

Guidelines for Overnight Trips

The class free academic days of Mini-Term offer a unique opportunity for an educational travel experience. However, as Mini-Term is considered fully a part of NCSSM's curriculum, the basic expectations for both academic engagement and student behavior on trips are the same as for those students who remain on campus.

Eligibility

Students are permitted to participate in extended travel during Mini-Term just once over their two years at NCSSM, and only as part of a faculty led course. Extended travel for the purposes of Mini-Term is any activity involving more than three nights away from campus.

Thus, students must plan to spend at least one year pursuing a course or independent project on, or in close proximity to, our campus. Any travel associated with that activity may not exceed three nights during the entire period, including weekends. Seniors whose Mini-Term activity involved extended travel the previous year (i.e. more than three nights off campus) are no longer eligible to participate in an extended trip.

All overnight travel, whether or not a part of an extended trip, must be accompanied by a NCSSM staff sponsor or instructor. Parents or other appropriate adults may act as additional chaperons, with the approval of the NCSSM staff member. But projects or trips that do not directly involve our staff will not be approved.

Although all eligible students will be considered for any trip, there may be prerequisites or an application process providing criteria for selection. Responsible sponsors or instructors are expected to review the academic and judicial records of every student with whom they will be traveling overnight and may, with appropriate cause, refuse to allow any student to participate.

International Travel

All Mini-Term trips involving travel outside the United States must be sanctioned by the NCSSM Travel Committee. Requests for approval of international travel should be submitted to the Academic Programs Office by the responsible staff member as early as possible in the planning stages of a trip, and approval must be granted prior to signing any contracts with travel related vendors and/or collecting any funds from students or adults.

Approval requests should include the following:

- Specific dates and location of intended travel
- Anticipated number and description of intended travelers (e.g. Japanese language students, robotics team, any qualified student, etc.)
- Academic involvement or intent
- Description of travel arrangements and anticipated cost per traveler (student and/or adult)

In making its approval decisions, the NCSSM Travel Committee will consider the health and safety of students and staff, the unique academic merit of planned activities (i.e. are similar opportunities available to students or their families on vacations and breaks), as well as overall cost. Preference will be given to trips specifically focused on the related talents and academic interests of our students. No trips will be approved to countries on the restricted travel list (see link to Travel Policy and Country List on the NCSSM At-a-Glance website).

Costs

Although the majority of on campus or local Mini-Term activities are available to our students at no charge, all costs associated with overnight Mini-Term trips are the responsibility of the students who take part. As a rule, the full expenses of the staff sponsor(s) or instructor(s) who accompany our students on Mini-Term trips are incorporated in the student cost.

Most of the extended trips call for an advanced deposit (detailed in the course description) and each requires full payment in advance. All payments should be made to SCSSI (the school's Student and Constituent Support Services Corporation) and presented to the appropriate Department's Program Assistant for a receipt. The money collected should be forwarded to Academic Programs for deposit in a specified account for each trip.

Disbursements will be handled by the Vice Chancellor for Administration's Office, with the approval of Academic Programs. It is not appropriate for staff to collect funds or make payments for Mini-Term travel through their personal account. A trip budget detailing all major expenses along with total student receipts must be submitted to the Academic Programs Office at least three weeks prior to departure for all extended (i.e. four or more night) Mini-Term trips.

Transportation

Unlike for extended trips during the regular school year and the daytrips that are so much a part of local Mini-Term projects and courses, NCSSM school vehicles are not available for overnight travel during Mini-Term. Therefore, any vehicles used on trips that require a night or more away from campus must either be rented or provided by parents (or others).

As Mini-Term travel is a school related activity, it is imperative (for insurance purposes, as well as our Code of Student Conduct) that no students drive on Mini-Term trips, even in a family vehicle. All drivers must be adults—either the accompanying instructor or sponsor, or a parent or other adult approved by the accompanying NCSSM staff member and noted on the School Sanctioned Activity Form (see Forms / Permissions below).

Scheduling

Mini-Term travel can be scheduled anytime during, as well as just before or after the designated academic days of Mini-Term. As long as no class (or exam) days are missed and the staff sponsor(s) or instructor(s) are able to meet all their NCSSM obligations (e.g. grading, duty assignments, etc.), trips can begin or end during breaks (or weekends) not actually a part of Mini-Term. However, all the regular limitations and requirements for travel during Mini-Term itself (e.g. presence of staff, prohibition on driving, academic and behavioral expectations, etc.) still apply.

Academic Expectations

Just as on campus, students participating in trips must be engaged in their academic activities a full eight hours per day throughout Mini-Term. On extended trips, students typically have specific projects to be working on in conjunction with their travel, either individually or in groups. All students must devise an appropriate means of sharing what they have learned with the school community upon their return. Travel, even if initiated prior to the start of Mini-Term (or continued after its end), does not excuse any students from their obligation to devote their full attention to their course or project while on campus during Mini-Term itself.

