

Memo

To: Huw Lewis, Academic Affairs Board Chair
From: Jennifer Wolfe, International Education Committee Chair
CC: Amy Otis-De Grau, Director of Fried International Center
Date: 8/22/13
Re: Official Off-Campus Study Program Status for the **Oman Semester at the Al Amana Center in Muscat, Oman**

Dear Huw,

During the 2012-2013 academic year, the International Education Committee reviewed this program for addition to the official off-campus study program list.

The proposal was submitted by Dr. Donald Luidens, of the Sociology and Social Work Department. The program is run by a Reformed Church missionary (Doug Leonard) under the wing of Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa. This **spring semester** program offers a full slate of 16 credits in **Arabic language, Omani culture, cultural immersion, and Christian-Muslim dialogue**. Both Don Luidens and Annie Dandavati have visited the Al Amana site, and Doug Leonard spent a few days here at Hope in the fall, during which time he spoke about Christian-Muslim dialogue at the CIS. Doug has an extensive and impressive interfaith background, including working in NYC after 9/11. The Oman program is well established, and ideally situated in the capital city, Muscat, a stable, multicultural and multi-ethnic community. The connection with Northwestern College assures high standards for both safety and academic rigor.

The "Official Program" designation is intended to streamline the process by which Hope College students may participate in off-campus study programs facilitated by an institution not directly affiliated with Hope. The procedure that the International Education Committee (IEC) has followed for reviewing and approving these requests is as follows:

1. **Basic review of the program** by Amy Otis-De Grau (Director of Fried International Center) which includes orientation, health and safety, and program structure.
2. **Request for program specifics** from faculty members. The proposal for the Oman Semester is attached to this memo for review by your committee.
3. **Review by the IEC of submitted proposal** provided by the faculty; in fall 2012 we discussed the program with Annie Dandavati during a regularly scheduled committee meeting, and a few committee members (Jen Wolfe, Annie Dandavati, Andrew dell'Olio and Amy Otis) met with Doug Leonard during his visit.
4. **Review by Dean Richard Frost and Registrar Carol DeJong**. Dean Frost and Doug Leonard met to review and approve aspects related to risk, health and safety, while Doug met with Carol DeJong to review and approve issues related to the academic structure and credit transfers.

The IEC is hereby requesting approval by the Academic Affairs Board to grant "Official Program" status to the Oman Semester for addition to the officially approved program list at Hope College.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Jennifer Wolfe, IEC Chair (2012-13)

Off-Campus Study at Hope College Official Program Status Request

Please complete this form and submit it along with any supporting documents to the Registrar who will forward this to the chair of the International Education Committee.

Name of faculty member submitting proposal Donald A. Luidens	Department Sociology and Social Work
Program Name Oman Semester	Program Location Muscat, Oman
Program Website	Program Length One semester
Name of Accrediting Institution Hope College in conjunction with Northwestern College	Is the program US accredited? YES

Briefly describe the program, it's academic strengths and how it will contribute to the mission of the college:

A semester-long program (Spring), run by a Reformed Church missionary in Muscat, Oman and under the auspices of Northwestern College, Orange City, Iowa, this opportunity engages students in a direct encounter with a very different culture and religious milieu, always within the context of a supportive community. Students live, study, and have most of their classes in a compound of the *Al Amana Center*, the legacy of over 100 years of Reformed Church mission work in Oman.

The strength of this program is embodied in several features: it has an outstanding, 6-credit Arabic component (an intensive approach which the alumni students have been advocating since they have to be fully engaged in an Arabic-speaking environment). The current professor is on the faculty of Sultan Qaboos University, the premier university in Oman. While most students will be at beginner or near-beginner levels of Arabic, the faculty will be able to take proficient Arabic speakers and build on their knowledge as well.

Students will, together, take a 4-credit course entitled "Oman Society and Culture." It is currently taught by Prof. Ahmed Al Mukhaini who is an attorney who has been engaged in the political life of Oman at the highest levels (he helped to craft the proposed constitution for Oman). In this course students will engage in readings, lectures and cultural field trips designed to provide a survey of the history, social structure, politics, religion, economy and culture of Oman.

Additional courses, again taken by all students together, will be taught by the *Al Amana Center* staff. They include a 2-credit, intensive immersion course which requires students to become directly engaged with the local community through a variety of agencies or institutions (under the direct supervision of the Director of the *Center*). Muscat is the capital and primate city in Oman; its rich history of interaction with countries throughout the Indian Ocean region is reflected in a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic indigenous population, an ideal community within which to have such an emersion experience. Students will take numerous guided "field trips" to such places as the Grand Mosque of Oman and the Arab market (*souq*) as well as the interior of the country (a fascinating, semi-arid high plateau which is rarely visited by Westerners).

In addition, students will take a 4-credit course on Christian-Muslim dialogue, challenging them to think of ways in which Christians and Muslims can find common ground for dialogue and collective action. This course will take advantage of a wide range of contacts with local religious leaders and scholars, from the indigenous Muslim population to the indigenous and expatriate Christian communities.

Why are you proposing the addition of this program to the official program list and how will the courses contribute to the academic program at Hope College? Is this program geared to a specific major/minor?

It was my pleasure to visit Oman last spring and get to know the *Al Amana Center* and its creative and well-connected Director, Rev. Douglas Leonard. He was in the midst of the 2012 semester with a dozen students from Northwestern College. As he and they described the experience this program made available, and as I began to realize what a remarkable opportunity – reconnecting with a Reformed Church mission project, working with students from one of Hope's sister colleges, dialoguing with Muslims in their own context (the Ibadi form of Islam which is practiced in Oman is uniquely interested in dialoguing across religious divides), and living intensely in an Arab world country with safety and security – this program afforded Hope students.

The academic rigor – assured by standards which have been set by Northwestern College – is assured.

While Arabic commands a significant proportion of this course's attention, it is not necessarily structured to build Arabic majors or minors. Its intentionally cross-disciplinary structure would be particularly valuable for students of International Studies, Sociology, Political Science, and Religion.

All off-campus study students will register for either IDS 747 or 767. Upon satisfactory completion of the program, students will request that the course work be accepted for general education requirements and/or majors and minors.

1) If this program is specific to your department, will your department approve the courses from this program in your major/minor curriculum?

While not designed specifically for Sociology, the community emersion course would definitely be acceptable as a course for Sociology majors and minors.

2) Have you discussed this program with your department chair and/or dean and do they support this program?

Department Chair Sturtevant has been enthusiastic in support of this proposal. Vice President Frost met with Rev. Leonard when the latter visited Hope in the fall of 2012 and was reassured that the safe-guards needed for students studying abroad were fully and appropriately in place.

3) Have you discussed this program with the director of the International Education Office?

Amy Otis (International Education Office) and Annie Dandavati (International Studies Major) are both warmly supportive of this program.

Please sign below and submit the form to the Registrar's Office.

Signature

Date

To be completed by the Registrar:

____ Yes, I have reviewed the proposal and program website and support the addition of this program to the official off-campus program list. A student may submit the course approval form to the Registrar's Office for the consideration of having general education requirements met.

____ I have reviewed the proposal and program website and have additional questions. (Please contact the chair of the International Education Committee.)

Please sign below and submit the form to the chair of the International Education Committee.

Signature of Registrar

Date