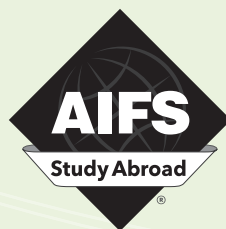


AIFS STANDARDS

In Alignment with the
Forum on Education Abroad's
Standards of Good Practice



AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR FOREIGN STUDY®

**AIFS Study Abroad
Program Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad, 2nd Edition**

AIFS has a comprehensive assessment process for its programs of all term lengths and across host countries. The nine areas of Program Standards align with the Forum on Education Abroad's Standards of Good Practice. Beginning with the AIFS mission, vision and goals, the Standards serve as the basis of our program development assessment processes. With student learning as its core objective, we conduct ongoing and transparent review for continuous program improvement.

The AIFS assessment cycle is designed to:

- Establish program goals and objectives and ensure they are being met
- Determine whether resources are being used efficiently and effectively
- Identify program areas that need improvement
- Inform managerial planning and decision-making
- Monitor progress and communicate a program's value

The AIFS Program Standards have an important role in our assessment process. Students are asked to complete program evaluations that relate directly to the established program standards and guidelines. From the discussions which take place regarding the shared results and summary information, specific recommendations are made and program modifications are made.

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1. Mission, Vision & Goals

AIFS has a formally-adopted mission statement for its overall operations and for its individual divisions that is known and accepted by its staff and board members. AIFS reviews the degree to which it is achieving its overall mission and its mission statement on a regular basis.

Our Vision

We bring the world together.

Our Mission

To provide the highest quality educational and cultural exchange programs to enrich the lives of young people throughout the world.

Values we are committed to in order to achieve our goals:

- Excellence in programs, operations, people
- Respect and understanding of different cultures
- Exceptional caring support for our program participants to ensure their safety and well-being
- Honest, equitable, and non-discriminatory treatment of program participants, partners, and employees
- Technological innovation
- Teamwork and collaboration both within the organization and with partners
- Encouragement of employee initiative and professional development
- Responsible financial stewardship

Goals:

AIFS Programs:

- Promote students' curiosity and intellectual growth through high-quality academic programming which utilizes the host country & culture as context.
- Promote cross-cultural learning and increased understanding through both academic and extra-curricular events and activities focused on the interaction with the host culture.
- Facilitate students' self-awareness of their own culture by providing opportunity to compare and contrast cultural differences.
- Enhance students' personal growth, including qualities such as independence, confidence, self-reliance, curiosity and willingness to be in new and different surroundings and environments.
- Contribute to students' career and professional development by exposure to different fields of study and work, encouraging the development of skills sought by employers, and helping them to identify and articulate the applicable knowledge and skills acquired by studying abroad.

80%

of AIFS alumni reported that studying abroad contributed to their ability to adapt in diverse workplace environments.*



2. Student Learning & Development

AIFS has education objectives to foster student learning and development. Assessment data is gathered and analyzed on a regular basis and utilizes the information to monitor, maintain support and improve student success.

Intercultural Understanding

- Students are offered opportunity (a series of online exercises) to reflect on self-awareness, cultural identity, the adjustment process before, during and after their experience abroad.
- Information on cultural traits of the host culture is presented in the on-site orientation and staff demonstrate respect for differences in customs and values.
- Course(s) on various aspects of the host culture are part of the core curricular offerings.
- Opportunities for students to integrate into the host culture exist through student clubs and activities, exchange partners, homestays and/or volunteer placements.
- Assessment is made of students' cultural learning by administering the Global Perspectives Inventory (GPI) pre- and post-programs to a representative population of participants.
- Students report on the way in which program components helped them acquire adaptive skills.
- Program alumni report on the way in which the program helped them learn adaptive behaviors for diverse work settings.
- Results on students' intercultural development are utilized to modify and enhance program aspects such as curriculum, orientation, and student services.

