



## AC.2.13.2 Study Abroad procedure

### Schedule A: SAIT Group International Study Program Guide for Programs, Schools and Departments

2020-21

#### INTRODUCTION

At SAIT, we believe that it's important for our students and staff to have an international perspective. The global world in which we live and work makes this particularly critical for today's students, who will be globally mobile workers and citizens.

There are many ways that students can gain an international perspective. One of the most meaningful ways is by studying and living in another country, whether for a short or long period of time. Instructors and staff play a very important role in this, by developing Group International Study Programs (GISP) and leading students on these programs.

The aim of this guide is to help programs, schools and departments develop a GISP that benefits SAIT students and that proceeds smoothly and safely.

#### DEVELOPING A GROUP INTERNATIONAL STUDY PROGRAM

##### 1. Deciding on the type of Group International Study Programs

SAIT offers many different types of GISPs, including field schools, program-specific study tours, subject-specific study tours, service learning programs, competitions and conferences. They range in length from two-day conferences to three-week study tours<sup>1</sup>. GISPs can run throughout the academic year but are commonly held during a scheduled academic break.

- Field Schools: a program where students travel to a particular region or destination to learn about a topic or a range of topics related to that destination. For instance, a field school might

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<sup>1</sup> SAIT students may also be able to participate in a semester-long study abroad opportunity. Technically, this is not a group study abroad opportunity, but rather an opportunity for an individual student, working closely with his/her program and academic chair and with the Study Abroad office, to complete part of the student's program by attending a comparable program of studies at a post-secondary institution outside of Canada. A semester-long study abroad program is normally for credit, with the student able to apply that learning towards the SAIT program in which the student is registered.



involve culinary students travelling to Thailand to learn about and experience Thai cuisine, or architectural students travelling to Chicago to learn about and see the architecture in that city. These are normally organized and led by an individual program (or programs) in a school.

- Program-Specific Study Tours: a program-specific trip to another post-secondary institution, usually 2-3 weeks in duration. Students attend classes related to their program at the host institution and participate in cultural excursions (usually organized by the hosting institution). These trips are usually non-credit but in appropriate cases, a certain number of practicum hours can be granted. The success of these tours depends on a strong relationship existing between SAIT and the other post-secondary institution, on both institutions working closely together to make the study tour a success, and on the programming at the other institution being similar enough to SAIT's programming for SAIT students to find the classroom component relevant but different enough to provide valuable learning opportunities for the students. These are often organized and led by the Study Abroad office, in conjunction with SAIT's Global Education Network partners.
- Subject-Specific Study Tour: a program where students from several post-secondary institutions come together in one location to study a specific subject, such as project management or design thinking, while also taking part in cultural and social activities organized by the hosting institution. These are often organized and led by the Study Abroad office, in conjunction with SAIT's Global Education Network partners.
- Service Learning Program: a non-program specific trip usually 2-3 weeks long. These trips are dedicated to a volunteer service project such as working in a non-profit organization, providing some basic ESL teaching to children or youth in the hosting country, or doing physical work such as helping repair a school or orphanage. This gives our students a strong cultural experience and builds their leadership and teamwork skills.
- Conferences/Competitions: usually 2-3 days long, and may be program-specific or general (with a topic such as student leadership).

## 2. Getting Approval

### (a) The Decision Support Package

A Decision Support Package (DSP) must be developed and approved for all group international study programs at SAIT. The program leader for the GISP is responsible for preparing the initial draft of the DSP, using the online study abroad DSP submission form on SAITNow. DSPs can be prepared and then presented to the Study Abroad Advisory Committee as early as May/June before the academic year in which the program will run, so that approvals are in place as early as possible.



It is important to have a detailed, thorough and organized Decision Support Package, as it becomes the framework for the study abroad program and helps to avoid delays associated with the approval process. One of the most important sections of the DSP relates to risk, both in terms of assessing risk and managing risk.

