Georgia Institute of Technology
Emergency Response Plan for Study Abroad,
Exchange Programs, and Intl Internships

Operating Principles

The following operating principles form the guidelines for these procedures:

• Safety is the number one concern
• Confidentiality of information must be kept
• Legal liability of the Institute and its employees should be considered
• Predetermined procedures must be followed

Introduction

This document outlines the specific procedures for any emergency or crisis involving participants in the Georgia Institute of Technology’s programs abroad. These procedures are meant first and foremost to ensure the safety and well-being of student participants, faculty, and staff.

These procedures differentiate between “real” and “perceived” emergencies:

• **Real emergency**: A genuine or imminent risk to participants, or a disturbance that has already occurred. Examples: political coup, civil unrest, natural/manmade disaster, incarceration, pandemic, physical/emotional illness, accident, physical assault, disappearance for an inordinate period of time, death, kidnapping, terrorist threat and/or attack.

• **Perceived emergency**: No significant risk, but perceived as threatening by student, family, University official, or others in the U.S. Examples: Sensationalized reporting of an event abroad, distortion of information provided by a participant, and/or nervousness of a family member or student with little or no international experience. NOTE: Perceived emergencies can affect students, family members and others in the U.S. as strongly as real emergencies. They need to be treated seriously and responses should be made in a timely manner.

Procedures

**PHASE I: EMERGENCY IS REPORTED**

Dean of Students (DEAN) should be contacted as well as the Director of Education Abroad, or if
Director is not available, the Executive Director of the Office of International Education or Associate Director.

Contact numbers and addresses:

**GT Police (will contact DEAN):** (404)-894-2500

**John Stein,** Dean of Students, Office of Student Affairs
Student Services Building
Office: (404) 894-2564, Fax: (404) 894-9928
Cell: (404) 431-1300, Home: (770) 979-2244
E-Mail: john.stein@vpss.gatech.edu

**Lorie Johns Páulez,** Director of Education Abroad
Office of International Education, Savant Building 211
Office: (404)-894-7475, Cell: (404) 316-4961
Fax: (404) 894-9682
E-mail: lorie.paulez@oie.gatech.edu

**Meghan Greene Penland,** Associate Director of Education Abroad
Office of International Education, Savant Building 211
Office: (404)-894-7475, Cell: (850) 212-6672
Fax: (404) 894-9682
E-mail: meghan.penland@oie.gatech.edu

**Amy Bass Henry,** Executive Director of the Office of International Education
Office of International Education, Savant Building 211
Office: (404) 894-7475, Cell: (770) 823-4741
Fax: (404) 894-9682
E-Mail: amy.henry@oie.gatech.edu

**PHASE II: DETERMINE WHETHER THE EMERGENCY IS REAL OR PERCEIVED**

**A. Gather information and assess the risks**

1. The DEAN, along with in-country contacts, will gather as much information as is necessary to determine which risks, if any, GT participants/faculty/staff are facing. Appropriate people and organizations should be contacted by telephone, if at all possible, to assess these risks.

2. In assessing whether the emergency is real or perceived, the DEAN will contact a number of sources for detailed and accurate information. These may include:
   a. The lead GT faculty member abroad, the administrative contact abroad, or the non-GT
administrator abroad (or in the U.S.) who is the contact for an exchange program or internship (LEADER).

b. The Director of Education Abroad or if the Director is not available, the Executive Director of the Office of International Education, or Associate Director of Education Abroad.

c. The U. S. State Department Desk Officer of the country affected – http://www.state.gov/www/regions/country_offices.html.


e. Special Task Force of the U. S. State Department, if one has been created as in the case of a long-standing crises. Telephone the Office of Crisis Management of the State Department’s Operations Center, at (202) 647-0900.

f. U. S. State Department’s Counter-terrorist Office, if information is needed concerning a terrorist threat or action, at (202) 647-9892.

g. Local safety/crime agencies in the host country.

h. Study abroad insurance provider.

