

Guidelines for Participation Teaching ESL Certificate Program with Immersion

Overview

The Penn State ESL Certificate Program with Immersion in Ecuador intends to build a community-based learning experience that upholds principles of integrity, respect, communication, and shared learning. This goal is realized when individuals honor the rights and privileges of all members of the community and take responsibility for their own actions. This document seeks to elaborate on the Program's expectations for student participants and staff, and the consequences of not abiding by program guidelines and policies. In general, concerns or questions that arise in relation to a specific course or practical experience should first be discussed in direct communication between the student and the course instructor.

*Please note that attendance **during all weekend sessions** before and after the Ecuador immersion experience on Penn State's campus is required. Please review the dates of courses posted on the website now to be sure that there will be no conflicts with your schedule.*

Travel during a pandemic

Our program to Ecuador is going through several levels of review to ensure that you, the program leaders and staff, homestay families and students in Ecuador are following health safety protocols related to COVID-19. The program's COVID-19 measures must meet or exceed the standards in place for Penn State programs at home.

Penn State consults a number of sources for guidance on the safety of international travel, including: governmental agencies (U.S. Department of State, U.S. Centers for Disease Control, foreign governmental sources), the World Health Organization, the Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC), Penn State's international insurance provider, professional health and security organizations, public health data providers (Harvard Global Health Institute, Our World in Data), assessments by university partners abroad, U.S. Embassy country COVID-19 information, and more.

All students on University-affiliated international travel that begins August 1, 2021 or later must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 before departure. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [recommends that individuals not travel internationally until they are fully vaccinated](#), as getting vaccinated lowers the risk for severe illness and hospitalization from COVID-19.

Therefore, Penn State students approved to participate in an education abroad program, including this program to Ecuador, will be required to attest that they are or will be fully vaccinated against the virus that causes COVID-19 by their date of departure, or that they have or are pursuing a medical or religious exception via the appropriate offices at Penn State. Exemptions by personal choice require approval from academic unit leadership and review by the Assistant Vice Provost for Global Learning. Details on medical, religious, or other exemption requests are available

within the education abroad application portal and by contacting educationabroad@psu.edu.

- It is important to note that countries and individual programs may impose their own requirements related to COVID-19 so students should check with their host institution or program provider for the most up-to-date information. As of 9/28/2021, upon entry to Ecuador, all travelers (except airline crew and children age two [2] and under) must provide:
 - Proof of a negative COVID-19 RT-PCR test taken no more than three (3) days before entering Ecuador, or;
 - Present a COVID-19 vaccination card showing the traveler received a complete series of the COVID-19 vaccine at least 14 days prior to entering Ecuador.

The vaccination attestation form will be made available to accepted students during the Spring semester before travel.

Program Cancellation

If this program is cancelled, you will be notified by the program leaders via your Penn State email address. We plan to offer the three ESL certificate courses that are an integral part of the Ecuador immersion program during the summer sessions, even if travel is not possible. Naturally, we cannot offer exactly the same experience, but there will be a pathway to complete the courses in the case that the immersion experience abroad is not possible.

If Penn State or your host organization cancels your study abroad program, you will be held harmless from any billable financial penalties associated with the program cancellation (i.e., tuition and program fee as published on your Penn State Education Abroad program brochure). However, costs paid to third parties such as airlines and program providers are subject to the third-party providers refund policies and will not be refunded by Penn State. We encourage students to carefully read through refund policies when purchasing airline tickets.

Ecuador Immersion Experience

While in Ecuador, students are expected to follow the Penn State Code of Conduct as well as program expectations for participation. Program expectations include maintaining professionalism and respect in interactions within the University and local Ecuadorian community, openly and willingly collaborating with co-teachers, advisor and mentor, attending all classes and teaching practicum (barring illness), and keeping the program coordinator informed with any plans to leave the host city in Ecuador.

Participants will:

1. *Act as ambassadors* in order to facilitate understanding between the host country and the U.S. Program participants are expected to promote themselves, the Penn

State ESL Certificate Program and the U.S. in a positive, respectful manner throughout the program.

