

VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE
Lexington, Virginia

GENERAL ORDER)
NUMBER 73)

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INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL POLICY

1. PURPOSE

VMI supports international travel as a valid, desired, and increasingly important part of undergraduate education and faculty development. Additionally, the Institute recognizes that such programs may take a variety of forms, including educational travel with cadets and professional travel. All international travel operated, sponsored, or approved by VMI is expected to maintain standards of proper accountability and risk management.

This policy addresses the centralization and standardization of international travel, as well as the delegation for accountability and risk management.

2. DEFINITIONS

- A. Professional Travel: Travel by VMI personnel for professional development, to include conferences and/or research.
- B. Program Director / Trip Leader: VMI personnel designated to lead a group of cadets abroad. Program Directors lead credit-bearing programs; Trip Leaders lead non-credit bearing trips.
- C. Sponsored (International) Travel: Programs and/or travel conducted by Institute Member(s) and supported – fully or in part – by the Institute. This may include financial support, administrative support, leadership, organization, marketing, or advising.
- D. Third Party Programs: Independent organizations that facilitate or administer study abroad programs.
- E. Senior Administrator: Senior VMI leadership, to include the Deputy Superintendent for Academics and Dean of the Faculty; Deputy Superintendent for Finance, Administration, and Support; Commandant; Director of Intercollegiate Athletics; Director of Information Technology; and the Chief of Staff.

3. APPLICABILITY

This policy shall apply to all VMI personnel.

4. ADMINISTRATION OF THE POLICY

The Director of Global Education is responsible for the administration of this policy.

5. POLICY

All VMI-sponsored international travel must be registered through the Office of Global Education and is subject to procedures based on the type of travel. This includes travel using VMI funds for any portion of travel expenses, fees, or costs, as well as programs in which VMI personnel organize, lead, or advise cadet participants regarding said travel. All employees (including foreign

nationals) and cadets are responsible for ensuring they have the required visas and other documentation for travel to their international location as well as re-entry into the United States.

- A. **DEPARTMENT OF STATE (DOS) TRAVEL ADVISORY SYSTEM.** The Institute uses the DOS Travel Advisory System (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html/>) as a baseline for approval of sponsored international travel. Other factors and resources (e.g., OSAC guidance, insurability) may also be considered when approving international travel. Approval of VMI-sponsored international travel may be rescinded at any point, including once a traveler arrives in an international location. In general, travel to locations with DOS Levels 1 (Exercise Normal Precautions) or 2 (Exercised Increased Caution) advisories is permitted without additional review. In addition to completing VMI's travel registry, the Institute requires all international travelers to enroll in the SMART Traveler program (<https://mytravel.state.gov/s/step>) and register every international trip to ensure they have the most up-to-date travel information and receive any advisories issued by US embassies while traveling.
- B. **Travel to Countries with Elevated DOS Travel Advisory Levels.** The Institute recognizes that compelling academic reasons for travel to a particular country may exist and strongly supports international travel. At the same time, the Institute recognizes that there are times and certain places within a country where security and safety may outweigh the advantages of exposure to international experiences.
- 1) Therefore, VMI does not permit cadets, faculty, or staff to travel to or through countries under a DOS Level 3 Travel Advisory when on VMI-sponsored international travel. This policy may be waived if the cadet, staff member or faculty member has received specific approval after completion of the petition procedures described below. The Institute will review all petitions for VMI-sponsored and/or funded travel to any country under a DOS Level 3 Travel Advisory on a case-by-case basis. Such review applies to VMI-sponsored travel with or without faculty or staff leadership, programs sponsored by other universities or entities, or individual travel deemed to be under VMI sponsorship.
 - 2) A DOS Level 3 Travel Advisory will automatically trigger the waiver request process described below. Additionally, based on conditions on the ground in proximity to the intended travel, the Director of Global Education may recommend against travel to a country or area within a country that is under a Level 2 Travel Advisory. In this instance, should the traveler or the traveler's Department Head determine that the travel is essential, travel must be approved via the travel waiver process below.
 - 3) VMI will not authorize travel to or through countries under a DOS **Level 4 (Do Not Travel) Travel Advisory**. There are no waivers or exceptions to this rule other than in instances where the Travel Advisory Review Committee and Superintendent publish notice of a specific exception (e.g., waiver for ongoing health pandemic resulting in all countries in the world classified as Level 4).
- C. **Procedures for Requesting a Travel Waiver.**
- 1) When the DOS issues a Level 3 Travel Advisory for a particular country or parts (specific locations) of a country, the Institute will suspend approval of, and terminate all ongoing, study abroad by cadets, regardless of their nationality, in that country during the period of time that such travel advisory is in effect unless an exception is granted in accordance with these procedures. Approval rests with the Travel Advisory Review Committee

pending appeal to the Superintendent. Decisions may be reversed if the political climate or security situation changes after approval was initially granted. Submission of a “Petition for Approval of Travel to DOS Level 3 Country” via Etrieve and approval by the Travel Advisory Review Committee (appealable to the Superintendent) are required for the following:

