



# TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER

## Operating Policy and Procedure

**HSC OP:** 10.29, **International Programs for Students**

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this HSC Operating Policy/Procedure (HSC OP) is to provide guidelines for TTUHSC student participation in courses and programs abroad.

**REVIEW:** This HSC OP will be reviewed in February of every odd-numbered year (ONY) by the Senior Director of the Office of Global Health and the International Affairs Council, with recommendations for revisions forwarded to the Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs and the President.

### **POLICY/PROCEDURE:**

#### **General Consideration**

In full consideration of the added complexity associated with conducting academic courses or programs in a foreign setting, TTUHSC is committed to ensuring that those courses and programs are:

1. Student-centered, part of a degree program;
2. In conformity with standards of safety and responsibility as established by recognized academic consortia (e.g., NAFSA: Association for International Educators, Consortium of Universities for Global Health), the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the Texas Administrative Code, and TTUHSC operating policies and procedures;
3. Operated by all TTUHSC academic units in a manner that meets approved operation and program standards;
4. In conformity with the laws, rules and regulations of the host country, the host institution, and TTUHSC; and
5. Of benefit to the host institution, host community, and TTUHSC faculty and students.

#### **1. Definitions**

a. Abroad

Travel to any country(ies) outside the United States

b. Advising

Guiding students in choices among program options (where and when to go) and assisting students in the completion of applications and pre-departure requirements

c. Exit Survey

Surveying students who have completed their international program to obtain their evaluation of the program and their experience

d. Funding

Scholarships, grants, awards, and financial aid that are available to TTUHSC students to assist them in covering some or all of the expenses associated with their international program

e. Orientation

- (1) Safety and security orientations dealing with both routine and emergency procedures for students abroad
- (2) Program-specific orientations dealing with site-specific information including, but not limited to, information on expectations of faculty; organization of classes, programs, and course work; cultural adjustment; practical information on day-to-day living (e.g., how to obtain currency, call home, and health and safety issues that are site-specific)
- (3) General orientations providing general information on travel abroad, health issues abroad, and general cultural adjustment strategies

f. Visa Information

Providing information to students regarding where they can obtain the most up-to-date information for a country-specific visa; providing assistance when visa requirements include students taking the visa application with them when they travel abroad and/or picking up the passport with the visa in person

g. Recruiting

Encouraging students to participate in approved international programs

h. Screening

Evaluating and selecting applicants by schools and degree programs

i. Approved Sites

- (1) Universities or institutes of higher education with which TTUHSC has a formal agreement or memorandum of understanding (MOU);
- (2) International organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the United Nations (UN), etc. where the U.S. has representation;
- (3) Teaching hospitals or health care organizations approved by the dean of the school and the Senior Director of the Office of Global Health, including one-time-sites of special pedagogic interest.

j. Restricted Regions

A country or area within a country which requires additional review before consideration for approved travel.

k. Program Administrator

The contact person at the host institution/organization or faculty member leading the program abroad

l. Acronyms

ART—Assessment and Response Team  
OGH—Office of Global Health  
EVPAA—Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs  
SDOGH—Senior Director of Office of Global Health  
MOU—Memorandum of Understanding

**Emergency response procedures are found in section 6 of this HSC OP and in Attachment B. When students are abroad, the Office of Global Health can be contacted for urgent matters at (806) 743-2901.**

## 2. Types of Programs

### a. Institutional Programs

Institutional programs are those required courses and/or electives that are part of a school's curriculum, and that are offered at an approved site. The course may be conducted by faculty of the institution abroad, previously identified and approved by TTUHSC for the purposes of leading the course and/or students.

### b. Faculty-led Programs

Faculty-led programs are those established by faculty in their area(s) of expertise to teach TTUHSC students in an environment outside the United States. Faculty design the program in consultation with their school, recruit and select students for the program, accompany the students abroad, administer the program abroad, and are responsible for the educational content of the program.

