

GAP YEAR ASSOCIATION - STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION

APPLICATION:

The application for Accreditation involves a 360-degree evaluation that includes GYA staff, GYA Board of Advisors, submitted evidentiary documentation for each standard, and a student-survey to ensure only the best programs are able to pass.

INSTRUCTIONS:

The Application for Accreditation is best done by going through each Indicator in this .pdf document as a self-evaluation to determine whether your organization is ready to officially apply. The actual application will be completed using our proprietary online application in the members area of our website: members.gapyearassociation.org.

TO COMPLETE YOUR APPLICATION, THE FOLLOWING ITEMS MUST BE SUBMITTED:

- Signed and dated Gap Year Association Accreditation Engagement letter found on the [GYA Standards web page](#).
- \$1,500 deposit to be sent via check, ACH, or paid online using the members area of the website.
- All relevant certification levels depending on your organization's programming:
 - 1.X.X: PHILOSOPHY AND PROFESSIONAL ETHICS **must be completed by all organizations,**
 - 2.X.X: SERVICE-LEARNING certification is for organizations that include student service-learning. The GYA have partnered with Critical Service-Learning and adopted the Fair Trade Learning Standards that require a self-assessment according to one of four levels, Entry, Intermediate, Advanced, Ideal, and evidence to support that self-assessment,
 - 3.X.X: BACKCOUNTRY/DEVELOPING COUNTRY certification is for organizations traveling 2 hours or more away from definitive first-world medical care. Typically this will be applicable for overnight backpacking, or for those that work within developing countries,
 - 4.X.X: INDEPENDENT STUDENT PLACEMENTS certification is for organizations who send students on individual placements where they are away from an organization-staffed supervisor. This is typically an independent internship or a solo experience,
 - 5.X.X: PARTNERSHIPS certification is for any organization that outsources some element to a partner-organization. Typically this looks like hiring private transportation, an adventure outfitter for SCUBA or white water rafting, or student homestays.
- A survey sent to 20 of your most recent alumni (or active students) that allows us to verify some of the most important Standards.
- Copy of current Liability Insurance (USD \$2 million minimum).
- Copy of official registration (e.g.. 501.c.3, LLC, Sole-Proprietor, etc.).
- Copy of required student forms including a release and waiver form, a medical disclosure form, and if appropriate, forms for minors.
- Digital or hard copy versions of current organizational collateral (brochures, flyers, etc.).
- TEN pictures that GYA can use to promote gap years and your organization.



STEP 1. Make sure all the appropriate boxes are ticked here. Don't forget to click "Update". NOTE: every org has to do "Philosophy & Integrity".

STEP 2. Drag and drop each Standard on to the Organizational Evidence. NOTE, if you want to take an "Exception" or consider a standard "Not applicable" then a simple text answer will suffice.

STEP 3. Add evidence. NOTE, you can create a title such as "Staff Manual" and not upload the manual until you're finished dragging & dropping all the standards. This way you can update the manual to address a Standard and not have to upload it each time. (see step 5)

STEP 4. Click on the evidence to open it and: (a) Change the title. (b) Upload a "File" or type in a "URL" or some "Text". (c) Identify the corresponding page #s for each

STEP 5. This box will turn from gray to green once everything inside it is completed.

FEE STRUCTURE AND ACCREDITATION MAINTENANCE:

The fee for Accreditation is \$3,000 / \$4,000 depending on the size of the organization with 150 gap year students per year as the threshold. During non-accreditation years, organizations pay the normal Gap Year Provider Members rate.

• 0 - 50 students: \$400 per year	• 51 - 100 students: \$575 per year	• 101 - 200 students: \$1,100 per year	• 200 + students: \$2,200 per year
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If Accredited, organizations have four years' validity with a self-assessment required at the two-year mark to stay abreast of changes to the Standards and ensure that newly-adopted Standards have been fully incorporated into the organization. Accreditation requires attendance to at least one gap year conference every three years.

- *Gap year students are defined as: any student embarking on 2+ months of programming between the ages of 17-21. In cases of ambiguity, please reach out to the Gap Year Association for clarification.*
- *Organizations that run multiple programs should complete only one application for all gap year programs.*

GAP YEAR ASSOCIATION



The Official Standards Development Organization as recognized by the
United States Department of Justice, and the
United States Federal Trade Commission

"Gap Year" definition:

An experiential semester or year "on," typically taken between high school and college in order to deepen practical, professional, and personal awareness.

ORGANIZATION NAME:	
<i>Organization Mail Address:</i>	
<i>Number of gap year students / year:</i>	
<i>Date of Submission:</i>	
<i>Organization Contact Person and Info: (position, email, phone)</i>	
<i>Digital Signature of Executive:</i>	

1 - PHILOSOPHY & PROFESSIONAL ETHICS - required for all organizations

Every organization that is applying for Accreditation with the Gap Year Association MUST complete the Philosophy & Integrity certification. These are basic standards so students are informed, prepared, and appropriate risk-management is considered and active.

1.1 - "Organization's pedagogy is congruent with gap year education."

Gap year education is an active process that involves, among other things, both an experiential and a reflective element. Students must be involved in and accountable for their own learning, processes, and growth with a fundamental favor towards natural consequences when appropriate. Structured activities are designed to engender real successes, failures, uncertainty, and do so within a safe manner.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.1.1 - Organization consciously includes core qualities of "Experiential Education:" Appropriate mentorship that is defined by the organization. <i>(Critical to the development of youth is mentorship. Partially this is a statement about student:staff ratios, but moreso this is about defining the nature of the relationship staff have with students as supportive, interested, and encouraging of learning through mistakes.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Manual detailing mentorship support tools • Copy of staff training schedule highlighting mentorship strategies 				
<p>1.1.2 - Organization consciously includes core qualities of "Experiential Education:" Focused reflection with a strong emphasis on student-directed answers. <i>(In order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people's capacity to contribute to their communities (as noted by the AEE). At the end of intentional experiences, equal intention must be put into debriefing and reflecting upon what happened.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff manual outlining guidelines to prepare students for active role in day-to-day activities • Expectations that outline reflection • Reflection tools for staff or students 				
<p>1.1.3 - Organization consciously includes core qualities of "Experiential Education:" Students have an active role in the governance of their experience/program. <i>(Students learn best by doing and receiving the merits of their own efforts - for better or worse. The best way to make sure that students 'own' their experience is if they have a hand in its creation. This might mean booking transportation, leading an initiative, etc.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations that outline self-governance for students as a priority • Staff manual outlining self-governance strategies 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.1.4 - Organization attempts to challenge students' comfort zones in manageable ways: The student is set up for success and individual capacity is considered. <i>(One of the two most common reasons listed in taking a gap year is a desire to increase one's self awareness. Challenging comfort zones remains a vital element in the definition of a gap year and organizations each have their own unique approaches to such challenges that must consider individual student needs and abilities.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of program planning directives that incorporate such challenges to students comfort zone • Copy of staff manual outlining specific activities designed to challenge comfort zones 				
<p>1.1.5 - Organization educates students on the value of seeing things from differing perspectives; exposing students to, and discussing with them, differing world views, opinions, and cultural norms. <i>(Students will be challenged to define their own answers to questions and thus develop a deeper sense of Self. Additionally, in terms of developing an appreciation for global citizenship, it becomes vital to develop tools that will help students see things from opposing perspectives. Understanding how to resolve issues with coworkers, strangers, or even other students it is important to attempt to see their perspective.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of curriculum that focuses on opposing perspectives education • Copy of staff expectations that mandate world view education • Copy of staff manual that provides guidelines or directives focused on opposing perspectives education 				
<p>1.1.6 - Organization communicates a commitment to inclusivity and, within the organization's Essential Eligibility Criteria, welcomes participants of diverse backgrounds and perspectives. <i>(Some examples include, but are not limited to: political beliefs, socio-economic status, different physical abilities, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, etc. An environment that fosters respect, tolerance and recognizes the incredible contribution of diversity is an essential component for uplifting our shared-humanity. Where appropriate, special consideration for safety (eg, LGBTQ in Uganda), should be discussed in educational terms as a concern, but not excluded from participation.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusivity statement published on website • Policy on bullying • Staff manual or trainings on fostering inclusivity among participants and/or addressing bullying 				

1.2 - "Do what you say you'll do & be public about it."

