

Guidelines, Criteria and Procedures for FACULTY-LED TRAVEL SEMINARS

By their very nature, international and domestic travel seminars involve educational, geographic, financial, and administrative elements that go well beyond most traditional, classroom-centered courses. While the central criterion in evaluating proposals for this type of course is the educational value of the travel component, the unique nature and cost of travel seminars lead the college to use an extended time frame and more extensive criteria for their development and review.

Given the preparation time and resources required for travel seminars, travel seminar proposals should follow the deadlines outlined below. The Advisory Committee on Off-Campus Programs (ACOP – a sub-committee of CEPP) in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty's office, a faculty member from Curriculum Committee, and the Director of Off-Campus Study & Exchanges (OCSE) will review and approve courses based upon their pedagogical merit, as well as financial and administrative factors.

For most travel seminars, *including courses previously approved by ACOP and Curriculum Committee*, sponsoring faculty should anticipate an 18-month process of proposing, planning and preparing the course. For example, faculty proposing a travel seminar for the academic year (the January, March or summer breaks) 2015 should submit expression of intent by November 15, 2013.

NOTE: Travel seminars offered during winter or spring break should respect the existing academic calendar by scheduling travel to and from the destination when classes are not in session.

1) PROGRAM MODELS AND STRUCTURES

Travel seminars can follow one of two models:

- **Stand-alone travel seminar:** This travel seminar is not connected to any course on campus; rather, the course is delivered in its entirety off campus. This program model may be offered during the January and summer breaks. Please note that stand-alone travel seminars offered during the summer will not be eligible for Skidmore financial aid.
- **Travel seminar incorporated into an on-campus course:** This travel seminar is a combination of a semester-long on-campus course and an off-campus academic experience – the travel seminar. The on-campus course is offered during the fall or spring semester. The off-campus portion may be offered during the January, March or May breaks. The travel seminar should follow or be delivered in the middle of the on-campus course rather than precede it. Faculty must submit two complete proposals – one for the on-campus course and one for the off-campus travel seminar. Typically, students may participate in the on-campus course without completing the travel seminar; however, students cannot participate in the travel seminar without completing the on-campus course. Please note that any incorporated travel seminar will be eligible for Skidmore financial aid.

The various iterations of this model are:

- Fall semester on-campus course plus January travel seminar
- Spring semester on-campus course plus spring break travel seminar
- Spring semester on-campus course plus early May travel seminar (beginning the week following final exams)

Courses approved as Skidmore travel seminars may be established courses with content that lends itself to an off-campus study structure, or new courses proposed to the Curriculum Committee by a department or program.

2) PROCESS AND DEADLINES

Due to the financial aid resources required to fund travel seminars, a limited number of proposals will be approved for each academic year. The number of travel seminars usually will not exceed three; the total number of students on all travel seminars usually will not exceed 60, unless resources allow.

a) Considerations for Submission:

- **ALL** travel seminars must be submitted and reviewed at the same time to ensure that OCSE is able to strategically plan an entire year of programs. This includes programs that have been approved and delivered in the past. The various committees and people reviewing the proposals must have a clear understanding of what travel seminars might be available in order to make appropriate decisions.
- If a travel seminar is attached to a new credit-bearing on-campus course, then faculty must submit a separate proposal for the on-campus course for a total of TWO proposals.
- If a travel seminar is attached to an existing credit-bearing on-campus course(s), then faculty must establish connections between the travel seminar and the on-campus course(s).
- As required for any course, travel seminar proposals must include a syllabus and acquaint proposal reviewers with the topics and student learning objectives of the course. In addition, travel seminar proposals must include materials about travel plans, costs and budgets, and other administrative considerations. **NOTE:** Proposals that do not include all of these details will be considered incomplete and will not be considered in the proposal review process.
- Because the *location* of a travel seminar should be inseparable from the *location* of the learning, proposals must indicate both *where* and *when* formal instruction takes place.
- All sponsoring faculty must consult with OCSE for any and all travel seminars offered at any time.
- Repeated Travel Seminars (those that have run previously) must be approved again each time they are proposed. If a Travel Seminar is run more than twice, it will require Curriculum Committee review and approval.

b) Proposal Review – Process:

The following proposal review process was approved by Curriculum Committee in September 2013.

- Faculty member or faculty-administrator team prepares full proposal in consultation with OCSE and with support from the Associate Dean of the Faculty for Academic Policy and Advising (ADOFAPA).