Please be aware of the following:

1. The DSP asks you to read and review the Canadian government's travel advisory information for your study abroad destination, at [www.travel.gc.ca](http://www.travel.gc.ca), and to include relevant information from that website in the risk assessment section of the DSP. This is a vital step in the process of obtaining approval for a study tour. If the overall risk rating for your proposed destination is "exercise a high degree of caution", your proposal must explain why this particular destination should be visited in lieu of an alternate, lower risk destination. Further, as per SAIT's current policies, travel will not be approved under any circumstances for a destination which has an "avoid all non-essential travel" or "avoid all travel" advisory.
2. Medical risks must be identified and a plan to mitigate them in place, as described in your DSP. Students and accompanying staff must be advised of any vaccinations, etc. that are required or recommended for travel to the country. If proof of vaccinations is required for entry to a particular country, a plan must be in place to verify that students and staff have obtained those vaccinations before they can depart on the study abroad program. Students and staff are also required to have medical insurance in place before participating in any study abroad program.
3. For risk management purposes:
  - GISPs require an instructor-to-student-ratio of 1:10. If a tour company is involved in the study abroad program and will be providing a full-time tour escort who will be accompanying the group throughout the trip, that escort can be included in the calculation of this ratio.
  - All students and accompanying SAIT staff must depart from Calgary as a group. Students (but not accompanying SAIT staff) may stay on at the end of the study abroad program and make their own way back to Calgary; however, they will need to sign a waiver that releases SAIT of liability and that acknowledges that the student is solely responsible for his/her own travel arrangements back to Calgary.
  - GISPs must be attached to a Course and CRN in which all student participants are registered, regardless of whether or not the students are getting credit for the GISP. If alumni/industry members are participating on the GISP, they must also be registered as students in this CRN, and are subject to the same code of conduct as other student participants. For more information on this, please contact the study abroad coordinator.



- Participation on a GISP is limited to the students (which may sometimes include alumni and industry members) and accompanying SAIT staff. Family members/friends cannot participate.
- Students must be over the age of 18 to participate in a study abroad program.

#### **(b) Approval Process**

- A school wishing to propose a GISP must prepare a DSP. The study abroad coordinator will review the DSP and will work with the school to revise it.
- The academic chair/supervisor and the dean/director of the program leader submitting the DSP must approve and sign off on the DSP before the Study Abroad Advisory Committee will review it.
- The study abroad coordinator will circulate the finalized DSP to the Study Abroad Advisory Committee for review and feedback. This Committee includes representatives from several schools/departments, including deans/academic chairs, instructors who have led trips, SAIT's Insurance Coordinator (specifically in relation to risk management and insurance issues), SAIT's International Centre Director, and a senior manager representing the Office of the VP Academic.
- The Program leader (or designate) may be required to present an overview of the DSP to the Study Abroad Advisory Committee at the Committee's meeting, and addresses any questions or concerns that the Committee raises.
- The Committee provides a recommendation to the associate vice president, learner services.
- The associate vice president, learner services reviews the recommendation and the DSP, and make the final approval decision for all group international study programs

The study abroad coordinator is available to provide direction and support in this approval process.

#### **(c) What does the Study Abroad Advisory Committee consider when reviewing the DSP?**

The Study Abroad Advisory Committee focuses on (but is not limited to) the following items:

- Academic Value: Why is it necessary to travel to the proposed destination in order to gain the proposed knowledge? Are there credits being offered to the students? Is the itinerary conducive to the academic component (transit time vs. hours on the ground, etc.)?
- Financial Viability: GISPs need to realistically fall within a student's budget in order for the program to recruit student participants. The Committee will look at the proposed participant expenses for each trip. Is the total cost too expensive to attract students? Will the cost prevent too many students from participating? How will the accompanying SAIT staff's expenses be covered (i.e. by the participating students' fees? Through the school's own budget)?



