

UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO

Faculty/Staff-Led International Travel Program (FSIT)



FSIT Program Support Manual

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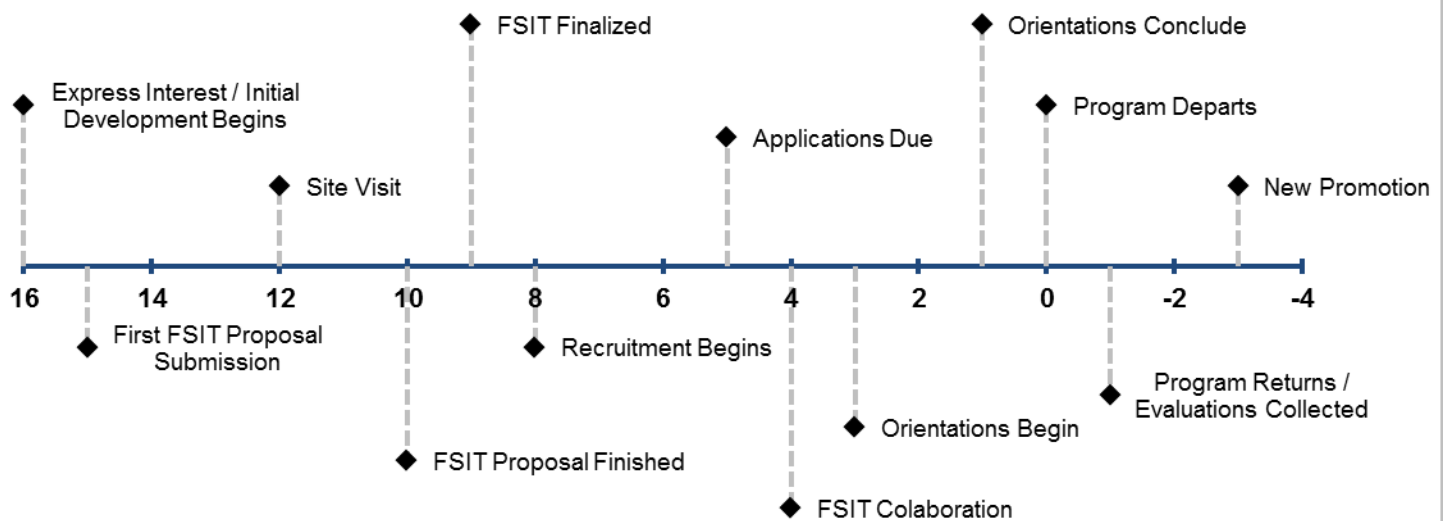
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FSIT Creation Timeline (months before program)



Introduction & How to Use This Manual

Are you ready to change somebody's life forever?

Hopefully you are, because that is consistently the effect of leading students abroad. There are some specific tasks that can only be accomplished abroad, certain ideas that can best be learned abroad, and countless intangible benefits for students that you lead abroad. But the final outcome of an international experience is more profound than any of its parts. You quite literally change the course of somebody's life! While this is a sizable responsibility, the University of Idaho's Study Abroad Office will support you through the entire process. It provides resources, guidance, and assistance to ensure that your trek overseas with students is positive, productive and rewarding for all.

This manual is intended to provide vital information for faculty and/or staff members who will be leading students abroad via a Faculty/Staff-led International Travel Program (FSIT). The manual is arranged chronologically, though in practice some components of FSIT building happen concurrently. While it is highly recommended that you read through the entire manual at least once, it is structured so you can target your learning toward any particular aspect of FSIT creation as the need arises. This manual is not intended to be fully comprehensive; instead its purpose is to provide a roadmap for FSIT development, execution, and evaluation. Its guidance is supplemental to, and not in place of, your collaboration with the Study Abroad Office.

Initial Program Development

In beginning stages of program development there are three main steps to complete. Each step serves to inform the structure of your program, and bolster the chances of your program's eventual success.

