



COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON

STUDY ABROAD FINANCIAL HANDBOOK

Created by the Controller's Office and the Center for International Education

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INTRODUCTION

This guide applies to all College of Charleston CofC-sponsored study abroad programs and supplements the College's policies and procedures to provide additional information to program directors (PDs). Refer to the [Travel](#) and [Student Group Travel](#) policies on the Controller's Office website, and the Handbook for Study Abroad Program Directors on the [Center for International Education's](#) (CIE's) website and in the OAKS resource center for faculty.

To obtain College approval for international student group travel, PDs must submit a signed Study Abroad Program Proposal no later than the due date for their intended term of travel. Program proposals are typically due to the CIE approximately one year prior to program implementation; exact deadlines are indicated on the Study Abroad Program Proposal Form. If the PDs are requesting an exemption to the program provider requirement, the program proposal must include an itemized budget that outlines anticipated program expenses. PDs leading new programs or programs with a provider will collaborate with the CIE on the request for program provider quotes. Once a quote is agreed upon, PDs will create a budget that includes the provider's costs.

Financial Responsibilities as Program Director (PD)

As indicated in the OAKS Resource Center for Study Abroad Program Directors, the role of PD carries more responsibility than the typical role of professor at the College. One of the largest responsibilities for program directors is the fiscal management of the program budget. Of significant importance, PDs are responsible for developing the program budget (see OAKS Resource Center), working in collaboration with the CIE (and program provider) to ensure all items requiring payment before program departure are processed, maintaining accurate financial records, preparing a travel reimbursement report after program completion, and submitting it to CIE **within 10 business days after returning**. PDs are also responsible for the safekeeping of any currency obtained prior to the program, the safe return of all unused funds, collecting all relevant receipts, and for ensuring that total expenses do not exceed the program budget.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Budget Development

Program directors are required to obtain proposals from a licensed service provider who can assist with the logistical arrangements on-site. Previously run programs can seek an exemption from using a provider. Please contact the CIE for more information.

For programs requesting an exemption from the provider requirement, PDs should develop a program budget, estimating costs for each aspect of the program. For programs using a provider, PDs will integrate the cost from the provider into their budgets. The CIE provides a template to help determine the program fee. See the OAKS Faculty Resource Center for the program budget template included in the Program Proposal Form. The program fee is the cost of the program as described in the program's brochure and/or other advertising. This fee generally covers lodging, some meals, excursions, ground transportation, and the expenses for each program director traveling with the group (airfare, lodging, and local transportation). It also should include the current study abroad application fee (see [Treasurer's Office](#) for current fee) and CISI insurance fee for both students and PDs if insurance is not included by the provider.

Program budgets should be calculated based on a minimum of 10 students. PDs must also consider the director(s)' costs when calculating the program fee. If the program fee is set based on a minimum of 10 students, then the PD(s) costs should be divided by 10, and the total should

be added to the per-student-cost. Program budgets are built on no more than two faculty members per program unless there is department or school funding.

The program fee advertised is an estimate; however, it is important for the budget to be as accurate as possible. Transportation and housing can be impacted by the number of participants (housing can also be affected by the male/female participant ratio) and currency exchange fluctuations. The budget template will automatically include a contingency fund amount of \$50 per student (See reimbursement section regarding how the contingency fee can be used) Program Directors should create enough room in the budget between the anticipated program expenses and program fee to cover unexpected costs or program changes.

Please note that tuition is not included in the program fee. For summer study abroad programs in-state students are charged the current in-state tuition rate; Out-of-state students are charged the in-state rate plus 30%.

Account Review

PDs can view the status of their accounts using Cognos. Please see [Finance Training – College of Charleston](#) for details.

To ensure that academic departments and college leaders have oversight of CofC individual program finances, CIE will provide CofC program Chairs and Deans with access to each program's SharePoint finance folder, where they have the ability to review program budgets, travel authorizations, travel advances, expense reports, receipts, and invoices paid out on behalf of each program.

Surplus Considerations

The program budget and program fee should be as accurate as possible to avoid a significant surplus or deficit. If a surplus for a program is identified before departure, the amounts billed to the students should be adjusted, upon approval by the CIE. **If a surplus is not identified until after the program ends, CIE and the PDs will determine the amount to be refunded to students after reconciling the account within one month of return.**

Funding

Once the program fee is charged to the participant's CofC bill, funds are deposited into the individual program account created specifically for the study abroad program. The Treasurer's Office determines the [billing cycle](#) each term. After a program has met the minimum number of committed students to materialize, funds may be spent prior to the collection of program fees. Program participants must sign a financial agreement after their conditional acceptance, which indicates that expenditures will be made on their behalf.

