# LaGrange College
# Study Away Risk and Crisis Management Plan

Updated February 2024

LaGrange College recognizes the importance of Study Away, both in the U.S. and abroad, as an influential part of a student's education. Students may spend a semester or academic year abroad or participate in a short-term experience led by faculty and staff. As with any travel, College-affiliated travel may present risks and place significant responsibility/liability on study away leaders. This document is provided to set policy aimed at assisting College faculty and staff prepare for and respond to crisis-based situations while traveling with students. The first section of this document, Risk Management, addresses how study away leaders can prepare for study away, and the second, Crisis Management, outlines procedures for handling crisis events while on a trip with students.

## Risk Management

### Introduction

The purpose of this document is to assist College faculty and staff to take the necessary steps to provide a safe educational experience while off campus. While student safety is the predominant concern, study away leaders should also understand that there a certain legal responsibilities that are associated with leading a group of students on an experience off campus. Study away leaders who fail to take proper procedures prior to a study away course or who fail to exercise reasonable oversight and/or care while on a study away course could face a suit for negligence in a court of law. While the College cannot provide faculty and staff with any complete assurance that following the steps below will insulate them from legal action, the steps below constitute best practices in preparing for travel away from campus with students.

### Program Research and Approval

All faculty and staff wishing to take students on an educational experience off campus must complete the proper paperwork in a timely manner and receive permission from the institution.

For the Study Away Program, faculty and staff must be familiar with the program or service providers and the country's political, social, and cultural conditions. Any program provider must be fully vetted and approved by the Office of Global Engagement (OGE) before contracting their services. A pre-visit to the country or region where travel is planned is highly recommended before planning the course. Please contact OGE about the Preview Grants faculty and staff can apply for when developing a study away course.

A preliminary budget that includes all costs and a 5% contingency fund must be submitted with the course proposal; this budget should include a realistic estimate of all required expenses. Underestimating expenses to lower the cost of the course could be considered a breach of professional ethics.

Safety and security of all accommodations, transportation, and destinations must be researched with any concerns reported in the proposal. Study away leaders should be aware of and include in the course proposal any U.S. Department of State Travel Warnings or Alerts - especially if they target a specific area the students will be traveling through, or to, during the course. Leaders will consult the U.S. Department of State at http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html for travel advisories and Consular Information Sheets for each country. Likewise, any health risks need to be included along with a report of vaccinations or medications recommended before traveling. The Center for Disease Control posts this information at http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list/?s_cid=cdc_homepage_topmenu_003.

**Insurance**

Students, non-students, faculty, and staff will purchase emergency medical and travel assistance insurance provided by the College (EIIA) and this cost will be included in the budget. Contact information for Healix, EIIA's emergency medical and travel assistance provider, will be provided. Any adventure sport activities must be reported in the proposal for liability reasons. An additional rider may be needed if the activity is not covered by our insurance policy. This extra cost will also be included in the budget.

**Contracts**

Contractual liability stems from not providing the services or quality of services that are promised or required by the College. To help prevent contractual litigation:

- All costs should be as accurately predicted as possible and clearly specified as to what is included and what is not in the advertised cost of the course.
- Disclaimers should be included, such as the fact that prices may vary, services may change, or costs are estimated and may change due to fluctuation in exchange rates.
- Clear, written contracts with service providers are produced and submitted for approval to OGE. These include services, costs and a refund or alternate plan that is equal to the first choice.

**Travel Forms**

All students are required to submit a current passport that will still be valid 6 months after the return from their course, a signed Waiver, Emergency Health Care Authorization, and complete the Emergency Medical and Contact Form before traveling on a study away course. The medical form contains health and insurance information and emergency contacts; this information is to be carried by the study away leaders and kept confidential.

**Supervision**

At all times, the study away leaders (or other responsible College representative or program provider representative, depending upon circumstances) is in charge of the group, and the members of the group know who that person is and have either direct contact or contact information of that person. The study away leaders should be available to handle emergency situations at all times. They are responsible for daily conversations and status checks with all students in their course.

**Alcohol and Drugs**

Even while away from campus, students are bound by the provisions set forth in the LaGrange College Student Handbook. They should be made aware of the local laws and cultural norms governing the possession, sale and consumption of alcohol and drugs in the country where they are traveling. Students must remember that the possession or use of illegal drugs is strictly prohibited. Students, as well as College employees, are expected to exercise moderation and responsible behavior if they decide to consume alcohol. Irresponsible behavior, whether associated with alcohol or not, could result in disciplinary action by the College.