### c. Unofficial Travel Activities Involving TTUHSC Faculty

TTUHSC faculty who travel abroad with students or arrange for students to travel abroad for personal activities including, but not limited to, conferences, study, enrichment, service, or any other non-institutional purpose, shall contact OGH to obtain a "disclaimer and release" form to be signed by the faculty and students. Other than this Section 2.c., this OP is not applicable to unofficial travel activities and specifically excludes use of TTUHSC personnel, facilities, and resources in support of such activities.

## 3. Establishment of Programs

### a. Inaugurating Agreements with Foreign Entities

- (1) To promote institution-wide standardization, the OGH is available to offer guidance for the establishment of any new degree program, school-specific, or institution-wide agreements between TTUHSC and foreign institutions or organizations.
- (2) **All** agreements between degree programs or schools having to do with international courses and exchanges in those degree programs and schools will be forwarded to OGH for routing through the TTUHSC contracting system.
- (3) **All** institution-wide agreements will be forwarded to the president for signature following signed certification by OGH that the agreement incorporates required standard provisions.
- (4) A copy of all fully executed agreements will be provided to OGH, which serves as the institution's central repository for international programs for students.

### b. Faculty-led International Program Proposals

Steps for faculty members interested in establishing a faculty-led international program, not necessarily in the following order, are:

- (1) Meet with OGH to discuss the procedures and guidelines for establishing such programs. Items to consider:

(a) Location of the international program site with reference to:

- Previously established TTUHSC programs at the site; and

- Sustainability of international programs at the site with respect to other programs;
  - (b) Safety/security issues;
  - (c) Justification and uniqueness of the proposed site;
  - (d) Confirmation that courses to be taught are in the TTUHSC inventory and are approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to be taught off campus.
- (2) Discuss the proposal with the dean, addressing such issues as academic merit and use of faculty and other resources.
  - (3) Complete a program proposal (Attachment A), faculty-led program training, and meet with OGH to discuss procedures that need to be followed, as referenced in this OP.

c. Other Programs

Other programs such as Reciprocal Exchange Programs, TTUHSC Centers Abroad, Affiliated Programs, Joint Degree Programs, and/or Consortium Programs may be added to this OP in the future, as these programs become incorporated into TTUHSC's international activities.

**4. Prior to Departure**

a. Institutional Programs

- (1) Students participating in TTUHSC international programs are required to complete an application and a pre-departure orientation through OGH. Students are solely responsible for making arrangements with OGH for the pre-departure orientation.
- (2) A pre-departure orientation will include the following:
  - (a) Completion of required emergency and liability forms;
  - (b) Standardized information regarding international health / MEDEVAC insurance, personal safety, security awareness, emergency preparedness, and practical issues related to travel, packing, and obtaining currency;
  - (c) Site specific information concerning required and recommended immunizations, suggested modes of in-country transportation, and cultural acclimation; and
  - (d) Visa information.

A follow-up consultation with OGH may be necessary to demonstrate proof of international health / MEDEVAC insurance and immunizations.

b. Faculty-led International Programs

- (1) For faculty-led international programs, the faculty member will have primary responsibility for publicizing the program and recruiting and selecting participants.
- (2) Faculty-led program administrators will be responsible for:
  - (a) Screening applicants to ensure that all requirements and pre-requisites are met (e.g., minimum GPA requirements, non-existence of academic or other probation). The OGH will assist in verifying eligibility of all student participants;
  - (b) Providing students with site-specific information, including visa information, at program meetings before departure. Faculty are encouraged to conduct trip-specific orientations beyond what OGH provides;

