

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF OUTBOUND INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS STUDY PROGRAMS

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides an overview of the major considerations areas related to the administration of outbound international business study programs offered by universities.

BACKGROUND

Competition among business schools and requirements noted in AACSB accreditation standards has necessitated increasing emphasis in “internationalizing” the business curriculum and student experiences across North America and throughout the world [6]. Exposing students to international business can be approached in various ways such as bringing international speakers into the classroom, case study analysis, and study abroad. An out of country study experience may be viewed as the best approach for business students to learn about international commerce [1]. Dwyer and Peters [4] documented the value of long-term impact of study abroad. Their findings show study abroad positively influences the career path, world-view, and self-confidence of students [4]. Chieffo and Griffiths [3] documented educational impacts of international short term programs on students’ educational endeavors and personal lives.

Areas for Consideration

While others have provided a step by step model for developing a short-term study abroad program [5], there needs to be a full discussion of the primary factors that impact the decisions related to international study on the university campus. Certain areas of the university that impact international study environment need to be collectively considered before deciding what type of international study program is best for the university and individual students. These interconnected areas include: university structure, university support, academic curriculum structure; students backgrounds, and faculty experiences (Table1).

TABLE 1

University Structure/Support
Curriculum Structure
Student Background
Faculty Experiences

Any international study opportunity needs active support of department chairs, college deans, provosts, and the university president. Without their unqualified support an international program has very little chance of success. The support may consist of administrative leverage in terms of finances (for students and faculty), procedures and structures.

Students will likely look at an international experience as expanding their education, yet they may want the experience to count in some way toward their degree. Faculty organizing international experiences for students need to factor this desire for academic credit into their planning. How does the university curriculum structure fit the needs of the student considering an international study program?

The prospective students' backgrounds need to be considered when designing international study programs. These considerations include their age and maturity, past travel experience, financial capability, and academic background. Different universities attract a student body that varies related to academic ability, financial resources, life experiences (which may impact maturity), parental support and expectations of the university experience.

It is important to understand the background and personality of the facilitating faculty involved with planning, recruiting, coordinating and traveling with the students on an international program [2]. Faculty coordinators need to be able to relate to students and to get them excited about a program of international study. Faculty members should have prior travel experience with the areas to which they will be sending/leading students and there needs to be a least two faculty accompanying any group traveling internationally.

Semester Long vs Short Term Outbound International Study Programs

A long term international study experience can be defined as lasting more than eight weeks abroad. This long term experience, more typically a semester or a year, is appropriate for many students, especially those who have the financial resources, have the freedom/flexibility to be away from their regular home situation, and can structure the experience so as to not delay graduation [8]. Semester long international business study programs may be grouped by three different models: direct enrollment, hybrid programs, and island programs [7].

Longer time international study programs may not be best suited for all students [9]. Some students do find it difficult to be away from their home institution for such a long period of time. In contrast to semester long programs, study programs that consist of a shorter period of time may be appropriate for many university students, usually consisting of one to three weeks. An appropriately designed short term program may allow many students a chance to experience international business in person while balancing the needs of family and jobs at home.

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