PROGRAM EVALUATION GUIDELINES
Off-Campus Study & Exchanges, Skidmore College

OVERVIEW

Each year the Office of Off-Campus Study & Exchanges (OCSE) invites faculty and staff members to participate in a formal evaluation process for Skidmore and approved programs abroad. The evaluation process is integral to monitoring the programs' academic rigor and ability to support students in their co-curricular experience. Evaluations could result in recommendations for changes to the program or the addition to or removal of a specific program from the Approved Programs list. It is our hope that meeting with program faculty and staff and observing program classes and co-curricular structures also will allow faculty and staff to better advise students who are choosing programs in a given discipline or location.

As a participating evaluator it is expected that you will do the following:

- Prepare for the evaluation visit by reading program materials (web site, student pre-departure handbook, course syllabi, past student evaluations, etc.), reviewing the program evaluation report questions you will need to answer, and meeting with OCSE to determine the specific goals for the evaluation.
- Actively participate in the planned visit. This means attending all scheduled classes and activities. Please remember OCSE is investing our resources in this visit in order to get as much information as possible about the program you are evaluating. We expect you to invest your time and energy accordingly.
- Work with OCSE to plan the logistics of the visit. (Any personal travel cannot interfere with the set schedule of the visit and must be planned for before or after the formal visit period.)
- Complete a program evaluation report for each program visited; the report is due within 30 days of completion of travel. (See report template at the end of this document.)
- Serve as a resource for students and faculty who are interested in the program you evaluated.

SELECTION OF PROGRAMS TO BE EVALUATED

Each summer OCSE determines which sites will be evaluated the following academic year. We consider several factors when making these decisions. We preference programs that:

- are used most frequently by our students;
- have not been evaluated within the past five years;
- have experienced major administrative or academic changes in the recent past;
- cause concern based on student or faculty feedback;
- are approved by departments that have not conducted an evaluation in the past five years.

OCSE also considers evaluation requests made by specific chairs and program directors, as long as those requests align with the factors above. Finally, some evaluations will be scheduled based on formal site visits being offered by the program itself.

Given this information, OCSE determines which program evaluations can be sponsored in a given budget year. We then approach specific chairs or program directors to see if there are faculty within those disciplines who are able to conduct an evaluation in a given year. The chair/director makes recommendations for faculty who would be appropriate for a specific program evaluation based on faculty expertise or experience. If there are administrative concerns to address, OCSE will either sponsor an administrative review or sponsor a faculty member and a staff member for the same review. We typically begin working with departments in the summer prior to a given academic year to plan who will go where and when.

Program evaluations typically occur during January or spring breaks; occasionally, if the academic calendar abroad permits, evaluations can take place in the summer. OCSE will work with evaluators to determine the best time to visit based on the on-site calendar and the evaluator's availability. In all cases, faculty and staff must conduct the review during the program's academic year when semester students are participating on the program. Summer programs are very different from semester programs and, therefore, are not included in the opportunities to evaluate programs.

PRIOR TO DEPARTURE

Once the program evaluation selections are made, evaluators work with OCSE to arrange all aspects of the visit. OCSE and the evaluator each have specific responsibilities prior to the evaluation.

OCSE:
- meets with the evaluator to discuss specific goals for the visit (these might include specific concerns that prompted the visit);
- assists the evaluator by providing program specific information prior to the visit;
- arranges the on-site itinerary in consultation with evaluator and on-site program staff;
- helps the evaluator arrange all travel through OCSE preferred vendors (i.e., airfare, hotel accommodations, etc.);
- informs evaluator of Skidmore College's Travel and Entertainment Policies and Procedures;
- processes evaluator's travel expenses to ensure costs are reimbursed in a timely manner.

Evaluator:
- reviews program specific materials provided by OCSE or the program to ensure a basic knowledge of the program prior to arriving to conduct the evaluation;
- reviews the program evaluation report form to understand what questions should be asked during the visit;
- reviews past student evaluations to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the program;
- meets with OCSE staff to learn more about the program and the questions OCSE might want addressed during the evaluation;
- finalizes and pays for travel and accommodations. ***Skidmore requires all employees to pay for their own travel and entertainment costs. However, all eligible evaluation-related expenses will be reimbursed by OCSE.***

DURING PROGRAM EVALUATION ON SITE

Evaluator:
- actively participates in all scheduled program activities;

- visits program facilities and classrooms, including program center and/or host universities;
- meets with program faculty and host institution faculty to discuss overall curriculum and academic quality of the program and to address any academic questions;
- meets with program staff and/or host institution staff to discuss overall structure of the program and to address any administrative or student support questions;
- attends classes specific to own discipline and/or disciplines included on Approved Programs list;
- meets with program participants – Skidmore students where available, other students in all cases. (Meeting with students should NOT include program staff as students should have the opportunity to give candid feedback about the program.)
- visits housing facilities and/or families; if there is more than one option for housing, visits each option available to students;
- looks for unique characteristics of the program – academic or co-curricular – that can be used to better promote the program to appropriate students during advising;
- looks for challenges that need to be discussed openly during advising;
- collects and tracks receipts for local ground transportation, meals, accommodations, etc.

