

# **GAP YEAR ASSOCIATION**

## **2024 STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION FOR GAP YEAR CONSULTANTS**



### **DESCRIPTION OF APPLICATION**

The Application for Gap Year Association (GYA) Accreditation involves a comprehensive, evidence-based, multi-round evaluation of a gap year consultant’s professional practice. In order to pass GYA Accreditation, a Consultant must submit evidence that demonstrates their Gap Year Consulting practice meets or exceeds each Standard. Applicants may submit more than one piece of evidence in order to satisfy different aspects of a single Standard. There is no expectation that every aspect of a Standard be met within a single piece of evidence, but applicants must demonstrate that they meet every aspect of each Standard, whether with one or multiple pieces of evidence. The “Evidence” column accompanying the Standards reflects examples of evidence that a Consultant might submit in order to meet a given Standard. There may be additional forms of appropriate evidence that do not appear in the “Evidence” column.

Prior to beginning the Accreditation Application, Consultants must submit a complete [pre-application](#) in order to ensure they meet the minimum eligibility requirements for becoming an Accredited Gap Year Consultant. Once the pre-application has been approved, the applicant will be granted access to the full Accreditation Application and final submission must be completed within 90 days. Consultants intending to apply for GYA Accreditation are encouraged to read through this document thoroughly before beginning the application process.

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## CONSULTANT REFERRAL CATEGORIES

In order to refer to a particular organization, site, or experience, the Consultant must assess each opportunity to determine the level of infrastructure and support offered to a student, as well as the types of individuals that will thrive therein. To prepare students for the referrals they choose to pursue, Consultants must ensure that the preparation, travel, arrival, and orientation details are communicated in a timely way to students. The nuances of each experience's coordination and infrastructure will determine the role a Gap Year Consultant must fulfill within each referral. Below are four broad categories of gap year activities that capture the vast majority of referrals/recommendations that a Gap Year Consultant might make and support.

"Support" (i.e., "Low," "Medium," or "High") refers to the level of Consultant involvement specifically related to student preparation, pre-departure support, and coordination. The higher the support, the more in-depth the Consultant vetting process must be to assess overall suitability, and the higher their involvement in coordinating support for the student.

**STRUCTURED** (Low) - refer to highly supported and facilitated experiences through organizations with an established experiential education pedagogy and consistent student cohorts.

### Coordination

The organization manages pre-departure details, activity vetting, and support with logistics. Admissions (fit, medical, etc.), risk management, and pedagogy are also the responsibility of the organization.

### Infrastructure

Information about these organizations is readily available on the internet and they have dedicated, accessible admissions personnel to support student inquiries, applications, and pre-departure preparations. A comprehensive, onsite orientation is a fundamental aspect of student support provided by the organization.

### Consultant Roles

Consultants refer to these organizations based on a student's goals, aspirations, and needs. Vetting includes: internet research, conversations with directors, alumni reference checks, and/or site visits. Most, if not all pre-departure support consists of directing students to organization-supplied resources.

### Examples include:

Many GYA Accredited programs and general member programs.

**SEMI-STRUCTURED** (Medium) - refer to moderately or highly supported experiences that are robustly coordinated and supervised, but have a variable experiential education pedagogy and do not incorporate consistent cohorts.

Coordination

The organization takes the lead with all pre-departure details, onsite support, and logistics. Admissions (fit, medical, etc.), risk management, and learning opportunities are the primary responsibility of the organization.

Infrastructure

Information about these organizations is readily available on the internet and they have dedicated, accessible admissions personnel to support student inquiries, applications, and pre-departure preparations. A comprehensive, onsite orientation is a fundamental aspect of student support provided by the organization.

Consultant Roles

Consultants refer to these organizations based on a student's goals, aspirations, and needs. Vetting includes: internet research, conversations with directors, alumni reference checks, and/or site visits. Pre-departure support may consist of directing students to organization-supplied resources and/or supporting students in consolidating critical site and orientation details .

Examples include:

Opportunities through structured volunteer organizations, internship agencies, skills courses, etc.

**INDEPENDENT** (High) - refer to minimally supported, unique experience referrals. Generally, these opportunities do not have an established or reliable experiential education pedagogy. They offer nominal supervision and coordination, requiring students to take more ownership and overall responsibility during the experience.

