

Guidelines for Organizing Study Tours



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Introduction

A “study tour” is any trip with a destination outside of the UAE that is organized by American University of Sharjah’s (AUS) academic units, including student groups such as the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers of the College of Engineering or the Dean’s Business Team at the School of Business and Management, and involves AUS faculty/staff accompanied by one or more AUS students. AUS supports the development of study tour programs that enhance the educational experience of students. For the protection of AUS and all attendees, any AUS faculty members interested in developing a study tour program must adhere to the guidelines provided in this document.

The faculty member will serve as the principal organizer and will assume full responsibility for planning, coordinating and following through with the various aspects of the program’s advertising, travel-related arrangements and final preparations.

AUS study tour programs must be developed in consultation with and approved by the appropriate college/school dean.

AUS study tour programs are subject to a two-stage approval process that requires submission of the following materials prior to departure:

- a complete Study Tour Program Preliminary Proposal Packet (approved eight weeks before the date of departure); and
- an AUS Study Tour Program Final Approval Packet (approved three weeks before the date of departure).

Within two weeks of returning from the study tour program, the program organizer must submit:

- Business Travel Expense Form with receipts to the Finance Department
- a written evaluation that has the description and outcomes of the study tour program to International Exchange Office (IXO)
- images from the study tour program to IXO

All materials relating to study tour programs will be collected and held by IXO. This process ensures that all relevant university departments are aware of the study tour in time to organize the necessary documents (e.g., travel insurance, visa application letter and financial support, etc.) and student activity account (e.g., Cashier’s Account), and also ensures that the university, and its faculty, students and reputation are well-protected in case of any emergencies or travel disruptions.

After receiving notification of preliminary approval, the Finance Department will establish the required budgetary systems and maintain the accounts of the program. Collection of fees, expenditures, allocation of funds, and reimbursements must follow existing university policies.

Study tours, and any travel associated with them, must not be scheduled to occur during regular semester classes.

Note: Any exceptions must be authorized by the Provost, and the program organizer will be responsible for communicating with all faculty members who may find their class attendance

impacted by the study tour in order to resolve any problems that may arise from this scenario.

Study Tour Program Preliminary Proposal

Preliminary Information for Study Tour Program

- Destination and dates of the study tour (verifying that dates of the study tour/associated travel have not been scheduled during regular semester classes) must be stated.
- The full-time faculty member(s) serving as program organizer(s) and chaperone(s) must be identified. Please indicate whether the program organizer will be attending the Study Tour.

Note: Chaperones who are not AUS faculty/staff **must be spouses of direct employees of AUS.**

- Chaperones are required for all study tours and they should be direct employees of the university (in exceptional circumstances, spouses of direct employees of the university may be considered, but require approval by the Provost or Chancellor).
- Chaperones must provide the level of supervision and guidance necessary for the students' safety, wellbeing, and adherence to the cultural norms of the UAE.
- A male chaperone must accompany all groups that include male students and a female chaperone must be available for groups that include female students. If the student attendees include both male and female students, then both a male and a female chaperone are required.
- For groups that include more than 20 students, additional chaperones are required. The guideline is at least one chaperone for every 20 students.
- The program organizer should always inform parents/guardians about the arrangements for chaperones prior to the study tour.

Description of Academic Benefit to the Students

- The purpose and objectives of program including the eligibility requirements and student selection criteria must be stated.
- Academic credit awarded (if applicable): If a study tour is to be offered for credit, a course approval form (CAF) must be completed. The CAF must be approved by the department head/chair and the dean of the college/school and submitted as part of the Study Tour Program Preliminary Proposal. The course code X93 (or BUS 300) must be used for study tour courses.
- According to the UAE Commission for Academic Accreditation, credits are based on an expectation of a minimum of 15 hours of instruction and 30 hours of out-of-class assignments for each course credit (see section 3.2.3 of the Standards for Licensure and Accreditation 2007). Therefore, section D of the CAF must address how the study tour will address the minimum expectation of 15 hours of instruction and 30 hours of out-of-class assignments for each course credit.

Detailed Plan for Addressing any Classes Missed

- Please explain how any situation will be handled where other faculty members may object to a student missing their classes for the purpose of this trip

Detailed Itinerary

- Please provide a detailed schedule of study tour activities and their location(s).
- Please include a description of how time will be spent outside of scheduled study tour activities.

