Communicating with undergraduate students whilst on their Year Abroad

The compulsory Year Abroad in the AMES and MML Triposes is an exciting and, on occasion, daunting time for students. Events over recent months have suggested it would be helpful for all parties to agree the expectations for the role of the College before and during the Year Abroad. Details of people to contact with questions or problems appear at the end of this document.

Preparing for the Year Abroad

Students in the AMES and MML Triposes must complete a period of study and/or work experience abroad in a country where the language(s) they are studying are spoken. The year abroad may take many forms, from studying with a group of fellow Cambridge students at a University in China, to a work placement in an NGO in Latin America, though the range of opportunities many be restricted by the visa regulations of each country. Students have a reasonable amount of flexibility in their plans, all of which are approved by the relevant Faculty and include a risk assessment. Year abroad plans are ‘live’ documents and must be resubmitted with updated risk assessments if and when students’ plans change.

HEFCE guidelines specify that students on their year abroad should experience, where reasonably possible, a similar level of pastoral support as they receive at their home institution.

Both the AMES and MML Faculties would like to request that in future all year abroad plans are approved by an appropriate point of contact for the named student in College, whether this is their College Tutor, Director of Studies or equivalent level role. Colleges may have more information to hand about the pastoral care of their students and may have views on the suitability of particular plans. For this reason, it is proposed that any plans submitted by students in their second year of study (Part IB) in the academic year 2017-18 onwards should be signed by students’ College before being submitted to the Faculty.

To help facilitate arrangements for the year abroad for students with specific needs or disabilities, the College, the Disability Resource Centre, and the relevant Faculty will work closely together to determine what practical support students could be afforded whilst they are on their year abroad.

During the Year Abroad

It is often the case that students have a closer relationship with their colleges than with the Faculties. Whilst we do keep in touch with students whilst they are away, communication is mostly procedural and relates to e.g. submission of reimbursement forms, modifications to learning agreements or information about their 4\(^{th}\) year (e.g. dissertation title applications) and their return to Cambridge. We are sometimes aware of other issues relating to students and where we are able to, we make efforts to keep in touch. We very much value the input of colleges in maintaining a live communication link with students and would like to recommend that Colleges make regular contact with their students to ensure that they are safe and well during their year abroad.

What to do when problems arise

(Please see also the section on Security incidents/Natural disasters below).

If Colleges have concerns about a student’s health or welfare before or whilst they are on their year abroad, this should be brought to the attention of the relevant member of staff in either AMES or MML as soon as possible (details at the end of this document). Similarly, staff in the Faculties will contact Colleges if and when they become aware of issues relating to students, as will members of the International Student Team (IST) should the student be on an Erasmus study placement. We can then meet (either in person or hold a discussion by telephone or email) to agree the best way to deal with each individual situation. Problems that should be discussed amongst colleagues in Colleges, Faculties and IST might include things like:
A student has submitted a plan that raises pastoral concerns specific to him or her.
A student has failed to check in and/or provide information about their whereabouts
A member of staff at a host university/institution raises concerns
An employer reports that a student has left their job without letting anyone know
A student has not provided the relevant information to IST (or elsewhere) to receive reimbursement payments
A student has not provided information such as their Year Abroad Project plans in a timely manner
A parent reports that they have not heard from a student for some time

Both the AMES and MML Faculties have agreed that they will ask all students to provide details of who to contact in the event of an emergency or in the event of us not being able to contact them. They will be asked to give explicit consent for us to make this contact. Where appropriate, and in agreement with all parties involved, parents will be contacted.

Security incidents/Natural Disasters

The MML and AMES Faculties recently introduced a protocol to be invoked in the case of security incidents or natural disasters in locations where we are known to have students. Copies of these protocols are included as Annex A.

Intermission/Exemption from the Year Abroad

Where it is clear before the Year Abroad that a student’s health will prevent them from completing the Year Abroad it is possible to receive permission from the relevant Faculty Board for a student to be exempted from the Year Abroad in its entirety, or to have permission to complete a shorter period abroad. In these cases, Colleges can contact either the MML Year Abroad Secretary (Amanda Law) or the AMES Administrator (Nadya Mullen) in the first instance.

If a student falls ill during the Year Abroad, it is possible for them to intermit (via the usual procedure with the Applications Committee) and to have permission from the relevant Faculty Board not to complete the Year Abroad.

