

STUDYING ABROAD, SPEAKING OUT:

How U.S. Universities
Approach Expression in
Study Abroad Programs



FIRE
Foundation for Individual
Rights in Education

STUDYING ABROAD, SPEAKING OUT

Each year, [hundreds of thousands](#) of students at American universities study abroad.¹ There are many benefits to studying abroad: new experiences, cross-cultural education, broadened research opportunities. But one potential downside that students must carefully consider is the possibility that their destination country could operate under very different rules regarding freedom of expression.

Because of the differing legal environments between nations, both students and their universities must navigate difficult questions about whether it is safe, legal, or wise to engage in expression about religion, politics, gender, sexuality, protest, or other sensitive issues abroad. To better understand how universities address these complicated issues, FIRE surveyed the study abroad policies and resources at 100 top universities in the United States.²

FIRE found a number of commonalities among universities' handling of speech issues in education abroad programs — reliance on State Department resources about student travel and warnings about the risks of engaging in speech or protest abroad, for example. Concerningly, however, FIRE found that a group of universities, including the entire University of California system, maintain policies that sharply limit students' overseas speech and raise questions about how academic institutions should handle conflicts between American expressive rights and repressive censorship policies overseas.

FIRE's survey addresses university policies and educational materials related to expression in study abroad programs, namely: 1) information about student rights abroad, 2) limits on student travel related to speech restrictions abroad, 3) warnings against expressive conduct abroad, and 4) policies governing students' speech in study abroad programs. Additionally, FIRE offers suggestions for universities to better prepare their students for the challenging speech issues they may encounter while still respecting their rights.

To better understand how universities address these complicated issues, FIRE surveyed the study abroad policies and resources at 100 top universities in the United States.

- ¹ Study abroad programs have experienced extensive changes in recent months due to COVID-19, but while the logistics of travel are different and may remain changed in coming years, the underlying freedom of expression issues remain constant.
- ² For the full list of universities and FIRE's full findings, please see the end of this report. Some universities offer training that is not public and instead is made available to students who have entered into study abroad programs or are further in the process of planning. While these trainings may offer more comprehensive education, such information should be publicly available to the general community at the beginning of the process to aid students in choosing the right program. FIRE surveyed only publicly available material. FIRE encourages readers to notify us if we missed any relevant public policies at the surveyed institutions.

INFORMATION ABOUT STUDENT RIGHTS ABROAD

Students choosing to take part in study abroad programs, especially those who have not extensively traveled before, naturally need to be given basic information about navigating life abroad: information about healthcare, immigration policies, currencies, housing, and so forth. But they should also be counseled about their rights, their destination country's legal system, and the differences between the rights they enjoy in the United States and those that they do and do not enjoy in the country they intend to visit.

To address this need, many of the universities FIRE surveyed encourage students to research their travel destinations and volunteer basic resources about how student rights could be implicated by travel abroad. Of the 100 university websites surveyed, FIRE found that 80 of them offer easily accessible links or resource pages for students to review.

Most commonly, universities direct students to information available on the U.S. Department of State's "[U.S. Students Abroad](#)" page. These resources include a series of specialized pages addressing students' unique situations, including some advice on foreign legal systems and their relationship to expressive activity abroad. For example:

- The "[High-Risk Area Travelers](#)" page recommends that travelers "[e]rase any sensitive photos, comments, or other materials from your social media pages, cameras, laptops, and other electronic devices that could be considered controversial or provocative by local groups." It makes clear that students "are subject to the laws and the legal system of the country [they] are visiting."
- The "[Journalist Travelers](#)" page warns: "Find out if you must register with a local press syndicate or receive official press credentials. Sometimes, countries may tolerate 'informal' journalists until there is criticism of the local government. Not having a press credential might be used as a reason to deport or even imprison you."
- "[Faith-Based Travelers](#)" are advised that "[m]any countries have laws that restrict religious expression" and may prohibit, among other things, "public or private prayer or other religious practices," "speaking to others about your beliefs," "criticizing or questioning the religious beliefs of others," and "distributing religious literature."
- "[LGBTI Travelers](#)" are warned that "[m]ore than seventy countries consider consensual same-sex sexual relations a crime, sometimes carrying severe punishment," and that "consensual same-sex sexual activity, public gathering, or dissemination of pro-LGBTI material may be illegal."