B. Make a careful, chronological sequence of events (in writing) leading up to, during, and after the crisis.

The following checklist should be used during conversations:

1. Which event took place? Request a chronological statement of what happened from each person who was involved or who witnessed the event.

2. What is the current physical and psychological condition of the affected participant(s) and leaders?

3. Is the LEADER in close touch now with the affected participant(s)/faculty?

4. If the LEADER is not in touch, has anyone from the Institute communicated with them?

5. What is the proximity of the event to all the program’s participants/faculty?

6. What is the imminent risk to participants/faculty if they remain where they are?
7. Are all program participants/faculty/staff, whether directly involved or not, aware of the emergency?

8. How are they responding?

9. Are adequate food, water and medical attention available?

10. Is adequate and secure housing available? How long will this housing be available? What other appropriate housing options are available as a backup, if needed?

11. Is safe transportation available locally and internationally (land and air)?

12. Should students/faculty/staff be evacuated?

13. Have you confirmed the list of participants, faculty, and staff?

14. Have you prepared information for notification of families (when, where, how, by whom?).

15. Who will be the spokesperson to the media?

16. What information may and should be disbursed to the media?

C. Incident-specific issues--address the appropriate type of crisis:

1. **SERIOUS ILLNESS**:
   - Where is the victim?
   - What medical treatment has victim received?
   - What has the on-site response been?
   - Who is the attending physician (if any)?
   - Does the attending physician speak English?
   - How can family member(s) contact the physician and/or hospital?
   - What is the diagnosis?
   - What is the prescribed treatment?
   - What is the prognosis?
   - Can the victim be adequately treated at current location?
   - Has the student’s insurance been contacted?
   - Are other participants at risk (physical or psychological)?
   - Is airlift a desirable and/or viable action?
   - What are the likely academic and financial consequences of returning to the U.S.?

2. **SERIOUS INJURY**:
   - Same as SERIOUS ILLNESS above, but include:
   - What are the details of the accident?
Are rescue operations needed?  
Have they been initiated?  
Were there witnesses to the accident?  If so, obtain signed statement from each witness.

3. **PSYCHOLOGICAL OR PSYCHIATRIC ISSUES**  
   Same as SERIOUS ILLNESS above, but include:  
   In what way(s) if the person upset and/or inappropriately behaving?  
   What has been done on site?  
   Is the person a danger to self and/or others?  
   Is there a history of previous counseling/therapy?  Where?  With whom?  
   Is the person prescribed medication(s) for emotional difficulties and/or any other medication(s)?  
   Are they taking the prescribed medication(s)?  
   Was there an apparent precipitant for their distress/behavior?

4. **SEXUAL HARASSMENT**  
   Same as SERIOUS ILLNESS above, but include:  
   Does victim feel physical threat?  
   What action is necessary to remedy situation?  
   Can situation be remedied on site?  
   Consult the Georgia Institute of Technology Student Policy on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct or the Georgia Institute of Technology policy for staff on Sexual Harassment Complaints.

5. **ASSAULT OR RAPE:**  
   Same as SERIOUS ILLNESS above, but include:  
   What are the major details of the incident?  
   Is counseling available?  In English?  
   Has appropriate local law enforcement been notified?  
   Were there witnesses?  If so, obtain signed statement from each witness.  
   Does the victim want to return to the U.S.?  
   Are the victim and the counselor aware of these consequences?  
   Is the accused person a GT student?  A local student or resident?  A tourist?

6. **MISSING PERSONS:**  
   When and where was the missing person last seen or heard from?  
   Did the person tell anyone of plans to be absent?  
   Does anyone know or have an idea about where the person went?  
   How was the person travelling?  Example:  Alone and by train.  
   If the person left and was expected to return at a specific time, what was the date and time of the expected return?  
   Are reliable search and rescue operations available on site?  
   Have they been initiated?  
   Should they be initiated?
What is a description of the student (height, weight, eye color, hair color, hair length, gender, race, and other distinguishing factors)?
What is the student’s passport number?
Have the local missing person's officials been notified?
What is the agency and case number assigned?
Has the U. S. State Department been contacted?
Who is the contact at the State Department (name, title, and phone)?
Has the State Department initiated a Welfare and Whereabouts check?
For which countries?
Clergy involvement?