Coordination

The host is unlikely to provide substantial onsite support, community-building, extracurricular activities, and/or logistics. It is unlikely that a robust and consistent admissions process (fit, medical, etc.), risk management plan, nor formalized learning outcomes will be organized to support the student.

Infrastructure

Information about these opportunities is NOT substantially available on the internet and they are unlikely to have dedicated, accessible personnel to support student inquiries, applications, and pre-departure preparations. One should not expect a comprehensive, onsite orientation as an aspect of student support provided by the organization.

### Consultant Roles

Consultants may refer to specific, vetted opportunities based on a student's goals, aspirations, and needs. Vetting may include: internet research, conversations with site-supervisors/owners, and/or site visits. The consultant tracks and supports all pre-departure details, activity vetting, and logistics. Admissions (fit, medical, etc.), risk management coaching, and learning opportunities are the primary responsibility of the consultant to facilitate and support on behalf of the student before, during, and after the experience.

### Examples include referrals to specific:

Internships, work exchange sites (e.g. WWOOF, HelpExchange, Work Away), unique volunteer placements, paid work.

**SELF-ORGANIZED** (Low) - refer to highly independent and self-coordinated experiences. These opportunities do not have any established or reliable experiential education pedagogy. They will likely be unsupervised and unsupported, requiring students to take full ownership and overall responsibility during the experience.

### Coordination

Overall fit, risk management, and pedagogical opportunities are generally left to the student to determine in the experience. The student takes care of all pre-departure details, experience vetting, and logistics.

### Consultant Roles

It is unlikely that the Consultant will have vetted this experience. The Consultant provides guidance and advice for risk management, challenge-by-choice pedagogical opportunities, and logistics.

### Examples include student-identified and pursued:

Internships, work exchange sites (e.g. WWOOF, HelpExchange, Work Away), unique volunteer placements, projects (e.g. learning an instrument, hiking the AT), paid work.

# GAP YEAR ASSOCIATION



## THE GAP YEAR ASSOCIATION

is the Official Standards Development Organization (SDO) for gap year education  
as recognized by the U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Federal Trade Commission

**gap year, (noun):** “An intentional period of time dedicated to personal growth and exploration through experiential learning opportunities.”

No two gap years are alike: intentionality, deliberately expanding one's comfort zones, and critical reflections on one's experiences are critical components to a quality gap year.

## 1.X.X - PHILOSOPHY & PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

The Gap Year Consultant understands core philosophical concepts of gap years and experiential education, and is committed to applying them while supporting students in their gap year planning and referral work with students.

### 1.1 - Consultant's pedagogy is congruent with gap year education.

Gap year education is an active process that involves, among other things, both an experiential and a reflective element. Students must be involved in and accountable for their own learning, decision-making, and growth with activities that are designed to create real successes, while allowing for uncertainty and reasonable failures within an appropriate level of challenge and risk.

2024 Standard	Examples of evidence	2019 Standard (for reference only)
<p>1.1.1 - Gap Year Consultant incorporates core qualities of experiential education into their consulting practice by encouraging student-directed reflection.</p> <p><i>In order to increase knowledge, clarify values, and develop a student's capacity to contribute to their community, equal intention must be put into debriefing and reflecting upon their gap year experience.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Online platform or curricula to support reflection and decision-making</li> <li>•Debrief conversation template</li> </ul>	<p>1.1.2 - Gap Year Counselor encourages focused reflection with a strong emphasis on student-directed answers. <i>(At the end of intentional experiences, equal intention must be put into debriefing and reflecting upon what happened so that learning is cemented. Journal prompts, curricula, or access to suggested resources all support reflection.)</i></p>
<p>1.1.2 - Gap Year Consultant incorporates core qualities of experiential education into their consulting practice by encouraging students to have an active and ongoing role in the governance of their gap year experience.</p> <p><i>A key component of experiential learning is encouraging students to take ownership of their experiences (i.e., students learn best by doing). This might mean identifying their goals, managing their budget, booking travel, choosing experiences, etc.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Statement or webpage for students highlighting importance of student self-direction</li> <li>•Commitment letter signed by the student emphasizing their role in leading the process</li> </ul>	<p>DID NOT EXIST</p>