All marketing and enrollment material is reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis in order to ensure its accuracy and ease of understanding. Materials don't mislead nor misrepresent any experiences students will be exposed to and are clear about what an 'appropriate student' is for their organization's programs. Policies and marketing materials are unambiguous, deliberate, and publicly available.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.2.1 - Student policies must be clear and include expectations about drug use (prescription & street), alcohol use, student behavior, and sexual relationships (both internal/external to the program as well as where relevant for minors). <i>(The policies that students are expected to abide by are critical to forming clear expectations for their upcoming gap year. Keeping students in alignment with the organization's policies while they are on program begins early in the enrollment process - thus the need for making them public and clear. Note that GYA does not take a stand on relationships between staff.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public list of policies for students and how they are 'public' • Public URL • Brochure • General program / organization information packet and description of its public availability 				
<p>1.2.2 - Organization emphasizes publicly that students must choose to participate: mandates by parents, court, or otherwise are not allowed. <i>(While many students can benefit from a gap year, those that are required to join a program inevitably will change the dynamic of any experience. Parents directing students towards programs should be counseled against student-participation unless students adequately convey their own personal desire to join.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public URL • Brochure • Public list of guidelines for admission 				
<p>1.2.3 - Organization seeks to improve its inclusion and equity efforts with a publicly available strategic plan for both. <i>(The strategic plan should recognize the current accomplishments of the organization and focus on efforts that can be improved in programming, staff hiring, marketing, financial aid, and partnerships. Inclusion represents broad student perspectives and life-experiences, such as racial differences, LGBTQ, ADA, etc.. Equity represents financial aid towards additional resources that might make the gap year accessible.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public URL showing the Strategic plan 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
1.2.4 - Organization has clear policies about existing student prescription medication. <i>(Who holds the meds? Whose responsibility is it to maintain regular intake of medication? Especially with mental health prescriptions or those considered a 'controlled substance' it becomes necessary to identify where the responsibilities lay and what level of self-care is expected from a prospective student.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public URL • Public list of guidelines for admission • Public list of policies for students and how they are 'public' • General program / organization information packet and description 				
1.2.5 - Students requiring regular therapy while on program are not allowed. <i>(While almost any student can benefit from a gap year, students requiring regular (eg, weekly) professional, in-field therapy are better suited for a designated 'therapeutic' or 'wilderness therapy' program, and outside of the purview of GYA to regulate.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public URL • Copy of admissions criteria highlighting where this is publicly stated 				
1.2.6 - Organization does not pay commissions for any US referrals to their gap year program. <i>(Clearly, fit is paramount in a successful gap year and when money becomes part of a reward system it easily can confuse motives, and, at the least, colors perceptions.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public URL • Brochure 				
1.2.7 - Organization has a clear and publicly available Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC) that clearly communicates "optimal fit" for students. <i>(EEC are vital to clearly explain what is needed for each student to physically and safely complete the established itinerary, but also protect the organization from potential ADA lawsuits. Example: https://www.nols.edu/media/filer_public/63/86/6386bc7c-a8d6-4618-9196-966efac6e0c1/wmi_eec.pdf)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public URL • Brochure • Public list of guidelines for admission • General program / organization information packet and description of its public use 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.2.8 - Organization is transparent about typical staff profile (e.g., qualifications or current staff profile). <i>(Staff who administer the organization and especially those Direct Supervision Staff give a window into the type of experience the organization is facilitating. Emphasizing qualifications, certifications, and accomplishments help families understand the benefits of an GYA-Accredited organization.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public URL listing hiring guidelines • Brochure • Public profiles of current staff • General program / organization information packet and description of its public use 				
<p>1.2.9 - Organization is clear about finances: including program costs, anticipated additional charges, and a clear refund policy. <i>(Finances hit at the heart of establishing trust and no one wants to feel blindsided with them. This means clear anticipated costs. Refund policies must be clearly stated to ensure financial accountability.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public URL • Brochure • Public profiles of current staff • General program / organization information packet and description of its public use 				
<p>1.2.10 - "Safe," "always," "guarantee" are not used to suggest or promise as much in any materials. <i>(There are legal complications in using unrehearsed or promissory language that creates an implied expectation about things that are ultimately out of the organization's control. Organizations do themselves a favor to accurately represent risks as well as clarify that sometimes bad things happen despite the best preparation.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization's policies discussing care in word choice • Written letter of commitment from the Executive Director • Submitted collateral by the organization 				
<p>1.2.11 - Organization is transparent with students, parents, and family about expected frequency and methods of communication for the duration of the program. <i>(Because a student's experience necessarily involves their family, it is important to be clear about the expected methods and frequency of on-program communication. Organizations should also consider whether its communication policy reflect the developmental needs of its students.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public URL • Brochure • General program / organization information packet and description of its public use 				

1.3 - "Organization must abide by GYA's principles for strong governance."

All organization staff should strive to represent a professional educational organization with integrity. Safety and student education should be the priority above all other considerations, however, to achieve the best in safety standards, the organization must be accordingly run and governed.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.3.1 - Organization is adequately insured for all proposed activities (minimally for USD \$2million), properly registered, and submits all mandated reports in a timely and responsible fashion. <i>(Having sufficient insurance, being properly registered, and handling the business of your organization responsibly is a protection to all gap year students, not the least of which includes the organization itself.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copies of: current liability insurance policies, local and state and federal registration of entity status (corp, llc, 501.c.3, etc.), most recent 990s • Copy of additionally encouraged insurance (such as DAN for SCUBA) 				
<p>1.3.2 - Organization has immediate access to resources sufficient to address emergencies in the field. <i>(Emergencies come in any number of forms and it can be necessary for the headquarters to intervene directly with a program. Preparation for those unique situations can only go so far, however, without access to funds.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the field: any short-term emergency expenses such as immediate hired transport or VISA/MasterCard with sufficient funds (depending on the group/program this should be roughly \$800). <i>(Note that areas where access to a VISA/MasterCard is unreliable must bring cash.)</i> • In the office: funds sufficient enough to transport one support staff to any operating location for each of five programs currently operating. Considerations for any necessary (passport) visas should be made to allow for a quick departure should circumstances merit. This could potentially also be with a reliable local contact who can act as a deputy for the organization. <i>(The cost to travel can be significant, so local resources are encouraged if they are trusted. However, financial availability must allow for an organization to deal with reasonably anticipated emergencies.)</i> 	<p>Field-relevance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization's policies discussing maintenance of financial cushion • Field budget from a recent program showing extra 'emergency' funds <p>Office-relevance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization's policies discussing maintenance of financial cushion • Organization's emergency protocols • Written letter of commitment from the Executive Director • Balance statement from bank accounts • Names and locations of contacts who can intervene • Documents for a Business Line of Credit including available credit 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.3.3 - Prior to departure, every student (or their legal guardian if minors), signs medical history forms disclosing current medications, allergies, psychological diagnoses, history of therapy or hospitalization within twelve months, and any relevant physical disabilities. <i>(In order to best protect each student, the organization must know any particular student needs in advance. Preparation and information are a minimum for responsible care.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of medical history form • Copy of deadline for submission of all required forms • Explanation of organization’s methods for tracking and keeping copies of all submitted forms 				
<p>1.3.4 - Prior to departure, every student (or their legal guardian if minors), sign release & waiver forms. <i>(Having clear and iron-clad forms help ensure that the organization is safe, and that the students in its charge are informed and transparent about any necessary conditions. GYA recommends being clear about potential risks in any paperwork.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of release and waiver form • Copy of deadline for submission of all required forms • Explanation of organization’s methods for tracking and keeping copies of all submitted forms 				
<p>1.3.5 - Organization has independent medical expertise available on-call for consultation, with a minimum active certification of Residential Nurse or equivalent. In front-country domestic settings, 911 will suffice. <i>(Medical situations are the most common emergency faced by Study Abroad organizations. Having independent medical expertise provides an expert to help determine medical urgency, treatment (if directed by the expert), and recommend evacuation if necessary. Additionally, it reduces the organization’s liability.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy for staff to call local 911-equivalent for medical advice and action • Name and contact of medical experts • Copy of the contract with the individual/organization • International SOS, MEDEX, HTH, etc., contract 				

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<p>1.3.6 - Organization has a trained, independent, organizationally-sourced clinician available on-call for psychological issues and to help assess fitness of students to continue participation. <i>(Psychological issues are the second most common issue faced by students while studying abroad. While the ultimate decision to remove a student always rests with the gap year organization, it is only through informed experts that organizations are able to make accurate assessments. Clinicians must be authorized to advise the organization regarding suggested actions.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name and contact of medical expert(s) • Copy of the contract with the individual/organization 				
<p>1.3.7 - Organization abides by all local laws wherever students or staff are present. <i>(Familiarity with local laws should be necessary to ensure the students and the organization aren't unintentionally put in harms way nor at risk for potential local legal issues, including prison.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization's policies discussing compliance with all local laws • Staff resource educating about local laws 				
<p>1.3.8 - Any safety equipment used by students or staff are kept in sound condition, appropriately used, checked prior to use, and sufficient to accommodate different students (i.e., sized correctly). <i>(Safety equipment must be kept in good working order and appropriate to the students and staff using it or the utility of the equipment meant to keep students safe will not serve its purpose.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization's policies discussing maintenance of equipment and supply needs/standards • Name and contact information of person responsible for safety equipment 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.3.9 - Organization has an Emergency Response Plan with clear steps on how to handle a medical emergency including death. [See your GYA Membership Account for examples].</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handling of current students / group • Communication with family including debriefing and following up with family • Staff support • Availability of psychological professionals / psychological first aid (http://icisf.org: the International Crisis Incident Stress Foundation) • Repatriation of remains / insurance / communication with local government and if needed, State Department • Detailing protocols for a missing student including contacting HQ, working with any local agencies, supporting local staff and individual students and other group members <p><i>(A good Emergency Response Plan should include specific roles for all parties, addressing all groups (parents, students, staff, affected students/staff, media, GYA, etc.). It should identify when the plan is put into effect and the principal decision-maker for each step when one is called for.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of Emergency Response Plan that addresses each of the bullet points to the left 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.3.10 - Organization must have a clear Crisis Communication Plan. <i>(For small organizations, GYA can be a part of the Plan. Emergency response plans are a critical first step, but in a true crisis, expectations for communication with outside stakeholders can interfere with the actual ability to best preserve life. A good Crisis Communication Plan should include proactive steps to communicate with parents, other programs in the “field”, local partners, and media sources. It should also consider decision making processes and authorized speakers on behalf of the organization. See https://today.duke.edu/showcase/emergency_plan/ for an example.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crisis Communication Plan or flowchart 				
<p>1.3.11 - Organization must share upon request a Risk Management Document or web page with any interested party. <i>(This should not be the full risk management plan for proprietary and liability concerns, however, it must speak intelligently of what a family can expect in the event of a crisis.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Template or .pdf or web page of a risk management outline 				
<p>1.3.12 - Organization clearly outlines for students, the process for escalating disciplinary responses. <i>(Whether through an escalating series of discipline - warning leading to a verbal contract leading to a written contract, or timeouts - students are more likely to succeed if they know when a rule is absolute and what they can expect in terms of the escalation processes.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of policies for students and how they handle the ‘grey’ zones 				
<p>1.3.13 - Organization has clear start- and end-dates and times. <i>(A common success for any program is when a student decides to stay and explore independently post-program. In these, and many other cases, being able to communicate program completion (through paperwork, contracts, completion certificates, etc.), is a vital part towards safeguarding the organization and any confusion about when program staff responsibilities are completed.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paperwork showing start and finish dates and times that are program-specific • Certificate of completion and instructions for when to give 				

1.4 - "Organization upholds the spirit of Federal standards for higher education."