- Faculty member submits proposal to chair of department (and director of program if applicable) for review and approval.
- A Chair or Director who is proposing a Travel Seminar should consult with and submit the proposal to the ADOFAPA in lieu of the “Chair/Director”.
- Chair/Director partners with the ADOFAPA and a faculty member of Curriculum Committee to review proposal looking at:
 - Academic rigor
 - Fit with departmental/program curriculum and goals
 - Impact on on-campus curriculum, including need to replace faculty, delivery of major, other planned leaves, etc.
- Chair/Director consults with the Associate Dean of the Faculty for Personnel and Diversity (ADOFPD) to determine resource implications and feasibility.
- ADOFPD approves and signs off on proposal based on resources.
- Chair and/or director approves and signs off on proposal based on departmental/program needs and academic strength of proposal.
- Chair submits proposal to OCSE; OCSE forwards proposal to ACOP.
- ACOP and OCSE review proposals and make final decisions. ACOP asks ADOFAPA to attend review meeting if additional information about the academic program is needed.
- Chair of ACOP and Director of OCSE report results to ADOFs, chairs/directors and faculty.
- Note: For Travel Seminars run more than twice, an additional step is needed. OCSE will forward those proposals to Curriculum Committee for review prior to a final decision by ACOP.

c) Deadlines for ALL Travel Seminars:

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| Early fall | The Office Off-Campus Study & Exchanges (OCSE) to send a call for proposals to faculty. |
| Nov. 15 | Faculty to submit proposals to OCSE. |
| Dec. 1 | OCSE to submit the proposals to the Advisory Committee on Off-Campus Study (ACOP – a CEPP sub-committee). ACOP and OCSE to review proposals and make final decisions. |
| Dec. 15 | Inform applicants, chairs/directors and DOF office of decisions. Announce decisions to campus. |

3) CRITERIA FOR FACULTY-LED TRAVEL SEMINARS

a) Faculty Qualifications

- Sponsoring faculty must possess the academic expertise to inform and guide the proposed course of study.
- Faculty must have significant experience with the culture of the host country/location or be able to identify host-country/location experts and guides who can support the project.
- Because faculty are leading a group of students for off-campus study, they must possess a high level of commitment to recruiting for, organizing and leading the project and demonstrate strong organizational skills, responsibility and reliability,

resourcefulness, and a readiness to provide a level of personal guidance to students that is well beyond the expectations of the traditional classroom environment.

b) General Course Criteria

Travel seminars must offer carefully structured, focused, and rigorous learning experiences. Faculty should consult with OCSE and the ADOFAPA for guidance as they develop their proposals.

Travel Seminar selections are made based on course quality, distinctness of the opportunity, ways in which the Travel Seminar supports curricular and strategic goals of the College, overall balance among the disciplines, frequency of off-campus offerings from specific departments and programs, and availability of resources.

Course proposals must:

- clearly define the connections between the course and the department or program proposing the course;
- show that the discipline(s) or objects of study involved in the travel seminar clearly lend themselves to the compressed period of study being proposed (how does the course benefit from or lend itself to being short term?);
- make significant use of the educational and cultural resources of the off-campus location(s) (how does the course benefit from being taught off campus?);
- set forth specific learning tasks and goals for students that integrate critical inquiry, course materials, and active learning into the off-campus learning experience (if students are asked to keep journals, what kinds of prompts will push students to integrate course readings or lecture material into their analysis? If students are visiting museums, will they be asked to select a work of art or an exhibit and to explore how that exhibit engages a course theme/unit in a journal or paper, or discuss the work with other students while they are in the museum? How will instructors evaluate/assess the effort by students to grapple with complex issues or challenging environments encountered on the trip?);
- define how the off-campus learning experience promotes student knowledge and abilities beyond observation and towards interaction and engagement with people or places on the itinerary.

Considerations for selection include:

Academic:

- the quality of the course;
- how well the course makes use of the off-campus location as a classroom;
- how the course fits into College priorities and programs;
- whether the host country/region/location is one which Skidmore students are otherwise unlikely to experience as part of an academic program (ACOP tends to preference strong proposals in underrepresented locations or disciplines);
- whether the course has been successfully offered in the past (while OCSE hopes to offer a variety of Travel Seminars from year to year, a successful repeat seminar could have an advantage over a new course that does not meet the other criteria);
- whether the faculty member and/or department or program has offered off-campus programs in the past;
- whether the department or program proposing the course has offered a similar course (on or off campus).

Administrative:

- whether the host country/region/location is deemed “safe” based on health or political risks;
- how likely it is that the seminar will meet enrollment targets based on its appeal to a broad group of students;
- whether the host country/region/location is one in which Skidmore offers existing off-campus programs;
- whether the faculty member or OCSE has existing contacts in the seminar location.

Financial:

- how complete and realistic the budget is given there will typically be an 18-month lag between approval and delivery of the travel seminar (what are estimates based on?);
- whether the course is financially viable (exclusive of financial aid implications);
- whether the department or program will incur costs to substitute courses if the faculty member’s teaching load is affected by the course.

c) Course Numbers for Travel Seminars

Travel seminars use the “TX” rubric. This “TX” rubric is used for all travel seminars, with the departmental code indicating the sponsoring department incorporated into the section title. There are separate course numbers that allow for one-, two- or three-credit options, as all three are available within the rubric of short-term programs.

We offer “TX 100 A, B, and C”, “TX 200 A, B, and C” and “TX 300 A, B, and C” depending on the level of the offering and the number of credits offered. For example, the TX-200A, B, and C would simply be listed generically as Regional Topics at the course level, and the title for the specific offering in a given term might indicate the department and the specific title, e.g. “AH – African Textiles in Context” might be attached to the Fall 2015 2-credit offering TX-200B.

