GUIDELINES FOR EDUCATION ABROAD ADVISING
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’s institutional members include U.S. colleges and universities, overseas institutions, consortia, agencies, provider organizations and foundations.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Forum on Education Abroad serves as the collective voice of U.S. post-secondary education abroad. To benefit students, The Forum develops and disseminates comprehensive standards of good practice, resources and training, advocates for education abroad and its value, and engages the field in critical dialogue.
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, partner organization representatives, diversity and inclusion professionals, career counselors, faculty, graduate assistants, student life professionals, financial aid counselors, mental health professionals, mentors in other student development based roles, and peer advisors/ambassadors.

While professionals at the home institution carry much of the work of education abroad advising, 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. These trust-based partnerships allow for proactive collaboration that can enhance the student journey.

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, 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)

education abroad advisor (or study abroad advisor): a professional advisor who specializes in education abroad; such an advisor explains to students the general education abroad process, helps students understand the education abroad choices available to them, and often does outreach work to identify prospective education abroad participants; advising addresses a wide variety of topics including the types of available programs, application procedures, scholarship and financial information, the credit-approval process, academic major/minor articulation, pre-departure preparation, program requirements, and re-entry\(^1\,^2\); on some campuses this role may also be referred to as off-campus study or study away advisor, or the work described may be done in whole or in part by an individual with a different job title

academic advising: “based in the teaching and learning mission of higher education, [academic advising] is a series of intentional interactions with a curriculum, a pedagogy, and a set of student learning outcomes… [it] synthesizes and contextualizes students’ educational experiences within the frameworks of their aspirations, abilities, and lives to extend learning beyond campus boundaries and timeframes”\(^3\)
**Program Provider:** also referred to here as *partner organization*, an institution or organization that offers education abroad program services to students from a variety of institutions; a program provider may be a college or university, a nonprofit organization, a for-profit business, or a consortium; also referred to as independent program provider, or third-party provider, or simply provider

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1 Adapted from The Forum’s Glossary, www.forumea.org/resources/glossary


BEST PRACTICES FOR EDUCATION ABROAD ADVISING

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

a. Offer multiple opportunities for students to seek out or receive advising guidance before, during, and after the education abroad experience, including class presentations, group information sessions, and one-on-one advising meetings.
   - Begin offering advising early in students’ university careers to give students plenty of time to find a way to incorporate education abroad into their college experience.
   - Be prepared to meet students where they are and partner with other stakeholders across campus in order to reach traditionally underserved student populations.

b. Make concerted efforts to develop good working relationships with faculty and key support offices on campus in order to connect students with appropriate and current information and guidance related to their participation in education abroad, such as:
   - Academic advising
   - Financial aid
   - Registrar
   - Student life
   - Diversity and inclusion
   - Student health and wellness
   - Counseling
   - Career services
   - Office of learning resources/disability support
• Veterans affairs
• Judiciary or disciplinary offices

c. Clearly communicate the expectation for students to come prepared and on time for advising sessions.

d. Encourage strong lines of communication between the student and their academic advisor(s) throughout the process.

e. Clearly explain the calendar and logistics for administrative procedures to all students, including:
   • Optional and required advising meetings
   • Application deadlines
   • Scholarship and financial aid deadlines, requirements, and notification dates
   • Essential eligibility criteria
   • Required and optional pre-departure activities
   • Commitment dates and/or deposit due dates and withdrawal/refund policies
   • Billing and payment procedures and deadlines
   • Visa application timelines
   • Course selection/registration timeline (especially if done prior to departure)
   • Pre- and post-program course approval and credit transfer

f. Be familiar with the approved education abroad programs offered by the home institution and its partner organizations; maintain working relationships with partner organizations so that information and resources can be readily accessed when needed and colleagues can collaborate on initiatives that can improve student resources and make advising more effective.

g. Help students consider their academic, personal, and professional goals when selecting their program.

h. Encourage all students to consider the following factors during program selection:
   • Program/host university size, degree of immersion in the host country higher education system
   • Program duration
   • Host community size/context
• Academic calendar at both the home and host institutions (if applicable)
• Academic fit; availability of courses that satisfy student’s degree requirements
• Housing options
• Language requirements
• Level of independence and on-site support students will experience
• Group dynamics
• Available extra- and co-curricular activities
• Local laws and attitudes related to dimensions of identity, e.g., race, ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, LGBTQ+
• Physical and emotional demands
• Climate and terrain
• Transportation infrastructure
• Financial responsibilities
• Available infrastructure to support specific needs
• Cost of living and additional costs associated with particular programs

i. Make students aware if any education abroad options that they are considering could delay their time to graduation.

