

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL HANDBOOK

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I. INTRODUCTION

American University (AU) encourages and supports international travel by its faculty and staff. This Handbook has been developed to provide guidance to individual AU faculty and staff members traveling alone as well as those leading groups, and to ensure compliance with AU's International Travel Policy. Users of this Handbook will include individual faculty and staff traveling internationally on university business, and any AU travelers abroad who may be leading groups of students on short-term experiences abroad.

Travelers who lead groups of AU students abroad will find they wear many hats: teacher, dean, academic advisor, friend, psychological counselor, financial counselor, tour guide, secretary and even, at times, janitor. The workload is thus much higher than leading any comparable program on the AU campus. Program leaders must remember that their first priority is to be available to program participants 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, when the program is in session. Information regarding allowed reimbursable expenses may be found in AU's Travel Policy (see Appendix 1).

All AU travelers are encouraged to stay in touch with their sponsoring AU department while abroad. In cases of emergency (see Section VI), the relevant AU office(s) should be contacted as quickly as possible.

See Appendix 2 at the end of this Handbook for a list of offices and emergency contact information.

II. AU INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL POLICY

Please familiarize yourself with the university's International Travel Policy. The policy can be found by going to the following web address:
http://american.edu/finance/rmo/int_travel_ov.html.

III. INSURANCE INFORMATION

A. Health Insurance

All faculty travel must have prior approval by their dean before insurance is arranged. Once AU travelers complete and submit the required documents as outlined above in the Travel Policy, they are eligible to be covered by an international travel insurance policy that covers certain medical expenses and expenses associated with emergency evacuation or repatriation. This insurance is only available to AU faculty, staff or students while traveling on AU business as an individual or participating in a scheduled AU program abroad. Since this coverage is supplemental, travelers also need to be covered by their own health insurance plan. Full information regarding the international insurance policy, benefits and claims procedures is available on the Office of Risk Management website.

When receiving medical treatment abroad, travelers will likely be expected to pay in full at that time, often in cash. Those seeking reimbursement from an insurance carrier for this treatment, should remember to get translatable itemized receipts or descriptions of the treatment received.

B. Other Types of Insurance

If you are planning to rent a vehicle while traveling internationally on University business or if you have questions about international worker's compensation, liability issues, or other insurance-related questions, please contact the Risk Management office at 202-885-2706 or 202-885-3284.

B. Tuition Refund Plan

Any student who suffers a serious illness or accident and needs to leave American University and an AU program hosted abroad before completion may face not only the loss of time invested in studies, but also a substantial financial loss including tuition and relevant living expenses.

A.W.G. Dewar, Inc. offers "[The Tuition Refund Plan](#)" underwritten by Employers' Fire Insurance Company, one of the member companies of OneBeacon Insurance Group, Boston, MA for A.W.G. Dewar, Inc., dba Dewar Insurance Services, Four Batterymarch Park, Quincy, MA 02169. The Tuition Refund Plan is the Service Mark of A.W.G. Dewar, Inc. This elective insurance provides coverage for tuition, room, board, and activity fee charges if a student must withdraw from school because of a serious illness or accident. Please read the coverage section and consider the advantages of enrolling. Dewar Insurance Services must receive the insurance premium before any scheduled classes begin. If you have any questions, please call DEWAR directly at (617) 774-1555.

C. Trip Cancellation and Theft Insurance

A sudden illness prior to departure or a family emergency may result in a participant needing to cancel their travel abroad. Airline regulations regarding refunds in such circumstances tend not to be very favorable to the traveler. AU recommends that all travelers purchase trip insurance to insure them against this potential loss. Participants should contact their travel agency for more information.

Certain Homeowners Insurance may cover loss or theft of property abroad, such as a cameras or laptop computers. Participants should contact their insurance company for more information.

IV. REQUIRED FORMS FOR AU TRAVELLERS

All AU international travelers are required to complete the standard forms listed below. Programs administered by individual AU units may have additional forms that are required of their travelers.

A. General AU International Travel Forms

- Consent and Release
- Emergency Contact
- Agreement and Waiver
- Emergency Contact Card (currently being developed in AUA)

B. *Specific Office of Campus Life/ Alternate Break Program Forms*

- Faculty/Staff Advisor Agreement
- Faculty/Staff Advisor Consent and Release

C. *Specific AU Abroad Program Forms*

- AU Abroad Consent and Release
- Additional Waiver for Countries under State Dept. Travel Warning
- FERPA release

D. *Specific SIS Program Forms*

V. RELATIONSHIPS WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ABROAD

Individual travelers should be mindful that they should not make any commitments on behalf of AU to any educational institutions abroad. In particular, they should be aware of the following:

- All dealings with institutions abroad must be centrally coordinated at AU to manage requests and commitments. Individuals should make no commitments themselves, and should document all such requests on their return with their academic unit at AU.
- All international relationships will need to be budgeted.
- All international relationships will need to be legislated by contractual agreements before they can be put into effect.