Universities, in order to receive funding and ensure compliance with Federal agencies, must abide by reasonable practices. Given the relationship gap years have (and hope to continue) with universities, such standards are in every organization's best interest to pave the way for gap years' inclusion in Federal education benefits.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.4.1 - Staff do not share information about specific students without either the express permission of the student, or to prevent a clear or immediate danger to a person or persons (ie, FERPA & HIPAA). <i>(Sharing any students' information creates many consequences and should only be done with their prior permission, or if a clear and immediate danger is posed. This explicitly includes information-sharing with parents. Minor children don't have the same legal right to privacy, however, every effort should be made to treat them as adults whenever immediate safety is not a concern.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of policy detailing staff disclosure of student details for Office staff and Field staff • Policy of organization to educate about FERPA and keep student privacy 				
<p>1.4.2 - The organization works proactively and supports a fair, survivor-centric approach to any case of sexual assault. (ie, Title IX & VAWA). [See your GYA Membership Account for details]. <i>(No one should ever be assaulted, but when it occurs, each organization has an obligation to respect the needs, rights, and privacy, of the victim, while also striving to protect other students from potential or known predators.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of policy detailing organization's compliance of student record confidentiality 				

1.5 - "Organization prepares student appropriately."

Despite the best training for staff and solid organizational protocols, at the end of the day students themselves are their own best resources for safety. A comprehensive orientation remains the best way to teach a student to make safe and healthy decisions for themselves.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and not a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.5.1 - Provides on-site program orientation, started and finished within 96 hours of program beginning, that includes each:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Staff facilitates follow-up with students about any potentially undisclosed medical concerns, specifically discouraging titration of prescription medications without a doctor (2) Focuses on teaching students experientially about "risk management awareness" and problem solving. [See your GYA Membership Account for a list of GYA-approved examples] (3) Educates students about "bystander awareness" for at least BOTH, sexual assault and drug overdose prevention (4) Re-establishes program policies and provides EXPLANATIONS meant to enroll students in the reasoning for each policy (5) Addresses EACH of the following where relevant: illness, disease (HIV, regional considerations, etc.), hygiene, working and living with others (within the group and cross-culturally), local safety considerations, personal medical issues (allergies, medication, etc.), day/night safety, terrorist attacks, natural disasters (flooding, hurricanes, typhoons, etc.), crime (sexual assault, assault, how best to respond), local laws, potability & hydration, food-borne illness & safety, local flora & fauna safety, road safety, local water safety, local fire safety, environmental hazards (lightening, etc.), hypothermia & heat stroke (where appropriate), homestays (where appropriate) <p><i>(While an orientation prior to departure is a good aid, creating an orientation on-site adds relevance that assists in the integration of students' learning. Ultimately, students are their own best safety-sponsors, but only if they are informed about, and meaningfully understand, the relevant dangers.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of the staff policies detailing orientation expectations • Copy of an orientation • Copy of instruction used to experientially instruct students about risk management awareness and problem solving • Signed copy of program policies that students have re-initialed from an orientation • Copy of the staff policy detailing timeline and what must be covered during orientation 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and not a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.5.2 - Written welcome information includes details on each of the following: program policies, housing, local environmental concerns, transportation, vaccinations (based on CDC guidelines), possible challenges (personal, group, cultural), local safety/security concerns, packing list specific to the student's program. <i>(Different people learn in different methods, so while it's important to address details over the phone and 'on the ground', it's also vital to have these same details available for reference in print.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program-specific welcome packet detailing the concerns listed • Student web-page detailing the concerns listed 				
<p>1.5.3 - Organization has appropriate process for re-entry that is focused on easing the transition home and maximizing the longterm transference of lessons learned. <i>(These experiences inevitably will transform a student's life, but even more so with a proper contextualization of the experience. Taking time to prepare a student for 'normal' life or 'reverse culture shock' are critical towards their longterm success and the integration of lessons learned.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of curriculum used in debriefing program • Handouts or materials to address re-entry preparation and how they are used • Written letter describing the steps taken to address re-integration shock post-program 				
<p>1.5.4 - Provides an orientation specific to safety prior to each organized activity (e.g., rock climbing, entering a new city, etc.). <i>(Safety cannot be overemphasized, and each situation is unique. Accordingly, reminders should be frequent and as specific as they can be to ensure that students are making informed decisions. The great fear of "negligence" can be abated if students are informed and thus then are responsible for ensuring their own safety in as much as they've been warned. Simple things can have life-altering impact if not done with preparation and care.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of the staff policies detailing activity/site-specific orientation • Copy of student roles detailing activity/site-specific orientation • List of expectations for on-site representatives 				

1.6 - "Organization has clear policies about transportation."

Understanding that different methods of transportation are critical to the overall experience of a good gap year, transportation remains a mostly preventable risk. Road transportation is the most common cause of fatalities and thus should merit a significant preventative effort.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.6.1 - For students, motorcycles, ATVs, and quads, are not allowed. <i>(In the Peace Corps anyone riding a motorcycle is automatically expelled even in the eleventh hour. Not applicable for staff.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of policy detailing motorcycle use 				
<p>1.6.2 - Any motor vehicle in which students are passengers must be vetted by staff according to a pre-departure checklist that includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any decision to ride in a vehicle without seatbelts is made consciously and as part of a planned and researched activity. If available, seatbelts must be worn at all times • How reliable is the local regulation? • Reasonable attempts are made to assess the driver's fitness for safe vehicle operation? <i>(questions and dialogue are responded to reasonably and assertively)</i> • Have potential route-hazards been researched? <i>(reasonable checks are made on the ground with respect to recent security issues and road status)</i> • Reasonable estimates for maximum number of occupants • Does the vehicle look well-maintained? <i>(checking fluids, light functionality, tire tread and pressure)</i> • Valid drivers license for the vehicle they will be operating and the states / countries it will be operated in • Is there safety equipment? <i>(e.g., fire extinguisher, med kit, etc.)</i> • Special training or experience is given if using a trailer <p><i>(Given the increased risk of travel in a motor-vehicle, additional safeguards are required to ensure students aren't unnecessarily endangered.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff driving vehicle check list • Staff policies detailing minimum training standards • Copy of vehicle insurance certificate and coverage • Copy of policy on when seatbelts are used and when they are not • Employee Manual section with a checklist for road travel • Expectations section for staff that outlines road travel checklist 				

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)</i>	<i>In Place</i>	<i>In Process</i>	<i>Not Applicable</i>	<i>Exception Requested</i>
1.6.3 - Staff expectations state drivers should abide by US DOT standards whenever students are passengers in a road vehicle: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10-hour maximum driving after 8 consecutive hours off duty. • 70 hour driving limit within 8 consecutive days. <i>(The Federal Government has created a few clear limits around driving before the 'human element' begins to have a negative impact.)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Copy of Staff policy detailing rest and US DOT standards</i> 				

1.7 - "Organization has clear process for hiring and staffing."

Hiring the right people is arguably the most important effort for any well-run organization. Doing so inadequately both endangers the organization and the students. Staff should be well-qualified, which includes but is not limited to: ability to self-assess, take feedback, appropriately handle foreseeable medical emergencies, handle challenging or difficult students, be familiar with program and location-specifics, possess relevant technical skills, etc.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.7.1 - The hiring process is legal. All local hiring guidelines are followed. <i>(Hiring comes with some specific challenges that carelessness could open into lawsuits. Hiring according to local laws must be employed, and in the US, most typically will involve NOT asking certain questions about age, religion, etc. Hiring international staff requires special considerations such as potential work visa requirements or alternative methods for performing background checks. Note: when an employee is in the US, US-labor law applies, however, when an employee is outside of the US such laws, in most cases, do not. Read here for a helpful tool on hiring law.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline of hiring process including dos and don'ts for questions, etc. • Copy of staff interview template • Written letter of commitment from the Executive Director 				
<p>1.7.2 - Direct Supervision Staff are provided with access to medical, and evacuation insurance, and educated about options for longterm care such as might result from a chronic back injury - or paralysis - while on program. <i>(Staff that feel safe and supported are better able to do their jobs. Additional long-term support through workers compensation or alternative insurance in the event of an accident provides securities for the staff.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of Workers' Compensation Insurance listing field staff • Copy of staff contract with insurance details • Copy of organization policy for hiring independent contractors 				
<p>1.7.3 - Staff have appropriate process for redress of grievances to HQ that is timely and free from retaliation. <i>(Treating staff with respect only improves their experience and thus that of their students. Creating a strong process for addressing grievances involves creating a culture of tolerance around sharing, but also represents a safety net from lawsuits.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of protocols for staff grievances • List of person in charge of dealing with staff grievances • Copy of previous staff grievance and how it was addressed 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.7.4 - Staff have understanding of relevant cultural norms and how to navigate them with students. <i>(In every gap year there is some form of cultural navigation - whether from New York city to Katrina relief or from Colorado to Turkey. In every case, staff should have a strong understanding of the cultural norms to safely chaperone students through the intricacies of navigating cultural differences. These skills have direct benefits in college and in the workforce and thus represent a compelling reason for students to take a gap year.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of hiring guidelines • List of expectations for staff to know specifically re. cultural norms • List of supportive educational materials for staff to read prior to departure • Copy of staff training materials that discuss navigating cultural norms while on program 				
<p>1.7.5 - Direct Supervision Staff have a background check or at least three relevant professional references prior to hiring. <i>(Working with young adults while putting them in de facto uncomfortable situations means they will rely on staff in a very significant way. Even though it is rare that a relevant history will show on a background check, it's also critical that if it does not, the organization be able to say they did their due diligence.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of contract with background check agency • Copy of organization policy to get references from all potential staff • Copy of reference check form with instructions 				
<p>1.7.6 - Direct Supervision Staff are interviewed in-person or virtually so. <i>(Hiring staff that interact with students, parents, or other professionals is far too important to do with only a phone call or email. In this day and age, there are too many options for a virtual meeting to warrant not having one. e.g., skype, google video chat, sightspeed, etc.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of interview sheet for organization HR • Copy of interview guidelines for prospective staff • Name and contact information of person in charge of interviewing 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
1.7.7 - Organization has clearly written guidelines for post-program interaction between students and staff with an eye towards professionalism. <i>(Just because a program finishes does not immediately mean that staff can or ought to engage with students in a less professional manner. Are there rules about immediate alumni drinking alcohol with staff? Such timelines should be spelled out clearly to prevent confusion and recognize the historical student/educator relationship.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee handbook • Employee contract 				

1.8 - "Direct Supervision Staff have clear policy expectations, are regularly and adequately trained, and current on any certifications."