Step 1: Meet with the Study Abroad Office

When you initially meet with the Study Abroad Office you should be prepared to discuss and expand upon the following aspects of creating your FSIT program:

1. What are the program's mission(s), objective(s) and/or purpose(s)
2. What is(are) your particular area(s) of expertise and how does it (do they) relate to the program that you intend to create
3. What do you wish to share with your future students via their participation in your FSIT
4. What is the planned learning environment before, during, and after being abroad; how does that relate to, and enhance, their understanding of the subject(s) being shared
5. How will students earn credit on your program, and how will those credits be useful for your students
6. If your program is not for credit, how will it enhance students' educational experiences
7. Do you have any potential or existing partnerships that could be garnered or leveraged to enhance the students' experience

Step 2: Construct your FSIT Proposal

The FSIT Proposal process provides the skeletal structure for your future program. By answering the questions listed on the proposal (as fully as possible) you will begin to refine your program. Progressing

from something that holds promise, to something feasible and marketable, and finally to fruition. Here is a brief list of subjects addressed in the full FSIT Proposal:

- Academic term & travel dates
- Course information & syllabus
- Accommodations
- Travel logistics & itinerary
- Risk management planning
- Recruitment plan
- Pre-departure meetings
- Salary & per diem considerations
- Leader & TA information
- Program cost & budget

Simply completing the above referenced proposal provides a significant amount of inertia to help ensure your future program will be a success. You can find the FSIT Proposal, by visiting the FSIT website at: <http://www.uidaho.edu/international/ui-faculty-staff-opportunities/taking-students-abroad>.

Step 3: Revisit the Study Abroad Office as needed

Once your proposal has been completed and signed, submit the initial copy to the Study Abroad Office. If at any time the process is unclear, you want to hash out ideas, or you have questions of any other kind, feel free to meet with the Study Abroad Faculty/Staff-Led Program Coordinator. The Study Abroad Office is a resource to assist and/or guide you through any aspect of your FSIT program, so please use them as such.

Site Visit (Optional)

A site visit may be necessary. When conducting a site visit it is essential to keep four considerations in mind: how will it be funded, how long do you need to effectively evaluate the area, what are your specific goals, and how do you plan to shape those goals into outcomes. These considerations are explained further below.

1. Money for an exploratory site visit can come from one or more sources. Departments and/or colleges will regularly support a study abroad initiative, especially when the benefit to their students is clearly demonstrated. Furthermore, other entities may have additional resources at your disposal. The best advice when it comes to funding this category of trip is to be creative, and clearly articulate your needs.
2. Take care to conservatively budget enough of your time to accomplish each task set forth in your itinerary. Also, be sure to prepare contingencies, so you are able to accomplish your goals when the unexpected occurs.
3. Have a plan. Goals are essential for site visits to be both efficient and effective. Consider why you are going. Are you trying to determine the best accommodations for you and your students while you are abroad, are you gathering contacts for future collaboration, are you assessing an area's safety, are you assessing the feasibility of other considerations (classroom space, transportation, meal options, excursions, cultural visits, etc.)? The contents of your goals will mold the shape of your trip. As much as is possible, make your goals SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely).

4. Once you have concluded the visit and accomplished your goals, it is important that you convert the completed goals and learning into tangible outcomes that positively affect the continued development of your program. Do not let your takeaways sink into obscurity, put them into action immediately.

Program Development

Program development is where the bulk of the challenge in creating a new program lies, and it is also where the Study Abroad Office will provide you with the most extensive support. The work you put in to this development phase will be directly reflected in the quality of experience for your future students.

Academic / Course Design

It's important for sustainability that your program be academically rigorous. This is the area where you, the expert, truly have a chance to shine. There are some aspects of course design, however, that are not immediately apparent to those new to FSIT programs. Keep the following considerations in mind:

- *Contact Hours* – These are usually based on the amount of hours in the semester in which the class is held. When you are abroad the line can become blurred. You will be with the students facilitating learning for many more hours than the amount of credits you will reasonably be able to award for your course. It is helpful to remember that contact hours should be based on directed scholarly activity. It's essential that you coordinate with your department on how these hours will be determined in your specific circumstances.
- *Readings* – Keep in mind that in most courses led abroad, much of the learning comes from tangible experience. Often the reading load in an FSIT course is lightened to allow students sufficient time to absorb both kinds of learning. However, it is important that your students have sufficient context for what they are experiencing, so eliminating reading altogether would not be recommended.
- *Assignments & Assessment* – It is recommended that assignments and assessments are directly related to experiences your students will have, and not interfere with the cultural exchanges taking place. Be flexible but do not compromise on rigor.

