ETHICAL & RESPONSIBLE
STUDENT TRAVEL

A self-assessment tool for schools and universities

Save the Children

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Acknowledgements

INTRODUCTION

This Self-Assessment Tool has been developed for use by educational institutions to assist with due diligence in the planning and implementation of overseas student travel. The Tool is designed to address student travel that is instigated, organised and implemented by schools, as well as travel that is facilitated by third party providers such as travel companies, Non-government organizations (NGOs) and other entities.

While there are clear benefits to overseas travel within an educational context for Australian students, it is vital that the activities students engage in whilst travelling do not cause harm to local communities. Whilst volunteering overseas can be an immersive component of overseas student travel, it has the capacity to have negative impacts on communities, particularly within those programs where children are involved. Australian schools and universities have a duty of care to both travelling students, and members of host communities overseas, and must ensure that Australian students are not participating in activities which may cause harm.

There are many ways for Australian students to positively engage with local communities overseas, and this Self-Assessment Tool has been developed to assist schools to design, assess, and experience ethical and responsible student travel that is mutually beneficial for students and host communities alike.

A note on fundraising: Many schools and universities raise funds for community projects overseas, whether or not they visit these projects or plan to. Whilst assessment of these projects is beyond the scope of this self-assessment tool, we advise at minimum that schools and universities do not raise funds for organisations or projects where the residential care of children is involved. Residential care refers to all institutions housing children overnight – this includes orphanages, shelters, safe houses, children's homes, children's villages, boarding schools, rehabilitation centres, transitional homes etc. Growing up in these institutions can be harmful to children, and these harms are lifelong and intergenerational. Schools and universities wanting to support vulnerable children overseas should direct their support toward organisations that promote family based care, prevent family separation and strengthen families and communities.

Using the self-assessment tool

This Self-Assessment Tool should be used by educational institutions to assess both internally developed, organised and implemented overseas travel programs, and those delivered by third party providers. The tool allows for due diligence to be undertaken on all stakeholders within the supply chain, ensuring that schools and universities are able to exercise their duty of care not only to their own students, but to host communities overseas.

This tool is divided into four sections and should be completed chronologically:

Section 1: Internal Assessment - an internal self-assessment for schools and analyses policies and procedures within schools and universities regarding child protection in an international context.

Section 2: Project Assessment - requires the assessor to consider various aspects of the intended service, volunteering or visiting component of overseas travel – referred to in the document as the 'project'.

Section 3: Host organisations -enables schools to perform due diligence on the host organisation or entity where the intended project will take place. This may be an NGO, social enterprise, or faith-based entity. In some cases, schools and universities may partner with a third-party provider who facilitates their connection with a host organisation. In this case, Section 4: Third Party Provider should also be completed.

Section 4: Third Party Provider (if applicable) - allows for assessment of the third party provider's policies and procedures, and their approach to responsible and ethical community engagement.

This tool is designed to ensure that products, services and programs offered to schools and universities are ethical, responsible and do not cause harm to local communities overseas. The tool includes Guidance Notes for each question, in order to explain the rationale for the question and introduce best practice, and also includes a 'Flag' system, which provides further guidance.

Definitions of terms used

Beneficiary: Any person who is receiving services or otherwise benefitting from the host organisation or project overseas – for example children in a school or members of a community where there is a health project.

Host Organisation: The local entity where students will participate in service, volunteering or visiting – for example an NGO, a school, or a church.

Local Community: People who live in the surrounding area where the project takes place. When we use the word 'local' we are taking about people in the country and area you will visit.

Orange Flag: Answers marked with this require serious consideration before proceeding with the project.

Partner Organisation: This refers to the main organisation(s) through which you are facilitating the trip. It could refer to a hosting organisation or a Third Party Provider, whichever you have the most contact with.

Project: The place where student will engage in service, volunteering or visiting.

Red Flag: Answers marked with this indicate that the project may be harmful and should be reconsidered.

Residential Care Institution: Residential care refers to all institutions housing children overnight – this includes orphanages, shelters, safe houses, children's homes, children's villages, boarding schools, rehabilitation centres, transitional homes etc.

Third Party Provider (or 'provider'): Third party providers are organisations or companies that facilitate student travel, service activities, volunteering and community visits. They may be based in Australia or internationally.

Volunteer: This refers to all students and staff who go on the trip to work on the project

Internal Assessment

Section 1 is an internal self-assessment for schools and looks at policies and procedures wthin schools and universities regarding child protection in an international context

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	YES	NO	Guidance Notes	Flag Notes
Child Protection Policy				
Does our Child Protection Policy include a section on overseas travel, and does it take into account the protection needs of children in overseas destinations?			Overseas student travel presents unique risks to traveling students and local children in destination communities. Best practice is for Child Protection Policies to have a specific section dedicated to overseas student travel. This should identify the risks to students and local children and specific mitigation strategies to avoid those risks.	
Code of Conduct				
Does our Code of Conduct for staff include a section on overseas travel?			Overseas travel for staff presents unique risks for staff, students and local communities. Best practice is for a Code of Conduct to expect standards of behavior that protect staff, students, local children and other community members from all forms of harm, including abuse and exploitation	
Do we have a Code of Conduct for traveling students to guide their behavior when interacting with children overseas?			Overseas travel can be a new experience for students, who can be presented with confronting situations and unfamiliar behaviours while traveling. Best practice is to develop a student specific Code of Conduct which specifies standards of acceptable and unacceptable behavior from students while travelling.	
Is there a process in place to ensure all those travelling have read, understood and signed the schools' Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct?			While a Code of Conduct is an important protective mechanism for staff, students and local communities – without adequate familiarization and procedures in place, it can be ineffective. Best practice is to ensure staff, students and guardians are educated about the content of the Code of Conduct and have an opportunity to ask questions and commit to following it. Mechanisms should be put in place to ensure the Code of Conduct is distributed, signed and copies are collected prior to departure.	
Is there a Reporting Process in place for students to report on any issues experienced during their travel experience?			A Reporting Process ensures students have a clear mechanism for reporting any issues experienced during their travel. This may include risk of harm / exposure to harm, or witnessing or suspecting harm to local children and other vulnerable community members. Best practice is for a Reporting Process to be in place that is clearly communicated, explained and accessible to traveling students. The Reporting Process should include examples of reportable incidents, advice on roles and responsibilities of specific individuals, and guidance on how and when to report.	