Another CofC department may choose to contribute funds to the study abroad program (e.g., the faculty member's academic department); however, the departmental account **must** appear on the Travel Authorization (TA) Form prior to obtaining signatures. The TA should list the exact amount and the specific expense that the departmental account will contribute. The fund administrator for the departmental account must also sign the TA. For further information on TA processing, please see the Travel Authorization section below.

Program Directors are responsible for keeping track of any financial contributions to the program and working with CIE and contributing parties to ensure those contributions have been processed and posted in the program index as needed.

At the end of the program, CIE will work with the Program Directors and departments/schools to ensure that the program index is balanced. Program Directors will be responsible for reviewing individual line items on their budget template and comparing actual invoiced expenses if there are questions regarding the final budget amount.

Use of Program Providers

Previously established programs are required to use service providers unless granted an exemption through a formal petition. All new programs, however, are required to use service providers. Further information on service providers is found at the OAKS Faculty Resource Center.

TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION AND PREPAID EXPENDITURES

Travel Authorization (TA)

CofC will not be responsible for any unscheduled and/or unauthorized student-group travel. All applicable campus travel forms must be completed, approved, and received in the Controller's Office (accountspayable@cofc.edu) prior to departure. Please ensure the most economical means of travel is used when making travel arrangements to keep student costs as low as possible, while keeping health and safety in mind.

An approved Travel Authorization (TA) form is required for all study abroad programs, and the form is located on the Controller's Office website. CIE will prepare all TA forms that serve three basic functions:

- I. Administrative approval of the program and travel arrangements
- II. Commitment of funds
- III. Supporting documentation for reimbursement claims

One TA form should be completed for the PD and all student participants. The PD is responsible for managing the funds and accounting for all group expenditures. Reimbursements are done through the submission of a Study Abroad Expense Report form. If there are two PDs, the second PD's individual costs, such as airfare, per diem, cell phone charges, etc. must be submitted on a separate TA under the second PD. Only group costs (lodging, ground transportation, activity fees) should be indicated on the group TA under the first PD.

Written information on all logistical arrangements abroad must be provided to the CIE for review and approval before any payment can be made for services.

All funding sources must be identified up front, and the appropriate indexes included on the TA form. If the travel expenses/reimbursements are to be paid from multiple indexes, the fund administrator for each index must sign the TA form and be listed as an authorized signer on the Index/FOP Access Form for that index. Funding sources may not be changed after the TA form has been approved without an update to the approved TA.

The approved TA form should be submitted to the accountspayable@cofc.edu in the Controller's Office, **no less than ten (10)** business days prior to the commencement of travel.

A copy of the approved TA form must accompany all requests for payment or reimbursement when submitted to the Controller's Office. Accounts Payable (accountspayable@cofc.edu) must

receive payment requests 7-10 days before payment is due to allow time for processing. Requests made the day before the trip may not be accommodated.

Expense Payments Prior to Program Departure

After a program has materialized with the minimum number of committed students, funds may be spent prior to the collection of program fees. Expenditures are made directly from the program index. An invoice is required for all payments to program providers. Invoices must include the name and address of the vendor, services to be rendered, payment amount, currency, and due date. All invoices and other payment requests should be submitted to the CIE **at least three weeks** before the deadline to ensure adequate time to process payment. Failure to comply with this may result in late payment and cancellation of reservations or higher fares. The CIE will complete the necessary paperwork to submit to the Controller's Office for payment. The vendor/program provider's W-9 or W-8 (W-8BEN for individuals or W-8BEN-E for entities) forms must be on file in Procurement before payment can be processed. Accounts Payable (accountspayable@cofc.edu) must receive payment requests 7-10 days before payment is due to allow time for processing. Requests made not the day before the trips may not be accommodated.

Direct Payment – if possible, the first option for payment of program providers, lodging, and transportation expenses such as airfare should be to arrange for direct payment to the vendor using the regular Procurement and Accounts Payable processes (purchase orders and Expenditure Authorization forms). Direct payments can be made via wire transfer, or check/ACH (if a U.S. entity). For wire transfer payments, the invoice must also include the beneficiary's name and address (this may be different from the vendor name/address), bank name, bank address, account number, IBAN, and SWIFT/BIC code. For wire transfers a physical street address is often required. Wire transfers will incur a fee ranging from \$15-\$35 per wire.

State Purchasing Travel Card – CIE has access to a travel card that can be used to **prepay** student group travel expenses if direct pay is not possible. Allowable student group travel expenses may include lodging, airfare, group meals, ground transportation while they are in travel status, and activity costs such as entrance fees for museums. Instructions must be given on the exact items to be purchased or arrangements that need to be secured. The CIE may request a meeting to ensure that the correct arrangements are made.

Personal credit cards must not be used to cover student travel expenses (i.e., those expenses related to actual travel such as plane tickets, hotels, etc.) in anticipation of receiving an advance reimbursement prior to the program.