INFORMATION ABOUT STUDENT RIGHTS ABROAD

Students are also directed to the State Department’s country-specific [Travel Advisories](#), which range from Level 1 (“Exercise normal precautions”) to Level 4 (“Do not travel”). Individual country pages and travel advisories contain information about ongoing security threats, travel requirements, local laws, and, in some cases, notable speech restrictions. For example, the pages explain that:

- In the [United Arab Emirates](#), “[i]ndividuals may be arrested, fined, and/or deported for . . . making rude gestures, swearing, touching another person without his/her permission, and making derogatory statements about the UAE, the royal families, the local governments or other people.” Travelers are warned to be “cautious about online posting of information that might be deemed to insult or challenge the local or national government,” and to “avoid posting insults or derogatory information about governments, institutions, or individuals.”
- [Qatar](#) “provides for a prison sentence of up to seven years for defaming, desecrating, or committing blasphemy against Islam, Christianity, or Judaism” and “also restricts public worship for non-Islamic faiths.” Additionally, “[i]ncidents involving obscene language, gestures, or insulting comments often result in arrest, overnight imprisonment, and/or fines.”
- Travel to the [People’s Republic of China](#), where “security personnel may detain and/or deport U.S. citizens for sending private electronic messages critical of the PRC government,” should be “reconsider[ed]” because of “arbitrary enforcement of local laws.” In the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the “National Security Law also covers offenses committed by non-Hong Kong residents or organizations outside of Hong Kong, which could subject U.S. citizens who have been publicly critical of the PRC to a heightened risk of arrest, detention, expulsion, or prosecution,” and “activities that authorities interpret as constituting an act of secession, subversion, terrorism, or collusion with a foreign country could result in criminal charges.”

While most universities rely on the State Department for information about general safety on study abroad and information on individual countries’ speech policies, some go further. Texas A&M University, for example, offers its own frequently updated and more in-depth [warnings](#) for “high” and “extreme risk” countries. Speech-related assessments from this summer include:

- In Egypt, “[l]ocal law prohibits protesting or demonstrating without a permit. Being near anti-government protests can draw scrutiny from Egyptian police and security forces.”
- In Russia, “[p]rotests are expected to continue in major cities, with authorities restricting movement and declaring the protests illegal. It is advised to avoid all protests and concentrations of security forces.”
- “Travelers should avoid all demonstrations and follow the advice of local authorities” in Honduras.

FIRE RECOMMENDATION

Ensuring students understand the expressive challenges they may face abroad should be a basic priority for universities that operate such programs — especially if those universities prioritize freedom of expression in the United States, either as public universities bound by the First Amendment or private universities that have voluntarily committed to do so. While the resources and travel warnings offered by the State Department are helpful for students, universities should do more to ensure this necessary information is more readily accessible to students and does not require them to navigate a number of different pages — like country warnings, or pages designed for religious travelers or student journalists — to understand the different ways their expressive rights may be limited at their destination. In short, universities should accept the mantle of responsibility to proactively put information about speech restrictions abroad in front of students, rather than simply encouraging them to seek it out on their own. At the beginning of the study abroad process, specific country information should be publicly available to all interested students, as that information may help students determine how their personal lives and college careers will be impacted by the decision to study overseas.



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LIMITS ON STUDENT TRAVEL RELATED TO SPEECH RESTRICTIONS ABROAD

For obvious reasons — like civil war, public health, terrorism, and so forth — universities may limit what study abroad options they will offer or coordinate for students. In most cases, when a university places restrictions on study abroad destinations, it does so based on advisories or warnings from the State Department,³ which, in some cases, are issued based on government suppression of speech, protest, or religion in those countries.

FIRE found that 47 of the universities we surveyed had readily available information about study abroad country restrictions, with a majority noting that they used or relied on State Department advisories to determine where students could not travel. These universities generally prohibit or require special permission to travel to countries with a Level 4 advisory, “the highest advisory level due to greater likelihood of life-threatening risks” where “the U.S. government may have very limited ability to provide assistance.” Additionally, some universities, like the [University of Maryland](#), [Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute](#), and the [University of Georgia](#), restrict travel to Level 3-rated countries, where travelers are advised to “reconsider travel” “due to serious risks to safety and security.” For example, [Belarus](#) is given a Level 4 advisory “due to the arbitrary enforcement of laws, and risk of detention,” and [Hong Kong](#) is listed as Level 3 in part due to “arbitrary enforcement of local laws.”

