

INTERNATIONAL FIELD STUDIES (USA AND EXTENDED OFF-CONTINENT EXCURSIONS)

BACKGROUND

International field studies comprise travel to foreign countries for the purpose of broadening students' understanding of other cultures and helping them to see their relationship in the world as a Canadian. Extended Off-Continent Field Studies include excursions during Spring Break.

An application for international travel must meet field studies criteria as outlined in AP260, including:

- closely connected to curriculum and prescribed learning outcomes;
- relevant, effective, affordable and accessible;
- to be an outgrowth of a school program that involves a clearly defined class or group; such as second language learners, band or athletic team;
- are not to seriously interfere with the education of students who remain at school nor the students who are participating on the field study. This includes the class(es) that a teacher may miss as a result of sponsoring a field study.

PROCEDURES

1. Excursions for the purpose of life experience are considered when proposed during non-instructional time. Such excursions typically draw a range of student involvement by grade and course and are related to the *Core Competencies* as opposed to a specific curricular focus/learning outcome. Examples include global citizenship and sustainable development projects excursions.
2. Additional Risks
 - 2.1. An extended international field study (Category 5) involves absence from school for normally up to (5) instructional days and international land or air travel, and as such involves additional risks. These risks arise from:
 - 2.1.1. Travel beyond the community of the District;
 - 2.1.2. Group living 24 hours per day;
 - 2.1.3. Activities which are different than everyday;
 - 2.1.4. Language, custom and cultural differences; and
 - 2.1.5. Living in areas with a different social infrastructure.
 - 2.2. Accordingly, additional caution must be exercised when planning extended field studies.

3. International Extended Off-Continent Field Study Application and Approval

The extended international field study application is a time sensitive 3-step approval process that has been established to enable systematic planning, review and approval by the Principal and Director of Instruction, with ample time for feedback on the trip proposal.
- 3.1. Step 1: School Level Preliminary Approval
 - 3.1.1. Educators who wish to plan and sponsor extended international field studies must obtain the signed preliminary approval of the Principal before communicating the proposed international destination with students and/or parents, and prior to consultation and commitment with any tour company or agency. The Principal's preliminary approval is secured using school-based processes, which may include submission of a district Field Studies Planning Form.
 - 3.1.2. Once the Principal's preliminary approval is secured, Educators who wish to move forward with planning and sponsoring extended international field studies must prepare to seek formal District preliminary approval via the *Preliminary International Field Study Application* form (REQ-SC-031). The sponsoring Educators must provide Principals with the *Preliminary International Application* (REQ-SC-031) for signature, attached to a detailed Field Studies Proposal Form.
 - 3.1.3. Before approving the *Preliminary International Field Study Application* (REQ-SC-031); the Principal will ensure that the proposal:
 - 3.1.3.1. Has substantive educational rationale;
 - 3.1.3.2. Has a duration and number of days absent from school which is reasonable; (The maximum number of days for an extended field study is fourteen (14) days in total, with only 5 of the 14 days being school "Instructional" days.)
 - 3.1.3.3. Co-ordinates with overall school programs and considers learning and program delivery of other classes remaining in the school;
 - 3.1.3.4. Appears to be a safe activity for the planned group;
 - 3.1.3.5. Has an appropriate safety assessment and plan;
 - 3.1.3.6. Is not a prohibited activity or does not involve travel to an area with a travel advisory indicating "avoid all travel" or "avoid non-essential travel" on the <http://travel.gc.ca> webpage. Where the destination has a travel advisory indicating "exercise a high degree of caution" the Principal and Educator-In-Charge must carefully consider whether there are educationally compelling reasons to go to this destination, the appropriateness of the destination, and must make a determination that appropriate safety and security precautions are in place.
 - 3.1.3.7. Establishes criteria for appropriate access and eligibility;
 - 3.1.3.8. Is affordable for the intended group and co-ordinates with the overall school plans for fundraising;
 - 3.1.3.9. Has appropriate business and financial arrangements established for the trip including travel arrangements that would provide for comprehensive insurance coverage and cancellation losses responsibility;

- 3.1.3.10. Has a group comprehensive student travel insurance package for all participants that includes comprehensive medical, trip cancellation and trip interruption coverage.
- 3.1.3.11. Has a prudent plan of student supervision
- 3.1.3.12. Provides for appropriate communications to parents, students, teachers, staff and volunteers on the plans, risks and financial arrangements as the basis of providing informed consent to be involved; and
- 3.1.3.13. Provides for appropriate pre-travel preparations and the establishment of expectations with students and all other participants.
- 3.1.4. The Principal will review the *Preliminary International Field Study Application* form (REQ-SC-031) before approving it to ensure that it is diligently completed and the field study is well proposed, has inherent and substantive educational value, and addresses the considerations in this Administrative Procedure.
- 3.2. Step 2: District Level Preliminary Approval
 - 3.2.1. Upon the Principal's approval, a copy of the *Preliminary REQ-SC-031 Field Study Application* form and supporting documents is submitted to the Director of Instruction to obtain preliminary approval no less than 4 months prior to the proposed departure date.
 - 3.2.2. Preliminary approval of the Director of Instruction is required before making any financial commitments and commencing fundraising or fund collection of any nature.
 - 3.2.3. Once the Director of Instruction provides Stage 2 Approval, the sponsors can go forward with trip planning and fundraising.
- 3.3. Step 3: District Level Final Approval and Document Submission
 - 3.3.1. Once all trip details have been finalized, including the number of students participating, supervisors identified, travel itinerary finalized, the Educator-in Charge must submit to the District a request for final approval via the *International Request For Field Study (IUSA) REQ-SC-034 form* to the Principal and Director of Instruction for final signed approval no less than 6 weeks prior to the departure date.
 - 3.3.2. Attached must be copies of the:
 - 3.3.2.1. Parent information letter
 - 3.3.2.2. Parent consent form
 - 3.3.2.3. Final trip Itinerary
 - 3.3.2.4. Accommodation contact information throughout the excursion, including billets
 - 3.3.2.5. Staff contact information throughout the excursion
 - 3.3.2.6. Completed *District Passport Verification Form* for all students and staff Travelling. The Passport Verification Form must be submitted to the Director of Instruction for final approval of the OHRA (REQ SC-034) for Category 5 excursions. Copies of student passports are not required by the District.