7. **ARRESTS:**
   Has the student been detained?
   Has the U. S. Embassy been notified?
   What was the Embassy’s response and advice?
   What agency made the arrest?
   Have charges been filed?
   What are the charges?
   What are the facts?
   Were there witnesses? If so, obtain signed statement from each witness.
   What are the names, addresses and phone numbers of the arresting authorities?
   What is the case number?
   What rights have been granted?
   Is the student entitled to place a phone call?
   Does an attorney represent the student?
   What is the name, address and phone number of the attorney?
   When does the University intervene? How?

8. **HOSTAGE SITUATION:**
   Same as MISSING PERSONS above and POLITICAL EMERGENCY below, but include:
   Has the U. S. Embassy been notified there?
   What is the Embassy’s response and advice?
   Who is the contact person at the U. S. Embassy (name, title, and telephone)?
   Who is the contact person at the State Department in Washington (name, title, and telephone)?
   Have the kidnappers made contact?
   Have the kidnappers identified themselves?
   Who are they and what do they want?
   Is negotiation support available on site?
   Is there a no-ransom policy established by the institution?

9. **POLITICAL EMERGENCY OR NATURAL/MAN-MADE DISASTER:**
   See SERIOUS INJURY, if needed.
   Has the U. S. Embassy advised participants to take appropriate action?
Have all participants/leaders been made aware of these precautions, and in writing?
Are all participants/leaders following these precautions?
Have local authorities imposed a curfew?
Is travel in or out of the country being restricted in any way?
Is the group in danger?
Who or what is the target of the unrest?
Has any particular group or organization been threatened?
What kind of military or other security or public safety personnel are present?
Are they unusually visible?
How is the military behaving with respect to the civilian population?
Contact the U.S. Embassy to learn if airlifts are planned.
What forms of transportation are available? What would the cost be?

10. STUDENT DEATH:
Where is the victim?
Has the U. S. Embassy been notified there?
What is the Embassy’s response and advice?
Who is the contact person at the U. S. Embassy (name, title, and telephone)?
Who is the contact person at the State Department in Washington (name, title, and telephone)?
Is the family already informed/involved?
Does the family need support?
What are the circumstances of the death (illness, accident, murder, suicide, etc)?
Is law enforcement involved? Are there witnesses?
Is there an attending physician or mental health professional? Do they speak English?
Has the insurance company been contacted?
Who will coordinate repatriation of remains?
Has the CMT been convened?
Does Legal need to be consulted?
Has COMM been consulted/notified?

PHASE III: EMERGENCY RESPONSE

A. PERCEIVED EMERGENCY

1. Response scenario A: The perceived emergency has not yet created widespread or persistent rumors:

a. DEAN diffuses the situation and reassures concerned parties: inquiries have been made, participants/faculty/staff secure, program proceeding normally, welfare provided for participants/faculty/staff.

b. Staff in the Office of Student Life and the Office of International Education
informed of situation so that all may respond in a like manner if other inquiries are received.

c. Parents may be given embassy phone number upon request.

d. If participants/faculty/staff cannot be reassured that they are safe, DEAN will work with the Office of International Education and the LEADER to decide how to handle the situation, including the financial and academic implications of returning home.

2. Response scenario B: The perceived emergency has created widespread or persistent rumors and a strong public perception of risk:

   a. DEAN to inform the President, the Provost, the Vice Provost for International Initiatives, the Institute Communications and Public Affairs, and staff in the Office of Student Life and the Office of International Education.

   b. If appropriate, program LEADER, participants/faculty/staff also advised about perceived emergency and about Institute response.

