Spring 2018

Hands-On with On-Site Students? Exploration of the Expanding Role of the Third-Party Provider Education Abroad Advisor

Emma Lynch
SIT Graduate Institute

HANDS-ON WITH ON-SITE STUDENTS? EXPLORATION OF THE EXPANDING ROLE
OF THE THIRD-PARTY PROVIDER EDUCATION ABROAD ADVISOR

Emma Lynch
IELR 76
A Capstone Paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of
International Education at SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont, USA.

May 7, 2018

Advisor: Linda Gobbo, Professor

Consent to Use of Capstone

I hereby grant permission for World Learning to publish my Capstone on its websites and in any of its digital/electronic collections, and to reproduce and transmit my CAPSTONE ELECTRONICALLY. I understand that World Learning's websites and digital collections are publicly available via the Internet. I agree that World Learning is NOT responsible for any unauthorized use of my Capstone by any third party who might access it on the Internet or otherwise.

Student name: __Emma Lynch_____
Date: ___April 7, 2018_____

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

According to the Forum on Education Abroad's State of the Field 2017 survey, more students on average studied abroad with third-party providers than with both private and public institutions combined in the 2016-2017 academic year. However, many of the resources available and best practices for the profession are focused toward advisors who work at institutions of higher education. These resources often discuss how contact with on-site students should be established, but only vague references are made for advisors employed by a provider. This study discusses the potential impacts that education abroad advisors at third-party providers may have on the student experience by maintaining contact with their on-site students, as well as what implications these results have for the profession. Using theories of student development, and utilizing the resources currently in existence for third-party providers, advisors at third-party providers were surveyed and interviewed, and the websites of several third-party providers were analyzed to determine what current practices are in place for maintaining contact with on-site students, if at all. This research concludes that many education abroad advisors maintain contact with on-site students, whether or not their provider organizes their role to take part in this communication. Education abroad advisors at third-party providers should develop strategies based on their organizational needs to support students in their on-site transition in anticipation of this contact.

Introduction

Education abroad advisors are expected to handle many tasks; they often communicate with students from the time they are simply inquiring about or interested in study abroad, through the application process, and pre-departure process. Some may also work with students throughout the entire study abroad process, in other words, communicate with students on-site and assist them with re-entry and coordinate with them as alumni ambassadors. The professional organization, the Forum on Education Abroad (the Forum), conducted a survey on the education abroad position in January of 2016, writing, "In recent years, it has become apparent there is a need, in education abroad specifically and in higher education generally, for a common understanding of the complexity of the work of education abroad professionals and the titles that they hold" ("Education Abroad Positions," para. 1). The Forum also recognizes that the roles of education abroad advisors are not always consistent because of the variety of organizations that exist. This is true not only of higher education institutions based on the size and scope of their organization, but true of third-party providers for the same reasons. Education abroad advisors across education institutions and third-party providers not only have many different tasks that they may handle, but they also have many different titles, which may or may not hint at the various roles they perform. Sometimes they work as admissions advisors or counselors, program coordinators, program managers, etc. Other times they may assist with pre-departure preparations, but not re-entry assistance. What roles or titles an education abroad advisor ultimately fulfills depends on the needs of the organization for which the individual works.

However, there have been attempts to define and organize the role of the education abroad advisor, especially as the field of international education has become more and more professionalized over time. In the Forum's most recent State of the Field Survey for 2017, the

data provided offers further rationalization for investigation into the role of education advisors at third-party providers (State of the Field 2017, p. 3). The survey demonstrates that amongst the top concerns of all professionals in the field remain crisis and risk management (68% of respondents concerned), adequate preparation of students (45% percent concerned), and student support services related to disability, wellness, or mental health (32% concerned). A new question that appears in this survey that does not appear in past surveys also shows that, on average, more students studied abroad through a third-party provider than through their institution. In fact, 1,327 students on average studied through providers versus 1,182 students that studied through both a public or private institution combined in the 2016-2017 academic year. Overwhelmingly, however, 78% of respondents to the State of the Field 2017 survey were persons from U.S. Institutions that send their own students abroad, whereas only 7% were persons from a U.S.-based entity that provides education abroad programs for students not earning a degree through the organization, such as a program provider, highlighting the need for more understanding of the provider side of the field.

In the researcher's experience as an Admissions Advisor at a third-party study abroad provider, education abroad advisors primarily provide support to students in three stages of their study abroad process: the application, pre-departure, and post-program administrative support (such as processing transcripts or sending surveys). Occasionally, education abroad advisors interact with students while they are abroad. Recently, however, there has been an increasing desire from the executive team for the Admissions department at this third-party provider to be involved in checking-in on students while abroad, no matter the degree of on-site support from Resident Directors or other staff. Typically, at the end of a program survey, student responses highlight an issue in their experience that could have been resolved had the student been willing

or comfortable with approaching a member of the on-site staff. Therefore, the reasoning for this intervention of Admissions staff is for risk management and monitoring and evaluation purposes, as discovery of these issues at the culmination of a program is understandably undesirable. In situations such as these, it is an indication that health, safety, or integration with the host culture has been unnecessarily put at risk. By keeping admissions advisors in communication with their advisees while they are abroad, there has been recent success in making changes to a student's situation that had a positive impact on their overall experience and reduced risk to their health, safety, and integration. In a role where an advisor is part of the application, pre-departure, and post-program administration, it sends a message that the role of the advisor doesn't and shouldn't disappear when students are abroad.

This experience has led the researcher to question the evolving nature of the education abroad advisor profession for those who work for a third-party provider, and what role these advisors maintain while their students are overseas. This research aims to answer a question about current best practices for education abroad advisors: What advising role should an education abroad advisor at a third-party provider maintain once their students are abroad? The sub-questions that will inform the answer to this question include, what is the desired outcome for advising students who are on-site? What do changes in the role of an education abroad advisor mean for future program design? The answer to these questions aim to inform further development of the profession and clarify the roles of various groups involved in the education abroad experience.

Literature Review

There is often an assumption in the literature in the field of international education that the primary education abroad advisor is an individual who works at a higher education

institution. While this is not to say that these professionals do not play an important role in a student's time abroad, it does tend to ignore the magnitude of impact that an education abroad advisor at a third-party provider may have. This is also not to diminish the importance of on-site staff, such as resident directors, who are readily available to help students navigate their host culture. Important professional works such as *NAFSA's Guide to Education Abroad for Advisers and Administrators* (2014) primarily write about education abroad advising with the assumption that the advisor is employed at a two- or four-year college or university. Much focus is also placed on the role that on-site staff, host families, speaking partners, and other groups such as internship or service learning placements all have in engaging and advising the student abroad. Other organizations, such as the Forum on Education Abroad (2011; 2015; 2018), provide standards of best practice for advisors who work at a third-party provider and acknowledge that many higher education institutions use providers to send their students abroad. But, the depth of information or discussion of the third-party advisor role can be lacking.

In the Forum's 2011 *Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad,* it's recommended that third-party education abroad advisors should make academic advising appointments, specifically, "available regularly throughout the education abroad process" (p. 32). Though there is no indication that other types of advising could take place, in this language, there is an acknowledgement, or assumption, that the "education abroad process" is holistic and encompasses pre-departure advising, on-site assistance, and ending with re-entry programming. This is left as an assumption and not clearly defined, but the idea is still there; education abroad advisors from third-party providers should be available for advising during the entire education abroad period. In the Forum's next iteration of the *Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad*, published in 2015, this section on on-site academic advising doesn't change from the

previous publication. In fact, underneath *Standard 4: Student Selection, Preparation, and Advising: The organization maintains fair and ethical recruitment and selection processes, adequate student preparation and advising, and ongoing student support*, there is a query called "How does pre-departure and on-site advising encourage academic and professional planning?" ("Standard 4", 2017). As these queries are meant to elicit a discussion of how an organization meets this standard, there is an online toolbox the Forum on Education Abroad provides for universities or providers to examine, answer these queries, and use them to shape their own organization. However, all the resources in the toolbox for this query are links to university websites, or to the Forum's previously published resource on this topic, which is cited above. There are no resources present from third-party providers, nor is there a query within this standard for ways to address other forms of advising that may take place beyond academic advising.

In 2014, NASFA: Association for International Educators published their most recent version of their *NAFSA's Guide to Education Abroad for Advisers and Administrators*. In Stacey Woody Thebodo's chapter, "Education Abroad Advising," she cites Fourm, writing,

> Education abroad advising should be consistent with the institutional mission and must address students' needs and objectives. The goal of education abroad advising is to guide students throughout the entire education abroad process, helping them to make informed decisions from predeparture through reentry (p. 22).

However, Thebodo notes, most education abroad advisors spend the greatest amount of time advising during the pre-departure process. While this is not incorrect, this is again another resource in which the recommendation to advise throughout the education abroad process is highlighted but not discussed in any regard. It is also written with education abroad advisors at higher education institutions in mind, with emphasis put on how the education abroad advisor

can work with faculty, and how the "education abroad office is a microcosm of the university itself" (28). Moreover, this chapter focuses on student development theory, advising models, and advising content, such as advising for different groups of students or academic and financial advising. She states that the most effective advisor is one who is transformational, someone who emphasizes assessing students' individual needs, identifies programs, and develops educational plans that suits each student's goals. This is in contrast to other advising models, which just see the role of the advisor as someone who sees the advisor-student relationship as a one-way transaction of information. Thebodo highlights that there is no "one size fits all" for education abroad advising (p. 26). Education abroad advisors need to adapt their advising model based on the individual they're working with, and not make any assumptions about what the student needs. For underrepresented students, especially, they must develop a multifaceted advising approach. If all of what Thebodo discusses her in chapter is true, then the role of the education abroad advisor with on-site students can no longer be ignored. If the individual student requires the support while on-site, then a transformational or effective advisor should be available and this role must be explored.