Financial Grant Opportunities

Students participating in a study tour that is course-credit awarded, who already are receiving a minimum of 25 percent Financial Grant, will be eligible to apply for a study tour grant. The program organizer should submit the list of students with Financial Grant to the Office of Financial Grants and Scholarships (OFGS). **Note:** It is recommended that you should only turn in the list of students when it is finalized, in order for OFGS to account the grant for each eligible participant appropriately. Also, Study Tour Grant is different from financial aid. Students who have existing financial aid get the discount automatically when they pay the tuition fee at the AUS Cashier.

International Travel Advisory Warnings and Health Updates

- As the program organizer, please ensure that you have checked US State Department travel advisory warnings:
<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html>
and WHO International travel and health updates: <http://www.who.int/ith/en/>.
- If there is a serious risk in the destination country, the study tour will not be allowed.

Preliminary Study Tour Budget Sheet

- Required: airfare, ground transportation, accommodation, entry fees, tips, chaperone expenses (including meals and incidentals), cost of meals for students, etc. If course credit is awarded, the tuition fees must be included.
- Optional: side trips/visits for students
- Details regarding accounting and expense codes to be charged for this trip
 - **Notes:**
 - i. The program expenses, i.e., the costs for program organizer and chaperones, which is the total of section A of the budget sheet, will be divided by the number of students.
 - ii. AUS prefers that the program organizer use approved (and tested) vendors such as ITL. However, the program organizer is free to find alternative travel agents if the prices are more competitive than those provided by SNTTA.
 - iii. When the dean signs this form, s/he is agreeing to cover any financial shortfall out of the college/school budget.

Please find an image of the Preliminary Study Tour Budget Sheet on the next page.

Preliminary Study Tour Budget Sheet

Projected Number of Students: _____

A. Program Expenses

| | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|-------|
| Travel | | |
| Organizer | | _____ |
| Co-organizer(s)/Chaperones | | _____ |
| Accommodations | | |
| Organizer | _____ @ _____ nights | _____ |
| Co-organizer(s) + | _____ @ _____ nights * chaperones | _____ |
| Chaperones | _____ @ _____ nights * chaperones | _____ |
| Meals and Incidentals (per diem schedule from Human Resources) | | |
| Organizer | _____ @ _____ days | _____ |
| Co-organizer(s) + | _____ @ _____ days * chaperones | _____ |
| Chaperones | _____ @ _____ days * chaperones | _____ |
| Local Transportation | | |
| Travel pass (bus, underground, etc.) | | _____ |
| Trains | | _____ |
| Car, van or bus | | _____ |
| Other | | |
| Maps and related publications | | _____ |
| Local telephones, faxes | | _____ |
| Entrance fees | | _____ |
| Tips | | _____ |
| Other (specify additional allowable expenses) | | _____ |

Total for Section A _____

B. Contributions

| | |
|--|-------|
| Contributions from college/school budget (<i>indicate codes below</i>) | _____ |
| Cost Center: _____ Accounting Code: _____ | _____ |
| Contributions from third party (specify details on separate sheet) | _____ |
| Other contributions (specify details on a separate sheet) | _____ |

Total for Section B _____

C. Student Expenses

| | | |
|--|----------------------|-------|
| Accommodations | _____ @ _____ nights | _____ |
| Travel | | _____ |
| Local transportation | | _____ |
| Food | | _____ |
| Entrance fees | | _____ |
| Health and travel insurance | | _____ |
| Program expenses (Total Section A divided by number of students) | | _____ |

Less contributions (Total for Section B divided by number of students) _____

Total Expense (per student) _____

Preliminary Approval Form Submission

- Obtain signatures on the Preliminary Approval Form for Study Tour Program from the department chair/head or program director, and the dean of the college/school.
- Submit the **signed** Preliminary Approval Form, **signed** Budget Sheet, Description of Academic Benefits, and Detailed Itinerary to International Exchange Office (IXO).
- IXO will check the packet and submit it to the Provost for signature and will hold all study tour information for monitoring and tracking purposes, provide copies to the Finance Department (for support letters, and so that accounts can be set up for the program), the Office of Public Affairs (for letters of no objection – only for AUS visa-sponsored, or visa application letter for the whole group) the appropriate dean, and the originating department.