Logistics

There are two common ways to arrange logistics for an FSIT program. The first is to arrange logistics independently with the support and guidance of the Study Abroad Office. The other is to partner with a Study Abroad program provider so you can use their contacts and resources, both in your destination country and in the U.S. Both ways of arranging logistics have advantages and disadvantages that will vary based on the specific program that you are creating. As an example: program providers can provide extra support in planning, act as a backup in the country, and relieve you of some legal liability, but may cost more money and have restrictions attached to what kind of program can be created. Whereas building everything from the ground up allows you maximum freedom and flexibility in regard to your program's direction, and may save money in the long run, but will not have as many safe guards and will require a significant share of your time. Regardless of how the arrangements are made there are four primary considerations that must be addressed in the process: housing, transportation, learning space, and field trips.

- Housing in this context refers to the location where your group will be based, and where they will sleep for the nights. When securing housing remember to pay special attention to the characteristics of the location you choose (you must balance affordability with proximity and

safety). If a housing option is inexpensive but would leave your students feeling insecure, it would not only act as a detriment to student learning but also open the University of Idaho up to significant liabilities. On the other hand, if a housing option is very secure and perfectly located but much more expensive, there is a possibility that you will not have enough students sign up for the program because of the added expense.

- Transportation needs to be safe, cost effective, and efficient. Transportation to the program site can be secured as a group or individually. This can be arranged through your program provider, if working with one, or through a travel agent. Public transportation may be safe in some areas and not in others, and if you charter transportation you must be sure that it is properly insured based upon local insurance requirements (a contract with the transportation provider will ensure this).
- Learning space also needs to be considered. Do you need to rent a classroom? If you do how much will it cost? Are you going to engage local experts in relevant fields, what fee will they command for collaborating with your FSIT? Will your class do all of their learning by way of tangible experience?
- Field trips in many ways are the heart of an FSIT experience. If there are no purposeful visits that scaffold the student learning, why travel at all? With the field trips, as with the rest of the FSIT experience, it is important to keep the above mentioned considerations in mind.

Financial

Often the most difficult part of creating an FSIT opportunity is determining how the financial aspect of your new program will work. You will find that creating this fee is simply a building process, and as long as it is done in collaboration with the Study Abroad Office (who provides official university oversight) the process is fairly painless.

- *Tour Fee* – This acts as a base for building the rest of the fees. When calculating a tour fee all things that will be centrally paid for by the university must be included, such as: accommodations, group meals, field trips, transportation, celebrations, teaching space, and guest lecturer salaries. Be sure to estimate accurately but on the high end of real costs to ensure there is at least some flexibility in the budget for last minute changes and currency fluctuation.
- *Program Fee* – The program fee is based on the Tour Fee with considerations such as leader airfare and living expenses, and a contingency fee for risk management purposes. Once the program fee is calculated, that will be the fee openly advertised to students.*

*Note: Program fees **MUST** be established before program promotion begins. If you do not yet have an established program fee, then one must be established before creating any marketing materials.

- *Total Expense* – This is the total out-of-pocket expense for a student to participate on your program, and if applicable, this is what will be used for Financial Aid purposes. The total expense includes the Program Fee as well as passport/visa costs, airfare (if not already included), per credit fees, vaccinations, and all other incidentals not included in the program fee.
- *Budgets* – All budgets for new FSIT programs will be centralized within the International Programs Office. This allows for two specific considerations that would not be possible otherwise. First, anytime the budget is to be used, the approval process will exist within the International Programs Office, significantly reducing the amount of time for individual transactions. Second, as all FSIT budgets are strictly pass-through (they do not generate revenue) we are able to bypass the 10% University of Idaho tax that would otherwise be charged.