In addition to State Department advisories, universities sometimes employ other methods to determine how to limit student travel. Texas A&M University [offers](#) a weekly advisory report produced with travel risk consulting company [FocusPoint International](#), which creates risk summaries and a country travel advisory list that warns that travel to “Extreme Risk countries or countries with an Extreme Risk region” requires additional permission and review.

The Ohio State University utilizes resources, including State Department advisories and its evacuation insurance provider’s rating system, to create its own [risk scale](#) ranging from Tier 1: Universal Risk, where travelers should assume basic level of risk, to Tier 5: Extreme Risk, where travel is “highly discouraged” and not permitted for undergraduate programs at minimum.

Similarly, Harvard University’s Global Support Services [shares](#) risk ratings “based on guidance from several sources, including the U.S. State Department and other foreign ministries, our worldwide security consultants, and regional experts among Harvard’s faculty and staff.” GSS notes:

Whereas the U.S. State Department and similar foreign affairs organizations base their ratings off their own citizens’ business and tourist travel, Harvard’s ratings take into account the unique and diverse work and backgrounds of our students, faculty, staff, and other academics. The University’s student travel policies also correlate with the Harvard GSS risk ratings.

FIRE RECOMMENDATION

As always, transparency matters. Universities should be clear and upfront about the reasons why they may limit institutional travel to some countries, but promote it in others. Regardless of whether universities rely entirely on State Department advisories, or use other services to determine their travel restrictions, students should be able to easily understand why and how universities reach their decisions on study abroad travel.

3 While only some of the universities surveyed by FIRE did not have information about destination restrictions readily available to the public, it is unlikely that any university is operating without safety-based limits on student travel.

WARNINGS AGAINST EXPRESSIVE CONDUCT ABROAD

As discussed above, universities should, and often do, notify their students that travel destinations will have speech restrictions, or encourage students to research overseas laws on their own. But some go a step further, offering blanket warnings against engaging in speech overseas, especially at protests and on social media.

FIRE found such publicly available warnings at 39 of the universities we surveyed. The warnings range from short directives to avoid demonstrations to longer explanations about why protest can be dangerous, and the legal risks that joining or attending them may entail. These statements generally warn students against joining protests for safety or visa reasons, but do not have clear university disciplinary action associated with them.⁴ For example (emphases added):

- The University of Minnesota **warns**: “**Keep away from political demonstrations, particularly those directed toward the United States.** If you see a situation developing, resist the temptation to satisfy your curiosity and investigate what is happening. Walk the other way. **Do not agree to newspaper or other media interviews regarding political conflicts.** It is important to remain as inconspicuous as possible. Do not make reference to your program group. In such cases, always say ‘no comment’ and hang up or walk the other way.”
- At the University of Washington, students are **advised**: “Whether you are passionate about the cause or a curious observer, **do not attend any political demonstrations while abroad.** Not only do these events have the potential to escalate from peaceful gatherings to violent clashes with police and government forces, but **as a foreigner, your participation may also be illegal and can carry severe consequences. U.S. students abroad have been arrested, detained, subjected to fines and jail sentences, and forcefully deported due to their real or perceived involvement in demonstrations.** If you know of a scheduled rally or demonstration, avoid the affected area of the city. If you come into contact with a demonstration by chance, adjust your route and leave the area.”
- The University of Southern California **cautions**: “**Avoid crowds, protest groups or other potentially volatile situations,** as well as restaurants and entertainment places where Americans are known to congregate. While ‘safety in numbers’ is generally a good rule to follow, traveling as a ‘pack’ of American students may attract attention and possibly cause problems.” USC also notes, “**Do not get involved in any social or political unrest or illegal movements, no matter how sympathetic you are with the cause or the people involved.**”
- **Carnegie Mellon University** reminds students that the burden of protest attendance remains on them rather than the university: “In some cities and countries, public political demonstrations are not uncommon. **If you choose to participate in a demonstration, be aware that some of your hosts may not appreciate that you, a foreign visitor, are publicly opposing their political or social system. Your behavior abroad is your responsibility, not Carnegie Mellon’s, and you should think about the consequences before acting.**”

4 Warnings against speech that also suggest or threaten disciplinary action are discussed later in this report, and are not included in this section.