VI. LEADING AU STUDENT GROUPS ABROAD

A. *Pre-Departure*

Program orientation begins when participants first encounter published information about the program. Because of this, and because all program materials and presentations can constitute contractual agreements, all distributed information about the program must be clear and accurate.

AU requires pre-departure meetings to be held prior to the program departure date. The meeting should address all key issues related to the program. Topics to be covered should include but not limited to:

- course outline(s)
- academic expectations
- program itinerary

- travel arrangements
- travel documentation
- financial arrangements
- safety, health, legal, environmental, cultural and religious conditions in the host country
- appropriate and expected behaviors
- potential health and safety risks
- appropriate emergency response measures

Leaders may wish to hold additional meetings prior to departure.

Group leaders should educate themselves prior to departure concerning possible health risks of their specific site abroad, such the conditions of drinking water, certain foods, endemic illnesses such as malaria, and exposure to extremes of temperature/humidity. The health risks and concerns relevant to the site abroad should be fully covered during the pre-departure and on-site orientations.

Student group leaders should compile and have with them at all times a list of doctors and medical clinics where English is spoken (the local US Embassy or Consulate also maintains such lists). Should participants need to go to a doctor or clinic, it is recommended the group leader accompany them to provide support and, where applicable, translation services. Anyone accompanying a participant to a doctor or a clinic must be aware that sharing any information regarding the participant's condition is subject to the FERPA privacy legislation [See Section VII.F].

B. Setting Academic and Behavioral Expectations

The most effective way to promote a successful program abroad is for leaders to discuss appropriate behavior with the student group prior to departure, on arrival in the host country, and at periodic points throughout the program's duration. Disciplinary problems should be dealt with immediately. Depending on circumstances, leaders may wish to discuss the problem(s) individually or more openly in a group meeting.

Participants should be required to attend all classes and excursions that are part of the program itinerary. Acceptable excuses for missing a class or excursion are illness or true personal emergency. Attendance should be taken at all classes and excursions, and, where appropriate, grades should be reduced for any student who is late or absent.

The sponsoring AU office should be notified immediately about any serious disciplinary problems with any student participating in the program, whether or not arrest is involved. Disciplinary action can range from mediation by the sponsoring

AU office to the student being dismissed from the program with no refund and, where applicable, a failing grade (F). If damage control is necessary at the host site, the leader should make amends in a culturally appropriate way.

In cases of arrest, AU assumes no financial responsibility for legal aid to students. The group leader, with the sponsoring AU office, should assist students in contacting their families and relevant government offices.

Participants discovered using and/or selling illegal substances will be immediately dismissed from the program, with no refunds and, where applicable, given a failing grade of F.

Students who are disciplined abroad should be reminded that they may also be subject to additional disciplinary measures on their return to AU.

Certain behaviors and activities cannot be condoned or implicitly supported by AU for student participation because they carry unacceptable risk to both the individual and the university (Injuries sustained while engaging in such activities - such as bungee jumping- may not be covered by insurance). Students need to be alerted to the dangers of such activities during orientation and as necessary throughout the program. Students who intend to engage in any risky activities must sign a statement to the effect that they are doing so outside the auspices of the AU program and that they understand the potential risks of their behavior.

Participants in AU programs abroad serve as ambassadors for both AU and the United States. It is often difficult for participants to understand what is expected of them in this regard, so it is important to stress these issues in the pre-departure orientation. Participants need to be aware that behaviors with minimal or no consequences in Washington, DC may have major implications for the university-sponsored program.

Topics to include in these discussions with students are: sensitive political/cultural issues, appropriate dress, local laws, local mobility (including which neighborhoods are safe and which are not), gender dynamics, youth-elder relationships, food and meal etiquette, and how to recognize signs of displeasure in host country nationals. This information will need to be presented repeatedly, and not just at the pre-departure orientation.

Students should be reminded that according to the Agreement and Waiver they have signed, they will be held to AU's Student Code of Conduct while they are abroad [See Appendix 1]. If they violate the Code, they may be summarily dismissed and face disciplinary action on their return to AU.

