

Q&A on Oversight and Procedures for International Travel

by Lehigh University Undergraduate Students

Q: What is ITAC?

A: ITAC is Lehigh's International Travel Advisory Committee, which was established by Provost Patrick Farrell in 2012. As an advisory committee, it does not have decision making power, but rather provides information and advice to the provost. It also has an informal reporting relationship with the Study Abroad Faculty Policy Board (SAFPB), a subcommittee of Lehigh's Educational Policy Committee.

Q: Who serves on ITAC?

A: ITAC is chaired by the deputy provost for academic affairs. Other members include the director and associate director of the Study Abroad Office; Lehigh's deputy general counsel; Lehigh's director of risk management; and the associate dean of students for student life. ITAC consults the Study Abroad Faculty Policy Board member(s) as needed. The associate director of the Study Abroad Office serves as the committee's secretary.

Q: What does ITAC do?

A: ITAC advises the provost on issues related to safety and logistics of international travel by students, faculty and staff that is supported by or related to Lehigh University. This includes, but is not limited to, travel on a for-credit study abroad program, travel with a Lehigh University group as part of a non-credit educational experience, and travel for teaching, research, co-curricular, conference or administrative purposes. ITAC is responsible for recording and reviewing plans for Lehigh-supported or -related international travel. For travel to certain countries, ITAC is responsible for reviewing travel plans and reporting to the Provost (or provost's designee) an assessment of the safety and logistics of these travel plans. ITAC provides this review because travel to certain countries requires the approval of the provost.

Q: I am an undergrad and I'm organizing a trip for my student organization, so I know it is Lehigh-related. But I'm confused about whether the trip needs ITAC approval. Can you explain how Lehigh classifies undergraduate student travel, and how ITAC is involved with each type of travel?

A: Lehigh puts undergraduate student travel abroad into six categories. Here is a description of each:

1. Semester and Year-long Study Abroad. Lehigh's Study Abroad Office coordinates study abroad for undergraduates to study abroad for a year or semester. These study abroad opportunities earn Lehigh academic credit. Students pay regular Lehigh tuition and maintain their existing financial aid packages. The Study Abroad Office pays tuition at the host institution, while students are responsible for all other program fees, including airfare. Year-long and semester study abroad has academic and implementation oversight by both SAFPB and ITAC, in consultation with the Study Abroad Office.
2. Faculty-led, credit-bearing travel. Faculty organize a study abroad trip that is linked to a Lehigh course and taught "off-load" in the winter or summer. Faculty develop these programs in conjunction with the Study Abroad Office, with academic and financial oversight provided by SAFPB. As part of the approval process through SAFPB and the colleges, ITAC also evaluates the program and forwards to the provost for approval as necessary. Students pay regular Lehigh tuition and program fees.

3. Student organized travel. Some travel abroad is organized by student organizations, such as Engineers Without Borders. The best practice is for a Lehigh faculty or staff member to accompany the student group, but in some cases the faculty member provides guidance in preparation for the program, and students implement the program themselves at the abroad site. For these trips, the student organizers seek ITAC review and, if needed, provost approval for the travel, typically working with their group's faculty advisor or trip leader.
4. Sponsored Independent Travel. Many students travel abroad on independent programs that do not fall within the categories above. Most often, these programs fall within the research and internships definitions, with either guidance or funding provided by a Lehigh source. In all cases, students are provided guidance by a faculty member such as GELH research grants, or the Study Abroad Office, such as the Iacocca Internship program, including "cohort" programs directed by Lehigh faculty or staff. Many other independent programs may fall under this category. ITAC reviews the travel plans in coordination with the Study Abroad Office. Again, provost approval may be needed for some travel.
5. College-centric and Embedded Programs. Some colleges offer their own programs that either fall within the semester or are packaged as an embedded lab, or that are run off-load in the summer or winter and target a certain subset of students by major and/or year. Examples include the Sustainable Development programs and several programs run by CBE. These programs do not have oversight by SAFPB, but are subject to review by ITAC.
6. Student independent travel. Many Lehigh students travel outside the U.S. without any affiliation to Lehigh. Students might have a family trip or might travel on their own before or after the official program dates of a Lehigh sponsored program. Students do not receive course credit, and Lehigh plays no role in the coordination or oversight of this sort of travel. ITAC has no oversight role in this type of travel.

