



# MANAGING EMERGENCIES ABROAD

Approved by the Chancellor's Cabinet (5/15/02)

## OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Monday-Friday 7:45 am-4:30pm (920) 465-2413  
UW-Green Bay Office of Public Safety (920) 465-2300

### Introduction

This document outlines the steps that staff from the Office of International Education follows to ensure the safety of UW-Green Bay students studying abroad. In addition, the document includes the guidelines that the Office of International Education and other personnel from UW-Green Bay will follow in the event of a Study Abroad emergency.

The UW System has established Policy Guidelines (ACIS 7.1-2) for the development and operation of educational programs abroad. The plan for managing emergencies outlined in this document complies with the ACIS Policy guidelines. The guidelines included in this document delineate the responsibilities of the Office of International Education and Study Abroad participants to ensure the safety of students studying overseas as well as what other UW-Green Bay personnel and overseas staff are expected to do in the event of an emergency.

### Statement of Purpose

Because the health and safety of study abroad participants are of the highest importance for UW-Green Bay, the management of emergencies affecting students abroad should be a cooperative venture that involves several offices and officers. In that regard, it is of primary importance that other campus units that operate programs abroad implement the guidelines included in this document as applicable.

No set of guidelines can guarantee the health and safety needs of each individual involved in a study abroad program. Although this document addresses general considerations, it cannot possibly account for all the inevitable variations in actual cases that arise. Therefore, as specific situations arise, those involved must also rely upon their collective experience and judgment while considering the unique circumstances of each situation. While acknowledging that no single plan can address all contingencies, the Office of International Education recognizes the importance of establishing in advance, policies and procedures that are designed to ensure the safety and well-being of study abroad participants.

### Office of International Education Measures to Ensure Safety Abroad

The Office of International Education will convey available information about risk factors to individuals participating in study abroad programs that the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay offers for credit. In addition, the Office of International Education will monitor compliance with UW-System mandatory insurance coverage for students participating in UW-Green Bay Study Abroad programs, short-term Travel Courses and summer Language Immersion Programs.

In order to ensure the safety of UW-Green Bay students abroad, the Office of International Education:

- a) Conducts periodic assessments of health and safety conditions for UW-Green Bay for credit abroad programs.

- b) Considers health and safety issues in evaluating the appropriateness of an individual's participation in a study abroad program.
- c) All participants will be registered in mandatory health and travel insurance (including emergency evacuation, repatriation).
- d) Conducts appropriate inquiry regarding the potential health and safety risks of the local environment of the program, including program-sponsored accommodations, events, excursions and other activities, on an ongoing basis and provides this information to participants.
- e) Maintains a contingency fund adequate to respond to emergencies and unforeseen problems overseas.
- f) Communicates applicable codes of conduct and the consequences of noncompliance to participants. In collaboration with the Dean of Students' Office, takes appropriate action when aware that participants are in violation of codes of conduct.
- g) Requires participants to attend mandatory orientations and sign a "Statement of Responsibility, Release, and Authorization to Participate in Study Abroad and Exchange Programs" to ensure compliance with UW-Green Bay academic standards and disciplinary codes, a "Pledge of Acceptance" to protect UW-Green Bay from legal liability, and a "Orientation Form" stating that the participant has received information about safety, health, legal, environmental, political, and cultural conditions of the host country before participating in the overseas experience.
- h) Provides participants with a card called "International Travel Emergency Call List" listing phone numbers for obtaining health and law enforcement services in the host country. In addition the card includes the number and address of the U.S Embassy in the host-country, as well as UW-Green Bay contact number to report an emergency.
- i) Develops and maintains an emergency and crisis response plan.

In addition to these measures, the Office of International Education will:

- j) Provide appropriate health and safety mandatory training for faculty and leaders of study abroad programs, including guidelines with respect to intervention and referral, and working within the limitations of their own competencies.
- k) Provide the faculty leader of short-term study programs with a cell-phone with prepaid international service to be able to call or be called at all times, and encourage students studying abroad for a semester or a year to purchase/rent an international cell phone to contact the Office of International Education or be contacted by the Office of International Education in case of an emergency.

