

Short-Term Study Abroad: Program Development Toolkit

7–15 Day Intensive International Programs

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How to Use This Toolkit

This toolkit guides faculty, staff, and academic administrators through every step of designing and managing a short-term study abroad program. It follows a one to two-year development timeline organized in phases, from initial idea to post-program evaluation. Checklists, budget templates, guided questions, and proposal templates are included throughout. The toolkit mirrors the natural development arc of a study abroad program — starting with Virtual Exchange as a foundation, then scaffolding through faculty and student recruitment, partner development, curriculum design, logistics, and program delivery. Each section builds on the last. We recommend working through each section in sequence with your team.

This toolkit will help you:

- Start with Virtual Exchange as the first step, then scaffold up into a full study abroad program
- Recruit faculty leads and student participants
- Identify and partner with international institutions
- Guide faculty through curriculum development including mobile lectures, site visits, and partner programming
- Plan a comprehensive budget — flights, accommodations, meals, insurance, and more
- Arrange logistics from airport transfers and in-country transportation to room assignments
- Secure appropriate insurance and manage risk
- Evaluate and continuously improve the program after each cycle to maintain sustainability.



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Program Development Timeline: At a Glance

Phase 1 Months 1–4 Fall, Year 1	Phase 2 Months 5–8 Spring, Year 1	Phase 3 Months 9–12 Summer–Fall, Y1-2	Phase 4 Months 13–16 Spring, Year 2	Phase 5 Months 17–18, 4–8 Weeks Before	Phase 6 Days 1–15 Program Dates	Phase 7 30–90 Days After Return
VE & Program Initiation	Partner Selection & Design	Budget & Student Recruitment	Student Selection & Logistics	Pre-Departure Prep	Program Delivery (On-Site)	Evaluation & Sustainability
▶ Launch Virtual Exchange ▶ Faculty recruitment ▶ Institutional endorsement ▶ Feasibility assessment	▶ Select partner institution ▶ Draft MOU ▶ Define learning outcomes ▶ Course structure	▶ Build program budget ▶ Set program fee ▶ Launch recruitment ▶ Open applications	▶ Select students ▶ Book flights ▶ Finalize curriculum ▶ Confirm site visits	▶ Orientation sessions ▶ Final documents ▶ Room assignments ▶ Emergency protocols	▶ Lectures & labs ▶ Site visits ▶ Mobile lectures ▶ Capstone presentations	▶ Submit grades ▶ Budget reconciliation ▶ Program report ▶ Plan next cycle



This is a recommended timeline. Most programs take 18–24 months from first idea to departure. Starting earlier is always better, especially for a first program. Beginning with Virtual Exchange (Phase 1) builds the relationships and institutional momentum that serve as the foundation for a successful study abroad program.

SECTION 1

Virtual Exchange: A Gateway to Study Abroad

WHY START WITH VIRTUAL EXCHANGE?

Virtual Exchange (VE) is technology-facilitated collaborative learning that enables cross-cultural collaboration between students and faculty in different locations and countries. It can serve as a first step when planning a study abroad program, offering a low-risk way to build international partnerships and develop a pipeline to prepare and recruit both faculty and students for study abroad.

We strongly recommend Virtual Exchange as the first phase in your internationalization pathway.

Benefits of Virtual Exchange as a Foundation

- Builds faculty confidence and strengthens international partnerships before starting the planning logistics for study abroad
- Identifies motivated students who are strong candidates for study abroad
- Helps identify logistics and evaluate the strength of a prospective partnership prior to formalizing an MOU
- Generates course-level international content that can carry forward into the study abroad curriculum
- Demonstrates institutional commitment to internationalization to deans, provosts, and other administrators
- Provides internationalized experience that can strengthen your study abroad proposal
- Low cost and accessible to faculty who have not yet traveled internationally

Virtual Exchange Models to Consider

- Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) — faculty-to-faculty co-taught modules embedded in existing courses
- Synchronous discussion exchanges — structured student-to-student exchanges moderated by faculty; partner faculty may also virtually visit a class to lead a lecture and discussion
- Joint research projects — students from both institutions collaborating on a shared research question or case study
- Virtual site visits — partner institution-hosted live video tours of labs, campuses, or industry partners
- Asynchronous discussion exchanges — Discussion forums and chats are tools that can be used, still encourages student engagement and communication

From Virtual to In-Person: Building the Foundation

A well-executed Virtual Exchange does three things that directly support study abroad development:

1. Faculty and students experience firsthand how the partner institution communicates, collaborates, and delivers on commitments before signing an MOU.
2. Students who complete a virtual exchange are significantly more likely to apply to a study abroad program with that same partner.
3. A co-taught virtual exchange module usually becomes the academic foundation of the study abroad class and the same partner faculty may co-teach/lead the on-site lectures.

Virtual Exchange Checklist

Refer to the Virtual Exchange Toolkit for full guidance.

