

Vetting Potential Experiential Learning Host Organizations

When planning an experiential learning (EL) opportunity with an off-campus host organization, program coordinators and instructors play a key role in ensuring the placement offers a safe, inclusive and meaningful learning environment for students.

This checklist is designed to support the vetting process by helping assess whether a host organization is a credible partner – one that can provide a welcoming and accessible learning environment, free of harassment and discrimination. It also offers an opportunity to strengthen relationships with host organizations, ensuring the EL experience benefits both student learning and the broader community.

General Vetting Checklist:

- Does the organization have a preexisting relationship with Queen's? Is there an existing Affiliation or Experiential Learning Agreement in place? (if unsure, email the Office of the University Secretariat and Legal Counsel at usec.contracts@queensu.ca)
- Does the organization have a well-established presence and/or positive reputation in your local, regional, national or international community?

If not, look for some or all of the following:

- Organization has a website
 - Address, phone numbers, and email domains you have as contact information match information posted on the website
 - No concerning information found when doing a Google search (try various search terms, such as "organization name + scam" or "organization name + news")
 - The company is listed with a local Better Business Bureau or a related industry or professional organization
 - Mission or value statements align with the learning outcomes of the course or program
- Is the organization in a location that is accessible to your students? Are there any risks associated with that location that would be difficult to mitigate?

- Has the organization identified a staff member that can be contacted by the student and/or program coordinator or instructor? Are you able to connect with that individual to discuss the EL opportunity?
- Can the organization commit to a supervision structure (in-person or remote) that will support your students' learning during the EL experience?
- Can the organization commit to providing the student with a meaningful experience that will help the student meet the course learning objectives?
- Does the organization demonstrate a commitment to Indigeneity, equity, diversity, inclusion, accessibility and anti-racism? In what ways do they communicate this commitment (i.e. policies, website content, verbal commitment during conversation)
- Does the organization have transparent policies and procedures regarding discrimination and harassment that include sexual harassment in the workplace?
- Does the organization have a demonstratable health and safety policy and program? Information may be available through the organization's website or through a contact from the organization. In Ontario, a safety check can be run through the [Workplace Safety and Insurance Board](#) . An in-depth assessment of the organization's health and safety program as it relates to the work the student will be performing can be done using the checklist made available through Queen's Department of Environmental Health and Safety.
- Will the organization provide health and safety training that is specific to their location, site, and/or special populations?
- Does the organization carry a minimum of CAD \$5,000,000 per occurrence comprehensive third-party liability insurance, including professional liability insurance, if applicable. In some cases, less amounts can be accepted, but never less than CAD \$2,000,000. Please consult with Queen's Insurance office for questions at insurance@queensu.ca.

Additional Considerations for Vetting International Opportunities:

Travel Advisories

- Is the host organization in a location that complies with Government of Canada travel advisories? Queen's does not permit experiential learning in locations with active 'non-essential travel' or 'avoid all travel' advisories. The Government of Canada provides the

most up to date potential security risks and travel advisories on their [Travel Abroad](#) website.

- For more detailed and localized information about the region or city where your internship might take place, the Department of Environmental Health and Safety recommends downloading the International SOS App. Instructions for how to install the App using the Queen's Membership number are found on the [Queen's Emergency Support Program SharePoint](#) page. Once in the app, Use the 'My Destinations' option to search for cities or countries.
- Risk levels established by the Government of Canada will guide the approval process:
 - Level 1 or 2 – normally approved.
 - Level 3 or 4 are considered unmanageable risk. An activity is deemed to have an Unmanageable Risk level when sustainable mitigation strategies that would bring the risk level to a manageable threshold cannot be achieved. Normally travel in these circumstances would not be allowed.
 - For international students wanting to work in their home country, with a Level 3 or 4 risk level, may petition for approval to travel.
- If you have questions or concerns, please contact Environmental Health and Safety (ehssa@queensu.ca).

Insurance

- Is the host organization legally recognized in the country in which it operates?
- Insurance coverage availability and procurement processes varies by international jurisdiction. What type and level of liability and/or worker's compensation insurance is provided by the host organization?
 - If you have questions or concerns, please reach out to the Insurance Office at insurance@queensu.ca
- **Please note:** Queen's international students taking part in academic related programs in their home country are exempt from supplementary health insurance coverage provided by the AMS or the SGPS as well as any coverage through UHIP

OCASP

Students completed experiential learning opportunities in international destinations (excluding their home country) will be required to complete:

- A High-Risk OCASP record using the Safe Travel Activity Tool (START)

- The Virtual Pre-Departure Training Modules embedded within the START for international travel before submitting the OCASP record for approval. Note: All undergraduate students travelling outside of Canada must complete the pre-departure training modules.

Additional Considerations

- Has the organization hosted students from other post-secondary institutions in the past?
- Does the host organization have the capacity to assist the student with work permits or visas (if necessary)?
- Does the host organization require the University to sign any country or organization-specific agreements or forms? If so, have you reviewed those with the relevant risk management experts on campus?

Ethical Considerations:

- For host organizations that work directly with communities and/or marginalized populations, is there evidence that the organization's outcomes are having positive impact?
- Are you confident that students are not displacing or circumventing local workers?
- Will the EL opportunity be mutually beneficial to the student and the host organization and/or host community?
- Will the host organization provide guidance on accepted code(s) of professional ethics for the field and host country in which they are working?

Site Visits:

Program coordinators and instructors who plan to conduct site visits as part of their planning process can refer to the [Queen's University Due Diligence Checklist](#) made available through Queen's Department of Environmental Health and Safety.

References:

Brigham Young University. "Guidelines for Vetting International Internship Placements or Social Problem-Solving Organizations for BYU Student Involvement". <https://kenedy.byu.edu/00000180-2926-d2d1-ade4-6b76e4c40000/ispinternship-ngo-vetting-16aug18-pdf>

California Baptist University. "Global Engagement - Guidelines for Review and Vetting Opportunities". <https://www.globalcareercenter.org/post/best-practices-made-better-foundations-vetting-potential-host-organizations>

Kate Moore, Global Career Centre. "Best Practices Made Better – Foundations: Vetting Potential Host Organizations". <https://www.globalcareercenter.org/post/best-practices-made-better-foundations-vetting-potential-host-organizations>