B. REAL EMERGENCY

1. General Procedures:

   a. Non-acute crisis – the emergency is real, though not acute enough to warrant convening the Crisis Management Team (see below for acute crisis):

      i. The DEAN will consult with the LEADER in order to decide what specific measures should be taken in responding to the crisis. Any telephone conversation should be well documented.

      ii. Once the appropriate response strategy has been determined (see below), the DEAN will send a written communication to the LEADER and the affected students/faculty. This written communication will contain a detailed description of the course of action that they will be required to follow in responding to the crisis. The LEADER will see to it that all program participants acknowledge receipt of this information in writing (date and signature). The LEADER will send via email/fax the signed acknowledgements to the DEAN as soon as is practical. If email/fax is not available, then these exchanges will be handled using another form of communications.

      iii. The DEAN will take the following points into account in developing the written course of action:
• Include a reasonable amount of detail in drafting the procedures.

• Reassure participants/faculty that everything is being done to insure their safety, security and well-being, and that GT is counting on their cooperation in responding to the crisis.

• Tell participants that while it is not possible to eliminate all risk, we have had experience dealing with emergencies in the past, and that we will work with them.

• As circumstances dictate, either have participants get in touch with their “persons to notify in case of an emergency” or tell participants that we are in touch with their “persons to notify in case of an emergency.”

• Direct participants/faculty to stay in close touch with the LEADER to let him/her know of their precise whereabouts throughout the crisis, and to report any suspicious persons or packages to the LEADER.

• If not already done, tell participants/faculty to register with the U. S. Embassy or the nearest Consulate, and to maintain contact with them throughout the crisis.

• Tell participants to exercise common sense in responding to the crisis, and to avoid contact with or travel to the affected area (if they are not located at this area).

• Direct the LEADER and participants/faculty to remove all signs or any other objects, at the academic center or at their homestays, that would call attention to them or to the program.

• Tell participants/faculty to keep a low profile, to avoid dress and behavior that will attract attention, to not use pre-labeled luggage tags, and to avoid places where Americans are known to congregate.

iv. The DEAN will write a brief and accurate description of the event and will distribute it, with a copy of the written response strategy, to the following people:

• The President
• The Provost
• The Vice-Provost for International Initiatives
• Executive Director of the Office of International Education
• Director of Education Abroad
• Office of Legal Affairs
• Associate VP of GT Communications and Marketing
• The Dean and the School Chair of the academic unit that is sponsoring the program, if applicable

v. Once the description has been written and delivered to the above individuals, any media inquiries will be directed to Institute Communications. In forwarding these requests, the Office of Student Life will make every effort to appear cooperative, while at the same time letting the media know that the Office of Student Life needs to avoid giving out information that might violate a student’s right to privacy (FERPA).

vi. Institute Communications will provide information to the media as contained in the DEAN’s description. Institute Communications will pre-arrange with the DEAN any press requests for interviews.

vii. The DEAN will handle all other requests for information, including those from parents, students, and other members of the GT community, as appropriate.

viii. The DEAN may be in touch with the emergency contacts of the students/leaders in order to provide accurate information about the emergency and about GT’s response. The information should substantively mirror the description provided in “d” above.

b. **An acute crisis**—the emergency is real and warrants convening the Crisis Management Team (CMT):

i. The DEAN will:

   • Contact the LEADER and other appropriate people abroad and in the U.S. in order to discuss with them the response to the crisis. The DEAN will be sure that all appropriate steps are being taken at this point to assure the immediate safety and welfare of the participants/leaders. The DEAN will inform the staff abroad that the Crisis Management Team (CMT) is being convened in order to consider what other responses will need to be made.

   • Reassure participants/faculty/staff that everything is being done to insure their safety, security and well-being, and that GT is counting on their cooperation in responding to the crisis.

   • Tell participants that while it is not possible to eliminate all risk, we have had experience dealing with emergencies in the past, and that we will work with them.

   • As circumstances dictate, either have participants get in touch with
their “persons to notify in case of an emergency” or tell participants that we are in touch with their “persons to notify in case of an emergency.”

- Direct participants/faculty/staff to stay in close touch with the LEADER to let him/her know of their precise whereabouts throughout the crisis, and to report any suspicious persons or packages to the LEADER.

- If not already done, tell participants/faculty/staff to register with the U. S. Embassy or the nearest Consulate, and to maintain contact with them throughout the crisis.