2024 Standard	Examples of evidence	2019 Standard (for reference only)
<p>1.1.3 - Gap Year Consultant emphasizes that students actively engage in the planning/research/selection process.</p> <p><i>While many students can benefit from a gap year, mandatory participation in a program will change the type of engagement and benefits/outcomes that a student experiences. Parents, guardians, and other authorities directing students towards specific programs should be discouraged.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Statement or webpage for students highlighting importance of student participation in the planning/research/selection process</li> </ul>	<p>1.1.3 - Gap Year Counselor emphasizes that participants must actively be engaged in the search process. <i>(While many students can benefit from a gap year, mandatory participation in a program inevitably challenges outcomes. Parents or courts directing students towards specific programs should be discouraged.)</i></p>
<p>1.1.4 - Gap Year Consultant supports students in challenging their comfort zones in manageable ways. Students are set up for success and individual capacity is considered.</p> <p><i>Challenging comfort zones remains a vital element of experiential education. Consultants must consider individual student needs and abilities when making referrals.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Letter or webpage for students highlighting Gap Year Consultant’s commitment to supporting each individual’s unique goals and aspirations in the spirit of “challenge by choice”</li> </ul>	<p>DID NOT EXIST</p>

**1.2 - Marketing, enrollment, and “right-fit” material is updated continually and publicly available.**

All marketing and enrollment material is reviewed and updated at least annually to ensure accuracy and ease of understanding. Consultant’s materials must be clear about who is an ‘appropriate student’ for their services and must not mislead or misrepresent the scope of expertise that the consultant is able to offer. Pricing and marketing materials are unambiguous, deliberate, and available upon request.

Standard	Examples of Evidence	2019 Standard (for reference only)
<p>1.2.1 - Gap Year Consultant communicates a commitment to inclusivity and has policies in place that welcome and support students of diverse backgrounds and perspectives, including but not limited to: socioeconomic background, ability, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity. <i>(An environment that fosters respect, inclusiveness and recognizes diversity is an essential component of gap year education. Where appropriate, special consideration for safety (e.g., LGBTQ in Uganda) should be discussed in clear educational terms as a concern, but should not prohibit student participation.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Inclusivity statement publicly available on website</i></li> </ul>	<p>1.2.1 - Gap Year Counselor communicates a commitment to inclusivity and welcomes participants of diverse backgrounds and perspectives including but not limited to: politics, socio-economic background, different abilities, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity. <i>(An environment that fosters respect, tolerance and recognizes the overwhelming contribution of diversity is an essential component of gap year education. Where appropriate, special consideration for safety (e.g., LGBTQ in Uganda), should be discussed in educational terms as a concern, but not prohibited for student participation.)</i></p>
<p>1.2.2 - Gap Year Consultant has clear Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC) that explain optimal fit for students, and they clearly explain their scope of expertise in therapeutic advising, if any. <i>EEC are vital to clearly identifying what is needed for each student to physically and safely complete an established itinerary, but also to protecting the Gap Year Consultant from potential ADA lawsuits.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Clear and publicly available EEC statement on website and promotional materials</i></li> </ul>	<p>1.2.4 - Gap Year Counselor has a clear Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC) that explains optimal fit for students <i>(EEC are vital to clearly identify what is needed for each student to physically and safely complete the established itinerary, but also protect the Gap Year Counselor from potential ADA lawsuits.)</i></p>
<p>1.2.3 - Gap Year Consultant demonstrates initiative to improve access for students from diverse financial circumstances with publicly available financial aid opportunities and other support. <i>Statements should recognize the commitment of the Gap Year Consultant to ensure an inclusive and equitable approach.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Publicly available information highlighting Consultant’s scholarships and/or fee waiver / reduction opportunities</i></li> <li>• <i>Resources for students that provide a fundraising toolkit or promotion of third party scholarships</i></li> <li>• <i>Strategic plan for diversity &amp; inclusion</i></li> </ul>	<p>1.2.2 - Gap Year Counselor seeks to improve access (financial aid opportunities) for clients with publicly available methods of supporting lower-income students. <i>(The statements should recognize the current accomplishments of the Gap Year Counselor and focus on the underlying benefits of a more inclusive approach.)</i></p>