✓	Task
☐	Identify a faculty member interested in international course collaboration
☐	Connect faculty with a prospective partner institution for a virtual collaboration pilot
☐	Select a Virtual Exchange model (COIL, asynchronous, joint project, etc.)
☐	Integrate VE module into an existing course (recommended: 3–5 week module)
☐	Document student engagement and outcomes from the VE module — Pre and Post Surveys
☐	Debrief with partner faculty post-VE and assess fit for study abroad partnership
☐	Use VE experience and relationship to inform or strengthen study abroad proposal
☐	Recruit VE alumni students as early applicants for the study abroad program

Recommended Resources

- Stevens Initiative — stevensinitiative.org — resources for virtual exchange
- COIL Center at SUNY — coil.suny.edu — model frameworks and faculty development
- COIL Global Network — coil.suny.edu/global-network — for partner matching
- NAFSA Virtual Exchange resources — nafsa.org
- Community Colleges for International Development — ccidinc.org — partnerships and resources
- Virtual Exchange Toolkit — developed by Lone Star College

WHY FACULTY LEADERSHIP IS ESSENTIAL

Short-term study abroad programs are faculty-led experiences. The faculty member designs the curriculum and works with the partner institution on identifying academic activities. Recruiting the right faculty and supporting them is the single most important early step.

The Faculty Lead is responsible for:

- Designing and teaching the course
- Co-developing the academic and cultural itinerary with the partner institution
- Supervising students on-site throughout the entire program
- Serving as the primary emergency contact for students during travel
- Submitting all required reports to the home institution before, during, and after the program

HOW TO IDENTIFY PROSPECTIVE FACULTY LEADS

Begin faculty recruitment 18–24 months before the target departure date. We recommend a formal proposal application process in which faculty propose the class and program. If the institution already has partners, we recommend faculty work directly with established partners. However, faculty may also use this opportunity to initiate a new partnership while working with the appropriate campus office.

Faculty do not necessarily need prior study abroad experience, but should meet some of the following criteria:

- Virtual Exchange experience (see Section 1)
- International collaborations, co-publications, or conference connections
- Prior travel or research experience in the target region
- Experience supervising student fieldwork, laboratory projects, undergraduate research, and/or internships
- Interest in course development and curriculum internationalization
- Ability to commit to the full 7–15 day program dates, plus class time at home institution
- Department chair, dean, and/or senior administrator support for the time commitment

FACULTY RECRUITMENT CHANNELS

Host information sessions and advertise through the channels below. Encourage supervisors to identify and directly contact faculty they recommend.

- Department chairs and academic deans
- International Office faculty database
- Fulbright alumni and returned scholars
- Existing Virtual Exchange faculty partners
- Faculty Senate or Curriculum Committees
- Grant-funded research partnership rosters
- Professional association chapter contacts

INCENTIVES & SUPPORT TO OFFER FACULTY

- Exploratory Travel Award — funded visits to the location prior to submitting a proposal (see template below)
- Stipend or supplemental pay for program coordination
- Course releases in the semester before the program
- Travel costs are fully covered by the institution
- Administrative support from the International Office
- Curriculum development grant or seed funding
- Recognition in promotion and tenure materials

FACULTY PROPOSAL PROCESS

We strongly recommend requiring a formal proposal application. The proposal creates accountability, helps the institution evaluate program viability, and ensures faculty have thought through the key elements before resources are committed.

Below is a general template of sample questions for a Faculty Study Abroad Program Proposal Application. Institutions should adapt this to their own processes and approval workflows.

TEMPLATE

Faculty Study Abroad Program Proposal Application

Section A: Faculty Information

Faculty Name:

Department / School:

Faculty Rank / Title:

Campus Email:

Phone:

Have you led a study abroad or international program before? (Yes / No) If yes, describe briefly:

Have you participated in a Virtual Exchange or international course collaboration? (Yes / No) If yes, describe briefly:

Section B: Program Overview

Proposed Program Title:

Target Destination Country/Countries and City/Cities:

Proposed Program Dates (month/year):

Proposed Program Duration: ____ days

Target Cohort Size (minimum / optimal): min ____ / optimal ____

Academic Credit Hours:

Home Institution Course Number / Title (or proposed):

Section C: Partner Institution

Proposed Partner Institution Name:

Partner Contact Name and Title:

Partner Contact Email:

Existing Relationship with Partner (e.g., co-author, VE collaborator, conference colleague, none):

Does your institution have an active MOU with this partner? (Yes / No / In Progress)

Have you visited this institution or location previously? (Yes / No) If yes, describe:

Section D: Academic Rationale & Curriculum Overview

Describe the academic goals and learning outcomes of the program:

How does this program connect to your course, department curriculum, or research?

What academic activities do you plan to conduct with the partner institution (lectures, labs, joint projects, etc.)?

What professional site visits, industry connections, or research facilities do you plan to incorporate?

How will you assess student learning (journal, field report, presentation, etc.)?

Section E: Budget & Funding

Attach to this application a preliminary budget for the proposed Study Abroad Program.

Estimated total program cost per student: \$

Estimated total program budget: \$

Identified funding sources (institutional, grants, student fees, scholarships):

Are you requesting an Exploratory Travel Award to visit the location prior to finalizing this proposal? (Yes / No)

Section F: Support & Approvals

Department Chair Name:

Department Chair Signature: _____ Date: _____

Dean / Academic Officer Name:

Dean Signature: _____ Date: _____

Section G: Faculty Signature

I certify that the information above is accurate and that I am committed to fulfilling the responsibilities of faculty lead if this proposal is approved.

