



PARTICIPANT SUPPORT OVERVIEW

1. INTRODUCTION

We are proud to offer an unrivalled level of support to all participants before, during and after their programme. We align our health, safety, security and risk management practices with Standard 8 of The Forum on Education Abroad's best practice guidelines. This document provides a general overview of our services in relation to participant care and support for our programmes.

This document serves as an overview to inform our valued partners about the pastoral care and other general support considerations that we provide as standard with our programmes.

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2. GENERAL SUPPORT

One-to-one [support from Pagoda](#) is a key part of our success story. Our team genuinely care about every participant and 'rate our support' within feedback is included in our top 3 evaluation metrics. We have [pre-programme medical calls](#), [check-ins](#), [risk assessments](#), [self-care plans](#) and a centralised 'extra support system' to flag any issues to our leadership team. Participants will feel supported throughout their programme and well into their graduate career, many Pagoda alumni have even starred as [guest speakers](#) as part of our events and are [driving change in government](#) and for [cutting-edge businesses](#).

2.1 Support for In-person Programmes

We employ our own staff and local language speakers in our in-person destinations. We do not outsource the delivery of our programmes to other companies in our destinations; we do everything ourselves from the pre-departure support to the facilitation of cultural activities, company visits and trips. This enables us to standardise our support without relying on third parties to deliver to our high expectations. We are an approachable team, who will be there for the participants when issues arise in-country, large or small. Our team can help translate for participants, for example when going to the doctor. We also provide advice and support to help participants to maximise the internship and other programme activities, as well as be there to support them in case of personal problems. We conduct issue-specific staff training and have detailed processes in our systems to help staff address possible problems, such as lost passports, injuries or visa renewals. Furthermore, every Pagoda destination will have a first-aid trained staff member on the programme.

People from 96 different countries have taken part in our programmes since 2007. We are proud of our genuine participant diversity and have measures in place to make our support accessible in cases where potential language barriers, health conditions or access requirements occur. Participants provide us with confidential health and safety information and medical history via our participant registration web form prior to arrival. If needed, we provide participants who have allergies or dietary requirements with a translation card which they can show waiters for ordering food or show an ambulance or doctor in an emergency. Our risk/escalation procedures for specific incidents and reporting procedures are available on request.

2.2 Support for Online Programmes

Our participants will benefit from the Pagoda Community during and post-programme via the Pagoda Portal (desktop & mobile app), online webinars, events, info sessions, skills courses, and the alumni network. The Pagoda Community includes speakers & industry experts, cultural mentors, and fellow participants following similar pathways. Learning is not constrained to the programme.

Participants will be pushed out of their comfort zones and encouraged to think beyond the programme to articulate their skill development to future employers. Focus on cultural and digital fluency, teamwork and other employability skills is emphasised at multiple points in the programme. The influence of the Pagoda Community will continue as their career progresses.



3. PRE-PROGRAMME SUPPORT

Preparing and managing expectations for a learning opportunity is a vital part of any programme. Our pre-departure processes also feature heavily on every programme risk assessment.

3.1 Prior to In-person Programmes

We understand that leaving one's home country, especially as a young person, can be a daunting prospect. The importance of the support we offer before participants even arrive at their destination should not be underestimated and is a key factor in ensuring participants enjoy all aspects of the programme. Our admissions and delivery teams are responsible for ensuring participants understand what to expect. Participants receive extensive information via webinar or in-person presentation, and if necessary, one-to-one discussions via WhatsApp, Zoom or email to help manage expectations, reduce the likelihood of culture shock and minimise any anxiety.

3.2 Prior to Internship Programmes

Our staff cooperate with participants to ensure they are carefully matched with suitable host companies prior to the programme, thus reducing the risk that either party will be dissatisfied with the arrangement whilst on the programme. Companies conduct phone or online interviews with participants during the placement process, which allows both parties to get to know one another, and ensures the participant is aware of the nature of their internship tasks and responsibilities prior to the internship start.