- (c) Providing OGH with a plan of evacuation should the site become unsafe for TTUHSC students. A decision to remove students from a site is made in conjunction with OGH and others, as provided under "Emergency Procedures."
- (3) For faculty-led international programs, the faculty should direct students to OGH to complete an application and a pre-departure orientation, which will include:
  - (a) Completion of required emergency and liability forms;
  - (b) Standardized information on international health / MEDEVAC insurance, personal safety, security awareness, emergency preparedness, export controls, and practical issues related to travel, packing, and obtaining currency;
  - (c) Site specific information concerning required and recommended immunizations, suggested modes of in-country transportation, and cultural acclimation;
- c. International Travel by Students
  - (1) All students traveling abroad must abide by the guidelines set forth in [TTUHSC OP 77.08](#), Student Travel Policy OP.
  - (2) It is the responsibility of students to meet with a program coordinator or advisor before the start of the international program to gain pre-approval for participation in the program abroad and to verify eligibility.
  - (3) Restricted Regions
    - (a) Travel to a restricted region is prohibited without prior written exemption. Exemptions may be considered and granted on an individual basis when there is compelling justification and no suitable alternative exists.
    - (b) Restricted regions include, but are not limited to:
      - Countries with a current U.S. Department of State Travel Warning, and
      - Countries with locations that have an International SOS travel risk rating of High or Extreme, whether or not there is a U.S. Department of State Travel Warning.
    - (c) TTUHSC retains the right to withdraw travel approval and/or require return to the U.S. due to changes in conditions or circumstances.
    - (d) No student can be required to travel to a restricted region.

## 5. Funding

**Information about available funding, including guidelines for International Education Fee disbursement, is available through the Office of Global Health.**

Funding for students participating in TTUHSC international programs will not be released until students have:

- a. Met all program-specific qualifications;
- b. Met with a program coordinator or advisor in their degree program to receive approval of courses to be taken in the international program;
- c. Completed and submitted all forms required by OGH; and
- d. Completed the OGH pre-departure orientation requirements.

## 6. Exit Survey

Upon return from participation in an international program, students must complete an Exit Survey.

## 7. Emergency Procedures

- a. The Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center Planned Response to Emergencies Abroad (Attachment B) will be used to guide response by the home institution to emergencies facing international programs.
- b. Policy on Canceling Programs in Progress
  - (1) OGH monitors State Department advisories and other safety information. When a State Department warning is issued advising U.S. citizens not to travel to a specific location, the SDOGH and EVPAA will convene a meeting of the Assessment and Response Team (ART) to determine and implement an appropriate response.
  - (2) If OGH receives information from a contact or program administrator at the site reporting that the international program site is dangerous for TTUHSC students, the SDOGH and EVPAA will convene a meeting of the members of the ART to consider moving the program to an alternate site within the country or bringing the students home.
  - (3) If parents or other outside interested parties contact OGH and express concern regarding something they have heard from the international program participant, the SDOGH will contact the program administrator to ascertain the facts of the situation and then contact the parents or other interested party.
- c. Suspension of a TTUHSC International Program Due To Safety Concerns Before Departure from the United States
  - (1) The decision to suspend a TTUHSC international program can have serious consequences, and it should be considered carefully in view of how the cancellation will affect other TTUHSC international programs.
  - (2) If a program does not have a sufficient number of participants to proceed, the decision of whether or not to suspend the program temporarily should be made by the appropriate dean.
  - (3) If a question regarding whether or not to temporarily suspend or cancel a TTUHSC international program concerns issues of safety or security of TTUHSC students, the SDOGH must be consulted. OGH closely monitors the most recent safety information available from the U.S. Department of State, International SOS, and other sources, including insurance providers for the program, and will be able to provide the most timely information if concerns arise. (A State Department warning or alert advising U.S. citizens to avoid travel to a specific locale is a valid reason to cancel a program.)
    - (a) If no such warning exists, counterparts at the site should be contacted to determine if there is a compelling reason to cancel the program, and such information may form the basis for a decision.
    - (b) If a faculty leader decides that he/she does not want to take the students abroad for personal reasons, the school has an obligation to the participants of the program to find an alternate leader or to make every effort to accommodate the students in a comparable program.
    - (c) If parents or other outside interested parties contact OGH to voice concerns about issues related to the trip, especially something they have heard from the student, the SDOGH will contact the program administrator to seek first-hand information. This information will enable the ART to make a decision as to whether the program should be suspended or delayed.

d. Members of ART

- Senior Director of the Office of Global Health
- Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Dean(s) of the School(s)
- Faculty member(s) onsite or program administrator, when possible