

## **International Travel Advisory Committee (ITAC) Student Travel Abroad Policy**

This document outlines policies for Lehigh student international travel and summarizes the process by which ITAC will review proposed travel.

### **I. Overview / Introduction**

#### **A. Scope**

The International Travel Advisory Committee (ITAC) is responsible for reviewing and approving all Lehigh-sponsored international programs and travel involving undergraduate and graduate students. ITAC focuses on issues related to the health, safety, and logistics of such travel. Lehigh-sponsored student international travel includes experiences that receive funding of any amount from any Lehigh department/office, or experiences that are organized, directed, or coordinated by the university. This includes, but is not limited to: for-credit study abroad programs, travel with a Lehigh University group as part of a non-credit educational experience, travel for research, co-curricular programming, Lehigh student club travel, and conference attendance.

ITAC does not exercise academic oversight of international programs. Courses taught completely or partially abroad are subject to the policies and requirements of the Rules and Procedures of the Faculty of Lehigh University, the Educational Policy Committee, and the Graduate Research Committee.

ITAC members from the Office for International Affairs (OIA) have extensive knowledge in planning and executing abroad programs, as well as a large network of international partners and resources. Faculty, staff, or students preparing for a program that includes University-sponsored international travel are advised to meet with a designated representative from ITAC during the initial planning stages to review program models/options, discuss pitfalls to avoid, and review planning resources available. ITAC is available to facilitate and guide through the planning process from early brainstorming through program launch. Consulting with ITAC throughout the process will facilitate program development that aligns with University policy and best practices.

ITAC review may include an iterative process as ITAC works with program leaders or individual travelers to gather needed information. For new programs, this process may take 4-6 weeks. Importantly, none of the following may occur prior to ITAC review: student selection and notification, signing of contracts with vendors, payments for services, or confirmation of faculty/staff program leaders. As such,

program leaders or individual travelers are expected to initiate the ITAC review process several months before any such program details need to be completed.

#### B. Composition

ITAC is chaired by the Vice President/Vice Provost for International Affairs. Other members include the Director of the Study Abroad Office; Assistant Director of Study Abroad; Director of the Iacocca International Internship Program; General Counsel or designee; Director of Risk Management; Dean of Students or designee; Director of the Health and Wellness Center or designee; and a faculty representative. The Assistant Director of the Study Abroad Office serves as the committee's secretary. ITAC may consult with other campus representatives, as needed.

#### C. International Crisis Advisory Group (ICAG)

All international programming that falls under ITAC oversight will have access to on-call support from the International Crisis Advisory Group (ICAG) during official program dates. ICAG is composed of administrators and staff from across the University whose expertise may be critical in responding to a crisis abroad. In a crisis scenario, a designated on-call individual from OIA will coordinate with relevant members of ICAG as needed and share ongoing updates with the group. Current ICAG membership is listed on the OIA Risk Management [website](#).

## II. ITAC Review Process

The University seeks to provide high-quality international experiences while also assessing and mitigating risks for travelers. This involves carefully considering the educational benefit of the program/travel versus the relative risk to travelers.

#### A. Criteria for evaluating proposed international travel

ITAC reviews proposed travel on a case-by-case basis and considers the following information and resources<sup>1</sup>, as appropriate:

- The familiarity of program leaders and/or individual travelers with the host country and /or the project;
- Activities or destinations listed in the itinerary with elevated risk;
- Transportation plans including forms of transportation, drivers, and other location-specific transportation risks;
- Activities involving health care, volunteering, or interacting with minors;
- Onsite infrastructure for program support including, but not limited to, expertise and capacity of the partner organization, availability of on-site staff, quality of facilities;

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<sup>1</sup> Section 4 of this document provides resources ITAC regularly consults for guidance.

