

**NC State University  
Study Abroad Office**

**GUIDELINES FOR PURCHASE OF ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT:**

If an item is “consumable” and “used up” during the program for the benefit of the program, there is generally no question of reimbursability (within the scope of normal university policies). Examples include batteries and cell phone minutes.

If not “consumable,” then there are four choices.

- 1) Whenever possible, the item should be borrowed from the faculty member’s home department or college. Many academic units have invested in equipment specifically to support the instructional needs of their faculty. These items typically have university insurance coverage, and are an efficient use of resources in that they can be used by more than one professor or group over time.
  - a. Appropriate permission should always be sought well in advance.
  - b. Items are tracked and must always be returned to the academic unit.
  - c. Purchase of accessories or any additional related equipment (e.g. a second memory card for a digital camera, a card reader for a laptop, virus protection software) would be approved and paid for by the unit lending the equipment, and additional purchases would become their property.
  
- 2) If borrowing equipment from the home academic unit is not possible or practical (e.g. an overhead projector would be too heavy to take along, or US cell phones are not compatible with the host country system), then every effort should be made to rent or lease the item on site. The rental or leasing cost would be receipted and is then reimbursable. Possible sources include on-site service providers, partner universities, or commercial vendors.
  - a. Every faculty director is encouraged to have a cell phone while abroad. Internationally compatible phones available in the US can be prohibitively expensive, and leasing is typically the best option.
  - b. Leased cell phones for students are not typically included in the program cost for NC State faculty led group programs, but they could be if the faculty director feels it is important. Directors who would like to include participant cell phones in their program budgets should discuss this with SAO staff, and be especially careful to ensure that detailed information is provided to the students regarding any fees they will need to cover.
  
- 3) If neither borrowing nor leasing is possible, then the faculty director can submit a written request to the SAO, explaining the need to purchase the equipment from program funds.
  - a. **If approval is not requested and given in advance, then the item is not reimbursable from program funds, and it becomes the director’s personal property.**
  - b. Considerations for approval include the unique needs of an individual program (especially regarding student safety), the availability of alternative options, the capacity of the program budget, the size of the expense itself, and whether the subsequent increase in cost passed along to the students is justifiable because it benefits the students.
  - c. If permission is denied and the director would like to appeal this decision, the matter will be brought to the Study Abroad Advisory Board.

- d. If the purchase is approved, the cost is reimbursed by the program, and the item becomes the property of NC State. As with all university property, NC State requires departments to have access to, and keep track of property purchased.
  - i. If the item is relatively small (like a cell phone or small printer), the director must bring the item back so that it can be stored in the SAO. It will then be available to the same director if the program is repeated, or if not repeated, to other directors traveling to the same area. If necessary, transportation costs for the equipment (such as excess luggage or excess weight fees imposed by airlines) would be reimbursed by the program.
  - ii. If the item is large or heavy (like shovels, or a pile of 30 cell phones), and if the program is likely to return to that site, then the item can be left in the care of a local contact. In this case, the director must provide the SAO with contact information, and the person holding the property should sign a form acknowledging that they have it. The caretaker would not, however, be permitted to use the equipment.
  - iii. In some cases if the cost of shipping an item back and forth is prohibitive, or the item is highly fragile and likely to be damaged in transit, then the faculty director may submit a request to the SAO to leave the item behind as a gift to local collaborators, or to resell the item locally, or to simply "surplus" the item. The SAO will instruct the director regarding the appropriate procedures required by University Surplus in each case. Typically a digital photo is required by Surplus to verify the condition of the item.
- 4) Although not generally recommended, the director may choose to use their own personal property on the program, and be reimbursed only for the usage costs associated with the program (if any).
  - a. Using the faculty director's personal property is most appropriate if:
    - i. Use is mixed; director plans to also use the item for purposes other than to benefit the study abroad program
    - ii. Item is unusable by anyone other than current director. (e.g. camera memory card which only fits director's personal camera)
    - iii. Director chooses not to bring the item to the SAO for storage.
    - iv. Item was not approved for purchase with program funds, but the director prefers the convenience of having their own equipment.
  - b. Any damage or loss would be covered by their personal homeowners' or renters' insurance, or other policy purchased through the director's personal insurance agent. It would be important to ask specifically whether the policy covers items in non-US countries or territories.