Final Study Tour Procedures

Obtain signatures on the Final Approval Form for Study Tour Program from the department chair/head or program director, and the dean of the college/school. **Provide a full and numbered list of all student attendees, both in hard copy and soft copy formats.**

Collect the packet of student forms for each of the student attendees, including: Parent/Guardian Consent for Travel Form, AUS Agreement and Release of Reliability, Student Agreement/Code of Conduct, Student Emergency Information, and copies of student passports with valid UAE residency visas. All of these documents should be organized according to the numbered list (please use the numbering scheme to organize the packets collected from students) and submitted to IXO as part of the Final Approval Form packet of materials. Please also include copies of the emergency information collected for all program organizers and chaperones.

- Submit the complete AUS Study Tour Program Final Approval Form Packet to IXO. IXO will check the packet of materials, submit it to the Provost for signature, and hold these materials for monitoring and tracking purposes. In addition, IXO will:
 - serve as the primary AUS contact for the study tour during the trip
 - provide copies of the Final Approval Form to Finance, Office of Public Affairs, the appropriate dean, and the originating department
 - hold copies of all of the various forms completed by student attendees until the end of the Study Tour

Recommended Emergency Contacts

| |
|--|
| Faculty Name, Study Tour Program Organizer Department, School/College American University of Sharjah Tel +971 6 515 XXXX Fax +971 6 515 XXXX Mobile +971 5X XXX XXXX XYZ@aus.edu |
| Mr. Colby Seay International Exchange Office (IXO) American University of Sharjah Tel +971 6 515 4008 Mobile +971 50 153 5242 caseay@aus.edu |
| Ms. Lillie de Guzman International Exchange Coordinator International Exchange Office (IXO) American University of Sharjah Tel +971 6 515 4027 ldeguzman@aus.edu |
| Mr. Saeed Al-Shamsi, Director of Safety and Security Operations Department American University of Sharjah Tel +971 6 515 2080 alshamsi@aus.edu |

Essential Documents

Documents for each Student Participant

- Parental/Guardian Consent Form
- AUS Agreement and Release of Liability
- Student Agreement/Code of Conduct
- Student Emergency Information
- Copy of insurance proof or ID, if not organized through AUS policy (attach it to Student Emergency Information)
- Copy of passport information page with photo and valid UAE Residence Visa
- Parental Permission to Attend Study Tour with only one Chaperone (where applicable)
- Travel and accommodation information, if self-organized

Documents to be Submitted by the Program Organizer and Chaperone

- Emergency Information for Program Organizer and Chaperones
- Copy of insurance proof or ID (if not organized through AUS policy)
- Copy of passport information page with photo and valid UAE Residence Visa
- Travel and accommodation information
- Final List of Study Tour Participants Form

Visas

- Initiate visa requests very early (different nationalities require different processing schedules) and contact the embassy to find out what type of visa is required.
- Prepare a list of students' visa requirements by nationality for your own information and records, and email a soft copy to IXO, as well.
- Meet with students to fill out visa request forms to ensure accuracy and confirm requirements.
- For short study tours, you will generally only need a tourist visa.
- It is always a good idea to contact the consulate before you go for your interview; also inquire about the possibility of a group interview.
- **Please note: IXO does NOT get involved in organizing visas for study tours.**
- The IXO website has links to a wide variety of consulates/embassies and their visa requirements www.aus.edu/ixo.
- If students are arranging for their own visit visas, or if the program organizer is facilitating the visa application process, then:
 - Prepare a letter from the college/school, signed by the program organizer confirming individual students' participation.
 - If AUS is paying student expenses during the study tour, then obtain a Letter of Financial Support from the Finance Department (they will need names, student IDs, passport nationalities and passport numbers). This Letter of Financial Support should include all of the attendees; however, you should make sure that each study tour participant has a copy of this letter when he/she goes to the consulate to interview for their visa, as each participant may meet with a different consular representative.