- Partner organization(s) in the host country. Refer to [Guidelines on Selecting and Working with an Organization Abroad](#);
- Emergency preparedness, with consideration given to: at-site support; stability in country; medical care and treatment: availability, access, standard of care; laws, cultural practices that may impact individuals based on identity; level of involvement of Lehigh faculty/staff to support students;
- Travel risk assessments from the US State Department, independent risk management organizations, and peer institutions;
- Existing Lehigh policies on international travel, academic programs, purchasing, export control compliance, and personnel;
- Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad, prepared by the Forum on Education Abroad; and
- Standards for short-term global health programs, outlined in the Brocher Declaration.

#### B. ITAC Review Process

ITAC meets on a bi-monthly, or as needed, basis throughout the academic year to review the following categories of travel:

- Group travel credit/non-credit;
- Individual student travel (ie fellowship or other university sponsorship); and
- Graduate (ie fellowship, research).

Group program leaders or individual travelers will be expected to complete the [ITAC Review Forms](#) and submit supplementary materials such as contracts or other agreements with partner organizations, as requested. ITAC may also ask them to attend an ITAC meeting, if necessary.

#### C. Student Participant eligibility

All students traveling on Lehigh-sponsored international travel must be in good academic, disciplinary, and financial standing. The Study Abroad Office verifies eligibility and ensures that students remain in good standing until departure. Individual programs may set additional eligibility or selection criteria.

#### D. Assessment of Elevated Risk

During proposal review, ITAC may identify an activity or region as high-risk. Regions or countries may be considered high-risk if they carry a level 3 or 4 Department of State Travel Advisory if there is an increased risk of disease, if the country is subject to U.S. government sanctions, or if conditions at the site are unstable. (Note: Some countries may have an overall country risk rating of Level 1 or 2, but have

areas/locations designated as Level 3 or 4.) For additional information, see: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html/>

Some examples of high-risk activities include, but are not limited to: hands-on physical work, activities involving close interaction with human subjects, work involving export-control implications, and health-related projects involving any level of patient interaction.

If ITAC determines that an activity or region is high-risk, the program leader may be requested to submit an addendum with information justifying the educational value of the trip and the steps taken to mitigate risk to the travelers. Additional Lehigh University offices may be engaged in review of the proposed travel to confirm compliance with applicable university policy. Students will be notified of the ITAC assessment of elevated risk and may be asked to sign an addendum acknowledging their voluntary decision to travel; for undergraduate students, parents/guardians will receive notification of elevated risk and may be asked to sign the addendum.

#### E. Contracts

Most international programs will require entering into contracts with partner organizations and/or vendors. OISS conducts Restricted Party Screening of organizations and/or vendors included in contracts, prior to routing them for further review. All contracts must be reviewed by Lehigh's Office of the General Counsel and must be submitted using the online system called "[Lehigh University Contract Administration: LUCA](#)". No contracts may be signed prior to ITAC review. The [University's Signature Authority Policy](#) explains which Lehigh employees have signing authority. Contract review also applies to individual student travel requiring a contract.

#### F. Eligibility for Group Program Leaders

Lehigh faculty or staff may travel abroad as a group program leader. Approved program leaders must be employed by Lehigh as exempt staff, tenured or tenure-track faculty, or professors of practice. Dean and ITAC approval are needed for an adjunct faculty member to participate as a program leader. ITAC will consider the following points related to the role of group leader:

- Familiarity of the group leader with the host location;
- Appropriate leader to participant ratio; and
- Review of group leader's (s') concurrent personal or professional responsibilities during program dates.

Prior to program departure, all Group Program leaders must attend an emergency preparedness and response training led by OIA. Individuals who lead programs over multiple years must attend leader training annually.

G. On-going review

ITAC regularly monitors current events and conditions at the program location. All ITAC approved travel is subject to ongoing review occurring up until the date of departure and throughout the duration of the program. Programs may be subject to additional review due to changing conditions.

III. Additional Procedures

A. Companions Accompanying Faculty and Staff Leading International Programs

Lehigh does not permit any individual to be included in, or to accompany, an abroad program who is not considered a “program participant” except under the limited circumstances involving the companion(s) of a program staff member.