The Office of International Education, the faculty leading short-term travel courses or our contact person in abroad institutions cannot:

- a) Guarantee or assure the safety of participants or eliminate all risks from the study abroad environments.
- b) Monitor or control all of the daily personal decisions, choices, and activities of individual participants.
- c) Prevent participants from engaging in illegal, dangerous or unwise activities.

- d) Assure that U.S. standards of due process apply in overseas legal proceedings or provide or pay for legal representation for participants.
- e) Assume responsibility for the actions of persons not employed or otherwise engaged by the program, for events that are not part of the program, or that are beyond the control of the sponsor, or for situations that may arise due to the failure of a participant to disclose pertinent information.
- f) Assure participants that home-country cultural values and norms will apply in the host country.

## Responsibilities of Study Abroad Students

**The following information is discussed during the mandatory pre-departure orientation sessions with the students participating in Study Abroad, short-term Travel Courses or summer Language Immersion Programs.** A student participating in a UW-Green Bay sponsored international program must:

- g) Attend all mandatory orientations prior to departure and sign the "Statement of Responsibility, Release, and Authorization to Participate in Study Abroad and Exchange Programs," the "Pledge of Acceptance, and a "Orientation Form" stating that the participant has received information about safety, health, legal, environmental, political, and cultural conditions of the host country before participating in the overseas experience.
- h) Assume responsibility for all the elements necessary for their personal preparation for the program and attend mandatory orientations prior to departure. Read and seriously consider all the materials that relate to safety, health, legal, environmental, political, cultural, and religious conditions in host countries.
- i) Make available to the Office of International Education accurate and complete physical and mental health information and any other personal data that is necessary in planning for a safe and healthy study abroad experience.
- j) Assume responsibility for all the elements necessary for their personal preparation for the program and participate fully in orientations.
- k) Inform parents/guardians/families, and any others who may need to know, about their participation in the study abroad program, provide them with emergency contact information, and keep them informed on an ongoing basis.
- l) Understand and comply with the terms of participation, codes of conduct, and emergency procedures of the program, and obey host-country laws.
- m) Be aware of local conditions and customs that may present health or safety risks when making daily choices and decisions. Promptly express any health or safety concerns to the program staff or other appropriate individuals.
- n) Behave in a manner that is respectful of the rights and well being of others, and encourage others to behave in a similar manner.
- o) Accept responsibility for their own decisions and actions.
- p) Become familiar with the procedures for obtaining emergency health and law enforcement services in the host country.

- q) Follow the program policies for keeping program staff informed of their whereabouts and well being.

## Responsibilities of Academic Program Leaders

A Study Abroad Academic Program Leader is a faculty member or other representative of UW-Green Bay in charge of administering or accompanying students on educational programs outside the United States. All Academic Program Leaders are expected to adhere to the following protocols:

1. Conduct/ Attend pre-departure orientations: During pre-departure orientations Academic Program Leaders will inform participants of:
  - a. Safety, health, legal, environmental, political, and cultural conditions of the host country. Including dealing with health and safety issues, potential health and safety risks, appropriate behavior, and emergency response measures.
  - b. Academic goals for the program.
  - c. Flight arrangements, accommodations, events, excursions and other activities included in the program.
  - d. Applicable codes of conduct and the consequences of noncompliance.

Academic Program Leaders shall emphasize to all participants at orientation meetings the need to exercise reasonable caution and vigilance while studying abroad. In addition, Academic Program Leaders should inform participants that the university takes all reasonable precautionary measures and has established an emergency procedure plan.

2. Attend mandatory workshop: All Academic Program Leaders must attend a mandatory workshop sponsored by the Office of International Education in order to familiarize themselves with crisis management procedures and institutional expectations for managing an emergency overseas.