Direct Supervision Staff are those staff who are hired to work directly with the students. This may represent a group leader, a remote supervisor doing regular check-ins, or a local independent contractor who is in charge of the day-to-day safety of the students. Direct Supervision Staff represent the greatest safety mechanism in working with students. They must be regularly trained, respect the fundamental worth of all people regardless of personal differences, and should work within the scope of their training.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.8.1 - Staff have a minimum and current certification of First Aid/CPR, although more is preferred. <i>(Even in front-country settings with ready access to emergency services, first-aid/CPR certifications are an expectation. Organizations that go "backcountry" have a higher responsibility to provide a WFA or, preferably, a WFR, which is found in section 3 of the Standards.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of training / incentives that organization sponsors to ensure staff compliance 				
<p>1.8.2 - Staff are experienced and/or trained sufficient to lead any activity that isn't being outsourced to a partner organization. <i>(Staff have specific training or certification if leading the following:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Camping (fire safety, food safety, wildlife, equipment maintenance, evacuation protocols, etc.)</i> • <i>Backpacking / Hiking</i> • <i>Climbing</i> • <i>Biking (touring, mountain, road, commuting, helmets, etc.)</i> • <i>Caving / Spelunking</i> • <i>Horseback Riding / Working with Pack Animals</i> • <i>Snow Sports (Skiing, Snowboarding, Avalanche, etc.)</i> • <i>Ropes Courses (High and Low Challenge Courses)</i> • <i>Sailing</i> • <i>Tree Climbing</i> • <i>Water sports (canoeing, boating, rafting, kayaking, SCUBA, etc.)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>List of typical activities on program and certification requirements to do so</i> • <i>Organizational protocol / policy to determine whether staff can lead certain activities or if they need to be outsourced</i> • <i>Written letter of commitment from the Executive Director</i> 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.8.3 - Policies support the sustainability of staff (e.g., time off, adequate co-leaders, professional development opportunities, etc.). <i>(Staff who are well-rested and strongly supported are better able to do their job. Additionally, the institutional knowledge of a veteran staff is in everyone's interest.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff training/manual that emphasizes staff care • Organizational policy that discusses staff support 				
<p>1.8.4 - Staff must provide resources for students' basic needs including physical (medical, food, water, shelter) and mental health. <i>(In order to do the real work on a gap year we must ensure that students' basic needs are being met. Teaching them what healthy food, clean water, and emotional health looks like is often more useful in their lives than many of their experiences. Unless there is a specific and intentional experience such as a walkabout or a fast from food, this standard should be considered second only to immediate physical safety.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of policy that requires staff to ensure students' basic needs • Copy of resources for staff to support students' basic needs • Copy of staff training that addresses mental and emotional health • Copy of policy that outlines regular staff interaction with students 				
<p>1.8.5 - Staff are trained for and have clear policies against any romantic or sexual relationship with a student. <i>(While these should seem obvious, it must be clearly stated. As well, staff training should address sexual misconduct topics such as power differentials with students, how to redirect any student advances, and creating appropriate boundaries.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of policy or expectation • Staff contract with these points highlighted 				
<p>1.8.6 - Organization must have risk management plan specific to fire emergencies. Preference should be given to 1st floor accommodations with multiple points of evacuation, smoke detectors (or a plan to bring portable smoke detectors). <i>(Every year fire is an unfortunate and never planned for contributor to fatalities and just because an organization is in a "developed country" doesn't mean that fire codes place life above expense - such as in many of Europe's older buildings, let alone in the developing world.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Checklist for staff when selecting housing • Staff expectations/policy that states housing preference to be given to 1st floor, with multiple points of evacuation, and smoke detectors present 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
1.8.7 - Organization has a risk management plan that addresses drowning risks. <i>(Drowning is one of the most common causes of fatality and every organization must adequately consider methods for training staff and students about water safety with particular attention to prevention and access to PFDs.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of policy or expectation • Copy of training that addresses swimming policy 				
1.8.8 - Staff policy clearly prohibits students from carrying any of the organization’s primary critical emergency equipment (med kit, emergency phones, etc.). <i>(It may be tempting to empower students with these tools, however, given their critical nature only staff should possess them.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of policy or expectation • Staff contract with these points highlighted 				
1.8.9 - Expectation to communicate to program supervisor whenever there is a plan for students to be beyond reach of telephone or internet as well as what time to be alarmed should they not return. <i>(Whenever a program is going to be away from regular communication, expectations must be set so that supervisors and HQ know when to call in the authorities for a missing group, student, or staff.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of policy or expectation • Copy of training that addresses communication requirements 				
1.8.10 - Organization has policies about acquiring “prescription” medications from local sources, fellow students, or the medical kit. An emphasis on bystander training is encouraged to proactively identify drug overdose concerns and report them to the right person. <i>(With the explosion of opioid deaths in recent years, prescription drug deaths are incredibly relevant. Students may steal, sell, or barter potent drugs, or buy them from local sources. Whether overseas or domestically, staff should not dispense directly to any student any medication, unless specifically trained and directed by a physician.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of policy or expectation • Copy of staff manual 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
1.8.11 - Organization has clear policies requiring documentation about student medical and behavioral concerns. <i>(Documenting student behavior is both important for legal records, but also helps to address the 'gradual change blindness' of student behavior and empower staff to respond objectively and appropriately.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of policy or expectation • Copy of staff manual • Copy of documentation template 				
1.8.12 - Training is based, whenever the opportunity is available, on experiential methods. <i>(Staff who are working within an experiential pedagogy should be trained in the same, thus expanding their teaching tools and responding to student learning styles. This might be scenarios, games, or skits.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff training with scenarios highlighted • Copy of policies / expectations that emphasize an experiential pedagogy internal to the organization 				
1.8.14 - Staff are educated, proficient, and trained in how to work with students on prescription psychotropics. <i>(Approximately 40% of students are, or have recently been, on some form of psychotropics. Staff must be prepared to work with some of the unique considerations that accompany these students.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of educational materials for staff detailing prescription psychotropics • Copy of staff training about prescription psychotropics and when staff are instructed on it 				
1.8.15 - Staff training addresses personal biases that might affect work performance. <i>(Staff have an incredibly challenging job, but one that only works if they are aware of their own biases. Staff must be involved in their own regular self-reflection process in order to identify and address unconscious biases such as a 'favorite student', or a bias against a particular student. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKHSJHkPeLY)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of hiring guidelines • Copy of training that emphasizes reflection and self-awareness of staff • Copy of policy that details staff stepping down • Copy of methodology for student grievances to be shared / dealt with 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.8.16 - Staff are trained on how to ensure proper administration of epinephrine according to the organization's protocols. <i>(Epinephrine is a life-saving drug that must be available and administered correctly. There are many vehicles for administering it, and staff must be informed about when to use it and how it is injected. An anaphylactic reaction can occur without any prior warning.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff training that emphasizes epinephrine training (WFA does not emphasize this) • Organization's epinephrine tools of choice and instructions for its use 				
<p>1.8.17 - Staff carry appropriate, relevant, and updated resources that support and complement learning opportunities. <i>(Staff are incredibly dedicated and smart people. However, they are limited by their experience and the organization can support them to support their students. This may mean games, lesson plans, activities, etc.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff manual • Outlines games, initiatives, lesson plans, histories, reading lists, etc. • Copy of handouts for staff that support their efforts to educate 				
<p>1.8.18 - Staff always carry a copy of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All emergency medical phone numbers • All known current student & staff medications • All medically relevant allergies and any relevant diagnoses for each student currently on program. <p><i>(In case of a medical emergency, these details become exceedingly timely and critical.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff manual • Policy detailing mandate to carry staff manual at all times 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.8.19 - Staff always carry emergency protocols prioritizing student safety that include considerations for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Communication (2) Weather / natural disaster (3) Terrorist attack (4) Medical emergency (5) Missing student (6) Student evacuation (7) Political crisis (8) Rape and sexual assault (9) Self-harm / cutting / suicidal ideation <p><i>(In the event of an emergency, these protocols can become the difference between a well-organized and efficient response, or a chaotic, poorly communicated, potentially dangerous one.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff manual • Policy detailing mandate to carry staff manual at all times 				
<p>1.8.20 - Appropriate student:staff ratios, with a minimum of two trained staff qualified to lead that activity, or, in front-country situations, one trained staff with appropriate backup procedures.</p> <p><i>(Organizations have student:staff ratios for specialty activities:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Developing Country/Overnight Backpacking - 8:1</i> • <i>Mountaineering (depending on terrain) - 4:1</i> • <i>Winter camping, front-country skiing/boardings - 6:1</i> • <i>Back-country skiing/boardings/snow sports - 4:1</i> • <i>Top-rope & Ice climbing - 6:1</i> • <i>Multi-pitch climbing- 3:1</i> • <i>Flat water paddling - 6:1</i> • <i>Sea kayaking - 8:1</i> • <i>Rafting (depending on class) - 1:2 boats</i> <p><i>These listed summarize common activities.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public URL • Brochure • General program / organization information packet and description of its public use 				

1.9 - "Organization has a medical kit that is available at all student functions."

