

University of St. Thomas
Accompanying Persons on Short-term Off-Campus Programs
Policies and Guidelines
May 2007

I. Introduction

The University of St. Thomas has supported the inclusion of accompanying persons on sponsored credit-granting short-term off-campus programs, including spouses, children and university employees who do not have a formal role in the program. As the number of programs and family requests increase, we need to clearly articulate policies and guidelines.

As a university, we have had excellent experiences when faculty directors have brought families on short-term programs. Because each course differs in time spent at a location, amount of travel, and daily schedule, and families differ greatly, from number and ages of children to individual personalities and their ability to adjust to travel, faculty directors must carefully consider whether it is appropriate for accompanying persons to join the program. Faculty and staff directors are encouraged to consider these issues and to consult and seek approval from International Education staff to determine if accompanying persons and families are appropriate for a specific short-term program.

The following policies and guidelines are provided to assist faculty and staff directors in making informed decisions related to accompanying persons (family and guests). Such programs are, first and foremost, academic courses and should never be designed to cater to the needs of ancillary individuals who are not part of the academic and intercultural experience and should not interfere with the function of the off-campus program in any way.

As a Catholic university, St. Thomas recognizes the importance of the family. It also expects program directors to adhere to the following policies and guidelines to support the best academic and intercultural experience for their students, as well as to create good experiences for accompanying persons and families.

II. Policies for Accompanying Persons

A. General Policies

1. Program directors (faculty and staff) must provide a written statement at least ninety days before departure to International Education, outlining their plans to invite accompanying persons, including names, ages, relationship, and dates on the program. The statement must include a description of steps taken to ensure how these persons will not disrupt the students' learning (both academic and intercultural) experience.
2. Financial Obligations and Arrangements
 - a. All travel and onsite expenses for accompanying persons must be paid directly by the program director to the travel arranger/program provider.
 - b. Program funds may not be used to pay for accompanying persons. This information must be made transparent for all those involved in the program, especially the

students, so there is no misunderstanding that student program fees are in any way subsidizing non-participants.

- c. Accompanying persons may share the program director's accommodation, provided that the cost is based on the room, and not per person. Additional rooms and per person cost is the responsibility of the accompanying person. The *St. Thomas Off-Campus Travel With Students On University-Sponsored Curricular And Co-Curricular Activities* must be adhered to (see Employee Handbook).
 - d. Arrangements are not primarily made to accommodate the needs of accompanying persons. All arrangements are made with the understanding that this is an academic program designed to meet the needs of the students and the program directors.
 - e. Accompanying persons are not permitted to share accommodations with students.
3. Program directors are responsible for obtaining passports and visas for all accompanying persons.
 4. All accompanying persons must have adequate health insurance (medical expenses and evacuation and repatriation) during off-campus travel, including overseas insurance coverage and process for reimbursement. For supplemental insurance, all students, including children, are eligible to purchase the International Student ID card, available from International Education.

Additional liability insurance for accompanying persons should be considered.

5. Students must be informed of any accompanying persons at the pre-departure orientation meeting. Expectations of involvement and interaction should be clear to all participants.

B. Additional Policies for Spouses

1. A spouse may accompany the program director for the duration of the program or a significant portion of the program as long as it does not interfere with the director's member's duties to the course and students.
2. Spouses must sign the *St. Thomas Liability Release, Waiver, Discharge and Covenant Not To Sue for Non-Student Adults Accompanying Employees*.
3. Spouses should understand that their primary role on the off-campus program is that of spouse and/or caretaker of any dependent children also accompanying the director. For liability purposes, it is important that spouses do not assume responsibilities related to the academic program (e.g. taking roll, monitoring tests, managing program funds, etc.).

C. Additional Policies for Dependents

1. The faculty or staff director's children or legal dependents under the age of 18 may accompany the faculty member for the duration of the program or for a significant portion of the program as long as it does not interfere with the director's duties to the program and students.

