

Look Both Ways Before Crossing Cultures: Proactive Approaches to Behavioral Issues Abroad

While preventing all instances of inappropriate behavior abroad is unrealistic, addressing warning signs in the application, acceptance, pre-departure and arrival phases can reduce the likelihood of an incident abroad. These approaches not only provide opportunities to document issues and provide conditions and terms, but, more importantly, they provide students with clear expectations for their time abroad. Before allowing your students to cross cultures, consider how these methods may help ensure that your students are poised for success.

Prospective Student Phase

- Consider recording advisor comments of interactions with student to address any pink/red flags down the road.

Application phase

- Ask questions in the application phase related to students' disciplinary/legal records, ability to serve as an ambassador, reasons for poor academic performance, etc.
- Follow-up on problematic responses.
- Consult with your providers/host institutions on issues
- Interview students with pink/red flags
- Partner with your judicial affairs unit on campus

Acceptance phase

- Implement probationary acceptances for students with serious records

- Consider rejecting students with serious records that show patterns of behavior and include recent incidents
- Include codes of conduct in acceptance materials or pre-departure handbooks

Pre-departure orientation

- Have one, and address behavioral expectations: set clear expectations
- Provide training for on-site staff and faculty directors so that they understand what is expected of students and how to ensure adherence to expectations/policies

On-site orientation

- Set expectations for students: be clear and specific
- Allow students to set expectations for each other as a group - create group accountability
- Consider program format and how the program structure can help/hinder students' behavior