WARNINGS AGAINST EXPRESSIVE CONDUCT ABROAD

- The University of Texas at Austin [advises](#): “Be mindful of what you are posting on social media while abroad and never assume privacy in other countries” and “Assume that any activity on your device, especially on the Internet, will be intercepted. Be especially mindful of any security warnings from web browsers and applications.” Regarding protest, UT Austin [warns](#), “Public protests and demonstrations are common, but they can be very dangerous. Even a peaceful protest or demonstration can become violent without warning. Students should never participate in a public rally, demonstration, or protest. If these events occur during your program, avoid the area.” And, “It is advised not to express political views on social media.”
- The University of Colorado, Boulder takes a somewhat different position, advising students of the safety considerations at play in foreign protests, but also [noting](#) the reputational risks student participation could pose to the university: “Participating in an illegal demonstration or strike might not only cause you physical harm, it might also be harmful to CU’s relationship with the host institution or country.”

These warnings generally do not carry sanction warnings from the university, but do make clear that students should expect other consequences, including threats to their safety or possible imprisonment.

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FIRE RECOMMENDATION

Generally speaking, universities should seek to inspire students to engage in conversation, debate, and expression. However, this mission may put both students and institutions in an uncomfortable situation when coordinating study overseas. The simple fact is that the same expression universities might, or should, encourage at their U.S. campuses could lead to trouble elsewhere. But while administrators have a responsibility to warn students about the legal risks of expression, they should still endeavor to do so in a manner that is respectful of the importance and value of speech.

University training material should make clear the safety risks students may be undertaking by protesting, tweeting, or practicing their faith abroad, and the potential that they may be arrested, prosecuted, expelled from the country, or outside the reach of U.S. authorities.

However, they should also ensure that students know that the risk of engaging in speech will vary by country, and that understanding specific local laws and culture is required to give students a clearer picture of the rights and risks. Warnings should not be so general as to suggest to students that, no matter where they are, it's better if they say nothing at all. Students should be prepared, sufficiently warned, and cognizant of the local legal system, but they should not be made to believe that all kinds of speech carry similar risks regardless of their host countries. Students traveling to France, for instance, should not be given the same warnings about expressive activity as students traveling to China. When it comes to warnings about speech abroad, one size will not fit all.

Administrators can and should warn students of specific situations and sensitive topics that could incur risk, but they should not lose sight of the importance of students' agency. Wisely or not, students may feel

strongly enough about an issue to engage in speech overseas — perhaps because they have family or friends personally affected by events in their host country, or because they wish to show support for political, religious, or other meaningful movements taking place — and it should be clear to them if their university is simply advising against speech overseas.

Lastly, universities should do more than just warn students about the dangers of speech overseas. They should also teach students about the tools they can use to protect themselves, whether via simple suggestions like changing privacy settings on social media or more complex advice regarding the protection of sensitive information on electronic devices while traveling across borders.

Administrators can and should warn students of specific situations and sensitive topics that could incur risk, but they should not lose sight of the importance of students' agency.

POLICIES GOVERNING STUDENTS' SPEECH IN STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS

As discussed above, some universities offer a series of resources or advisories to students taking part in study abroad programs that will educate them about speech rights (or lack thereof) abroad and warn them about engaging in expressive activities. But FIRE's survey found 18 universities, including public institutions, that went further and crafted policies that confusingly incorporate foreign laws into university conduct policies or govern what students can say abroad, raising questions about what an American university's role is in handling student expression overseas.

For example, Michigan State University's Education Abroad program [asserts](#):

As a condition of participation in the Education Abroad program, you agree to not participate in and to avoid any demonstrations and protests. Even those with peaceful intentions may become unsafe and/or involve negative confrontations with local law enforcement. If you are accidentally caught up in a demonstration, you must leave the area as soon as it is safe to do so. If you have any questions or concerns about civil unrest before your program or while abroad, contact us. If you participate in a local demonstration or protest you are subject to local laws and may be subject to disciplinary action by MSU, your host institution, and/or program provider.