- *Student Charges* – As your students progress through the application process, they will be required to pay applicable fees, such as the program fee you just created. The Study Abroad Office charges these fees directly to the students’ accounts. As the fees are charged, the funds are immediately made available in your program’s budget to spend on preparation and in-country expenses.
- *Salary & Per Diem* – This will be determined between you and your department with the Study Abroad Office acting as an intermediary for guidance and advice. Generally leader salary is directly based upon your department’s share of per credit fees from your course and the final enrollment within the course with no per diem paid, but there are other models that have been created—contact the Faculty/Staff-led Program Coordinator to explore other options.

Roles While Abroad

When leading students abroad there are multiple roles you must assume. Some of these roles are entirely obvious, and other roles are not as immediately apparent. In short you must act as the purveyor of knowledge, the facilitator of learning, the life coach, the tour guide, and the crisis manager. Each of these roles is distinct, and the final 3 rarely occur in an everyday classroom environment.

- *Purveyor of Knowledge & Facilitator of Learning* – While these are truly distinct both are highly familiar in higher education and you likely have your own established methodologies. If you would like help with either, do not hesitate to reach out to the Study Abroad Office.
- *Life Coach* – While this may already be a consideration, its importance is magnified by leading students abroad. Not only must you deal with your own culture shock, but you must also assist students in dealing with theirs. Difficulties that arise from being abroad are learning opportunities, as long as the right life coach is present to help contextualize the events.
- *Tour Guide* – As in the classroom, it is expected that you know answers even when you do not. You must either have had experience in the location where you will be for your program, or you must do enough research to assist your students with their cultural sensibilities and acquisition. Formal tour guides can also be hired to enhance the experience and assist where you feel necessary.
- *Crisis Manager* – While this is the role that you may prefer to avoid, it is present regardless. If something goes wrong, really if anything goes wrong, it falls upon your shoulders to bring that situation to a successful resolution. You are not alone, simply the first line of defense. You are backed up by the Study Abroad Office with both institutional and program specific policies and procedures. Most importantly, keep in mind that open and frequent communication is the key to successful crisis resolution. Also, this will be a central topic in the FSIT Leader Collaboration Meeting that you will attend before your program’s departure. You will also be given the “Study Abroad Emergency Management Handbook” that will provide you with guidance and protocols for emergencies that could arise while leading an FSIT.

Legal Considerations

Ever present in the realm of international programing within higher education is the influence of the law in our society. Using the lens of these programs it becomes clear that the specific legal applications used include risk management, legal protections, and insurance.

- *Risk Management* – As a part of your initial FSIT Proposal you will create a detailed risk management plan that includes the dangers present where you will be leading students, how you will mitigate those dangers, how you will prepare students for that which cannot be mitigated, and an on the ground emergency plan for your group. There are inherent risks with activities as simple as getting out of bed in the morning, but we want to be sure you are aware

of the specific dangers associated with leading students abroad. It is also necessary that we are able to prove your competence if called upon to do so.

- *Legal Protections* – These are built into the application and post-application forms that students fill out and submit. You will use our documents as the building blocks for your own application processes. Not using these documents opens not only the university, but you personally, to an unacceptable level of liability. It is also important to register your travel plans with the Department of State’s SMART traveler enrollment program before departure.
- *Insurance* – It is important that your program has a centralized insurance policy for all people participating. The University has secured an insurance that is required of all FSIT student/leaders and will automatically be worked into each FSIT budget. Students and leaders will receive information regarding the insurance through their online UI Studio Abroad account.

Recruitment

Recruitment is an often neglected piece of ensuring a program fills to the point that it is financially viable. It is easy to wrap yourself up in the idea of creating the very best possible program but remember--if you build it, they still may not come. It takes a concerted and broad-based effort to ensure your new labor of love is capable of providing all the cultural insight and specific learning that it was designed to. There are three primary areas to target while recruiting: on campus, off campus, and on the web. These three areas each reach a different set of students with some overlap. While we will provide some suggestions here, it is best to develop the specifics of how to carry out these strategies for each individual program. Think of this list as the yeast, not the finished loaf of bread.

