West Virginia University
International Programs

Guide to
Faculty-Led Programs

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What are Faculty-Led Programs?

Faculty-Led Programs at West Virginia University comprise one of the many types of study abroad that are popular among students. Each academic year, WVU sends hundreds of students on more than 50 different Faculty-Led Programs around the world.

Faculty-Led programs are greatly varied, ranging from 1-15 weeks in duration, with an average program lasting 3-4 weeks. The majority of programs run during the summer term, but there are programs during the Thanksgiving, spring and winter breaks, as well as at various times in the Fall and Spring semesters. Full semester programs are also possible. These semester programs normally function under a slightly different model, which allow for shorter faculty visits during the term, rather than the onsite involvement of a faculty member for the entire term. International Programs rely on oversees partnerships to assist in the coordination for semester programs.

Almost all course credit completed while studying abroad is maintained by the Office of Extended Learning. This serves a number of programmatic needs, and also helps to make Faculty-Led Programs more reasonable in cost for students. Currently, students are assessed the program costs, plus a small fee per credit hour for their study abroad. This fee is in lieu of tuition, and remains the same regardless of residency status. The program fee itself varies greatly between programs, and in some cases will depend on residency status. If WVU were to elect to charge full tuition for these types of programs, the cost would more than likely be out of the price range of most students and greatly lower participation.

So why go to all the effort?

Because of the nature of this type of program, one or more faculty working directly with a group of students in an immersive environment, Faculty-Led Programs offer a unique set of benefits that differ from other forms of study abroad. These include, but are not limited to:

- Allows for internationalization and personal growth of faculty and students
- Teaches students to collaborate outside of the classroom and build stronger bonds among both their fellow students and their faculty leaders
- Has a targeted curriculum that can be directly integrated into majors, minors and academic programs
- Provides a comfortable entry into international study and travel by having a leader and being part of a group
- Shorter term programs can fit easily into existing academic schedule
- Usually are much more affordable than third-party study abroad, as WVU has many mechanisms to keep costs down
How and when would I start the creation of a Faculty-Led Program?

When beginning the process of creating a faculty-led program, it is best to decide when the program will run, and then consider a procedural timeline (in terms of months) out from the program. As a reference, consider the following as a good timeline for program creation and implementation:

![Faculty-Led Program Time Line](image)

There are five basic phases to the process, each with a set of best practices attached to it. These phases are broken into:

- Academic and Resource Planning and Development
- Participant Recruitment
- Pre-Departure and Student Advising
- While Abroad
- Evaluation and Review

Each of these phases covers a broad range of activities - not all of which are applicable to every program. It is important to remember that one of the strengths of the Faculty-Led model is the degree of flexibility that it offers. In order to achieve this level of flexibility, however, a very hands-on approach needs to be taken. WVU International Programs works closely with faculty and staff across WVU to help ensure that each trip is successful, as well as to maintain policies, standards and best practices to cover situations when things do not go as planned or an emergency arises.
Phase 1 - Academic and Resource Planning and Development

The obvious first step is program concept. While this sounds simple, there is actually a lot that goes into the early part of development. It is for this reason that there is a “the sooner the better” approach to planning.

While 18-9 months out might sound like an extreme, it is important to remember that you must allow for adequate time for phases 2 and 3. In some cases, a needed visa for some countries can take one to three months to process, and that can only take place after recruitment of program participants.

Let’s take a look at the steps encompassed in this program developmental phase:

**Concept** – A program concept can evolve in a number of different ways. Most programs grow out of an area of need in a particular curriculum, a basic need for course work that could best be completed in an immersive environment, or research that needs to be done “in the field.” Other programs might be created to enrich existing curriculum, adding an element that isn’t available or as tangible in the classroom on campus. Programs can also be linked, with a concept of a short-term program that will engage students in new ways, leading to further enrollment and study in other programs both abroad and on campus. While concepts may vary widely, the important part is to make sure you allow adequate time to build the program. No matter how solid of an idea one may have, a rushed program rarely yields the results one would hope for.