Standard	Examples of Evidence	2019 Standard (for reference only)
<p>1.2.4 - Admissions process includes at least a 30 minute phone interview with student to foster trust, assist with goal setting and review student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A) Motivation for taking gap time</li> <li>(B) Interests and goals for the gap year</li> <li>(C) Medical and mental health support needs</li> <li>(D) Fit for services</li> </ul> <p><i>During the interview process, getting to know a student is a critical element to understanding if the Consultant can support the student's needs, interests, and personal situation.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Example of Interview template or sample Interview notes</i></li> </ul>	<p>1.10.1 - Admissions process includes at least a phone interview that must address expectations and review of policies (it is unlikely that these can be met with less than 30 minutes per student).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fit</li> <li>• Managing expectations (challenges &amp; opportunities)</li> <li>• Medical review</li> <li>• Relationship</li> </ul> <p><i>(Determining the right fit for any student is ultimately up to the organization. During the interview process, getting to know a student is a critical element to understanding how they'll fare, and thus establishing minimum interviewing standards and a set of interview questions aimed to foster candor, trust, and confidence is vital.)</i></p>
<p>1.2.5 - Gap Year Consultant does not accept commissions from, nor pay commissions to, any organization or experience for referrals.</p> <p><i>Fit is paramount in a successful gap year and commissions/financial incentives can confuse motives.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Publicly available statement on the website</i></li> </ul>	<p>1.2.3 - Gap Year Counselor does not accept commissions from any gap year programs. <i>(Clearly, fit is paramount in a successful gap year and when money becomes part of a reward system it easily can confuse motives.)</i></p>
<p>1.2.6 - Gap Year Consultant is clear about finances and anticipated additional charges, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A) Consulting costs</li> <li>(B) Refund policies</li> </ul> <p>Consultants must disclose fees and financial arrangements in writing with the student prior to enrollment.</p> <p><i>Providing clear anticipated costs and refund policies ensure financial accountability and transparency.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Clear statement about consulting costs available on the website, in a brochure or marketing materials, or available on request</i></li> <li>• <i>Consulting costs are clearly stated in Service Agreement, provided prior to enrollment</i></li> <li>• <i>Refund policy is clearly stated in Service Agreement prior to enrollment</i></li> </ul>	<p>1.2.5 - Gap Year Counselor is clear about finances: including consulting costs, anticipated additional charges, and clear refund policy. <i>(Finances hit at the heart of establishing trust and no one wants to feel blind-sided. This means clear anticipated costs. Refund policies must be clearly stated to ensure financial accountability.)</i></p>

Standard	Examples of Evidence	2019 Standard (for reference only)
<p>1.2.7 - Website, marketing materials, and/or other documentation must acknowledge the inherent risks involved in a gap year experience.</p> <p><i>Consultant avoids using words and language such as "safe," "always," or "guarantee" or similar to describe the quality or safety of an experience. Such language creates unrealistic expectations about things that are ultimately out of the Consultant's control.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Public URL statement</li> <li>•Acknowledgement of risk statement in Waiver</li> </ul>	<p>1.2.6 - "Safe," "always," "guarantee" are not used to suggest or promise as much in any materials. <i>(It benefits no one to use language that creates an expectation about things that are ultimately out of the Counselor's control. Everyone benefits from accurately representing risks as well as clarifying that sometimes bad things happen despite the best preparation.)</i></p>
<p>1.2.8 - Gap Year Consultant is transparent about expected services and available support from the Consultant.</p> <p><i>It is important to be clear about the Consultant's qualifications and capacity including the available support and methods / frequency of communication between the Consultant and student and the Consultant and organization.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Public URL statement</li> <li>•Service Agreement</li> </ul>	<p>1.2.7 - Gap Year Counselor is transparent with students about expected support services through the Counselor. <i>(Because a student's experience necessarily involves their family, it is important to be clear about the expected methods and frequency of on-program communication and support. GY Counselors must consider differing student needs.)</i></p>
<p>[2022 Standard eliminated]</p>		<p>1.2.8 - Gap Year Counselor has a publicly available policy against favoring any particular program, regardless of history, or current status with any program. <i>(Counselors will improve outcomes and reputation by favoring the student as their primary client, and thus favorite placements must be second to "student fit.")</i></p>

### 1.3 - Consultant abides by GYA's principles for student experience and safety.

Gap Year Consultants should strive to embody the integrity and values of a dedicated education professional. Well-being and student education should be the priority above all other considerations.