3.3 Prior to Online Programmes

Participant experience and engagement are our top priorities. Participants will be nurtured through the application process, engage live with our team, register, discuss expectations, prepare and onboard via an extensive orientation process. Nobody gets left behind with clear steps and the support of our team, especially once they have access to our app and the resources including the skills courses available.

4. ACCOMMODATION SUPPORT

We offer various accommodation options for our in-person programmes depending on the destination and type of programme. There are no additional bills or hidden fees to pay with our accommodation. Our [Accommodation Quality Policy](#) provides a more detailed overview of our requirements and the due diligence we carry out regarding apartments and homestays.

4.1 Short-term Programme Accommodation

For group programmes, hotels or hostels may will be arranged, usually on a shared room basis. Our team will be based in the same hotel, or nearby to assist participants with everything from special room requests to personal issues, from check-in to check-out.



4.2 Longer-term Programme Accommodation

For longer programmes, we usually arrange either apartment accommodation or independent rooms in a residential block. Our staff go through a checklist with each participant, highlighting everything that should be present from CO2 / CO alarms to cutlery and agreeing on action to be taken to satisfy individual requests or in the event, a specific item is reported damaged or missing. We set up social media groups for participants in each apartment or residential block to raise any issues and all apartments have evacuation plans and safety information documents.

Participants may also be offered the option of an immersive experience with a homestay family (all families have at least one English speaker). Our homestay option also includes a private room as standard and families should have some basic comforts such as at least one western toilet. We visit and carry out due diligence with each family to ensure that their basis for hosting students is legitimately for cultural exchange rather than being exclusively for profit or other undesirable motivations such as having the participant provide formal English teaching to their children.

4.3 Programmes without Accommodation

Most of our in-person programmes include accommodation arranged for participants by the Pagoda team. For the few programmes that do not include the provision of accommodation, support and advice are always provided by our team to help the participants find their own accommodation.

5. INCLUSIVITY

We pride ourselves on [our inclusivity](#) and believe that everyone should have the opportunity to enjoy an international learning experience. We do not discriminate against nationality, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity or disability. We have processes in place to understand and support the participant with any physical or mental health considerations and we provide ample opportunity to sensitively capture information in our system within data protection laws, so our trained staff can prepare the appropriate support.

6. INSURANCE & LIABILITY

We ensure that all participants have comprehensive travel and health insurance in place before an in-person programme begins.

6.1 Insurance

For participants covered under the Pagoda Participant Insurance Policy, details of the level of expected cover are listed on the pre-departure page in the [Insurance Summary](#). These details are subject to change with the validity and renewal of each policy. We work closely with our trusted insurance broker Marsh Commercial, to ensure we are aware of any updates affecting international cover for all eventualities in relation to our programmes. We are therefore prepared to advise participants in terms of coverage, claims procedure, pay-out speed and emergency in-country support.



POLICY DOCUMENT

For participants who are not covered under the Pagoda Participant Insurance Policy, we request full details of their insurance coverage to ensure it meets the required standards before the start of the programme.

6.2 Liability

To mitigate risk for host organisations, participants must sign a waiver in their Programme Agreement with Pagoda Projects. This can be found in full upon request. The host organisation's liability is also clarified in the contract between the organisation and Pagoda Projects, which is also available upon request.

7. PLACEMENT SUPPORT & VETTING

We aim to give participants a real experience in their chosen sector which has a meaningful impact on their journey within that sector after graduation and throughout their careers. When placing a participant with a host company for the first time, we conduct additional checks with the company and the participant to ensure that the experience is a positive one. For any companies which fail to deliver to our high expectations, we will terminate our partnership and no longer offer to participants as a placement option.

7.1 For In-person Internships

We will visit every company to ensure that it adheres to our [Internship Quality Policy](#). This policy covers general workspace safety considerations as well as our expectations in relation to the quality of tasks assigned to participants on our programmes. We sign an independent agreement with every host company to ensure that their responsibilities towards the participant are understood and agreed upon formally in writing. In addition to outlining our expectations, this document clarifies what our team are responsible for such as introducing the participant and ongoing/emergency support. Host companies provide fire safety certificates for their buildings in addition to an 'action plan' in case of emergencies.