- If AUS is **not** paying student expenses, then each student should organize to bring six months' worth of personal bank statements from their families to prove that they have financial support during the study tour period.
- Although it may not always be necessary, it is a good idea to obtain a "no objection" letter as part of their visit visa requirements. If students are on AUS sponsorship, contact the Visa and Equalization Services for "no objection" letters.
- If VES assistance is required for the purposes of obtaining "no objection" letters, then:
 - allow sufficient advance notice and contact OPA as early as possible to verify whether they will be able to assist and confirm their requirements
 - provide a spreadsheet with the names, AUS IDs, passport nationality, passport numbers, and sponsorship status for each of the student attendees
 - provide passport copies for each AUS-sponsored participant
- Otherwise, students' parents/guardians should provide this letter. The letter should clearly state that the student's sponsor has no objection to the student travelling with the study tour for the specified study tour period. In addition, the no-objection letter should be directed to the consulate/embassy, and include the date, name of the sponsor, the sponsor's passport number and country, the name of and passport information for the student being sponsored, and the following statement of no objection:

I will be responsible for all the expenses associated with the XYZ Study Tour from Date A to Date B in your country. I have no objection for "name of student" to apply for a visa to your country. On the closing remarks, write your printed name and signature.

Travel and Health Insurance

- Contact Human Resources to verify AUS employee coverage for AUS-employed program organizer(s) and chaperone(s). If any of the chaperones are not employed by AUS, organize travel insurance coverage through an insurance company, although we suggest AUS-approved vendor Al Buhaira National Insurance Company (ABNIC).
- The insurance company requires the program organizer to provide a verified list of students along with the required details. The following information must be provided to the insurance company for each student and any chaperone who is not employed by AUS but who is a spouse of a direct AUS employee. The Final List of Study Tour Participants Form can be used for listing all the participants, to be submitted to the insurance company. Sample of this form can be found on the next page and is also uploaded at www.aus.edu/ixo as part of Final Approval Forms):

- In addition to these student-related details, please provide the following information as part of this list:
 - Individual passport copy with residence visa page
 - Confirmation whether everyone is travelling together or individually via separate flights
 - Complete travel itinerary
 - **Note:** All of this information must be provided in one list via the program organizer to ABNIC

ABNIC Standard Travel Insurance Policy for AUS students and chaperones covers personal assistance (medical and hospitalization abroad, transport/repatriation in case of illness/accident, emergency dental care, repatriation of family members travelling with the insured, repatriation of mortal remains, travel of one immediate family member, emergency return home following the death of a close family member, delivery of medicines, relay of urgent messages, advance of bail bonds, advance of funds, loss of passport or ID, legal defense), baggage, delayed departure, and personal accidents for the period of the study tour.

- A sample of a travel insurance quote and its coverage from ABNIC, for budgeting-purposes (please look over conditions and requirements) is found on the next page:

TERRITORIAL LIMIT

- ▶ Option I - SCHENGEN + UK
- Option II- WORLDWIDE

TRAVEL PERIOD/ PREMIUM

| NO. of Days | PREMIUM (Dhs) | | | |
|-------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | SCHENGEN + UK | | WORLDWIDE | |
| | OPTION I | OPTION II | OPTION I | OPTION II |
| 7 Days | 60/- | - | 80/- | - |
| 10 Days | 75/- | - | 100/- | - |
| 15 Days | 100/- | - | 135/- | - |
| 21 Days | 125/- | - | 165/- | - |
| 1 Month | 195/- | - | 260/- | - |
| 2 Months | 320/- | - | 420/- | - |
| 3 Months | 450/- | - | 590/- | - |
| 6 Months | 630/- | 882/- | 830/- | 1,162/- |

CONDITIONS:

- ▶ As per ABNIC Standard Travel Insurance Policy wording.
- ▶ Option I: Any one trip limited to maximum period shall not exceed 92 consecutive days.
Option II: Any one trip exceeding 92 consecutive days.
- ▶ Age limit not exceeding 66 years.
- ▶ Group will obtain discount 5% above 10 students.

REQUIREMENTS

- ▶ Passport copy including valid residency page to be submitted.
- ▶ Trip Details

THIS QUOTATION IS VALID ONLY FOR 1 MONTH FROM THE DATE.