Academic Growth

- AIFS offers courses that progress students toward their degree requirements.
- Courses utilize the relevant resources of the local/host culture to teach the subject matter.
- Syllabi and/or course outlines are readily available.
- Syllabi for host institution courses are available or sought when requested.
- Course pre-requisites are clearly stated and placement tests are administered where necessary (e.g., language courses).
- Students are exposed both to different pedagogies and different perspectives in the classroom.
- Students placed in regular university courses are advised by the Resident Directors on the differences in the academic systems and offered ongoing academic advising and support.
- Student achievement is measured against the learning objectives stated for each course.

Student Development

- Students have opportunity for skill development (e.g., leadership, maturity, adaptation to diverse work environments) outside the classroom in activities such as volunteering, student clubs, or internships.
- Students are encouraged to establish personal goals for their learning (academic, language, cultural) and development.
- Students are asked to reflect and report on their personal growth upon completion of the program.
- Resident staff both challenge and support students to become more independent and self-motivated through both their daily interaction and in various meetings and events.

Language and Communication

- AIFS encourages the development of language and/or intercultural communication skills.
- Students are given a placement test to help determine the appropriate language course(s).

- The language curriculum includes information on cultural norms, values and etiquette.
- Students placed in regular university courses are advised by the Resident Directors on differences in the academic systems and offered ongoing academic advising and support.
- Program activities provide an opportunity for students to use the host language.

3. Academic Framework

AIFS offers academic programs that support its goal for students to learn about other cultures and languages, has public and makes available information on its affiliations with host universities, and reviews program effectiveness regularly, implementing changes as necessary.

Academic Credit

- AIFS has established policies and procedures for awarding credit and grades.
- The awarding of U.S. credit and grades is based on established international equivalencies (when credit is issued by a non-U.S. institution).
- Resident Directors regularly monitor the awarding of grades by the host country faculty.
- AIFS programs are hosted by universities with degree-granting status in host country.
- Transcripts are issued to the home institution with sufficient information to evaluate and post academic credit.

Academic Coursework

- AIFS offers courses accepted by U.S. institutions towards degree requirements.
- Students are informed of course requirements.
- Where applicable students may enroll directly in courses at universities which meet the academic standards of the host country.

Academic Advising & Support

- Students are required to show acceptance of AIFS program courses by home institution upon application to the program.
- Students receive tips on managing differences in the academic system, teaching styles and expectations during the on-site orientation.
- On-site staff are knowledgeable about registration and enrollment procedures in order to readily assist students.
- Students may consult with on-site staff to seek academic advice or express concerns throughout the program duration.
- Students have sufficient access to academic resources in the appropriate language at the program site and/or local libraries.
- Students have convenient access to online resources for academic purposes.

Curriculum

- The curriculum offers courses focused on the host country – such as its culture, language, history, politics, economics arts and society.

88%

of alumni reported that their AIFS program contributed to developing awareness of global political, economic or social events.*



- The curriculum engages students in critical-thinking and intellectual growth.
- The curriculum and its related activities promote student learning and development.
- Appropriate methodology is used to instruct in each discipline.

Internships & Field Research

- Attending meetings and relevant preparation by students is required for an internship or research project.
- Interns enroll in an accompanying academic seminar (and in language courses, if other than English).
- Intern sites offer opportunity for students to participate as well as observe and analyze a host-country business or organization.
- Interns are monitored by the workplace supervisor and a faculty member.
- Academic requirements for internships follow AIFS and host university guidelines and practices.

4. Student Selection, Preparation & Advising

AIFS is committed to, maintains, and makes available, the information on fair and appropriate policy on student selection, and provides advising, orientation and ongoing support for students.

Student Selection

- AIFS enrolls degree-seeking undergraduate students who are in good academic standing.
- AIFS supports the study abroad admission requirements of students' home institutions.
- Students are directed to follow the study abroad application requirements of their home institution.
- AIFS supports the academic requirements of its partner institutions abroad.
- Eligibility requirements are clearly stated in program materials.
- Where applicable, students meet the stated admissions requirements for target language study.
- AIFS does not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or religion.

Pre-Departure Info

- Information is provided to accepted students on academics, accommodation, travel arrangements, health precautions and care, safety considerations, and information on expenses and budgeting.
- Relevant information on passports and immigration visas is provided to students in a timely manner.
- Students may consult with AIFS staff with questions or concerns on an ongoing basis.
- Students receive information on the process of cultural adjustment.

