

## Bradley University Office of Education Abroad

### Policies for Faculty Teaching Abroad

January 2023: Please note that policy revisions due to the impact of Covid-19 are possible for May 2023 Interim Programs Abroad. We will make timely notification if so.

Following are policies of the Office of Education Abroad (OEA) for faculty members teaching in an Interim Program Abroad, a summer or Spring Break program abroad, or any other short-term faculty-led program abroad.

These policies are fundamental to the academic integrity of our programs abroad. They also protect the university's considerable liability exposure for international academic programs, and increased documentation requirements at both the university and national level. In all cases, our policies for our programs abroad are dictated by national best practices within the unique circumstances of academic programs abroad.

#### 1. Faculty Contracts and Compensation

Faculty members teaching abroad are issued a contract for a 3-hour course and are compensated between \$2,600 and \$2,850 (as of Fall 2022). Besides work conducted within the program dates, all faculty members must attend two on-campus orientations prior to the program – one for faculty, and one for students and the academic group. In addition to a contract, faculty members abroad receive a cash per diem for meals and incidental expenses (\$60 per day onsite, \$45 for departure/return travel days) and travel expenses. Round-trip airfare from O'Hare (coach class) is included, and faculty members are expected to travel on the Bradley-booked flights with their class (more information is available in 7, Travel Policies). An allowance for transportation to O'Hare is provided. Onsite accommodations, public transportation, and other program expenses are provided, and a reasonable budget for course-related activities is also provided (more information is available in the section on "class operating budgets").

Faculty members can teach no more than one section of one 3-hour course (or the equivalent, in the case of a cross-listed course) in any given Interim Program Abroad, and cannot be compensated to teach *any* other course – onsite, online, or on campus – concurrently. Faculty members teaching abroad generally cannot receive external funding or support for the period of the program, nor can they be compensated for research or other activities that coincide with the BU program dates. Any possible exception must be discussed well in advance with the Director of Education Abroad.

In order to meet basic communication protocols for safety and security, faculty members are required to travel with a smartphone that has an "international plan" at least to the extent that the faculty member can text another U.S. mobile number onsite – and preferably, both text and telephone. Most U.S. carriers provide reasonably priced short-term international plans, and teaching contracts have been increased by a modest amount to account for possible technology costs. Therefore, be aware that this is required, as is faculty members' willingness to use a short-term program (Whatsapp is one example) for group communication onsite (all apps can be deleted after program dates).

#### 3. Teaching Abroad: Course Design and Teaching Responsibilities

Study Abroad course logistics are complicated. Besides the significant job of designing a course to be taught abroad, we face the challenges confronting *any* interim course. The following policies should clarify those issues:

**a. Contact hours** for a course taught abroad are identical to those on campus – for a 3-hour course, that means 750 minutes per credit hour, or 2,250 minutes (37.5 hours) total.

However, the nature of both contact hours and EL (Experiential Learning) hours in a course taught abroad differs significantly from traditional on-campus courses. See the appendix on “Contact Hours and EL Hours Abroad” for additional information.

**b. Class meetings:** in Interim Programs Abroad, every class meets **every** day except on a designated non-class day (generally termed an Independent Activities Day), *if* such a day is scheduled (sometimes it is not feasible). Why so inflexible? These course policies take into account that a typical Interim Abroad course might run 17 days, as on campus, but without two travel days (departure and return) available as class days. In other words, we compress an already tight schedule. Thus, every class day is vital to fulfill contact and EL hours in a fair and transparent program. Moreover, in a close-contact program abroad, a class that does not meet, or seemingly meets less than others, creates a perceived, and often legitimate, fairness issue among our incredibly interactive students abroad. Faculty members teaching in a program abroad are responsible to their colleagues in the program in ways that don’t always occur on campus.

**c. Attendance policy:** Our longstanding attendance policy is this: **If you miss a class or required event or activity, you lose a letter grade in the course. Any lateness can count as missing class. If you are too ill to attend, you must inform the program director and see a physician.**

None of us would advocate such an unequivocal attendance policy on campus. Nevertheless, in programs abroad, we agree to adhere to it. It addresses fundamental issues of fairness and academic integrity, and perhaps most important, it represents a core risk-management strategy for student and faculty safety and security. If a student fails to appear for class, we act. We never wait to locate an MIA student. We do not lose track of students, period.

And, due to a past grievance resolution, each Study Abroad faculty member is obligated to state this policy explicitly in his or her course description or syllabus. You can use the wording above, or rephrase if you prefer, as long as you include parameters by which “lateness” can constitute an absence, and as long as no ambiguity about meaning remains.

**d. Student work expectations:** In terms of course design, besides the significant project of designing course content for a course taught abroad, faculty must be mindful of the challenges that confront *any* interim course syllabus – i.e., in a course taught abroad, just as on campus, students must complete coursework within the program dates. Thus, student work must be undertaken, completed, and turned in onsite, with no requirement that students write, revise, or otherwise “complete” assignments after their return to the States.