Background checks				
Have all travelling adults undergone recent criminal record checks/ Working With Children Check?			Securing a criminal record check for all adults is crucial in ensuring student travel experiences are safe for students, teachers and local communities. Best practice is for all adult participants (including students over the age of 18) to undergo a criminal record check prior to being approved for participation. Whilst criminal record checks may not be conducted on those under the age of 18, schools have a duty of care to supervise and accompany their students at all times when in the presence of children. This is to prevent the risk of harm to children by students who may have an unknown history of perpetrating abuse on others or have a history of sexualized behaviours. Schools must show due diligence by preventing any students with a known history of violence, abuse, or harm to children or others from traveling.	
Have all students been formally assessed as physically and psychologically prepared and able to participate in overseas student travel?			Sometimes a student may have a pre-existing mental health condition, or other medical or behavior factors that could influence their ability to cope with student travel and volunteering experiences. Travel to developing nations in particular can be confronting for all travelers, and learning about serious issues can have unintended impacts on students' wellbeing. Best practice is for schools to undertake an internal assessment on individual students and their ability to cope with the challenges of the student travel experience. This assessment should include the student and their guardians. Partner organisations should provide clear, detailed information on exactly what students will experience so that schools, students and parents can make informed decisions about participation.	
Interaction with unchecked individuals				
Is there a process in place for managing student interaction with unchecked individuals during community engagement activities overseas?			In the course of their travel students may come into contact with adult members of the local community who have not been through a screening process. This presents a safeguarding risk for traveling students. Best practice is to ensure that both the school/university and partner organisation have a clear policy in place regarding supervision of traveling students, both for their protection and for those they come into contact with.	
Student Preparation and Learning				
Have the students been adequately prepared for the roles and responsibilities of volunteering?			Volunteers should have a limited remit and should understand what they are and are not responsible for. They should not expect to manage or make changes to locally-run projects, for example. Best practice is for students to commit to volunteering mainly in learning and assisting capacity, understanding their role as volunteers clearly.	**Amber Flag** – If no, students could be dissatisfied with or act in inappropriate ways during the project.

Have students' expectations been adequately managed in advance of the trip?			Volunteers may have unrealistic expectations – particularly about the impact that one individual can make in a short time span. Best practice is for school to address these issues directly with students during the preparation phase.	Amber Flag - If no, students could be dissatisfied with or act in inappropriate ways during the project.
Are there clear learning objectives for the volunteer project that align with curriculum?			Volunteering can provide great learning opportunities but those opportunities have to be scaffolded and maximized. Best practice is for providers to state learning objectives that are mapped to the relevant curriculum.	
Are there structured opportunities for volunteer reflection throughout the project?			Volunteer reflection helps students to consider their experiences and learning and allows participants to challenge their assumptions/ preconceptions Best practice is for structured group reflection sessions to take place periodically during a project.	

2 Project Assessment

Section 2 requires the assessor to consider various aspects of the intended service, volunteering or visiting component of overseas travel – referred to in the tool as the 'project'.

Schools and universities may have a direct relationship with the host organisation that delivers the project on the ground, or alternatively they may utilise a third party provider such as a student travel business, travel agency or other mechanism to organise their experience.

Section 2 questions should be answered with regard to the project the students will be participating in while overseas. If you are using a third party provider, you are still required to have access to this information in order to conduct your due diligence.

	YES	NO	Guidance Notes	Notes
Transparency				
Are you directly in contact with the host organisation where the project is located (do you have their name, location, and contact details)?			Some third party providers do not reveal information about their host organisations ahead of travel. This does not allow travellers to do their due diligence on the host organisation or make an informed choice. Best practice is for all host organisation details to be freely provided and direct communication to be made available.	**Amber Flag** – If a provider is unable to give you full details of the organisation that will host you it indicates a serious lack of transparency.
Interactions with children				
Does the project involve interaction with children?			Projects that interact with children carry unique risks. For children to engage with visitors or tourists can be extremely disruptive to important routines, including schooling. Children in developing countries, in particular, are often extremely vulnerable and may have a complex and traumatic background, which may be exacerbated by interaction with strangers. Best practice is for projects where there is interaction with children to be supervised, structured and limited.	**Amber Flag** – If yes, the school must be fully satisfied that these interactions take place in supervised, structured and appropriate ways that minimise the risk of harm and abuse.
Homestays				
Does the project involve a 'homestay' component, where students stay in family homes in the local community?			Homestay experiences carry unique risks to both traveling students and children in host communities. Host communities are often unaware of the risks to their children through participating in these activities. Best practice is to ensure that host families are fully trained, and vetted for risk. Homestay communities and the children in them should also have received training and information on the risks as well as strategies for self-protection.	**Amber Flag** – If yes, further information on the homestay policies and procedures are required. This should include evidence of Child Protection / Safeguarding Policies and evidence that host communities and families have been made aware of the risks and benefits of homestay programs.
Residential Care Institutions				
Does the project involve visiting or volunteering at a Residential Care Institution? (Residential care refers to all institutions housing children overnight – this			Residential care is an outdated and harmful model of care for all children, and over 70 years of research shows that children thrive in families, and are harmed in institutions – and that this harm is lifelong, and sometimes intergenerational. The harms children experience growing up in residential care are exacerbated by the presence and constant flow of	**Red Flag** – If yes, completely avoid this project