EXPENDITURES DURING PROGRAM

NOTE: Cash/Venmo, etc. payments cannot be made to students while abroad for them to use for in-country expenses such as meals. Either the PD needs to pay for those expenses and be reimbursed or the program fee should be adjusted ahead of time. In that situation, students should be reminded to budget for those expenses.

Cash Advances

Cash advances are allowed for the budgeted amount of in-country expenses if not prepaid before travel. Program directors can receive cash for group dinners, excursions, etc. Ideally, these are prepaid to reduce the amount of the advance. Program directors must work with CIE on all requests for cash advances. Students are not eligible to receive cash advances.

The Cash Advance form is located on the Controller's Office website, under Accounting Forms. The completed and a copy of the approved TA must be submitted to accountspayable@cofc.edu **no later than four weeks prior to the beginning of the program**. Cash advances **will not be issued earlier than 5 days prior to travel**, even if the request is received before that date.

- i. Program directors may receive an advance for up to 80% of their budgeted in country lodging and meal expenses.
- ii. Cash advances are allowed for up to 98% percent of the budgeted lodging and group meal expenses for students, if not prepaid before travel.
- iii. Cash advances are allowed for up to 100% of entrance fees related to student group activities (e.g., museum entry fees).

Travel Reimbursements

Travel reimbursement forms should be submitted to CIE within 10 days of returning from the program. Please review the Travel and Student Group Travel policies on the Controller's website.

Original receipts are required for all expenditures. Please do not staple or overlap receipts. In instances where vendor-generated receipts are not available, PD will document detailed expenses with item/service description and date of expenditure.

Receipts should be categorized as noted on the template (airfare, lodging, group meals, per diem, other transportation, or miscellaneous expenses) and by date.

Examples of miscellaneous expenses include activity fees, gasoline, parking, phone charges, and supplies.

Daily expenses should be tracked using the study abroad program expense report, located on the Controller's Office website.

Please provide a written explanation for those expenses that lack an original receipt.

Meals/Per Diem – the foreign Per Diem rate for all locations is \$52 per day. For some locations, it might be preferable to use up to 80% of the US Department of State's Meals & Incidentals rate found at: https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp. Receipts are not required for reimbursing per diem rates.

All group meals must be noted in the expense report. Faculty cannot claim per diem for a meal that is already being covered as a group meal.

The arrival and departure dates and times need to be noted on the reimbursement form.

For PD flight deviations from the standard Charleston to destination route on official program dates, any cost increase over \$100 from a comparable estimate of direct travel on program dates, must be covered by the PD.

Tips will be reimbursed based on the nature of the related expense and the customs in the target country of travel. Tips are only reimbursable for group expenses such as tips for tour guides and bus drivers, not for meals. Tips are not reimbursable for individual PD expenses. The amounts must be reasonable and accompanied by an original receipt when possible.

No reimbursement is permissible for expenses incurred outside the travel dates specified on the approved TA.

PDs can request usage of the contingency funds for emergency situations including, but not limited to, fees not covered by insurance for an injury or illness; emergency accommodations or transportation due to an unforeseen disruption caused by natural disasters, strikes, terrorist threats or attacks, and/or pandemics; etc. PDs must receive approval from the CIE prior to using these funds and then include the expenses and documentation in the expense report. However, if communication is impossible, the PD may request approval after the expenditure.

Student Emergency Loans

In situations where a student does not have access to money needed for food or other necessities, PDs, in conjunction with CIE, can provide a one-time emergency loan to a student for no more than \$300. Examples of emergencies include ATM card/withdrawal issues or paying for minor medical expenses up front before reimbursement from the insurance company. PDs will have access to a form in the OAKS Faculty Resource Center that can be used for a student to accept the loan. Ideally, the student would return the funds to the PD during the program, but if that is not possible, the charge will be added to the student's CofC bill. If communication is possible, PDs should consult with the CIE before loaning any funds.

Program Deficits

The program budget and program fee should be as accurate as possible to avoid a surplus or deficit. CIE will communicate with the PD about specific treatment of annual balances. If program expenses result in a deficit, the PD may or may not be reimbursed depending on what caused the deficit. Deficits caused by poor fiscal management will not be reimbursed, whereas deficits caused by legitimate emergency expenses may be reimbursed. Such reimbursements will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and are only feasible with approval by Academic Affairs following consultation with the PD, CIE, the department chair(s)/program director(s) and the dean(s) in question. Deficits may not be covered by departmental operating indexes.

Change in Approved Travel Plans

Any change in travel plans must be communicated to the CIE immediately. If the CIE determines that the TA Form needs updating, CIE will communicate any changes to the Controller's Office. Any proposed change in location, term, program director, or course must be reviewed and approved by the Director of CIE. Chairs and Deans may also be consulted depending on the change proposed.