Furthermore, as Thomas Teague (2014), discusses in his chapter of *NAFSA's Guide to Education Abroad for Advisers and Administrators*, interventions from education abroad advisors while students are abroad are a way of connecting pre-departure to re-entry, and are about providing support and structure for students on-site. He also acknowledges that there are more interventions than the support the advisor provides: homestays and speaking partners are also interventions on-site that are there for support and to aid in cultural learning. However, he notes that just the presence of these interventions on-site does not necessarily mean that intercultural learning may occur. He further explores the way education abroad advisors can

assist students with technology, and also how program design plays a role in providing support or advising for students on-site. Teague cites the case of CEA Study Abroad, a third-party provider based out of Tempe, Arizona, whose students can live chat with their advisors. Without the technology in place to assist a generation of students that often wants to be able to reach out at their own convenience, there is not that connection to the preparation that the education abroad advisor put into pre-departure orientations while they are on-site.

Additionally, as Michael Vande Berg (2009) explains while referencing Sanford's Theory of Challenge and Support in his research summarizing interventions with students studying abroad, students need to have a program that balances the two forces of challenge and support for them to learn most effectively. He argues that there is a new narrative forming regarding study abroad, where professionals are moving from describing a student's study abroad experience as transformative and experiential to describing intercultural learning within the study abroad context as foundational, and to note that those who learn well at home do not necessarily learn well abroad. Berg suggests that strategic interventions via a cultural mentor are needed at all stages of the process to ensure that this new, foundational learning is successful. While the intention is for the cultural mentor to be person who is on-site with the student, the education abroad advisor could also work with on-site staff to aid in their mentoring. Education abroad advisors often spend time developing a relationship with their students throughout pre-departure, and the assumption that on-site staff can take over this relationship with little to no assistance from the advisor demonstrates that there is a gap between advising and student support.

The phenomena of passing off the advisor-student relationship to the on-site staff is more apparent when compared to other advising literature, such as academic advising. In the U.S.,

much is written about advising in terms of academic advising, and with very strong emotions attached. Katherine Carlman (2017) equates her role as an academic advisor to that of a mother, seeking ways to navigate institutional roadblocks for her students to forge a new path in their educational careers. Peggy Delmas (2002) also sees a similar strength in the connection she forges with her advisees as she helps them navigate meeting the goals of their personal and academic lives. While there may not be many education abroad advisors who consider themselves parental figures to their students, the education abroad advisor can forge strong connections with their students and help them navigate challenging transitions in their life. As a society, the U.S. has a culture that values prevention greatly (Ritchie, 2003). This also adds depth to the idea that advisors form strong bonds and maintain some type of connection with students abroad, especially if it helps connect pre-departure to re-entry, as it helps assuage our cultural need for prevention of bad experiences. The goal in reviewing these sources is to fill gaps in the literature that do not analyze the role of third-party education abroad advisors. It is hoped that this analysis and subsequent research will help highlight what is currently being practiced by third-party education abroad advisors and what shape the landscape of their advising may take in the future.

Conceptual Framework

Advisors often use several student development theories to guide their approach or method of advising. Utilizing Sanford's Theory of Challenge and Support and Bridge's Transition Model as conceptual frameworks, this study will analyze how these student development theories may be used to expand upon the role of the education abroad advisor (Berg, 2009; Mindtools.com, 2018). Sanford's Theory of Challenge and Support directly relates to the actions that an advisor takes in facilitating a student's learning: students need a balance of

9

challenge and support in order to be successful abroad (Berg, 2009; Ward et al, 2005). Maintaining that presence of support once abroad may aid students in their transition to their new environment, which is full of challenges. It may also aid in the smooth transition of the support the education abroad advisor provides to the support the on-site staff gives to students. This coincides with Bridge's Transition Model, which states that in order to make transitions in their lives, students first let go of a piece of their identity and then enter a neutral zone, a gray area where students still connect to their old identity as they begin to transition to a new one. The final stage of their transition is a new beginning, in which students have adjusted to their new normal and discuss it with enthusiasm or excitement (Boehman, 2010; Mindtools.com, 2018). Students studying abroad may often be tired and confused upon arrival abroad, having let go of their life in the United States and transitioning to the change in their environment. Advisors can remind students of their pre-departure program goals to help them through this transition period.

Research Design

To understand what role third-party education abroad advisors should maintain with on-site students, research was conducted through an anonymous survey, open-ended interview questions, and analysis of third-party provider websites. Utilizing Sanford's Challenge and Support theory (Berg, 2009; Ward et al, 2005), the survey and interview questions aimed to explore how long the advisor had been in their role and their level of familiarity with their workload. Appendix A shows the complete list of figures from the survey. The questions were designed to discover the nature of support these advisors provide before students depart for their programs and while students are on-site. In other words, if an advisor maintains contact with on-site students, are they advising them on areas of concern already covered in the pre-departure process? The survey, in particular, asked if advisors felt that this support impacted an on-site

student's experience of their program. Moreover, the questions in both the survey and interviews sought to understand the frequency with which the support was both provided by the advisor and/or sought out by the student. The more a student may try to reach out to an advisor, the more they may remain in a gray area in their transition to their life abroad. Finally, the interview questions, specifically, aimed to understand if advisors themselves felt supported enough to advise on-site students, and if their communication with these students had informed changes in their processes or program design.

For distribution of the anonymous survey, the sample of third-party education abroad advisor participants came from their subscription to professional listservs to the NAFSA Region XI and SECUSS-L listservs. The survey was posted to both of these listservs for two weeks before data collection was complete. Appendix B shows the complete list of seven questions and answer options in the survey. In total, 45 responses were received from current or former education abroad advisors at third-party providers. Analysis of these responses was supported by use of SurveyMonkey's analytical tools, as SurveyMonkey was the product used to distribute the survey through the listservs. Participants completed the survey in an average of three minutes, and there was an 80% completion rate, as some participants skipped over questions. For those questions, analysis was based on the response rate for the question, the specific rates for which are mentioned below.

Ten education abroad advisors at five different third-party providers were contacted for an interview. Of these, five advisors at third-party providers agreed to participate and signed an informed consent form, which can be seen in Appendix C. These interviewees were contacted based on their geographic distance to the author and by the content of their website, which alluded to the role their education abroad advisors perform, for further discussion. The lengths of

the five interviews ranged from 15 to 25 minutes. Appendix D shows the list of seven interview questions asked. No interview participants refused to answer certain questions and no one asked to end the interview early.

Personal identifying information was collected during the interview, but made anonymous for the publication of this capstone. Ensuring that voluntary survey and interview responses is published anonymously for this research prevented participants from feeling pressured or obligated to respond, as their identity is not tied to their answers and therefore published data cannot harm their professional or personal lives. Similarly, anonymous survey responses kept participants from feeling pressured to participate because it was not a direct or personally worded request to complete the survey, and participants could answer without their identity being tied to their responses. It also widened the net of education abroad advisors that could not have otherwise been reached. Participation in the research may have provided participants with the space to reflect on their roles, and therefore benefited their work with this self-reflection, although no compensation was offered. Anyone who wished to see the results of the listserv or the final capstone, were publicly provided with the author's contact information throughout the survey and interview process.

Finally, using a randomized selection of five third-party providers from across the United States, their websites were analyzed for availability of student services support information or other advising procedures, and how this information included or didn't include the provider's education abroad advisors. Attention was paid to keywords that indicate the role of an education abroad advisor: "advisor/advising," "support," and "student support." The keyword "on-site support" was also monitored, in case a provider highlighted how an advisor may be involved in on-site support. The information was also searched for patterns that demonstrate what possible

12

outcomes education abroad advising has at third-party providers, such as student development, cultural integration, or healthy and safety management.

The research was inherently limited by the pool of participants that subscribe to professional listservs, and by the number of questions asked. The research may also have been potentially hindered by relying on assumptions that education abroad professionals will understand what is meant by terms such as "education abroad advisor" and "third-party provider." However, since the title of the advisor and the tasks they perform can be so varied from provider to provider, these terms were kept general in order to capture the widest audience of advisors to best understand how communication is maintained with their on-site students.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Survey Results

The majority of survey respondents, 45 respondents, or 53%, were professionals in their education abroad advising role for between one to three years. The next majority of respondents, nine respondents, or 20%, were professionals who have worked in the field for ten years or more. Another nine respondents, or 20%, have worked in this field for four to six years, and three respondents, or 7%, have worked in this field for six to ten years. Figure 1 shows the range of experience of professionals that responded to the survey.

Figure 1. How long have you worked as an education abroad advisor at a third-party provider?
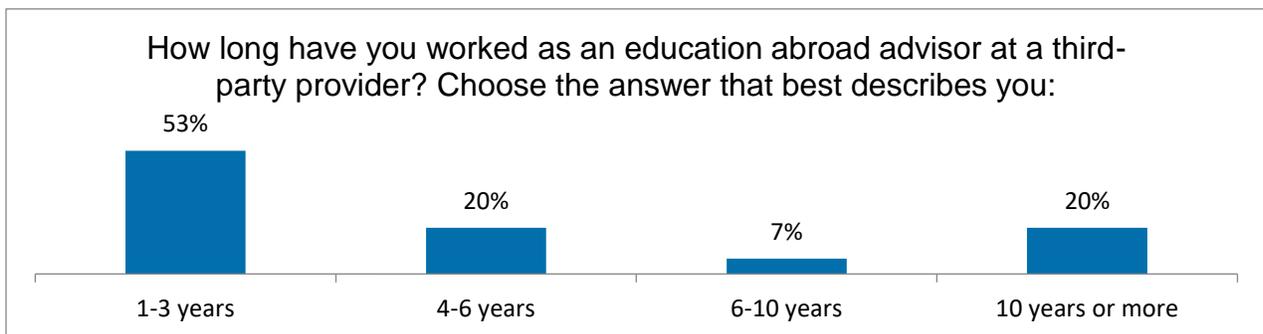
Answers to the second survey question regarding what advising topics are typically handled by the respondent showed that education abroad advisors at third-party providers cover a wide range of advising topics. Respondents could check any topic that applied to them, and three respondents skipped this question, therefore analysis is based on a 93% response rate with 42 respondents. Of the options provided for selection, only topics related to re-entry programs/conferences and résumé assistance were not chosen as a responsibility as often as the other options. The top four selected topics were Accommodations (90%, or 38 selected), Academics (88%, or 37 selected), Housing (83%, or 35 selected), and Travel (83%, or 35 selected). The full range of topics is demonstrated in Figure 2. Other common responsibilities that were identified by 13 respondents in the "Other" category were responsibilities related to program selection, finances (such as financial aid, scholarships, billing and payments), visas and flights, student identity and cultural integration.