includes orphanages, shelters, safe houses, children's homes, children's villages, boarding schools, rehabilitation centres, transitional homes etc.)			short-term visitors and volunteers. Children in residential care may have been trafficked to meet the demand for volunteer experiences, a form of modern slavery. Best-practice is for schools and universities to **completely avoid** visiting, volunteering and donating to residential care institutions while traveling due to the unacceptable risk of harm to local children.	
Does the project provide a service or program into a Residential Care Institution? E.g. taking children who live in a Residential Care Institution on an outing etc.			Providing a service or program into a Residential Care Institution may seem less harmful, however the provision of services and programs into these organisations perpetuates the orphanage industry and legitimizes a harmful model of care. Best practice is for schools and universities to **completely avoid** projects where services or programs are provided to a Residential Care Institution due to the unacceptable risk of harm to local children.	**Red Flag** – if yes, completely avoid this project
Does the project involve caring for children (playing, bathing, feeding, helping with hygiene, dressing etc.)?			These 'caring/playing' activities may seem helpful, and relatively simple for students to engage in, however children who are unable to care for themselves are particularly vulnerable to abuse, and to the harms caused by short-term visitors and volunteers and perpetuate ideas of inequality. Additionally, these activities provide very little benefit to the local community, or students themselves, aside from a short term 'feel good' aspect. These types of activities should be provided by a child's primary caregiver, with whom they have a close, attachment-based relationship. Best practice is for schools and universities to **completely avoid** engagement in these types of activities due to the unacceptable risk of harm to local children.	**Red Flag** – if yes, completely avoid this project
Education projects				
Does the project involve teaching?			If teaching is part of a project it must be ensured that those offering the teaching are qualified to do so and are only given the amount of responsibility that they would have in their own country / place of work. Best practice is for unqualified students to be teaching assistants to local teachers or exchange partners with local students, rather than teaching classes by themselves.	**Amber Flag** – if yes, ensure that all interactions with children are structured, supervised and appropriate.
Do the project activities form part of an ongoing relationship with the educational institution?			Some Australian education institutions or third party providers have long-term partnerships with schools overseas, ensuring that activities are not disruptive and build on the work of previous volunteers. Best practice is to ensure that educational institutions overseas have a formal written Memorandum of Understanding with an overseas partner, with channels for feedback and grievance – resolution processes.	

Does the project involve visiting or volunteering at an educational institution such as a school or kindergarten?			Visiting schools and kindergartens can disrupt children's ability to learn by visiting during class time, and also present a child protection risk. Giving gifts to local children promotes a belief that all foreigners are safe, and perpetuates ideas of inequality. These activities disrespect children and local families though promoting the perception that they are 'poor' and 'victims' that need 'saving' by foreign visitors. Best practice requires that school visits are part of an ongoing project that has measurable outcomes and does not cause disruption to local students or teachers.	**Amber Flag** – If yes, ensure that the project is ongoing, has measurable outcomes and does not cause disruption
Has the project been assessed to ensure it is not disrupting local students classes, or their free / family time?			Many school visits disrupt classes and teachers and distract students from learning the prescribed curriculum from their regular teacher. In some cases, children are required to come to school in their free time simply to be present when tour groups arrive. Best practice is for school visits to be planned well in advance so as not to disrupt teachers and students. Visits should form part of an ongoing relationship, with defined and measurable objectives, and should never just be viewed as a tourist activity.	
If the project involves visiting or volunteering at an educational institution – are the students of similar age / year level?			Many school visits involve students visiting a local primary school and interacting / playing with students well below their age group. These visits can place local students at risk, be disruptive to teachers and students and perpetuate ideas of inequality, and provide very little benefit for either group of students. Best practice is for school visits to form part of an ongoing relationship with defined and measurable objectives. Student to student interactions should be between students of the same age / year level to ensure activities are mutually beneficial.	
Is it clear what the intended outcomes of visiting or volunteering at the educational institution are?			Some school visits are set up like tourist attractions, so that visiting groups can view and experience daily life overseas. However these kinds of trips can have little benefit for the educational institution itself, and can be disruptive and perpetuate ideas of inequality. Best practice is for all school visits to have clearly-defined aims that have measurable benefits for the host institution.	

Health projects				
Does the project involve healthcare or health education?			Many service projects involve healthcare related activities as this is seen as a big need in developing countries. However, travelling students are often not qualified to deliver health interventions. Best practice is to ensure that all healthcare work undertaken by travellers would be allowed and appropriate for them to undertake in their home country.	
Does the project involve a visit to a healthcare facility?			Some programs involve visits to healthcare facilities. Patients in healthcare facilities are extremely vulnerable and it can be hard to ensure patient privacy and confidentiality when visitor groups are allowed inside facilities. Best practice is to avoid visits to healthcare facilities unless there are specified objectives that the students are qualified to deliver.	**Red Flag** – If yes, avoid unless there are specified mutually-beneficial objectives and students are qualified
Does the project require students to administer healthcare to community members?			Some projects place students in the role of healthcare providers, often as a way to combat resource shortages in healthcare facilities overseas. Having unqualified students administer healthcare can place both the patient and student at risk. Best practice is for students to never take on any role which they would not be qualified to do in their home country.	**Red Flag** – if yes, completely avoid unless students are qualified
Does the project require students to educate others about health concepts?			Many volunteer projects involve health education, usually in order to change health behaviours such as hygiene practices. Sometimes students themselves are not educated enough on the topic to deliver clear messaging, or else there are language or cultural barriers. Sometimes the topic itself is sensitive, such as menstrual practices or reproductive health. Best practice is for students to only educate about concepts that they know well, that are not culturally sensitive and that they would be allowed to educate on in their home country.	**Amber Flag** – if yes, ensure that students know the concepts they will educate on in detail
Construction projects				
Does the project involve construction of wells, buildings or other infrastructure?			Many projects involve construction work and manual labour that is physically satisfying and a team can work on together. In these cases the quality of the infrastructure needs to be carefully checked and maintenance provided for in the project plan. There is an additional risk of students replacing local workers. Best practice is for all construction projects to have a clear rationale as to why student volunteers are involved in the project and how safety, quality and long-term usability can be guaranteed.	