- Tell participants to exercise common sense in responding to the crisis, and to avoid contact with or travel to the affected area (if they are not located at this area).

- Direct the LEADER and participants/faculty to remove all signs or any other objects, at the academic center or at their homestays, that would call attention to them or to the program.

- Tell participants/faculty/staff to keep a low profile, to avoid dress and behavior that will attract attention, to not use pre-labeled luggage tags, and to avoid places where Americans are known to congregate.

- If appropriate, DEAN will provide description of event and response strategy to “persons to contact in case of an emergency.”

ii. The DEAN will convene the CMT as soon as he has collected enough information to be effective in writing a summary of the crisis and the initial response to it. Under certain circumstances, OIE may convene the CMT as a crisis develops to review GT response, or possible suspension or cancellation of programs (such as pandemics, developing political unrest, natural disasters, etc.) The team will include the following persons or their designated substitutes:

- Dean of Students
- Executive Director of the Office of International Education
- Director of Education Abroad
- President/Provost’s designee (VP II)
- Dean(s) and/or School Chair(s) of program’s sponsoring academic unit(s), if appropriate
- Director of Counseling Office, if appropriate
- Director of Health Services, if appropriate
- Associate VP of GT Communications and Marketing
- Chief of Institute Police
iii. CMT reviews issues relating to the crisis, after which DEAN sends fax to LEADER and program participants/faculty with the same guidelines used for the non-acute crisis (See iii, Page 8, above).

**Issues for the management team:**

a) nature and extent of crisis  
b) imminent danger to participants  
c) steps already taken to assure safety and well being  
d) considerations of possible steps to be taken:  
   • review of DEAN’s written summary of emergency  
   • recommendations about student behavior  
   • question of evacuation  
   • reliability of communication with participants and program LEADERS abroad  
   • communication with emergency contacts  
   • communication with others (family members at other sites, students and colleagues on campus)  
   • measures to be taken with the media  
   • counseling of students on campus and off campus, as appropriate  
   • implications of a return to US  
   • refund policy  
   • financial impact on participants, employers, and Institute, including legal liability and financial aid policies  

e) If evacuation is necessary, CMT develops detailed evacuation plan, DEAN sends in confidence to LEADER.  

   *Evacuation plan considerations:*  
   • safety of routes and mode of transportation  
   • advisability of separating into smaller groups  
   • availability of in-country resources  
   • ground and air transportation to be scheduled  
   • costs of evacuation.  

f) DEAN writes brief, accurate description of event, distributes it with the response strategy to all members of CMT.  

  g) All media requests are then to be directed to Institute Communications; media
must understand that the Office of Student Life and the Office of International Education wish to cooperate but must also maintain confidentiality of participants.

h) Institute Communications will restrict dissemination of information to what the DEAN has provided.

i) DEAN accepts requests for information from parents, students, and members of the Institute community

j) If appropriate, DEAN will provide description of event and response strategy to “persons to contact in case of an emergency.”

D. A special case: the death of a program participant – SEE ACUTE CRISIS ABOVE.

1. DEAN must get full details of incident from LEADER. DEAN needs confirmation that GT study abroad insurance provider, or private insurance will handle repatriation of remains, information on burial and/or repatriation, including police or immigration procedures. DEAN will inform the LEADER that family may be in contact with him/her. DEAN must check Registrar’s records to assure that no other student has the same name.

2. DEAN will write summary of circumstances surrounding the death and send it to the following individuals:

   a. President
   b. Provost
   c. Vice Provost for International Initiatives
   d. Members of the CMT

3. DEAN determines who should notify the next of kin.

4. DEAN contacts family to offer condolences and puts family in contact with GT education abroad insurance provider (if appropriate), and offers to work with family in contacting LEADER for specific arrangements.

Additional contacts may need to be made with:

- Participants/faculty/staff
- Attending physician(s), clinics, health care professionals
- Translators
- U. S. Embassy and State Department
- Local law enforcement or public security officials, particularly English-speaking local officials.