On Campus

- Study Abroad Fair
- Information Session(s)
- Flyers and Reader Boards
- Class Visits
- Advisees
- Personal Student Meetings
- Study Abroad Advisor Meetings

Off Campus

- Institutional Collaboration
- Corporate Partnerships
- Alumni

Online

- Study Abroad Listing Services
- Course Website
- Department Website
- Study Abroad Website
- University of Idaho Main Website
- Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube)

Leader Pre-departure Preparation

We all have expertise in different areas. The Study Abroad Office has expertise in leading students abroad, sending students abroad, and preparing students and others for sojourning abroad. Following are a handful of things to keep in mind to ensure that your program runs smoothly behind the scenes, and that you run smoothly too.

FSIT Leader Collaboration Meeting

This event brings together the expertise of the Study Abroad Office, the insight of current FSIT leaders, and the open minds of those new to leading this kind of experience. Together, we will work through real life scenarios, legal requirements, and tips to make your life easier.

Contracts

Each time you make an agreement with a domestic or foreign entity to provide a service for your program you must go through a university service contracting process. While it is rarely an expeditious process it is also rarely a difficult one. By far the most important thing to keep in mind while working your way through contracting is that the earlier you start, the better the chance everything will run smoothly. The Faculty/Staff-led Program Coordinator can walk you through this process.

Payments to Service Providers

Service providers can be paid by check, international wire, or through a UI purchasing card once contracts are complete. These payments are processed through the Accounts Payable Office, and coordinated by the Study Abroad Office.

Travel Advance

A travel advance is what enables you to pay for on-the-ground expenses while you are in country with the students. The Study Abroad Office strongly recommends that you set up a separate bank account to handle the advanced funds and to ensure the greatest amount of accounting transparency. You will need to prove through receipts and daily ledgers that money spent out of the advance went directly toward the successful execution of the program. Any money not used directly toward program expenses (whether spent or unspent) must be returned to the university at the conclusion of your program. Also any money spent in excess of the program's budgetary allowances will be the responsibility of the program leader.

Regulatory Reminders

- *FERPA* – All of the provisions of The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act still apply while leading students abroad. The less formal environment makes it easy to forget this, but it is important to remember as both the university and you personally can be held liable for any breaches of confidentiality.
- *Department Travel Approval* – Do not forget that while your whereabouts are accounted for from the official university perspective, you will likely still need to go through your department's general process for traveling.
- *STEP Program* – It is your responsibility to remember to submit the US State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program information. If there is an emergent situation that arises while you are abroad (from political instability to a lost passport) the US State Department will be in a better position to offer assistance more quickly if they already know your group is in the

country. Also, by virtue of signing up you will be kept abreast of all relevant Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and Warden Messages that are available for your particular destination.

Student Pre-departure Preparation

Students also have responsibilities in preparing themselves to depart on this kind of a journey. Following is a snapshot of the processes and preparations that they must go through in order to participate on a university FSIT program.

Application

All students must successfully complete an official university application to study abroad. This application will be tailored to your specific program. And while you may not remove application components you are welcome to make additions (in collaboration with the Study Abroad Office).

Finances

There are three fees each student will have charged on their student account before studying abroad. The first is the application fee; it is \$200 regardless of which program the student is applying for, and is charged when the application is submitted. The next fee is the deposit, which varies depending upon the preference and needs of the FSIT leader, but is always charged at the same time as the application fee. Both of the preceding fees are non-refundable. The final fee is the remainder of the program fee, comprised of that which was not already charged at the time of deposit, and will be non-refundable on a date set by the Faculty/Staff-led Program Coordinator and the program leader based on the requirements of program preparation.