Faculty Signature: _____ Date: _____

Submit to: International Office | Contact: _____ | Deadline: _____

EXPLORATORY TRAVEL AWARD FOR FACULTY

Exploratory Travel Awards provide funding for faculty to visit a prospective program location and partner institution before submitting a formal study abroad proposal. This investment reduces risk, strengthens proposals, and accelerates partnership development.

Below is a general template that could be adapted to develop an Exploratory Travel Award Application.

TEMPLATE

Faculty Exploratory Travel Award Application

Complete and submit to the International Office / Office of Global Engagement. Awards are competitive and subject to available funding.

Applicant Information

Faculty Name:

Department / School:

Faculty Rank / Title:

Campus Email:

Phone:



Travel Information

Proposed Destination Country/Countries and City/Cities:

Proposed Travel Dates:

Duration of Visit: ____ days

Proposed Partner Institution to Visit:

Partner Contact Name, Title, and Email:

Purpose & Objectives

Primary purpose of the exploratory visit (check all that apply):

- ☐ Meet with prospective partner faculty and administrators
- ☐ Assess campus facilities, housing, and infrastructure
- ☐ Identify and confirm professional site visits and industry partners
- ☐ Scout accommodations and local logistics
- ☐ Evaluate safety, accessibility, and local transportation
- ☐ Build on an existing Virtual Exchange relationship
- ☐ Other (describe below)

Describe the goals and agenda for your proposed visit:

How does this visit connect to a planned study abroad proposal? What program are you developing?

Do you have an existing relationship with the partner institution or contacts in this location? Describe:

Have you previously completed a Virtual Exchange or other collaboration with this partner? (Yes / No) Describe:

Proposed Budget

Budget Item	Estimated Cost
International airfare	\$
Local transportation (ground)	\$
Accommodation (___ nights)	\$
Meals / per diem (___ days × \$___/day)	\$
Visa / entry fees	\$
Other (specify): _____	\$
TOTAL REQUESTED	\$

Are you requesting additional institutional funding or supplementing with personal or grant funds?

Deliverables & Commitment

Award recipients are required to submit a written post-visit report within 30 days of return, addressing the following:

1. Summary of meetings held and contacts established
2. Assessment of the partner institution's readiness and capacity to host a study abroad group
3. Specific site visits, cultural activities, and academic resources confirmed for the program
4. Identified logistical considerations (housing, transport, safety, accessibility)
5. Recommendations for or against proceeding with a formal study abroad proposal

If awarded, do you commit to submitting a full study abroad proposal within 12 months of your return? (Yes / No / Unsure — explain):

Signatures

Faculty Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Department Chair Signature (if required): _____ **Date:** _____

Dean Signature (if required): _____ **Date:** _____



Submit to: International Office | Contact: _____ /
Deadline: _____

SECTION 3

Recruiting Students

SETTING STUDENT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

In any announcement and informational materials, clearly state the application eligibility requirements.

Example Eligibility Requirements

- Minimum GPA (e.g., 3.00 or above)
- Sophomore standing or higher
- Good academic and non-academic standing
- Major or coursework in relevant discipline
- Completion of program application including essays and other requested items
- Faculty recommendation letter
- Valid or obtainable passport (always provide a hard deadline for when passport must be in hand)

Other Items to Consider that Help Recruitment

- Offer scholarship or financial aid supplements
- Offer workshops and support for applications to study abroad scholarships
- Recruit through student organizations
- Recruit from students who have completed a prerequisite class
- Prioritize students who completed a related Virtual Exchange opportunity
- Allow payment plans
- Provide passport application support and funding
- Provide information sessions on study abroad scholarships such as the Gilman International Scholarship

STUDENT RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

- Begin outreach at least 12 months before departure
- Host an information session with the faculty lead and study abroad student alumni
- Post in department newsletters, LMS course announcements, and campus-wide systems
- Leverage Virtual Exchange alumni — students who completed a virtual exchange are strong candidates and natural ambassadors
- Coordinate with Financial Aid to ensure the program fee is eligible for existing aid disbursement
- Create an online interest form early to build a waitlist and gauge demand

Recommended Cohort Size

Cohort Size	Guidance
Minimum: 10 students	Below this threshold, programs may not be financially viable
Optimal: 12–18 students	Manageable on-site and maximizes program revenue.
Maximum: 20–24 students	Beyond this, on-site supervision becomes complex
Recruitment buffer	Always recruit 20–30% more applicants than your minimum to account for withdrawals or visa delays

Note on Cohort Size: One faculty member is recommended for every 10 students; groups exceeding 10 students require an additional faculty member.

