversight committee of some kind (58%). Other approaches for approving programs include review by an advisory committee (29%), and approval by risk managers (17%) and legal counsel (14%). 8% of institutions reported that their students may study abroad and earn academic credit on any program and that there is no program approval process.

Relations between Institutions and Program Providers

Given the questions raised recently about the relationships between institutions and study abroad program providers, the survey sought details about these relationships. Institutions partner with provider organizations about half the time (50.12%) when running programs with at least one special course and no on-site participation by the institution's faculty. This is the most reported type of program with which institutions and providers cooperate. Non-exchange programs with integrated university study (35.74%) is the second most prevalent program type in which institutions and providers cooperate.

The most important factor for colleges and universities to consider when they decide to affiliate with or approve programs is academic quality. The next most important factors, in order, are: health and safety; quality of program administration and ease of working with program provider; in-country support (eg. resident directors, co-curricular activities); and program structure (eg. direct enrollment, hybrid, field study). Notably, despite media reports about program discounts, the cost of study abroad programs was ranked only sixth on the list.

The survey shows that there are a wide range of arrangements that are offered to colleges and universities that send students on provider programs, the most popular being visits to the campuses by provider program representatives, a practice reported by 65% of provider organizations. 55% of provider organizations reported offering program fee reductions to students from affiliated institutions for each student sent. 50% reported offering representation of college/university staff or faculty on advisory boards/committees, more detail about which is provided below. 35% of program providers offer the opportunity for faculty members from institutions to serve as program directors or instructors periodically. 25% of program providers report that they offer rebates to affiliated institutions for each student sent, while 25% also report that they provide program fee reductions to affiliated institutions for a certain number of students sent (i.e., volume discounts). 15% of program providers report that they offer rebates to affiliated institutions for a certain number of students sent, while 10% provide funds to support institutional office overhead.

Also notable, given the recent media coverage, is that only 3% (two institutions) reported having exclusive agreements with program providers. "Exclusive agreement" here refers to the practice of an institution not affiliating with or permitting a student to enroll in any other study abroad program in the same city/country/region covered by the provider program. Based on the survey, exclusive agreements appear to be an uncommon practice.

Study abroad has for many years used familiarization tours and site visits as ways to better advise students about programs as well as to evaluate programs and provide quality assurance. Institutions report that they utilize tours and site visits as key strategies for deciding whether or not to approve a program for their students. 75% responded that they "always" or "sometimes" conduct site visits for which their institution pays. 37% responded that the site visits are "sometimes" paid for by providers, while 67% reported that site visits are "always" or "sometimes" paid for *in part* by providers.

Similar results were found in regard to familiarization tours, which are also used extensively as a strategy for deciding about programs. The most commonly reported practice is to share the costs of such tours between the college/university and the study abroad provider organization. 54% of colleges and universities always or sometimes participate in familiarization tours that are paid for by their institution when they are deciding whether to affiliate with a program. 39% sometimes participate in such tours that are paid for by the provider organization. 71% sometimes/always participate in familiarization tours where the cost of such tours is shared by the program provider and the institution.

The survey also asked provider organizations and host institutions to answer questions regarding familiarization tours and site visits, and the results demonstrate that these are commonly conducted and that there are different ways in which they function. Study abroad provider organizations report that they offer familiarization tours or site visits to institutions with which they are formally affiliated, to those institutions interested in a future affiliation, and to unaffiliated institutions that currently send students on their programs.

80% of program providers report that they sometimes pay all or part of on-site lodging and meals for site visits and familiarization tours by participants from affiliated institutions. 60% report that they sometimes pay all or part of the participant's airfare; 25% sometimes cover expenses for a fee that is less than the actual expenses. 20% of program providers report that they do not offer familiarization tours or site visits to affiliated institutions.

70% of program providers report that they sometimes pay all or part of on-site lodging and meals for site visits and familiarization tours by participants from institutions *interested in* an affiliation. 40% report that they sometimes pay all or part of the participant's airfare; 20% sometimes cover expenses for a fee that is less than the actual expenses. 25% of program providers report that they do not offer familiarization tours or site visits to institutions that are interested in an affiliation.