- a. Any proposed program/group travel to a DOS Level 3 country.
- b. Any VMI-sponsored individual travel to a DOS Level 3 country.
- 2) All petitions and attached documentation will be reviewed by the Travel Advisory Review Committee. The Committee shall be comprised of the Director of Global Education (serving as Chair), the Chairperson of the Global Education Committee, the Director of Risk Management, the Post Physician, the Director of Cadet Counseling, the Commandant (or designee) and the Deputy Superintendent for Academics and Dean of the Faculty (or designee), in consultation with VMI counsel.
- 3) The Travel Advisory Review Committee will review the proposal for completeness and will render a decision based on the following factors.
 - a. The specific details of the Level 3 Travel Advisory as it relates to the proposed travel;
 - b. The information contained in the letters submitted as part of the petition for approval;
 - c. The petitioner’s proposed preparations to respond to security concerns and evacuation plans;
 - d. The petitioner’s communication plan;
 - e. Any recommendations and warnings provided to the committee by internal or external experts;
 - f. The academic benefit to be gained from such travel and available alternative travel to countries not under a Level 3 Travel Advisory; and
 - g. The committee’s assessment of risk mitigation versus benefit to the Institute and the petitioner.
- 4) The Director of Global Education will provide the petitioner with an explanation of the Travel Advisory Review Committee’s decision, which may include restrictions or precautions the committee deems necessary for the travel.
- 5) If the petition is denied, all elements of Institute sponsorship shall be withheld and any cadets involved in the proposed travel will be instructed not to conduct travel to that country.
- 6) If the petition is denied, the petitioner may appeal the decision to the Superintendent. Notice of appeal must be submitted in writing to the Director of Global Education within two weeks of the Travel Advisory Review Committee’s decision. The Director of Global Education will forward the petitioner’s original waiver request and the committee’s decision to the Superintendent. The Superintendent’s decision regarding travel is final.
- 7) If the petition is approved, all participants will be required to adhere to any restrictions or guidelines required by the Travel Advisory Committee or Superintendent and to complete the “Agreement and Acknowledgement of Risks for Travel to Countries under a DOS Level 3 Travel Advisory” via Etrieve.

D. Travel Advisory Changes Post-Departure – Evacuation.

Authorization for all travel is contingent upon VMI’s continual assessment of the location. Changes in the situation at a location may necessitate the Institute requiring an individual on

VMI-sponsored travel to depart the location and/or return to the United States. If DOS raises a travel advisory to Level 3 or 4 or recommends the evacuation of US citizens (including non-essential embassy personnel or dependents of US government employees), the Institute requires all VMI-sponsored travelers in the location to depart using the first available means.

It should be understood that an event as extreme as an evacuation creates highly unusual circumstances. If an evacuation is deemed necessary, it may not be possible for the Institute to recover all costs that cadets have paid and/or to refund such costs to cadets for the cost of the trip as well as the cost of the evacuation. This is a risk participants assume when they undertake study or research abroad. It also should be noted that if cadets are studying abroad and are unable to complete the semester abroad that it might not be possible to receive full or partial credit for work completed abroad.

6. PROCEDURES FOR ESTABLISHING AND PARTICIPATING IN A VMI-LED PROGRAM ABROAD

A. Credit-Bearing Program Proposal and Approval Process

- 1) Proposal Submission (16-20 months prior for new programs and 9-12 months prior to departure for recertifying programs): The proposal form for all VMI-led programs abroad can be found on Etrieve. A detailed proposal timeline is available from the Office of Global Education. VMI-led programs that are repeated must be presented for recertification every three years.
- 2) Approval Criteria: Programs will be reviewed to ensure they:
 - a. Address health, safety, security, and risk management concerns adequately
 - b. Articulate expectations of cadet conduct
 - c. Align with Institute policies concerning the evaluation of program and academic content, (e.g., program length and academic credit, time of year, cost), and appropriate institutional support from senior administration and department heads.
 - d. Conform to VMI's Code of Ethics (GO 46)
- 4) Families Accompanying Program Directors: The Program Director's family may accompany them on the trip with the understanding that the family is responsible for the additional expense. These leadership roles are demanding and do not allow much free time for private social or recreational activities. An adult who is fully responsible for childcare (not the Program Director) must accompany children under 18 years of age.
- 5) Travel Authorization: In addition to the procedures outlined in this General Order for the OGE, travelers are responsible for completing a travel authorization in accordance with the procedures outlined by the Comptroller's Office. All international travel supported with VMI funds requires that a travel authorization be signed in advance by the Superintendent or his designee, the Deputy Superintendent for Finance, Administration, and Support.

