



Padnos International Center

130 Lake Ontario Hall
Extension 1-3898

PIC Policy on Study Abroad Providers

GVSU's "Open" Study Abroad Policy

GVSU students are free to select some 4000+ study abroad options around the world, and do so without additional administrative fee or penalty. This is not standard practice in the US. Most schools with high participation rates in study abroad limit students to a particular menu of study abroad options, either officially administered by that university or through select or exclusive affiliate providers. It's not unusual, for example, for a college to limit students to just 30 options.

Though time-consuming and challenging, this policy allows students to identify the programs that best match their individual academic and professional interests, not to mention their individual financial situation or the length of their "window of opportunity" to be away from jobs, families, or lease obligations.

GVSU students have always been, and continue to be, free to select any accredited, reputable, and safe program across the globe—as long as the students meet the general application criteria for study abroad (e.g., minimum GPA of 2.5).

GVSU's Affiliate Providers

Like the vast majority of institutions that count their annual study abroad participation in the hundreds or thousands, GVSU has entered into affiliation agreements with a limited number of quality study abroad vendors—for-profit or non-profit organizations that specialize in providing students with study abroad experiences that feature strong academics as well as on-site orientation support.

The current affiliate organizations for GVSU include:

- *Global Links (formerly AustraLearn)*, specializing in programs at scores of universities in various regions, but predominately in Australia, New Zealand and various parts of Asia
- *American Institute for Foreign Study (AIFS)*, specializing in unique programs all over the world and has served as a leader in the field of international education since 1964.
- *Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE)*, specializing in smaller group and high quality educational experiences in less-popular study abroad destinations, where there tend to be very few large groups of American students.
- *Cultural Experiences Abroad (CEA)*, known for its excellent on-site support to students and opportunities for a unique study experience through its global campuses. Especially successful in programs to Spain and Latin America.
- *Edge Hill University, Ormskirk, England*. A mirror of GVSU in rural northern England, with strong reputation on small classes, undergraduate instruction, and excellent student support services. We typically have 2-4 students there in any given year.
- *Hellenic International Studies in the Arts (HISA)*, offers a small liberal arts program in Paros, Greece. This unique location combined with academic work that focuses on creative and artistic expression offers students an opportunity to develop individual talents in small group settings.
- *Semester in India*, offers students an opportunity to study at a traditional Indian university while receiving additional support services to help acclimate to the host university and culture.
- *International Studies Abroad (ISA)*, very reputable provider with cost-effective programs for GVSU students in Western Europe and Latin America.
- *Academic Programs International (API)*, offers programs in various locations around the world and provides excellent on-site support to help students maximize their study abroad experience through self-awareness and development of cultural understanding.
- *John Cabot University (Rome, Italy)*. Small English-language liberal arts college in the historic *Trastevere* district of Rome. An average of 10-20 GVSU students study there each year.
- *University of Deusto (Bilbao, Spain)*. Private University with a renowned Spanish-language institute. First-rate teaching faculty and strong student support services.
- *European Study Abroad (EUSA)*, provider of internship placements and supervision for GVSU students in Dublin, London, Paris, and Madrid.

Because there are no in-bound students from these affiliate schools or organizations, these agreement documents are typically signed by the Chief International Officer of GVSU (or were signed by the former Deans of International Education). Original copies of each agreement are kept in the Padnos International Center.

Not all affiliation agreements are alike. The agreements with single institutions, for example, are different: John Cabot, Edge Hill, and Univ. of Deusto are non-profit institutions of higher education. CEA, ISA, AIFS, API, and EUSA are for-profit entities. There are also a number of study abroad providers such as CIEE and Semester in India that are non-profit organizations. Furthermore, GVSU students also participate in the programs of some dozen other third-party providers with which we do not have affiliation agreements: School for International Training (SIT), USAC, IES, and others. And many other providers are affiliated with other US-based institutions: IFSA-Butler, Arcadia University (PA), Michigan State University, Semester-at-Sea, and more.

How GVSU Students Benefit From These Agreements

The sole reason we sign these affiliation agreements is to benefit GVSU students. Obviously, the affiliate organizations or institutions benefit by gaining GVSU student participation in their programs.