j. Encourage students to take advantage of opportunities not available to them on their home campus.

k. Be available to students for guidance and support before, during, and after their education abroad experience.

l. Guide and encourage students to reflect on how the education abroad experience is contributing to their academic and personal development and worldview.

m. Encourage students to consider how their social identities may be challenged in an international context, e.g., how identities related to race, gender, religion, sexuality, etc. play out in the study abroad setting.

n. Offer training and professional development opportunities to education abroad advisors and campus partners to keep them up-to-date on strategies for student support and development and changes to education abroad program offerings.
GUIDELINES FOR EDUCATION ABROAD ADVISING

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

1. MISSION AND GOALS FOR EDUCATION ABROAD ADVISING

- Encourage students to consider a program’s mission and goals when making their choice.
- Empower students to prepare for their education abroad experience through personal, academic, and professional goal-setting.
- Advise students to select programs that support their goals.
2. STUDENT LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT THROUGH EDUCATION ABROAD ADVISING

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

- Ensure familiarity with the home institution’s general and department-specific academic policies and requirements, as well as those of partner organizations and host institutions, or how to find these, including:
  - Required number of credit hours, requirements for full-time enrollment, and policies related to credit overload
  - Major/minor/general education requirements
  - Prerequisites
  - Credit conversion and/or transfer policies
  - Grade conversion, transfer, and grade point average (GPA) policies
  - Course equivalencies and course approval procedures
  - Policies for class absence and justification thereof
  - Academic integrity
  - Policies for course or program withdrawal
  - Procedures related to other credit-bearing activities, e.g., internships, community engagement or service-learning activities, research or independent studies, job shadowing/clinical observation

- Try to be familiar with academic offerings and policies for education abroad programs and institutions that frequently enroll student advisees.

- Know when to refer students to their academic advisor or another person better qualified to answer particular questions; assist them in identifying this person if possible.
4. STUDENT SELECTION AND PREPARATION IN EDUCATION ABROAD ADVISING

- Engage in outreach efforts and recruitment practices that are inclusive of student groups that have been historically underserved by education abroad programs and attentive to the barriers to participation these students may face.

- Ensure that marketing, advising, application, and orientation materials utilize inclusive language and images and reflect awareness that students come from a wide range of backgrounds and identities.

- Direct students to various sources of information (websites, online databases, peer advisors, advising staff, faculty, meetings, handbooks, etc.) that will help them to plan for their experience abroad.

- Provide accurate and timely information regarding institution and program requirements, and institutional policies and procedures for education abroad.

- Help all students access information about program offerings that includes:
  - Location(s)
  - Courses or subjects offered
  - Housing options
  - Language requirements (if any)
  - Total cost of participation, including tuition, airfare, and estimated personal expenses
  - Program start and end dates
  - Program mission and goals
  - Pre-departure and on-site orientation offerings and requirements
  - Course start and end dates
  - Holiday breaks
  - Required and optional field trips or excursions
  - Co-curricular learning events and activities
  - Confirmation, commitment, and payment deadlines
  - Scholarship and financial aid availability
Essential eligibility criteria for participation in particular educational opportunities or at particular sites

Visa requirements, if any

- Help students identify relevant information about the educational culture, relevant academic, co-curricular, and non-curricular concerns, and policies and procedures for the programs and locations they are considering.

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

- Encourage students to consider how their social identities may be challenged in an international context, e.g., how identities related to race, gender, religion, sexuality, etc. play out in the study abroad setting.
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 partner organizations 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 advisor 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 information sharing.

- Review student’s current disciplinary status.
  - If necessary, work with student to prepare a 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 they must take prior to re-applying.
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; review policies and practices regularly to identify unintentional barriers that may impact students’ ability to study abroad.
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 organizations and institutions; this facilitates communication when questions arise and also encourages collaboration.

- Strive for advisor-to-student ratios that enable advisors to give students individualized attention when needed.
  - Explore the advantage of organizing advisors by academic departments to promote more familiarity with curricular needs for students.

- Ensure that advising appointments are available to students regularly throughout the education abroad experience.
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 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.
- Strive to provide a safe space for students to be open about health and wellness concerns so that advisors can proactively assist in helping on-site staff support students.
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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