B. Credit-Bearing Program Execution

- 1) Budget and Itinerary Planning (9-6 months prior to departure): Program Directors will work with the Director of Global Education to develop a budget for the program. Any contracts associated with the program must conform to the procurement and purchasing requirements of the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- 2) Marketing and Recruiting Cadets (6 months prior to departure): Faculty-led programs abroad may not be advertised or publicized to cadets before they have been approved.

While OGE will assist Program Directors in designing a marketing plan, Program Directors will assume the primary role of marketing the program.

- 3) Participant Applications: All applications will be submitted electronically using The Global Education registry.
 - a. VMI Study Abroad Program Agreement: Any student taking part in a VMI-sponsored credit-bearing program abroad must sign the VMI Study Abroad Agreement and Release, as well as the VMI Study Abroad Code of Conduct. This document details expected academic standards, as well as standards of conduct, and can be found in the student's application portal.
 - b. Emergency Information Form: All participating cadets and VMI personnel must complete an Emergency Information Form through OGE's travel registry.
- 4) Pre-departure (~1 month prior to departure): OGE will ensure completion of pre-departure briefings covering practical information for daily life, legal, safety and security issues, health information, emergency contacts, and academics for all international travel involving cadets. Additional orientation sessions covering logistics and thematic content specific to each program will be conducted by the Program Director. Topics covered should include (as applicable):
 - a. General health and safety risks associated with studying abroad
 - b. Maintaining safety and wellness (including mental health) while abroad
 - c. Expectations for student conduct, including academic obligations
- 5) Program Directors will file the final itinerary and will communicate any changes to the Office of Global Education prior to departure.
- 6) Registration in the Global Education travel registry: Program Directors and any teaching faculty accompanying cadets on programs abroad must provide their individual travel information via OGE's travel registry. OGE will provide access to review applications for their programs through the Program Director's registry account.
- 7) Risk Management Training: OGE will provide risk management training for faculty or academic staff with Program Director duties. This training is mandatory for all new directors, and refresher training is required every three years.
- 8) On-site Orientation: All Program Directors must provide an on-site orientation for all participants, including emergency and communications procedures, as soon as feasible upon arriving in country and no later than 48 hours after arrival.
- 9) On-site Administration: Program Directors shall provide cadets oversight throughout the program in matters including, but not limited to, monitoring cadets during excursions; advising cadets on cultural and academic issues; obtaining medical, legal or passport assistance, as necessary; and acting as a liaison with local housing providers. They must inform OGE of any specific health, security, or cadet behavior incidents by submitting an incident report, which is available via Etrieve. All Program Directors and faculty or staff accompanying cadets on programs abroad are responsible for ensuring compliance with VMI regulations and policies, including the Cadet Blue Book, the Honor Code, and VMI General Orders.
- 10) Program Completion
 - a. Civilizations and Cultures Credit (C&C): Upon successful completion of credit-bearing courses abroad, OGE will follow VMI SOP concerning C&C credit waivers.
 - b. Assessment: Program Directors will be asked to assist OGE in gathering data regarding assessment of Faculty-Led programs. This can include OGE surveys and

individual learning outcomes.

C. Non-Credit-Bearing Travel with Cadets.

Proposal Submission (3-6 months prior to program execution): The proposal form for all VMI-led trips abroad can be found on Etrieve. All international travel through VMI clubs, NCAA teams, ROTC, Chaplain, Band, or any other VMI office must receive prior approval by their respective VMI Senior Administrator and the Office of Global Education. Trips may not be advertised or publicized to cadets prior to approval.