- **Potential Popularity:** It is important to maximize participant interest and registration in each program in order to make the program financially viable. The Committee may consider the breadth of the pool of possible participants, whether this particular program will be directly competing with several other programs also being offered to the same group of potential participants, whether students will find this an interesting opportunity, etc.
- **Risk:** To what degree will participants be at risk of being injured or contracting a disease? Are these risks manageable? How will these risks be mitigated? Will extensive immunizations be needed? Is the country politically stable? What other risks need to be considered in approving this program?
- **Logistics:** What are the transportation arrangements to, from, and around the destination site? What is the planned accommodation? How has the accommodation been vetted for safety? Is the accommodation at a commercial, regulated establishment, such as a hotel or student university residence?

### 3. Preparing for a study abroad program: who does what?

#### (a) School or Academic Program<sup>2</sup>:

- **Student Recruitment** – It is important to have GISP information available to your students as early in the academic year as possible, as this is when students are seeking opportunities and begin to set their academic and financial goals. Information sessions, class visits, posters, and advertisements on your program’s web pages and social media sites are all effective methods of recruiting students and letting them know about these opportunities. SAIT’s experience has shown that the most highly subscribed and successful programs are those that the instructors promote to students. For information or guidance about the effective use of any of these recruitment methods, or if you would like assistance with the student selection process, please contact the study abroad coordinator.
- **Logistical Arrangements** – Logistical arrangements, including accommodation, in-country transportation, tours, program scheduling, and air travel are the responsibility of the organizing program, school or department<sup>3</sup>. Custom Travel is SAIT’s official travel agent; SAIT’s Destinations travel agency may also be used to make travel arrangements.
- **Academic Content** – The school (academic program) is responsible for the academic content of the GISP and all related academic matters. Please ensure that all school administrators associated with the program are kept informed about the study abroad program.

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<sup>2</sup> Please note that the roles and responsibilities are different for study abroad programs that are part of the Global Education Network (GEN): these programs are managed logistically by the Study Abroad Office.

<sup>3</sup> With the exception of visas: if a destination country requires a visa for entry into that country, the study abroad coordinator can help direct student and staff participants to the resources needed for them to obtain their visa.

- **Creation of a CRN/Student Registration:** For insurance and risk management purposes, GISPs must be attached to a course and CRN in which the student participants must be registered, regardless of whether or not the students are getting credit for the GISP. This course can be an existing course within the program (such as an internship or practicum course, for instance), or it can be a general study abroad course, as created by the study abroad coordinator. If alumni/industry members are participating on the GISP, they must also be registered as students in the course, and are subject to the same code of conduct as other student participants. For more information, please contact the study abroad coordinator.
- **Financial Obligations** – It is important to provide students with realistic predictions of the financial obligations associated with the GISP and to ensure they are kept up-to-date as costs are finalized. Once the final cost of the study abroad program has been determined, student participants must be provided with a clear breakdown of the costs, as well as payment instructions (including deposit information and deadlines). The program, school or department organizing the trip is also responsible to make/pay all deposits, payments and fees required for the program's logistical arrangements.
- **In-field Leadership** – These responsibilities include ensuring pre-departure that logistical arrangements are complete, and being prepared to deal with in-field emergencies or other student issues that may occur outside of "class" time. The study abroad coordinator will provide you with information about SAIT contacts and procedures for these types of incidents.
- **Collection of Information:** Prior to departure, the program's finalized and detailed itinerary, including flight numbers/ travel itinerary, accommodation information, scheduled activities, participant names, student ID numbers, contact information, and emergency contact information for all student participants and instructors must be submitted to study abroad coordinator. This is required by and provided to the associate vice president, learner services, for use in an emergency situation. Please contact the study abroad coordinator to obtain the template/ format for this information to be provided in.

