

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL FIELD STUDIES (OFF-CONTINENT EXCURSIONS, INCLUDING HAWAII)

BACKGROUND

For the purpose of this Administrative Procedure, international educational field studies that occur for extended periods of time are Category 5 Field Studies. These trips are intended to broaden a students' understanding of other cultures helping them to see their relationship in the world as a Canadian.

Excursions for the purpose of life experience are considered when proposed during non-instructional time. Such excursions typically draw a range of student involvement by grade and course and are related to the Core Competencies as opposed to a specific curricular focus/learning outcome. Examples include global citizenship and sustainable development projects excursions.

Applications for International Educational Field Studies may be limited or restricted based on local and/or global circumstances. The Superintendent of Schools, or designate, will convey the terms of the limits or restrictions to school principals, as required.

Although the district believes that international educational field studies are valuable opportunities they are not a right of any student, class or group.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. It is the Principal's responsibility to ensure the appropriateness of all International Educational Field Studies and to ensure appropriate planning for student safety. The Educator-in-charge must inform and involve the Principal from initial school-based proposal through to completion of the excursion.

3. An application for an International Field Study must:
 - meet field studies criteria as outlined in AP260
 - be planned to have a direct connection to curriculum and prescribed learning outcomes;
 - be relevant, effective, affordable and accessible;
 - be an extension of a school program that involves a clearly defined class or group; such as second language learners, band or athletic team;
 - Not seriously interfere with the education of students who remain at school nor the students who are participating on the field study. This includes the class(es) that a teacher may miss as a result of sponsoring an off-continent field study.

- Not result in student participants missing more than (5) instructional days.
- 3. All field study proposals will be brought forward to the attention of the District Secondary Leadership Team for discussion. The Director of Instruction for the school has the responsibility to approve proposed International Educational Field Studies.
- 4. The safety and welfare of students and staff is the primary consideration in planning and implementing International Educational Field Studies. The supervisors of each such field study must incorporate appropriate safety practices that consider factors such as the location to which the students are travelling, the nature of the activity in which the students are participating, the skill level of the students, the number of students and the age and development of the students.
- 5. International Educational Field Studies must be under the general supervision of school district staff. Planning and supervision for the field study are the shared responsibility of the Principal and the sponsor teacher.
- 6. Billeting, and/or reciprocal exchanges organized through agencies that involve billeting are not supported as Category 5 travel.
- 7. Parents and guardians must provide informed consent for their child's participation in the International Field Study, including informed consent for activities undertaken on that field study. Parents and guardians must be provided with all appropriate information regarding the date, location, arrangements, level of supervision and known inherent risks specific to the field study in order to give informed consent.
- 8. All International Field Studies must be planned through a VSB approved 3rd party educational travel service provider.
- 9. All International Educational Field Studies must be planned to ensure that changes in travel plans, on short notice, to ensure the safety of students are possible without significant costs to participating students and/or their parents/guardians. Travel insurance plans and/or alternate destination plans are essential to International Educational Field Studies proposals.
- 10. At all times the use of alcohol, tobacco or illegal substances by student participants, volunteers, supervisors or staff is strictly prohibited during International Field Studies, regardless of the circumstances, the age of the participants, or local laws, customs and culture.
- 11. Cancellation insurance must be in place for the field study. The cost of cancellation will not be borne by the District.
- 12. Should the school or District require the field study to change or return home, all field study participants will be required to comply with this directive.

PROCEDURES

All requests must be processed through a time sensitive 3-step approval procedure that has been established to enable systematic planning, review and approval by the Principal and the Director of Instruction, with ample time for feedback on the field study proposal:

1.0 School Level Application

- 1.1 School Application should be received 9-12 months prior to proposed departure date.
- 1.2 The Principal's support is secured using school-based processes, which may include submission of a district Field Studies Planning Form.
- 1.3 The Principal's support must be secured before communicating the proposed international Field study opportunity with students and/or parents, and prior to consultation with any of the District's 3rd party education travel providers.

