

## **Guidelines for Dependents, Extended Family Members, and Acquaintances of Faculty Traveling on Faculty-Led Study Abroad Programs**

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These guidelines, approved by the Dean of Faculties and the Study Abroad Program Policy Committee, are provided to assist faculty in making informed decisions related to including guests and family members on all or part of a study abroad program. Such programs are, first and foremost, academic programs and, like their counterparts on campus, these classes, field trips, and cultural excursions should never be designed to cater to the needs of ancillary individuals who are not part of the academic experience. Accompanying dependents, spouse/partners, and acquaintances should not interfere with the function of the study abroad program in any way. However, Texas A&M recognizes the importance of the family and encourages faculty members leading programs to include their family members as part of the study abroad experience bearing in mind the need to adhere to these guidelines.

### **I. DEPENDENTS**

#### **A. Spouse/Partner**

- i. A “partner” will be used to refer to either the spouse or the domestic partner of a faculty member, including the domestic partners of unmarried faculty irrespective of sexual orientation.
- ii. A spouse/partner may accompany the faculty member for the duration of the program or a significant portion of the program as long as it does not interfere with the faculty member’s duties to the program and the study abroad students.
- iii. Spouses/partners should understand that their primary role on the study abroad program is that of spouse/partner and/or caretaker of any dependent children also accompanying the faculty member. For liability purposes, it is important that spouses/partners do not have responsibilities related to the academic program (e.g. taking roll, monitoring tests, managing working funds).

#### **B. Children**

- i. The faculty member’s children or legal dependents under the age of 18 may accompany the faculty member for the duration of the program or for a significant portion of the program as long as it does not interfere with the faculty member’s duties to the program and the study abroad students.
- ii. Grandchildren, nephews, and nieces who are not a faculty member’s legal dependents are not considered dependents but rather extended family and are therefore not permitted to stay for the duration of the program unless they are enrolled as students in the program.
- iii. If the child is under the age of 15, the faculty member must provide a caretaker. This caretaker must be eighteen years of age or older. A sibling under the age of eighteen may not act as the caretaker for his/her younger siblings. This caretaker could be the spouse/partner of the faculty member.
  1. The faculty member must cover the caretaker’s and the children’s expenses.
  2. Students on the program should never be asked to serve as a caretaker, as this detracts from the program and the student’s experience. In addition, it places the faculty member in a difficult position to defend if the student alleges that he/she felt pressured to perform personal services for a faculty member as part of the course grade.
  3. The faculty member cannot be considered the caretaker.

4. Other faculty or staff members involved with the program should not be asked to serve as a caretaker.
- iv. It is strongly recommended that faculty members consider carefully the number of children being taken on study abroad programs. Logistically, the more children that are involved, the more difficult it becomes to make arrangements that will accommodate large families, and the more difficult it is for the faculty member to focus their full attention on the study abroad program. Past experience shared by other faculty members suggests that a spouse/partner and several dependent children taken abroad require more attention from a faculty member than they require at home in Texas due to language barriers as well as lack of usual friends, recreational, and educational activities.

### **C. Financial Considerations**

- i. State regulations require that faculty members pay all expenses of their spouse/partners and dependents. Current Texas A&M fiscal policies do not allow such expenses to be paid by student program fees or monies mixed into student program fee accounts. This means that separate payments directly from the faculty member will be required for dependent expenses. This information must be made transparent for all those involved in the program, especially the students, so there is no misunderstanding that student program fees are, in any way, subsidizing non-participants. Please refer to the Working Fund Guidelines for more details or contact Study Abroad Programs for questions about this information.
- ii. Dependents are not guaranteed potential “group discount” prices due to restrictions on such rates (e.g. age limits, student only prices, etc.)
- iii. In cases where a faculty member requires a logistical arrangement for a dependent or spouse/partner that costs more than the price paid by a student, the faculty member is responsible for the cost difference (e.g. if paying for a double room instead of a single room in a hotel, the faculty member would pay the difference between the single and the double to accommodate an accompanying spouse/partner)

### **D. Logistical Arrangements**

- i. Program arrangements are not primarily made to accommodate the needs of dependents and spouse/partner. All program accommodations are made with the understanding that this is an academic program designed to meet the needs of the students and the faculty members.
- ii. Faculty members are responsible for obtaining passports and visas for their spouse/partner and dependents.
- iii. Faculty members are responsible for obtaining health insurance for their spouse/partner and dependents.
- iv. Faculty members must organize dependents’ travel arrangements whenever these arrangements deviate from those made for the planned study abroad program, such as (but not limited to)
  1. Transportation to and from the study abroad location
  2. Excursions in the host country
  3. Hotels
  4. Meals

- When travel arrangements exactly coincide with the planned study abroad program, these will be coordinated with the Study Abroad Programs Office, using the same program deadlines that apply for students engaged in the program.
- v. Dependents may room with the faculty member if accommodations allow, but, as already mentioned, the faculty member must pay the difference for any room upgrade.
  - vi. Dependents are not permitted to share accommodations with students.
  - vii. Dependents should not compromise the planned academic program in any way, such as (but not limited to)
    - 1. preventing the faculty member from attending or leading field trips or other academic elements of the program.
    - 2. disrupting class or field trips.
    - 3. preventing students or other faculty members from engaging fully in the academic program.

## **II. EXTENDED FAMILY MEMBERS AND PERSONAL ACQUAINTANCES**

- A. “Extended family members” are those relatives other than the faculty member’s spouse/partner or immediate children.
- B. “Personal acquaintances” are generally individuals who have no official connection with the program and who are not related to the faculty member.
- C. General Guidelines
  - i. It is strongly recommended that extended family members and/or personal acquaintances visit before or after the official program dates, during a scheduled vacation (e.g. Spring Break), or during a free weekend. Visits during other time periods have proven to be disruptive to the academic program. This type of arrangement encourages the perspective that study abroad programs are vacations rather than academic endeavors.
  - ii. It is strongly recommended that extended family and personal acquaintances not travel with the study abroad group on program field trips or weekend excursions because of the increased potential for misperceptions related to the purpose of the program (academic versus vacation), financial difficulties in maintaining a separation of program versus guest payments, and liability for the faculty member and the university.
  - iii. All expenses and travel arrangements for any extended family and personal acquaintances must be separate from those of the program. This information must be made transparent for all those involved in the program, especially the students, so there is no misunderstanding that student program fees are, in any way, subsidizing non-participants.
  - iv. Extended family and personal acquaintances are not permitted to share accommodations with students.
  - v. Extended family and personal acquaintances should not compromise the program in any way, such as (but not limited to)
    - 1. preventing the faculty member from attending or leading field trips or other academic elements of the program.
    - 2. disrupting class or field trips.
    - 3. preventing students or other faculty members from engaging fully in the academic program.



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- vi. Extended family members are responsible for obtaining their own health insurance.
- vii. Extended family and personal acquaintances are responsible for making their own travel arrangements including passports, visas, transportation, food, and lodging.

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