**Academics** – The fundamental pillar that any program is built on is its academic viability and rigor. While an exotic location may offer a great deal of cultural immersion, without any academic integration, it is not study abroad. Multiple factors need to be considered when planning the course work tied to the program:

- **Curricular fit** – Does the course work fit into an existing academic plan, or will it be extracurricular for the students?
- **Audience** – Think of how the proposed course work relates to the target audience. Does there need to be a graduate and undergraduate course? Will the course overlap or interfere with other academics, limiting the number of participants you may have? Is there a place for non-standard students, alumni and parents? These types of participants are growing in number each year. Most importantly, can your trip accommodate participants with special needs or handicaps? OIP and Disability Services can offer support in this area.
- **College/Department support** – Does the college or department support the concept of the program? Consider whether or not your program is competing with others, or has a fit with another college or department. If so, consider working together on a joint program. Many times programs that cross disciplines turn out to be very strong.
- **Content hours** – In a normal on campus setting, there are guidelines for directed and self-study hours and the amount of credit awarded. This is not always as easy to calculate during a program while abroad. Take time to consider the amount of directed instruction that occurs on your program. Also, consider advance readings, lectures, journals and reflective papers as a way to supplement the directed instruction.
Resources – Resources vary greatly from program to program. It is vital to identify your resources as early as possible, as this defines many of the program parameters in later phases. Some of these may be obvious, while others may require a degree of effort. Here are examples of resources:

- **Financial** – Colleges, departments and outside parties can all be sources of financial support for a program. Some colleges and departments prefer to assist the students directly with scholarships and grants, but many programs can receive support in the form of subsidies, faculty travel awards, release time or allowing the courses to be taught in-load. Outside companies and organizations can be a great source for program sponsorship, usually awarding significant contributions to the program. Be sure to start early and exhaust all your financial support options, keeping in mind that once a program is advertised at a certain price that the cost to the students may not be increased and altering a established budget can be very challenging. Overall program cost can be one of the most significant factors in program success.

- **Academic** – Consider things like graduate/research assistant participation. Will your department support you through providing a GA/RA to assist in various aspects of the program? Generally this is a cost effective way of supporting the program, as well as taking some of the workload off of the faculty leader. While we usually recommend one faculty member or trip leader per 10-12 students, it is always valuable to have at least a second responsible person in case of illness or emergency.

- **Technical** – Technical resource availability can vary widely depending on the destination of the program. In areas where computers and internet access are available, you should always consider your options. While you may save a few dollars a day by going to the cheaper hotel without access, having internet access also opens the door to online reference and research tools while abroad. The WVU libraries in conjunction with OIP have created an online resources guide for students studying abroad: [http://libguides.wvu.edu/studyabroad](http://libguides.wvu.edu/studyabroad)

In addition to the web and internet access, consider things like digital cameras and camcorders in order to document the experience. While journals and blogs are effective, consider assignments like video presentations and documentaries as an optional type of assignment. Equipment such as this can be an item placed into a budget.
Budget Plan – The budget is one of the three key elements to any program proposal, and possibly the most difficult, especially if it is a first time program. It is important when begging the budgetary plan to approach it with the correct mind set. While keeping the costs low is a good mindset to have, for this early stage a “worst case scenario” approach should be adopted. It is important to remember that these are ceiling budgets, not exact expenditures. Key points to remember when planning a budget:

✓ Start to Finish – Think in terms of the very beginning of the program. When does the program start? Is the flight part of the program? If so, are the students responsible to arrive at the airport on their own or will a bus be chartered? Are there events or resources that are needed in country prior to departure? This type of thought process should be continued throughout the budget creation all the way to the end of the program. Remember that all costs, including materials and supplies need to be considered. Also, while the travel company may be organizing and paying for the tour, you are still more than likely expected to handle tips to guides, and this needs to be included.

✓ Give Yourself Room – While it is easier to give your students a low cost estimate and thus drum up interest, it can really backfire in the recruiting phase if that cost needs to change. Don’t under cut your budget before it is finalized by estimating cost to students. Also, you may need to find places to cut costs down the road. Keep in mind that if you think something will cost $112; put it down as $120 in the budget to give yourself room. Rounding up is always a good idea early in the budget planning phase. Also, think of contingency. Things can and will go against your plan.

✓ Things Change – Many times our programs end up becoming reoccurring trips. Each year a program needs to be re-evaluated and a new proposal submitted, and while a program may have had a very well done budget one year, it may be completely off the next. Currency fluctuation, inflation, government policy changes and many other variables can affect a budget and itinerary dramatically. It may be a good idea to rethink parts of a program to respond to these kinds of changes, in order to keep costs similar.