C. Guidelines for Accompanying Family Members/Companions.

Accompanying family members or companions, if not enrolled as full-time program participants, are not considered in any way to be participants in the program or representatives of AU or its affiliates. Accordingly, the following issues must be considered prior to the program:

- **Expenses:** no reimbursements can be made by AU for any costs incurred on behalf of family members/companions. Careful records must be maintained to ensure separation of family members/companions. Any additional costs due to stopovers, route changes or modes of transport for the convenience of the family members/companions will be borne in full by the program leader.
- **Orientation:** family members/companions will not be on the program participant list, and therefore will not receive program mailings nor be invited to the program orientations. Program leaders are responsible for ensuring that family members/companions are adequately prepared.
- **Restrictions:** family members/companions, although not program participants, are expected to abide by all program policies and restrictions that are imposed for safety reasons. Their involvement in any group activities may at any time be prohibited by AU as necessary.
- **Minor Children:** children under the age of 18 must be under the supervision of his/her parent or guardian, other than the program leader. At no time should a program participant be asked to care for or supervise a child of the program leader.
- **Fees:** family members may only attend classes or excursions on a space-available basis, and with the permission of the instructor and of AU. All relevant fees or expenses must be paid by the family member/companion.
- **Program-Related Duties:** family members/companions may not have any official duties (chaperone, driver, assistant, etc.) unless they are contracted separately with AU for that purpose.

D. Alcohol Use

All AU travelers and AU-sponsored program participants must be aware that all AU's policies regarding alcohol use apply while they are abroad [see Appendix 1 for links to AU's alcohol and travel policies]. Participants are additionally bound by the laws and regulations of the host country. All participants will be held strictly responsible for their behavior and their actions. Group leaders must be aware that their behavior will be an example to the participants and will set the tone for the entire group.

At both pre-departure and on-site orientations, participants should be educated about legally and culturally appropriate behavior regarding alcohol, and of the consequences of inappropriate behavior.

VII. EMERGENCIES ABROAD

Group leaders should take reasonable and prudent measures to provide for the safety and well being of program participants. While it is impossible to plan for all contingencies, AU must provide for the safety and well-being of its program participants in a consistent and predictable way. Administrators also need to take reasonable and prudent measures to limit AU's legal liabilities.

A. What is an emergency?

For our purposes, an emergency is any circumstance that poses a genuine risk to, or that has already disturbed, the safety and well-being of program participants.

Emergencies include, but are not limited to:

- Physical assault
- Disappearance or kidnapping
- Robbery
- Sexual assault
- Serious illness (physical or psychological)
- Significant accident and/or injury
- Hospitalization
- Terrorist threat or attack
- Local political crisis that could affect safety
- Arrests or questioning by police or security forces
- Legal action involving a participant

B. How to prepare for emergencies

All participants should be registered with the US Department of State, which serves as the central point for all embassies. This can be done on-line:

http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/registration/registration_1186.html. Please verify with your students that this has been completed.

A discussion of safety, health and medical care should be included in the orientation sessions and discussed at other points during the program. Participants should be reminded to notify the leader of any emergency or health problems as they arise. In turn, the leader is required to inform AU.

If participants are to be housed with families, the host families should be informed they are required to notify the leader immediately of any emergency involving the participant(s) in their care. If participants are housed in a residence system or rented house, the local housing supervisor must be similarly informed.

Participants should be given an Emergency Contact Card that provides contact information for the following:

- 24/7 contact information for the group leader
- Nearest US Embassy or Consulate
- Law enforcement/police
- Nearest hospital/emergency facility and English-speaking health care providers

Participants should be reminded to carry the Emergency Contact Card with them at all times.

C. Responding to emergencies

Emergencies can range from the irritating but benign (a lost or stolen passport for example) to the imminently dangerous (motor vehicle accidents, political coups). Each situation must be addressed in its own context. Leaders should maintain daily contact with their sponsoring AU office and their on-site hosts.

The leader's first responsibility will be to ensure the safety and well-being of the participants. The leader should do all that is necessary to ensure this, whether it means obtaining prompt medical attention, US Embassy intervention, or police protection. All steps taken must be documented and communicated back to the sponsoring department.

When all has been done to reasonably ensure the participants' well-being, the leader should immediately contact the sponsoring AU office. During an ongoing crisis, the leader should keep AU informed on a regular basis via telephone and/or e-mail until the crisis has passed. If for any reason the leader cannot reach his/her AU contact, the AU Campus Police should be notified.

The leader should notify the local US Embassy or Consulate about the crisis and follow whatever procedures they may require. If there is a continuing threat to participants (during civil unrest, for example) the leader should ask the Embassy or Consulate to advise them on a regular basis about the evolution of the crisis, and about how the leader and the group should respond.

In any other sort of emergency, the local police should be notified, if the leader and the Embassy feel it appropriate; then any procedures recommended by the police should be followed.

During a political crisis or other emergency in which foreigners in general or US citizens in particular may be at risk, participants should be instructed to keep a low profile. They should avoid demonstrations, behavior that could call attention to

themselves, places where Americans are known to congregate, and using luggage tags or clothing that identifies them as Americans.