Standard	Examples of Evidence	2019 Standard (for reference only)
<p>1.3.1 - In line with their Essential Eligibility Criteria, the Consultant collects the following medical disclosures from every student (or their legal guardian if minors):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A) current medications and their purpose</li> <li>(B) allergies</li> <li>(C) relevant psychological diagnoses and mental health history</li> <li>(D) history of hospitalization, and any relevant (E) physical disabilities.</li> </ul> <p><i>In order to best protect each student and make responsible referrals, the Consultant must understand relevant student history and needs in advance.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copy of/link to medical history form that requests stated disclosures</li> </ul>	<p>DID NOT EXIST</p>
<p>1.3.2 - Every student (or their legal guardian if minors), sign Liability Waiver/Acknowledgement of Risk forms.</p> <p><i>Liability Waiver and Acknowledgment of Risk forms help ensure all parties understand that gap year experiences involve inherent risks, and they serve to support students in making informed decisions.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copy of Liability Waiver or Acknowledgement of Risk form(s)</li> </ul>	<p>DID NOT EXIST</p>

Standard	Examples of Evidence	2019 Standard (for reference only)
<p>1.3.3 - Gap Year Consultant does not share and securely maintains private information about specific students (to parents/guardians or other third parties) without either the express permission of the student or to prevent a clear and timely danger to a person or persons (similar to FERPA &amp; HIPAA).</p> <p><i>Sharing any students' information creates many consequences and should only be done with their prior permission, or if a clear and immediate danger is posed. This explicitly includes information-sharing with parents/guardians. Minor children don't have the same legal right to privacy, however, every effort should be made to treat them as adults whenever safety is not a concern. GYA recommends that Consultants retain a signed Release Form from each student.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•<i>Policy detailing Consultant's disclosure of student details</i></li> <li>•<i>Commitment statement to parents/family about privacy</i></li> <li>•<i>Release form</i></li> <li>•<i>Explanation of Consultant's methods for collecting, securing, and maintaining copies of submitted private information</i></li> </ul>	<p>1.3.6 - Gap Year Counselor does not share private information about specific students (to parents, outsiders, or others) without either the express permission of the student, or to prevent a clear and timely danger to a person or persons (ie, FERPA &amp; HIPAA). <i>(Sharing any students' information creates many consequences and should only be done with their prior permission, or if a clear and immediate danger is posed. This explicitly includes information-sharing with parents. Minor children don't have the same legal right to privacy, however, every effort should be made to treat them as adults whenever safety is not a concern.)</i></p>
<p>1.3.4 - Gap Year Consultant maintains and shares a list of mental health resources with all students in order to support student wellness.</p> <p><i>In some cases organizational partners will have resources to support student mental health but the Consultant should also offer resources that could support their students.</i></p>	<p><i>Resource list for students and families that includes at minimum:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•<i>Name</i></li> <li>•<i>Expertise,</i></li> <li>•<i>Contact of medical expert(s), and</i></li> <li>•<i>Road map of support protocol based on student environment</i></li> </ul>	<p>1.3.5 - Gap Year Counselor facilitates family access to a clinician, available on-call, for psychological issues and to help assess fitness of students in the field. <i>(Psychological issues are the second most common issue faced by students while studying abroad. It is through informed experts that families are able to make accurate assessments and such specific skills must not be left for a family to research while in a crisis. In some cases organizational partners will have these resources, whereas in others, the Counselor may have a list of resources available for families in a pinch.)</i></p>

Standard	Examples of Evidence	2019 Standard (for reference only)
<p>1.3.5 - Gap Year Consultant is enrolled in a global security monitoring service such as the Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) or Safe Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP), and provides relevant country information to students prior to departure.</p> <p><i>Access to this information can help respond, triage, or plan for dynamic security concerns. It is crucial that students have access to timely updates that the Gap Year Consultant's enrollment can provide.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•<i>Proof of OSAC or STEP enrollment</i></li> <li>•<i>Information shared with families, which might include: webpage communicating recommended resources, specific communication sharing relevant country information to students, etc.</i></li> </ul>	<p>3.1.2 - Gap Year Counselor is enrolled in the Overseas Security Advisory Council.</p> <p><i>(US Organizations operating internationally have free access to everything below "Secret" classification through the OSAC, which is run by Diplomatic Security Services of the US Department of State. Access to these information can help respond, triage, or plan for dynamic security concerns.)</i></p>

## **2.X.X - EXPERTISE, RESEARCH & BEST PRACTICES**

*A Consultant's effectiveness in coaching gap year students relies heavily on the stewardship of relationships, continuous learning in Experiential Education, regular reassessment of program sites, and intentional mentorship.*

### **2.1 - Researching Gap Year experiences is at the center of a Gap Year Consultant's work.**

*Quality research and vetting of potential gap year experiences is the foundation of the referrals that Gap Year Consultants make. A clear understanding of an experience's strengths, challenges, and overall support capacity is the key to matching opportunities with a student's goals, aspirations, and abilities.*

*The GYA recognizes and assesses Gap Year Consultants on three broad categories of gap year opportunities: **Structured**, **Semi-Structured**, and **Independent**. Each category is defined below and is distinguished by the amount of structure that it inherently offers, as well as the amount of support that a referring Gap Year Consultant might need to offer their students.*

**STRUCTURED** - refer to highly supported and facilitated experiences through organizations with an established experiential education pedagogy and consistent student cohorts. Examples include many GYA Accredited programs and general member programs.