Figure 2. On what topics do you typically advise students throughout the education abroad process?

On what topics do you typically advise students throughout the education abroad process? Check all that apply:

Topic	Percentage
Academics	88%
Accommodations	90%
Culture Shock	79%
Travel	83%
Housing	83%
Safety	79%
Health	74%
Packing	74%
Re-entry programs/conferences	26%
Résumé assistance	29%
Other (please specify)	31%
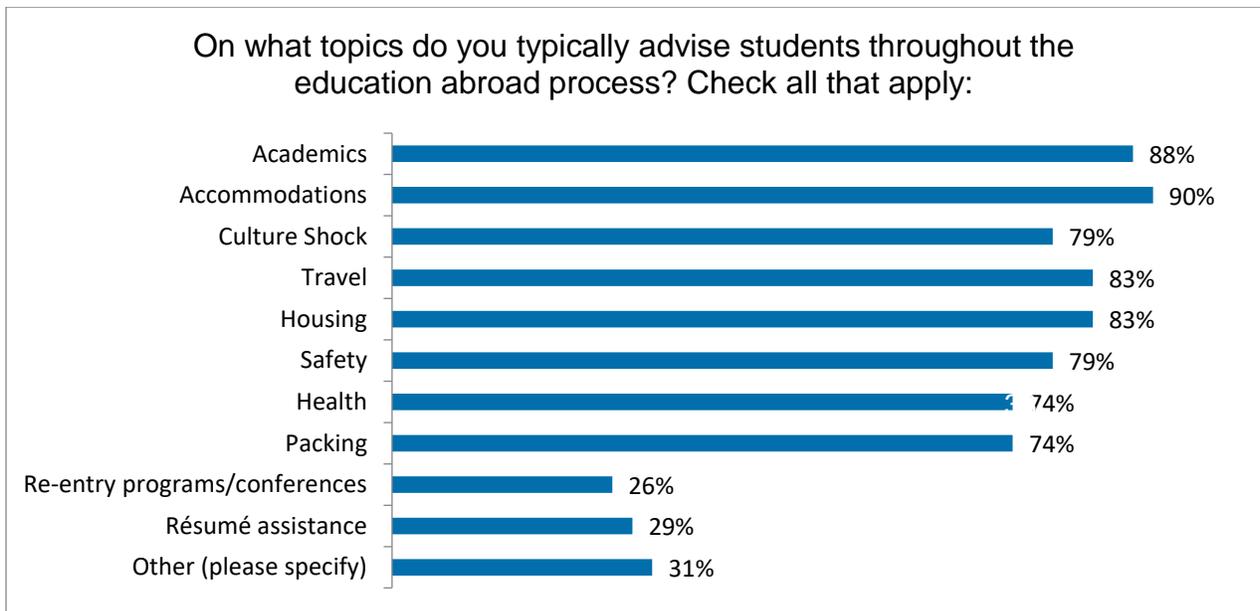
Significantly, as illustrated in Figure 3, 23 respondents, or 55%, maintain their contact with students on-site via on-site staff, whereas 45% of respondents, or 19 respondents, maintain contact directly at least once or multiple times combined. On the other hand, 26%, or 11 respondents do not keep in contact with on-site students at all. Once again, respondents could check any topic that applied to them, and three respondents skipped this question, therefore analysis is based on a 93% response rate with 42 respondents.

Figure 3. Do you keep in contact with students while they are abroad?
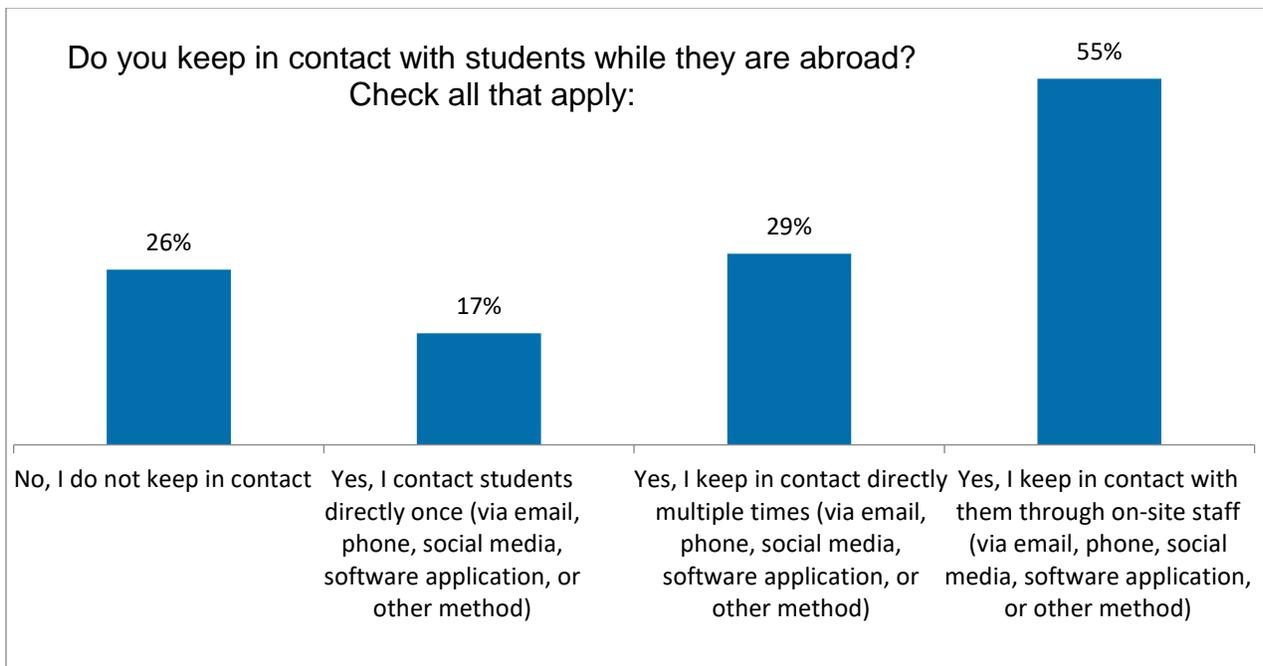
When education abroad advisors did maintain contact with on-site students because the student contacted them, the type of topics on which they advised students did not vary much from the topics on which they advised students throughout the education abroad process. Respondents could check any topic that applied to them, and nine respondents skipped this question, for an 80% response rate with 36 respondents. As can be seen in Figure 4, the top four choices were Academics (64%, or 23 respondents), Accommodations (61%, or 22 respondents),

Housing (61%, or 22 respondents), and Health (53%, or 19 respondents). The top choices that were entered in the "Other" category regarded program extensions, billing, and issues/emergencies.

Figure 4. What topics do on-site students contact you about?

What topics do on-site students contact you about? Check all that apply:

Topic	Percentage
Academics	64%
Accommodations	61%
Culture Shock	17%
Travel	50%
Housing	61%
Safety	44%
Health	53%
Packing	11%
Other (please specify)	39%
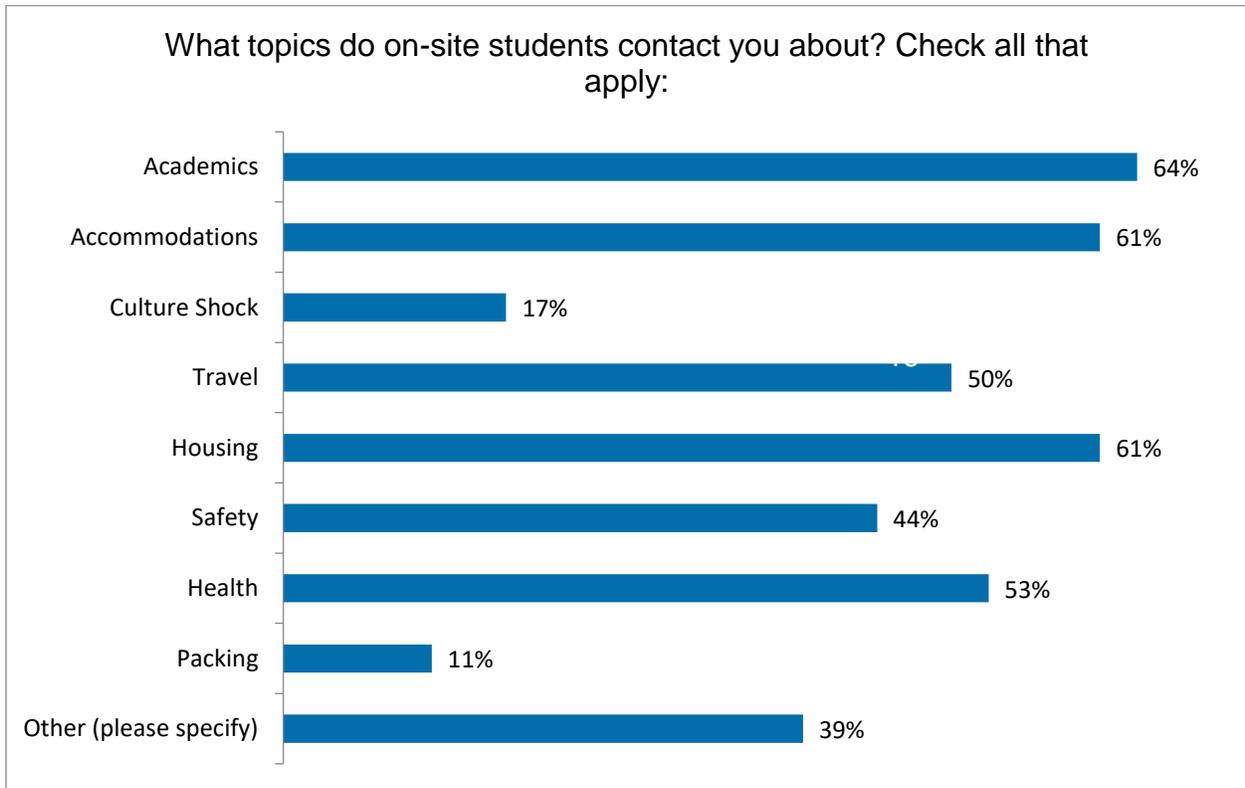
In Figure 5, the frequency with which an on-site student may contact an advisor before the advisor had contacted them can be seen. Seven respondents chose to skip this question, for an 84% response rate with 38 respondents. The rate at which students will contact advisors with these issues, before the advisor has attempted to contact them, is "sometimes," according to 21 respondents, or 55% of all respondents. Rarely or not at all would a student contact the advisor first for 12 respondents, or 31% of all respondents, and for five respondents, or 13% of all respondents, a student would often contact them before they had made any outreach to the student.