8. ARRIVAL SUPPORT & ORIENTATION

8.1. In-Person Internship Programmes

Participants on in-person internship programmes typically arrive individually rather than as part of a group. This encourages a certain level of independence from the very beginning of a participant's programme and enables us to offer a personal level of support upon arrival. We pick up every participant from the airport on arrival and accompany them to their accommodation. Our team follow guidelines on which points to discuss on arrival, what general tone to take with a new arrival and ensure that they receive their digital and physical welcome packages. Alongside a comprehensive digital welcome pack on WeChat, participants also receive a physical welcome pack, which contains:

- Emergency contacts card
- A local travel card
- A SIM card with pre-loaded credit (where necessary)



- Pagoda Projects merchandise

The most important item in participants' welcome packages is their emergency contacts card. This business card fits into their purse/wallet and contains the following emergency contact information:

- Our office hours
- Our office address
- How to reach our office using public transport
- Office Phone number
- Primary emergency contact name and number
- Secondary emergency contact name and number international
- Clinic details
- Hospital/ambulance telephone number
- Accommodation address
- Internship company address

Upon reaching their accommodation, the participant is introduced to their flatmates. Our team member stays with the new arrival for as long as is necessary so that they feel welcome at their accommodation and ensures their route to our office the following day for orientation is clear. Our team prepare fresh bedding and some drinks and snacks for each new arrival. For apartment accommodation, a professional cleaner cleans the apartment before each new arrival. As well as having social media groups for all participants in each city, we establish separate social media groups for each apartment, so that flatmates can communicate issues between each other and with the Pagoda team simultaneously. On each participant's first full day in the country, our team conducts a full orientation at our local office.

8.2. Short-term Programmes

Prior to departure, participants are provided with a digital welcome pack which contains:

- 24/7 Emergency Pagoda staff contact number(s)
- The address of the hostel
- Details of the nearest medical centre
- Details of the local emergency centres

Participants on short-term programmes typically arrive on an individual basis. or by coach to London, which allows for socialising and getting to know one another before arriving at the final destination. Students are greeted at London St Pancras train station, and accompanied on the train to the final programme destination by our team. Participants are then brought to their accommodation, where they can choose with whom they dorm.

On the day following the participants' arrival, our team conducts a full orientation, during which they outline health and safety considerations for that particular location, conduct icebreakers to feel comfortable within the group, and stress the use of the Pagoda Portal through which daily updates are provided. Participants are also encouraged to



communicate with our team on this portal should there any issue arise during the programme.

9. INTERNSHIP SUPPORT

First and foremost, we work hard during the matching process and allow participants to speak directly to their host organisation during an interview to minimize the risk that both the participants' and hosts' expectations are aligned. Our team plan at least one 'backup' placement per participant so that if either party is not satisfied with the internship after it has commenced, we are ready to act quickly and relocate the participant to a more suitable position when necessary.

Should issues arise, our experienced team will provide advice and if necessary facilitate an in-person meeting between the participant and supervisor to discuss and resolve issues. Should the participant and/or supervisor continue to find the arrangement unsuitable, we will endeavour to source an alternative host company for the participant with minimal disruption to their programme and experience.

We take feedback from both the participant and company supervisor at the end of their placement and review whether it met expectations and fulfilled our quality policy. We have a zero-tolerance approach to substandard internships and those which do not meet our expectations are no longer offered.

9.1 For In-person Internships

On their first working day, a member of our team accompanies the participant to their host organisation and ensures they receive an adequate orientation from their internship supervisor. This introduction also serves to ensure that the participant knows their way to the company using public transport and has ample opportunity to ask questions and raise any issues for further action. We speak to participants regularly during their first week in country and conduct formal internship 'check-ups' with both participants and companies within the first 2 weeks of the placement commencing. This check-up takes the form of either a structured phone call or the completion of a survey web form. Should our team deem the webform as the most appropriate form of feedback submission, a phone call will be made to follow up on the result and identify any points for ongoing support.