Has the infrastructure been designed by a local engineer/architect?			Most student volunteers are not qualified in infrastructure design. Experts need to be involved in design and quality assurance. Even engineers and architects from other countries may not be fully versed on conditions in the country where the project takes place. Best practice is for all infrastructure projects to be designed and overseen by a qualified local person.	**Red Flag** – if no, avoid due to unacceptable risk to local communities
If the infrastructure is to be privately owned, is there a clear selection criteria for beneficiaries?			Houses or wells are often made for individuals or families. If the selection process is not carefully managed, this can cause jealousy or conflict in communities, and disrupt power balances. Best practice is for there to be a clear and transparent selection criteria for beneficiaries, that has full buy-in from the community.	
Are students appropriately skilled to perform the tasks expected of them?			Many tasks in building or construction work require specialised skills. If work is not completed to a certain standard then the infrastructure may be low quality. Best practice is to ensure that students do not perform tasks that they would not be qualified to do at home.	**Red Flag** – if no, avoid due to unacceptable safety risks to students and local community
Are students educated in relation to occupational health and safety on a worksite?			Construction work carries inherent health and safety risks, including risk of injury and chemical inhalation. Other countries may not have the same Occupational health and Safety (OHS) protective measures in place, such as access to hard hats, steel-capped boots, work gloves or face masks. Best practice includes finding out exactly what processes students are expected to engage in and what protective equipment will be provided. Where protective equipment is not provided, it could be brought from Australia. Enough equipment should be provided for both students and local workers. If certain activities would not be allowed for students at home, students should not engage with those activities overseas.	**Red Flag** – if no, completely avoid due to unacceptable safety risks to students
Will students' work be supervised and checked by a qualified builder on site prior to use by the community?			Students may not have worked in construction before and not have the ability to check whether their work is sound. For the project to have benefit, the infrastructure needs to be of a high standard. Best practice is to ensure that a qualified worker checks all student work and makes rectifications if necessary.	**Amber flag** – if no the project risks doing harm to local communities

Is it clear who will be responsible for organizing any repairs required?			A major problem with donated infrastructure is that beneficiaries do not feel ownership of the project and may not invest in ongoing repairs. Alternatively, in the case of technical infrastructure such as solar panels, local people do not have access to the technology needed to fix problems, or else parts are too expensive. Best practice is to ensure that there is a sustainability plan in place for how repairs will be dealt with (including who is responsible), and that this plan has been clearly communicated to recipients.	
Animal and wildlife projects				
Does the project require interaction with animals or wildlife?			Many projects involve animals as it is seen as attractive and easy work for unskilled students to engage in. Some organisations exploit the demand to work with animals and engage in practices that do not prioritise the welfare of the animals. Best practice is to ensure that animal and wildlife projects create minimal disturbance to the natural environment, and do not remove wild animals from their natural habitat.	
If there are wild animals, are they kept in domestic settings (such as a shelter or zoo)?			Wild animals are sometimes kept in confinement for tourism purposes. These animals can be subject to abuse and violence, and may not have their basic needs met. Best practice is for animals to be out of their natural habitats in only extenuating circumstances, and not for tourism purposes.	**Red Flag** – if yes, avoid due to risk of harm to animals
Is there a clear reason for wild animals being kept in a domestic setting?			Some wild animals are exploited for tourism, such as the case of elephants used for rides. In other cases, wild animals are rescued from unsafe situations in the wild. Best practice is for there to be a clear reason why the animal is not living in the wild, and there should be a clear long term plan for the animal's welfare.	
Are animals being prepared to be released back into the wild?			Many programs house wild animals on a short-term basis in order to for them to be reintroduced to the wild. In these cases their interactions with human should be minimised and not be offered by untrained visitors. Some programs state that the animals will be reintroduced to the wild when there is no intention for or possibility of that happening. Animals can be kept as a tourist attraction or used for the canned hunting industry. Best practice is to avoid student contact with animals that are due to be released into the wild, and to get verifiable evidence of animals being released.	**Amber Flag** – If yes, interaction with the animals must be extremely limited.

Do the animals have access to the same conditions as if they were in the wild (food, space, social settings)?			Wild animals have strong instincts to run, hunt, and interact with other animals, to name but a few. They can be severely unhappy to be kept in vastly different conditions to their natural setting. Best practice is to only partner with institutions that try to imitate natural conditions.	
Is there a clear reason why volunteers are interacting with wild animals?			Student volunteers do not usually have the skills to deal with wild animals. Animals due to be released into the wild should not be habituated to human contact. Best practice is to gain insight into why student volunteers are needed to perform the roles they do.	
Participation				
Are the people who run the project from the local community?			Local people know their development needs better than outsiders, and should be able to self-determine what development they want in their own communities. Local leaders will remain in the country and be able to offer ongoing on the ground support. Best practice ensures that those leading and making decisions about the project are local people to ensure sustainability of project activities.	**Amber Flag** – if no, consider avoiding due to risk of project not meeting local, self identified needs.
Do local community members have the opportunity to participate in the project?			If only outside volunteers participate in a project, there will be no local ownership and also less likelihood that the project is responsive to a community need. If community members do not participate, the project is more likely to reinforce ideas of inequality. Best practice is to ensure that local people work alongside outside volunteers as partners and mentors.	**Amber Flag** – if no, consider avoiding due to the risk of project failure, and project needs being irrelevant to local communities.
Does the project specifically include marginalized populations and is it gender sensitive?			Even when projects are planned locally, if only majority groups have input then often help does not get to the people in real need (for example, girls and women, people with disabilities or people from minority groups). Best practice is to ensure that the project planning incorporates the voices of marginalized groups and actively targets them, and shows a clear commitment to equal opportunities for girls and women.	
Do project staff speak the local language?			Project staff may come from a different ethnic group or part of the country, or even be a foreigner. If project leaders cannot adequately communicate with local people they run the risk of the project not meeting local needs. Best practice is to ensure that the project leader is a local or at a minimum, speaks the local language.	