63% of program providers report that they sometimes pay all or part of on-site lodging and meals for site visits and familiarization tours by participants from institutions that send students on programs. 37% report that they sometimes pay all or part of the participant's airfare; 16% sometimes cover expenses for a fee that is less than the actual expenses. 32% of program providers report that they do not offer familiarization tours or site visits to institutions that are interested in an affiliation.

Finally, program providers also offer support to institutions that might like to send students on the provider's programs. 65% of program providers report that they sometimes pay all or part of on-site lodging and meals for site visits and familiarization tours by participant's from institutions that *might like to* send students on programs. 35% report that they sometimes pay all or part of the participant's airfare; 15% sometimes cover expenses for a fee that is less than the actual expenses. 30% of program providers report that they do not offer familiarization tours or site visits to institutions that might like to send students on the provider's programs.

Institutions report that they commonly negotiate reduced program fees with provider organizations. 44% of institutions report that, in deciding whether to affiliate with a program, they negotiated fee reductions "always" or "sometimes" for each student sent on the provider's program. 8% report that they "always" or "sometimes" negotiate rebates for each student sent, and this money is used to support their study abroad office. Another 8% of institutions report that they "always" or "sometimes" negotiate a "volume discount," or a fee reduction for a certain number of students sent to a provider's program, at the time they are considering whether or not to affiliate with the program. A more common approach employed by institutions is to negotiate a scholarship allowance for students, with 38% of institutions reporting that they "always" or "sometimes" take part in this practice. 17% of institutions report that they "always" or "sometimes" negotiate scholarships based on student volume.

When it comes to the marketing of provider study abroad programs on campuses, 47% of campuses permit only approved programs to direct market while 21% allow any study abroad program to direct market on campus. 18% of campuses report that they do not allow direct marketing by off-campus entities.

Another aspect of the relationship between colleges and universities and study abroad provider organizations is institutional representation on the program providers' external advisory boards or committees. 74% of provider organizations report that they have an external advisory board/committee or similar group, demonstrating how common this practice is. Provider organizations report that these entities have several responsibilities. 80% of organizations report that they provide guidance on the needs of institutions and 80% report that they provide guidance on the needs of students. 53% report that such boards give credibility to the program provider's offerings. Almost half of program providers (47%) report that these bodies are utilized to formally evaluate programs, while 33% of them report that the advisory board actually approves programs. Program providers report that members of advisory boards/committees are appointed in a variety of ways, with the most common being selection by provider-organization staff (64%).

Program Evaluation and Site Visits

While service on program provider advisory boards and committees often involves evaluating the provider programs, institutions report that they employ both formal and informal processes for evaluating study abroad programs in general. 85% of institutions report that they informally evaluate programs on a continuous basis, while 79% report that advisers and faculty informally evaluate programs when they conduct site visits. More formal internal evaluation processes are in place at 67% of the colleges and universities that responded to the survey, while 24% of institutions use their regular campus-based course evaluation process to assess courses offered abroad. Only 19% of institutions reported using a formal evaluation process that includes external reviewers, while 3% (2 institutions) reported that they do not have an evaluation process.

Site visits to study abroad programs are utilized extensively by colleges and universities to help to evaluate and to improve programs. 95% of institutions report that when staff and faculty conduct site visits they must write a report of the visit, and 79% must do a presentation to the education abroad staff upon return. If conducting a site visit to a provider's program or to a host institution, 60% of institutions report that they must share a copy of the report with the provider or host institution. The survey asked how often the director of the education abroad office participates in overseas site visits for any study abroad program, whether managed by the institution, approved by the institution, or programs that are being considered for approval. 73 institutions responded to this question with 69% (52) reporting between 1 and 3 site visits per year. Slightly fewer site visits are conducted by education abroad advisors. 71 institutions reported that 63% of their education abroad advising staff conduct 1 or 2 site visits each year. Similar data was reported for education abroad program administrators. Institutions report that faculty members who do not work in the education abroad office conduct a significant number of site visits. Over 50% of institutions reported that faculty participate in 2 or more site visits a year.

Study Abroad Finances

The survey asked institutions questions about the funding sources for the study abroad office, how fees are set for approved or affiliate programs and where that revenue goes, and the degree of financial aid support for students who study abroad. It also asked provider organizations about financial aid support of students. While financial practices vary, there are common approaches that most institutions and organizations seem to follow.