For instance, if a Mini-Term trip is scheduled to depart during Trimester Break, two days before Mini-Term begins, and then return to campus in the middle of the following week, when the rest of our students are still at work on Mini-Term activities. That does not excuse the students involved from the requirement to be engaged with their course or project on the remaining academic days of Mini-Term. Nor will they be granted approved absences (to go home or rest) as compensation for the days they voluntarily gave up over Trimester or Spring Break to extend their Mini-Term activity.

Student Behavior

All the basic expectations for student behavior at NCSSM—from meeting specified curfews to prohibition on alcohol and sexual activity—apply on Mini-Term trips, with violators to be addressed under the Code of Student Conduct. Prior to departure, trip sponsors should discuss standards of behavior with their students and develop a contract for responsible behavior to be signed by each student and her/his parents (see Forms / Permissions below).

It is the responsibility of the accompanying instructor(s) or sponsor(s) to set, and clearly communicate, all meeting place times and locations, as well as specific curfews for both in hotel (i.e. dorm) and in room. In room curfew can be set as early as appropriate, but no later than midnight on academic days. Intervisitation in hotel bedrooms (i.e. guys approved to visit girls rooms or vice versa) will not be allowed. The accompanying staff member must personally take check each night to confirm the location of every student, and be available on site to address any problems that might arise overnight (e.g. illness, in room violation, etc.).

During the day, the students should be under the direct supervision of an adult (either accompanying NCSSM staff or someone officially part of the institution or organized activity with which the group is involved) or in groups of three, or more, in a delimited entertainment or cultural area where they have direct access to their responsible staff member (or another appropriate adult). Examples of "delimited area" include: Southpoint Mall, Georgetown (in D.C.), and Times Square (in N.Y.C.) and "direct access" means the accompanying instructor or sponsor is at a designated location on site.

At night, students must not leave their hotel without being accompanied by a responsible adult. With advanced parental permission, students may make arrangements to spend time with family or friends in the local area provided they leave their responsible staff member written information as to their intended location, specific return time, and available contact number (i.e. sign out). However, the requirement that there be appropriate adult supervision and specified curfews still applies (i.e. our students cannot "sign out" solely with other student friends or past the established curfew regardless of their parents' authorization).

These expectations must be strictly adhered to, with appropriate sanctions (e.g. early curfew, room restriction, loss of other activities or privileges, etc.) assigned for any violations. In all cases, accompanying sponsors and/or instructors should use their best judgment to consistently apply the rules of student behavior as if at NCSSM. Serious violations will be charged under the NCSSM Code of

Student Conduct at the conclusion of the trip. However, if necessary as the result of an aggravated situation or Level III violation, students may be sent home early at their parent/guardian's expense.

Cancellations

NCSSM reserves the right to cancel any planned Mini-Term trip at any time due to national or world events, State Department or other governmental travel advisories, illness or injury to the responsible NCSSM staff member(s), or other causes related to the health and safety of our staff and students. As the threat of pandemic disease and world-wide terrorism have become increasingly likely, trips might well be cancelled on very short notice. However, any deposits or other monetary payments lost due to such a cancellation will not be the responsibility of NCSSM. Consequently, travel insurance must be obtained (either individually or as a group) for all international trips and included as part of the student cost.

Forms / Permissions

School Sanctioned Activities Form—Mini-Term (available in the Academic Programs Office)

This permission form and waiver must be signed by each student's parent/guardian, and then confirmed by contacting the parent/guardian in person (or by telephone). It should include the names of the responsible NCSSM staff members (and any other accompanying adults); a description of transportation arrangements (i.e. airline flight times and numbers, type of vehicles and drivers, etc.) and a complete itinerary of the trip (i.e. dates, locations, and accommodations— including contact information, where possible). Copies of each student's completed form should be provided to the Academic Programs Office (prior to departure), the SLI Office (when the student signs out), and taken by the accompanying NCSSM staff member on the trip.

Expectations for Student Behavior (developed for each trip by the responsible NCSSM staff members)

Although this agreement can address any related academic or behavioral expectations, it must at minimum include the following:

- all standards for appropriate student behavior will apply as if on campus at NCSSM
- students will meet all curfews—in dorm/hotel and in room—as specified by the accompanying staff sponsor(s)
- students will not purchase, possess, or consume any alcohol or other controlled substances at anytime on the trip (regardless of local laws or customs)
- any violation of expectations will be appropriately addressed by the accompanying staff sponsor(s), including potential charges under the NCSSM Code of Student Conduct and/or requiring the offending student(s) to return home early at parent/guardian expense

This behavioral contract should be signed both by the student and his/her parent/guardian and retained by the responsible staff member, with a copy forwarded to the Academic Programs Office.

Emergency Contact Form (available in the Academic Programs and Student Life Offices)

This previously completed medical emergency form is intended to provide hospital or other medical personnel the parental permission and insurance information necessary for our students to be treated. Copies of each student's form must be taken by the accompanying NCSSM staff member on the trip.

All students must follow the regular **sign-out** procedure with Student Life before they depart!

Questions or Concerns

For further information or to discuss any aspect of these guidelines, contact Tom Clayton, Director of Academic Programs (e-mail: clayton@ncssm.edu / telephone 919-416-2888).