Program Organizers' Responsibilities

Before the tour

- Preparing the Preliminary Approval Form Proposal Packet and Final Approval Form Packet
- Obtaining the necessary signatures on the Preliminary Approval Form that includes the Preliminary Study Tour Budget Sheet, and the Final Approval Form
- Developing brochures/posters to advertise the study tour
- Making all necessary arrangements for travel and accommodation, including airport transportation from campus
- Planning and conducting a minimum of two orientation sessions for students prior to departure
- Ensuring that all required participants' documents are clearly labeled/organized, and on file with IXO

During the tour

- Maintaining accurate financial records associated with the study tour
- Ensuring that the study tour is carried in accordance with the approved schedule
- Ensuring adequate supervision of study tour activities

The program organizer and/or chaperones is/are expected to:

- Ensure all students sign the Student Agreement/Code of Conduct form before participating in an AUS Study Tour Program, agreeing to conduct themselves within the guidelines of the AUS Student Code of Conduct.
- This Code of Conduct states that "AUS expects its students, wherever they are, to adhere to high standards of honor and to conduct themselves in a responsible manner that brings credit to themselves and the university." Participants should avoid physical contact between men and women, inappropriate dress, alcohol possession/use, etc.
- When on study tours, students are expected to comply with these policies, no matter where they are in the world. Program organizers have the right to dismiss students who jeopardize the program by their inappropriate behavior.

Financial Matters

Participation Fee/Travel Payment

- Upon approval, IXO will forward copies of the Preliminary Approval Form packet to the Finance Manager so that accounts can be set up for the study tour (eight weeks prior to travel date).
- Finance will set up a student activity account code for this program that will be used to charge the students as authorized by the program organizer. The student activity account within the appropriate cost center will be used to account for the collections from the students and the expenses for the program.
- The program organizer and the Cashier's Office will be informed of the study tour, the student activity account to be used, and the amount of participation fee per student.

Collection of Funds

- Program organizers absolutely must **NOT** collect any money directly from students! This approach puts the program organizer into a very risky situation, which can easily be avoided by collecting all funds through the AUS Cashier's Office.
- Prior to the time that funds are to be collected, the program organizer must decide whether the Cashier should accept payment on a "first come/first served" (or some other) basis, or whether he or she will provide the Cashier's Office with a list of confirmed attendees. If it is the latter, the program organizer must confirm the final list of approved participating students, and the exact amount to be paid per student. Other questions that the Cashier's Office may ask are:
 - What is the charge per student?
 - How many students are expected to attend the trip?
 - When are the students expected to make the payments?
 - Do they need to make the payment in full at once, or are there several installments expected?
- Students approved to join the program must pay their program participation fee at the AUS Cashier's Office.
- AUS cashiers accept payment by the students for the program and issue appropriate AUS receipts. The Cashier Supervisor will send payment reports to the program organizer upon request.
- Program organizers must develop and announce their policy regarding refunds for the study tour (i.e., how much can be refunded, deadline for refund, etc.) due along with the Preliminary Proposal. Any refund of the program participation fee requires a written request from the student, along with approval of the program organizer and the dean of the college/school. Five working days are required by the Finance Department to prepare the refund check.

Collection of Third-Party Contributions (if applicable)

- If the approved study tour includes external party contributions, then the program organizer must submit to the Finance Department any communication with the third party that confirms their intention to contribute.
- Finance will prepare the appropriate AUS invoices to the third party and follow up on the collection of the contribution by the third party.
- External party contributions must be paid at least four weeks prior to departure.
- The dean of the college/school recognizes that any shortfall due to lack of payment from an external party may be deducted from the college/school budget.
- The program organizer will be copied on the external party invoice and informed of contribution payment.

Payment of Program Expenses

- All purchases required are arranged directly with the vendors and are **NOT** done through the regular AUS purchasing cycle.
- The program organizer must obtain confirmation from the vendor stating that he or she will be responsible for the supply of specific goods or services in order to allow Finance to process the payment.

