

## SECTION 2: INDEPENDENT STUDY ABROAD

This section is aimed at staff approving an existing, non-University of Melbourne, overseas program, for credit to a University of Melbourne degree where the program meets the following criteria:

- taught outside Australia
- involves students enrolling directly with a foreign university; a Third Party Provider (TPP) based in Australia but conducting programs overseas; or a TPP based outside of Australia
- does not normally involve a University of Melbourne staff member travelling with students
- normally involves a fee-exempt enrolment in a study abroad placeholder subject code

This section is **not** applicable to:

- programs run by the University of Melbourne (such as UMOS, case competitions, study tours, etc.)

These guidelines aim to assist University of Melbourne academic and professional staff members with

1. Looking strategically at your faculty's global mobility offerings and identifying gaps where promoting independent study abroad programs would be more appropriate than creating UMOS from scratch
2. Identifying and promoting suitable programs at overseas universities
3. Assessing the academic suitability of a program
4. Assessing the non-academic suitability of a program
5. Developing a system of approved lists and petitions
6. Risk Management (including insurance)
7. Assisting students with budgeting

This section is intended to compliment the current guidelines and policy available on independent study abroad, developed by Melbourne Global Mobility. Students on independent study abroad programs remain enrolled in a fee-exempt Melbourne enrolment; therefore we are endorsing independent study abroad programs as part of the student's enrolled degree and have a responsibility to ensure that these programs comply with best practice.



## **1. Looking strategically at your faculty's global mobility offering and identifying gaps where promoting independent study abroad programs would be more appropriate than creating UMOS**

- Approving independent study abroad programs is the easiest and, in terms of upfront costs, most cost effective way of sending students on short term mobility programs.
- Look at where your faculty's students have gone in previous years and identify majors or degrees where fewer students undertake mobility programs. Is this because of lack of demand or lack of suitable programs?
- Are there disciplines within your faculty where you wish to provide mobility opportunities, but suspect numbers will be low? If this is the case it may not be worth investing in UMOS.
- Are there disciplines where UMOS are not required because there are a number of suitable independent study abroad programs available to our students?
- Are there disciplines where staff do not have the willingness or resources to develop UMOS?
- Promoting independent programs can fill a gap in your faculty's offering where there are likely to be low numbers; insufficient existing offerings; or major hurdles to developing UMOS.

## **2. Identifying and promoting suitable programs at overseas universities or through TPPs**

- Are there any programs that your students have already taken through independent study abroad? Can you get feedback on these from the students? Can you look at what credit was approved for which programs and map out a list of suitable programs based on prior approvals?
- Do you have a faculty mobility strategy and, if so, what gaps exist between the strategy and your current offering that could be quickly filled by promoting an independent study abroad program?
- Research the top few universities in a given country to see what their summer and/or winter offerings are. Ensure that the programs do not overlap with the Melbourne semester dates or exam period.
- Speak to other faculties. Many students take subjects towards the breadth component of their degree overseas and other faculties may have lists of suitable programs that you could promote to your students as a breadth option.
- Melbourne Global Mobility can also assist in compiling a list of potential options and advising on suitable TPPs as required. All TPPs must be approved by Melbourne Global Mobility (see section 4 on the following page) and, where programs involve payments made by University staff for student travel, approval also must be sought from Strategic Procurement.
- Programs can be promoted through Faculty newsletters, Facebook, Twitter, posters or LCD screens, information sessions.

## **3. Assessing the academic suitability of the program**

- This should be done by the nominated academic for the discipline area. Short programs tend to have a limited number of subjects so it can be helpful to get them all assessed at once and pre-approved as opposed to having several students submit study plans asking to have the same subject approved.
- A list of academic approvers by faculty and department is available [online](#).



#### 4. Assessing the non-academic suitability of the program

- By enrolling students in a University of Melbourne subject code and promoting independent study abroad programs, the University is endorsing all aspects of this program.
- Does the host university provide an induction for incoming students and are appropriate student services accessible?
- Does the host university provide accommodation? For a short program, it is recommended that students do not leave Australia without suitable pre-arranged accommodation.
- Is the host university's policy on fees and refunds clear to students?
- Is the destination country on the DFAT "Reconsider your need to travel" or "Do not travel" list? If so, you must refer to the University's [Student Travel Policy](#). Travel to countries with these ratings will only be approved under exceptional circumstances.
- Third party study abroad providers offer a range of opportunities for students to study overseas. All third party providers providing study abroad programs must be approved as per section 13.1 of the [Student Mobility Procedure](#). Individual staff, faculties or graduate schools should not approve TPPs' programs or engage in discussions with providers about program development until the provider has been approved. Providers are not accredited universities and, while some are excellent, others are not.

#### 5. Developing a system of pre-approved lists and petitions

- Consider researching suitable programs to develop a "pre-approved" list for students, this will make their planning easier and may reduce your workload. Pre-approved lists can include programs that provide opportunities for students in areas not currently covered by University of Melbourne programs and can also be developed in line with the faculty's strategic priorities.
- Faculties and Graduate Schools may contact the administrators of independent study abroad programs they wish to promote or pre-approve to obtain further information. The program organiser or host institution should be asked to provide links to relevant websites and/or further syllabus information that will assist you with the pre-approval process. This information should then be listed on Studio Abroad, as part of the application, and the student must tick a box to say that they have read it.
- Institutions that cannot or will not provide this information should not be approved. If non-partner institutions wish to recruit our students as fee paying study abroad students, they must provide information to allow us to mitigate risk. It is also advisable to be wary of institutions that only provide the information reluctantly. If faculty staff are not satisfied with the information, they should contact Melbourne Global Mobility for advice.
- Where a student has found an independent study abroad program independently and wishes to obtain credit for it, the student must contact the host University and request this information. The student will be required to provide this information for faculty assessment as part of their application on Studio Abroad.
- Programs found by students can be added to the pre-approved list if appropriate

#### 6. Risk Management (including insurance)

- All students will be informed automatically by Studio Abroad that they are obliged to complete the online [pre-departure briefing](#).



- All students must register through the [Online Student Mobility Registration system](#) and will be required to provide proof of either University of Melbourne [travel insurance](#) or a suitable alternative policy, which should be checked by staff.
- Students will be asked to declare any current or ongoing physical or mental health issues as part of their Studio Abroad application.
- Australian citizens must be registered online with [Smartraveller](#), or for international students, with their country's equivalent system where it exists.
- Students should either be provided with (in the case of pre-approved programs) or asked to provide (when applying for a program they have found independently) information about emergency numbers in their destination, the location of the closest emergency medical facility, the details of the closest Australian embassy or consulate, and the emergency contact details for the University of Melbourne.

## 7. Assisting students with budgeting for independent study abroad

- Information should ideally be provided to students to help budget for independent study abroad programs, including estimates for the following expenses at destinations on the pre-approved list:
  - Application/Admission Fees
  - Tuition
  - Housing
  - Meals
  - Transportation
  - Program fee discounts (e.g. consortium membership discounts, automatic student scholarships etc.)
  - Local ground transportation
  - Passport/visa/required documents
  - Required and recommended immunizations
  - Textbooks and other course materials
  - Essential daily living expenses
- Where students are submitting an application for a non-approved program, they will be asked to research this information themselves to ensure that they are fully aware of the associated costs.
- Studio Abroad will provide students with links to information about available funding and OS-HELP loans.