Is there a clear mechanism for project beneficiaries to give input to, provide feedback on and complain about the project?			If project beneficiaries are respectfully consulted and included at all stages of a project, it is more likely to respond to a need and stay relevant. If there is a clear process though which local people can give feedback and suggestions, it can ensure that the project is transparent. Best practice is to ensure that there is a mechanism to collect and respond to input from project beneficiaries, and a clear and accessible Grievance policy.	**Amber Flag** – if no, consider avoiding due to risk of activities being ineffective or exploitative.
Sustainability				
Does the project have a clear exit strategy and sustainability plan?			Projects should not plan to exist forever. Issues and priorities shift and funding runs out. Also ongoing projects can create dependency. An exit strategy is a planned, timely responsible withdrawal from a project area. Best practice is to ensure that any project you are involved with is time-limited and, has a sustainability plan, and a clear exit strategy.	
Is the project addressing a root cause of a problem (i.e. is it working towards a long term solution for the issue)?			The most sustainable projects are doing work that tackles a root cause of a problem, so that the problem will not be an ongoing issue (e.g. improving incomes) Other projects address only symptoms, meaning that the problem will not be resolved (e.g. handing out food.) Best practice is to look for projects addressing root causes, or that have a good reason for doing work that addresses symptoms (such as it being a short-term need after a disaster).	**Amber Flag** – if no, consider avoiding due to risk of ineffectiveness, unsustainability, and short-term band-aids in place of long-term solutions.
Donations				
Does the project have clearly defined selection criteria for beneficiaries?			If the beneficiary selection process is not carefully managed then this can cause jealousy or conflict in communities, and disrupt power balances, including gender and power dynamics. Best practice is for there to be a clear and transparent selection criteria for beneficiaries, that has full buy-in from the community and that is aligned with defined community needs, and project objectives.	
Does the project provide, or allow for material items or handouts?			Material handouts can be particularly tricky to handle well, as there is a risk of conflict, dependency, and disrupting power dynamics. In some cases, material donations are sold back to local markets instead of being used by communities. In particular, if visitors are allowed to give gifts or donations to individuals, it can inadvertently fuel rivalry. The situation is also open to corruption, as it is hard for short-term visitors to follow up on determining how donations have been used. Best practice is to avoid material handouts, especially to individuals. If this is offered by the project it should not be an ongoing project and there should be clear selection criteria in place.	**Amber Flag** – If yes, ensure there are clear reasons why this is necessary and that there is a clear selection criteria in place.

Is there a clear process for further donations to be given if desired?			Offering donations without a formal procedure in place may end up with the donation being mishandled or disrupting power balances. Best practice is for there to be a clear channel through which donations can be offered, and for the funds to be transparently distributed.	

Volunteer Roles

Are students presented as "helpers" coming to provide a service?			Presenting outsiders as "helpers" can perpetuate inequality and fuel the 'Western Saviour Complex' – especially if the helpers are young and relatively unskilled. The Western Saviour Complex refers to privileged individuals engaging in activities under the auspices of 'helping', however this 'help' is not about justice, it's about the 'helper' having a big emotional experience that validates their privilege. Best practice is to ensure that students are presented as "learners" coming to offer solidarity in the spirit of mutual exchange, and as equals to the beneficiaries.	
Does the project have a risk management plan that specifically addresses the risks of volunteering in local communities?			International travel is inherently risky, and volunteer projects often involve activities that add to that risk. A risk management plan should transparently identify those risks and articulate clear mitigation strategies as well as provide details of local resources, facilities and emergency contacts and services, as well as an evacuation plan. Best practice is for the risk management plan to be shared transparently with partners.	
Is there a project-specific Code of Conduct for volunteers?			Overseas travel for staff presents unique risks for staff, students and local communities. Best practice is for a Code of Conduct to expect standards of behavior that protect staff, volunteers, students, local children and other community members from harm. The Code of Conduct should form part of a wider group of mechanisms including a Child Protection Policy and Reporting Process.	
Is there a Reporting Process in place for volunteers to report on any issues experienced during their volunteer placement?			A Reporting Process ensures students have a clear mechanism for reporting any issues experienced during their volunteer placement. This may include risk of harm / exposure to harm, or witnessing or suspecting harm to local children and other vulnerable community members. Best practice is for a Reporting Process to be in place that is clearly communicated, explained and accessible to volunteers. The Reporting Process should include examples of reportable incidents, advice on roles and responsibilities of specific individuals, and guidance on how and when to report.	

Does the project provide an induction for students that includes how to be culturally respectful?			It is fundamental for volunteers to be culturally respectful if they are to ensure that they do more good than harm. Partners and providers will know what cultural guidelines are important to follow. Best practice is for providers to offer an extensive induction for volunteers, which includes information on cultural norms and standards.	
Does the project provide a clear mechanism for volunteers to give feedback about their experience?			Projects that are committed to receiving feedback (both positive and negative) demonstrate greater transparency. Best practice is for thorough participant feedback to be collected and valued. This should include reporting of any risks to children they witnessed or suspected.	
Is volunteer feedback incorporated into the project in the future?			A clear process for volunteer feedback to be incorporated in the future shows that the organization is committed to quality. Best practice is that there is a clear process to incorporate volunteer feedback into the program for the purposes of ongoing program quality and improvement, and evidence that this has happened in the past.	
Is it clear how schools, universities and students can make a complaint, and what action will be taken in the event a complaint is made?			Having open and transparent channels for complaints shows a commitment to quality and is an important mechanism for protecting students, volunteers, staff, children and local communities. Best practice is for the project to give information of how to make a formal complaint and who it will be heard by, as well as who is responsible for following up on any child protection / student safety and harm issues.	
Does the project provide training or information regarding the global development issues being addressed by the project, and how students will contribute to this?			Most overseas volunteering opportunities seek to address perceived development needs in communities. Best practice is for students to be able to maximize their learning about needs and issues identified through structured learning activities.	
Does the project have a clear selection process or criteria for students to participant in projects?			Not all people are suited to all volunteer roles. Some programs accept anyone that applies and therefore volunteers without the required skills and attitudes are included in volunteering and community development programs. Best practice is for the project to have a key selection and assessment criteria through which to select the most appropriate and suitably skilled volunteers.	