- 3.3.2.7 Proof of group student insurance coverage.
- 3.3.2.8 A full disclosure of risks must be included in these documents.

4. Supervision

The selection of supervisors for extended international field studies must address the following considerations in addition to the general supervisor selection considerations identified in Administrative Procedure 260.

4.1. Ratios for Category 5 Field Studies

International travel (excluding continental United States as outlined in Administrative Procedure 260 Category 4) is educational enrichment reserved for secondary level students.

Category 5	
K-7	N/A
8-12	1 supervisor for every 10 students

4.2. Qualifications and Certifications

- 4.2.1. Field studies outside of Canada will include a least one supervisor who is certified to provide First Aid; and
- 4.2.2. Field studies outside of the United States will, wherever possible, include at least one supervisor or guide who has first-hand knowledge of the customs and culture of the country being visited.

4.3. Educator in Charge Responsibility for Adult Volunteers

4.3.1. The Educator in charge is responsible for adhering to the AP 490A *Guidelines for Volunteers*, and for ensuring that all volunteer supervisors complete the *Volunteer Conduct Agreement* and a Criminal Record Check prior to being accepted as a chaperones for international travel. Volunteers include any adult person acting in supervision capacity to support the delivery of an international travel program, inclusive of travel for the purpose of a reciprocal exchange that involves billeting.

- 3.3.1.1 Reciprocal exchanges organized through external agencies that involve billeting must have agency confirmation of criminal record checks for all adults, 18 years of age or older living in the hosting home, inclusive of a Vulnerable Sector Screening, and confirmation that international partners screen their applicants using their own procedures.
- 3.3.1.2 Screening of volunteers to support a reciprocal exchange that are self-organized by an Educator in Charge and an international host school falls to the responsibility of the Educator in Charge as outlined in 3.3.1.1.

4.3.2. It is required that a meeting of all supervisors, and the Principal be held to:

- 4.3.2.1. State who is in charge and define the roles of the volunteers

- 4.3.2.2. Communicate that supervisors are to serve as role models to students, as ambassadors for the District and they are expected to conduct themselves accordingly;
 - 4.3.2.3. Inform volunteers of appropriate supervision and leadership techniques;
 - 4.3.2.4. Review that students must be supervised 24 hours per day including sleep time and unscheduled time – plans for such supervision must be made well in advance of travel;
 - 4.3.2.5. Discuss consistency in the application of guidelines, rationale, responsibilities, expectations and follow-up;
 - 4.3.2.6. State that the use of alcohol by students is strictly prohibited during field studies regardless of the circumstances, the age of the students, or local laws, customs and culture;
 - 4.3.2.7. Outline the expectations concerning the restricted consumption of alcohol by supervisors;
 - 4.3.2.8. Prohibit the use of controlled substances by all participants;
 - 4.3.2.9. Discuss the issue of smoking and provide clear expectations that will be consistently applied throughout the field study, that are consistent with administrative procedures;
 - 4.3.2.10. Define a critical incident plan to deal with health, financial or discipline emergencies that includes a telephone tree and arrangements for two-way communication;
 - 4.3.2.11. Agree on what type of behaviour will be deemed inappropriate for both students and supervisors; and
 - 4.3.2.12. Agree on the consequences of inappropriate behaviour.
- 4.4. Meeting of All Involved in the International Field Study
A meeting of all involved (staff, supervisors, students and parents) in the extended field study, must be called to:
- 4.4.1. Discuss student behaviour, discipline and their role as ambassadors of the District;
 - 4.4.2. Distribute the itinerary and information on the planned activities, including site based contact information (addresses, phone numbers etc);
 - 4.4.3. Distribute a written statement of expectation about student behaviour;
 - 4.4.4. Distribute a written statement outlining the possible consequences and liabilities of inappropriate behaviour;
 - 4.4.5. Discuss any potential risks and plans to minimize those risks;
 - 4.4.6. Define how the identifiable school unit is to be maintained during travel; and
 - 4.4.7. Communicate the actions which will be taken should a serious problem emerge in relation to health, finances or discipline.

5. Financial Matters

- 5.1. Before any financial contributions are accepted, parents must be notified, in writing, that if the travel has to be cancelled for any reason the District is not responsible for any costs incurred.

- 5.2. Financial arrangements for staff and volunteer travel costs must be transparent, including the use of a “free” tickets and the accruing of travel benefits earned from the group’s travel.
- 5.3. Funds raised by all participants (educators, students and supervisors) for an extended international field study will first be used to benefit students and secondly for the benefit of other participants.

- 5.4. An accounting of all funds related to an extended field study must be provided to the Principal within two weeks of completion of the travel.

Reference: Sections 17, 20, 22, 65, 75, 85 School Act
Motor Vehicles Act
Collective Agreements

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