



Title: Accompanying Individuals on International Travel Policy
Effective Date: August 1, 2025
Issuing Authority: Provost
Policy Contact: Assistant Vice President, Office of Global Engagement
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Purpose

This policy defines basic institutional requirements that support the participation of accompanying individuals on University-related international travel programs.

Scope

This policy applies to all persons identified as accompanying individuals who participate in University-related international travel. Individual travelers are responsible for compliance with this policy and the international travel policy when undertaking University-related international travel. Units sponsoring University-related international travel are responsible for informing travelers of this policy and the international travel policy and for facilitating compliance for individuals where appropriate.

Exclusions

Mercer University assumes no responsibility for non-sponsored activities or liability for individual guests adjacent to the international travel.

Definitions

As used in this policy, the following terms have the meaning specified below:

Accompanying Individual: an individual who is not a Mercer University student or employee and who is not associated with the teaching or logistical delivery of the program, such as a spouse, partner, legal dependent(s), or minor child of program faculty and/or staff.. An accompanying individual may also be an adult supervising a legal dependent or minor (relative or non-relative adult).

Accompanying individuals fall into one of two categories:

1. Individuals not associated with the teaching, logistical delivery of the program, or
2. Special academic guests

Accompany Individuals wishing to travel with all or a portion of the international travel program must adhere to the Accompanying Individuals Policy.

Students participating in a study abroad program may not sponsor an accompanying individual.

Special Academic Guest: In some instances, international travel programs may invite a Special Academic Guest(s), who may or may not be a Mercer University employee, to join the program to advance academic and co-curricular learning of the program participants. Special Academic Guest requests to the Office of Global Engagement or Mercer On Mission must include a clear rationale for their participation. Special Academic Guests financials and expenses follow the Accompanying Individual Policy and procedures described below.

Special Departmental and Leadership Guest: a Mercer University employee visiting the program but not associated with the delivery of teaching or logistics of the program. Examples may include departmental guests such as deans, associate deans, future program directors, etc. Approval to travel with the program for these guests may be granted via the Office of Global Engagement or Mercer On Mission Office which requires a rationale for inclusion of special guests on an international program. However, program funding must not be used to pay for travel expenses for these guests. An alternate funding source (i.e., departmental or foundational funds) must be used.

Special Guest: On occasion, international travel programs will have special guests wishing to attend all or a portion of the program. Participation of all special guests will require support from the international travel program director. All special guest requests must be received by the Office of Global Engagement or Mercer On Mission by the applicable program planning deadline, and applications will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Requests made after the deadline may be considered but may be denied if logistical and payment deadlines have passed.

Policy Statement

Individuals not providing direct benefits to international travel programs may travel on the program with approval from the Office of Global Engagement or Mercer On Mission. Accompanying individuals fall into two categories: (1) Individuals not associated with the teaching, logistical delivery of the program, or (2) Special Academic Guests as defined above. These individuals are referred to as **Accompanying Individuals** and must adhere to the Accompanying Individuals Policy. The presence of these individuals on the program must be disclosed in advance during program planning and be approved by the Office of Global Engagement or Mercer On Mission to travel with the program. Financial management of the Accompanying Individual's expenses and risk management will be taken into consideration based on the logistics of the program.

While Mercer University does not restrict Accompanying Individuals traveling with an international travel program, the practice should not, in any way, interfere with the execution of the program nor should the addition of the accompanying individuals become burdensome or require increased duties by any other member of the Mercer University community. Mercer University reserves the right to impose limits and/or conditions on the roles, activities, and presence of accompanying individuals, including minor children, on international travel programs. Such limits or conditions derive from concerns related to health, safety, security, and administrative burden as determined by Mercer University. In some cases, accompanying individuals may not be permitted to join the international travel group for some or all activities.

All accompanying individuals, directly or indirectly, become representatives of Mercer University and its educational mission. Violations of this policy or the international travel policy include but are not limited to limitations on group travel activities and ineligibility of future travel with the University.

Supervision of Minor Children

Accompanying individuals who are legal dependents or children under the age of 18 must be accompanied by another supervising adult. Hiring or relying on program participants or program staff for childcare during the program is not acceptable nor allowed. An additional relative or nonrelated adult is permissible so long as their role is to serve as a primary childcare professional while approved program staff are performing program duties. Such persons must follow all other conditions and requirements of the Policy on Accompanying Individuals. Any additional costs incurred because of alternate arrangements made for accompanying individuals is the responsibility of the program staff who is sponsoring the accompanying individual. However, the Program Director with the Office of Global Engagement and Mercer On Mission holds responsibility for approving logistical arrangements made on behalf of the accompanying individual. Program Directors and instructional staff administering or teaching on the program may be called upon at any moment 24/7 if an emergency or other situation arises. Therefore, it is Mercer University's international travel program staff's responsibility to ensure that they have arranged for proper childcare and supervision at all times for their accompanying minor or legal dependents.