A medical kit is an essential part of every safety plan, but only a well-stocked and maintained kit that's on-hand can actually serve its purpose. Staff must be comfortable using every item in the medical kit and if not done so through previous training, the organization must ensure appropriate training to do so.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.9.1 - Staff must have medical kit available at all times students are present. <i>(Carrying the medical kit at all times is of course the only way it will be useful. Inevitably, the times it will be needed most are those when it is inevitably not carried. NOTE: "available" can mean at a nurse's offices or central location.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy that mandates staff carry medical kit at all times 				
<p>1.9.2 - Medical kit must contain at least:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of any emergency medical phone numbers • Epinephrine • Backup water purification • Bacitracin antibiotic cream • Band Aids • Trauma gauze • Trauma sheers • CPR mask • Rubber/latex gloves • Tape • Benadryl • Irrigation tools • Tweezers • Thermometer <p><i>(A well-stocked and prepared medical kit will satisfy about 90% of any emergencies. Note that these lists should be contained in the medical kit and another location such that all staff have a copy of these vital details whenever the need should arise.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of organization's medical kit 'must haves' • Photograph of actual medical kit 				

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)</i>	<i>In Place</i>	<i>In Process</i>	<i>Not Applicable</i>	<i>Exception Requested</i>
1.9.3 - All medication must be current and not expired. <i>(Carrying expired medication means that it is unreliable and potentially ineffective.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of organization's policy stating that all medication in each med kit must not be expired 				

1.10 - "Organization has clear admissions processes."

Gap year organizations only thrive when their students thrive. To have students that thrive, each organization must be clear about the right fit, for both the student and the organization. Every organization has a different set of focus areas, however, being both conscious and clear about them is important. Some of these different areas might include: student-supervision and independence, specific activities, certificates/credits earned, languages learned, level of 'roughing it,' religious affiliations, physical fitness, and many more. Not every program is right for every student and the organization is the best judge.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.10.1 - Admissions process includes at least a phone interview that must address expectations and review of policies (45 minutes MINIMUM per student). <i>(Determining the right fit for any student is ultimately up to the organization. During the interview process, getting to know a student is a critical element to understanding how they'll fare, and thus establishing minimum interviewing standards and a set of interview questions aimed to foster candor, trust, and confidence is vital.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of organization's interview template • Copy of completed interview with student name edited out • Organization's handbook for interviewing students 				
<p>1.10.2 - Organization must ask during the student interview process about swimming ability. <i>(Fatality by water is the second most common cause of death on study abroad programs and knowing whether students can safeguard themselves in such matters is simply critical information for staff consideration.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of student interview form or application with a swimming or water safety question 				
<p>1.10.3 - Organization discusses how it typically responds to students that are either showing signs of being unwell or breaking program policies. This discussion should ideally take place as part of the interview process, and include what support the organization has to offer the student once they are on program. <i>(Knowing what safety nets students have better prepares them to challenge comfort zones and learn. They cannot ask for a resource if they do not know it exists)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of script that is universally communicated to students encouraging transparency but also how the organization plans to proceed in the event of an event or episode in the field • Copy of disclaimers that are read to all students 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.10.4 - Any history of therapy within the past 12 months must have a communication plan between organization staff and clinician prior to participation on program. [See your GYA Member Account for examples]</p> <p><i>(This typically means a Release of Information authorizing the clinician to speak directly with the organization. Students with a past history of mental health issues are not uncommon, however, predicting how a change in endorphins, metabolism, desire to titrate themselves off prescriptions, jet lag, physical illness, etc., presents a unique challenge for how to work best with each student. A good plan that supports the student and the organization is key.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of 'communication plan' made for a past student • Copy of Release of Information form used by organization to enable direct communication between organization and clinician 				
<p>1.10.5 - Organization takes special consideration with any student on medication - considering and discussing with each student the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expected availability in case of loss/damage to existing medication • Strategies to prevent loss/damage • Transportation of controlled substances (especially if international) • Education about potential stolen medication, what to do, and what it might mean if meds go missing <p><i>(Prescription medications are potent, have side effects, and are prescribed with specific individuals and medical histories in mind. Students depend on them, however, the organization possesses travel/logistical expertise and thus the onus for education about potential problems and mitigation strategies. Considerations for replacement, strategies to prevent loss, and the abuse of prescriptions by others in/outside of the program, must be discussed.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of organization handout (and how it is delivered to students) detailing anticipated medication problems • Copy of student interview template • Copy of narrative that is universally communicated to students encouraging transparency but also how the organization plans to proceed in the event of lost / stolen medication 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.10.6 - Students are discouraged from removing or titrating themselves off of their prescription medication without the consultation of their guiding physician. <i>(Educating students about the importance of staying on their medications is vital, discouraging them from changing medications outside of the supervision of a physician is the only reasonable expectation. Students often titrate due to a newfound sense of self-empowerment, but unanticipated side-effects are common - especially increases in suicide rates.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of organization policy on students removing themselves from their medication • Copy of staff policy discouraging unsupervised titration from medication 				

1.11 - "Organization strives to improve."

All good things evolve and organizations, through a regular and thorough review process, have the obligation to learn and further reduce exposure. Program evaluation, research on outcomes, or student satisfaction are all valiant efforts towards improvement. The organization should have regular review processes that include positives, negatives, and reviews for potential changes to organizational policies.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
1.11.1 - Reviews should include a mid-way (optionally) anonymous evaluation for students focused on improving their current experience. <i>(Every program can always be improved, however, waiting until the end of the program to solicit opportunities for improvement is an opportunity lost to improve the immediate student experience.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Template copy and delivery method of mid-program student evaluation 				
1.11.2 - An end-of-program evaluation given to students that must include the "net promoter score." <i>(The end-of-program student evaluation is an opportunity for a comprehensive review of the student experience and an opportunity to mine for areas of improvement, and great reviews or testimonials. For a link and explanation of the net promoter score and why it's relevant, click here.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Template copy and delivery method of end-of-program student evaluation 				
1.11.3 - A staff evaluation of the program. <i>(Staff will often have the best feedback complete with what worked for their students and what about an itinerary made their job more difficult.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Template copy and delivery method of end-of-program staff evaluation 				
1.11.4 - An evaluation process aimed at staff development and staff support, using the organization's rubric for consistent improvement. <i>(Working with staff is always an organizational investment, but unless they're given feedback and given an opportunity to give their own, the organization will miss key opportunities to improve. NOTE, this is required for both Direct Supervision Staff and Office Staff.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Template copy and delivery method of Direct Supervision Staff evaluation • Template copy and delivery method of Office Staff evaluation 				

2 - SERVICE-LEARNING

Service-Learning is an often-used tool on gap years. The benefits to the students are in almost all cases profound, however, the importance of leaving a responsible footprint on the host communities cannot be overstated. Fundamental to such responsibility is that visitors, guests, students, and volunteers enter their host communities focused on learning rather than ‘helping.’ It is clear that when a project becomes focused exclusively on the completion of its goal the host community suffers in the longterm, thus, a focus on process and education rather than completion should be the guiding principle. Students often won’t understand these nuances, so the onus for such framing of expectations necessarily falls on the organization and the staff.

Filling out this section of the Standards keeps the focus on improvement and while each project partner requires a unique relationship, the expectation will be that applying organizations submit three (3) Fair Trade Learning Rubrics as representative of preferably three different programs. If the organization works with less than three service partners then whichever is less will be accepted.

The GYA have partnered with <https://compact.org/global-sl/ftl/> to use their Fair Trade Learning (FTL) rubric.

The pages below contain one page of explanation and four pages of self-study rubric for organizations, institutions, and individuals concerned with advancing just, fair, and conscientious global exchange, learning, and service partnerships.

Fair Trade Learning (FTL) is global educational partnership exchange that intends to make the means of global citizenship development consistent with the idealized ends. FTL prioritizes reciprocity in relationships through cooperative, cross-cultural participation in learning, service, and civil society efforts. Rather than focusing on volunteer or student development alone, it holds community-driven development in equally high regard. FTL therefore explicitly advances the goals of economic equity, equal partnership, mutual learning, cooperative and positive social change, transparency, and sustainability. Fair Trade Learning explicitly engages the global civil society role of educational exchange in fostering a more just, equitable, and sustainable world (Hartman, Paris, & Blache-Cohen; 2012).

The FTL framework facilitates learning and growth even as concepts such as reciprocity and solidarity are re-negotiated in the tourism, volunteerism, and service-learning literatures. This immediate applicability of the framework could be seen as a response to a concern first raised by Crabtree (2008) and later echoed by Sharpe and Dear (2013). That is, “we need more than an ethos of reciprocity as a guide; we need to learn the...on-the-ground strategies that are more likely to produce mutuality” (Crabtree, 2008, p. 26).

The rubric below provides an opportunity for self-study and reflection among stakeholders in university - community, NGO-community, or abroad organization-community partnerships that include immersive learning and community engagement, around the world. The rubric is at least in part developmental. At times the “Ideal” state is fully dependent upon components expressed in advanced or intermediate stages. However programs could emerge as advanced or ideal, provided that they carefully review best practices before beginning. Long-standing, generative relationships, of course, can only emerge with time.

Many different kinds of organizations are engaging in immersive volunteering, service-learning, and community engagement. This rubric should be useful for universities, NGOs, ethical businesses, and faith institutions interested in best practices in immersive, community-engaged partnerships. Frequently, individuals and organizations involved in this work are uncomfortable with and contest many of the words involved. The purpose of this rubric is not to present a settled understanding of “service”, “development”, “community”, or “partnership”, among other terms. Rather, the hope is that the rubric helps any organization improve the intentionality and quality of partnerships specific to its own identity.

Fair Trade Learning Rubric below, as prepared for: Hartman, E. (2015). Fair trade learning: A framework for ethical global partnerships. In M.A. Larsen, (Ed.), International Service Learning: Engaging Host Communities. New York: Routledge.

More resources at <https://compact.org/global-sl/ftl/>

“Fair Trade Learning Rubric” - created by Global Service Learning. Fair Trade Learning (FTL) is a global educational partnership exchange that intends to make the means of global citizenship development consistent with the idealized ends.

