**Guidelines for planning successful international travel courses**

As stated in the Simpson College catalog, “May Term provides a change of emphasis in the academic year and permits three weeks of intensive study of a single academic course,” and therefore it is an ideal time for the college to offer short-term, off-campus travel courses. These courses, both domestic and international, are intended to capitalize on opportunities unique to the locations where they are taught and to integrate classroom instruction and experiential learning activities into a well-conceived whole. Proposals for off-campus travel courses shall provide a rationale for conducting the course off-campus by explaining the significance of the location(s) to the overall educational experience, and they shall provide a clear picture of the careful integration of course content and on-site living and learning opportunities.

May Term 2022 off-campus **international** travel course proposals are due to the Office of International Education (OIE) by **January 15, 2021**. Summer 2022 off-campus internationaltravel course proposals are due to the Office of International Education (OIE) by **February 15, 2021**.

**General guidelines:**

1. Each course should have a well-defined focus, whether disciplinary or interdisciplinary.

2. Instructors should be mindful of the course’s intended audience(s), whether it be majors, non-majors, or both.

3. Courses should have academic integrity and coherence. The relationship between course content and the course location(s) should be articulated clearly. Instructors should give careful thought to the integration of course readings, lectures, site visits, and appropriate methods of evaluation.

4. Courses shall generally combine on-site experiential learning with more traditional academic learning.

5. The type and amount of work required of students shall be appropriate to the focus and level of the course and the academic expectations of the course should be comparable to on-campus courses. The time devoted to classroom or course-related activities shall be at least as much as for on-campus, four-credit courses, and normally significantly more to take advantage of the off-campus site.

6. Means of evaluation shall be clearly stated, realistic, adequate and appropriate for the course.

7. It is expected that the duration of a travel course will generally be consistent with the length of on-campus courses, either in May Term or in a Summer Term, although not all of this time must be off-campus.

8. In the interest of the health and safety of all participants in off-campus travel courses, Simpson College generally will only offer courses in countries with which the United States has official relations and which have a U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory Level 1 or Level 2 (see <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html/> for a current listing). Faculty wishing to lead an international travel course in a location with a Level 3 or Level 4 Travel Advisory can petition for a waiver of the college’s ban on travel to affected countries. Check with the Director of International Education for details of the waiver petition process.

**A few notes about best practice in short-term study abroad:**

As you design your short-term travel course, it might be useful to you to reflect upon what current research has identified as best practice in short-term study abroad programs.

* According to an article published by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (Peer Review, Fall 2009), the following characteristics are hallmarks of effective short-term study abroad programs:
* Programs are “highly structured, require ongoing reflection, and include in-depth experience working or studying with host country participants (14).”
* Programs are created and managed internally, rather than by external service providers such as travel agencies (14).
* The number of sites visited is limited to one or two countries (15).
* Students enrolled in the programs have ample opportunities to engage in authentic interactions with residents of the host countries via classroom activities, service-learning, or home stays (15).

**Timeline:**

International travel course proposals will be reviewed by the Study Abroad Committee (SAC) soon after the January 15/February 15deadlines, and therefore it is imperative that proposals be submitted in a timely fashion. Following review by the SAC, the proposals will then be sent on to EPCC for their consideration. Faculty proposing to lead an international travel course are asked to submit a preliminary course budget using the Business Office’s “International Travel Course Logistics” spreadsheet by April 1, 2021 to both Jay Wilkinson in the OIE as well as to Angie McKelvey in the Business Office. A revised course logistics form will need to be submitted by September 1, 2021 so that an updated cost estimate can be provided for each travel course at the Study Abroad Fair in September. Final course budgets using the logistics form are due to Angie McKelvey by November 1, 2021. The Business Office will then bill participants’ student accounts for the travel course costs by mid-November 2021, with payment due by January 10, 2022.

If you have any questions, please contact Jay Wilkinson (jay.wilkinson@simpson.edu) in the OIE.