✓ Paying the Bills – One thing that is often over looked in budgeting is the hidden fees associated with paying the vendors and institutions. Outside the US it is common practice to charge a percentage fee, usually 3-4%, for paying an invoice with a credit card. Also, many times a bank transfers or wires are requested, and each individual transaction carries a fee of $30-$50. These fees need to be considered when planning the budget as well.

The Proposal – Once all the pieces are considered, it is time to pull it all together in the program proposal. The proposal is the final step of phase one. A proposal needs to contain the following:

- A Course Syllabus for each individual course offered
- A completed budget questionnaire and faculty/chaperone list
- A description of the overall idea of the program
- A completed information sheet with specific program details
- Approval of the appropriate parties (Chair/Director, Dean, Associate Provost)
- Any additional information such as outside funding, special itineraries, etc.
Phase 2 – Participant Recruitment

Once the program proposal and budget plan have been approved, phase 2 begins. International Programs will create official application materials based on the needs of the program. In addition, websites and online information will be created to assist with recruitment. Recruitment can be one of the most difficult phases, and needs to be given both time and effort.

Your approach to recruitment will vary greatly depending on the type of program. If the course is in advanced economic theory, you are probably not going to want to spend a lot of your effort chasing students in Biology. So what are the key elements to consider when recruiting?

**Audience** – While it might be a bit of a challenge to recruit outside of your department, do consider reaching out to other departments and disciplines, even other schools. For example, a well placed phone call to a smaller school in the state may generate a much larger group of students to recruit from, as well as open more opportunities to the program. There is nothing to say that alumni or professionals cannot take part in a program, and in fact it does happen often. The key is to make sure to get the right students on your trip and not just someone looking for a “vacation” or tour.

**Location** – Where you choose to focus your recruitment efforts can have an impact on numbers as well. Getting the information out during class sessions is a great way to reach a captive audience, but make time for option information sessions as well. Each year International Programs holds its Study Abroad Fair in the fall semester, which attracts hundreds of students looking for programs. In addition, we offer numerous smaller recruitment efforts where we discuss all of our available programs. We can also send advisors to classes to talk about study abroad in general, as well as specifics on various programs. Another great way to get the information out is via social media. International Programs has a Facebook page specifically for study abroad that can help showcase your program.

**Materials** – While the WVU Abroad site will host applications and program information, it is still a good idea to produce flyers or information cards to distribute with program details like dates and pricing. Posters with a lot of visuals that can be displayed around campus are also a great way to grab attention of students. International Programs can assist with the development of some of these materials.

As a last note, keep in mind that it is generally not a good idea to promote specifics of your program until they are set in stone. It may seem worthwhile to give estimates or “we plan on” in your advertising, but if prices and plans change, it usually drives away some of your potential participants. Make sure to get things solidified with your program early, and then advertise on those absolutes.
Phase 3 - Pre-Departure and Student Advising

Once a majority of your student participants have applied to the program, focus begins to switch to the preparatory phase of the process. Making sure the students are properly advised on basics of international travel in combination of specifics of the destination will make for a much smoother trip.

This phase starts a month or two prior to the program will continue right up to departure. In addition to advice on travel, this can include can include class sessions, course work, readings and research pertinent to the program.

Travel Advising – As part of all programs, pre-departure orientation participation is required at WVU. Though many students are experienced travelers more than ever, we still want to make sure that each participant is knowledgeable on the basics before they depart. International Programs offers a combination of group sessions and online information for program participants. Generally for Faculty-Led the instructor and an International Programs staff member will hold a pre-departure session for students that give the general travel information as well as the program specifics and academic expectations.

Academic Preparation – One of the key elements to a smoother trip is to make sure the participants understand what is expected of them clearly before they depart. This can take the form of e-mail correspondence, group advising and/or class sessions. It is also a good practice to give the participants background knowledge on the sites and locations they will visit. Often your time on ground is limited, and the less information you have to disseminate in person, the more quality time you will have. This methodology has also proven to keep participants more engaged, as they have a better understanding of what they are seeing and why it is significant.

Preparing for Special Needs – A vital part of meeting and communicating with participants in advance is to determine if you have anyone with special needs. While it may not be possible to accommodate all special needs on a program, it is vastly easier to do so in advance of departure, rather than discovering the need on location. International Programs and Disability Services will work with your participants to do everything that they can to make the program accessible as possible. Beyond physical limitations, it may also be necessary to produce special course materials as well.

