

## **Statement Defining Participants and Companions on Lehigh University International Programs**

The purpose of this Statement is to identify those individuals who are approved to participate in, and travel with, study abroad and other international experience programs sponsored by Lehigh University. Lehigh defines a “program participant” as (1) a Lehigh student enrolled in a study abroad or international program (the “abroad program”), or (2) a Program Staff Member fulfilling specific academic and/or administrative responsibilities for the abroad program and as an agent of Lehigh. The Program Staff Member may be a faculty member or a professional staff member; under certain specific circumstances this individual may be a graduate student who is authorized and acting as an agent by Lehigh.

Lehigh does not permit any individual to be included in, or to accompany, an abroad program who is not considered a “program participant” except under the limited circumstance involving the companion(s) of a Program Staff Member, as described below.

When directing/leading a Lehigh abroad program, a Program Staff Member is primarily responsible for (1) delivering the program content and (2) overseeing the well-being of the participants, including their health and safety. Most Program Staff Members work very long hours and rarely have free time within the program dates. As a result, Lehigh discourages Program Staff Members from being accompanied by any non-program companion, defined as a spouse, partner, or dependent.<sup>i</sup> In particular, Lehigh strongly discourages minor children from accompanying Program Staff Members. In the event that approval is given for a companion to accompany a Program Staff Member, Lehigh is not in any way responsible (financially or legally) for the companion. If a Program Staff Member is given permission to bring a companion, the companion is neither a participant in the program nor an agent of the University, and may not be given any responsibilities on behalf of Lehigh. Additionally, a Program Staff Member is solely responsible for covering all of his/her companion’s expenses. The companion will be required to be covered by health insurance that is valid in the country of travel, as well as travel insurance that includes coverage for evacuations.

A Program Staff Member who wishes to be accompanied by a companion on an abroad program should carefully review the following aspects of the program for suitability: the length of the program, the age of children, the location of the program, the nature of the program, the extent of travel activity involved during the program, the availability of accommodation, the impact of the presence of the companion on the program, and any special needs of the companion. The presence of a companion, particularly a dependent child, must not disrupt or alter the abroad program in any way. Importantly, a Program Staff Member must always remember that (1) (s)he must be available to program participants at all times (24/7) for the duration of the program, and (2) in the event of crisis or emergency, his/her primary responsibility is to program participants first and companions second.

If Lehigh permits a minor child to accompany a Program Staff Member, the minor child may only travel with the abroad program group if another adult/caretaker is present, and that

caretaker must have 24/7 supervision of the minor child. A Program Staff Member is not permitted to hire a program participant for childcare purposes, as doing so creates a dual relationship and a potential conflict of interest between a Program Staff Member and the participant.

A companion may participate in some program activities, but only if the quality of the program is not affected and the cost to the program is not increased because of companion participation. A Program Staff Member may not incorporate any expense incurred on behalf of the companion into the program budget, or submit a reimbursement request or invoice to Lehigh pertaining to the companion. The Program Staff Member is solely responsible for any non-refundable expenses for cancellation of arrangements made on behalf of a companion.

A Program Staff Member who is interested in bringing a companion with him/her on an abroad program must submit a justification to ITAC<sup>ii</sup> before funding has been committed (e.g., plane tickets, housing reservations). The justification should include information about the companion's motivation for participating and the extent of the participation in the group's itinerary. If the companion is a minor, the justification should include information about the items addressed in paragraphs three and four above. ITAC is the Committee responsible for reviewing the Program Staff Member's request and providing approval or denial. Appeals to ITAC decisions on companion travel will be reviewed by the Provost.

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<sup>i</sup> Grandchildren, nephews, and nieces and other relatives 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 participants in the program.

<sup>ii</sup> International Travel Advisory Committee.