McCausland College of Arts and Sciences
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

POLICY: Faculty-Led Education Abroad Programs

DATE: August 16, 2025 (Revised)

I. PURPOSE

The McCausland College of Arts and Sciences is committed to providing the highest quality education to our students, including opportunities for students to earn academic credit through education abroad courses. Faculty-led Programs are short-term, education abroad programs designed and taught by College faculty. The short duration and unique group dynamics of these programs necessitate careful planning to maximize the students' academic, cultural and personal learning.

The purpose of this policy is to provide an institutional framework for departments and academic programs in the development of faculty-led education abroad academic courses. The College and all departments and academic programs have a shared interest in ensuring that study abroad experiences provide valuable academic content, maintain a safe learning environment, sustain College teaching capacity and use fiscal resources effectively.

This policy applies to all units within the McCausland College of Arts and Sciences. The College policy is subordinate to related policies outlined in the University of South Carolina Faculty Manual. In cases of inconsistencies between this policy and the university, state, or federal policies, the university, state, or federal policy rules are the final authority.

II. PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

A. Faculty Program Leader

1. All McCausland College of Arts and Sciences Education Abroad academic courses must be developed by a full-time faculty member from within the College who will serve as the Program Leader. Temporary faculty are not eligible to serve as a Program Leader.

2. The Program Leader must serve as instructor of record for the course and must be able to be credentialed to serve as instructor of record in accordance with ACAF 1.20 Credential Verification for Instructors of Record.

3. The Program Leader is responsible for the academic component of the program.

4. The Program Leader is responsible for obtaining all required program approvals.

5. The Program Leader must be present with the students during the entire duration of the program and be prepared to deal with the 24/7 presence of students and their varied concerns and needs. In the event of an emergency, the Program Assistant may temporarily serve as the Program Leader.

6. A program may have more than one Faculty Program Leader if a course is team taught or if multiple courses are included in a single program. See sections II.B.1. and IV.B. for additional guidance on team taught courses and programs.

B. Program Assistant

1. Education Abroad courses must have an additional USC faculty or staff member (with preference for personnel in the McCausland College of Arts and Sciences) serve as a Program Assistant during the entire travel portion of the program. This person must have prior international travel experience, strong interpersonal and communication skills, and be highly organized.

2. Programs with 15 or fewer participants may request an exception to this requirement. Exceptions must be approved in writing by the Department Chair or Director, the office of the Dean, and the Education Abroad Office.

3. Programs with multiple instructors-of-record should consider adding a Program Assistant when the total student to faculty ratio exceeds 15 to 1. Programs with multiple instructors-of-record must include a Program Assistant when the student to faculty ratio meets or exceeds 20 to 1.

4. Graduate Students who meet the criteria outlined in this policy may be hired as a Graduate Instructional Assistant to serve as Program Assistants.

5. All travel expenses for the Program Assistant(s) are to be included in the student program fees. Any stipend or supplemental pay provided to the Program Assistant must be covered by student fees.

6. FTE salaried staff and faculty who serve as a Program Assistant must have approval from their direct supervisor to receive additional compensation and to be out of the office for the dates of the course.

7. The Program Assistant will help the lead faculty member manage the trip and serve as a resource in case of an emergency.

8. The Program Assistant is expected to attend all class meetings, discussions, and activities prior to departure as well as during the program.

C. Leader Expectations

1. For all programs, the program leader and/or the program assistant are to establish appropriate expectations for program participants in terms of activity levels, cultural sensitivity and general comportment. They must have sufficient expertise to recognize and anticipate

challenges in the host country and during transit to the program site. They must have a working knowledge of the local language of the host country (intermediate level or higher). The program leader and/or the program assistant must know the geographic area well and be prepared to handle concerns and emergencies that may arise with the USC student group.

2. Both the Program Leader and Program Assistant(s) must complete all Education Abroad Office (EAO) required training and follow all approval processes EAO requires for all aspects of the program.

3. Program Leader(s) and/or Program Assistant(s) must notify their unit, the College and the Education Abroad Office as soon as possible of any emergency incidents which occur or if they observe any change in a student's behavior/physical state which may lead to self-harm or harm to others. Program Leaders must also document any incident(s) and provide this documentation to EAO and the College immediately following the incident using EAO's provided forms.

4. Only the official program leader(s)/assistant(s) and students fully enrolled in the program can travel with the student group and participate in program activities. **Spouses, friends, and non-students may not accompany the group in any official capacity and must cover all their own expenses.** Non-employees may not accompany the group in any official capacity except for employees and representatives of officially contracted service providers.

D. Faculty Workload

1. Unit chairs and directors are responsible for ensuring that faculty workload expectations are met.

2. If an education abroad course is assigned as part of a faculty member's standard fall or spring teaching load and the education abroad course is cancelled, the faculty member must be reassigned to an active course which meets the College enrollment standards.

3. Faculty may not teach more than one class during any 3-week term.

4. Faculty may not teach any other courses as compensated load or overload during the time that their education abroad program is out of the country. Faculty may serve as an instructor of record for courses that are generally considered individualized instruction and taught on an uncompensated basis such as internships, independent study, thesis or dissertation courses.

III. PROGAM APPROVALS

A. Program Approval

1. To ensure compliance with university and College policies, all Faculty-led Education Abroad programs must be reviewed and approved by the unit chair/director, the Office of the Dean, the Education Abroad Office, and the International Program Approval Committee prior to being advertised to students or added to the university schedule.

2. Procedures and Guidelines for faculty members developing an Education Abroad Course are provided on the College and Education Abroad Office websites.