The study away course leaders, in cooperation with the VPEMSE, the VPAA, and OGE, will discontinue course participation of anyone who violates local alcohol or drug laws or whose alcohol use poses a potential danger to persons or property or disrupts the academic process of the study away course. The student will not be reimbursed for any course costs and will be responsible for any additional costs they incur, including foreign bail costs and legal fees. The participant will be expelled from the course, sent home at their own expense, and be subject to LaGrange College student disciplinary actions. An Incident Report will be filled out and the student will meet with the VPEMSE upon return.

LaGrange College funds may not be used to pay for alcoholic beverages for anyone. Faculty or staff shall not purchase alcohol for students. Study away leaders should carefully weigh the consequences of their actions which include the consumption of alcohol whether in the presence of students or not. You must be capable of addressing an emergency at any time.

**Student Conduct**

While studying away, LaGrange College students remain bound by the policies in the Student Handbook and are responsible for their own behavior. However, study away leaders are responsible for advising students when they are acting in a culturally offensive way or violating the cultural norms of the country in which they are studying.

The College may terminate the student's travel approval based on any disciplinary or other concerns which the College, in consultation with the study away leaders, VPMESE and VPAA, deems would make the student unsuitable for travel. Non-compliance with College behavior rules during the travel portion of the course shall make the student subject to dismissal requiring the student to pay for an early departure for home. The student will not be reimbursed for any course costs and will be responsible for any additional costs they incur, including foreign bail costs and legal fees. The participant will be expelled from the course and subject to LaGrange College student disciplinary actions. An Incident Report will be filled out and the student will meet with the VPEMSE upon return.

Study Away leaders may choose to have all participants sign a Behavior Expectations form before departing so rules and group norms are clearly outlined. This form can be added as part of the online application process or you can have the students sign a hard copy during orientation and

upload it into their online application. Samples of behavior contracts are located on the OGE website.

**Communication**

Each program should have in place a system of rapid communication and a central meeting point in case of an emergency. Participants should have each other's contact information to communicate in cases of emergency.

All faculty and staff traveling abroad or in the U.S. are required to always be accessible by cell phone and share that number with their department and OGE.

OGE will register all groups traveling abroad with the Department of State's STEP program which allows local embassies and consulates to contact and notify the group regarding any emergencies.

**Orientation**

Advising and counseling students on expectations and consequences prior to their departure is key to minimizing risk and litigation. Orientation sessions will need to be conducted by both OGE, who will cover College policies on alcohol, behavior, health and safety and insurance, and the faculty will need to cover country specific information such as culture, history, political background, currency, and local laws. Please refer to the section on Orientations in the *A Guide to Developing Short-Term Study Away Courses* for topics to be included. Study away leaders will work closely with OGE to provide a quality study away orientation.

## Crisis Management

Study away involves a unique set of risks and responsibilities for both participants and leaders. This section is devoted to procedures for handling crisis situations abroad. They are to be followed by ALL study away leaders in the situations described. Please remember to take this document and keep it accessible during your study away course.

**Prior to departure:**

OGE will provide study away leaders with the following information for each participant:

- Copies of the passport identification page
- Campus Emergency contact information
- All medical information provided by participant
- Insurance card with Contact information for Healix.
- International insurance information for each participant
- Cell phone number
- Embassy and Consulate contact information

Business Office will provide study away leaders with:

- Credit card contact information in case of lost or stolen card or if the card will not accept charges.
- Cash advance

Study away leaders will provide OGE with the following information:

- Detailed daily itinerary with hotel and in-country transportation contact information, flight itinerary, and program provider/tour guide contact information
- Emergency contact information

**What is a reportable incident?**

Study away leaders have an obligation to report any incident that could be considered a violation of local laws or College policy. Due to the severity of the action, leaders must immediately report incidents that involve actual or threatened harm; verbal/physical harassment; and sexual harassment or violence – including but not limited to domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, or sexual assault.

It is always critical to document when the crime or incident occurred, when it was reported, and what response protocol was used by study away leaders and other program staff; contact information for all parties, including local authorities or non-college individuals, should also be collected. ALL incidents must be reported using the study away incident report form. A copy of the completed form should be sent to the Office of Global Engagement.