SECTION 4

Identifying Partner Institutions

TYPES OF INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS

Academic Partners	Non-Academic Partners
Universities or colleges with shared disciplines	Industry partners / technology companies
Research institutes or science centers	Government research laboratories
Technical institutes or polytechnic universities	NGOs or international development organizations
Community colleges with strong regional ties	Museums, cultural institutions, innovation hubs
Institutions with existing MOUs with your school	Professional associations in the target country

HOW TO FIND PARTNER INSTITUTIONS

- Search your institution's existing Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) and partnership agreements
- Tap into networks such as AASCU, NAFSA, Forum on Education Abroad, or IIE
- Leverage faculty's existing co-authorship and conference networks — the best partners are often already known to your faculty
- Use Virtual Exchange as a pipeline: a successful VE is a natural precursor to a study abroad partnership
- Contact U.S. Embassy offices and Fulbright commissions in the target country for referrals

- Attend international higher education fairs and consortia meetings

Partner Institution Vetting Checklist

✓	Task
☐	Confirm institutional accreditation and academic standing in home country
☐	Verify the institution has hosted foreign student groups previously
☐	Confirm English-language instruction capacity (or translation support)
☐	Review U.S. State Dept. travel advisory — Level 1 or 2 only
☐	Assess campus safety, housing options, and medical facility proximity
☐	Review any existing MOU; draft new MOU if none exists
☐	Obtain written confirmation from partner of willingness to host
☐	Assess partner's financial systems for invoicing and payments

FORMALIZING THE PARTNERSHIP

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

- Outlines mutual responsibilities of each institution
- Specifies program dates, cohort size, and academic content
- Defines payment terms, cancellation policy, and liability
- Should be signed 6–12 months before departure
- Requires legal review at both institutions
- Typically renewed annually or every 3–5 years

Program Agreement (Addendum to MOU)

- Specific schedule of activities and instructional hours
- Names of faculty and institutional coordinators on both sides
- Logistical responsibilities: airport pickup, housing, meals
- Emergency protocols and communication plan
- Intellectual property provisions for joint curriculum
- Insurance requirements for each party

SELECTING THE DESTINATION

The destination should be chosen based on academic alignment, safety, cost, and student appeal. The partner institution's location is often the primary driver but verify that the country and city support the program's learning goals.

✓	Task
☐	Academic alignment with program's discipline and professional learning outcomes
☐	U.S. State Dept. travel advisory Level 1 (Normal) or Level 2 (Exercise Caution) only
☐	Direct or manageable flight routes from home institution city
☐	Reasonable cost of living — affects per diem, meals, and local transport
☐	Availability of professional site visits, industry partners, or research facilities
☐	Cultural richness and relevance to cross-cultural learning goals
☐	Visa requirements for U.S. students
☐	Historical and cultural site access for planned excursions

RECOMMENDED TIMING: SUMMER SESSIONS

We strongly recommend scheduling 7–15 day programs during summer sessions (May–August):

- Avoids conflicts with regular semester coursework for faculty and students
- Aligns with international partners who also have summer flexibility
- Lower airfare windows are often available in May–June, before peak summer travel
- Students earn summer session credit without extending time to degree
- Faculty have more time for pre-departure preparation during spring finals
- Reduces visa and travel complications associated with academic-year absences

Optimal Windows	Timing Pitfalls to Avoid
Late May / Early June — post-commencement, before peak travel season	August travel — heat extremes in many destinations; conflicts with student return
Mid-June — most common; aligns with Summer I session	July 4th and Labor Day windows — high domestic airfare

Early July — aligns with Summer II session	Overlap with partner institution's own exam weeks
	Monsoon season in South/Southeast Asia destinations
	Last-minute departures — allow at least 12 months of planning

SECTION 6

Developing the Curriculum

OVERVIEW: A CURRICULUM-FIRST APPROACH

The academic curriculum should be the backbone of the entire program. Every activity, site visit, and partner session should connect back to the course learning outcomes. Curriculum development for a short-term study abroad program is different from a traditional course because the learning environment is distributed — some instruction happens in partner classrooms, some in the field during site visits, some through mobile lectures, and some through cultural immersion.

STEP 1: DEFINE LEARNING OUTCOMES FIRST

Before designing the schedule, establish 4–6 clear learning outcomes for the course. Every session, visit, and activity should map to at least one outcome.

Example Learning Outcomes (adapt to your discipline)

- Analyze [discipline-specific topic] in an international and comparative context
- Apply theoretical frameworks from coursework to real-world professional settings observed on-site
- Demonstrate cross-cultural communication and professional skills through direct interaction with host-country peers and professionals
- Synthesize field observations and partner lectures into a coherent academic deliverable
- Reflect on how international exposure has shaped your professional or disciplinary perspective

STEP 2: BUILD THE CURRICULUM WITH YOUR PARTNER

The partner institution is your primary academic co-designer. Their faculty, facilities, and local expertise are the core academic resource of the program. Begin curriculum conversations early, ideally during the Virtual Exchange phase or during your exploratory visit.

Academic Programming Provided by the Partner Institution

Work with your partner coordinator to confirm which offerings they can provide, and schedule partner-delivered programming first before adding supplemental activities.