Figure 5. How often does a student abroad contact you first, or how often do they contact you before you've contacted them?

How often does a student abroad contact you first, or how often do they contact you before you've contacted them?

Not at all	5%
Rarely	26%
Sometimes	55%
Often	13%
Always	0%
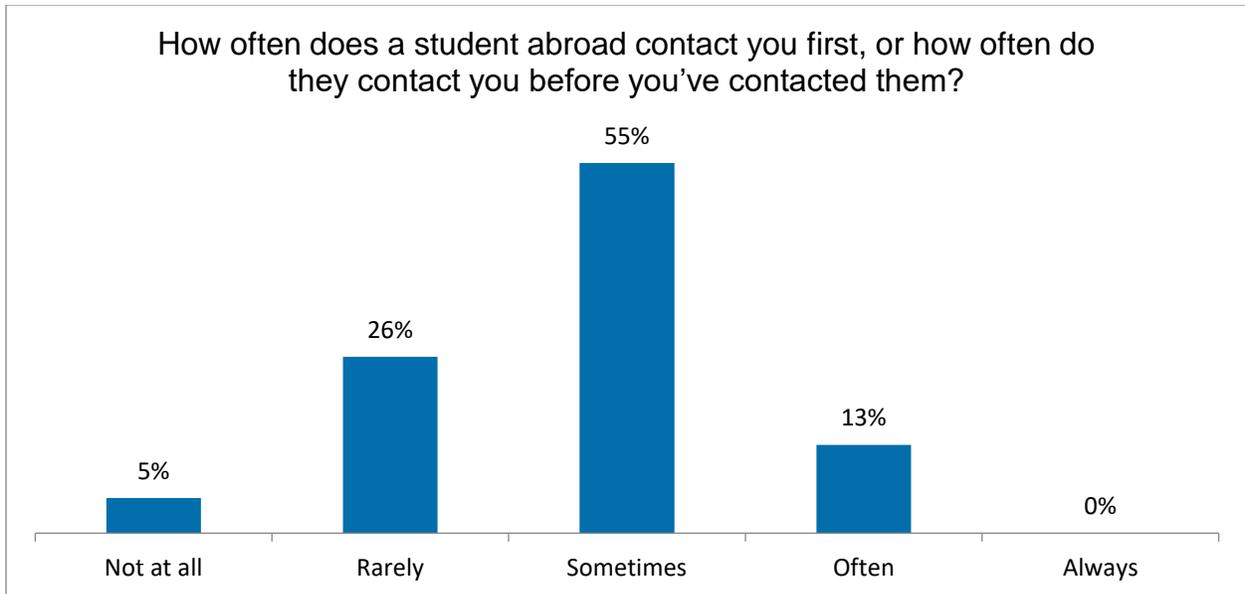
The penultimate survey question asked about the consequences for on-site students if they did not reply to communication from their advisor. Respondents checked any consequence that may apply. While 51%, or 19 respondents, stated that there would be no consequences, many of the 11 write-in answers in the "Other" category stated that the student could be removed from the program.

As for the other categories, 22% or eight respondents said there were health and safety consequences, and 14% or five respondents said there were academic consequences for students. In total, 37 respondents answered and 8 skipped the question, for a response rate of 82%. The distribution of responses to this question can be seen in Figure 6.

Figure 6. What consequences exist if an on-site student does not reply to your communication?
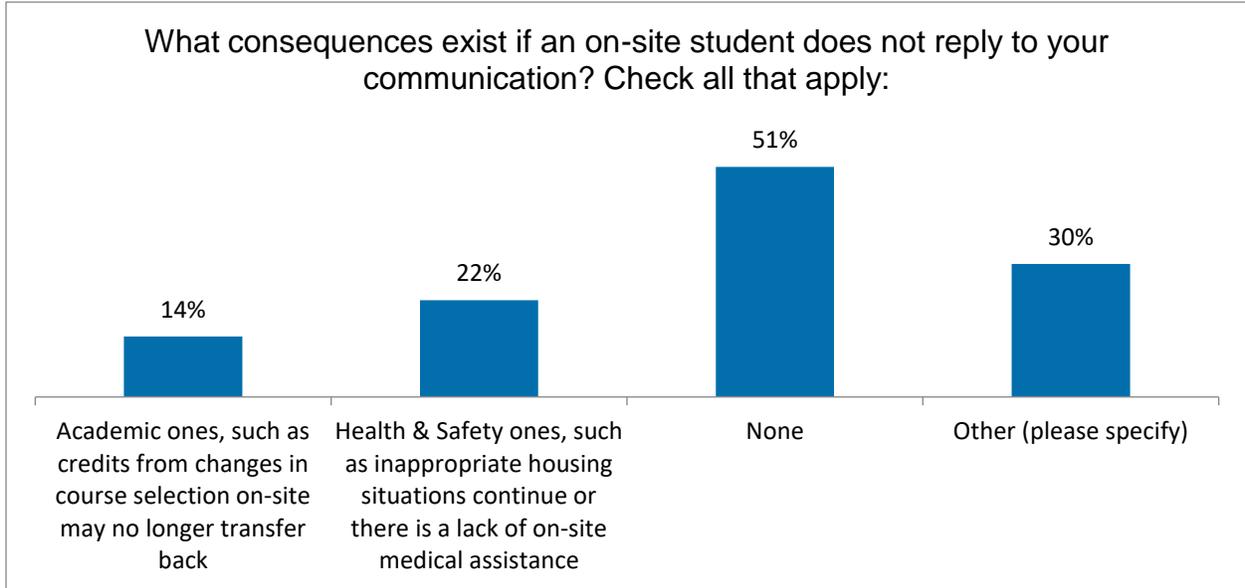
In the final survey question, show in Figure 7, 24 or 67% of respondents agreed that their communication with on-site students impacted their experience by improving their communication with on-site staff; 14 respondents, or 39% percent, said it led to changes in the student's accommodation; 30% or 11 respondents said it led the student to have a better understanding of health care in the host country, while 25%, or nine respondents, said it led to changes in the student's courses; and 11%, or four respondents, said they helped the student with information on local organizations and clubs to join. Respondents could check any topic that applied to them, and nine respondents skipped this question, for an 80% response rate with 36 respondents.

The ten write-in options were varied about how their communication impacted a student's experience. Many highlighted how they improved the student's communication with on-site staff, while other commented that they would just direct the student to the on-site staff and not become involved. One comment questioned whether they could really answer this question, as they felt they were not in a position to speak to on-site students' experiences.

Figure 7. How does your communication with students while abroad impact their experience in the host country?

How does your communication with students while abroad impact their experience in the host country? Check all that apply:
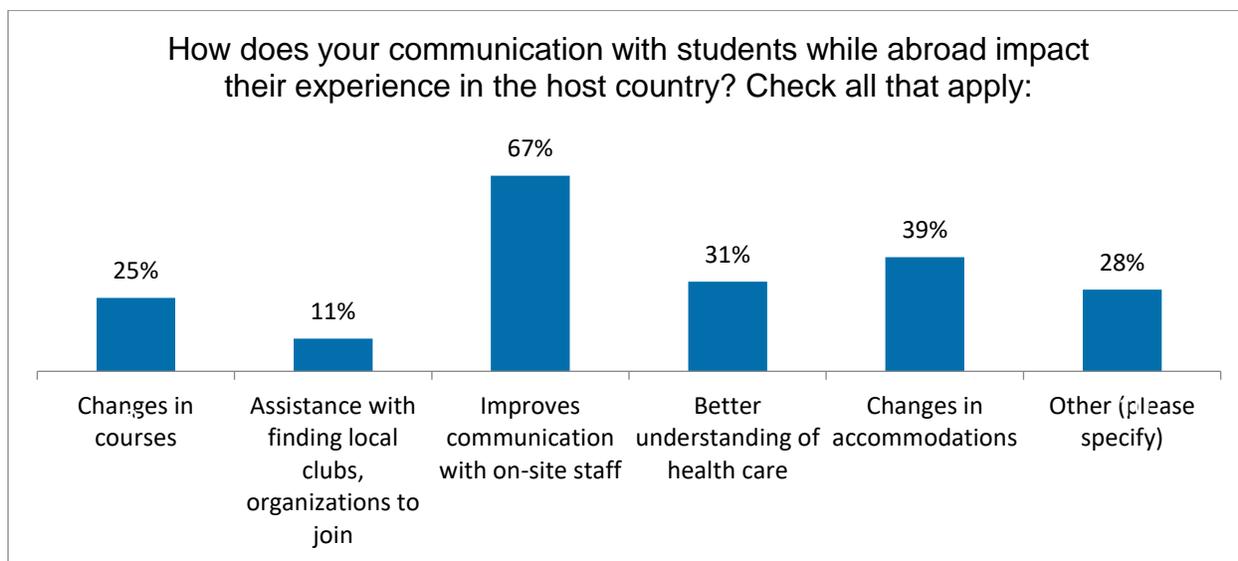
Interview Results

The five professionals interviewed were all education abroad advisors who work at third-party providers that work with college-aged students. They represented three different companies, and held different roles within their organization. Some were in a management position, or had the title of "manager" in their position title. Some were at the advisor level with the word "counselor" in their position title. Some worked with faculty-led programming, others with individually enrolled students in their programming, and some who worked with both groups. See Appendix D for the list of questions.

In response to the first question, "What are your responsibilities as an advisor with a third-party provider?" all interviewed had a variety of responsibilities. Many were involved in the application process: moving students through the application, making admissions decisions, following up on deposits, and then assisting through pre-departure. Some interviewed had responsibilities more focused on the recruitment side of admissions, such as guiding students to

the right program choice based on personal or academic interests. Others were advisors focused on custom programming with partner universities, therefore their level of involvement throughout the whole process sometimes depended on the requirements of the university with which they were partnering. Others were more focused on the student experience/student affairs side of admissions, meaning they worked with students once they had submitted an application fee and were already fairly committed to the program.