9.2 For Online Internships

On or a few days before the participant's first working day, a member of our team conducts an induction call with the participant and the company to ensure that all questions regarding communication channels, time differences and remote work reporting procedures are clear to all parties. The participants check in either weekly or biweekly via a web form and our app. If deemed necessary by our team, a phone call will be made to follow up on the result and identify any points for ongoing support.

10. EMERGENCY SUPPORT

In emergencies, our team is well trained to handle situations calmly and professionally, going above and beyond their regular office hours to offer impeccable customer service to participants in our programmes in exceptional



circumstances. All staff contribute to our [risk assessment & emergency procedures](#), which are reviewed thoroughly every 6 months. We also have a member of staff trained as a Mental Health First Aider.

10.1 For in-person Programmes

All participants have two 24-hour emergency contacts for their city. Each office conducts a 6-monthly team training session related to risk assessment and practices a 'dry run' for a randomly selected hypothetical emergency. A separate risk-assessment session is conducted by Pagoda team members attending trips outside of our destination cities made by groups of participants.

11. SOCIAL SUPPORT

11.1 In-person Social Support

Our social events are an informal element of our ongoing support to participants on in-person programmes. We organise weekly dinners at local restaurants which would be difficult to find for participants and regularly organise optional activities, events and excursions for participants. Activities include calligraphy classes, dumpling making, cooking classes, tea ceremonies, ten-pin bowling, Kung Fu classes, hiking, swimming or beach trips. Events have included panel discussions, networking events and dinners. Weekend excursions have included visiting nearby famous culturally significant sites and national parks, as well as lesser-known places of interest. Our social programme is communicated to participants through regular updates to our app and social media groups for each of our destinations.

11.2 Online Social Support

Our app-based platform offers participants a unique level of interaction within a community of participants, cultural mentors, businesses and alumni. Weekly online events provide participants with on a professional level but also a social level with quizzes and challenges. We have developed sector-leading best-practice to support participants' mental health.

12. CAREER SUPPORT

We measure the participants' career readiness via a compulsory self-assessment at the beginning and end of their programme, the questions for which are aligned with the NACE Core Competencies for Career Readiness.

Pagoda prepares participants for the future of work and works toward the UN Sustainable Development Goals 8 & 10 by promoting positive international relations through work and cultural exchange. We believe that valuable work experience cannot be superficial or a stepping stone to a graduate job. If participants engage in meaningful work, develop key skills and join a community, the benefits of a Pagoda experience will be visible throughout their careers. We help participants to reflect on and articulate their skills to future employers.

In a survey of 663 alumni, respondents said Pagoda helped them improve their intercultural fluency (92%), problem-solving (84%), communication (82%) and ability to spot opportunities and develop a career plan (86%). We can provide



the data to our partners for participants from the group programmes/cohort we facilitate internships for.

13. COMPLAINTS HANDLING

A clear procedure for complaints in various circumstances is detailed to participants during orientation and can be found in our [Complaints & Grievance Policy](#), including the procedure for raising a complaint to senior management if required.

14. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Our KPI for participant support is related to participant feedback. We ask participants to rate our support as either 'Excellent', 'Good', 'Satisfactory' or 'Poor' for several categories related to support, accommodation, orientation and mental health impact. Our target is to achieve 100% either 'Excellent' or 'Good' in each category.

End-of-programme feedback is compulsory for the vast majority of our participants. Following each cohort, we conduct feedback reviews internally and with your team; discussing key data, learning points and actions with implementation deadlines. We collect formal weekly participant "check-in" feedback informally through events and social engagements. Coaching participants during their programme is a key component toward excellent feedback outcomes.

For feedback, we work on a 1-5 scale whereby anything below 4 is flagged and actioned. We have a range of internal processes to act on feedback, including a complaints procedure and a 6-monthly 'Risk Assessment Week'. Two highlights of feedback from over 1000 participants over the past four years:

- Rate your overall Pagoda experience: 96% Excellent or Good
- Would you recommend Pagoda to another person: 97% Yes

An uncensored report of quantitative feedback is available on request and a range of video testimonials is available on our [YouTube Channel](#).

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