**(b)** Study Abroad Coordinator, Study Abroad office, Learner and Academic Services department:

- **Pre-departure information:** The study abroad coordinator can provide information and advice on travel arrangements, itinerary, risk management and health issues, local culture, and travelling tips. Information may be in the form of brochures, booklets, website references or be provided during the mandatory pre-departure orientation.
- **Visas:** if the destination country requires a visa for entry into that country, this must be identified in the DSP, as this will affect student costs and timelines. The study abroad coordinator can help direct participants to the resources they need in order to obtain their visas.



- **Pre-departure orientation:** The study abroad coordinator will present at a mandatory pre-departure information session for all students/ instructors participating in a GISP. The organizing program, school or department must contact the Study Abroad Office to arrange this presentation. Topics covered include:
  - Travel Tips
  - Safe travel information
  - Travel/ Medical Insurance
  - International SOS and Emergency Preparedness
  - Immunization information
  - Personal Security
  - Student Code of Conduct
  - Registration with ROCA – [www.travel.gc.ca](http://www.travel.gc.ca)

The study abroad coordinator will also have the Study Abroad Participation Agreement available for all students to sign and complete at the pre-departure session. This agreement is Schedule C to the AC.2.13.2 Study Abroad procedure.

- **Emergency Contact Information:** Prior to the study abroad program's departure, the study abroad coordinator will ensure that the final itinerary, as well as student information and emergency contact information for the program participants, are available to the associate vice president, learner services.
- **Contact at SAIT during program:** The study abroad coordinator will act as the liaison between participants abroad, their emergency contacts in Canada, and the embassies of the countries to which the participants travel. The study abroad coordinator and SAIT Security are the first point of contact at SAIT for the GISP's program leader in the event of an emergency or need for other support from SAIT. **Please see Schedule B: SAIT Study Abroad Emergency Response Flowchart, an Associated Document to procedure AC.2.13.2 Study Abroad.**

### **(c) Student Participants:**

All SAIT students must meet the following requirements before participating in any GISP:

- Register with the Study Abroad office (program leaders will be required to submit participant contact information, emergency contact information, and a detailed itinerary and travel itinerary).
- Provide a copy of important documents (passport)
- Provide proof of trip cancellation and emergency medical insurance
- Review the Government of Canada's Country Report for the trip's destination
- Sign the Study Abroad Participation Agreement. This is Schedule C to procedure AC.2.13.2 Study Abroad.



- Attend the mandatory Pre-Departure Orientation session offered by the Study Abroad office.
- Register with ROCA (Registry of Canadian Abroad)
- Obtain any required visas

**(d) Accompanying SAIT staff:**

All accompanying SAIT staff must meet the following requirements before participating in any GISP:

- Complete an AP 60 and have it signed by the staff member's supervisor, dean/director, and the VP Academic
- Provide contact and emergency contact information
- Provide a copy of important documents (passport)
- Attend a mandatory Pre-Departure Orientation session offered by the Study Abroad office
- Register with ROCA (Registry of Canadians Abroad)
- Obtain any required visas
- Review the Government of Canada's Country Report for the trip's destination

Before deciding to participate, SAIT staff should also ask themselves the following questions, as the success of a GISP relies heavily on the enthusiasm and preparation of the accompanying staff:

- Why do you want to lead/participate in a Group International Study Program? What interests you about it? What is motivating you?
- Are you prepared for group travel, including living and working together 24/7 with students and other SAIT staff?
- Are you prepared for the extra time and labor involved with organizing and participating in a GISP (including but not limited to pre-departure course work and post-return reflection with participants)?
- Are you in a position to undertake this project both professionally and personally? Have you thought about being away for a long period of time?
- Do you understand there will be a shift in the roles and relationships with the participants, from the formal setting of the classroom to the informal environment of travelling together?
- Are you cross culturally sensitive? Do you understand and accept those who are different from you?
- Do you have an understanding of your destination? Have you travelled there before? What research have you done?
- Do you understand you cannot be accompanied by a family member or friends, and that your focus needs to be on leading the group and ensuring that the program runs smoothly and safely?
- Do you understand that you need to accompany the group throughout the entire program, including departure from and return to Calgary?