Because the IA Travel Seminar preceded the topics courses described above, that course is coded as TX-201A or B for the on-campus component and TX-202 for the one-credit travel component. The course title is currently listed as IA Regional Topics, and unique titles are added at the term-specific section level.

d) Guidelines for Contact Hours and Credits

Contact hours of formal instruction must meet Skidmore and New York State Education Department expectations for lecture, lab, and studio courses (and also see State Ed guidelines for “activity supervised as a group, such as field trips”).

All Skidmore **travel seminars** should generally be guided by the following criteria (based on contact hours for lecture/discussion mode):

- 1 credit at least 13.75 instructional hours
- 2 credits at least 27.5 instructional hours
- 3 credits at least 41.25 instructional hours
- 4 credits at least 55 instructional hours
- 5 credits at least 68.75 instructional hours
- 6 credits at least 82.5 instructional hours

NOTES ON CONTACT AND CREDIT HOURS: While the student's *self-directed* travel or study is of great value in its own right, it cannot diminish the amount of organized, formal instruction required for the credit minimums. That being said, given the nature of off-campus study,

particularly when it includes substantial travel and site visits, it is understood that “instructional hours” are not limited to those occurring within a traditional classroom.

4) GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES FOR FACULTY-LED TRAVEL SEMINARS

The successful travel seminar will be the result of a solid and active collaboration between the faculty sponsor(s) and Off-Campus Study & Exchanges (OCSE).

a) Proposal Stage:

Faculty will be responsible for:

- designing the academic program and all instructional materials, including a detailed syllabus, list of readings and other resource materials, a detailed itinerary relating sites visited to the subject matters of the course(s) or seminar, and an estimated budget;
- consulting with their department chair/program director and the ADOFAPA;
- responding to questions or recommendations from ACOP.

Off-Campus Study & Exchanges will be responsible for:

- advising faculty throughout the development of the proposal for a travel seminar;
- working with faculty to develop a realistic program budget and program fee;
- shepherding proposals through approval process;
- informing faculty and campus constituents of selection decisions.

b) Preparation Stage:

Faculty will be responsible for:

- locating and evaluating resources in the host country for classroom space, student housing, local transportation, etc. (with assistance from OCSE);
- obtaining accurate cost information on the rental fees for classroom space, local transportation, student and faculty housing, and any expenses associated with field trips (e.g., entrance fees, lecturing permits, etc.) (with assistance from OCSE);
- providing OCSE with text describing the program and developing recruitment materials;
- promoting the program to students through flyers, information meetings, etc. NOTE: Due to the financial elements of a travel seminar, insufficient student enrollment will jeopardize the ability to run the program. Faculty are responsible for recruiting students sufficient to run the program(s). OCSE will assist in recruitment; however, faculty must take primary responsibility for enrolling the necessary number of students;
- reviewing applications and selecting program participants in collaboration with OCSE;
- developing pre-departure materials to prepare students for the program and to enter the host country and host culture (with OCSE);
- holding pre-departure orientation for program participants (with OCSE).

Off-Campus Study & Exchanges will be responsible for:

- assisting with locating and evaluating resources in the host country for classroom space, student housing, local transportation, etc.;
- assisting with organizing international/domestic transportation, including group flights;
- attending to all financial arrangements needed to meet program costs in the U.S. and abroad, according to established Skidmore financial policies and procedures;
- examining all aspects of students' health and safety with respect to travel in general and the host location in particular (with faculty);

- helping create promotional materials (e.g., brochures, flyers), application forms and pre-departure materials by providing templates and samples that faculty can customize;
- assisting with promotion of the program and serving as central resource for information on the program;
- setting deadlines and overseeing application process;
- reviewing applications and selecting program participants in collaboration with faculty;
- developing pre-departure materials about program and host country/culture (with faculty);
- presenting on cultural adjustment, emergency procedures, and health and safety resources at pre-departure orientation;
- managing program finances, including payment/collection of deposits and billing of students;
- assisting faculty and students with visa applications and/or other necessary documents to lead/attend the program overseas.

c) On-Site Program Delivery:

Faculty will be responsible for:

- delivering academic portion of program;
- providing ongoing student support in and out of the classroom;
- liaising with on-site partners on program delivery;
- attending to any student personal or behavioral concerns that arise;
- informing OCSE of any changes to on-site itinerary or plans; as soon as they are decided;
- obtaining receipts and keeping accurate records of all program-related expenses incurred abroad.

Off-Campus Study & Exchanges will be responsible for:

- Providing ongoing support to faculty on site.
- Responding to student concerns – through faculty on site – as needed.
- Serve as emergency contact for faculty and assist in resolving any emergencies that arise.

d) Return to Campus:

Faculty will be responsible for:

- submitting an expense report and receipts to OCSE within ten days of the end of program;
- submitting a program report to the Director of Off-Campus Study & Exchanges within 30 days of return to campus.

Off-Campus Study & Exchanges will be responsible for:

- processing expense report and receipts in timely manner;
- providing program evaluations to students and sharing results with faculty directors;
- reviewing faculty report and discussing any issues that may need attention.