

Guidelines, Criteria and Procedures for SKIDMORE COLLEGE 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 for evaluating Travel Seminar proposals is the educational value of the travel component, the unique nature and cost of Travel Seminars lead the college to use an extended timeframe and more extensive criteria for their development and review. Travel Seminar proposals should follow the guidelines and deadlines outlined below.

Proposal Review and Approval

All proposals are initially reviewed and approved/denied by a committee made up of the chair of the Advisory Committee on Off-Campus Programs (ACOP – a sub-committee of CEPP), two Associate Deans of the Faculty, and the Director of Off-Campus Study & Exchanges (OCSE). The group considers the following aspects of each proposal when determining which are viable:

- Academic strength;
- Use of the location as classroom;
- Available resources on site and connections the proposing faculty/staff member has with the host community;
- Budget feasibility, including ability of program to attract sufficient students; and
- Impact on department and delivery of on-campus curriculum.

Given that these opportunities are limited, the group will also take into consideration whether the proposing faculty member or department has taken advantage of other OCSE faculty opportunities in the past. Preference is given to proposals from faculty/staff and/or departments that have not been given the opportunity to participate in the past or from departments/programs that are underrepresented in the standard semester-long off-campus study options. In addition, ***OCSE is interested in proposals that specifically target underrepresented off-campus study students*** (i.e. student athletes, STEM majors/minors, first generation students, etc.). Finally, we welcome proposals for “repeat” seminars that were successful in the past.

Once the initial approvals are made, the approved proposals are reviewed by the chair of Curriculum Committee who will provide feedback to the faculty, possibly asking for changes, prior to final OCSE endorsement of the proposal.

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) 2020 should submit proposals by November 15, 2018.

1) PROGRAM MODELS AND STRUCTURES

Travel Seminars can follow one of two models. In both program models, the travel component may be offered during the winter, spring or summer breaks.

- **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. 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 additional off-campus academic experience – the Travel Seminar. The on-campus course is offered during the fall or spring semester. 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 component; however, students cannot participate in the Travel Seminar without completing the on-campus course, as it is assumed the on-campus course provides critical preparation for the travel component. 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; and
- Spring semester on-campus course plus May Travel Seminar (typically beginning the week following final exams).

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

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 typically will not exceed four and the total number of students on all Travel Seminars typically 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, as they will be considered within the entire group of proposals.

- 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).
- Proposals must include a syllabus outlining 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.
- Repeated Travel Seminars (those that have run previously) must be approved each time they are proposed.
- We urge you to consult with OCSE when developing a proposal to ensure questions about administration, budgeting and on site logistics are addressed. OCSE might also be able to offer assistance regarding on-site connections for delivering the program.

b) Proposal Review – Process:

The following process was reviewed and approved by the chair of Curriculum Committee and the Associate Dean of the Faculty in May 2016.

- Proposing faculty member/team prepares full proposal in consultation with OCSE and with support from the DOF.
- Faculty member/team 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 ADOF in lieu of the “Chair/Director”.
- Chair/Director reviews proposal looking at academic rigor, fit with departmental/program curriculum and goals, and impact on on-campus curriculum, including need to replace faculty, impact on delivery of major, conflicts with other planned leaves, etc. Chair/Director approves and signs off on proposal based on departmental/program needs and academic strength of proposal.
- Faculty member/team submits proposal to OCSE with Chair/Director signatures.
- Director of OCSE convenes Chair of Advisory Committee on Off-Campus Programs (ACOP) and the Associate Deans of the Faculty. The group reviews proposals to determine resource implications, academic rigor, fit with curriculum and goals, impact on on-campus curriculum, and overall strength and viability of program. Group approves chosen seminars and all sign off on selected proposals.
- Syllabi for approved proposals are sent to the Chair of Curriculum Committee for review. Chair of CC provides feedback to proposing faculty/team if changes are needed. Chair of CC signs off on final syllabi indicating approval of curriculum.

c) Deadlines for ALL Travel Seminars:

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| Early Fall | Office of Off-Campus Study & Exchanges (OCSE) to send a call for proposals to faculty. |
| Nov. 15 | Faculty to submit proposals to OCSE. |