UPON RETURN

Evaluator:
- submits program evaluation report to OCSE Associate Director of Operations within 30 days of completing the program evaluation visit;
- submits travel expense report within 30 days of completing program evaluation visit for reimbursement of expenses;
- makes themselves available to OCSE for questions about the report or advising for specific students.

OCSE:
- processes expense report and follows up as needed;
- distributes the program evaluation to the director and staff of OCSE and to relevant chairs and program directors as appropriate;
- invites evaluators to speak with students regarding the program visited at events such as interest meetings, International Education Week, panel discussions, pre-departure orientation, study abroad fair and/or open house events.

PROGRAM EVALUATION REPORT
OFF-CAMPUS STUDY & EXCHANGES
Skidmore College

This evaluation report is designed to help OCSE evaluate Skidmore and Approved Programs in an attempt to maintain high quality programs and to address emerging concerns as needed. We also will use this information when advising students in the future.

Please note that this report is intended to be read by your faculty colleagues and OCSE staff. It will also be used as an advising tool. This report will be available on our website, password protected, once you return this to us. *If there is confidential information that should not be shared publicly, it should be included in a separate appendix and sent directly to the Director of OCSE.*

Thank you for your assistance in our efforts to deliver the best off-campus programs to our students.

Note: This report is due to OCSE within one month of completing the site visit.

Program Title:

Site Visited (city and country):

Sponsoring Institution (provider and/or university):

Dates of Visit:

Name and Title/Department/Office of Evaluator:

WOULD YOU RECOMMEND THAT THIS PROGRAM BE OFFERED FOR SKIDMORE/YOUR STUDENTS? GIVE RATIONALE FOR ANSWER.

ADVISING POINTS - These advising points will be used by OCSE when working with students. Please provide information that will help us target the right student for this program.

Location: List reasons that this location is particularly well-suited for this program or for Skidmore's departmental or institutional goals for off-campus study.

Best majors for program: List which majors would be best served by this program.

Strengths: List any distinctive characteristics or strengths of the program.

Challenges: List any particular challenges of the program that might cause certain students to reconsider participating.

ON-SITE PROGRAM

Program Structure: Provide a bulleted list that includes information about the host institution, student demographics (US students only/combination of US and international students), language of instruction, basic framework of program (length, modules vs. traditional courses, service learning, etc.), and any additional details that will give us an idea of what the program "looks like" on site.

Program Goals: List the ways that the program supports Skidmore's departmental or institutional goals for off-campus study.

Concerns/Kudos: List any academic or administrative concerns that you were asked to investigate or that you have based on the visit. Provide potential solutions where able, either steps the program is taking or steps OCSE should take to address the concerns. Alternatively, provide any outstanding aspects of the program that make it distinctive or particularly suited for Skidmore students.

ON-SITE ACADEMICS AND FACULTY

Curriculum: Provide information about the curriculum of the program, the program's curricular strengths/weaknesses, any distinctive academic aspects of the program (alternative pedagogies, community-based projects, service learning, internships, etc.), and how the program's curriculum does or does not meet Skidmore's departmental or institutional goals for off-campus study.

Instructors: Provide information about program instructors (language of instruction, mix of local and international instructors, overall credentials of instructors, availability/engagement with students, etc.).

Courses: List courses you attended while on site and include strengths/weaknesses, distinctive pedagogies used, expertise of instructor, appropriateness of class level for level of credit given, etc.

Concerns/Kudos: List any academic concerns that you were asked to investigate or that you have based on the visit (registration process, availability of courses/syllabi, level of instruction, etc.). Provide potential solutions where able, either steps the program is taking or steps OCSE should take to address the concerns. Alternatively, provide any outstanding aspects of the academic program that make it distinctive or particularly suited for Skidmore students.

ON-SITE STUDENT SUPPORT

Staff and Support: Provide information about program staff (number of staff and titles, ability to support student needs, knowledge of local and US student context (bicultural?), students' perceived satisfaction levels, concerns that need to be addressed). List any concerns and possible solutions.

Housing: Provide information on student housing (type, location in relation to classes, arrangement for meals, perceived safety of housing, support available to students if they have problems or questions, type of evaluation of housing, quality of housing in relation to local context, students perceived satisfaction with the housing, etc.). List any concerns and possible solutions.

Program Facilities: Provide information about the program campus or program center (classroom space, library, administrative space, computer/printing access, and any other space relevant to the student experience).

Co-Curricular Activities: List co-curricular activities sponsored by the program as well as any informal activities the student have access to that are supported by the program, including how they support the curriculum and the effectiveness of the activities in supporting students' engagement with the local community.

Medical/Emergency Resources: Provide information on the program's resources to assist students in case of a medical issue or emergency (access to local medical facilities, language of treatment, quality of those facilities in comparison to US and local standards, program's protocols for supporting students in need, and ease of obtaining help). List any concerns and possible solutions.

Concerns/Kudos: List any student support concerns that you were asked to investigate or that you have based on the visit. Provide potential solutions where able, either steps the program is taking or steps OCSE should take to address the concerns. Alternatively, provide any outstanding aspects of the program that make it distinctive or particularly suited for Skidmore students.