Program Leadership Responsibilities

The Program Director must carefully consider approving accompanying individuals on their program as the Program Director assumes far greater responsibility than overseeing the academic content of the program. Program Directors must be available on a 24/7 basis to program participants while the program is in session. International travel programs administered by Mercer University are designed by academic units as complete programs focusing on both the curricular and developmental needs of participants. Mercer University expects Program Directors to serve as the program participants' primary contact and the first responder to a participant emergency. If the program needs to depart the region for political, natural disaster, or other reasons, the Program Director's responsibility is to travel with the program participants. Additionally, Program Directors hold sole responsibility for approval of logistical arrangements.

Roles and Expectations of Accompany Individuals

Accompanying individuals are not considered in any way to be Program Directors, program staff, or official representatives of Mercer University. Therefore, they shall take no role in leading the group or making decisions regarding the program or program participants. For personal and institutional liability considerations, accompanying individuals are required to have limited contact with students taking part in an international travel program. Under no circumstances are accompanying individuals to instruct, manage, or supervise students; administer or otherwise handle finances; or assist or participate in any other administrative aspect of international travel programs. In no event shall accompanying individuals share accommodations with students on the program.

Liability and Risk Management for Accompanying Individuals

Accompanying individuals who will be traveling with the program while the international travel program is in session must sign the *Acknowledgement of Risk and Release* form located with the Office of Global Engagement. Program Directors and instructional staff administering or teaching on the program may be called upon at any moment 24/7 if an emergency or other situation arises. Therefore, it is Mercer University international travel program staff responsibility to ensure that they have arranged for proper childcare and supervision at all times for their accompanying minor dependents.

International Travel Programs Insurance

For health and safety reasons, all travelers inclusive of accompanying individuals are required to enroll in OnCall Travel Assistance for the duration of their stay on the international travel program. The Program Director and staff will be responsible for ensuring the enrollment of the accompanying individual and cost of insurance for accompanying individuals will be the responsibility of the sponsoring Mercer University program staff administering or teaching on the international travel program. Insurance enrollment instructions for accompanying individuals will be provided by the Office of Global Engagement. Accompanying individuals are required to upload proof of insurance coverage through the Office of Global Engagements website. Failure to provide proof of insurance prior to departure will result in revocation in the accompanying individual's permission to travel with the program.

It is the responsibility of the Program Directors, sponsoring Mercer University program staff, and accompanying individuals to ensure that they have made arrangements for proper documentation and health concerns for overseas travel. In preparation for travel, accompanying individuals are encouraged to read all pre-departure materials and participate in orientation sessions. Mercer University is not responsible for the injury, illness, loss, or death of accompany individuals.

Accompanying individuals are not protected by the Mercer University liability insurance. However, although accompanying individuals are not program staff or participants, they are expected to abide by all program policies and any additional restrictions that are imposed for safety reasons.

Logistical Arrangements for Accompanying Individuals

Accompanying individuals may participate in program excursions and field trips, provided that such participation does not inflate the cost of the excursion. Program excursions are planned to accommodate all students plus the participating Program Director(s) and program staff.

Accompanying individuals' participation in these activities should be planned and approved by the Office of Global Engagement and Mercer On Mission in advance of program departure.

Expenses for Accompanying Individuals

Program funds **must not be used** to pay for any expenses for Accompanying Individuals.

Program funds may only be used to pay expected program-related expenses as outlined in the approved program budget for expenses incurred on behalf of (a) individuals providing direct benefit to the international travel program and (b) student participants. None of the accompanying individual's expenses (airfare, in-country transportation, meals, museum/event entrance fees, etc.) shall be paid by the program or any other Mercer University funding source. In addition, Program Directors and/or the sponsoring program staff member are personally responsible for (a) organizing travel arrangements for accompanying individuals and (b) additional costs incurred by special accommodations, such as a bigger room or apartment.

Program Directors must contact the Office of Global Engagement (studyabroad@mercer.edu) in the event of special circumstances where group expenses need to include expenses incurred by the Accompanying Individual(s). The Office of Global Engagement will assist in addressing these issues on a case-by-case basis and facilitate collection of funds from the Accompanying Individual(s) to offset these costs

Accompanying Individual Application

Program Directors, faculty/staff sponsors, or accompanying participants who understand and are willing to meet these conditions must submit an online Application for Accompanying Individual and sign an Acknowledgment of Risk and Release document by the program planning deadlines for the relevant program. These documents must be submitted at mercerabroad.com. The ability of an individual to accompany the program is not final until these documents have been submitted, reviewed, and approved by the Office of Global Engagement.

Additional Resources

International Travel Policy: <https://policies.mercer.edu/international-travel/>

Website Address

Mercer On Mission: <https://www.mercer.edu/global-impact/mercer-on-mission/>

Office of Global Engagement: <https://globalengagement.mercer.edu/>