It is highly unlikely that participants will need to be evacuated from a site abroad. If this unlikely event were to occur, an evacuation plan will be developed in coordination with the US Embassy, the Department of State, and the appropriate individuals on the AU campus and the host site.

Leaders should follow these guidelines when communicating with participants during an emergency situation:

- **Share information:** give participants as much and as accurate information as possible. Document the situation thoroughly and communicate with AU daily.
- **Assess the situation:** How long will it last? Is it an inconvenience or a threat?
- **Keep calm, and keep others calm:** do not panic. Discourage gossip.
- **Give participants choices:** in a serious emergency, allow participants, when possible, to make their own informed decision about whether to leave the program or to stay. This option is only ethical when participants have enough information to make a reasonable choice.

E. Canceling Programs/Sending Participants Home

Due to various reasons, there may be times when it is necessary to end a program early or cancel it completely. This is an infrequent occurrence and is done to protect the safety of our travelers. Such decisions are only made when it has been determined that a particular program site has become so dangerous and unpredictable that AU believes the risks to students is unacceptable, even when the students and their parents/guardians still want the program to take place. Examples of such situations include, but are not limited to:

- the site is experiencing a period of exceptional political and/or civil unrest that is unlikely to be resolved or may worsen in the immediate future
- the site has experienced a major natural disaster.

The sponsoring office, the Office of Campus Life, the Office of Risk Management and the Provost's Office all continually monitor the international situation to assess the safety of AU program sites abroad. These offices should be consulted when current events appear to indicate that AU should consider canceling a program.

Outside of the above, one or several participants may need to return to the US early. Leaders may decide to send participants home in response to:

- Criminal activity: arrest, drug use, physical or sexual assault, etc.

- Inappropriate behavior: continuing pattern of culturally insensitive behavior that does not improve with advising and endangers the program's relationship with the host site; behavior that is insensitive and offensive to group members and damaging to the program's functioning
- Emotional crisis: death of a program participant, death or serious illness in the family
- Serious illness, physical or psychological

Before making any decision/taking any action to cancel a program send a student or students home, group leaders must consult with their sponsoring AU unit, which will in turn consult with AU's Office of General Counsel and any other relevant AU offices regarding required protocol and procedure according to the individual circumstance.

F. FERPA/Buckley Amendment

FERPA (the Buckley Amendment) regarding the privacy of student records, may conflict with the desire of parents and others to be fully briefed on a student's progress and on-going site emergencies. It is inappropriate to communicate with parents about a particular student's grades, personal relationships, or cultural adaptation without prior permission of the student. Students participating in AU programs are given the opportunity to sign a release form that recognized program staff will disclose information to their families in case of a medical emergency. If a leader believes that certain information should be disclosed for a participant's well-being without his/her consent, the leader should first contact the sponsoring AU office, which will seek the advice of AU's General Counsel. In rare cases where it is not possible – an urgent and serious medical emergency, for example – the leader should act in the way that will most benefit the student. Leaders must remember to document all emergencies thoroughly and keep in regular contact with their sponsoring AU office regarding the situation.

APPENDIX 1

GENERAL AU POLICIES

AU International Travel Policy

http://american.edu/finance/rmo/int_travel_ov.html

AU Travel Expense Policy

<http://www.american.edu/finance/rmo/policies.html>

AU Alcohol Policy

<http://www.american.edu/academic.depts/cas/katzen/docs/UniversityAlcoholPolicy.pdf>

AU Conduct Code

<http://www.american.edu/ocl/vp/documents/student.conduct.code.pdf>

AU Academic Integrity Code

<http://www.american.edu/academics/integrity/code.htm>

AU Student Handbook

<http://www.american.edu/handbook/>

APPENDIX 2

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

Outside of regular office hours (M-F, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.), or if the contact person listed below cannot be reached immediately, travelers should call the AU Office of Public Safety Emergency Number:

202-885-3636

The Office of Public Safety in turn will communicate with the appropriate AU individual authorized to handle the specific emergency.

In addition, travelers sponsored by the units listed below should first use these contacts and only call the Office of Public Safety if the following individuals cannot be reached:

AU Abroad

Sara Dumont, Director

dumont@american.edu

202-885-1320 (office)

202-409-9995 (cell)

202-986-6620 (home)

Office of Campus Life/Alternative Break

Shoshanna Sumka, Coordinator, Global and Community-Based Learning

sumka@american.edu

202-885-2684 (office)

24/7 cell phone number given to individual travelers prior to departure

School of International Service

Rebecca Bellinger

rbellinge@american.edu

202-885-1659 (office)

24/7 cell phone number given to individual travelers prior to departure