- 2.1 - “Common Purposes”
- 2.2 - “Host Community Program Leadership”
- 2.3 - “Rights of the Most Vulnerable”
- 2.4 - “Host Community Program Participation”
- 2.5 - “Theory of Change (community)”
- 2.6 - “Theory of Change (students)”
- 2.7 - “Recruitment & Publications”
- 2.8 - “Communication”
- 2.9 - “Learning Integration”
- 2.10 - “Local Sourcing, Environmental Impacts, & Economic Structure”
- 2.11 - “Clarity of Commitment and Evaluation of Partnership Success”
- 2.12 - “Transparency”
- 2.13 - “Partnership not Program”

Indicator	Ideal	Advanced	Intermediate	Entry
2.1 - "Common Purposes"	Agreement upon longterm mutuality of goals and aspirations	Agreement upon overlap of goals and aspirations	Clarity from multiple stakeholders regarding how service* supports community and participant interests	Existing connection facilitates immersive exchange; service is added to "make a difference"
Self-ranked with supporting evidence				
2.2 - "Host Community Program Leadership"	Community members have clear teaching, leadership roles; Community-driven research initiatives are co-owned, including fair authorship rights to any co-generated publications	Content and activities of program, from educational through development intervention, are owned by the community through diverse input by community members	Multiple community members have remunerated speaking and leading roles	Key dynamic community member facilitates access
Self-ranked with supporting evidence				
2.3 - "Rights of the Most Vulnerable"	Most vulnerable populations in community have been identified; Appropriate training and safeguards are in place to ensure their rights and well-being in the community	Multiple community partners and stakeholders dialogue about and take action to ensure protection of most vulnerable populations that may be affected through the partnership	Vulnerable populations are not part of the exchange programming and/or specific steps are taken to ensure their rights and well-being specific to the exchange programming	Embedded assumption is that community partner leadership represents all members of the community
Self-ranked with supporting evidence				

2.4 - "Host Community Program Participation"	<i>Community age-peers** of participants have financially embedded opportunities to participate (where applicable, in an accredited way) in programming</i>	Community age-peers of participants are continuously invited for exchange, participation, and structured interaction	Deliberate spaces of free interaction exist within the program, and participants are made aware of opportunities to connect with local community members	Program is largely a bubble of visiting students; interactions with community tend to be highly structured, often as guest speakers
Self-ranked with supporting evidence				
2.5 - "Theory of Change (community)"	Reasons for partnership - in terms of community and student outcomes - are understood and embraced by multiple and diverse stakeholders	The partnership is infused with and guided by a clear understanding of its approach to community outcomes	Stakeholders discuss assumptions guiding community intervention, considering multiple models of service and development	Service is not tied to consideration of its implicit theory of student or community development, community partnership, or social change
Self-ranked with supporting evidence				
2.6 - "Theory of Change (students)"	Reasons for partnership - in terms of community and student outcomes - are understood and embraced by multiple and diverse stakeholders	Clear efforts are made to systematically grow targeted intercultural skills, empathy, and global civic understandings and commitments through best practices in experiential learning	Reflective practice is employed to advance student learning in relation to experiences	Service is not tied to consideration of its implicit theory of student or community development, community partnership, or social change
Self-ranked with supporting evidence				

2.7 - "Recruitment & Publications"	Recruitment materials serve educative function; Shaping expectations for ethical engagement	Writers, photographers, web developers, etc., understand and express responsible social mission via materials	Recruitment materials portray diverse scenes and interactions	Recruitment materials reproduce stereotypical and simplistic portrayals of community members
Self-ranked with supporting evidence				
2.8 - "Communication"	Organization / NGO*** and community members know whom to communicate with about what; communication continues year-round	Communication occurs throughout year between institution and community, but increasingly dense network includes individuals unaware of one another	Communication among two individuals is steady; they hold relationship	Communication occurs with key leader; Increases and decreases dramatically near once- annual programming
Self-ranked with supporting evidence				
2.9 - "Learning Integration"	Text and carefully facilitated discussion on responsible engagement, cross- cultural cooperation, and growth in global community are facilitated learning themes before, during, and after immersion	Participants are introduced to several materials specific to the community, culture, as well as service and development ideals and critiques, and encouraged to consider global citizenship or social responsibility	Idea of integrating reflection is present, but unsystematic "roses and thorns" or other "top of the head reasoning" is predominate	Formal programming focuses on service; conversations are organic
Self-ranked with supporting evidence				

2.10 - "Local Sourcing, Environmental Impacts, & Economic Structure"	Economic and environmental impacts of experience are understood and discussed openly between sending institution and multiple community stakeholders; Impact is deliberately spread among multiple community stakeholders	Decisions about housing, transportation, and meals reflect shared commitment to community change, sustainability, and/or development model	Key local leader owns most of the decisions relating to sourcing; makes effort to distribute resources among community- owned businesses and institutions	Decisions about housing, transportation, and meals are not tied to consideration of community or environmental impact
Self-ranked with supporting evidence				
2.11 - "Clarity of Commitment and Evaluation of Partnership Success"	Clarity of ongoing commitment or clear reason for alternative****; Mutual agreement on reasons and process for end of partnership	Partners have clear understanding of ongoing relationship and common definition of partnership success	Commitments are understood in relational terms and open-ended	Commitments are specific to individual program contracts, which reflect economic exchange and obligations
Self-ranked with supporting evidence				
2.12 - "Transparency"	Specific economic model, commitment, amount, and impact is publically accessible and regularly discussed among partners	NGO and/or organization shares full budget with one another and with interested community members, as well as with any other stakeholders who request access	NGO and/or organization makes broad form of budget available, such as through 990 disclosure	Economic model, financial exchange amounts, and impacts are not accessible
Self-ranked with supporting evidence				

2.13 - "Partnership not Program"	Time horizon and commitments always stretch beyond single experience*** or individuals; Relationships are generative rather than merely exchange-oriented	Clear expectation of ongoing exchange of resources and people among multiple stakeholders in hosting community and in sending institution	Partners communicate about expectation of an ongoing programming relationship	Time horizon is program-specific, as are contracts, commitments, and relationships
Self-ranked with supporting evidence				

**Service is clearly a contested concept. Robert Sigmon's (1979) classic understanding of service-learning suggests those being served control the services provided; those being served become better able to serve and be served by their own actions; those who serve also are learners and have significant control over what is expected to be learned. This understanding informs the use of the term above, allowing space for communities and partner organizations to co-create and identify how the various forms of service - including learning as service, direct physical service, project-based service, social advocacy, and many other forms - inform their partnership.*

***The phrase "community age-peers" grew from observation that international volunteers' interactions have sometimes been limited to working with children in host communities. This phrase is intended to draw attention to the importance of adult dialogue on intercultural learning, global civic engagement, and growing global civil society, along with conversation specific to local realities. It is not meant to exclude older adults.*

****University/NGO refers to a number of different possibilities of organizational forms in respect to the "student-sending", "volunteer-sending", or "tourist-sending", organization. This document was written primarily at the nexus of university-community partnerships, so University/NGO is most appropriate, but private sector organizations, faith institutions, and civic associations also choose to send volunteers around the world for immersive learning and service.*

*****There are reasons for single immersive service experiences, such as a major crisis event, a very specific intervention, etc. A nonrepeating relationship can be ethically defensible with clear communication and intentionality.*

Crabtree, R (2008) Theoretical foundations for international service-learning. Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning 15(1): 18-36.

Hartman, E, Paris, C, and Blache-Cohen, B (2012) Tourism and Transparency: Navigating ethical risks in volunteerism with fair trade learning. Africa Insight 42(2): 157-168.

Sharp, E & Dear, S (2013). Points of discomfort: Reflections on power and partnerships in international service-learning. Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning 19(2): 49 -57.

Sigmon, R. (1979). Service-learning: Three principles. Synergist, 8, 9-11.

The Fair Trade Learning Standards have been published in: Hartman, E., Morris-Paris, C., & Blache-Cohen, B. (2014). Fair trade learning: Ethical standards for international volunteer tourism. Tourism and Hospitality Research, 14(1-2): 108 - 116, and at <http://globalsl.org/fair-trade-learning/>.

More resources at globalsl.org/ftl

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3 - BACKCOUNTRY / DEVELOPING COUNTRY SAFETY

Backcountry or Developing Country is considered to be any time a student is 2 hours away from definitive first-world medical care. Typically this certification must consider timeliness, isolation, lack of immediate access to rescue, and communication. "Definitive first-world medical care" means care that is comparable to that received in a US hospital, and typically means having a surgeon on call 24-hours/day, as well as advanced medical diagnostic equipment including X-rays and a CAT scan as well as the availability of experts to interpret any test results.

3.1 - "Organization manages risk responsibly."

Risk will never be a non-factor in life, but appropriate risk management protocols will effectively save the organization and students great trouble by pre-identifying areas that require greater awareness and creating steps to ensure smart decisions are made instead of reactionary or uninformed ones. Safety is no accident.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>3.1.1 - Field resources sufficient to get to greater care, that must include at least:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Cash (not credit cards or an ATM) (2) ID (Passports / basic personnel identification) (3) Communication (phone, satellite, SPOT, etc.) (4) Medical Kit <p><i>(In an emergency, often times the use of travelers checks or a credit card will not be sufficient to navigate the students + staff to additional emergency medical care or a safer location. Organizations should have a list of required items staff must have on hand at all times.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations of staff to have on their person at all times each of the items at left • List of items staff must have on their person at all times 				
<p>3.1.2 - Direct Supervision Staff have ability to communicate any emergent issues - language abilities are considered and needed communication tools are provided. <i>(Communicating allergies or events must be within the purview of the staff to ensure students receive adequate care.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of job descriptions 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
3.1.3 - Direct Supervision Staff have access to emergency communication tools whenever they are with students, or, a plan for communication in the event those tools are inoperable. <i>(Having access to a satellite phone or a cell phone is critical in terms of communicating with the organization's headquarters or local authorities.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field list of required-to-carry items • Copy of staff protocols for communication 				
3.1.4 - Organization has a policy in place to fly with reputable airlines. <i>(Not all countries regulate airlines to the same quality standards as the FAA. Efforts should be made to work only with US-certified travel agents, airlines, or to research to US-standards for air travel safety. Some helpful questions might include: Does the desired destination represent a significant portion of that airlines routes? How 'on time' is that particular airline? Are there more than one flight per day for that route?)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of policy detailing appropriate steps of inquiry to fly with any non-major airlines • Agreement with certified US Travel Agent 				
3.1.5 - There are clear protocols for uniform medical evacuation and insurance. <i>(This is about both having a plan in place for evacuation of all US students in an emergency, and protocols for when evacuation is warranted. Having great medical evacuation insurance is critical, however unless the staff are prepared and aware of how to activate the insurance it becomes useless. Typically, good carriers might include iNext, STA, ISOS, HTH, MEDEX, etc. [See your GYA Member Account for a growing list of discounts.]</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of protocols for using medical evacuation including who makes the final decision 				
3.1.6 - Registration with relevant authorities prior to arrival (local sheriff, rescue agencies, State Department STEP program). <i>(If traveling backcountry, all appropriate resources should be notified to help address any emergencies that might arise and to keep staff informed.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of job description / expectations of responsible staff • Copy of organizational policy requiring registration with listed agencies 				

3.2 - "Organization critically and continually reviews all locations for safety in advance of any student activities."