In regard to the second question, "How long have you been in your role? Have your advising responsibilities changed since you began your position, if at all?" the majority of those interviewed have been with their organization for between one to four years. One respondent had been their organization for less than one year due to a job change, but has been in the field of international education for much longer. If her role had changed within the time she had been with her organization, it was due to her becoming more familiar with their role and thus more comfortable taking on additional projects. In some cases, the interviewee had changed position within the same organization, and their responsibilities had changed as a result. Sometimes, this also meant that the interviewee had more opportunities for professional development at their organization, such as conference attendance or site-visits to learn more about their programs. One person had transitioned from working in marketing and recruitment to "end user admissions," meaning she was more focused on the pre-departure process and preparing students for their experience abroad.

When asked "Do you believe an education abroad advisor has a duty to be involved with students while they are on-site? Why or why not?" most interviewed felt that they do. Only one interviewee did not feel that advisors should be involved due to her personal hesitation with her ability to handle on-site emergencies. In this interviewee's case, and in the case of one other,

they did not have education abroad advisor roles that permitted them to interact with students on-site. If on-site students did contact these two interviewees, then they were to forward it to a different department based on the type of concern. Both of these interviewees' organizations are segmented based on a very specific role that needs to be performed, and there is barely any role cross-over. However, while one of the persons interviewed in this position ultimately did not believe education abroad advisors should be in touch with on-site students due to their personal concerns, the other person interviewed that worked in a similarly structured organization thought that "it would be nice" to be in contact with on-site students. However, due to her current workload, she didn't see how it could be possible. The other interviewees did believe that education abroad advisors should be in contact with on-site students. One felt that this contact should be maintained if that is how the organization an education abroad advisor works for markets themselves.

Therefore, the interviewees were then asked, "If you have contact with students while they are abroad, is it maintained throughout their term abroad, or only for a short duration?" Four of the five interviewees said that they do have contact with students while they are abroad. Only one interviewee, the one interviewee who believed that education abroad advisors do not have a duty to be involved with students while they are abroad, said that she does not have contact with students abroad. Three interviewees stated that if they have contact with students who are abroad, it is specific to one instance or situation, and the reason for this contact could be anything. The reasons are explored in more depth in the next interview question, but in response to this question, one of these three interviewees provided the example of a time she reached out directly regarding a student's flight reimbursement after they had arrived on-site. As mentioned previously, the contact these interviewees have with students is often a case-by-case situation, or

in an emergency in which either the student needs to be contacted or the student needs to contact the advisor. Rarely does it continue throughout the on-site student's program. However, one interviewee said that the advisors at her company have a strategy to reach out at least three times throughout semester programs using an automated email system. They also try to do this with summer programs, if the program is long enough. The goal of doing so is to remind students that the advisor is still there, still cares, and can answer questions.

As stated before, the reason for contact with students, whether the advisor makes first contact or the student makes first contact, could be anything. When asked, "If you have contact with students while they are abroad, for what reasons do you contact students? If you do not contact students, for what reasons might they contact you?" interviewees reiterated what they mentioned in their answer to the previous question. When the advisor is contacting the student first, it's often to check in, make sure everything is going okay and that communication is functioning between the student and on-site staff. The student could also be contacted by the advisor to wrap-up a specific situation that began in the pre-departure process, such as the example of the flight reimbursement from the previous question. In all of the interviewee's responses to this question, their answers morphed to not only discuss the reasons that on-site students will contact them, but also how that contact is handled. For some interviewees, no direct contact is made outside of a specific situation, but rather indirectly through the use of technology, meaning that the advisor can reach out quickly and easily. For four out of the five interviewees, their company utilized an arrival survey to check in on their first days in their host country and to verify that their pre-departure process prepared them for their new experience— but this is the only outreach that occurs on behalf of the advisor unless there is a specific issue that requires separate outreach. The fifth interviewee was the person from the previous question

who stated that she uses automated emails to reach out periodically, and not just rely on one message or survey.

If the student communicates with the advisor first, all interviewees expressed a wide range of issues. Students may contact them about housing or their host family, medicine or medical situations, academics or their course selection, homesickness, or safety concerns. Sometimes the contact will simply be to say thank you to the advisor for all they did to help the student go abroad. When contacted with these concerns, two interviewees who worked at the same company but in different roles said that, if appropriate, they will try to help the student identify strategies they can use to deal with their concern, or help them to communicate better with on-site staff who are better situated to help the student directly. Two of the interviewees who worked at the same company said that their organization is set up so that other departments are meant to work more directly with students on-site, such as student affairs or finance departments. One of these two is the interviewee who responded to a previous question stating that she does not keep in contact with students who are abroad, and thus if a student contacted her with concerns such as those mentioned above, then she would automatically forward the student's email to another department. The other interviewee at this organization seemed more willing to engage with an on-site student if the student contacted her with a request that is not necessary to forward to another department, such as providing the student with copies of materials that they submitted for their application. The interviewee whose organization reaches out to on-site students at multiple points throughout their program said that if students contact her with concerns, she will bring the site director into the conversation, and vice versa: if a student contacts the site director first, that person will "often loop in the [advisor]."

Furthermore, when asked, "If you keep in contact with students while they are abroad, do you feel you have enough time or resources to maintain this communication in addition to other tasks you complete?" interviewees mostly had the same response. The one interviewee who consistently answered saying she does not have contact with on-site students did not answer this question. Three interviewees said that they do feel they have time because it doesn't happen too often and they also have the support of on-site staff to address concerns. One of these three interviewees also mentioned that she would like to have contact with on-site students if she had more time in her work schedule. The interviewee who reaches out to students periodically throughout the semester answered this question by saying that she always felt that the education abroad advisors at their organization could use more time in a day, but that support for on-site students is a primary role, equal to the support they must provide to the next cohort of students getting ready to go abroad. As advisors, they try not to let these two priorities with departing and on-site students interfere with one another.

Finally, when asked, "Have you ever used information gleaned from communicating with on-site students to improve your processes, program design, or re-entry materials? If so, please share details you feel are relevant to explain how this information was used?" some of the interviewee's responses revealed that if information was gleaned from communication with on-site students for improvement purposes, it was because the advisor had traveled to the site and met with the students in person. Because of the high volume of students that the interviewees advise, it's not always possible for them to form a relationship with a student. Therefore, for one interviewee, a site visit allowed her to interact with students and hear firsthand feedback about the students' experiences with the application process. This interaction with on-site students demonstrated that social media groups, such as Facebook groups, should be created earlier than

they were at the time so that students could get to know each other sooner. Another interviewee had a particular student they developed a relationship with during the pre-departure process, and, during a site visit, had the chance to meet with this student face-to-face. This interaction resulted in the advisor assisting the student in resolving issues she was experiencing in regard to her race in her host country. After this student's program ended, she reached out to her advisor again to express her gratitude for the support the advisor provided her throughout her entire study abroad process.

Other than these site visits that allowed these interviewees to receive direct feedback from on-site students, the only other way the interviewees use information gleaned from on-site students to improve their processes is to gather information from pre-departure and post-program surveys. Two other interviewees stated that if information from on-site students was used, it was not information that they received directly from the on-site student. The information either came from on-site staff or from surveys that are sent to students after their arrival. The interviewee whose company maintains regular contact with on-site students was more in a position to use information directly received from on-site students to improve processes, but this advisor also provided an example of meeting with students in Europe who stated that they kept going back to their online portal with application documents and other materials, and the interviewee realized that her organization should use this portal more for on-site student experiences. Yet, this interviewee noted that one of the challenges she experiences with communicating is that there are so many different ways to communicate now. "How can someone be everything to everyone? How is this fluid?" this interviewee asked in response to this question, hinting at how many different roles an advisor must perform at times.

Website Review

       Five websites of third-party providers were analyzed for the prevalence of certain keywords. Keywords that were searched for were "student support/support," "on-site support," and "advisor/advising." Each website revealed three or less web pages that mentioned the keywords. The goal of this review was not to quantitatively compare the number of times these keywords were observed across third-party providers, but to analyze the way in which the keywords were used on in the individual provider's website. Attention was paid to the category of information under which these keywords were found, such us an "About Us" or "Health & Safety" page. The third-party providers whose websites were analyzed were: CIEE, The Education Abroad Network (TEAN), International Studies Abroad (ISA), CISabroad, and AIFS Study Abroad.

       CIEE. Information regarding student support was found on three different pages of the CIEE website: "College Study Abroad," "Health, Safety, and Security," and their home page. Their information does not mention education abroad advisors specifically, therefore only the keywords of "student support/support" and "on-site support" were observed. Instead, they refer to "highly trained support teams, and health and safety specialists" ("College Study Abroad," n.d.). Their language regarding support is very straightforward, and does not go into much detail ("CIEE," n.d.). On their "Health, Safety, and Support" page, they do take care to mention the risks and rewards of study abroad. They state that when incidents occur abroad they anticipate some students may struggle more than others in the aftermath of the incident. The support discussed on this page primarily refers to the support they can provide in removing students from their program if an incident abroad is too much for the student to handle.

The Education Abroad Network (TEAN). On the TEAN website, information on student support and advising can also be found on three different web pages: "About Us," "Health & Safety," and "Student Identity." All keywords were observed, and in comparison with other websites, TEAN is more detailed in their language about support. They discuss being a part of students' experience abroad from beginning to end, providing expert, personalized advice, and offering exclusive on-site support from resident directors ("About Us," n.d.). They do not specifically mention the education abroad advisor on these pages. TEAN does, however, mention that LGBTQ students and students with disabilities should contact their Program Manager for support ("Student Identity," n.d.). TEAN also discusses student support from U.S. staff in terms of the safety tips they can provide to students going abroad, and how they can help on-site students in the event of an emergency ("Health & Safety," n.d.).