## Institutional Response to an Emergency Abroad

All responses should be governed by the highest concern for the well-being and safety of students, faculty and staff participating in an UW-Green Bay-sponsored study abroad program. However, in "Coping with Perceived Emergencies," (1989) Diane Smell draws a distinction between "real" and "perceived" emergencies. **Real emergencies** are those that pose a genuine and immediate risk to, or that have already disturbed, the safety or well-being of a study abroad participant or participants. These include occurrences as **coups and other civil disturbances; natural and human-made disasters; incarcerations; serious physical or emotional illness; accidents; physical assaults; disappearances or kidnapping; and terrorist threats and attacks.**

**Perceived emergencies** are those which pose no significant risks to the safety and well-being of participants, but which are seen as threatening by family members in the U.S. or by others, including at times, students and colleagues at the home university. **Perceptions of threat** can arise out of a number of things, including the sensationalized reporting of an event abroad; the distortion of information provided by a participant in a phone call, e-mail message, fax or letter home; or simply out of nervousness of a family member or student with little or no international experience. Such perceptions will sometimes affect family members and others in the U.S as seriously or more strongly than real emergencies, and need to be treated seriously.

## Determining if an emergency is perceived or real

In order to determine what risks, if any, Study Abroad participants could be facing, personnel from the Office of International Education will contact the appropriate people and organizations, including the university's overseas contact person for the program in which participants are believed to be in danger, and / or the US state Department Desk Officer of the country affected ([www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)).

### **An Emergency is reported to the Office of International Education**

Any phone call related to an emergency overseas will be directed to the Public Safety Office and they will report the call to the appropriate person.

- A. Whoever learns of an emergency involving a UW-Green Bay student, faculty or staff member on an Office of International Education sponsored program must immediately contact the Director of the Office of International Education, either at the office or at home. Every effort should be made to reach the Director by telephone, rather than e-mail or fax. The Director will coordinate the University's response to the crisis until it has passed.
- B. In the event that the Director of International Education cannot be immediately reached, the Program Manager should be contacted. The Program Manager will seek the immediate assistance of Dean of Students' Office and the Dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences to coordinate the immediate response to an emergency overseas. The Program Manager should brief the Director of International Education about the evolution of the crisis and steps taken.
- C. The contact numbers for these individuals are:

Director of International Education: **Cristina Ortiz**

Office: (920) 465-2007 or  
(920) 465-2450

Program Manager of International Ed: **Chad Goeden**

Office: (920) 465-2889

D. The following information should be gathered by the person responding to the emergency call:

- a) caller's name
- b) caller's location
- c) telephone number caller can be reached at.

E. An incident report form must be filled out by the faculty leading the Travel Course or Study Abroad program. In the absence of an on-site faculty member, the Director of International Education will fill out the form and file it.

### **Managing perceived and real emergencies**

- A. The emergency is perceived:

- i. The Director of International Education will take appropriate steps to defuse the situation and reassure concerned parties (parent, students or other individuals who contacted the university).
- ii. The Director will inform other members of the Office of International Education and administrators involved of what has occurred and what the concerned parties have been told, so to provide the same information in case other inquiries are received.

B. The emergency is real:

B.1) Action steps for the Study Abroad Academic Program Leader and/or field staff facing an emergency overseas:

- i. Upon serious injury or emergency of a Study Abroad participant, the leader of the group and/or field staff should get the person admitted to a hospital, and take efforts to keep the rest of the participants from danger.
- ii. The leader of the group and/or field staff will contact all student participants to make sure that they are accounted for and are safe. Advise students to wait until clear information is available before making speculative communications with family, friends and others.
- iii. The leader of the group and/or field staff will contact appropriate local medical emergency officials, law enforcement officers, the U. S. Embassy or Consulate, and the host institution on-site staff, and ask for advice and assistance.
- iv. The leader of the group and/ or field staff will contact the Office of International Education and brief them regarding the situation. It may be assumed that by the time the Office of International Education has been contacted, all immediate life-endangering circumstances will have been secured in the field.
- v. The leader of the group and/or field staff should reassess planned activities for the program, and adjust if necessary to avoid subjecting students and staff to unwarranted stress. Plan for creative ways to proceed; terminate the program only as a last resort and once the Office of International Education has been consulted.
- vi. In the event of an emergency that requires immediate repatriation, the leader of the group or field staff will communicate any action of evacuation plans in writing to student participants, and obtain written acknowledgment of receipt.
- vii. The leader of the group will document any emergency and obtain written witness statements from participants as soon as possible.