3. Additional resources for developing an education abroad course are available on the Education Abroad website and are hosted in the Education Abroad Office's Blackboard organization.

B. Budget Approval

1. The program budget must be reviewed and approved by the academic unit and the College. The budget must include all program-related student expenses, all Program Leader expenses other than salary, and any Program Assistant expenses, including any stipend or additional compensation.

2. The budget must include a contingency fund; this includes a margin for unforeseen expenses and an emergency fee. The use of the emergency fee must be approved by the College in advance of expenditure.

C. Service Providers and Contract Approval

1. Program Leaders are advised to work with an Education Abroad Office approved third-party service (logistics) provider to support the program itinerary and in-country logistics. Program Leaders who elect not to use an in-country service provider must document sufficient expertise and contacts in the destination country and receive written approval from the Office of the Dean and the Education Abroad Office.

2. All contracts with in-country service providers must be processed in accordance with university policy. Faculty and staff are not authorized to sign contracts on behalf of the University. Contracts must be developed in consultation with the Education Abroad Office. All contracts must be submitted to the dean's office for approval along with a Contract Approval form.

D. Program Expectations

1. All participants pay tuition and travel-related fees directly to USC. Tuition for education abroad courses is set at the in-state rate.

2. Program leaders must communicate all course requirements and expectations to students in writing through the course syllabus. The course syllabus must be prepared and provided to students in accordance with university policy.

3. The safety and security of our students, faculty, and staff is of paramount importance. Faculty leaders must review the safety and health concerns for the planned destination. Programs that include destinations with active U.S. State Department travel warnings must consult with the Education Abroad Office for guidance and follow all additional EAO protocols.

E. Program Fees, Program Payments and Reimbursement

1. Program fees and expenses are to be managed by the academic unit of the Program Leader.

2. In-country service providers must submit an invoice for services to the university in accordance with all university financial policies and procedures.

3. Academic units must use USC MarketPlace (TouchNet) to conduct secure, online transactions to collect program fees from students. No cash payments from students are to be accepted by either a faculty member or an academic unit.

4. Program Leaders must submit a Program Leader Expense Form (PLEF) to EAO prior to departure to obtain a PL authorization number. To be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses covered through program fees, Program Leaders must resubmit an updated PLEF along with receipts or other authorized documentation.

IV. COURSE ENROLLMENT MINIMUM STANDARDS

A. Course Enrollment Minimums

1. Education Abroad courses are not subject to the same course enrollment minimums outlined in the Faculty Workload and Course Enrollment Management Policy.

2. Each education abroad course must **have a minimum of 10 students**. Courses with less than 10 students will be cancelled, except as noted below.

   a) For programs which have contracted with an in-country service provider whose contract deadlines precede university registration, the number of deposits received is the standard by which enrollment will be measured. If subsequent changes in participation cause the course to fall below the College enrollment minimum of 10 students, the course may proceed, subject to minimums specified in the service contract. Any financial ramifications stemming from the decision to continue the course are the responsibility of the department.

   b) Programs which anticipate class size restrictions based on student safety or unique logistical factors may request a variance from the 10-student minimum. This request must be submitted to the College in writing during the initial planning stage of the course. The College will review the request and if approved, will establish an alternative enrollment minimum for the course. Unless the approval clearly states that the variance is continuing, the variance applies only to the next course offering and the request must be resubmitted for subsequent offerings of the course. The approval must be received in writing prior to advertising the course to students or adding it to the university schedule.

B. Team Teaching or Multiple Course Faculty-Led Programs

1. Team taught courses must enroll sufficient students to meet minimum enrollment

requirements for all instructors of record. **The course must have a minimum of 10 students for each instructor of record.** Team taught courses that do not meet enrollment standards for all instructors of record must be cancelled or changed to single-instructor courses.

2. Education abroad programs that offer multiple courses must have a minimum of 10 students per course. Courses with less than 10 students will be canceled.

C. Program Cancellation

1. Education Abroad programs must meet the minimum number of participants specified by any contracts executed with the in-country service provider. Courses that do not meet participant minimums by the contractually specified dates must be cancelled. When contract deadlines precede university registration, the number of deposits received is the standard by which participation is to be measured. Program Leaders are responsible for monitoring contract dates and student deposits.

2. Program leaders must monitor the U.S. State Department safety/threat level of the destination site. If the threat level is raised, EAO and the College must be consulted to determine if the program should be cancelled.

3. Program Leaders must notify the following people in writing when the program is cancelled: all in-country service (logistics) providers, the dean's office, the Education Abroad Office, the unit budget manager, the College Communications Team, and all program participants. The unit budget manager will issue refunds as appropriate.

V. FACULTY COMPENSATION

A. To support education abroad courses, the College provides salary compensation for primary instructors-of-record. Compensation rates for education abroad courses are based on course credit hours.

B. The table below indicates the compensation rates for the instructor-of-record when the course is offered outside of the faculty member's standard teaching load. Rates may not exceed those allowed by HR policy.

	3-Credit Course	6-Credit Course	Min.
FTE Faculty Program Leader	$7,500	$15,000	10

Units must follow Human Resources policies and procedures when hiring all instructors.

VI. RELATED POLICIES

ACAF 1.20 Credential Verification for Instructors of Record
ACAF 2.08 Faculty/Staff-Led Overseas Programs for Students
ACAF 2.09 International Travel Policy for Students
ACAF 2.10 Financial Arrangements for Faculty/Staff-Led Overseas Programs
FINA 8.07 Study Abroad Refund
HR 1.81 Summer Compensation for Faculty