2. For children under 16 years old, a second adult is required to exclusively care for the child(ren). Other faculty or staff members involved with the program should not be asked to serve as a caretaker.
3. Hiring participating students for child care purposes is not acceptable. Doing so creates a dual relationship between professor and student, with potential for conflict of interest.
4. Grandchildren, nephews, and nieces who are not a program director's legal dependents are not considered dependents, but rather extended family. They are not permitted to accompany the program unless they are enrolled as students in the program.
5. Parents must sign the St. Thomas *Liability Release, Waiver, Discharge and Covenant Not To Sue for Non-Student Minors Accompanying Employees* for each accompanying child.
6. It is strongly recommended that program directors consider carefully the number of children being taken on off-campus programs. Logistically, the more children that are involved, the more difficult it becomes to make arrangements that will accommodate them, and the more difficult it is for the director to focus her/his full attention on the course. Past experience shared by other faculty members suggests that a spouse and several dependent children taken abroad require more attention from a faculty member than they require at home due to language barriers as well as lack of usual friends, recreational, and educational activities.

C. Additional Policies for Extended Family and Personal Acquaintances

1. Extended family members are those relatives other than the faculty or staff director's spouse or immediate children.
2. Personal acquaintances are generally individuals who have no official connection with the program and who are not related to the director.
3. All accompanying extended family and personal acquaintances must sign the St. Thomas *Liability Release, Waiver, Discharge and Covenant Not To Sue for Non-Student Adults Accompanying Employees*.
4. Because of the intensity of a short-term off-campus program, it is strongly recommended that extended family members and/or personal acquaintances consider not accompanying the program, or doing so during unscheduled time, if available. Any arrangement should *not* encourage the perspective that off-campus programs are vacations rather than academic endeavors.
5. It is strongly recommended that extended family and personal acquaintances not travel with the group on program site visits or weekend excursions because of the increased potential for misperceptions related to the purpose of the program (academic versus vacation), financial difficulties in maintaining a separation of program versus guest payments, and increased liability for the program director and the university.

III. Suggested Guidelines for Accompanying Persons

Previous faculty directors offer the following guidelines and considerations. Before you invite accompanying persons on your short-term program, as well as when you prepare for the program's departure, please give these guidelines consideration.

General Guidelines

- Program directors should use their best judgment regarding interaction between their students and guests. Careful consideration should be made about the different aspects of your course, such as classes, lecturers, site visits, group dinners and overnight excursions, and when interaction with your guests is appropriate and when it is not.
- If co-directing a course, consider the impact of accompanying persons on the other director. Seek approval and consensus of expectations from your colleague before making a final determination. Also consult with in-country hosts (university, program provider, tour operator, etc.) if applicable.
- Accompanying persons should be adequately prepared for the program, just like your students. What can they expect regarding travel? What cultural resources are available? How will they prepare for a different language?
- If you have organized a group check-in at the airport, accompanying persons should check-in separately – either before or after your group. This allows program directors to focus on students' questions and excitement, as well as to meet their parents.
- Depending on the course location, consider what kind of transport will be used by the accompanying persons.

Suggestions/Questions from Past Faculty Directors with Young Children

- How does your child deal with routine and transitions? How will travel affect children in regards to their routine and what obstacles need to be considered? What portions of the routine from home can be transported, maintained and/or adapted for travel?
- What kind of foods or dietary changes need to be addressed? What will you do with a picky eater? (suggestion – bring their favorite foods and snacks)?
- How will you handle the potential disruption of the child's routine, especially on days when the course moves (e.g. travel days)? How will you handle unexpected (for 'typical toddler to preschool') behavior from your child, especially if the child is near the student group?
- Spouses should be prepared to be a single parent for a significant portion of the course, especially if you maintain a shared-parenting model at home. Depending on the course, directors may be busy in the evenings with student dinners, reflection or debriefing meetings or events.