**SEMI-STRUCTURED** - refer to moderately or highly supported experiences that are robustly coordinated and supervised, but have a variable experiential education pedagogy and do not currently incorporate consistent cohorts. Examples include opportunities through structured volunteer organizations, internship agencies, and skills courses.

**INDEPENDENT** - refer to minimally supported, unique site placements. Generally, these opportunities do not have an established or reliable experiential education pedagogy. They offer nominal supervision and coordination, requiring students to take more ownership and overall responsibility during the experience. Examples include referrals to specific internships, work exchange sites, unique volunteer placements, independent projects, and paid work.

Standard	Examples of Evidence	2019 Standard (for reference only)
<p>2.1.1 - Gap Year Consultant must have a consistent and robust process to find, research, assess, and maintain updated resources about Structured, Semi-Structured, or Independent gap year opportunities, grounded in an experience's core elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• history</li> <li>• infrastructure</li> <li>• risk management</li> <li>• student experience</li> <li>• organizational culture</li> </ul> <p><i>Independent Educational Consultants Association (IECA) Guidelines suggest that 20% of an Independent Educational Consultant's time should be spent visiting colleges. A Gap Year Consultant should spend a similar amount of professional time: maintaining relationships with, researching, vetting, or making site visits to potential gap year experiences. Best practices in research include: site visits, calls with directors, alumni references, and review of publicly available documentation. Gap Year Consultants are also encouraged to dedicate specific time to researching new gap opportunities.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Publicly available statement of commitment to continually research and stay up-to-date on new programming and program changes</i></li> <li>• <i>Copy of template used in vetting gap year experiences that minimally includes:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Mission, values, philosophy, and DEIA commitment</i></li> <li>b. <i>Cost; student expenses,</i></li> <li>c. <i>Program policies,</i></li> <li>d. <i>Housing,</i></li> <li>e. <i>Food and drink,</i></li> <li>f. <i>Risk management &amp; on-call procedures,</i></li> <li>g. <i>Possible challenges (e.g. personal, group, cultural),</i></li> <li>h. <i>Supervisor name/contact info</i></li> <li>i. <i>Recommendations based on understanding of the experience</i></li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<p>1.3.2 - Gap Year Counselor has process to research and assess the partner's history, with an eye towards safety and student experience. <i>(When partnering with an organization assumptions should never be made that they are competent simply because they have a nice website.)</i></p>

Standard	Examples of Evidence	2019 Standard (for reference only)
<p>2.1.2 - Gap Year Consultant has a process for determining referrals for each student, focused on alignment of a student's capacity and goals and an experience's core elements and level of rigor.</p> <p><i>Quality referrals require in-depth knowledge about the subtleties that make up each experience, and an understanding of a student's ability, motivation, and support needs to thrive. Not every student is a good fit for every organization. Referral should generally be based on an opportunity's:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mission, values, philosophy, and DEIA commitment</i></li> <li>• <i>Cost and/or student expenses</i></li> <li>• <i>Program policies</i></li> <li>• <i>Housing</i></li> <li>• <i>Food and drink</i></li> <li>• <i>Risk management &amp; on-call procedures</i></li> <li>• <i>Possible challenges (eg personal, group, cultural)</i></li> <li>• <i>Level of structure and support)</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Copy of documentation utilized by Consultant as a reference for at least three gap year experiences. Examples could include: Program information/description from CRM, custom PDF created for each program, etc., recently updated vetting information, or revised MOU. Documentation should include information such as:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Mission, values, philosophy, and DEIA commitment</i></li> <li>b. <i>Cost; student expenses</i></li> <li>c. <i>Program policies</i></li> <li>d. <i>Housing</i></li> <li>e. <i>Food and drink</i></li> <li>f. <i>Risk management &amp; on-call procedures</i></li> <li>g. <i>Possible challenges (eg personal, group, cultural)</i></li> <li>h. <i>Supervisor name/contact info</i></li> <li>i. <i>Recommendations based on understanding of the experience</i></li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<p>DID NOT EXIST</p>



## 2.2 - Consultant mentors students to structure their gap experience and remains engaged throughout.

Appropriate mentorship maximizes student growth, wellbeing, and learning in all experiences through guidance, consideration, and advocacy.