International Studies Abroad (ISA). The ISA website mainly refers to student support in the form of on-site support and cultural integration. There is one page that clearly states that an advisor is present to help students throughout the entire education abroad process, and all keywords were observed on this page, called "What's Included?" However, this page then breaks their advising support in detail, mentioning that advisors (Student Services Advisors and Program Managers) with help with the program selection, application, and pre-departure process. An on-site staff member continues this support once the student is abroad ("What's Included?," n.d.). ISA's website, in particular, puts the least amount of stress on the role of their education abroad advisors.

CISabroad. CISabroad's website puts most information on its advising and support on its homepage, and refers to it in a sales-oriented way. Indeed, keywords observed on their website include "student support/support" and "advisors/advising." CISabroad mentions on-site

staff as well, and therefore this was counted as observation of the keyword "on-site support."

They guarantee "the best value, support, culture and academics" ("CISabroad.com," n.d.). In

addition, they highlight that a staff member will support students before, during and after their

trip, but don't specify what type of staff ("Our Guarantee," n.d.). Also, if a student is not happy

with their program after they return, they will offer the student money towards one of their

highlighted summer programs. If the student finds another program that can offer what they do at

a lower price, then they will price match the program. No other provider refers to their support in

this context. CISabroad also features the experience their staff have in study abroad or

international education, in order to demonstrate their expertise, but do not specifically focus on

their education abroad advisors ("CISabroad.com," n.d.). Furthermore, they dedicate a page to

student and on-site support called "Diversity Abroad." While advising is inherently implied in

this page, there is not much direct mention of advisors beyond the mention of "our staff."

     AIFS Study Abroad. Information on support on the AIFS Study Abroad website could

be found evenly spread across labeled for students, parents, and advisors at universities:

"Frequently Asked Questions," "The AIFS Value," and "Programs and Benefits." All three

keywords were observed in the context that support and advising is available at all stages of the

study abroad process. On the "Frequently Asked Questions" page, which was meant as a

resource for parents, the "General" questions tab discussed the support that admissions officers

in the United States provide in conjunction with resident directors when an emergency occurs

on-site. This tab also mentions that AIFS staff guides students through every part of their study

abroad process, from the application, to the visa, and transfers at the airport. The value of AIFS

also has a significant presence across their site, but it is especially focused on their "The AIFS

Value" page where AIFS offers a guarantee, in dollars, for their programs, stating that they have

the "resources and experience to provide what our students want and need in a study abroad program, and to safeguard their welfare around the globe" ("The AIFS Value," para. 1). This page discusses support services from on-site staff in terms of health and cultural integration, but also support for financial aid and academic advising from AIFS support services. Education abroad advisors are not specifically mentioned on this page. On their "Programs and Benefits" page, admissions officers are again mentioned, but only in the context of their contact information being available in a AIFS Advisors Portal, a portal meant for university advisors to access. Overall, while there is mention of the fact that AIFS advisors, or admissions officers, are present and work in partnership with their on-site staff, there is no overt explanation of how these teams work together.

Discussion

There were several assumptions inherent in this research. The first was in the survey and interview design. It was assumed that the term "education abroad advisor" did not need to be defined, and these advisors would be able to self-identify. As mentioned before, it was intentionally not defined so as to widen the pool of potential participants. However, future researchers should define this role and therefore be very specific about the type of education abroad advisor they are targeting for research. This is due to the fact that there are many different types of organizations for which education abroad advisors could work, and not only a range of tasks they may perform. This research assumed that the education abroad advisors who participated work with college-age study abroad participants. The reality is that there are education abroad advisors who work with high school age participants and others who work with older adult participants, and they should be part of this discussion of the evolution of the education abroad advising profession as well.

Other assumptions that were inherent in the field of international education were those addressed by the research questions. It would appear, according to the professional resources available in the field from organizations such as NAFSA: Association of International Educators and the Forum on Education Abroad, that the study abroad environment provides the challenge and on-site staff provide the support for student development. If education abroad advisors (at any type of institution) are part of this equation, they mostly provide support in the pre-departure process. However, the surveys and interviews conducted for this study demonstrate that students contact their education abroad advisor, even if only for one instance or situation, and often about the same topics the advisor covered during the pre-departure process. This is not to say that education abroad advisors are not effective advisors during the pre-departure process, rather, this is an indication that, like Bridges Transition theory states, students need to reach out to a person from their old identity to help them navigate their new one. The education abroad advisor therefore becomes a part of the equation in providing support to on-site students. Yet, third-party provider websites often do not discuss in much detail the support that education abroad advisors offer, though the education abroad advisors who answered the survey and participated in the interview demonstrate that they maintain a supporting role. Websites may not put any more emphasis on this than already exists because the focus of a third-party provider website is on the marketing and promotion of the programs student will attend. Yet, the supporting role the education abroad advisor provides happens on a spectrum, according to the organization of the third-party provider and to the individual student's needs. As Sanford's theory of challenge and support dictates, too much support and the student will never learn what they need to from their experience abroad, but too much challenge (not enough support) and the student may become frustrated enough to quit trying (Boehman, 2010). As this research indicates, whether it is

planned for or not, students will contact their education abroad advisor back home, and so finding this balance of challenge and support is crucial for each third-party provider. Students contact their education abroad advisor about a range of subjects touched upon on the pre-departure process, as well as for assistance with cultural integration. As indicated in the survey, education abroad advisors themselves believe that their support can improve students' communication with on-site staff. The education abroad advisor must maintain a supporting role for the students who seek them out, and should make themselves available for other students who may not initiate contact as well. Third-party providers should consider this role as part of their students' experiences, and prepare their advisors to be intentional in maintaining their advising roles to students on-site.

Practical Applicability

Better understanding of how others in a similar position in the field work can help improve the profession overall. Though third-party providers are often in competition with one another, they can still benefit from this understanding and use it to analyze and improve their organizations. Improvement may be seen in the creation of better workflows for the advisor if it means new technology is implemented in the advising process, or in the better use of technology that may already be in place. It may improve their workflow through the pre-departure to on-site process and ensure that students begin to communicate more with their on-site directors. If students are better supported, then it means that more fulfilled students will go home and tell their friends and education abroad advisors at their universities about the experience they had, thus driving more students to that program. Of course, it could also be a burden to smaller organizations to try and maintain this advising presence, even if technology is available to make it easier for the advisor. Therefore, it could help organizations without enough man-power in the

U.S. to think about how their staff on-site handle the transition process and assist students. Understanding better how third-party providers and their education abroad advisors support on-site students can also help inform the universities that work with them. This research may spur a study abroad office at university to reach out to their third-party provider partners and begin new discussions that develop their working relationship. It may also help a university study abroad office to think of new things to look for in a partner provider when looking to review affiliation agreements or add new providers to their repertoire.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research is only a beginning. There are many more facets to the communication and support a third-party provider education abroad advisor offers to on-site students. More research could be done on the technology involved, and how it affects students of a younger generation that are more and more connected. With Generation Z now coming of age and going abroad, the role of technology in facilitating education abroad advising for those at third-party providers should be explored in more depth. Since this research already indicates the use of automated emails or surveys to connect with on-site students, it could provide new avenues of advising techniques for education abroad professionals who inherently work at a distance from those they advise. More research could be done from the student's perspective of their advising process, or more cross-sectional research could be done between the advisor's perspective and the student's perspective, since there is already research analyzing the student's perspective. In other words, future research could focus on questions such as, are the advisor's perceptions of their own advising methods and how the students understand the information given to them in alignment? Should advisors do more to make sure they are communicating effectively across any generational gaps? Further research could be done on the specific issues that are communicated

between third party provider education abroad advisors and on-site students: do some specific topics that continuously arise do so because the organization also uses support as a form of risk management? Do issues of health and safety continually come up between advisors and students only because these issues can be exacerbated in the study abroad context? By continuously putting this information out there, are advisors able to refer to it if something goes wrong and prove that they tried to prepare the student already? Future researchers could use this research study to analyze on-site staff and their perceptions of the readiness and integration of students once they arrive. If these same subjects discussed in pre-departure come up on-site, how do staff handle these issues and do they feel the students are adequately prepared? As previously mentioned, it may also be important to study how third-party provider education abroad advisors and their counterparts at universities interact to prepare students and then advise them once on-site. Other questions that may be considered include whether or not a student is reaching out to multiple advisors, the one at the provider and the one at the university; or, if the one at the university is contacted, is the one at the provider then also always brought into the discussion, or is it someone else at the provider organization, and why?

There are also other parts of the education abroad advising field that could be paid more attention to within the same context of the research conducted for this capstone, such as analyzing the role of the third-party education abroad advisor if the third-party provider is not U.S.-based, or if the provider is focused on secondary education instead of higher education. If thinking about how to be everything to everyone, it should also be worth exploring whether gender happens to play a role into this line of thought of being everything to everyone. It is reminiscent of the literature from Carlman (2017) and Delmas (2002) and the notion that advisors are motherly and can help students through very challenging times in their lives. If the

advisor is female, does that mean they are more inclined to take on this job in the first place and put effort into communicating with on-site students?

The biggest question this research leaves us with is that of the question brought up by one of the interviewees. How can someone be everything to everyone, and how does this change as students change or technology changes? It seems reasonable to say that it is impossible to be everything to everyone, and therefore to have organizations that divert on-site students to different groups based on different concerns. However, it still does not stop the student from reaching out to their original advisor in the first place—therefore, is it a good idea to divert the student to someone else? How does this make the student feel? Should this be a concern to education abroad advisors, or should the students learn to be comfortable with detaching from their original advisor, as it is part of the education abroad process to adapt to new situations and lean into discomfort? What direction makes sense? It ultimately may not matter if students continue to reach out to the advisor, and utilizing technology to keep that connection in place may be the better example to follow overall. Automation of the communication also means advisors can reach out to everyone without much effort, and then respond as needed when students reply. Being everything to everyone will always be a balance; we will always want more time to be able to do everything.

Conclusions

The role that third-party provider education abroad advisors should maintain with that of their on-site students is that of an advisor. This research demonstrates that students will contact their education abroad advisor, and therefore the education abroad advisor should not stop advising. They should not pass on the on-site student's concerns to another department or their on-site staff without first addressing the student, and they should make any effort that is feasible

for their organization that allows them to maintain their advising relationships with on-site students. By doing so, education abroad advisors can be intentional in their advising and assist students in their identity development. Education abroad advisors should do this first and foremost for their students, and then to fulfill the recommendations put forth by professional organizations to be involved in the entire study abroad process.

