

## Leading a Study Abroad

Okay. So, today we're going to uh dive into something that I know a lot of our listeners are thinking about or dealing with and that is

leading a study abroad program. Yes. Um you know, I think we can all agree that it's such an incredible opportunity, you know, for for the students and for us as faculty members as well um to really broaden our horizons. But, you know, I was reading this piece in uh Level Up, a mid-career guide for faculty and and they really hit the nail on the head when they said that meticulous planning is kind of the secret sauce to to a really successful experience.

Yeah, that's so true. And you know what I what I love about Level Up for those who maybe aren't familiar is that it's written by faculty for faculty, right? Yeah.

So, it's really coming from colleagues who have been there, done that. And this particular article guiding a study abroad really breaks down, you know, all the nitty-gritty of making this a great experience for everyone involved. And and that's kind of what we want to unpack today, right?

Like what are those key elements that can make all the difference?

Yeah, exactly. And and you know, I think one of the things that that's always top of mind for me is is finances. You know, thinking about our students and and and the financial realities. And, you know, the article really stresses the need to be upfront about all the potential costs. Yeah. Not just the, you know, the program fees, but also things like passports and and insurance and even, you know, daily expenses,

right? And and what I thought was insightful was that they they recommend going beyond just like a general estimate. Yeah. You know, they they talk about providing concrete information on exchange rates. Um maybe even suggesting, you know, a a currency converter app that students could use.

Oh, that's a good idea.

Talking about, you know, credit card usage, potential fees, ATMs, you know, all the nuances there. Um, and even, you know, giving them some ballpark figures for, you know, what an average meal might cost in the host country.

Yeah. Yeah.

Just that that kind of proactive transparency, I think, can alleviate so much stress for students. Absolutely. And it and it's a good reminder for us, too, to, you know, point students towards scholarship opportunities and travel grants early on. You know, every little bit helps to make these programs more accessible,

right?

So, let's shift gears a little bit and and talk about logistics.

Okay.

Timelines, itineraries, all that good stuff.

Yeah. Well, and those clear deadlines, right, for deposits and payments, you know, having those crystal clear departure and return dates, that's non-negotiable.

Of course,

what I liked in the LevelUp article was this emphasis on providing really detailed daily itineraries and and it's not about micromanaging. It's more about, you know, giving them a framework and then I think crucially suggesting for that free time, right, that cater to different interests, you know, so they feel supported, but they also have that room for that independent exploration.

That's a good point. That's a really good point. I like that. Um, so, so kind of thinking about the academic side of things, what are some of the key considerations that faculty leaders should be keeping in mind?

Yeah. Well, this is where our role as educators really comes in, right? So, the guide really stresses the importance of making sure that, you know, all the academic prerequisites are clear registration procedures, the specific course number.

Mhm.

And a syllabus that's adapted for the study abroad context and then very clear assignment details and deadlines.

Yes.

It's really about setting them up for success academically in this new environment.

Absolutely. And and you know and and then just thinking about practicalities beyond the classroom as well. Yeah. You know what about packing advice? What what kind of guidance can we give our students?

Right. So they suggest you know guiding students to think strategically about what they're bringing technology needs you know for work. Um, climate appropriate clothing, right? I got to be prepared for all types of weather.

Yeah.

And and any specific attire that might be required, you know, if there were planned excursions or cultural events, it's about equipping them for comfort and cultural sensitivity.

Yeah. And, you know, and then to really make this experience sing, I think it's so important to prepare students for the destination itself. What kind of resources, you know, can we be sharing with them?

Well, you know, it's interesting because they have this whole range of possibilities beyond on just academic readings. So, you know, websites, blogs, podcasts that are created by locals, even you know, relevant books, movies, TV shows that can offer these cultural insights.

Oh, that's a good idea.

And then don't underestimate, you know, those basic conversational language tutorials. Even just a few key phrases, I think, can make such a difference in terms of their interactions and how immersed they feel.

It's about that fluency, right? That cultural fluency and the confidence.

Absolutely.

Now, of course, leading a study abroad program is not a solo endeavor.

Yeah.

You know, the guide really emphasizes collaboration within the university.

Yeah, for sure. And and it it talks about working closely with your department chair or director, the the dean's office, the university's global course coordinator, right?

These are all such valuable resources for navigating institutional policies, procedures, and they could even help promote the program to students.

Yeah. And you know, they also emphasize the wisdom of those who've gone before, right?

Yes. Connecting with colleagues who have led trips and in the past can be so beneficial.

Absolutely.

They can offer those firsthand insights, practical suggestions. They might have, you know, itinerary syllabi that have worked well in the past.

Share best practices.

Exactly. Learn from their experiences to avoid potential pitfalls.

It seems like proactive planning and clear communication are really themes that that keep coming up for success here.

Yeah, they're really foundational and and the Level Upic stresses that, you know, early and detailed planning on our part, providing timely information, comprehensive information to students right from the outset

and then being responsive to their questions

you know that builds trust and manages expectations.

Yeah, absolutely. Um and then you know to really deep the study abroad experience the guide goes into strategies for cultural immersion

right and this is where I think the learning really comes alive. So you know encouraging activities that that facilitate interaction with locals. So you know cooking classes that focus on regional cuisine maybe language exchange meetups even something as simple as Navigating the local public transportation system can be transformative.

Right. Right.

And then the faculty, you know, we can guide them in understanding those cultural nuances like tipping customs, legal drinking ages, appropriate bartering etiquette, you know, those kinds of things.

Yeah. And and we also have a responsibility to our students, right, to to think about their well-being while they're navigating this new environment.

Absolutely. And you know, homesickness can come up, academic pressures, cultural misunderstandings, you know, all that, of course.

So establishing clear and accessible communication channels, whether it's regular group meetings, a messaging app, even just scheduled check-ins, can be really crucial for addressing their needs promptly and providing that support.

And, you know, speaking of support, preparing for the unexpected is equally vital.

Yes, contingency planning is key.

So, so important to be thinking through, you know, those potential scenarios, health issues, lost travel documents, uh, you know, unexpected travel disruptions, severe weather even, right?

You know, having a clear e mergency protocol in place, discussing safety and security measures, making sure students know who to contact, where to find local resources, you know, all of that can provide so much peace of mind.

Absolutely.

And then finally, you know, the level up guide touches on something that I think is so important, and that is reflection.

Yes.

It's not just about seeing new places. It's about, you know, really processing the experience, right? And and intentionally incorporating those reflection activities throughout the program. So, you know, things like guided journal entries that are focused on specific specific learning objectives, okay?

Group discussions that encourage them to share and analyze their experiences or even short reflection papers

can help them, you know, process what they're learning on a deeper level and connect it back to their academic goals.

So, you know, it sounds like guiding a successful study abroad program, as our colleagues in Level Up have emphasized, boils down to this really thoughtful and comprehensive planning across, you know, all these different areas, financial, logistical, academic, cultural personal well-being.

Yeah, it really is interconnected.

It is. Yeah.

And for you, our listener, you know, think about this. How can you intentionally weave those opportunities for structured reflection into the very fabric of your study abroad program?

Make it an ongoing process of learning and discovery rather than just like a post-trip add-on, right?

You know, could that deeper engagement be the key to an even more transformative experience for your students? And if you want more of these invaluable insights from your fellow faculty, be sure to visit the center for faculty excellence website and explore the full level up guide.

Awesome. Thanks so much for walking us through all this. This is really helpful.

My pleasure.

To all our listeners out there, happy travels.

Safe travels.

And we'll see you next time on the deep dive.

Bye-bye.