Are students rejected if they do not meet the selection criteria?			Some volunteer programs do not reject any applicants. Best practice is for volunteer placements to rigorously apply their assessment criteria and be selective.	
Are volunteer placements terminated if the student fails to meet the requirements of the position?			Volunteers are often used to do important work, and are also seen as role models in communities. Failing to meet the requirement of a position can cause harm to partners and local communities. Some volunteer providers do not have termination clauses in their agreements with volunteers, or else are unwilling to terminate placements. Volunteer sending organisations should exercise due diligence on failed placements and apply lessons learned to improve programming. Best practice is for volunteer agreements to reserve the right for the placement to be terminated, and to report any harm, crimes or wrongdoing to the appropriate authorities and agencies.	
Do volunteers have individual role / job descriptions?			Role descriptions ensure that all parties are clear about the responsibilities and expectations on a volunteer, and the limitations of the role. Best practice is that all volunteers have and agree to a role description, and are clear who they are accountable to e.g. a manager, supervisor, or mentor who they can turn to for support and advice.	
Does the project provide adequate information about the work schedule, accommodation and local area in advance?			It is important that volunteers receive accurate logistical information so they can set realistic expectations, ask questions and feel informed, safe and equipped for their experience. Best practice is for this information to be provided in advance.	
Are student volunteers performing roles that replace local jobs?			Some projects use international volunteers instead of hiring local professionals such as teachers or masons. This is unsustainable plus usually compromises quality. Best practice is for there to be a clear and convincing reason why international volunteers are used in these roles instead of local staff.	
Are student volunteers assisting or adding capacity to local people in their jobs?			Student volunteers will only be in a country for a short period of time, whereas local staff are there for the long term. Instead of replacing local staff, volunteers can be used to bolster their position. Best practice is for volunteers to work alongside local people, either in the capacity of assistant or capacity builder.	

Do student volunteers currently have the skills needed for the volunteer role, or will adequate training be provided?			Requiring volunteers to do roles that they would not be qualified to do at home can put both the students and local people at risk, and reinforce feelings of inequality. Best practice is for volunteers to only undertake roles that they would be allowed to do in their hometown, and for adequate training to be provided.	
Is there a clear and documented process in place for volunteers to build on the work of previous volunteer groups?			In placements that see streams of short-term volunteers, there is a big risk of each volunteer repeating the same work and the same mistakes of the last one, which over time causes harm to local communities. Best practice is for there to be a clear handover process between volunteers and volunteer groups to try to ensure that each volunteer builds on the work of the last.	
Supervision				
Are volunteers always supervised by a member of project staff?			It is important for volunteers to be supervised in their work to ensure that they provide maximum benefit, do not cause harm and are not at risk of being harmed. Best practice is for volunteers to always be supervised by a member of staff that understands the project and the needs of the volunteers.	**Amber Flag** – if no, consider avoiding due to risk of harm to students, and host communities.
Are volunteers/visitors ever left alone with project beneficiaries?			Allowing visitors or volunteers unsupervised interactions with beneficiaries, particularly children, can pose risks to either or both parties. Best practice is for visitors or volunteers to never be in a situation where they are left alone with beneficiaries, especially children.	**Red Flag** – if yes, avoid this project due to unacceptable risk to project beneficiaries and students.

3 Assessing host organizations

Section 3 assesses the host organisation that is on the ground in the country where the project is taking place. The hosting organisation could be, for example, an NGO, a religious organisation, or an educational organisation. If you are using a third party provider, the provider should be able to answer these questions or put you directly in contact with the host organisation, and it is a **Red Flag** if they are unwilling to do so.

	YES	NO	Guidance Notes / Best Practice	Notes
Registration				
Is the host organisation registered with the appropriate authorities (as a business, NGO, or other entity) and can they provide a copy of the current, dated registration in English?			Official registration ensures that there is some level of accountability to an outside authority. It is good to know whether the partner is a profit-making company. It can also be difficult to do full assessments in foreign languages. Most reputable organisations will already have verified translated documents. Best practice is to only partner with organizations that can produce current registration documents.	**Red Flag** – if no, avoid due to risk of engagement with an unregistered, unregulated organisation.
Finances				
Does the host organisation make audited financial reports available?			In most countries in the world, organizations need to be audited, and non-profits have to make these reports publically available. Best practice is for audited financial reports to be transparent and available.	
Is the host organisation able to provide clear documentation showing the breakdown of finances for the project?			Projects may have varied funding sources and it is important that the finances are well managed to ensure that the project is not under or over funded. Best practice is to obtain a clear project budget, including acquittal of any financial contribution offered by your group.	
Sustainability				
Have the financial implications of hosting volunteers been considered and reflected in organizational and project budgets?			It is not free to host volunteers – there is a need for management, supervision translation etc. If these costs have not been accounted for then hosting students could be a drain on organizational resources. Best practice is to ensure that the cost of hosting volunteers has been calculated and worked into budgets, or there is an external source of funding covering these costs.	
Is the host organisation dependent on volunteers for essential roles?			Some organisations rely on a stream of volunteers to fill important operational roles. This can be unsustainable as volunteers are short-term outsiders and recruitment and skill level cannot always be guaranteed. Best practice is to avoid organisations that use volunteers for essential roles and instead support those which invest in building capacity of long-term local staff.	**Red Flag** – if yes, avoid due to unsustainability, and impact on local jobs.

