

Guide to Leading a Study Abroad Program for the First Time

Your Companion for Building a Program from the ground up. Welcome to the world of study abroad! You're about to embark on a journey that blends teaching, travel, and transformative student experiences.

Getting Started: Choosing Your Destination

First things first —where will your program take place?

International programs offer rich cultural immersion but require more planning and familiarity with local customs. Domestic programs are easier to manage logistically but don't qualify for study abroad-specific scholarships.

Key Questions to Ask Yourself:

- Have you traveled to this location before?
- Do you speak the language or have access to translation support?
- Is the city a good fit for your academic discipline?

Housing Options: What's Best for Your Group?

Your students' comfort and safety matter. Here's a quick breakdown of housing types:

| Option | Pros | Cons |
|----------------|--|---|
| Homestays | Cultural immersion, support from host families | Requires careful vetting, potential for culture shock |
| Apartments | Cost-effective, everyday living experience | Group management challenges, kitchen availability |
| Dorms | Affordable, local university experience | May lack amenities, unfamiliar setup for students |
| Hotels/Hostels | Easy to book, predictable | Less cultural engagement, noise concerns |

Pro Tip: Always book for your maximum expected enrollment—you can cancel rooms more easily than add them later.

Working with Service Providers

Not ready to handle all logistics solo? Partnering with a study abroad service provider is a great way to get started, especially if you're excited about directing a program but not quite ready to manage all the logistics on your own.

As the faculty leader, you'll focus on teaching and recruiting students, while the service provider handles the rest: housing, transportation, meals, excursions, and more. The service provider also handles crises onsite and assumes a lot of the risk management for the program. Working with a provider is a streamlined way to bring your academic vision to life.

Want to explore your options on working with a provider? Email facultyled@lsu.edu for a list of trusted service providers.

Service providers typically offer two types of programs:

- **Pre-Built Itineraries** – these are ready-made programs shared with other student groups. The costs are shared across more universities/students, making the price lower per student. *Tip:* ask the provider whether you'll have dedicated time and space to teach your own courses separately.
- **Customized Programs** –You'll work with the provider to design a program tailored to your academic goals and student interests. Keep in mind:
 1. Custom programs usually require a minimum number of students to be financially viable. Your provider will help you determine that number.
 2. While this option is more expensive, it also requires less onsite experience from you as the faculty leader.

Choosing Dates

Avoid starting right after finals or ending right before fall semester. Consider:

- Academic calendar
- Local events and holidays
- Housing availability
- Weather
- Weekday arrivals (better for flights and museum access)

Course Planning

Your courses shape the entire experience. Ask:

- What subjects best connect with the host culture?
- Are you traveling solo or with other faculty?
- Will you offer general education or major-specific courses?

Think of your program as an introductory experience, not a comprehensive cultural deep dive.

Faculty Compensation

Faculty costs (housing, airfare, per diem) are covered by the program fee. Salaries come from student tuition. Salaries assume that all students are taking x6 credit hours through the program. For programs that offer only x3 credit hours, these rates will be halved.

| Student Enrollment in Program | Faculty Salary |
|-------------------------------|----------------|
| 5–8 | \$2,750 |
| 9–12 | \$3,300 |
| 12–15 | \$3,850 |
| 16–20 | \$4,400 |
| 21–25 | \$4,950 |
| 26+ | \$5,500 |

Budgeting Basics

Use the Study Abroad budget template to calculate:

- Student Costs (housing, excursions, marketing)
- Faculty Costs (airfare, per diem, travel expenses)

Round your final program price to a clean number (e.g., \$3,850 instead of \$3,835.42) for easier marketing.

Airfare

Faculty: Book through Christopherson Business Travel. Use LaCarte or personal card (reimbursed after travel).

Students: Usually book their own flights. Provide clear arrival/departure instructions.

Submitting Your Proposal

You're almost there! Final proposal checklist:

- Program Proposal
- Itinerary (it can change later)
- Signed Course Proposals (one per course)
- Syllabi
- Budget (Excel template)

Only complete proposals will be accepted. Get department and college approvals early!