What about assigning work, especially reading, to be completed *before* the first class onsite? Tempting, but be wary; we cannot technically require it. However, it’s reasonable to require students to read your course description and requirements before they leave the U.S., and you can also complete part of this at the Student Orientation. It’s also certainly legal to “strongly encourage” students to read as much as possible of your text or coursepack before they travel (i.e. “why lose the time abroad when you can read all this fabulous material before?”).

Now and forever, we do **not** assign incompletes in Study Abroad. The circumstances would need to be specific and compelling, and by the book in terms of University policy.

**e. Class operating budgets:** each teaching faculty member will have an independent class operating budget for onsite class activities. This budget permits you to tailor class-related activities and excursions to your course design. Faculty members use these funds for site visits, museum entrances, exhibit admissions, specialized tours, train tickets, and more. At the Faculty

Orientation that precedes each program, faculty will receive specific guidance in terms of what expenses are allowable and reasonable, and about what kind of documentation is required by the university. Faculty members are responsible for observing university policies regarding the use and full reporting of university funds.

**f. Classroom technology:** facilities vary among venues, but generally, as you consider course design, think low-tech – sometimes *very* low-tech, as in flipcharts. Some meeting facilities have mediated classrooms available, but most do not. All of our accommodations abroad offer wi-fi, but it is likely to be slower and less reliable than on campus. All courses abroad have a dedicated Canvas site, which is excellent, since printing is not convenient abroad. Technology is always evolving, as are our venue facilities, so a relatively high-tech course design may be possible, but consult the Program Director, experienced faculty teachers, and/or the Director of Education Abroad well in advance so that you understand onsite resources. Meanwhile, consider the upside: teaching abroad is a great opportunity to develop creative strategies and a Plan B.

#### **4. Study Abroad Conduct Regulations for Students**

Our inimitable Program Directors assume the main responsibility for resolving issues related to student conduct abroad, but teaching faculty members are inevitably involved in the process at times. Teaching faculty members thus share an important responsibility for understanding conduct policies, and supporting Program Directors in communicating and enforcing Standards of Student Conduct Abroad.

In terms of faculty conduct abroad, relevant provisions of the BU Faculty Handbook and Title IX provisions apply abroad as they do on campus.

#### **5. Reporting Responsibilities**

Besides an onsite daily course itinerary provided to the Program Director, faculty members should be prepared to provide the Study Abroad Office with any of the following upon request: a copy of the course description; itineraries for travel or excursions related to the onsite program; a syllabus and onsite class schedule; and emergency contact details. Faculty members must also fully report on class-related **expenditures** consistent with university policy. Individual departments may expect additional information (grading and evaluation criteria, etc.).

#### **6. Assessment of Courses Taught Abroad**

Faculty members are responsible for informing the Study Abroad Office about their preferred class evaluation form, and can choose either their departmental or College form, or an evaluation form provided by the Study Abroad Office. Students then complete these course evaluations online. In addition, students will address their experience of the overall program itself by means of a Qualtrics assessment instrument before and after the program. Faculty members are occasionally asked, independent of the Study Abroad Office, to submit a post-travel report to their department.

#### **7. Travel policies**

**a. Faculty travel to and from the venue:** teaching faculty members are booked with their class on the BU-booked group flight. Faculty members are responsible for accounting for all students at the departure gate at O'Hare, and ensuring that they reach group accommodations onsite.

**b. Faculty personal travel during program dates onsite** is necessarily very limited. If the program schedules a day when classes do not meet, an independent day-long excursion is possible. Overnight travel away from the BU accommodations during the program dates is not.

**c. Faculty personal travel after program completion date:** in every program venue, a minimum of one or two faculty members must return on the BU-booked group flight with students. Faculty members considering personal travel beyond the program dates **must therefore confer at the earliest possible opportunity with the Program Director and/or the Study Abroad Office to see if it is possible**; be aware that it cannot be guaranteed. If it proves possible, faculty members would be responsible for any cost differences in airfare, and must be available to ensure that all students board the return flight, either by accompanying the group to the airport or otherwise or otherwise facilitating the group return as requested by the Program Director.

**d. Policy on faculty companions:** see the first Appendix.

## APPENDIX

### Teaching Abroad: FACULTY COMPANIONS

The Office of Education Abroad (OEA) follows national best-practice norms in its policies regarding the presence of a faculty companion (spouse / partner) for faculty members engaged in academic programs abroad. Specifically:

**As a best practice, only program directors, program faculty members, and enrolled students can reasonably participate in university-sponsored academic programs abroad. Restricting participation to only those engaged directly in the teaching and learning process is a risk management policy that significantly decreases potential risk and liability to the University. Such a practice ensures that all program participants are committed to the academic process and primarily focused on the class, the students, and the events at hand.**

Academic programs abroad entail circumstances in which potential liability concerns cannot always be controlled, and unanticipated logistical complications often ensue, and OEA faculty and staff must remain focused on students and the program. Accordingly, faculty companions are simply not possible for faculty observers (“scouts”); for faculty members teaching in a program abroad for the first time, including faculty who have previously participated as faculty observers; and for faculty members teaching in a Spring Break “embedded” study abroad component of a campus course.