Impact				
Does the host organisation conduct regular monitoring and evaluation of their projects?			Monitoring and evaluation of project activities is a core and essential part of community development work. Monitoring and evaluation provides accountability for use of resources, funds and volunteer inputs and ensures that projects benefit the local community and meet their stated objectives. Best practice is for partner organisations to conduct regular monitoring and evaluation of their projects to ensure community needs are being met and resources are being used appropriately to achieve the stated objectives of the project.	**Amber flag** – if no, consider avoiding as without these processes there is no way to assess the credibility of the organisation.
Does the host organisation report failures or lessons learned?			Many development projects do not result in the intended outcome. This is a reality of working in challenging environments and trying to solve entrenched and complex social issues. Reporting on failures and lessons learned is an important part of the development process and allows for ongoing improvements. Best practice is for partner organisations to be transparent about the challenges, failures and lessons learned in their projects and to adapt their work accordingly.	
Volunteers				
Is it clearly communicated how volunteers fit into the mission of the host organisation?			Some organisations work with volunteers because it brings financial benefit, rather than ensuring that the work of volunteers fit with a wider strategy. Best practice is to ensure that volunteers fit into the mission of a partner organization and their work is valued.	
Does the host organisation have mechanisms in place to protect against fluctuations in the number of volunteers?			Volunteers are more likely to be present at certain times of the year (tourist season, school holidays) and less likely in others. It can be hard for organizations to plan activities if the numbers of volunteers are likely to fluctuate. Best practice is for partners to have a clear plan to manage fluctuations of volunteers, such as low caps on the number of volunteers and support for extra staff capacity.	

4 Assessing third party providers

Section 4 only needs to be completed if a third party provider is facilitating the travel experience. A third party provider may be a volunteer organisation or travel company based in Australia or internationally.

	YES	NO	Guidance Notes	Notes
Child Protection Policy				
Does the provider have a Child Protection Policy?			Third Party Providers that deal with student travel have responsibilities towards both the students on their programs and children that interact with their programs overseas. Without a Child Protection Policy in place, there is no mechanism to assess risks to children, and to address these risks. Best practice is for all entities that have contact with children under the age of 18 to have a Child Protection Policy in place. This Policy should be publicly available.	**Red Flag** – if no, avoid entering into a relationship with this provider.
Does the provider's Child Protection Policy meet or exceed the standards of the school / university Child Protection Policy?			A Third Party Provider's Child Protection Policy should as a minimum meet, or exceed the standards of the educational institution's own Policy. Best practice is to compare the Third Party Provider's Policy with the educational institution's Policy to ensure all aspects of care and protection for students and host communities are addressed.	**Amber flag** – if no, consider finding a different provider that prioritises child protection.
Does the provider's Child Protection Policy specifically take into account and address the protection needs of children in overseas destinations?			Overseas student travel presents unique risks to traveling students and local children in destination communities. Best practice is for Third Party Provider Child Protection Policies to have a specific section dedicated to children in host communities. The Policy should identify the risks to both students and local children and specific mitigation strategies to prevent those risks from occurring.	**Amber flag** – if no, consider finding a different provider that prioritises child protection.
Does the provider offer visits to or volunteer placements with Residential Care Institutions? (Residential care refers to all institutions housing children overnight – this includes orphanages, children's homes, shelters, residential street children services, foster homes, boarding schools etc.)			Residential care is an outdated and harmful model of care for all children, and over 70 years of research shows that children thrive in families, and are harmed in institutions – and that this harm is lifelong, and sometimes intergenerational. The harms children experience growing up in residential care are exacerbated by the presence of short-term visitors and volunteers. Children in residential care may have been trafficked to meet the demand for volunteer experiences, a form of modern slavery. Best-practice is for schools and universities to **completely avoid** travelling with any provider that offers visits to and placements at residential care institutions, even if your trip will not visit one.	**Red Flag** – If yes, completely avoid using this provider. Even if the product you are considering does not visit a Residential Care Institution, this organisation is still supporting a harmful practice by offering these products.

Code of Conduct				
Does the provider have a Code of Conduct for all persons travelling?			Facilitating overseas student travel that engages with local communities presents unique risks for Third Party Provider staff, volunteers, customers and local communities. Best practice is for the Third Party Provider to have a Code of Conduct in place that specifies standards of acceptable and unacceptable behavior for staff, students and teachers.	**Amber Flag** – if no, consider finding another provider that has a Code of Conduct in place.
Does the provider Code of Conduct specifically mention / have a section on interacting with children and other community members?			An entity that facilitates contact with children and other community members should have a Code of Conduct that specifically addresses acceptable and unacceptable standards of behaviour when interacting with children, and shows evidence of supervision and monitoring practices. Best practice is for a Third Party Provider to have a section within their Code of Conduct that specifically addresses behaviour toward and around children and other community members, and specifies supervisory conditions, including adult / child ratios.	**Amber Flag** – if no, consider finding another provider that has a Code of Conduct in place, or asking the provider to update their Code of Conduct.
Does the provider have a separate Code of Conduct for traveling students to guide their behaviour when interacting with children overseas?			Traveling students may be unclear on what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate behaviour around children. Best practice is for Third Party Providers to have a student focused and friendly Code of Conduct to guide students on appropriate and inappropriate standards of behaviour around children when traveling.	
Is there a process in place to ensure all participants have read and signed the Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct?			While a Code of Conduct is an important protective mechanism for staff, students and local communities – without adequate familiarization and procedures in place, it can be ineffective. Best practice is to ensure staff, students and guardians are educated about the content of the Code of Conduct and have an opportunity to ask questions and commit to following it. Mechanisms should be put in place to ensure the Code of Conduct is distributed, signed and collected prior to departure.	
Is there a Reporting Process in place for participants to report on any issues experienced during their travel experience?			A Reporting Process ensures participants have a clear mechanism for reporting any issues experienced during their travel. This may include risk of harm / exposure to harm, or witnessing or suspecting harm to local children and other vulnerable community members. Best practice is for a Reporting Process to be in place that is clearly communicated, explained and accessible to participants. The Reporting Process should include examples of reportable incidents, advice on roles and responsibilities of specific individuals, and guidance on how and when to report.	
Background checks				
Are all project staff required to undergo a criminal record check? This includes staff of the provider or partner organisation.			Securing a criminal record check for all adults is crucial in ensuring student travel experiences are safe for students, teachers and local communities. Best practice for all staff and participants over the age of 18 to undergo a criminal record check prior to being approved for participation.	**Red Flag** – if no, avoid due to unacceptable risk to children.