Changes to the safety of any given site happen rapidly and are affected by a variety of unforeseeable and unpredictable elements. Staying connected to what's happening allows for more time to address concerns before they become urgent, and more informed decisions once they need to be made.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>3.2.1 - Organization attempts to travel during daylight hours. <i>(Typically, transportation represents the most risk on any program, however, in a backcountry or developing country setting, transportation at night poses additional risks. Whether it's walking at a dangerous hour, or avoiding difficult-to-see hazards, efforts to travel during the day should be made a priority. Note, this is specific to road / rail transportation.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff policy detailing expectation to organize all road transit during daylight hours • Copy of training that highlights this expectation • Copy of training that highlights educating staff to road dangers 				
<p>3.2.2 - Organization checks both prior to arrival and each day a program is in process, for threats that include recent criminal concerns, environmental hazards, health or disease concerns, etc. For programs operating internationally, registration with OSAC is a requirement. <i>(Organizations should use relevant State and/or national resources such as NOAA & OSAC. Being on the ground in a backcountry setting, it can be difficult to access information. However, organizational staff can check daily for current information. Good examples include: www.globalincidentmap.com, http://reliefweb.int.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of policy requiring staff (office or, if realistic, Direct Supervision Staff) check resources for news on a daily basis • List of resources checked 				
<p>3.2.3 - If a location has a State Department warning valid for any duration of the intended trip, then additional protocols are in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insurance is notified and verified for validity • Parents / students are notified & encouraged to read the warning <p><i>(Some insurance companies will not honor liability insurance if a State Department warning is in place. Taking these additional steps listed is required to ensure students remain safe, the organization remains covered, and parents are respected in their concerns.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of protocols in case a location has a specific State Department warning • Copy of letter written to students and parents informing them State Department warning status 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
3.2.4 - Staff must ensure water activities have available and functional PFDs whenever the shore is farther than an average swimmer can swim safely in relevant water conditions. <i>(Typically in calm water this might be 50 yards - or one pool length - from shore. Water issues are amongst the most common in student fatalities.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of policy or expectation • Copy of training that addresses swimming policy 				

3.3 - "Students receive appropriate orientation."

Backcountry considerations for safety and cross-cultural concerns include all of the 1.x.x Standards of Philosophy and Professional Ethics, with additional concern given the heightened stakes unique to this certification. Same as is true for all GYA Standards, students remain their own best protectors, but only if they have adequate information to make smart decisions. Additionally, cultural considerations, where appropriate, must be made to support a safe and positive experience.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
3.3.1 - At orientation, students must have a physical reminder about what to do in case of being lost. <i>(Often times this is a tool designed to facilitate clear thinking in a challenging situation and might be the business card of a hostel, an emergency contact, or a Vagabond. This is often called an "oh shit card" or some other form of handy reminder.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of emergency card with requisite information • Copy of student orientation requiring use of a card or similar emergency steps 				
3.3.2 - Student on-site orientation addresses additional backcountry concerns including as appropriate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliable methods of getting in touch with staff or local supervisor • Diseases (malaria, dengue, tropical, communicable, etc.) • Location and use of medical kit/equipment • Methods of transportation/seafaring • Local laws • Drugs and alcohol • Personal safety • Sexual assault • Hygiene issues • Cultural norms & Interaction with locals • Program policies review includes sexual &/or romantic rules • "Safe" food & potable water • Safety concerns of local fauna • Safety concerns of local flora <i>(Student orientations in backcountry settings require additional information to mitigate the additional risks.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of orientation that lists location and clear expectations of staff to cover all relevant points at left • Copy of staff policy requiring orientation covering all relevant points at left 				

3.4 - "Staff are trained appropriately and regularly, and certified where appropriate."

Leading risky activities requires specific training and preparation: staff who are in a position of leadership must have appropriate certifications where necessary and available, and specific training tailored to those activities and locations where they are charged with safeguarding students. In backcountry/developing country situations, students are necessarily placed in unpredictable circumstances where special consideration should be made for reasonably common situations.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
3.4.1 - Minimum current certification of WFA, preferably WFR or WEMT. <i>(Some reputable providers include: WMI, WMA, or SOLO.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of current staff certifications requirement 				
3.4.2 - Staff must have specific training or knowledge that includes special consideration for safety, homestays, isolation, potential language concerns, culture shock, homesickness, etc. <i>(Unique considerations must be addressed when preparing students for unique situations. In homestays this might entail knowing where the staff live. Culturally there may be minor cues that could cause great issue.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff training highlighting specific concerns at left • Copies of support materials that are given to staff addressing concerns at left 				
3.4.3 - Staff must have specific training or knowledge that includes special consideration for potable water and hygienic food standards. <i>(Potable water and hygienic food are of course critical in all cases, but especially so when in backcountry settings. Instructions on how to verify food and water safety is important.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff training about safe food & water • Copies of support materials that are given to staff addressing concerns at left 				
3.4.4 - Staff must have specific training or knowledge that includes special consideration for dangerous local flora and fauna and how to prevent & respond to them (snakes, spiders, scorpions, poison oak / ivy, poisonous fruits, etc.). <i>(In backcountry settings, annoyances can turn majorly problematic, but major concerns can be fatal. Concern for risk management, preparation, and safety must be addressed.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff training highlighting specific concerns at left • Copies of support materials that are given to staff addressing concerns at left 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>3.4.5 - Staff must have specific training or knowledge that includes special consideration for local diseases, sicknesses, and vectors of infection (e.g., dengue, HIV, malaria, staphylococcus, giardia, etc.). <i>(Often times students exposed to new locations are also exposed to new and foreign bacteria that put them at a higher risk. Staphylococcus, for instance, is different in different locations and without previous exposure and thus basic antibodies, the bacteria can grow dangerously fast, representing one of the most common bacteria-related death. Knowing when something is relatively minor and when it warrants deeper investigation / treatment is paramount.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff training highlighting specific concerns at left • Copies of support materials that are given to staff addressing concerns at left 				
<p>3.4.6 - Staff must have specific training or knowledge that includes special consideration for safety with regard to political concerns, and how to address them. <i>(Staff must have a strong plan for how to respond in the event of a political crisis. Ultimately the quality of response will hinge on a staff persons ability to understand local political concerns and, to a degree, anticipate how to steer their students to avoid negative outcomes.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff training highlighting specific concerns at left • Copies of support materials that are given to staff addressing concerns at left 				

4 - INDEPENDENT STUDENT PLACEMENTS

Organizations that send students individually into specific placements understand that there is necessarily a greater risk at hand for their students. Students choosing an experience of an independent nature must be informed about the relevant concerns and the full details to which they're committing. However, setting the student up for a successful placement will ultimately require planning, and adequately empowering the student to supervise themselves. Preparation is a central component in this certification level.

4.1 - "Organization has protocols that are shared with the student, focused on vetting placements for safety."

Students and parents must be informed about the risks they are engaging in, including those general areas that are not known. The results of a thorough vetting process must be transparent and access to the results must be shared with both parents and students prior to final commitments.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>4.1.1 - Prior to sending students, organization must contact and share information from past participants to confirm the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliability of access to student basic needs • Reliability of contact, including supervisor's name and information • Report about student accommodation safety • Expectations of the student while on program/experience • Reasonable communication expectations • Financial arrangements <p><i>(There are very few certainties in working with individual placements, however, it is the responsibility of the organization to verify that any independent placement is verified rather than put students into a potentially negative or unsustainable position.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of expectation to share these items with students prior to their arrival on site • Copy of template for MOUs that include student placement vetting 				
<p>4.1.2 - Opportunities, preferably structured, in support of additional student focused reflection. <i>(In order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people's capacity to contribute to their communities (as noted by the AEE). At the end of intentional experiences, equal intention must be put into debriefing and reflecting upon what happened.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write up (or template of one) of a placement given to prospective students and based on information at left 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
4.1.3 - Focus on experiential education that include elements of mentorship either through a local contact or remotely through organization staff personnel. <i>(Individual placements, in order to be considered a gap year, must have some degree of supervisory oversight. This may be in the form of specific job counsel, or better, mentorship about life-matters.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of mentorship expectations for the local contact • Copy of staff expectations requiring mentorship component • Copy of remote-mentorship methodology and expectations 				

4.2 - "Organization provides basic pre-departure support."