- 1) Cadet Applications: All applications will be submitted electronically using The Global Education registry software.
 - a. VMI Study Abroad Program Agreement: Any cadet taking part in a VMI-sponsored program abroad must sign the VMI Study Abroad Agreement. This document details expected academic standards, as well as standards of conduct, and can be found in the student's application portal.
 - b. Emergency Information Form: All participating cadets and VMI personnel must complete an Emergency Information Form through The Global Education registry.
- 2) Pre-departure (~1 month prior to departure): OGE will ensure completion of pre-departure briefings covering practical information for daily life, legal, safety and security issues, health information, emergency contacts, and academics for all international travel involving cadets. In addition to the briefing provided by the OGE, additional orientations covering logistics and thematic content specific to each program will be conducted by the Trip Leader. Topics covered should include (as applicable):
 - a. General health and safety risks associated with studying abroad
 - b. Maintaining safety and wellness (including mental health) while abroad
 - c. Expectations for student conduct, including academic obligations
- 3) Registration in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program: The Trip Leader is responsible for ensuring each participant registers on DOS's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program.
- 4) Registration in The Global Education registry: Trip Leaders on programs abroad must create an account in The Global Education registry that will include their travel information. OGE will provide access to review applications for their programs through the Trip Leader's registry account. Prior to departure, the Trip Leader will file the final itinerary and will communicate any changes to the Director of Global Education via OGE's travel registry system.
- 5) Risk Management Training: The OGE will provide risk management training to VMI personnel with Trip Leader duties abroad. This training is mandatory for all new Trip Leaders and refresher training is required every three years.
- 6) On-site Orientation: All Trip Leaders must provide an on-site orientation for all participants, including emergency and communications procedures. This must occur as soon as feasible upon arrival and within the first 48 hours in country.
- 7) On-site Administration: Trip Leaders are expected to provide cadets oversight throughout the trip in matters such as monitoring cadets during excursions, advising cadets on cultural issues, obtaining medical, legal or passport assistance, as necessary, and acting as a liaison with local housing providers. Trip Leaders and other faculty or staff accompanying cadets on programs abroad are responsible for ensuring compliance with VMI regulations and policies, including the Cadet Blue Book, the Honor Code, and VMI General Orders. They

must inform their respective VMI Senior Administrator of any specific health, security, or cadet behavior incidents through normal reporting channels. VMI OGE will assist with any specific international considerations. Trip Leaders must arrange escorted travel for cadets to and from designated airports upon initial arrival and final departure. In the event escorted travel is not possible due to extenuating circumstances, detailed travel instructions must be provided to the cadets prior to travel.

7. STUDY ABROAD THROUGH THIRD-PARTY PROGRAMS, DIRECT EXCHANGE, AND DIRECT ENROLLMENT.

All cadets studying abroad through approved third-party programs or directly enrolling in foreign institutions must apply through OGE. Approvals to study abroad for a semester must be received from the cadet's Faculty Advisor, Department Head, Commandant's Staff, Financial Aid, ROTC, NCAA Coach (if applicable), and OGE.

Cadet Applications: All applications will be submitted electronically using OGE's registry software.

- **VMI Study Abroad Program Agreement:** Any cadet taking part in a VMI-sponsored program abroad must sign the VMI Study Abroad Agreement. This document details expected academic standards, as well as standards of conduct and can be found in the student's application portal.
- **Emergency Information Form:** All participating cadets and VMI personnel must complete an Emergency Information Form through The Global Education registry.
- **Pre-departure:** OGE will ensure completion of pre-departure briefings covering practical information for daily life, legal, safety and security issues, health information, emergency contacts, and academics for all international travel involving cadets.
- **On-site Orientation:** Third-Party providers and International Student Support Offices will provide on-site orientation to VMI Cadets.
- **On-site Administration:** Third-Party Providers and International Student Support Offices will provide on-site administration of Third Party and Direct Enrollment programs.
- **Assessment:** The Global Education Committee reviews and assesses Third-Party Providers and Direct Enrollment programs with OGE's input.

8. PROFESSIONAL TRAVEL ABROAD WITHOUT CADETS: All personnel participating in VMI-sponsored international travel without cadets must register their travel through the Office of Global Education, which registration shall include emergency contact information. This will be done electronically through the Independent International Travel Registration form on Etrieve.

9. HEALTH INSURANCE: All participants in VMI-sponsored international travel – to include faculty, staff, and cadets – must purchase and/or provide proof of appropriate international health/medical insurance coverage for the duration of their travel. VMI and OGE maintain an insurance policy with the appropriate coverages and very reasonable rates that is available to VMI-sponsored international travelers. For cadets participating through an approved Third-Party

Provider, most – but not all – provide their own coverage. Cadets must confirm this coverage with the Third-Party Provider and OGE during the application process and make the appropriate purchase if not included in the Third-Party Provider Program.

- 10. MISCONDUCT:** All VMI cadets engaging in foreign travel programs referenced in this General Order must conduct themselves in an appropriate manner at all times. Cadets are reminded that the provisions of the Blue Book pertaining to misconduct do apply while they are engaging in foreign study programs. In accordance with General Order 17, cadets are held to disciplinary standards set forth in the Blue Book from the day of matriculation until they graduate. Those cadets who do not adhere to proper standards of conduct or who fail to follow the rules outlined in the foreign travel programs are subject to those penalties, which can include suspension or dismissal from the Institute. Similarly, cadets are subject to the Honor Code and can be charged with honor offenses related to activities in foreign study programs.

FOR THE SUPERINTENDENT:

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Chief of Staff

OPR: Global Education DIST: E