*Remember that you are serving as an ambassador of MSU and the United States.
[Emphasis added.]*

Similarly, Northwestern University's "Travel Safety" page [warns](#) that "Students are not permitted to participate in—or attend—any kind of public demonstration."

Boston College's Study Abroad Handbook explicitly [states](#), "Do not participate in any political demonstrations."

But FIRE's survey found a handful of universities, including public institutions, that went further and crafted policies that confusingly incorporate foreign laws into university conduct policies or govern what students can say abroad, raising questions about what an American university's role is in handling student expression overseas.

POLICIES GOVERNING STUDENTS' SPEECH IN STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS

Georgetown University's [conditions](#) of participation for its study abroad program also ban involvement in protest, but go further:

I understand that conduct considered unacceptable to Georgetown University may lead to my dismissal from the program. Such conduct includes, but is not limited to: ... attendance at and/or participation in rallies, protests, or demonstrations, or participation in political activities.

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While the broad ban on attendance at overseas protests — not defined as protests that are illegal or turn violent, but rather “rallies” and “protests” more generally — is troubling enough, Georgetown’s conditions go further by listing “participation in political activities” as potentially sanctionable conduct. “Political activities” is an incredibly broad phrase. Would wearing a pro-LGBT pride pin count as a political activity? Would writing an op-ed discussing foreign policy count? What about a student’s tweet criticizing their host country’s president? It’s not clear from Georgetown’s policy, meaning that students taking part in the university’s study abroad program may reasonably conclude that they should self-censor potentially political speech rather than risk dismissal from their program.

North Carolina State University’s Study Abroad Participant Agreement [states](#):

Each foreign country has its own laws and regulations and has standards of acceptable conduct in the areas of dress, manners, morals, religion, social customs, politics, alcohol use, drug

use and behavior. I recognize that behavior or conduct which violate those laws or standards could harm the program’s effectiveness and the University’s relations with those countries in which the program is located. I also understand explicitly that behavior or conduct which violates those laws or standards could harm my own health and safety as well as the health and safety of other participants in the program. I take full responsibility for my behavior and conduct. This acceptance of responsibility applies to my conduct and behavior whether or not I am under the direct supervision of the University, University employees, agents, or program officials.

[...]

I agree that the University has the right to enforce all of the standards of conduct, rules and regulations described above and in any other materials provided to me. The enforcement of these rules, regulations and standards are the responsibility of the program director and the Study Abroad Office.

POLICIES GOVERNING STUDENTS' SPEECH IN STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS

NC State's agreement appears to suggest to students that the university's Study Abroad Office may punish students if they violate not only their host country's laws, but also its "standards of acceptable conduct in the areas of dress, manners, morals, religion, social customs, politics, alcohol use, drug use and behavior." While violations of certain cultural norms could lead to embarrassment for NC State or even legal trouble for the involved students, it is difficult to imagine that students taking part in the study abroad program can accurately predict how the university will determine what violates standards of morals, religion, or dress in a foreign country. Indeed, incorporating vague cultural standards into conduct policies raises troubling questions about whether students could face punishment for openly expressing frowned-upon religious views or opinions about sexuality, for example.

The University of California's Education Abroad Program, which [works](#) with ten campuses within the UC system and coordinates travel programs in over 40 countries, offers an even more troubling set of rules in its "[Student Conduct and Discipline Policy](#)." The policy notes that, while it is similar to UC Policies on American campuses, "UCEAP standards may be set higher and may be stricter because of the broader consequences of student conduct when a student is participating in UCEAP (e.g., student conduct may affect UCEAP's relations with the host institution and the local community or arouse anti-American sentiments)."

It goes on to explain that "violation of UC, local institution, or UCEAP policies or regulations" can lead to sanctions ranging from reprimand to dismissal from the program:

Behaviors that may lead to dismissal from UCEAP include actions that, in the judgment of UCEAP officials, jeopardize a student's welfare, that of fellow students, or the program.