On-Site Orientation

- AIFS staff deliver a comprehensive orientation program covering academic expectations, policies and procedures; living arrangements, behavior expectations and disciplinary policies, independent travel; and health/safety and emergency information.

- Students are given guided opportunity in the local area to use public transportation and identify daily living resources such as restaurants, grocery stores, etc).
- Students receive information about the local culture and area including laws and customs.
- AIFS Staff present information to students on the local culture's norms and practices regarding gender, racial, ethnic and religious diversity.

Re-Entry Resources

- Information on the re-adjustment period upon returning home is provided to students.
- Suggestions are offered to students to expand upon their international experience once back home.
- Resources are provided to students to help them identify the personal, academic and professional skills gained from their experience abroad.

5. Student Code of Conduct & Disciplinary Measures

AIFS is committed to, maintains, and makes available a behavioral code of conduct which explains the expectations of students and the resulting consequences for any violations.

- AIFS reviews, in cooperation with the home institution, each student's discipline record.
- AIFS shares a Code of Conduct with each student, asking them to sign in agreement to the listed expectations.
- The AIFS Code of Conduct articulates policies regarding drug possession or use, alcohol use, illegal activity, sexual harassment, and culturally inappropriate behavior, and explains the disciplinary sanctions and the process of appeals.

6. Policies & Procedures

AIFS has clearly articulated policies and procedures that govern its education abroad programs and practices and regularly reviews them to assure their effectiveness and appropriateness.

Policies and Procedures

- Academic information is clear and accurate in print and web media.
- Published program cost information is complete and accurate, and sound estimates are given for out-of-pocket expenses.
- Published cancellation refund policies are clear and accurate.
- AIFS has an established scholarship fund to assist students.
- Marketing activities follow ethical guidelines and principles.
- Field staff demonstrate respect for institutional policy regarding campus visits and program promotion.
- Advising practices support students' academic and personal development.
- Established published policies govern AIFS programs.
- Established policies govern AIFS personnel.

95%

of alumni surveyed said that studying abroad positively impacted their independence.*



Program Assessment

- AIFS has established program standards.
- A program evaluation is administered to all student participants for each program term.
- Data on student intercultural development is collected and shared on a regular basis.
- Program site visits are offered on a regular basis to faculty and staff of U.S. institutions.
- Alumni are requested to complete a survey to assess the personal and professional impact of their experience.
- Staff in the U.S. and abroad participate in short- and long-range planning and goal-setting.
- AIFS shares assessment findings with all internal staff and faculty and externally with the Board of Academic Advisors and affiliate institutions.

7. Organizational & Program Resources

AIFS provides adequate financial and staffing resources to support its programs.

Faculty and Instructors

- AIFS partners with respected universities in each host country that are recognized/accredited by the respective ministries of education.
- Faculty and instructors have appropriate credentials in the host country.
- Faculty have the required expertise in their respective fields, together with the ability to teach and a commitment to international students.
- Faculty are made aware of differences in learning styles, and the academic requirements of U.S. colleges and universities.
- Faculty participate in developing new courses which may be designed for international students and are approved by their respective credit-granting institution.

Administrative and Support Personnel

- AIFS staff hold the proper and required qualifications for their positions.
- AIFS staff demonstrate courtesy and respect and are committed to the best interests of the student.
- AIFS staff participate in annual performance evaluations.
- Staff participate in professional organizations' activities related to their area of responsibilities.
- AIFS seeks to provide staff with opportunity for professional development.
- Resident Directors establish and maintain relationships with academic and local community members.

Financial Resources

- AIFS practices responsible financial stewardship.
- The organization is managed by a Board of Directors.
- Financial oversight is appropriate to the size and complexity of AIFS.
- AIFS retains sufficient resources to address crises or unanticipated financial changes.