Formal Agreement				
Is there a formal agreement / MOU in place between the school / university and the Third Party Provider that clearly defines the terms of the relationship?			Written agreements can set expectations and ensure that both sides understand what they are committing to. Best practice is to have a clear written agreement that is signed by both parties.	**Amber Flag** – if no, consider finding another provider who will engage in a formal agreement.
Is this formal agreement reviewed annually?			Situations can change and the people managing relationships can also change. Regularly reviewing a partnership agreement will allow for changes to be suggested and for both parties to recommit. Best practice is for the agreement to be reviewed and signed annually.	
Interaction with unchecked individuals				
Does the provider have a process in place for managing student interaction with unchecked individuals during community engagement activities overseas?			Students may come into contact with adult members of the local community in the course of their travel who have not been through a screening process. This presents a safeguarding risk for traveling students. Best practice is ensuring that both the school / university and partner organisation has a clear policy in place regarding supervision of traveling students.	**Amber Flag** – if no, consider finding another provider who prioritises the safety of traveling students.
Mission / Theory of Change				
Does the provider collect and present evidence of progress toward their objectives outlined in their mission statement / Theory of Change (for example, in monitoring reports)?			Organisations with a social mission should be able to provide evidence of change. Some providers do not collect this information and so make unsubstantiated claims about their work. Best practice is for evidence of change to be collected and clearly presented in reports.	
Finances				
Is the Third Party Provider able to provide recent financial reports?			Financial reports show financial health and making them available ensures transparency. Best practice is for providers to make financial reports available.	**Amber Flag** – if no, consider finding another provider who is able to be transparent around financial reporting.
Do financial reports clearly show the annual breakdown and distribution of program fees, including donations or payments made to local partners in country?			Third Party Providers may have differing business models in relation to how much of a program fee reaches local communities through direct payments, or donations. Understanding how much of the program fee for student is passed on to the local community through direct payments or donations enables transparency and can be a mechanism for tracking impact. Best practice is for financial reports to clearly show how program fees are spent, and the percentage distributed to host organisations.	**Amber Flag** – if no, ask for detailed information to be provided. If this is not provided, consider finding another provider who is able to be transparent around financial reporting.

Supervision / Staffing			
Does the provider provide a dedicated staff member to manage volunteers on the project?			Volunteers need to be carefully managed to ensure that they provide the most value to an organization and don't waste staff capacity. Best practice is for the provider to have a dedicated staff member who liaises with the volunteers and local host organization.	
Partnerships with in-country organisations			
How does the provider select host organisation partners?			Sometimes partners are selected on the basis of personal relationships rather than there being a transparent selection criteria based on effectiveness of the work and need for volunteers. Best practice is that the provider has a transparent and competitive selection process.	
Are relationships with hosting partners regularly reviewed?			Situations can change and the people managing relationships can also change. Regularly reviewing a partnership will allow for changes to be suggested or for the partnership agreement to be terminated if it is no longer working or necessary. Best practice is for partnership relationships to be reviewed regularly, e.g. every few months.	
Does the provider have an individual partnership agreement with the hosting partner that clearly defines roles, responsibilities, objectives of the partnership and impact reporting requirements?			Written agreements can set expectations and ensure that both sides understand what they are committing to. Best practice is to have a clear written agreement that is signed by both sides.	
Does the partner organisation conduct independent evaluations of local project partners?			Projects sometimes make claims about their work that cannot be independently verified. Best practice is for providers to evaluate the impact of local partners to ensure that the work is creating the desired impact.	
Does the partner organisation require that local project partners submit regular reports on specified indicators?			A project that regularly collects data on specified indicators is able to verify that they are creating the impact that they intend. Best practice is for providers to receive regular reports on the outcomes of a partner's work.	

Marketing and social media				
Does the third party provider allow students to post pictures of beneficiaries / local communities on social media?			Images taken informally by students are often obtained without the informed consent (see below) of the subjects. Additionally, images can be shared and used on other platforms without the student, or subject's knowledge or consent. Best practice is to have a policy that does **not** allow students to share images of local community members on social media.	**Amber Flag** – if yes, consider finding another provider that considers the needs and rights of local communities.
Does the third party provider gain informed consent from the subjects of photos used in their marketing materials?			Subjects of photographs should give informed consent for their image to be taken and used. Informed consent means that understand how, where and by whom their image will be used. Children below the age of 15 years are generally deemed unable to give informed consent, and in these cases their parents should be required to give informed consent. Best practice is for all photos used in marketed to have obtained informed consent from the subjects, including children and their parents.	**Amber Flag** – if no, consider another provider that respects the needs and rights of local communities.
Does the third party provider use photos that depict people as alone, sick, vulnerable or in poverty in in their marketing materials?			Using marketing images of children and other vulnerable people that depict them as alone, sick, vulnerable or in poverty breaches ethical standards around the dignified portrayal of others and can reinforce harmful stereotypes. Best practice is to use images that depict local community members in a positive manner. Where images of children are used, best practice is to depict groups of children together. Children should be fully clothed in images.	**Red Flag** – if yes, avoid due to the harms of perpetuating harmful, undignified and stereotypical depictions of children and other vulnerable people.
Advocacy				
Does the third party provider offer ways and opportunities for students to get involved in the issue / cause in the future?			Many projects involve students engaging in an issue for a short period of time after which they leave and have no contact or knowledge of the ongoing progress of the project. These types of projects offer little benefit for local communities and represent a lost opportunity for students to return home and advocate on this issue. Best practice is ensuring that on return home, students have been equipped with the knowledge and resources to practically engage with the issue they have been working on. This is an important part of ensuring these activities have a long-term impact on both the community project and the student themselves.	