- Formal lectures and seminars — partner faculty present on topics directly tied to your course learning outcomes; treat these as equivalent to home institution class sessions
- Laboratory or studio sessions — hands-on work using partner facilities (science labs, design studios, fabrication spaces, archives)

- Research presentations — partner scholars, graduate students, or industry partners present current research, exposing students to the field as practiced in the host country
- Co-taught sessions — your faculty and partner faculty co-deliver a class, modeling cross-cultural academic collaboration
- Student-to-student collaboration — joint projects or discussions with partner institution students; highly valued for cross-cultural learning outcomes
- Partner-hosted professional panels — partner institution convenes local professionals, government contacts, or industry leaders for a panel discussion relevant to your field

Contact Hours and Credit Equivalency

Most accreditors and registrars require approximately 15 contact hours per credit hour for a condensed program. For a 3-credit course over 10 days, which means roughly 45 total academic contact hours — including lectures, seminars, site visits, and structured field activities. Document all sessions and their duration carefully.

Note: Some study abroad models include 7–15 days abroad plus class time at the home institution before and/or after travel for the full duration of the summer session.

Credit Hours	Approximate Contact Hours Required
1 credit hour	~15 hours of academic contact
2 credit hours	~30 hours of academic contact
3 credit hours	~45 hours of academic contact

STEP 3: MOBILE LECTURES AND FIELD-BASED INSTRUCTION

Mobile lectures are structured academic sessions delivered outside of a traditional classroom — at a site visit location, on a walking tour, in transit, or during a guided visit. They are one of the most distinctive and powerful pedagogical tools in short-term study abroad.

What Is a Mobile Lecture?

A mobile lecture connects academic content directly to the physical environment. Rather than talking about a topic in a classroom, you discuss it where it is happening. Examples:

- An environmental science faculty member leads a structured observation at a watershed or conservation site, asking students to apply analytical frameworks from the course
- A public health faculty member delivers a lecture on health system design while visiting a community health center
- An architecture or urban planning faculty member conducts a structured walking analysis of a neighborhood, guiding students through real-time application of design principles
- A computer science or engineering faculty member leads a structured technology walk-through at a manufacturing plant or tech campus, connecting course content to industry practice in the host country

Planning Mobile Lectures

- Map each mobile lecture to one or more course learning outcomes before the trip

- Prepare a brief 15–30-minute structured presentation or guided observation framework for each site
- Distribute a simple one-page field observation guide to students to focus their attention
- Build in 10–15 minutes for discussion and Q&A at the site
- Assign a reflective journal entry or field note linked to each mobile lecture
- If visiting a site where speaking is difficult (loud, crowded), prepare students in advance with a pre-briefing

STEP 4: SITE VISITS THAT SUPPLEMENT THE CURRICULUM

Site visits should not be add-ons or tourism; they should be planned as integral academic components. After establishing the partner-provided academic foundation, identify site visits that deepen, apply, or extend the learning outcomes your partner programming addresses.

Types of Site Visits and Their Curricular Role

Site Visit Type	Curricular Role / Best Use
Industry / company visit	Applied professional exposure; connects classroom theory to industry practice; ideal for business, engineering, health sciences, policy
Government agency or public institution	Comparative policy analysis: understanding how systems work across contexts; ideal for political science, public administration, social work
Research laboratory or innovation center	Exposure to cutting-edge research; connections to graduate school or career pathways; ideal for STEM programs
NGO or social enterprise	Applied ethics and social impact; understanding non-market approaches to social problems; ideal for social sciences, public health, sustainability
Historical or cultural landmark	Historical context: understanding how past events shape current society; works across virtually any discipline
Community-based site	Community engagement; grounding abstract course content in real community context
Startup / entrepreneurship hub	Innovation ecosystems; comparing startup culture across countries; ideal for business and technology programs

Site Visit Planning Checklist

✓	Task
☐	Map each proposed site visit to one or more course learning outcomes
☐	Contact site visit location 3–6 months in advance to confirm availability and arrange a host
☐	Confirm whether a subject-matter expert or guide will be available on-site
☐	Prepare a pre-visit briefing for students: what to observe, questions to bring, professional conduct expectations
☐	Design a structured debrief session or journal prompt to follow each site visit
☐	Confirm transportation, timing, and any entry requirements (ID, safety gear, advance registration)
☐	Document each site visit with student sign-in for contact hour records
☐	Evaluate site visits post-program and update the list for future cycles

STEP 5: CULTURAL PROGRAMMING THAT REINFORCES THE CURRICULUM

Cultural activities are not separate from the academic program; they are a distinct mode of learning. Cultural programming should be selected to reinforce course themes, not simply to fill time. Frame each cultural activity with an academic lens.

- Guided city orientation with a structured observation exercise tied to course themes (e.g., urban planning, public health, architectural history)
- Museum or gallery visit with a pre-assigned reading and structured discussion guide
- Local cuisine experience framed as a food systems, sustainability, or cultural anthropology exercise
- Community service connected to course content
- Language and cultural etiquette workshop that explores communication across professional and cultural contexts
- Free exploration afternoon with a required field journal entry observing and reflecting on one aspect of daily life in the host city through a course lens

STEP 6: DAILY STRUCTURE AND PACING

A well-paced day balances structured academic time with space for reflection and personal experience. Overscheduling is a common mistake in short-term programs — exhausted students do not learn well, and too little unstructured time reduces the depth of cultural engagement.