The biggest upside for students is the schedule of scholarships and discounts available to them because we have affiliate agreements with the providers. Our agreements often identify specific scholarships or discounts that will be made available to GVSU students. GVSU's preference is to see all students receive the exact same discount. When specific scholarship dollars are designated, there is a GVSU committee that makes recommendations on the most qualified applicants.

GVSU's policy requires any financial incentive offered by a study abroad provider to be used for student scholarships. GVSU does not use funding from a provider to pay for operational expenses or to benefit individual university employees.

GVSU students benefit from our familiarity with, and confidence in, these affiliate programs. Because of our affiliate relationships with John Cabot or Univ. Deusto, for example, we in PIC personally know our counterparts on site. When a call comes from a concerned parent about a son or daughter in Rome or Bilbao, respectively, we can assure them that we trust our counterparts to do the right thing in supporting the student and ensuring their safety, well-being, and opportunity for academic success. Over the years, we have come to trust CEA, ISA, and CIEE personnel for their handling of the occasional crises that inevitably arise. And our confidence in the academic quality is enhanced through these affiliations. Faculty from affiliate universities provide regular oversight and evaluation of the academic quality and integrity of the on-site programs, curriculum, faculty, and staff.

Indirect Advantages to GVSU Students

GVSU is regularly invited to participate in familiarization trips in order to meet on-site staff, review the academic program and to meet with current participants to learn about their experiences with the program. In most cases, in-country expenses may be covered by the study abroad provider, however, there is always a small cost to GVSU. These

invitations are carefully reviewed and are only considered when a site visit is in a location that our faculty and staff is less familiar with or is a location that is of growing interest to our students. Occasionally, a GVSU faculty or staff member may be in a location near one of our affiliate programs and we may agree to cover the cost for a short visit to meet colleagues and learn more about the academic program. Building a rapport with the on-site staff benefits our students when concerns arise or when the students are in need of additional information. Most often, these site visits are used by MLL faculty because these faculty are key to helping us advise students on the overwhelming array of programs available. The Spanish or French faculty are also in the best position to assess how placement and transfer credit between GVSU's language courses and those in Spain, France, or Latin America are compatible.

There's a tremendous upside to these visits, as our staff is better able to match students on appropriate programs, not to mention meet the on-site faculty and staff--helpful when there's a credit transfer or safety/health issue. Another benefit is that the affiliate providers send a representative to our study abroad fairs so students can "shop" the programs in person, talking with the representative directly.

Other benefits to GVSU students are that these affiliate agreements specify that representatives from affiliate programs receive invitations to campus (and our study abroad fairs) so that students can learn more about programs from the staff who are most familiar with the offerings.

Recruiting Practices by Non-GVSU Providers of International Programs

The Padnos International Center does not encourage representatives of programs—including those who happen to be GVSU students—to make solicitations or presentations of any particular program in GVSU classrooms. We encourage such providers to coordinate their visit with our office, and limit their on-campus direct promotion and recruiting to information tables in public areas on campus.

What Is/ Is Not Happening at GVSU (in Padnos Int'l. Center)

1. No GVSU or PIC employees have personally gained financially.
2. Students are *not* locked out of programs they see as the best for their interests or needs.
3. We do not inform students only of affiliate programs, nor do we aggressively steer them to affiliate programs. Our primary principle in study abroad advising—and one we encourage in faculty and advisors across campus—is “what is in the student’s best interest?”
4. We do maintain program information for countless non-affiliate programs and direct-enrollment options.
5. Our first choices in advising any potential study abroad participant are the cost-effective GVSU exchange partnerships. Our *Study Abroad Catalog* highlights GVSU programs (exchanges, university affiliations, faculty-led programs).

6. We do not provide specific marketing campaigns for providers.
7. We do not have agreements with affiliate providers to secure direct funding for the operation of Padnos International Center.
8. We do require all financial incentives offered by study abroad affiliates to be made available in the form of student scholarships or discounts.

Updated 4 January 2013