The expectations of a student on an independent experience require that they both act as student and guardian. Many efforts can be made to safeguard students and provide the highest chances for a successful experience, but they all start with adequate pre-departure support. The organization must adequately prepare students for success both physically, and emotionally / psychologically.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>4.2.1 - Student receives pre-departure information (and preferably training) relevant to each of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture - to understand context and support integration • Language - to demonstrate integration and navigate emergencies • Transportation checklist - to address safety and decision-making • Maturity - to prepare the student in 'being alone' • Independent project focus - to understand the capacity, limitations, and network of the project placement • Emotional (family, friend, organization) support - to promote longevity and emotional security for when things become challenging • Personal Safety (sexual assault training, theft, etc.) <p><i>(Students must be prepared for the independent experience they are immersing themselves in. Adequate preparation must be given to the student to ensure a positive and healthy experience. NOTE this does not mean coddling the student for a predictable experience.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational checklist for student appropriateness • Copy of student benchmarks required prior to commencement • Organization protocols for assessing student appropriateness 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Proce ss	Not Appli cable	Excep tion Reque sted
<p>4.2.2 - Organization provides pre-departure logistical support including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Necessary passport & visa information, requirements, & timelines • Transportation logistics • Vaccinations (based on CDC guidelines) • Enrollment in the State Department’s STEP program (for international departures) • Financial concerns & arrangements • Communication accessibility (e.g., cellular, email, radio, etc.) • Any regional safety concerns such as environmental, flora, fauna, political, religious, cultural, etc. • Student emergency procedures • Name and contact information for local contact • If work of any kind is performed (service, internship, etc.) then a direct supervisor must be given to the student for each work kind • Arrival transfer information • Use of evacuation insurance • Packing list that includes medical kit and regional specific clothing • Information on access to local medical care <p><i>(When on an independent placement, all of the traditional details that would be managed through a staff person inevitably rest on the student. It is the organization’s job to ensure that the student is aware of the full total of their responsibilities and thus aren’t caught in a “don’t know what you don’t know” catch-22.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of student preparation list addressing all points at left • Copy of staff expectation to connect with students and address all points at left 				

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)</i>	<i>In Place</i>	<i>In Proce ss</i>	<i>Not Appli cable</i>	<i>Excep tion Reque sted</i>
<p>4.2.3 - Organization shares with the student any Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), as well as details arranged on the students' behalf. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • financial commitments • responsibility for meals and accommodation • any committed timelines • on-site orientation must-haves <p><i>(Students necessarily are their own best advocates on independent placements. However, having the information to advocate for themselves is of course required.)</i></p>					

4.3 - "Organization has a local contact for each student."

Critical to a positive experience for the student is a local contact person: this person should provide local information, guidelines for how to deal with specific local problems, and help in case of an emergency.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>4.3.1 - Organization arranges an on-site orientation by the local contact in congruence with the orientation standards in the Philosophy and Ethics section (e.g., 1.5.1). <i>(Orientations are critical to preparing students for both a successful and safe experience. The local staff must be able to provide either independently or in concert with organization staff, all details that would otherwise be given to the student as part of the Philosophy and Ethics section.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of expectation given to local contact detailing orientation specifics • Copy of orientation template used by local contacts 				
<p>4.3.2 - If service-learning takes place, the organization ensures an orientation is provided with a focus on preparedness, safety, cultural awareness, and placement/internship mission & history. <i>(If service-learning takes place, then the student must be made aware and prepared for all relevant and reasonably anticipated concerns.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of expectation given to local contact detailing orientation specifics • Copy of orientation template used by local contacts 				
<p>4.3.3 - Organization's protocols require regular contact (at least every 21 days and preferably via video/in-person) between the student and organization HQ, which could come via a designated local contact. <i>(Students working independently often will not reach out for help unless prompted and part of an existing relationship. Conversations and check ins should focus on mental health, physical health, safety, and quality of experience. Any concerning health issues are communicated to the organization.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff expectation for regular communication • Copy of checklist for communication with students • Organizational calendar detailing check-in details 				

4.4 - "Organization has policies to support student health and safety."

Acting as their own guardian requires training to what critical elements are and how to respond appropriately. Organizations cannot assume that every student is equally prepared to identify, for instance, when a medical concern is emergent, nor can they assume that every student has adequate wherewithal to safely navigate unfamiliar situations. An emphasis on basic health and safety should be of the utmost priority.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
4.4.1 - Organization has specific language on release and waiver forms for students on an independent experience that outlines the unique and inherent risks of an independent placement. <i>(The experience of a student on an independent placement is more intense than one with a Direct Supervisory Staff and thus the paperwork must anticipate and address those concerns in detail.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of release and waiver form that highlights specific concerns for student health and safety 				
4.4.2 - Students must be certified in basic first-aid. <i>(In the absence of Direct Supervisory Staff, students then become their own medical experts. While more training is preferred, a basic first-aid course will create awareness and help identify early, any emergencies.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of expectation for students to be certified in first-aid prior to commencement 				
4.4.3 - Organization educates students on policies for how to contact organization in the event the local contact is unable to meet students' needs. <i>(In the event the student needs to connect with the headquarters, each student should know how to contact the head office. This might include international dialing, or use of a HAM radio.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of instructions given to every student for contacting HQ • Copy of student orientation that details how to contact organization headquarters 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>4.4.4 - Organization shares any critical risk management policies with students that include at least:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Weather / natural disaster (2) Terrorist attack (3) Medical emergency (4) Student evacuation (5) Political crisis (6) Sexual Assault <p><i>(Independent students may need to navigate emergencies with little support from HQ. Thus, having relevant & updated emergency protocols is vital. Note, student versions of these may be less complicated (aka, "light") to ensure ease of use.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of student orientation or on boarding documents that share the core emergency protocols 				

5 - PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships are an important tool in every organization's makeup. Often times, the best way to safeguard students and provide a desired educational experience is to work with an expert in that particular field. However, not all partnerships are good ones that benefit the students and the organization. Bringing an organization into relationship with a local contact or partner organization can endanger students if it's not properly vetted, or if the expectations of the partner are not clear.

5.1 - "Organization takes appropriate steps to ensure partner abides by GYA Standards."

Partnerships with universities, colleges, or parent organizations should be mutually beneficial and hold the integrity and any accreditation or certificates of such partner sacrosanct without sacrificing the established pedagogy of Gap Year Education.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
5.1.1 - Organization has written agreements in place that clearly outline risk management responsibilities, financial arrangements and all relevant expectations (e.g., who's responsible for food, drinking water, equipment, etc.). <i>(Clarity around who is responsible for bringing what, providing what, and ensuring what can help prevent important confusion around things such as drinking water, doors that lock, food, bedding or mosquito nets.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of template used in detailing partnership agreements • Copy of staff expectation to clarify partnership expectations 				
5.1.2 - Organization has policies in place to do annual research and assess the partner's safety history and/or certifications for outdoor activities. This must be done prior to the beginning of a new partnership and certainly for such activities as hiking, camping, rafting, SCUBA, etc. <i>(When partnering with an organization assumptions should never be made that they are competent simply because they have a nice website. If the partner is leading an activity, then the students must be in good hands and competency should be assessed for those areas in which the partner is directly asked to be in charge.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of template used in verifying partnership competencies • Copy of staff expectation requiring them to assess partner strengths and certifications • Written letter of commitment from the Executive Director 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>5.1.3 - Organization has policies in place to research that the partner does not carry any current ties to illegal organizations or activities. <i>(Partnering with someone who could unintentionally put the students in harms way through external affiliations is critical. Additionally, this standard is meant to not create additional hierarchies in responsibility to the local host communities.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff expectation requiring them to assess partner relationships • Written letter of commitment from the Executive Director 				
<p>5.1.4 - Organization has personal references who have specifically visited the site prior to sending students. <i>(In the best circumstances, an organizational staff person will be able to verify each site for safety and security. However, this is unreasonable in every case, and thus making contact with a previous participant or reference of a partner-activity should be made in advance.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of template used in reference-checking partner • Copy of staff expectation requiring them to contact past participants 				
<p>5.1.5 - Organization clearly prohibits institutional partners from having romantic relationships with students. <i>(Homestay families, volunteer supervisors, and institutional partners all are de facto extensions of the program and thus power-differentials and responsibilities to safeguard students become problematic in a relationship. Organizations must therefore maintain as sacrosanct the integrity of the student-educator relationship.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of language in MOUs that is required • Copy of staff expectations that clearly outline romantic relationships with students as inappropriate 				

5.2 - "Organization has policies for managing risk on hired transportation."

Whether airborne, on land, or in the water, transportation remains an often critical element of a gap year and thus an important safety matter. Local and public transportation have intrinsic educational value but also intrinsic risks; road transportation in particular remains the most common cause of death.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>5.2.1 - Staff check with every operator personally for awareness prior to boarding (i.e., checking for substance use, sleep deprivation, alertness). <i>(If working with a hired driver, whether overseas or domestic, fatigue and drug use can be common and significant contributors to accidents. Staff should do their best within reason to ascertain the roadworthiness of every driver. Short conversations with the driver and general awareness about the vehicle are sufficient.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff policy requiring verification of driver safety • List of possible measures for assessing driver safety 				
<p>5.2.2 - On road vehicles, give priority when available to vehicles with seatbelts and use them. <i>(Traveling without seatbelts is commonplace when on a bus or other larger vehicle. It is also commonplace when traveling in the developing world. However, unless there is some specific educational motive or logistical impossibility for doing so, vehicles with seatbelts adequate in function and number for the students must be used.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff policy requiring preference for vehicles with seatbelts • Copy of staff policy requiring students where seatbelts when available 				
<p>5.2.3 - Staff check routes for possible external threats such as weather, landslides, or security threats prior to each trip and accordingly make decisions. Possible information might lead to deciding to cancel a trip, change the itinerary or routing, or hire specialized vehicles or escorts. <i>(It cannot be assumed that every hired transportation company has researched potential external threats. It is obviously not, for instance, safe to travel in areas where bandits regularly hijack a vehicle, but the hired hands may not choose to share that information for fear of losing the business. Whether on airborne, on land, or in the water, the onus thus rests on the organization to ensure safety inasmuch as it is possible including researching external threats.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff policy requiring they research / assess external threats prior to departure on any road trip 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>5.2.4 - Staff inquire about reputation of the company and vehicle operators and make appropriate decisions based on results. If available, insurance, licensure, and documentation are verified for validity. <i>(Vetting a company often is possible through external sources, however, vetting transportation companies and drivers is much moreso about the vehicle's safety and the reputation of the driver. Inquiries must be made about the reputation of either the company, or if a smaller operation, the vehicle operators, prior to embarking.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff policy requiring researching of reputation prior to departure • List of questions to ask or methods for verifying history and reputability of carrier 				