Time Block	Activity Type
Morning (3–4 hours)	Primary academic session: partner lecture, lab, co-taught session, or structured site visit with mobile lecture
Midday (1–1.5 hours)	Lunch — ideally as a group or with partner students; builds community and informal cross-cultural exchange
Afternoon (2–3 hours)	Secondary activities: site visit, cultural programming, student project work, or independent exploration

Evening (1–1.5 hours)	Structured debrief, reflective journaling, or group discussion; closes the academic loop on the day's activities
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STEP 7: STUDENT ASSESSMENT AND ACADEMIC DELIVERABLES

Assessment should be integrated throughout the program, not concentrated at the end. Use a mix of formative (ongoing) and summative (final) assessments.

- Daily reflective journal entries (formative) — submitted at the end of each day; keeps students academically engaged throughout
- Site visit field notes or observation reports (formative) — one per major site visit; structured around learning outcomes for that visit
- Mid-program check-in — brief written or verbal reflection at the program midpoint; helps faculty assess learning progress and adjust programming if needed
- Capstone presentation or final paper (summative) — delivered on the final day or submitted within two weeks of return; synthesizes learning across the program

Curriculum Development Checklist

✓	Task
☐	Define 4–6 learning outcomes for the course before designing the schedule
☐	Coordinate with partner institution to identify and confirm their academic programming (lectures, labs, panels)
☐	Map all planned activities (partner sessions, site visits, cultural programming) to learning outcomes
☐	Plan at least 2–3 mobile lectures tied to specific site visit locations
☐	Identify and confirm 3–5 professional site visits that supplement partner programming
☐	Develop pre-visit briefing guides and post-visit reflection prompts for each major activity
☐	Design a balanced daily schedule that avoids overpacking while meeting contact hour requirements
☐	Define the full assessment plan including daily journals, field notes, and capstone deliverable
☐	Review the draft curriculum with partner institution coordinator and confirm feasibility
☐	Submit course syllabus with international program addendum for approval

SECTION 7

Comprehensive Budget Planning

BUDGET DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

A transparent, comprehensive budget is the foundation of a sustainable program. Build the budget at least 14–18 months before departure so that program fees can be published and students can begin saving or applying for financial aid.

- Budget for the minimum viable cohort (10 students) to ensure the program can break even
- Include a contingency reserve of 10–15% of total estimated program costs
- Get vendor quotes in writing — do not use estimates older than 6 months
- Separate faculty/staff travel costs from the student program fee; faculty costs are typically borne by the institution
- Set the student program fee based on full-cohort pricing, not individual quotes
- Be explicit with students about what is and is not included in the fee

BUDGET TEMPLATE: MAJOR COST CATEGORIES

Budget Category	Estimated Cost Range	Who Pays	Your Estimate
TRANSPORTATION			
International flights — students	\$900–\$1,800/person	Student (program fee)	\$_____
International flights — faculty/staff	\$900–\$1,800/person	Institution	\$_____
Airport transfers (arrival & departure)	\$300–\$600 total	Program budget	\$_____
In-country ground transportation	\$40–\$80/day (group)	Program budget	\$_____
ACCOMMODATIONS			
Hotel — standard double occupancy	\$80–\$180/room/night	Student (program fee)	\$_____
University dormitory / guesthouse	\$30–\$70/person/night	Student (program fee)	\$_____
Faculty/staff separate lodging	\$100–\$200/night	Institution	\$_____
MEALS & PER DIEM			
Included meals (partner-provided)	Negotiated flat rate	Program budget	\$_____
Student per diem (non-included meals)	\$25–\$60/day/student	Student	\$_____
Welcome/farewell group dinners	\$20–\$50/person	Program budget	\$_____
PROGRAM & ACADEMIC FEES			
Partner institution hosting fee	\$200–\$800/student	Program budget	\$_____
Guest lectures / expert sessions	\$100–\$500/session	Program budget	\$_____
Lab, studio, or facility use fees	Varies — negotiate	Program budget	\$_____
Course materials and supplies	\$30–\$100/student	Student (program fee)	\$_____
ACTIVITIES & CULTURAL PROGRAM			

Professional / industry site visits	\$0–\$200/visit	Program budget	\$_____
Museum and cultural site admissions	\$10–\$30/person	Program budget	\$_____
Cultural experiences / workshops	\$20–\$80/person	Program budget	\$_____
INSURANCE & SAFETY			
International travel health insurance	\$3–\$10/day/person	Program budget or student	\$_____
Emergency evacuation coverage	\$15–\$40/person/trip	Program budget	\$_____
Trip cancellation / interruption ins.	\$50–\$150/person	Program budget or student	\$_____
ADMINISTRATIVE & OVERHEAD			
Visa and document preparation fees	\$0–\$200/student	Student	\$_____
International Office / admin fee	\$100–\$400/student	Program budget	\$_____
Pre-departure orientation materials	\$10–\$30/student	Program budget	\$_____
Communication — SIM cards, Wi-Fi	\$20–\$60/person	Program budget	\$_____
Contingency reserve (10–15%)	10–15% of total	Program budget	\$_____
TOTAL PROGRAM BUDGET			\$_____
Program Fee Per Student (Total ÷ # students)			\$_____