2.0 Preliminary District Application

- 2.1 Once the Principal's support is secured, Educators who wish to move forward with planning and sponsoring extended off-continent field studies must seek formal District preliminary support via the *Preliminary International Field Study Application* form (REQ-SC-031). The sponsoring Educators must provide Principals with the *Preliminary International Application* (REQ-SC-031) for signature, attached to a detailed Field Studies Proposal Form.
- 2.2 Before approving the *Preliminary International Field Study Application* (REQ-SC-031); the Principal will ensure that the proposal:
 - 2.2.1 Has substantive educational rationale;
 - 2.2.2 Has a duration and number of days absent from school which is reasonable; (The maximum number of days for an extended field study is fourteen (14) days in total, with only 5 of the 14 days being school "Instructional" days.)
 - 2.2.3 Co-ordinates with overall school programs and considers learning and program delivery of other classes remaining in the school;
 - 2.2.4 Is supported by a VSB approved 3rd party educational travel provider.
 - 2.2.5 Is not a prohibited activity or does not involve travel to an area with a travel advisory indicating "avoid all travel" or "avoid non-essential travel" on the <http://travel.gc.ca> webpage. Where the destination has a travel advisory indicating "exercise a high degree of caution" the Principal and Educator-In-Charge must carefully consider whether there are educationally compelling reasons to go to this destination, the appropriateness of the destination, and must make a determination that appropriate safety and security precautions are in place.
 - 2.2.6 Establishes criteria for appropriate access and eligibility;

- 2.2.6.1 Is affordable for the intended group and co-ordinates with the overall school plans for fundraising;
- 2.2.6.2 Has appropriate business and financial arrangements established for the field study including travel arrangements that would provide for comprehensive insurance coverage and cancellation losses responsibility;
- 2.2.6.3 Has a group comprehensive student travel insurance package for all participants that includes comprehensive medical, field study cancellation and field study interruption coverage.
- 2.2.6.4 Has a prudent plan of student supervision
- 2.2.7 Provides for appropriate communications to parents, students, teachers, staff and volunteers on the plans, risks and financial arrangements as the basis of providing informed consent to be involved; and
- 2.2.8 Provides for appropriate pre-travel preparations and the establishment of expectations with students and all other participants.
- 2.2.9 The Principal will review the *Preliminary International Field Study Application* form (REQ-SC-031) before approving it to ensure that it is diligently completed and the field study is well proposed, has inherent and substantive educational value, and addresses the considerations in this Administrative Procedure.
- 2.2.10 Upon the Principal's approval, a copy of the *Preliminary REQ-SC-031 Field Study Application* form and supporting documents is submitted to the Director of Instruction via fieldstudies@vsb.bc.ca to obtain preliminary approval no less than 6 months prior to the proposed departure date.
- 2.2.11 Preliminary approval of the Director of Instruction is required before making any financial commitments and commencing fundraising or fund collection of any nature.
- 2.2.12 The Director of Instruction will take the *Preliminary Request for Approval* (REQ SC-031) and supporting documents to the District Secondary Leadership Team for discussion. The District Secondary Leadership Team will consider all relevant facts and in particular, will consider:
 - 2.2.12.1 the substantive educational rationale for the proposed field study.
 - 2.2.12.2 the reasonableness of the length of the proposed field study, having regard to the number of school days that will be missed and the age of the students.
 - 2.2.12.3 the risks associated with the field study and whether the application for approval provides an appropriate safety management plan.
 - 2.2.12.4 the destination and the risks of travel to that destination (the Principal and the Director of Instruction will not approve travel to a destination where the Department of Foreign Affairs has

- published a travel warning which indicates “avoid non-essential travel” or “avoid all travel”).
- 2.2.12.5 the activities to be undertaken while on the field study.
- 2.2.12.6 the affordability of the proposed field study for its intended participants.
- 2.2.12.7 how the proposed field study aligns with overall school plan and District Education plan.
- 2.2.12.8 preliminary contingency and emergency planning included in the application.
- 2.2.12.9 the impact of the absence of attending school staff from the school.
- 2.2.12.10 the supervision plan.
- 2.2.13 Once the Director of Instruction provides Preliminary Approval, the sponsors can go forward with field study planning, deposits and fundraising.