It is extremely important that the leader of the group or field staff keep an accurate and complete record of all the steps taken by him/herself or others before, during, and after a serious injury, emergency, or death for future reference. The Office of International Education will provide a blank form for recording essential basic information.

B.2) Action steps for university "Emergency Response Team":

i. In the event of a serious emergency overseas an “Emergency Response Team” will be composed of the following individuals or their delegates, and any other persons:

- a. Director of International Education
- b. Appropriate Academic Dean and Dean of Students
- c. University Legal Counsel
- d. Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
- e. University Communications/Media

ii. The Director of International Education, in consultation with the Dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the Dean of Students will determine a response strategy. This strategy will be communicated to the appropriate university officials, and solicit their involvement as needed.

iii. Upon receiving notification from a group leader/faculty and or field staff regarding a serious injury, emergency, or death the Office of International Education will:

- b) Begin and maintain a log of all communications
- c) Obtain the following information from the faculty/group leader or field staff:
  - i. Names of caller and of any victim(s)
  - ii. Brief description of accident, injuries, and/or emergency.
  - iii. Location of caller (street, city, country)
  - iv. Location of accident or emergency. How close is it to students and staff.
  - v. Phone and fax number where caller is and contact number
  - vi. Determine if the group leader, faculty or field staff has contacted the local rescue squad, local law enforcement, U.S. Embassy/consulate if appropriate.
  - vii. Determine if the group leader has released any information to the media.

### Internal Communication Protocol and Role of Officers

PERSON	ACTION
Campus employee receiving the call	*Contact Director of International Education
Director or Program Manager of OIE	*Coordinate the response with Academic Dean and Dean of Students’ Office
	* Call student/s’ family /Emergency Contact
	*Take immediate actions necessary to maintain the security and health of participants and staff.
	*Recommend the appropriate steps for the group leader/ faculty or field staff to take in the affected program (e.g., addressing any student panic,

Academic Dean and Dean of Students	<p>recommending appropriate student behavior, creating action plan etc).</p> <p>*Recommend or assist with evacuation or repatriation plans (e.g., safety or modes of evacuation, routes of travel, evacuation costs, methods of reducing threat such as dispersing students in small groups etc)</p> <p>*Maintain a communication plan.</p> <p>* Contact Counseling Services; Director of Risk Management; University Legal Counsel, and if needed, student/s' Academic Advisor, Ecumenical Center.</p> <p>* Notification of Next-of Kin in the Event of Serious Injury or Death.</p>
Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs/or Chancellor	<p>*University Communications/ Media</p> <p>* Approval of all statements, news releases, interviews, news conferences, open memorandum or letters to the media, university community or general public should be approved by the Chancellor or Provost (or administrative designee).</p> <p>*Provides accurate and full disclosure of the facts and cooperate with the media to every extent possible.</p> <p>*When information cannot be released explain why (e.g., next-of-kin have not yet been notified; doctor's orders prohibit interview of survivor etc)</p> <p>*Cancellation/Suspension of a program</p>

[Although this document has been developed by the Office of International Education of the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay to serve the purposes of the Study Abroad programs sponsored by this university, I wish to acknowledge the consultation of the following documents: "Managing Real and Perceived Emergencies Abroad" (University of Wisconsin-Madison), "Crisis Communication" ( University of Wisconsin-Whitewater), "Education Abroad Emergency Procedures Manual" (University of North Carolina-Charlotte), and "NAFSA Guidelines to Promote Health and Safety in Study Abroad"]

Cristina Ortiz, PhD  
 Director of International Education  
 March, 2002

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[Contact Us \(Request Information\)](#)

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