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| Early Dec. | OCSE to convene review group for selection process. |
| Mid-Dec. | OCSE to send selected proposals to Curriculum Committee for review. |
| January | OCSE to inform applicants and chairs/directors of decisions. OCSE to announce decisions to campus. |
| Feb./March | Faculty to meet with OCSE staff to discuss recruitment strategy, on site logistical planning, pre-departure orientation, etc. |

3) CRITERIA FOR FACULTY-LED TRAVEL SEMINARS

a) Faculty/Staff Qualifications

- Sponsoring faculty must possess the academic expertise to inform and guide the proposed course of study. Staff must possess necessary skills and expertise to support students in significant and distinct ways. (It should be clear that faculty and staff add value specific to topic or location.)
- Faculty/Staff must have 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/staff are leading a group of students for off-campus study, they must possess a high level of commitment to recruiting students and to organizing and leading the project. They must also 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 and staff are urged to consult with OCSE and the ADOF for guidance as they develop their proposals and courses.

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/program/office proposing the course;
- show that the discipline(s) or topics of study involved in the Travel Seminar clearly lend themselves to the compressed period of study being proposed (how does the course 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, how will they be asked to explore how the material engages a course theme/unit or engage other students with their work? 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 (preference given to strong proposals in underrepresented locations or disciplines);
- whether the course has been successfully offered in the past (a successful repeat seminar could have an advantage over a new course that does not meet the other criteria);
- whether the faculty/staff member and/or department/program/office has offered off-campus programs in the past.

Administrative:

- whether the on-site connections/partnerships outlined by the faculty/staff will provide appropriate students support;
- whether the host country/region/location is deemed “safe” based on health, safety 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/staff member or OCSE has existing contacts in the seminar location. (If faculty don’t have extensive expertise in the proposed country, they can identify a partner (CIEE, IES, SIT, etc.) with the help of OCSE staff.)

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;
- whether the seminar is financially viable (exclusive of financial aid implications);
- whether the student program fee is reasonable and will attract or dissuade student participation.

c) Course Numbers for Travel Seminars

Travel Seminars use the “TX” rubric. This “TX” rubric is used for all Travel Seminars; the departmental code indicating the sponsoring department is 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 (see also State Ed guidelines for "activity supervised as a group, such as field trips").

All Skidmore Travel Seminars should 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/staff sponsor(s) and Off-Campus Study & Exchanges (OCSE).

a) Proposal Stage:

Faculty/Staff will be responsible for:

- designing the academic and co-curricular program and all instructional materials, including a detailed syllabus, list of readings and other resource materials, detailed itinerary relating sites visited to the subject matters of the course(s) or seminar, and estimated budget;
- consulting with their department chair/program director or supervisor and obtaining their signature(s) PRIOR to submitting the proposal to OCSE;
- responding to questions or recommendations from OCSE, ACOP and Curriculum Committee in a timely manner.

OCSE will be responsible for:

- advising faculty/staff and providing recommendations throughout the development of the proposal for a Travel Seminar;
- working with faculty/staff to develop a realistic program budget and program fee;

- shepherding proposals through approval process;
- informing faculty/staff and campus constituents of selection decisions.

b) Preparation Stage:

Faculty/Staff will be responsible for:

- locating and evaluating resources in the host country for classroom space, student housing, local transportation, etc., with help 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 help from OCSE;
- 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;
- providing OCSE with text describing the program and developing recruitment materials;
- reviewing applications and selecting program participants with OCSE;
- using expertise in program location to develop pre-departure materials with OCSE that appropriately prepare students for the program and the host country and host culture;
- holding pre-departure orientation for program participants with OCSE.

OCSE will be responsible for:

- assisting with locating and evaluating resources in the host country for classroom space, student housing, local transportation, etc.;
- 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 and sharing with faculty and students;
- creating promotional materials (e.g., brochures, flyers), application forms and pre-departure materials;
- 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/Staff will be responsible for:

- delivering academic and co-curricular portions 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;
- reporting any emergencies or student incidents to OCSE immediately and responding to these with the guidance of OCSE;
- 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.

OCSE will be responsible for:

- providing ongoing support to faculty/staff on site;
- responding to student concerns – through faculty/staff on site – as needed;
- serving as emergency contact for faculty/staff and assisting in resolving any emergencies that arise.

d) Return to Campus:

Faculty/Staff will be responsible for:

- submitting an expense report and receipts to OCSE within fifteen days of the end of program;
- submitting a program report to OCSE within 30 days of return to campus.

OCSE will be responsible for:

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