**When do I need to contact the Office of Global Engagement?**

You should keep the OGE staff updated in a timely manner about any incidents that occur. If an emergency occurs, the campus emergency contacts should be contacted immediately following the hierarchy below:

1. Dr. Jon Ernstberger, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs
   Cell: +1-706-957-9652
   Office: +1-706-880-8155
   Email: jernstberger@lagrange.edu

2. Dr. Brian Peterson , Vice President for Academic Affairs
   Cell: +1-641-629-0101
   Office: +1-706-880-8235
   Email: bpeters2@lagrange.edu

3. Dr. John Head, Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Engagement
   Cell: 1+706-936-8110
   Office: +1-706-880-8253
   Email: jhead5@lagrange.edu

**What is considered an Emergency?**

An emergency is defined as a traumatic event, or the threat of such which causes extreme stress, fear or harm to students and leaders. Examples are:

- Arrest
- Victim of a crime
- Missing student
- Acute illness (physical or mental)
- Hospitalization, emergency medical evacuation, or death
- Drug and/or Alcohol abuse
- Sexual harassment or violence – including but not limited to domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, or sexual assault.
- Mental health
- Natural disaster, fire, explosion, bomb threat
- Civil disorder, act of terrorism

**Emergency Response Plan**

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The study away leaders traveling with the group are responsible for an immediate and appropriate response to any incident occurring in a study away course. The general rule in all crisis situations is to remain calm, try to determine all facts clearly, document all actions - including phone calls and conversations. All information related to a reportable incident should be kept confidential.

The study away leaders will contact Healix for help in finding a hospital or medical assistance that is within their network. Then the Vice President of Academic Affairs (listed above) should be contacted immediately to report that an emergency has occurred. All members of the Global Engagement Risk Management Committee will be informed, and when necessary, the Vice President for Academic Affairs will escalate the response by contacting senior administration to arrange a meeting of the Committee to respond to all ramifications of the incident.

The Global Engagement Risk Management Committee includes:

- Vice President for Finance and Operations
- Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Engagement with assistance from
  Associate Vice President for Student Experience and Student Dean, Director of Counseling Services and Chaplain, Director of Spiritual Life

The Committee may add other administrators, faculty, and staff with specific expertise as needed.

**What to do? Step by Step Responses**

Please keep in mind that when using a third-party program provider, the study away leaders should also be familiar with their emergency response plans, procedures, and resources. The Program Director they provide will be familiar with the location of medical facilities, local police stations and the nearest U.S. Consulate or Embassy and should conduct an on-site orientation for the course upon arrival.

**1. Medical Emergencies**

Before departure it is important to read over each participant's Emergency Medical Contact Information form to identify potential health issues and learn about the general attitudes toward health care in the host culture. You should also ask all students to meet with you to discuss any concerns they have and to explain the health and medical system in the country you will be visiting. This information should also be provided to students during pre-departure orientation.

In cases of serious medical situations, you should do the following:

- Contact Healix and take the person to a hospital/clinic, verify the nature of the emergency with a doctor, inform health care personnel about chronic medical conditions, and assist with medical insurance paperwork.
- Obtain the medical help indicated.
- Contact College with nature of the medical emergency, and keep in regular contact until the emergency has passed.
- Have the student call emergency contact. If the student is not able to communicate, one of the leaders in charge will call the emergency contact and, if possible, obtain the student's permission prior to the call.
- Remember, you are not the student's legal guardian, but you should try your best to get medical attention for her/him.
- Document all your actions and submit a completed study-away incident report to the OGE.

**2. Natural Disasters and Group Accidents**

In the case of earthquake, flood, avalanche, epidemic, bus crash etc., do the following:

- See to the safety of all group members and contact Healix.
- Communicate immediately with the College as to the safety and state of health of all group members, the group's location, plans, and when you will contact the College again.
- If possible, communicate the same information to the nearest American Embassy or Consulate. Diplomatic channels are an alternative way to get information to the College if public communication systems fail.
- Consult with American Embassy/Consulate, local police, local sponsors, etc. for advice on how to respond to the situation.

- Discuss plans with group members. This may include change of location, change in program schedule, cancellation of the program, or a shift in emphasis in the program.
- If necessary, OGE and the VP of Finance and Operations will coordinate evacuation procedures with the insurance company.
- Stay connected with the College.
- Document all your actions and submit a completed study-away incident report to the OGE.

**3. Civil Disturbance or Act of Terrorism**

It is important before departure to be aware of situations and locations which can be potentially dangerous. Inform students and advise them to avoid such areas whenever possible. Discourage or forbid attendance at particularly sensitive political meetings, rallies, or other sizable gatherings because it may pose not only additional risk, but it may be illegal for a foreigner to participate in these events.

- Your group will be registered with the US Department of State, and they will contact you by email or phone, if necessary, but it is still important to keep the American Embassy and Consulate notified of your location at all times if you suspect problems are likely to erupt. Make sure you fully understand evacuation procedures to be followed in case it becomes necessary.
- Keep the College informed of developments and follow instructions issued by the United States Embassy or Consulate.
- Contact the College as soon as possible in the event of a coup, assassination, riot, revolution, etc. so parents who call may be fully informed.
- If necessary, OGE and the VP of Finance and Operations will coordinate evacuation procedures with Healix.
- Document all your actions and submit a completed study-away incident report to the OGE.