Scholarship & Financial Aid Integration

- Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship - <https://www.gilmanscholarship.org/>
- Seek departmental or foundation mini grants to offset costs
- Publish scholarship availability in all student-facing marketing materials

SECTION 8

Accommodations

CHOOSING THE RIGHT ACCOMMODATION TYPE

University Dormitories / Guesthouses	Hotels
Best for campus-integrated programs	Best for programs with significant off-campus activity
Lower cost	Greater privacy and comfort — especially on longer trips
Built-in community and peer bonding among students	More predictable quality and safety standards
On-campus proximity to classes and labs	Easier to negotiate group contract rates
Managed by the partner institution, which simplifies logistics	Breakfast is often included in group rate
May include meal plan options	Better ADA / accessibility accommodations available

ACCOMMODATIONS PLANNING CHECKLIST

✓	Task
☐	Obtain written accommodation quotes at least 6-12 months before departure
☐	Inspect or request photos/videos of student rooms, bathrooms, and common spaces
☐	Confirm the accommodation can be fully reserved for your group's dates
☐	Verify 24-hour security or front desk presence
☐	Confirm proximity to program venues and medical facilities
☐	Negotiate group rate contract with cancellation and force majeure clauses
☐	Arrange separate accommodation for faculty and staff
☐	Confirm Wi-Fi availability and adequacy for academic work
☐	Identify ADA-accessible rooms and confirm with students who need them
☐	Confirm laundry access for programs longer than 10 days
☐	Distribute room assignments and key policies to students before departure

SECTION 9

Insurance & Risk Management

REQUIRED INSURANCE COVERAGES

Every participant, student, and faculty must be covered before departure. Work with your institution's Risk Management Office to confirm which coverages are required and which must be purchased individually.

✓	Task
☐	International travel health insurance (minimum \$100,000 medical coverage)
☐	Emergency medical evacuation insurance (recommended: \$500,000+)
☐	Trip cancellation / interruption insurance for all participants
☐	Institutional liability insurance covering faculty-led programs abroad
☐	CFAR (Cancel for Any Reason) rider recommended for first-time programs

Recommended Insurance Providers

- Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI) — widely used by study abroad offices
- GeoBlue / HTH Worldwide — strong medical and evacuation plans for groups
- International SOS — comprehensive 24/7 emergency assistance hotline
- Allianz Travel — competitive group rates for trip cancellation
- Chubb Travel Insurance
- Check if your institution has a master travel insurance policy before purchasing separately

RISK MANAGEMENT & EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS CHECKLIST

✓	Task
☐	Register all participants in U.S. State Dept. STEP program (step.state.gov)
☐	Collect and securely store all student emergency contacts and medical information
☐	Distribute 24-hour emergency contact protocol to all students
☐	Confirm nearest hospital and U.S. Embassy/Consulate in the destination city
☐	Establish group communication platform (WhatsApp group or institutional app)
☐	Collect signed student conduct agreements and code of conduct forms
☐	Confirm all students are enrolled in required travel insurance
☐	Share full itinerary with student emergency contacts before departure
☐	Conduct mandatory pre-departure orientation covering all safety protocols
☐	Issue students an emergency protocol card (wallet-sized)

SECTION 10

Phase Checklists: Program Development Timeline

Use these checklists to track progress through each phase of the program development timeline. Each phase builds on the last. Work through them in sequence with your team.

Phase 1 Months 1–4 Fall, Year 1	Phase 2 Months 5–8 Spring, Year 1	Phase 3 Months 9–12 Summer–Fall, Y1	Phase 4 Months 13–16 Spring, Year 2	Phase 5 Months 17–18, 4–8 Weeks Before	Phase 6 Days 1–15 Program Dates	Phase 7 30–90 Days After Return
VE & Program Initiation	Partner Selection & Design	Budget & Student Recruitment	Student Selection & Logistics	Pre-Departure Prep	Program Delivery (On-Site)	Evaluation & Sustainability
▶ Launch Virtual Exchange ▶ Faculty recruitment ▶ Institutional endorsement ▶ Feasibility assessment	▶ Select partner institution ▶ Draft MOU ▶ Define learning outcomes ▶ Course structure	▶ Build program budget ▶ Set program fee ▶ Launch recruitment ▶ Open applications	▶ Select students ▶ Book flights ▶ Finalize curriculum ▶ Confirm site visits	▶ Orientation sessions ▶ Final documents ▶ Room assignments ▶ Emergency protocols	▶ Lectures & labs ▶ Site visits ▶ Mobile lectures ▶ Capstone presentations	▶ Submit grades ▶ Budget reconciliation ▶ Program report ▶ Plan next cycle



This is a recommended timeline. Most programs take 18–24 months from first idea to departure. Starting earlier is always better, especially for a first program. Beginning with Virtual Exchange (Phase 1) builds the relationships and institutional momentum that serve as the foundation for a successful study abroad program.