3.0 District Level Final Approval and Document Submission

- 3.1 Once all field study details have been finalized, including the number of students participating, supervisors identified, travel itinerary finalized, the Educator-in Charge must submit to the District a request for final approval via the *International Request For Field Study (IUSA) REQ-SC-034* form via the online VSB Field Studies Application HUB for final approval no less than 6 weeks prior to the departure date. The application package must include copies of:
 - 3.1.1 Detailed VSB Safety Plan, including risk mitigation strategies
 - 3.1.2 Parent information letter. A full disclosure of risks must be included in parent Communications.
 - 3.1.3 Parent consent form
 - 3.1.4 Final detailed field study Itinerary
 - 3.1.5 Accommodation contact information throughout the excursion
 - 3.1.6 Educator in Charge contact information throughout the excursion
 - 3.1.7 3rd Party Educational Travel provider contact information and emergency contact information of the local guide for the tour..
 - 3.1.8 Completed *District Passport Verification Form* for all students and staff travelling. Copies of student passports are not required by the District.
 - 3.1.9 Proof of group student insurance coverage
 - 3.1.10 Contracts and Waivers from 3rd Party Service Providers

4 Supervision

The selection of supervisors for extended international field studies must address the following considerations in addition to the general supervisor selection considerations identified in Administrative Procedure 260.

4.1 Ratios for Category 5 Field Studies

International travel (excluding continental United States as outlined in Administrative Procedure 260 Category 4) is educational enrichment reserved for grade 11 and 12 secondary level students.

Category 5	
K-9	N/A
10-12	1 supervisor for every 10 students

4.2 Qualifications and Certifications

4.1.1 Field studies outside of Canada will include a least one supervisor who is certified to provide First Aid; and

4.1.2 Field studies outside of the United States will, wherever possible, include at least one supervisor or guide who has first-hand knowledge of the customs and culture of the country being visited.

4.2 Educator in Charge Responsibility for Volunteers

4.2.1 The Educator in charge is responsible for adhering to the AP 490A *Guidelines for Volunteers*, and for ensuring that all volunteer supervisors complete the *Volunteer Conduct Agreement* and a Criminal Record Check prior to being accepted as a chaperones for international travel.

4.2.2 Volunteers include any adult person acting in supervision capacity to support the delivery of an international travel program that is organized through the school planning process.

4.2.2.1 Staff and volunteer supervisors must be available to respond to the supervisory needs of the student twenty-four hours a day for each day of the event.

4.2.2.2 All participants travelling on an International Educational Field study must be in the role of supervisor or student. This includes all attending staff's spouses. Staff and volunteer supervisor's children are not permitted on the field study unless they are legitimately part of the curricular or extra-curricular program.

4.2.2.3 Any CUPE employee who attends and is outside of their classification is considered to be a volunteer therefore they will not receive pay for the activity.

4.2.3 It is required that a meeting of all supervisors, and the Principal be held to:

4.2.3.1 State who is in charge and define the roles of the volunteers

- 4.2.3.2 Communicate that supervisors are to serve as role models to students, as ambassadors for the District and they are expected to conduct themselves accordingly;
- 4.2.3.3 Inform volunteers of appropriate supervision and leadership techniques;
- 4.2.3.4 Review that students must be supervised 24 hours per day including sleep time and unscheduled time – plans for such supervision must be made well in advance of travel;
- 4.2.3.5 Discuss consistency in the application of guidelines, rationale, responsibilities, expectations and follow-up;
- 4.2.3.6 State that the use of alcohol by students is strictly prohibited during field studies regardless of the circumstances, the age of the students, or local laws, customs and culture;
- 4.2.3.7 Outline the expectations concerning the restricted consumption of alcohol by supervisors;
- 4.2.3.8 Prohibit the use of controlled substances by all participants;
- 4.2.3.9 Discuss the issue of smoking and provide clear expectations that will be consistently applied throughout the field study, that are consistent with administrative procedures;
- 4.2.3.10 Define a critical incident plan to deal with health, financial or discipline emergencies that includes a telephone tree and arrangements for two-way communication;
- 4.2.3.11 Agree on what type of behaviour will be deemed inappropriate for both students and supervisors; and
- 4.2.3.12 Agree on the consequences of inappropriate behaviour.

4.3 Pre-Field study Meeting of All Involved

A meeting of all involved (staff, supervisors, students and parents) in the extended field study, must be called to:

- 4.3.1 Discuss student behaviour, discipline and their role as ambassadors of the District;
- 4.3.2 Distribute the itinerary and information on the planned activities, including site based contact information (addresses, phone numbers etc);
- 4.3.3 Distribute a written statement of expectation about student behaviour;
- 4.3.4 Distribute a written statement outlining the possible consequences and liabilities of inappropriate behaviour;
- 4.3.5 Discuss any potential risks and plans to minimize those risks;
- 4.3.6 Define how the identifiable school unit is to be maintained during travel; and
- 4.3.7 Communicate the actions which will be taken should a serious problem emerge in relation to health, finances or discipline.