**4. Missing Program Participant**

- Inquire with friends and associates of the missing participant about his or her whereabouts.
- Notify the College. The College will notify the participant's emergency contact.
- Notify American Embassy or Consulate, local police, and local sponsor(s) and give them your telephone number.
- Check with authorities daily, and keep the College informed of any new developments.
- Document all your actions and submit a completed study-away incident report to the OGE.

**5. Arrest**

- Notify the College. The College will notify the participant's emergency contact.
- Visit or call local law enforcement agency and determine what happened.
- Report situation to American Embassy or Consulate, as directed by the College.
- Document all your actions and submit a completed study-away incident report to the OGE.

**6. Robbery**

- Contact local law enforcement agency.
- Assist student in obtaining funds to replace stolen money.
- Assist student in contacting US Embassy or Consulate to replace passport.
- If necessary, have student call emergency contact.
- If necessary, contact the College, otherwise, document all your actions and submit a completed study-away incident report to the OGE.

**7. Mental Health**

- Ensure the participant's and group's safety.
- Document any observations of the student's current mental state.
- Go through medical emergencies protocol in section 1.
- If it becomes necessary for the student to return home, you will need to decide if the student can travel alone or if someone will have to accompany them.
- Document all your actions and submit a completed study-away incident report to the OGE.

**8. Assault**

- Go through medical emergencies protocol in section 1.
- Call local law enforcement agency to report incident.
- Document all your actions and submit a completed study-away incident report to the OGE.

**9. Acts of Sexual Harassment or Sexual Violence**

- Go through medical emergencies protocol in section 1.
- With the student's approval, call local law enforcement agency to report incident.
- Help student find counseling through either the College or Healix. Keep in mind that in many cultures medical doctors often are the first point of contact for people struggling with emotional or psychological issues.
- Help student (if requested or required) return home.
- Document all your actions and submit a completed study-away incident report to the OGE.

**10. Death of a Student or Faculty/Staff Member**

If a participant in the course dies while participating in the program, record all available facts accurately. The atmosphere surrounding the program will be emotionally charged, and it is important that the tasks below are handled promptly and effectively.

Take the following steps if a death occurs:

- If word comes by phone, obtain the identity of the person giving the information.
- Determine the cause of death—if an illness, what illness; if an accident, what kind, where did it happen, who else was involved, etc.
- Find out time and place of death.

- Find out if anyone has contacted the participant's family.
- Get name and address of undertaker, if available.
- Find out participant's religion. If Catholic, check if last rites have been administered. If Jewish, contact a local Rabbi immediately. For those of other religions, wait until you have heard from the family as to their wishes.
- If the participant died in an accident, inquire about the local laws regarding autopsy.
- Contact OGE staff regarding insurance coverage and procedures for repatriation of remains.

Reporting the Information:

- Inform the College immediately.
- Notify the U.S. Embassy or Consulate. A trained consular officer will notify the family, and that will be followed by contacts with the family by the College president and appropriate others.

Follow-up:

- Continue to keep a chronological record of events and actions as they occur.
- Talk to other students and participants and keep them informed and counseled.
- Travel and Risk Management Team members will give the participant's family as much support as possible.
- OGE, with guidance from the VP for Finance and Operations will assist the study away leaders in making arrangements for the repatriation of the body or remains.
- Gather the participant's belongings and make an inventory.
- Ship the belongings and inventory to OGE staff, who will forward everything to the participant's family.

**Upon Return – After-Action Review**

It is important for study away leaders to schedule an after-action review with OGE staff upon their return to the US. This after-action review is key to the continuous improvement of our processes and responses to crises, as well as the continuation of our programs.

**References:**

Information for this document was drawn from the following sources:

University of North Georgia Study Abroad Risk Management, Emergency Response Plant for Faculty-led Programs

Study Abroad Program Director's Manual, Center for International Education, Columbus State University

Crisis Management Plan for Simpson College-Sponsored Study Abroad Programs

Responsible Study Abroad: Good Practices for Health & Safety by the Interorganizational Task Force on Safety & Responsibility in Study Abroad, NAFSA

*NAFSA's Guide to Education Abroad for Advisers and Administrators*

Forum for Education Abroad *Standards for Best Practices: Health, Safety, Security and Risk Management*

*Best Practices for Addressing Legal and risk Management Issues in Education Abroad*, PowerPoint presentation by Julie Friend, Michigan State University, Barbara Lindeman, University of Missouri, and Patricia Martin, Swarthmore College.