Non-Participant Companions include a spouse, partner, or dependent of the program staff member.

Conditions for participation by Non-Participant Companions:

- A Program Staff Member is solely responsible for covering all of his/her/their companion’s expenses
- The companion will be required to be covered by health insurance that is valid in the country of travel, as well as travel insurance that includes coverage for evacuations.
- A Program Staff Member is responsible for reviewing the following aspects of the program for suitability for travel by their companion: the length of the program, the age of children, the location of the program, the nature of the program, the extent of travel activity involved during the program, the availability of accommodation, the impact of the presence of the companion on the program, and any special needs of the companion.
- The presence of a companion, particularly a dependent child, must not disrupt or alter the abroad program in any way or otherwise affect the ability of the program staff member to carry out responsibilities associated with leading a Lehigh program.
- A minor child may only travel with the abroad program group if another adult/caretaker is present, and that caretaker must have 24/7 supervision of the minor child. A program staff member is not permitted to hire a program participant for childcare purposes.

A program staff member who is interested in bringing a companion with him/her/them on an abroad program must submit a justification to ITAC before funding has been committed (e.g., plane tickets, housing reservations). The

justification should include information about the companion's motivation for participating and the extent of the participation in the group's itinerary. If the companion is a minor, the justification should include information about the items addressed above.

The complete [Statement Defining Participants and Companions on Lehigh University International Programs](#) serves as the official explanation for the university review process.

#### B. Approved University Travel Vendors

The university requires University-sponsored student group travel and individual travel tickets purchased with University funds to be purchased through an approved university travel vendor, per the university's [Business Travel and Expense Policy](#). Booking travel through the approved vendor allows Lehigh to provide travel support (i.e., flight changes, etc.) in case of emergencies and use of ISOS flight management resources.

#### C. Insurance

All students participating in Lehigh-sponsored travel abroad will be enrolled in mandatory coverage under the Lehigh University Student International Services and Insurance program through International SOS (ISOS), which provides health insurance and security assistance. A registration fee will be billed to the student or sponsoring Lehigh program/department.

Faculty or staff who are ITAC-approved program leaders will be covered under a separate insurance policy and also have access to security assistance services. Travelers are encouraged to review their medical insurance limits with their provider prior to travel.

Both students and faculty/staff should maintain their domestic health insurance policies while traveling abroad and are only covered by the Lehigh ISOS plan during official program dates. Information about ISOS and policy benefits for both students and faculty/staff is available at [go.lehigh.edu/ISOS](http://go.lehigh.edu/ISOS).

#### D. Partnerships

For program activities requiring a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with an educational institution, NGO, company, or other institution, program leaders should refer to the [International Partnerships Guidelines](#).

### IV. Additional resources

The following is a partial list of resources that ITAC may consult as part of the program review. Program leaders are encouraged to access these resources as well.

- A. [International SOS \(ISOS\)](#):  
ISOS is Lehigh's contracted medical and security services company for international travel and programs. ISOS is a group all Lehigh travelers can consult with before or during travel by going to this link ([lehigh.edu/go/isos](http://lehigh.edu/go/isos)) and calling the phone number listed or starting a chat session.
- B. [US Department of State](#): International Travel
- C. [Overseas Security Advisory Council \(OSAC\)](#):
  - a. OSAC promotes security cooperation between American private sector interests worldwide and the U.S. Department of State.
- D. [Forum on Education Abroad](#):  
Forum sets the 'Standards of Good Practice' for education abroad programs
- E. [NAFSA - Association of International Educators](#):
- F. [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#):
- G. [Center for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#):
- H. [Governments of United Kingdom, Canada, Australia](#): travel advisories for their citizens
- I. Lehigh University Office of Research Integrity ([export control compliance](#))
- J. [Brocher Declaration](#):
  - a. A statement of ethical principles for guiding policy on short-term global health engagements.