Individuals for whom these circumstances do not apply, and/or faculty members who have previously taught abroad with a partner or spouse present, may request that a companion travel with them on a program abroad. However, before you make such a request, we ask that you consider that short-term academic program abroad involve serious liability responsibilities and an intensive daily schedule, leaving most faculty members working long hours with relatively little free time. Consider also the length of the program, its location, the nature of the program, the extent of travel activity involved during the program, and the availability of accommodation for a spouse or partner. Consider the impact of the presence of a companion on class activities, and be aware that students *always* notice the presence of a faculty companion, and, fairly or not, can perceive it as a distraction. Consult the appropriate Program Director, and/or the Director of Education Abroad, on these issues. If you subsequently decide to request that a companion travel with you, that request must be made **at the initial point a faculty member commits to teach in the program**. This will forestall possible disappointment

In cases where faculty members do travel with a companion: the university assumes no responsibility for the companion; a companion is not considered a program participant; and a companion can have no official or unofficial responsibilities on behalf of the University (e.g. taking roll, handling program funds, etc.). The university cannot assume financial or legal responsibility for a companion’s travel arrangements and cannot guarantee group rates or even availability for airfare, accommodations, onsite travel and activities, etc. Companions cannot in any way affect the operation and administration of program activities, or faculty plans for individual class activities. Companions must reflect the standards of civil, respectful conduct towards others that are expected of the BU group member whom they accompany. If a companion does participate in group or class activities, students must be introduced to the companion and be informed that their role involves no responsibility for the course or program.

Due to the additional liability risk for the university, minor dependents are not permitted to travel with university groups under most circumstances. If allowed, minor dependent/s must be the sole responsibility of a supervising parent / guardian or designated legally responsible adult other than the faculty member at all times. The designated responsible adult is subject to all the terms and conditions of any faculty companion. A sibling over the age of 18 cannot act as the responsible adult for a younger sibling. Other conditions may also apply. Early consultation with the Director of Education Abroad is essential.

## APPENDIX

### Teaching Abroad: CONTACT HOURS and “EL” HOURS (Experiential Learning)

One of the challenges and rewards of teaching abroad is that contact hours are constituted very differently than they are in traditional on-campus courses conducted in classrooms. The *number* of contact hours for a course taught abroad is identical to any 3-hour course on campus – 37.5 hours – but the similarity ends there. Contact hours abroad are more kinetic, engaged, and active. They are *experiential* learning (and teaching). And *voilà!* The redesigned BCC created an Experiential Learning (EL) tag that rightly credits experiential learning abroad. Beginning in January 2022, courses taught in the Interim Programs Abroad carry the EL tag on an opt-in basis.

Does this tag impose changes in the way you teach your courses abroad? Absolutely not. All of you *already* teach experiential courses. In fact, there is only one EL tag requirement that could impose a new “assignment” to your course, and that is a reflective essay. Have no fear, however – the Study Abroad Office will provide you with this mechanism.

The EL component requires 40 hours of “experience” to earn a tag. To help orient ourselves in terms of EL hours and contact hours, here are some observations:

– EL hours can and often do also constitute contact hours in courses taught abroad, although they are not identical. We do spend time abroad in traditional class meetings, for which we always arrange dedicated space, but EL hours are not generally lecture-oriented classroom hours. That’s good for those of us who teach abroad.

– All of our kinetic, integrated, out-of-the-classroom class activities, which we have always counted as contact hours, **also** constitute EL hours. An example: A class departs at 8:30 a.m. from the hotel lobby and arrives at X Professional Site or X Museum at 9 a.m. They embark on a guided tour lasting 90 minutes. Then the group visits or re-visits specific sites or exhibits that are particularly relevant to the class, engaging in discussions, and at noon, the instructor releases the class. This constitutes 3 solid hours of EL hours and contact hours. If the instructor requires two additional hours of activities undertaken independently – interviewing, investigation specific sites, etc. – those constitute an additional 2 EL hours.

– Consider another example: A class departs at 9 a.m. and returns at 5 p.m. for a full-day excursion via coach to a class-related venue. Does this constitute 8 hours of EL time? Probably not, because not all of the time spent riding in a coach is experiential, nor is eating lunch (there are exceptions to that; try an experiential lunch!) In such an instance, it may be that the time spent in active class EL time during the excursion totals 5, 6, or 7 contact hours – but the overall excursion time elapsed probably does not.

– Perhaps think of questions: Does a themed class walk count as EL hours? Absolutely. Can taking a short-hop train to a nearby university town? Absolutely. Hop-on hop-off tours? Absolutely. A discussion in front of one of the world’s great works of art? Student interviews of local professionals, students, peers, etc.? You bet. EL hours can actually be defined more broadly than traditional contact hours. These experiential teaching (and learning) hours abroad are among the most rewarding hours we spend teaching.

We are each others’ best resources for defining the task of teaching abroad, so use your creative, enthusiastic, and committed colleagues to consult about how to structure class hours abroad. We’re all committed to our programs abroad for the right reasons, and the collegial experience is one of the reasons.