5 Financial Matters

- 5.1 Before any financial contributions are accepted, parents must be notified, in writing, that if the travel has to be cancelled for any reason the District is not responsible for any costs incurred.

- 5.2 Financial arrangements for staff and volunteer travel costs must be transparent, including the use of a “free” tickets and the accruing of travel benefits earned from the group’s travel. Sponsor teachers shall not place themselves in a financially compromising position or a conflict of interest with their students. A summary of costs associated with the field study shall be completed by the sponsor teacher and submitted to the Principal as part of school based accounting procedures.
- 5.3 Funds raised by all participants (educators, students and supervisors) for an extended international field study will first be used to benefit students and secondly for the benefit of other participants.
- 5.4 An accounting of all funds related to an extended field study must be provided to the Principal within two weeks of completion of the travel.
- 5.5 Fundraising activities to support an International Field Study must comply with school District procedures and be approved by the Principal.
- 5.6 International Field Studies are assumed by the teacher and any supervisor on a voluntary basis. There shall be no compensation for the provision of extra-curricular activities.
- 5.7 If a teacher on call is required as a result of the International Field Study, the cost of the teacher on call will be included in the students’ cost of the field study.
- 5.8 Parents/guardians must be advised before any funds are collected from parents or students, in writing, that should the travel have to be cancelled for any reason the District is not responsible for any costs incurred.
- 5.9 The District will not be responsible for the costs of any International Educational Field Study.

6 Conditions of Participation for Students

- 6.1 Any grade 11 and 12 Vancouver School District (SD 39) student in good standing is eligible to take part in an International Educational Field Study, subject to the criteria and guidelines of the field study. Students who participate in a field study must be currently enrolled in a relevant course or program at their school or be a member of a team sponsored by the teacher undertaking the planning of the field study.
- 6.2 Participation in an International Field Study is not a right. The Principal may determine whether a student may participate in a field study. Non-participation in a field study will not affect a student’s standing or grade.
- 6.3 Participation in an International Field Study is expected for the duration of the planned activity. Family requests for a student to leave a field study early to meet vacationing family abroad will not be supported and the student’s space on the excursion may be forfeited and reimbursed, minus non-refundable deposits. This will be made clear to families at time of deposit.

- 6.4 All participants on an International Educational Field Study must comply with the school and District Student Code of Conduct, abide by all laws and customs of the destination, and act as ambassador of the school district. If the behaviour of a student on a field study, in the opinion of the sponsor teacher, compromises safety of self or others and does not adhere to previously established expectations, that student will be returned home at the expense of the parents/guardians. If it is necessary for the student to be accompanied by a supervisor on the return field study, the parents/guardians of the student will be responsible for the travel costs of that supervisor. Prior to the student being sent home, parents will be notified. Parents will be advised of this possibility as part of the field study conditions.
- 6.5 Student participants on an International Field Study must attend pre-field study meetings at which the activities to be undertaken on the field study, the risks associated with the field study, and the expected standards of conduct and consequences of non-compliance with that standard of conduct are reviewed and agreed to. Students who do not attend pre-field study meetings may be removed from the trip at the discretion of the Principal.
- 6.6 Student participants must satisfy any academic responsibilities prior to and during an International Field Study.
- 6.7 The Educator in Charge will communicate to parents/guardians the responsibilities and expectations of student and adult participants and the consequences of failure to comply with the expected standards of conduct.

7 Health and Safety

- 7.1 All participants, including students, volunteers and the sponsor teacher must provide confirmation of adequate health and hospital insurance coverage prior to departure.
- 7.2 All participants on an International Educational Field study must provide the sponsor teacher with information concerning any known medical or health condition that may require emergency attention on the field study.
- 7.3 The sponsor teacher must carry with them on the field study a copy of the relevant health information for students, including emergency contact information for parents/guardians and school district administration.

Reference: Sections 17, 20, 22, 65, 75, 85 School Act
Motor Vehicles Act
Collective Agreements

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