Contact details 2017-18

AMES Faculty
Faculty Administrator: Mrs Nadya Mullen, administrator@ames.cam.ac.uk
Deputy Administrator: Ms Susie Nightingale, deputy@ames.cam.ac.uk

Year Abroad Coordinators:

East Asian Studies
Chinese Studies YA Coordinator: Boping Yuan, by10001@cam.ac.uk
Japanese Studies YA Coordinator: Dr Miki Kawabata, mk820@cam.ac.uk

Middle Eastern Studies
Arabic YA Coordinator: Mrs Farida El Keiy, fhmze2@cam.ac.uk
Persian YA Coordinator: Dr Mahbod Ghaffari, mg695@cam.ac.uk
Hebrew YA Coordinator: Dr Aaron Hornkohl, adh44@cam.ac.uk

MML Faculty
Director of the Year Abroad: Dr Rebecca Reich, rr423@cam.ac.uk
YA Secretary: Mrs Amanda Law, aml41@cam.ac.uk
Assistant Faculty Administrator: Ms Rachel Deadman, rd405@cam.ac.uk
1. The following five Faculty members (henceforth Emergency Action Team (EAT)) will contact all relevant students:
   - Chairs of MML Faculty (Deputy Chair of Faculty from October 2017);
   - Director of MML Year Abroad;
   - Secretary of the MML Year Abroad Office;
   - MML Assistant Faculty Administrator;
   - MML Faculty Administrator.

2. The Secretary of the MML Year Abroad Office circulates to all members of the EAT an updated Excel list of YA students, their plans, their locations, and emails on the first day of each month throughout the calendar year. The Secretary also circulates the group email lists of all current and rising YA students to be used by members of the EAT in the case of emergency.

3. In the case of a security incident, members of the EAT contact (email and/or phone) all other members of the EAT to inform them of the incident.

4. If the first member of the EAT to inform the other members about the incident is in a position (i.e. has access to a computer and the Excel file) to email the relevant students, s/he should say so in the message to other members of the EAT and proceed to contact the students at once using the standard message in (6) below, copying in all the other members of the EAT and the Head of Department (from October 2017 > Undergraduate Teaching and Examining Officer (UTEO) for the relevant language area). If s/he is unable to contact the students, then s/he should say so in the initial message and ask other members of the EAT to contact the students (we work on the principle that potential multiple mailings from the EAT is better than no mailings at all).

5. As a principle, the EAT should contact ALL students who are spending part (or who have spent) part or all of their YA in the relevant country, irrespective of their exact location within the country (students travel considerably during the YA). On a case-by-case basis it may also be appropriate to contact students located in nearby countries. During the summer between academic years, the EAT should contact the relevant students in both the previous year’s cohort and the cohort that is beginning its YA.

6. Standard message to be emailed to all relevant students, with XXXX being the city/town in question:

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SUBJECT LINE: URGENT: Year Abroad Office – Please reply immediately

Dear Students,

Following the news about the recent security incident in XXXX, I am writing on behalf of the MML Faculty’s Year Abroad Office to make sure that you are safe and well. If you are currently in XXXX, please reply to this email IMMEDIATELY confirming your whereabouts and status, copying in ALL the other recipients of this email as well as your Director of Studies and College Tutor.

Please also reply to this email on behalf of another student in XXXX if you have relevant information about them but think they may not be checking their email.

Best wishes

MML Faculty
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7. Contact details of the EAT:

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<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chair of MML Faculty</td>
<td>Adam Ledgeway</td>
<td><a href="mailto:anl21@cam.ac.uk">anl21@cam.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>07494 973701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of YA</td>
<td>Rebecca Reich</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rr423@cam.ac.uk">rr423@cam.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>07742 167327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary of YA Office</td>
<td>Amanda Law</td>
<td><a href="mailto:aml41@cam.ac.uk">aml41@cam.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>01480 300351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Fac Administrator</td>
<td>Rachel Deadman</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rd405@cam.ac.uk">rd405@cam.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>07952 785225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Administrator</td>
<td>Olivia Speed</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ojs25@cam.ac.uk">ojs25@cam.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>07469 882617</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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8. When students do not respond to the initial email, decisions on how to proceed will be taken on a case-by-case basis and will involve discussion with the student’s Director of Studies and College Tutor.

9. In case of a student being personally involved in any such incident, the EAT should contact the University of Cambridge Security Office either by email on security@admin.cam.ac.uk or by telephone on 01223 76744. Full details of contact details for the Security Office are published here: http://www.em.admin.cam.ac.uk/operating-estate/security

Date of last update: 30 April 2017 (R Deadman)