Learning and Academic Support Facilities

- AIFS program center staffing and facilities are adequate to support their enrollments each term.
- Students have adequate study space.
- Students have access to adequate library resources.
- Students have access to adequate equipment and technologies to support their academic requirements.
- Reasonable accommodation is sought to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities.
- Reasonable accommodation is sought to meet the needs of students with physical disabilities, and is dependent upon local facilities and resources.
- AIFS facilities and grounds undergo routine maintenance and have established plans for preventative and deferred maintenance.

Student Housing

- Students are provided with appropriate and secure housing.
- Housing contracts abide by in-country laws.
- Housing is regularly inspected.
- Established procedures support a housing change when warranted.

89%

of AIFS alumni report that their ability to be more flexible and open-minded was positively impacted by studying abroad.*



8. Health, Safety, Security & Risk Management

AIFS assures the health, safety, and security of its students, faculty and staff at every step of the program process with established policies & procedures as well as at student orientation and faculty training.

Program Development

- The overall safety, political and economic stability of a country is a consideration in selection for new program sites.
- Experts in requisite laws and statutes of the host country are consulted regarding risk management, employment law, and other relevant certifications of staff.
- AIFS complies with requisite laws and regulations of the host country and follows best practices in reporting on critical incidents.

Health and Safety of Students, Faculty, and Staff

- General travel safety advice and country-specific health information are provided to students prior to departure.
- Comprehensive insurance (medical, evacuation, cancellation) is provided to every program participant.
- Students may request information prior to departure about managing a specific medical condition abroad.
- Resident staff refer students to English-speaking medical clinics and physicians for sickness, accidents or mental health care.
- Resident staff anticipate and respond responsibly to all health, safety, or security issues.
- Students are informed on ways to manage their own health, safety, and security while abroad
- Resident Staff monitor and advise students on relevant health, safety, and security issues by maintaining contact with the appropriate U.S. embassy or consulate and other relevant resources.

Risk Management

- AIFS maintains adequate insurance coverage for liability and indemnification.
- AIFS has established criteria for its contractual agreements with outside providers for services such as transportation, housing, facilities and technology.
- Regular risk assessments are conducted by administrative staff and legal counsel.
- Students must abide by the AIFS conduct code.
- Response coverage by AIFS staff is available 24-hours, 365 days/year on every program site and with the U.S. and London-based offices.
- Students, faculty and staff are provided information on safety and emergency procedures.
- Students receive timely notification of local health and safety concerns.
- Health and safety incidents are properly reported as per established AIFS policies & procedures.
- Crisis management plans are reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

Housing

- Student housing meets AIFS health and safety requirements.
- Student housing is located within proximity to public transportation access.
- Homestay hosts/families meet AIFS selection criteria.
- AIFS staff manage any conflicts that occur between student and homestay host or landlord.

9. Ethics & Integrity

AIFS educates its employees on ethical behavior and adheres to a code of ethics aligned with the Forum's Code of Ethics for Education Abroad.

- AIFS promotes respect of the cultures and values of the countries in which it operates programs and from which it draws its student participants.
- Students, faculty and staff abide by the home and host country laws and regulations.
- AIFS follows established guidelines on student rights to privacy and confidentiality.
- AIFS staff are actively involved in the leadership and training activities of relevant professional organizations.
- AIFS sponsors the publication of various resources for international educators.
- AIFS regularly sponsors other organizations in the field which promote support for diverse student participation in education abroad and the re-entry process for students.
- AIFS staff inform themselves of current trends and issues in U.S. and international higher education.
- AIFS does not discriminate in hiring or admissions on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or religion.

*All survey results taken from *AIFS Study Abroad Outcomes: A View from our Alumni, 1990-2010*

About AIFS

In affiliation with 29 international universities, AIFS organizes study abroad programs for more than 5,000 American students each year. Academic year, semester, summer and January term programs are available. Courses are for academic credit.

AIFS works closely with more than 500 American colleges and universities, providing students and faculty with high quality educational experiences abroad. These experiences include all-inclusive programs as well as customized faculty-led programs.

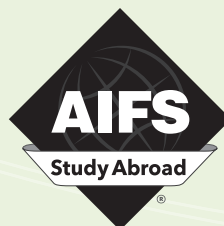
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