

The Forum on Education Abroad

Guidelines for Education Abroad Advising

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INTRODUCTION

Advising for education abroad helps students decide if, when, where, how, what, why, and for how long to go abroad. It is essential in helping students prepare for, navigate, and process educational experiences abroad and links the institution's mission, values, and goals for education abroad to the student's academic, professional, and personal goals. Done well, education abroad advising helps students integrate education abroad into their degree and career planning and encourages them to take advantage of the full range of opportunities available to them. Quality education abroad advising makes students feel prepared for the challenges and complexities that await them abroad, offers them support while they are away, and fosters continued growth and learning when students return home.

Education abroad advisors are often the front line and first point of contact for students considering participating in educational opportunities abroad, but individuals across a student's home institution can also play critical roles in helping students make choices that make their experiences abroad meaningful, purposeful, and successful. These people include other international education professionals, professional academic advisors, diversity and inclusion professionals, career counselors, faculty, student life professionals, peer advisors, financial aid counselors and mentors in other student development based roles.

While much of the work of education abroad advising is carried out by professionals at the home institution, partner institutions and organizations such as host institutions and independent provider organizations can also have an important role to play in this process. Home institution education abroad advisors are encouraged to build strong, mutually beneficial relationships with their counterparts on campus and at partner organizations to ensure timely and accurate information is available to students throughout the advising process as well as build a mutual trust that aids in creating a fluid and concrete partnership amongst institutions.

These Guidelines are intended for use by all international education professionals who are either directly engaged in education abroad advising activities or who are involved in the work of designing and supporting advising pathways. They can be used to train new staff and to guide conversations between education abroad professionals and their counterparts across their campuses and at partner organizations.

The *Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad* apply to all aspects of education abroad. Use them together to develop a comprehensive approach to education abroad advising.

STANDARDS The *Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad* were established in 2004 by The Forum on Education Abroad, and are recognized by the U.S. Department of Justice and Federal Trade Commission as the Standards Development Organization (SDO) for the field of education abroad. They are higher education's benchmark for education abroad program excellence and accountability.

KEY TERMS:

home institution: college or university where a student is pursuing their degree of study

host institution: the institution that the education abroad student attends while abroad (if any)

1 education abroad advisor (or study abroad advisor): a professional advisor who specializes in education
2 abroad. Such an advisor explains to students the general education abroad process, helps students
3 understand the education abroad choices available to them, and often does outreach work to identify
4 prospective education abroad participants; advising addresses a wide variety of topics including the
5 types of available programs, application procedures, scholarship and financial information, the credit-
6 approval process, academic major/minor articulation, pre-departure preparation, program
7 requirements, and re-entry^{3, 4}; on some campuses this role may also be referred to as off-campus study
8 or study away advisor.

9 academic advising: “academic advising, based in the teaching and learning mission of higher education,
10 is a series of intentional interactions with a curriculum, a pedagogy, and a set of student learning
11 outcomes... [it] synthesizes and contextualizes students’ educational experiences within the frameworks
12 of their aspirations, abilities, and lives to extend learning beyond campus boundaries and timeframes”⁴

13 ³ Adapted from The Forum’s Glossary, <http://www.forumea.org/resources/glossary>.

14 ⁴ See also: The Forum’s *Education Abroad Position Descriptions* (2016),
15 <https://forumea.org/resources/data-collection/education-abroad-positions/>

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17 **BEST PRACTICES FOR EDUCATION ABROAD ADVISING**

18 Effective education abroad advising empowers students to make informed choices that will advance
19 their learning and personal development through the abroad experience while also managing their
20 expectations. As experts on both the process of going abroad and the reasons why it is a
21 transformational experience, advisors rightfully want to do their best to “place” students in the program
22 that best suits their needs and matches institutional goals. But remember: a student’s academic plan is
23 ultimately their responsibility. It is essential that students take ownership of their selection and
24 preparation process for education abroad, which helps them to develop decision-making and problem-
25 solving skills. The following best practices can help achieve these goals.

- 26 a. Offer multiple opportunities for students to seek advising guidance before, during, and after the
27 education abroad experience, including class presentations, group information sessions, and
28 one-on-one advising meetings.
- 29 a. Begin offering advising early in students’ university career to give students plenty of
30 time to find a way to incorporate education abroad into their college experience.
- 31 b. Make concerted efforts to develop good working relationships with key support offices on
32 campus, such as academic advising, financial aid, the registrar, student life, diversity and
33 inclusion, student health and wellness, counseling, career services, office of learning
34 resources/disability support, and judiciary or disciplinary offices in order to connect students
35 with appropriate and current information and guidance related to their participation in
36 education abroad.
- 37 c. Clearly communicate the expectation for students to come prepared and on time for advising
38 sessions.
- 39 d. Encourage strong lines of communication between the student and their academic advisor(s)
40 throughout the process.
- 41 e. Clearly explain the calendar and logistics for administrative procedures to all students, including:
42 a. Optional and required advising meetings