60 out of 76 (77%) institutions surveyed report that their study abroad offices are funded in part by the institutional general fund, with the average funding level being almost 75%. 36 out of 76 institutions (49%) report that fees paid by students participating in education abroad programs fund the education abroad office, with the average funding level being 60% of the office's operation. Other sources of funding included student fees paid by every student at the institution (4 institutions), money from restricted endowments (5 institutions), and cost sharing from program providers, which on average contributes to 5% of the education abroad office's budget for the five institutions that reported this practice.

The survey reveals that institutions set the fees for affiliated or approved study abroad programs in a variety of ways. The responses demonstrate the complexity of study abroad finances and budgeting. The most common single practice, reported by 35% of institutions, is to have students pay the program

directly. Other approaches are almost as common: 31% of institutions report that their students pay the institution for the program fee and then the institution pays the program; and 29% of institutions report that their students pay full home school tuition, but pay for their own room and board. 18% of institutions report that students pay full home school tuition and fees and the institution pays all of the program expenses, including room and board.

Many institutions reported that they assess an additional fee that study abroad students must pay. At 8% of the institutions surveyed, students pay full home school tuition and fees and a study abroad program fee, and the institution pays all of the program expenses, including room and board. Another 8% of institutions report that their students pay full home school tuition and a study abroad program fee, but pay for their own room and board. 30% of institutions reported that in addition to any of the methods of collecting fees, students pay an administrative fee that goes to the education abroad office. An additional 21% of institutions reported that in addition to any of these methods, students pay an administrative fee that goes to an office on campus other than the education abroad office.

Where do the fees collected for study abroad go? Institutions were asked if any funds paid by their education abroad students go to accounts at the institution not controlled by the education abroad office. A total of 75 institutions answered this question, with 64% (48) of the institutions answering “yes” and 37% (27) answering “no.” The comments for this question again reflect the complexity of study abroad financing and the wide variety of practices that exist. The most prevalent practice, based on the comments, is that portions of the study abroad fee goes to the institution’s general fund.

It is not surprising that some portion of study abroad fees go to institutions’ general funds given the amount of financial aid that institutions provide for students who study abroad. Responses to questions about financial aid support of students who study abroad indicate that the highest percentage of institutions provide financial aid support for students who enroll in the institution’s own programs and approved programs. 74% of institutions report that their students who study abroad receive need-based institutional financial aid when they study on the institution’s programs, while 61% report their students receive this type of aid when they study on programs on an approved list. 30% of institutions report that their students receive need-based institutional aid when students study on any program that negotiates a written/consortial agreement with the financial aid office.

The percentage of institutions that provide merit-based institutional financial aid to its study abroad students is also high. 71% of institutions provide this type of aid to students who study abroad on their own programs, 57% do so for students who study abroad on programs on an approved list, and 26% provide aid in situations where the program negotiates a written/consortial agreement with the financial aid office.

Data regarding the application of federal and state financial aid to study abroad follow along similar lines. 75% of institutions allow students to receive federal aid for study abroad on institutional programs, 61% for students who study on programs on an approved list, and 47% in situations where the program negotiates a written/consortial agreement with the financial aid office. In terms of students receiving state financial aid for studying abroad, the percentages are quite similar. 73% of the colleges and universities surveyed allow students to receive this type of aid for study abroad on institutional programs, 56% for students who study on programs on an approved list, and 44% in situations where the program negotiates a written/consortial agreement with the financial aid office.

The survey reveals that most provider organizations offer scholarship funding to students in a variety of ways, with the most prevalent practice, reported by 63% of provider organizations, being that students apply directly to the organization for scholarships. Almost half (47%) the providers surveyed distribute scholarship funds to the affiliated institution for distribution to students that enroll in the providers’ programs. 16% of providers distribute funds to the affiliated institution for distribution to students who attend any study abroad program of the institution’s choosing. Yet another practice is that 26% of program providers surveyed report that they provide scholarships based on the number of students that an institution sends on the providers’ programs. 26% of the provider and host institutions surveyed report that they do not offer scholarships.