Such actions include, but are not limited to:

- *Violation of the laws of the country or host institution*
- *Open abuse of the customs and mores of the community*

[...]

- *Harassment of any kind—physically or verbally abusing, disrespecting, or threatening any program member or host institution official*

[...]

- *Inappropriate, disrespectful, rude, or aggressive communication or actions toward others, and uncivil behavior or communication (e.g. talking back, willfully ignoring program or host institution communications, physical or psychological intimidation, culturally insensitive behavior, name calling, willful or malicious maligning of any member of the UCEAP community, use of obscene or profane language) with others, particularly any official associated with the program*

[...]

- *Bias-motivated behavior, intentionally or unintentionally (e.g., on the basis of a disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, ethnicity, size, age, etc.)*

POLICIES GOVERNING STUDENTS' SPEECH IN STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS

Universities must work to preserve student safety in their overseas programs, but that does not mean they are granted a blank check to punish any unpopular or rude student speech under the guise of safety. Readers of this report likely have vastly different understandings of what language or behavior is “inappropriate,” “rude,” “profane,” “offensive,” “culturally insensitive,” or “open abuse of the customs and mores of the community.” Perceptions among students are no doubt equally diverse, and even the most basic expression or academic conversations about religion, politics, gender, or race could violate a subjective interpretation of these terms. Policies like the UC System’s can leave students in the dark about what their rights are within their university, when they are likely already uncertain about what their rights are abroad. Such a policy would undoubtedly be in violation of students’ First Amendment rights if applied within the United States.

While they are not within the top 100 universities surveyed, FIRE found other universities maintaining similar policies while conducting research on this issue. [Clarion University](#)’s Handbook for Faculty/Staff Conducting Study Abroad or Service-Learning Abroad warns “Do NOT participate in political demonstrations or take sides in a Civil War or coup” and then explains:

No tweets, facebook posts, instagrams, yik yaks, snapchats, etc. which may be viewed as taking a stance or side

The right to free speech as we Americans know it does not exist in other countries. Participating in political demonstrations or posting on facebook your opinion about such events could put all program participants at risk. The Clarion Student Handbook prohibits students from “...recklessly creating a risk...”

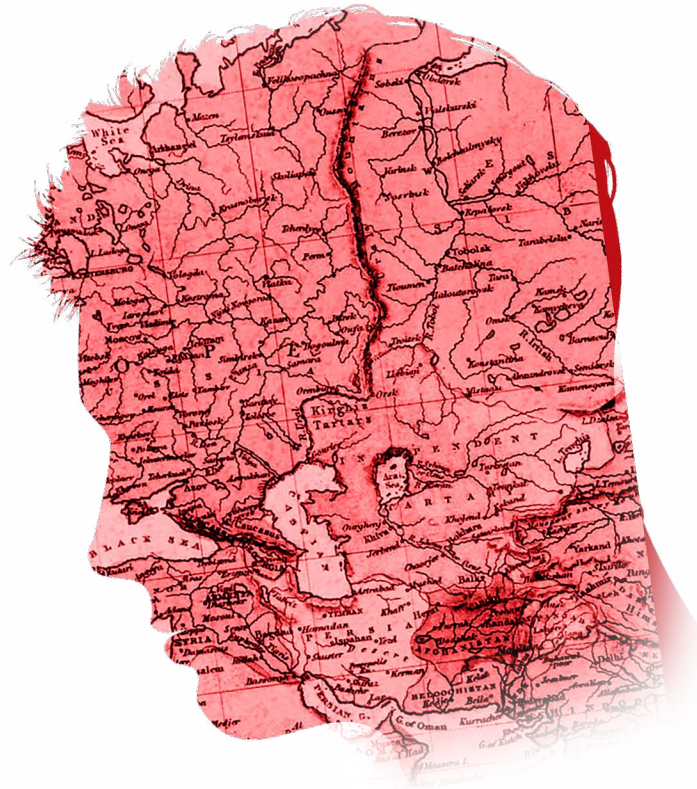
Millersville University’s [Participant Conduct Expectations](#) notifies students that “As a condition of participation in MU-Related International Travel, including study abroad programs, you agree to not participate in and to avoid any demonstrations and protests abroad. Even those with peaceful intentions may become unsafe and/or involve negative confrontations with local law enforcement.” And Niagara Area Community College’s Study Abroad Guidelines [state](#): “While in the host country, participants must refrain from political activity for their own safety. Participants in overseas programs may not participate in such political activities as joining political parties or unions, demonstrations, and soliciting political material or picketing.”