PHASE 1

Months 1–4
Fall, Year 1

Virtual Exchange & Program Initiation



Task

- ☐ Launch or identify an ongoing Virtual Exchange collaboration with prospective partner institution
- ☐ Gain institutional endorsement from Dean / Provost for developing the program
- ☐ Identify and formally recruit faculty lead; launch proposal application process (see Section 2)
- ☐ Provide Exploratory Travel Award opportunity to faculty exploring new locations or partners
- ☐ Define program's academic goals, target discipline, and credit structure
- ☐ Identify 2–3 potential partner institutions (see Section 4)
- ☐ Conduct a preliminary cost assessment
- ☐ Launch initial student interest survey to gauge demand
- ☐ administrative coordinator or program staff support

PHASE 2

Months 5–8

Partner Selection & Program Design



✓	Task
☐	Conduct virtual meetings with 2–3 potential partner institutions
☐	Select primary partner institution and begin MOU drafting
☐	Agree on program dates, cohort size, and core academic structure
☐	Identify destination city and complete destination risk assessment
☐	Begin curriculum development: define learning outcomes and map partner academic programming (see Section 6)
☐	Identify planned site visits, mobile lectures, and cultural programming
☐	Confirm summer session course registration pathway at home institution
☐	Identify scholarship opportunities and funding sources
☐	MOU submitted for legal review at both institutions

PHASE 3Months 9–12
Summer/Fall Year 1-2**Budget, Logistics & Student Recruitment Launch**

✓	Task
☐	Develop comprehensive program budget using template (see Section 7)
☐	Obtain written flight quotes from at least 3 travel agencies or group booking platforms
☐	Obtain accommodation quotes — dorm and/or hotel options (see Section 8)
☐	Negotiate and sign accommodation group contract
☐	Set student program fee and publish on study abroad website
☐	MOU finalized and signed by both institutions
☐	Confirm travel insurance requirements and provider (see Section 9)
☐	Launch student recruitment campaign; leverage Virtual Exchange alumni (see Section 3)
☐	Host student information session with faculty lead presenting
☐	Open student application portal

PHASE 4Months 13–16
Spring, Year 2**Student Selection, Flights & Detailed Planning**

✓	Task
☐	Review and select student applicants; notify accepted students
☐	Collect student deposits and begin enrollment confirmation
☐	Book group flights — use travel agency for group rates (10+ passengers)
☐	Finalize complete curriculum including all site visits, mobile lectures, and partner sessions (see Section 6)
☐	Confirm all industry site visits, guest lectures, and cultural activities
☐	Register students in summer session course at home institution
☐	Confirm visa requirements and communicate process to students
☐	Collect student medical forms and emergency contact information
☐	Confirm travel insurance enrollment for all participants
☐	Register all participants in U.S. State Dept. STEP program
☐	Collect signed student liability waivers and code of conduct agreements

PHASE 5Months 17–18
4–8 Weeks Before
Departure**Pre-Departure Preparation**

✓	Task
☐	Conduct mandatory pre-departure orientation (safety, health, cultural, academic) – one for students and another for faculty/staff traveling with the program
☐	Distribute final itinerary, emergency contacts, and packing guidance
☐	Distribute pre-visit briefing guides for each major site visit and mobile lecture
☐	Confirm all accommodation reservations and finalize room assignments. Arrange and plan for meals.
☐	Arrange airport transfer logistics in the destination city
☐	Collect final program fees and confirm all payments received
☐	Set up group communication platform and confirm all students are enrolled

☐	Issue students an emergency protocol card (wallet-sized)
☐	Share full itinerary with student emergency contacts
☐	Conduct final check-in meeting with partner institution coordinator
☐	Faculty lead completes institutional departure travel authorization

PHASE 6 Days 1–15 Departure Through Return	Program Delivery (On-Site)
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✓	Task
☐	Confirm group arrival, orientation, and room check-in on Day 1
☐	Deliver academic sessions, lectures, and lab activities per itinerary
☐	Facilitate mobile lectures at site visit locations as planned
☐	Conduct industry site visits and guest lecture sessions
☐	Facilitate daily student reflections or debrief discussions
☐	Monitor student health, safety, and wellbeing throughout the program
☐	Report any incidents or health issues to home institution immediately
☐	Ensure all academic requirements and contact hours are met
☐	Conduct farewell reception and capstone presentations on final day
☐	Manage group departure, airport transfers, and safe return

POST-PROGRAM: EVALUATION, REPORTING & SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING

Complete within 30-90 days after return.

PHASE 7 30–90 Days After Return	Evaluation & Sustainability
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✓	Task
☐	Submit all student grades for the program course to the Registrar
☐	Conduct post-program student satisfaction survey
☐	Faculty lead submits program narrative report to International Office and Dean
☐	Conduct budget reconciliation — compare actuals vs. estimates
☐	Send formal thank-you to partner institution and individual contacts
☐	Archive all program documentation for accreditation and assessment records
☐	Begin planning next year's cohort — confirm partner's continued interest
☐	Recruit student ambassadors to support next cycle's recruitment
☐	Present program outcomes to Dean / Provost to secure continued support
☐	Explore grant opportunities to expand or sustain the program
☐	Evaluate Virtual Exchange component: strengthen pipeline for next cycle

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