References

About Us. (n.d.). *The Education Abroad Network.* Retrieved from https://teanabroad.org/about-

us/

Berg, M. (2009). Intervening in student learning abroad: a research-based inquiry. *Intercultural*

Education, 20(sup1), pp. S15-S27. Retrieved from

http://dept.harpercollege.edu/international/bookshelf/documents/Intervening_in_Student_

Learning_Abroad.pdf

Boehman, J. (2010). Student Development Theories: A Brief Overview. *University of* Richmond.

Retrieved from https://facultystaff.richmond.edu/~jboehman/sdt.pdf

Carlman, K. (2017, December). Are you my advisor?: Essential insight into adult

learners. *Academic Advising Today*, 40(4). Retrieved from

http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Academic-Advising-Today/View-Articles/Are-

You-My-Advisor-Essential-Insight-into-Adult-Learners.aspx

CIEE. (n.d.). *CIEE*. Retrieved from https://www.ciee.org/

CISabroad. (n.d.). *CISabroad.* Retrieved from https://www.cisabroad.com/

College Study Abroad. (n.d.). *CIEE*. Retrieved from https://www.ciee.org/go-abroad/college-

study-abroad

Delmas, P. (2002, June). The 'quality' in advising. *Academic Advising Today*, 25(2). Retrieved

from http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Academic-Advising-Today/View-

Articles/The-Quality-in-Advising.aspx

Diversity Abroad. (n.d.). *CISabroad.* Retrieved from https://www.cisabroad.com/diversity-

abroad/

Education Abroad Positions. (2016). *Forum on Education Abroad.* Retrieved from

https://forumea.org/resources/data-collection/education-abroad-positions/

Health & Safety. (n.d.). *The Education Abroad Network*. Retrieved from

https://teanabroad.org/health-safety/

Health, Safety, and Security. (n.d.). *CIEE*. Retrieved from https://www.ciee.org/what-we-stand-

for/health-safety-security

Frequently Asked Questions. (n.d.). *AIFS Study Abroad.* Retrieved from

https://www.aifsabroad.com/parents/faqs.asp

Mindtools.com. (2018). *Bridges' Transition Model: Guiding People Through Change*. Retrieved

from https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/bridges-transition-model.htm

Our Guarantee. (n.d.). *CISabroad.* Retrieved from https://www.cisabroad.com/about-us/our-

guarantee/

Programs and Benefits. (n.d.). *AIFS Study Abroad.* Retrieved from

https://www.aifsabroad.com/advisors/benefits.asp

Ritchie, M. (2003, Fall). Risk management in study abroad: Lessons from the

wilderness. *Frontiers*, 53-69.

Standard 4. (2017). *Forumea.org*. Retrieved from https://forumea.org/resources/standards-of-

good-practice/standard-4/

Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad. (2011). (4th ed.). Carlisle, PA.

Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad. (2015). (5th ed.). Carlisle, PA.

Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad. (2018). (6th ed.). Carlisle, PA.

Student Identity. (n.d.). *The Education Abroad Network*. Retrieved from

https://teanabroad.org/student-identity/

Teague, T. (2014). While Abroad. In Wiedenhoeft, M.; Hernandez, M.; & Wick, D.

(Eds.), *NAFSA's guide to education abroad for advisers and administrators* (4th Edition,

pp. 75-89). Washington, D.C.: NAFSA: Association of Intercultural Educators.

The AIFS Value. (n.d.). *AIFS Study Abroad*. Retrieved from

https://www.aifsabroad.com/value.asp

Thebodo, T. (2014). Education Abroad Advising. In Wiedenhoeft, M.; Hernandez, M.; & Wick,

D. (Eds.), *NAFSA's guide to education abroad for advisers and administrators* (4th

Edition, pp. 21-40). Washington, D.C.: NAFSA: Association of Intercultural Educators.

What's Included? (n.d.). *International Studies Abroad*. Retrieved from

https://studiesabroad.com/programs/document/whatsIncluded

Appendix A: List of Figures

Figure 1. How long have you worked as an education abroad advisor at a third-party provider?

How long have you worked as an education abroad advisor at a third-party provider? Choose the answer that best describes you:

1-3 years	4-6 years	6-10 years	10 years or more
53%	20%	7%	20%

Figure 2. On what topics do you typically advise students throughout the education abroad process?

On what topics do you typically advise students throughout the education abroad process? Check all that apply:

Topic	Percentage
Academics	88%
Accommodations	90%
Culture Shock	79%
Travel	83%
Housing	83%
Safety	79%
Health	74%
Packing	74%
Re-entry programs/conferences	26%
Résumé assistance	29%
Other (please specify)	31%

Figure 3. Do you keep in contact with students while they are abroad?

Do you keep in contact with students while they are abroad? Check all that apply:

Response	Percentage
No, I do not keep in contact	26%
Yes, I contact students directly once (via email, phone, social media, software application, or other method)	17%
Yes, I keep in contact directly multiple times (via email, phone, social media, software application, or other method)	29%
Yes, I keep in contact with them through on-site staff (via email, phone, social media, software application, or other method)	55%

Figure 4. What topics do on-site students contact you about?

What topics do on-site students contact you about? Check all that apply:

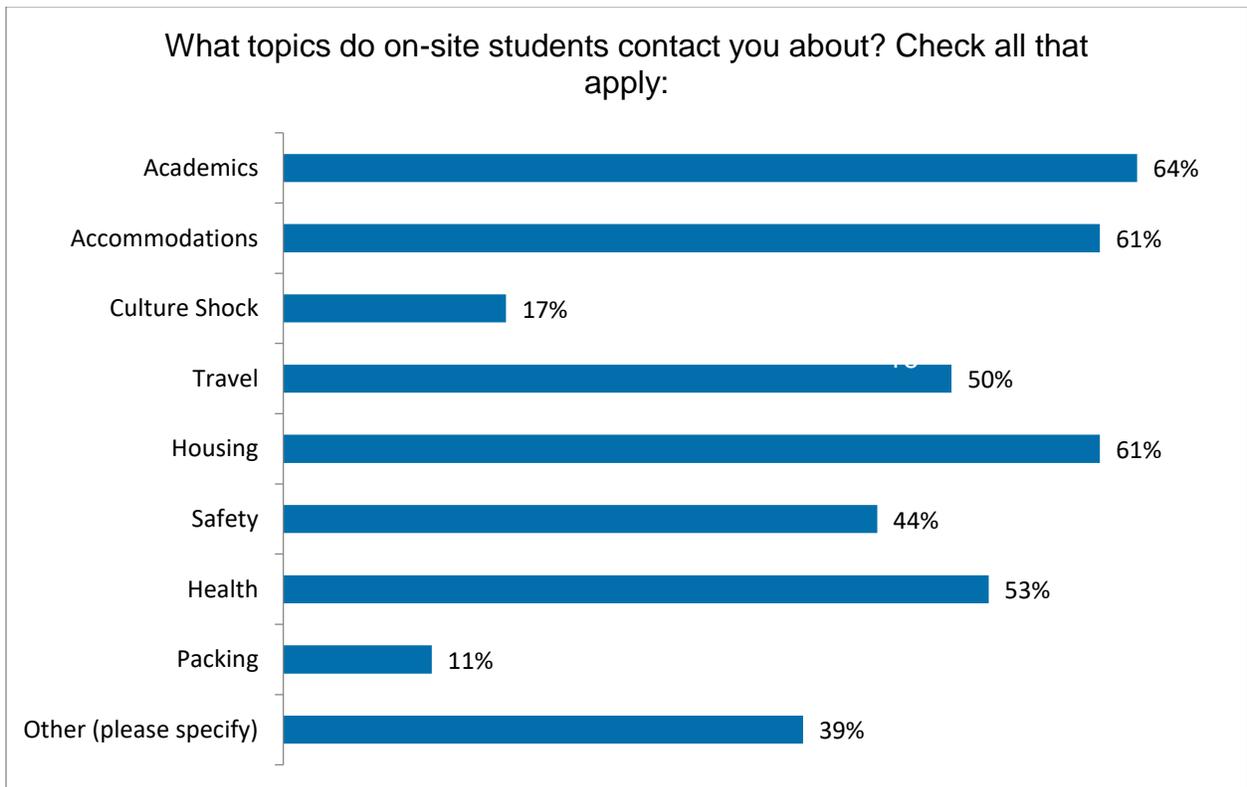| Topic	Percentage
Academics	64%
Accommodations	61%
Culture Shock	17%
Travel	50%
Housing	61%
Safety	44%
Health	53%
Packing	11%
Other (please specify)	39%

Figure 5. How often does a student abroad contact you first, or how often do they contact you before you've contacted them?

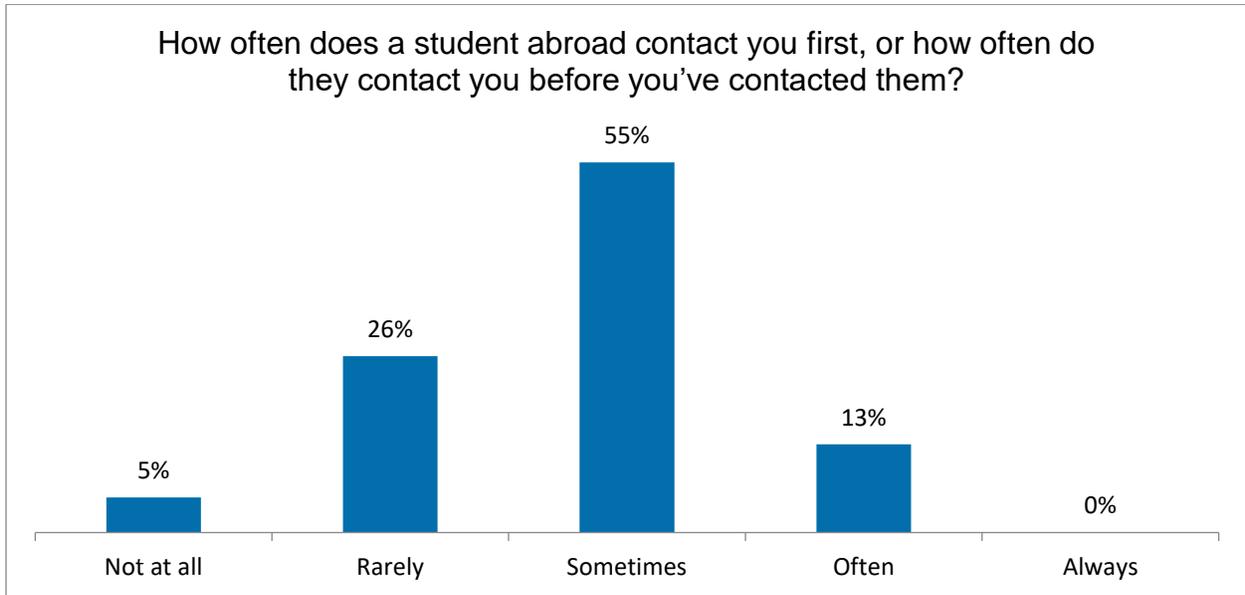**How often does a student abroad contact you first, or how often do they contact you before you've contacted them?**

Not at all	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
5%	26%	55%	13%	0%

Figure 6. What consequences exist if an on-site student does not reply to your communication?