No tweets, facebook posts, instagrams, yik yaks, snapchats, etc. which may be viewed as taking a stance or side.



FIRE RECOMMENDATION

Universities are in a delicate position when coordinating student travel and programs overseas — but that does not mean they should mirror unjust overseas speech restrictions within their own policies. University policies on speech in study abroad programs should make clear that students are bound by their destination country’s legal systems, that they may be required to leave the program and country if legal concerns or serious threats of violence are posed in response to their expression, and that administrators may be unable to provide aid in certain situations. The policies should make clear what expression has the potential to violate foreign laws or customs or partner institution policies and what speech-related consequences students can expect from state officials, immigration authorities, and partner university administrators. But universities should not develop vague policies that create additional confusion among students and the potential for self-censorship and administrative abuse.



Universities are in a delicate position when coordinating student travel and programs overseas — but that does not mean they should mirror unjust overseas speech restrictions within their own policies.



CONCLUSION

While the differing legal systems overseas create unique challenges and difficulties in study abroad programs, universities managing these programs can follow the same principles that should guide questions about freedom of expression on U.S. campuses:

- **Education:** Just like those in the United States, students abroad should know their rights — and their universities are perfectly positioned to teach them. Administrators should ensure students understand the differing speech protections between borders and the varied consequences of violating laws, customs, or institutional policies. They should make it as easy as possible for students to access this material. Rather than encouraging students to simply do their own research about their destination country, universities should have relevant information about expressive issues readily available to students as they make their decisions about studying abroad.
- **Ease of access:** Universities should consider having all of the relevant expressive resources in one place, rather than spread between safety and security pages, code of conduct guides, State Department pages, and travel warning lists — a “one stop shop” for free expression issues in study abroad. If students intend to go overseas, they can make the best choices for themselves when they have all of the information at hand and can know what a location or program will mean for their rights and their college careers. A student wondering if their ideas, religious beliefs, and/or political views are safe to express in a prospective program should be able to find up-to-date information they need to make an educated decision in one place.
- **Transparent, clear, speech-protective policies:** Universities should not reflexively incorporate illiberal censorship rules into their policies just because some of their program locations may have more restrictive legal systems, or create policies for all study abroad students based on the most speech-restrictive destinations some students visit. University policies should instead clearly explain the competing legal and administrative systems governing students, the consequences they could face for expressive activity, and how administrators will handle threats to student speech — but they should not pose additional threats to student rights.

Finally, universities should routinely reassess their exchange programs and study abroad partnerships to identify whether the facts on the ground have changed in a manner that impacts student rights. Last summer, FIRE [wrote](#) that universities needed to reassess their study abroad programs in Hong Kong as the state of free speech dramatically worsened. Since then, it has declined even more aggressively. Universities should not be conducting programs in Hong Kong today the same way they might have five years ago. They should be discussing what speech protections still exist at their partner institutions, what new warnings should be given to students considering travel there, and whether they should scale back their programs. Global politics are fluid, and universities must mirror that.

As FIRE has [argued for years](#), universities do not need to disengage from the world simply because engagement poses unique challenges to speech. But their engagement must be guided by their commitments to freedom of speech and academic freedom and their responsibility to protect students’ rights. As always, FIRE stands ready to assist universities in preserving expressive freedoms for their communities, whether they’re in the United States or abroad.