- 1 b. Application deadlines
- 2 c. Scholarship and financial aid deadlines, requirements, and notification dates
- 3 d. Required and optional pre-departure activities
- 4 e. Commitment dates and/or deposit due dates and withdrawal/refund policies
- 5 f. Billing and payment procedures and deadlines
- 6 g. Visa application timelines
- 7 h. Course selection/registration timeline (if done prior to departure)
- 8 i. Essential eligibility criteria
- 9 j. Pre- and post-program course approval and credit transfer
- 10 f. Help students consider their individual academic, personal, and professional goals when
- 11 selecting their program.
- 12 g. Encourage all students to consider the following factors during program selection:
- 13 a. Program/host university size, degree of immersion in the host country higher education
- 14 system
- 15 b. Program duration
- 16 c. Host community size/context
- 17 d. Academic calendar
- 18 e. Academic fit; availability of courses that satisfy student's degree requirements
- 19 f. Housing options
- 20 g. Language requirements
- 21 h. Level of independence students will experience
- 22 i. Group dynamics
- 23 j. Available extra- and co-curricular activities
- 24 k. Local laws and attitudes related to dimensions of identity, e.g., race, ethnicity, religion,
- 25 gender, disability, LGBTQ+
- 26 l. Physical and emotional demands
- 27 m. Climate and terrain
- 28 n. Transportation infrastructure
- 29 o. financial responsibilities
- 30 p. available infrastructure to support specific needs
- 31 h. Make students aware if any education abroad options that they are considering could delay
- 32 their time to graduation.
- 33 i. Encourage students to take advantage of opportunities not available to them on their home
- 34 campus.
- 35 j. Be available to students for guidance and support before, during, and after their education
- 36 abroad experience.
- 37 k. Guide and encourage students to reflect on how the experience is contributing to their
- 38 academic and personal development and worldview.
- 39 l. Offer training and professional development opportunities to education abroad advisors and
- 40 campus partners to keep them up to date on strategies for student support and development
- 41 and changes to education abroad program offerings.

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1 GUIDELINES FOR EDUCATION ABROAD ADVISING

2 Use the following guidelines, along with the *Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad*, to guide
3 your education abroad advising practices.

4 1. Mission and Goals for Education Abroad Advising

- 6 • Encourage students to consider a program’s mission and goals when making their
7 choice.
- 8 • Empower students to prepare for their education abroad experience through personal,
9 academic, and professional goal-setting.
- 10 • Advise students to select programs that support their goals.

11 2. Student Learning and Development through Education Abroad Advising

- 13 • Guide students to select courses and other appropriate learning opportunities that
14 support and help them work towards their educational and personal goals.
- 15 • Advise students to familiarize themselves with the country(ies) and culture(s) where
16 they will go and the educational systems and cultures of those locales.
- 17 • Encourage students to consider the differences they may face while participating in
18 education abroad in order to prepare for their experience adjusting to a different
19 educational environment and set of expectations.
- 20 • Be aware of the unique opportunities for learning and development and potential
21 barriers facing students from historically underserved populations.
- 22 • Be prepared to discuss the above topics with students and direct them towards reliable
23 sources of information.

24 3. Academic Framework for Education Abroad Advising

- 26 • Ensure familiarity with the home institution’s general and department-specific academic
27 policies and requirements or how to find these, including:
 - 28 ○ Required number of credit hours, requirements for full-time enrollment, and
29 policies related to credit overload
 - 30 ○ Major/minor/general education requirements
 - 31 ○ Prerequisites
 - 32 ○ Credit conversion and/or transfer policies
 - 33 ○ Grade conversion/transfer policies and grade point average (GPA)
 - 34 ○ Course equivalencies and course approval procedures
 - 35 ○ Policies for class absence and justification thereof
 - 36 ○ Academic integrity
 - 37 ○ Policies for course or program withdrawal
 - 38 ○ Procedures related to other credit-bearing activities, e.g., internships,
39 community engagement or service-learning activities, research or independent
40 studies, job shadowing/clinical observation.¹

¹ See The Forum’s Guidelines for Internships Abroad, Guidelines for Community Engagement, Service-Learning, and Volunteer Experiences Abroad, Guidelines for Undergraduate Research, Field Studies, and Independent Study

- 1 • Try to be familiar with academic offerings and policies for education abroad programs
2 and institutions that frequently enroll student advisees.
3 • Know when to refer students to their academic advisor or another person better
4 qualified to answer particular questions; assist them in identifying this person if
5 possible.