What consequences exist if an on-site student does not reply to your communication? Check all that apply:

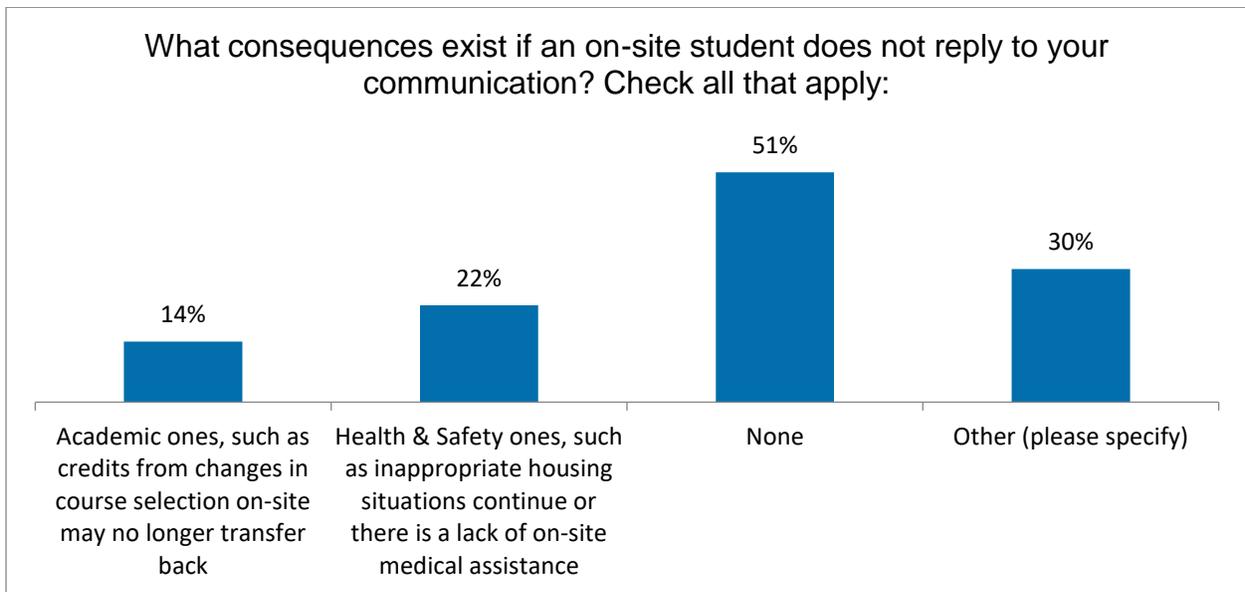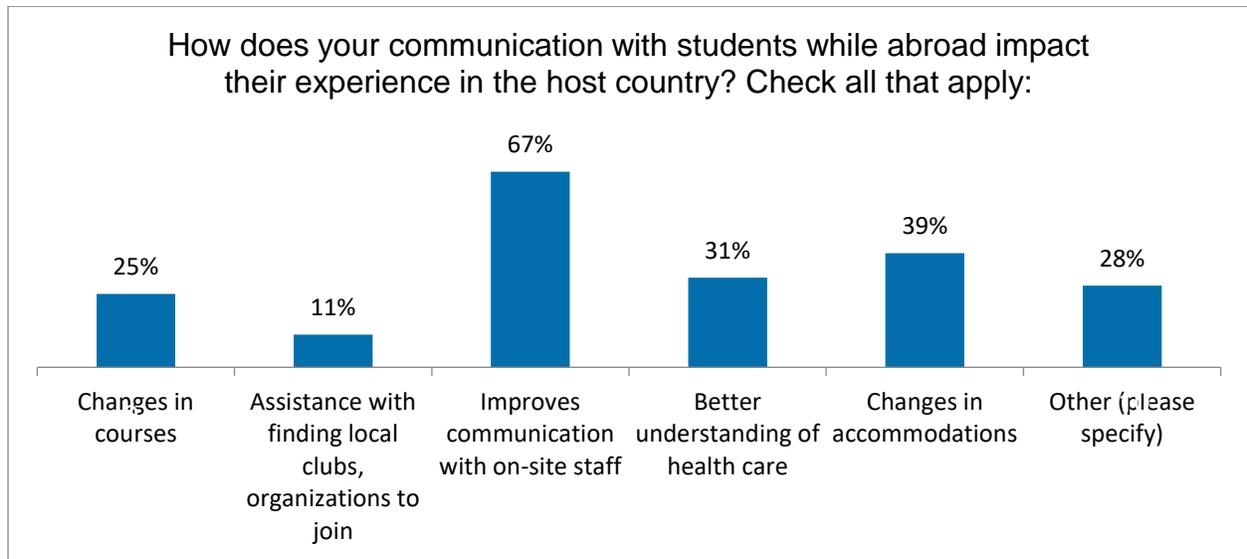| Academic ones, such as credits from changes in course selection on-site may no longer transfer back	Health & Safety ones, such as inappropriate housing situations continue or there is a lack of on-site medical assistance	None	Other (please specify)
14%	22%	51%	30%

Figure 7. How does your communication with students while abroad impact their experience in the host country?

How does your communication with students while abroad impact their experience in the host country? Check all that apply:

Changes in courses	Assistance with finding local clubs, organizations to join	Improves communication with on-site staff	Better understanding of health care	Changes in accommodations	Other (please specify)
25%	11%	67%	31%	39%	28%

Appendix B: Survey Questions

1) How long have you worked as an education abroad advisor at a third-party provider? Choose

the answer that best describes you:

- 1-3 years
- 4-6 years
- 6-10 years
- 10 years or more

2) On what topics do you typically advise students throughout the education abroad process?

Check all that apply:

- Academics
- Accommodations
- Culture Shock
- Travel
- Housing
- Safety
- Health
- Packing
- Other pre-departure needs
- Re-entry programs/conferences
- Résumé assistance
- Other: Comment box included

3) Do you keep in contact with students while are abroad? Check all that apply:

- No, I do not keep in contact
- Yes, I contact students directly once (via email, phone, social media, app, or other method)
- Yes, I keep in contact directly multiple times (via email, phone, social media, app, or other method)
- Yes, I keep in contact with them through on-site staff (via email, phone, social media, app, or other method)

4) What topics do on-site students contact you about? Check all that apply:

- Academics
- Accommodations
- Culture Shock
- Travel
- Housing

- Safety
- Health
- Packing
- Other: Comment box included

5) How often does a student abroad contact you before you've contacted them?

- Not at all
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

6) What consequences exist if an on-site student does not reply to your communication?

- Academic ones, such as credits from changes in course selection on-site may no longer transfer back
- Health & Safety ones, such as inappropriate housing situations continue or there is a lack of on-site medical assistance
- None
- Other: Comment box included

7) How does your communication with students while abroad impact their experience in the host

country? Check all that apply:

- Changes in courses
- Assistance with finding local clubs, organizations to join
- Improves communication with on-site staff
- Better understanding of health care
- Changes in accommodations
- Other: Comment box included

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

Project Title: Exploration of the Expanding Role of the Education Abroad Advisor

You are invited to participate in a research study that is being conducted by Emma Lynch, who is a Master of Arts in International Education Candidate at SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, VT. She is conducting this study in order to complete requirements for her degree. The purpose of this research is to analyze what the role of a third-party provider education abroad advisor is with students once they are abroad.

All international education professionals who currently work or have worked in the past as an education abroad advisor at a third-party provider are invited to participate in this study.

If you agree to take part in the study, personal identifying information may be collected, but this information will be made anonymous in the final capstone and there will be no way to link your responses back to you.

There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this study. While your advising skills are not likely to improve from participation in this research, the survey and interview responses may produce valuable data about education abroad advising. No compensation is provided for participating in this research.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, and you may withdraw at any time. In addition, you may choose not to answer any questions with which you are not comfortable.

If you have any questions about the study procedures, you may contact Emma Lynch at (781) 708-6084 or Emma.Lynch@mail.sit.edu. Questions or concerns above and beyond what are addressed by the researcher can be directed to:

Advisor: Linda Gobbo
Email: Linda.Gobbo@sit.edu   Phone: (802) 258-3260

OR

SIT Institutional Review Board:
Email: irb@sit.edu Phone: (802) 258-3132

I have read the above and I understand its contents and I agree to participate in the study. I acknowledge that I am 18 years of age or older.

Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix D: Interview Questions

1) What are your responsibilities as an advisor with a third-party provider?

2) How long have you been in your role? Have your advising responsibilities changed since you began your position, if at all?

3) Do you believe an education abroad advisor has a duty to be involved with students while they are on-site? Why or why not?

4) If you have contact with students while they are abroad, is it maintained throughout their term abroad, or only for a short duration?

5) If you have contact with students while they are abroad, for what reasons do you contact students? If you do not contact students, for what reasons might they contact you?

6) If you keep in contact with students while they are abroad, do you feel you have enough time or resources to maintain this communication in addition to other tasks you complete?

7) Have you ever used information gleaned from communicating with on-site students to improve your processes, program design, or re-entry materials? If so, please share details you feel are relevant to explain how this information was used.