Last Minute Alterations – Being that trips are usually organized at least 9 months in advance of departure, some details of the trip may need to be adjusted. Things like changing weather, social events and political turbulence can alter an itinerary. As changes occur, be sure to keep your participants advised. In the case of more significant changes, it may be necessary to offer participants the option to withdraw from the program without penalty as it is no longer the same program they signed up for. International Programs will work with faculty leaders on these types of alterations and assist as needed.

Trip Details – International Programs will assist with course registration, flight and transportation bookings, as well as lodging reservations. In addition, we will obtain insurance for all travelers and provide information on participants in case of emergency as well as offer advice on how to handle emergencies. Budgetary meetings will be held to assist with expenses occurred while abroad.
Phase 4 - While Abroad

This is what it all builds up to, the actual trip. While much of the detail has already been determined, and most of the information is already in hand, there are still key points and responsibilities to keep in mind.

The time-frame of this phase depends on the program, but the responsibilities remain fairly consistent.

**Health and Safety** – During the course of the trip, the faculty leader’s responsibilities include monitoring the overall well-being of the participants. While International Programs in conjunction with the insurance company will deal with most emergency issues, faculty leaders still need to communicate any issue that occurs with us as soon as possible. In addition, any participant who is engaging in activities or behavior that puts themselves or other participants in physical or legal danger should be reported to us immediately. Part of the application process requires completion of a participant responsibility and conduct contract. International Programs will work with the faculty leader in advance of the trip to help understand the rights and responsibilities of both faculty leaders and participants.

**Academic Oversight** – Depending on the nature of the program, the faculty leader may be responsible for some or all of the direct instruction, but regardless of who is doing the direct instruction, the faculty leader is responsible for oversight of all academic work involved in the program. This may involve evaluating independent projects, assessing independent work or sitting in on class sessions taught by foreign instructors. WVU faculty may even evaluate program participants on a different scale that the foreign institution, as long as the evaluation is in line with WVU standards and is clearly spelled out in the course syllabus.

**Finances and Record Keeping** – While we try to have a majority of the program expenses paid for in advance of travel, invariably there are always some costs that must be paid in person while on the trip. This can include transportation, lodging, meals and entrance fees. International Programs will work with the faculty to plan for as much of these costs as possible, but unexpected costs can occur. Payment methods to cover both the expected and unexpected costs will be given to the faculty. In cases where planned methods fail, International Programs will be available to assist. Parts of the faculty leader’s responsibilities include tracking all these expenses and keeping appropriate receipts and/or documentation for each. Materials to assist with this as well as details on how to manage this will also be discussed in advance of the trip.
Phase 5 - Evaluation and Review

While it is easy to want to be finished with the program once you set foot back on US soil, there are still a few things left that need to be dealt with.

This timing of this final phase varies greatly from program to program. It is heavily dependant on the needs of the program more than just the general responsibilities.

**Finishing Up the Course Work** – Some programs will give final projects or exams. These will have been planned upon well in advance and must be included in the course syllabus. All projects should be finished up prior to the end of the semester in which the travel occurred.

**Evaluation** – While it is encouraged for faculty to offer course evaluations on ground similar to how they would during an on campus course, some faculty will wait until after a trip has returned and the participants have a chance to digest all of the experiences they had. In a case such as this, it is usually a good idea to wait approximately two weeks. International Programs will offer program evaluations to students as well, though the criteria of these evaluations will more than likely differ from the evaluations the faculty leader would give.

**Grading** – It is important that the faculty leader properly record the participant’s grades as required by WVU policy in a timely manner. The faculty leader should work with their academic units to make sure they are in compliance with these policies. International Programs is not involved with the grading process.

**Financial Reconciliation** – Within a reasonable time frame upon return, faculty leaders are required to meet with International Programs to review all financial transactions related to the program. This includes delivering the appropriately prepared documents and receipts for transactions abroad.

**Incident Reporting** – In the case where issues occurred on the program, follow-up meetings with International Programs may be needed. These meetings will be to verify the appropriate record of all incidents is made, and that any needed resolution is achieved. Depending on the nature of the incident, multiple meetings may be required.