Orientations

All students must attend FSIT leader run orientations that are specific to academic and travel preparation for their specific program, as well as their Study Abroad safety and logistic orientation. It is especially important that the leader sets expectations regarding time as a group and individually, as well as makes clear the accompanying behavioral contract and expectations. It is also necessary that the final leader orientation involves a detailed review of the program's final itinerary and on the ground emergency plan, ensuring that all program participants are on the same page before departure. Much of the structure and content of the pre-departure orientations will be left to you, as the subject matter expert, to determine. As always, the Faculty/Staff-led Program Coordinator will be able to provide assistance as needed.

Program Execution

Once the bulk of the work is complete, then comes the time to actually lead students through your FSIT program. It is here that you will finally see the tangible (yet figurative) fruits of your labor.

Onsite Orientation

An onsite orientation should be the first thing you do when all of the program participants are in the same place while abroad. It is important to help the students, some of whom will likely be participating in their first experience abroad, to understand their surroundings, safety considerations, cultural expectations, and specific class requirements before they have an opportunity to explore independently.

Accounting of Spending

Keep detailed records of the money you are spending, where you are spending it and for what it is being used. These records may be kept with the assistance of an expense journal, detailed receipts, or both. Be sure that all of the expenses are recorded in the local currency.

Environmental & Cultural Responsibility

While it is always important to be a good steward of the environment and a quality representative of your home culture, all your actions are put under a magnifying glass while abroad. Help your students understand the positive and negative consequences of these actions and how they are amplified when traveling in a group.

Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are clearly defined in the development of any course. But it is important to remember to work your students' cultural integration into your intended learning outcomes for an FSIT course.

Group Dynamic

When people are grouped together, group personality traits may emerge. Remember that while leading an FSIT program it is vital to keep the negative traits in check. Recognize when there is tension in a group and quickly take action to mitigate it. You have a unique perspective to be able to diffuse these tensions and should do so as soon as possible. If not dealt with in a timely manner, negativity can quickly poison an entire group's dynamic.

Partner Overseas

If you are working with a partner overseas, be sure there are clear lines delineating who should provide what kind of support and services to your students and when. Also, be sure that you both hold up your respective ends of the agreement. This understanding should be reflected in the scope section of the contract.

On the Ground Emergency Plan

Not only must you have the risk management plan that you created during the proposal phase, but you should also need to have a specific emergency plan detailing how you would respond to dangerous situations. This plan should be based upon the "Study Abroad Emergency Management Handbook" provided to you by the Study Abroad Office. Always have a recovery gathering point should a member of your group become separated. Under no circumstances should a member or member(s) of your group be left behind or continue ahead to a future destination.

Behavioral Problems

These issues are not commonplace, but they do exist. Beyond the protections that are already built into the application process, you should create a code of conduct with your class. It should not only clearly define what to do and what not to do, but also the consequences of such actions. This code of conduct will need to be signed by all participants before departure.

Evaluation

The most important consideration for the future improvement of your program is timely and honest feedback from all parties once your program is complete.

Post-program Debriefing

Just as real as culture shock is reverse culture shock. Be sure to gather at least once after the program is complete to talk as a group about what was learned. This can ease the sometimes steep curve of cultural reintegration, and mitigate the effects of reverse culture shock.

Program Evaluation

It is important for the program to be evaluated from many different angles at its conclusion. The students should fill out a Study Abroad Office administered anonymous evaluation of their experiences; the leader should formally give a report on the program including a self-evaluation, observations, and suggestions for improvement in the future; and the Study Abroad Office can use those evaluations to compile an overall assessment of the year's program with specific suggestions for iterations in subsequent years.

Conclusion

Keep in mind that for most, if not all, of your students your program will be a once in a lifetime experience.

Remember this through your preparation, execution, and evaluation, as it will afford your program the gravity of impact that it fully deserves.

Now that you know the broad strokes of what is necessary to create and lead a successful FSIT program, you are ready to roll your sleeves up and start working on what will surely be a transformative experience for your future students. You may learn a thing or two along the way as well. Be sure to contact the Study Abroad Office with any questions or other needs—let's get started!

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