- The vendor must provide a pro-forma invoice which:
 - Clearly states the charges and the purpose of the charges
 - Confirms that the vendor is a valid and licensed third party engaged to perform the service for the specific study tour
 - Indicates payment terms that do not stipulate advance payment exceeding 50 percent of the total invoice
 - Includes complete vendor bank account details (vendor must provide an original invoice to the Finance Department before payment is issued)
- If the program organizer wishes to gain access to the program funds collected by the Cashier's Office, he or she should send an email to accountspayable@aus.edu, along with any invoices (i.e., for travel, visas, etc.). All invoices should be clearly labeled with the name of the study tour program, and should be signed off by the dean.

Advance Payment to Program Organizer(s)

- Upon submission by the program organizer of a Business Travel Authorization Form (FA-FD-036 - <https://www2.aus.edu/admin/forms/>) stating the advance required for the approved study tour and with approval of the college/school dean and the Provost, Finance will issue an advance payment to the program organizer within five working days of the submission of the request. (**Note:** When completing the form, itemize your requirements for funds needed during the trip. Finance will provide you with whatever funds you need in order to be able to manage during the trip. Also, please be sure to keep all of receipts during the trip, including boarding passes.)
- It is helpful for the dean to send a request directly to accountspayable@aus.edu so that a payment can be processed for a specific amount to the program organizer to cover miscellaneous program expenses.
- The program organizer must submit supporting documentation and receipts for the advance within two weeks prior to departure to the Finance Department, as per the AUS travel policy.

Submission of Receipts

- Upon completion of travel and within two weeks of return, the program organizer must submit the following to the Finance Department:
 - Business Travel Expense Form (FA-FD-038 - <https://www2.aus.edu/admin/forms/>) listing the expenses incurred during the trip and paid for by the program organizer, with required approvals
 - Original invoices and receipts of expenses (attached to the form). The Finance Department will deduct the advance paid and will pay the program organizer the balance expensed, or will collect from the organizer any balance not spent. The Program Organizer must collect all original invoices and receipts of expenses paid for directly while at the program destination and submit them to the Finance Department for payment or reimbursement.

Documents to be Submitted on Return

Images from AUS Study Tours

- The Strategic Communications and Media Department at AUS will be interested in publicizing the study tour upon completion. Program organizers should consider this when taking photos of students during the trip. Please ensure the availability of culturally appropriate photos (e.g., avoid photos of conference dinner tables containing alcoholic drinks). Please also ensure that students are comfortable with any images destined for publicity purposes.
- Program organizers should submit study tour images to the International Exchange Office (IXO) within one week of returning from the trip. IXO will forward the images to the Strategic Communications and Media Department, the dean, and the Office of the Provost.

Written Evaluation of Study Tour Program

- Program organizers should provide a description/purpose of the study tour program, participants, from what school/college, activities/events, any accomplishments/outcomes, and a couple of quotes from students and faculty regarding the trip. The write-up should be brief (no more than 300 to 500 words).
- Please submit the written evaluation to IXO within one week of returning from the trip. IXO will forward the written evaluation to the Strategic Communications and Media for publicity purposes.

Submission of Receipts

- Please refer to Financial Matters

Notes

In regards to appropriate attire and actions, please consider what would happen if a faculty member or student was wearing inappropriate clothing on official study tour and a photo of it was sent home to his/her family. This could cause problems for the university's reputation and faculty who want to do study tours in the future.

If students have a day off during the study tour, then program organizers and chaperones cannot really control what they do on their own—that is the students' responsibility. However, students should be carefully warned about taking inappropriate photos that could eventually become public (via Facebook, etc.) and may potentially tarnish the university's image and reputation.

List of Relevant Offices and Contacts

| Position Title | Name | Telephone/ Extension | Email |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| Interim Provost & CAO | Dr. Mohamed El Tarhuni | OM: Enas Tabakhah, 2020 | mtarhuni@aus.edu etabakah@aus.edu |
| Director, International Exchange Office | Mr. Colby Seay | 4008 | caseay@aus.edu |
| Finance Manager | Mr. Mustafa Kalavadwala | 2381 | mkalavadwala@aus.edu |
| Manager (HR) | Mr. Varun Lal | 2231 | vlal@aus.edu |
| Manager, Financial Grants and Scholarships | Ms. Aldrine Creado | 2005 | acreado@aus.edu |
| ABNIC (Al Buhaira National Insurance Company) | Mr. Al Faizal | +971 6 511 7481 | med.cards@albhaira.com |



Safe travels!

From IYO Team