SCHOOL	INFORMATION	RESTRICTIONS	WARNINGS	POLICIES
Texas A&M University	✓	✓		
University of Texas at Austin	✓	✓	✓ ✓	
Indiana University		✓		
Ohio State University		✓ ✓		
University of Minnesota	✓		✓	
University of Florida	✓			
Florida State University	✓	✓ ✓		
Michigan State University		✓		✓
University of Georgia	✓	✓		
University of Washington	✓		✓	
University of California, Los Angeles	✓		✓	✓*

SCHOOL	INFORMATION	RESTRICTIONS	WARNINGS	POLICIES
University of Colorado Boulder			✓	
Georgetown University	✓			✓
Princeton University		✓		✓
Harvard University	✓	✓	✓	
Columbia University	✓ ✓			
Massachusetts Institute of Technology				
Yale University	✓	✓	✓	
Stanford University	✓	✓		
University of Chicago	✓	✓		
University of Pennsylvania			✓	
California Institute of Technology	✓			

SCHOOL	INFORMATION	RESTRICTIONS	WARNINGS	POLICIES
Johns Hopkins University	✓			
Northwestern University	✓	✓		✓
Duke University	✓	✓	✓	
Dartmouth University		✓	✓	
Brown University	✓	✓		
Vanderbilt University	✓	✓		
Rice University	✓			
Washington University in St. Louis				
Cornell University	✓	✓		
University of Notre Dame	✓	✓	✓	
Emory University	✓			

SCHOOL	INFORMATION	RESTRICTIONS	WARNINGS	POLICIES
University of California, Berkeley				✓*
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor	✓	✓		
University of Southern California	✓		✓	
Carnegie Mellon University	✓	✓	✓	
University of Virginia	✓	✓	✓	
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill	✓✓			
Wake Forest University	✓			
Tufts University	✓			
University of California, Santa Barbara	✓✓			✓*
University of Rochester	✓	✓	✓	
Boston College	✓	✓		✓

SCHOOL	INFORMATION	RESTRICTIONS	WARNINGS	POLICIES
Georgia Institute of Technology		✓		
University of California, Irvine	✓			✓*
University of California, San Diego				✓*
University of California, Davis	✓		✓	✓*
William & Mary	✓	✓		
Tulane University				
Boston University	✓			
Brandeis University			✓	
Case Western Reserve University	✓		✓	
University of Wisconsin, Madison	✓	✓	✓	
University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign	✓	✓	✓	

SCHOOL	INFORMATION	RESTRICTIONS	WARNINGS	POLICIES
Lehigh University	✓			
Northeastern University		✓		
Pepperdine University	✓	✓		
University of Miami	✓			
Purdue University, West Lafayette	✓	✓	✓	
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute	✓	✓		
Santa Clara University	✓		✓	
Villanova University	✓		✓	
Syracuse University	✓	✓		
University of Maryland	✓	✓		
University of Pittsburgh	✓	✓	✓	

SCHOOL	INFORMATION	RESTRICTIONS	WARNINGS	POLICIES
Penn State University, University Park	✓		✓	
Rutgers University, New Brunswick	✓			✓
University of Connecticut	✓	✓		✓
Fordham University	✓		✓	
Loyola Marymount University	✓		✓	
Southern Methodist University	✓			
University of Massachusetts, Amherst	✓		✓	
Clemson University	✓			
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University	✓		✓	
American University	✓		✓	
Baylor University	✓			

SCHOOL	INFORMATION	RESTRICTIONS	WARNINGS	POLICIES
Yeshiva University	✓			
Brigham Young University, Provo	✓			
Gonzaga University	✓		✓	
Howard University		✓		
Michigan State University		✓		✓
North Carolina State University	✓	✓		✓
Stevens Institute of Technology		✓		
Texas Christian University	✓		✓	
University of Denver	✓	✓	✓	
Binghamton University	✓			
Colorado School of Mines	✓			

SCHOOL	INFORMATION	RESTRICTIONS	WARNINGS	POLICIES
Elon University	✓		✓	
Marquette University	✓	✓	✓	
Stony Brook University	✓			
University at Buffalo	✓	✓	✓	
University of California, Riverside				✓*
University of Iowa	✓	✓	✓	
Auburn University	✓	✓		
University of Arizona	✓	✓		
University of California, Merced				✓*
University of California, Santa Cruz	✓			✓*
University of Utah	✓	✓	✓	

SCHOOL	INFORMATION	RESTRICTIONS	WARNINGS	POLICIES
University of Oregon	✓		✓	

*University of California Education Abroad Program policies, discussed in the section titled “Policies governing students’ speech in study abroad programs,” apply to the ten campuses within the University of California system.

**Multiple check marks are shown when a university offers more than one resource or policy satisfying the criteria.