2. *Participate fully in all aspects of the program* including all courses and practical experiences related to those courses, the pre-departure orientations and assignments, the homestay, in-country orientation and program-sponsored weekend excursions.
3. *Live as a member of a host family* and respectfully conform to the norms and rules of the family and host community. Participants must be prepared to live in any family regardless of their race, religion or socioeconomic position.
4. *Limit individual travel* that is unrelated to the program, cultural/community exploration or immersion. A participant may travel with his/her host family or other program participants, but should notify the program coordinator if traveling outside of the local area.
5. *Prioritize safety for self and others* abiding by local norms and laws.
6. *Refrain from adoptions of pets, animals, humans (or other living things) with the intention of bringing them back to the U.S.* during the experience in Ecuador.

In general, violations of either the [Penn State Code of Conduct](#) or these Guidelines for Participation would be dealt with by the following protocol:

- 1) **Official Notice** – The program coordinator will speak directly with the student to understand the situation, and explain program expectations and when warranted, provide an official notice of violation. The program coordinator and student, in consultation with other staff (mentor, advisor, homestay coordinator, Ecuadorian university staff) will mutually agree to a plan of action to ensure further violations would not occur.
- 2) **Probation** – A period of probation will follow an Official Notice during which the participant's actions and behavior are subject to close examination. Further violations during this time may result in further sanctions, up to and including dismissal from the program.
- 3) **Dismissal** – In cases where there are further violations of the Code of Conduct and/or Guidelines for Participation, the student's participation in the program will be terminated. An oral/written notice of violation will be provided to the student, and administrators at the Penn State College of Education will be notified. There will be one additional meeting between the program coordinator, the student, and other staff as needed to communicate directly to the student the violations of Code and/or Guidelines for Participation and notice of Dismissal.

The Penn State ESL Immersion Program, in its sole discretion, reserves the right to dismiss any participant for the following reasons:

1. Failure to participate in all program components;
2. Failure to complete assignments or achieve satisfactory academic progress in the Spring semester course (as determined by a C+ final grade);
2. Failure to observe published policies and procedures;
3. Falsifying information provided on any Penn State form including the application, the health form, transcripts, references or other documents required of the application.
4. Failure to disclose material information requested by Penn State (e.g., emergency contact information, homestay information, health information, independent travel information).
5. Behavior that interferes with effective program participation, or behavior that is, in the judgment of the Penn State ESL Immersion program faculty and staff, improper or offensive to the host community, potentially detrimental to the health and safety of the participant or others, or inappropriate for living in a cross-cultural environment.
6. Leaving the program at any time without prior written authorization from Penn State. Participants who leave under such circumstances will not be allowed to return to the program and will be considered immediately withdrawn.

A student who returns home early as a result of dismissal or withdrawal will be solely responsible for all travel and related costs associated with an early departure as well as continue to be responsible for all scheduled Tuition payments. Once withdrawn or dismissed from the program, the student is not permitted any further association or contact with the program and will forgo any of the benefits that the program provides including insurance coverage.

Immediate Dismissal

Other certain severe violations of the Code or Guidelines may result in the immediate termination of a student's participation in the program and repatriation to the US. This level of violation would include possession or use of illegal drugs; abusive or violent conduct toward other participants, homestay members or program staff; felonious criminal activity; or compelling evidence that s/he is a danger to him/herself or others in the program. In addition, students who violate Ecuadorian law may face criminal prosecution in Ecuador and/or the U.S. Students will be responsible for any associated costs of repatriation.

In addition, a student's participation in the program may be terminated if s/he is in emergency need of medical care for illness (physical or mental) that is unable to be treated in Ecuador. In these cases, the program coordinator along with the student and her/his family will work with the International Student Health Insurance provider to arrange medical evacuation, as covered under the international health insurance policy which you get as participant in this program.

Photos/Video

The program frequently uses photographs and video taken during the time in Ecuador for program promotional materials. Your signature on the application assumes that you have agreed to allow Penn State University to use photographs taken during the experience. (Please write to the program administrator to request otherwise).

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