6 **4. Student Selection and Preparation in Education Abroad Advising**

- 7 • Engage in outreach efforts and recruitment practices that are inclusive of student
8 groups that have been historically underserved by education abroad programs and
9 attentive to the barriers to participation these students may face.
10 • Ensure that marketing, advising, application, and orientation materials utilize inclusive
11 language and images and reflect awareness that students come from a wide range of
12 backgrounds and identities.
13 • Direct students to various sources of information (websites, online databases, peer
14 advisors, advising staff, faculty, meetings and handbooks, etc.) that will help them to
15 plan for their experience abroad.
16 • Provide accurate and timely information regarding institution and program
17 requirements, and institutional policies and procedures for education abroad.
18 • Help all students access information about program offerings that includes:
19 ○ Location(s),
20 ○ Courses or subjects offered,
21 ○ Housing options,
22 ○ Language requirements (if any),
23 ○ Total cost of participation, including tuition, airfare, and estimated personal
24 expenses,
25 ○ Program start and end dates,
26 ○ Program mission and goals,
27 ○ Pre-departure and on-site orientation offerings and requirements,
28 ○ Course start and end dates,
29 ○ Holiday breaks,
30 ○ Required field trips or excursions,
31 ○ Co-curricular learning events and activities,
32 ○ Confirmation, commitment, and payment deadlines,
33 ○ Scholarship and financial aid availability,
34 ○ Essential eligibility criteria for participation in particular educational opportunities
35 or at particular sites;
36 ○ Visa requirements, if any.
37 • Help students identify relevant information about the educational culture, relevant
38 academic, co-curricular, and non-curricular concerns, and policies and procedures for
39 the programs and locations they are considering.

Projects Abroad, and Guidelines for Undergraduate Health-Related Programs Abroad for more on these types of international experiences: www.forumea.org/guidelines

- Make clear to students what support and/or accommodations are and are not available to them in particular destinations; remind them when and how is appropriate to access these if needed.

5. Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Measures and Education Abroad Advising

- Advise students that code(s) of conduct, consequences for violations, and adjudication processes of their host institutions and/or organizations may apply to them.
- Remind students of their responsibility to comply with the code(s) of conduct established for them by their home institution while they are abroad.
- Ensure familiarity with the judiciary and disciplinary procedures that apply to students seeking advising; collaborate with colleagues in student life to maintain open lines of communication and facilitate this process.
- Review student's current disciplinary status.
 - If necessary, work with student to prepare a behavior plan to guide behavior abroad and avoid repetition of behavioral issues in the future.
- For students with past or current conduct issues that prevent them from participating in education abroad at the time of advising, provide information on necessary steps that student must take prior to re-applying in the future.

6. Policies and Procedures in Education Abroad Advising

- Provide accurate and timely information regarding institutional and program requirements, and institutional policies and procedures that impact students, including:
 - Application procedures and deadlines,
 - Program dates,
 - Procedures for program and/or course approval,
 - Timeline for program selection, commitment and deposit deadlines, and required pre-departure training,
 - Course selection and registration procedures,
 - Financial aid and scholarship policies and deadlines,
 - Conduct and behavioral policies,
 - Grade and credit conversion and/or transfer upon completion of program.
- Assist students in understanding all expenses associated with program participation.
- Regularly review materials—electronic, print, or other—about education abroad policies, procedures, etc., to ensure accuracy and timeliness.
- Ensure that policies and practices are inclusive.

7. Organizational and Program Resources for Education Abroad Advising

- Be knowledgeable about requirements, policies, and procedures for students to participate in education abroad and be able to communicate these to students.
- Similarly, to the extent possible, strive to build and maintain relationships with counterparts in other departments on campus and at partner programs to facilitate communication when questions arise.
- Strive for advisor-to-student ratios that enable advisors to give students individualized attention when needed.
- Ensure that advising appointments are available to students regularly throughout the education abroad experience.

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8. Health, Safety, and Security and Education Abroad Advising

- Be knowledgeable about and participate in training on safety and security protocols and policies, even when these protocols generally do not require education abroad advisor involvement.
- Be prepared to respond promptly and appropriately to any critical incidents or issues that may arise.
- Ensure advisor understanding of and compliance with laws and regulations relating to privacy and confidentiality at the home institution/organization.
- Ensure that students know the steps to be taken in an emergency, i.e., who to contact first, where to go, etc.
- Provide students with information related to accessing physical, mental, and emotional health and wellness services and insurance while abroad.

9. Ethics of Education Abroad Advising

- Adhere to the ethical standards of academic advising, of education abroad, and of the institution.
- Advise with integrity and consistency.
- Assist all students in meeting their individual needs and goals without bias or judgment no matter their ability, age, cultural heritage, ethnicity, gender identity, nationality, political affiliation, race, religious affiliation, sex, sexual orientation, economic, marital, social, or veteran status.

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