Q: I understand that except for student independent travel, all undergraduate student travel abroad is subject to ITAC review in advance of the trip. What travel is also subject to the *approval of the provost*?

A: All Lehigh-sponsored or Lehigh-related travel to Travel Warning countries must be approved by the provost. Travel to some other countries must also be approved by the provost, as explained in this document.

Q: What is a Travel Warning country?

A: One that is subject to a U.S. Department of State official travel warning. There are close to 200 countries in the world; in March 2014, 34 countries were Travel Warning countries.

Q: Why does the U.S. State Department issue travel warnings?

A: According to the State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs, "We issue a Travel Warning when we want you to consider very carefully whether you should go to a country at all. Examples of reasons for issuing a Travel Warning might include unstable government, civil war, ongoing intense crime or violence, or frequent terrorist attacks. We want you to know the risks of traveling to these places and to strongly consider not going to them at all. Travel Warnings remain in place until the situation changes; some have been in effect for years" (Source: Bureau of Consular Affairs web site, <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html>, accessed March 20, 2014).

Q: What is Lehigh's general policy regarding travel to Travel Warning countries?

A: Lehigh University does not sponsor or otherwise support undergraduate student travel to Travel Warning countries. This practice is based on recommendations of the U.S. State Department and United Educators. It is common practice at many universities to disallow such travel.

Lehigh realizes that Lehigh faculty might seek to travel with Lehigh students to Travel Warning countries for limited periods, when specific itineraries are able to be vetted, and there are compelling academic benefits. Faculty members may petition for an exception to the Travel Warning policy for short-term trips to Travel Warning countries.

Q: What are the other countries that require the provost's approval for Lehigh travel?

A: Countries with an increased level of risk to travelers may be subject to approval. Of particular concern is travel to countries where Lehigh's ability to assist a student in an emergency might be constrained. You can ask for guidance from the Study Abroad Office.

Q: I understand that since I am planning short-term travel to a Travel Warning country, I need the provost's approval to travel. What is involved in this process?

A: The process starts by submitting an international travel proposal to ITAC. You do this by completing the International Travel Proposal Form and submitting it to the secretary of ITAC. (The current secretary is Katie Welsh Radande, associate director of the Study Abroad Office.) There is a [proposal form for expedited review](#) and a [proposal form for full review](#). If you are traveling to a Travel Warning country, you need the proposal form for full review. Otherwise, complete the proposal form for expedited review; if ITAC determines that your trip needs provost approval, it will ask that you complete submit a proposal form for full review.

Q: My trip needs ITAC review. How long does the expedited review process take?

A: Expedited reviews are typically completed within 10 business days of receiving all information.

Q: My trip needs approval from the provost. How long does this process take?

A: Travelers and trip leaders should expect that the ITAC review and provost approval process will take at least 10 weeks after ITAC has received all completed forms and information. Although it may take less time, it is best not to assume that the process will take fewer than 10 weeks. ITAC often asks for some additional clarifying information after the committee has completed its initial review of the proposal. In some cases, ITAC approval might take longer than 10 weeks. ITAC typically meets once a month, and the committee might review a proposal at two meetings before forwarding information to the provost.

Q: I'm a Lehigh student and I am working with a group of students to set up an international trip for our student club. Does our trip need to be reviewed by ITAC?

A: Yes. Student groups planning international trips must go through the ITAC review process. Depending on the country you are visiting, the trip might need approval from the provost (or provost's designee).

Q: I am a Lehigh student and I want to study abroad for a semester at another university in a Travel Warning country. Is this possible?

A: Students who wish to study in a Travel Warning country for a semester or academic year may wish to do so by enrolling directly in a program offered by another university or by a third-party provider. To do this, you would need to petition the Standing on Students Committee to take a leave of absence from Lehigh and to transfer the resulting course credit to Lehigh after re-enrolling.