Standard	Examples of Evidence	2019 Standard (for reference only)
<p>2.2.1 - Gap Year Consultant must have a comprehensive and documented process to support student goal-setting throughout their entire gap year process.</p> <p><i>Clear goal-setting increases student's accountability.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Template or sample of goal-setting process</i></li> </ul>	DID NOT EXIST
<p>2.2.2 - Gap Year Consultant guides students in the process of budgeting for their gap year.</p> <p><i>Consultants should be versed in approximate costs, as well as budgeting tools, scholarships, and fundraising strategies for gap-year planning.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Copy of protocols in case a location has a specific State Department warning</i></li> <li>• <i>Copy of letter written to students and parents informing them State Department warning status</i></li> </ul>	DID NOT EXIST
<p>2.2.3 - Gap Year Consultant provides a framework to help students vet and select experiences.</p> <p><i>While the ultimate decision of what to pursue lies with the student, Gap Year Consultants can help students by supporting effective decision making.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Training or documents shared with students that support personalized research, vetting, and program selection</i></li> </ul>	DID NOT EXIST
<p>2.2.4 - Gap Year Consultant advocates for the student's needs and learning throughout their experience.</p> <p><i>Gap Year Consultant encourages the student to self-advocate and mediates only when necessary.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Publicly available statement of commitment that Gap Year Consultant will serve as an advocate for students throughout their gap year</i></li> </ul>	DID NOT EXIST

### **3.X.X - STUDENT PREPARATION & SUPPORT**

Supporting students in planning and participating in their gap year activities requires careful and intentional preparation. This section is specifically referring to Semi-Structured and Independent experiences. It is understood that the Consultant's role in Structured programs can be limited to pre-departure support.

**SEMI-STRUCTURED** - refer to moderately or highly supported experiences that are robustly coordinated and supervised but do not currently incorporate gap-specific cohorts, nor a gap-specific experiential education pedagogy. Examples include opportunities through structured: volunteer organizations, internship agencies, and skills courses.

**INDEPENDENT** - refer to minimally supported, unique site placements. Generally, these opportunities do not have any established or reliable experiential education pedagogy. They offer nominal supervision and coordination, requiring students to take more ownership and overall responsibility during the experience. Examples include referrals to specific: internships, work exchange sites, unique volunteer placements, independent projects, and paid work.

#### **3.1 - Consultant ensures appropriate preparation and support for Semi-Structured or Independent experiences.**

While Structured experiences are inherently responsible for providing these aspects of the student's preparation and participation, it is the responsibility of the Gap Year Consultant to ensure student access to the appropriate preparation, support and transference for other, less structured gap experiences.

Standard	Examples of Evidence	2019 Standard (for reference only)
<p>3.1.1 - Prior to departure, Gap Year Consultant discusses the student's plan for managing medications, physical health, and mental wellbeing.</p> <p><i>In order to best protect each student, the Gap Year Consultant must attempt to understand individual student needs in advance, particularly relating to medical and mental health support. When appropriate, the Consultant should advocate that this information is shared with program providers.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copy of a Plan of Action form</li> <li>• Interview template with prompts</li> </ul>	<p>1.3.3 - Prior to departure, dialogue and documents assess and prepare student for any medication, physical health, and/or mental health concerns.</p> <p><i>(In order to best protect each student, the Gap Year Consultant must know any particular student needs in advance. Preparation and information are a minimum for responsible care.)</i></p>

Standard	Examples of Evidence	2019 Standard (for reference only)
<p>3.1.2 - Gap Year Consultant encourages students to get at least a basic first-aid &amp; CPR certification.</p> <p><i>Students should become their own resource, and basic first-aid certification will help prepare students should a scenario arise that a hosting site can't or won't manage.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Copy of URL or information sheet that encourages students to get certified in First Aid/CPR prior to departure</i></li> </ul>	<p>1.3.4 - Students must be encouraged to get basic first-aid certification, or better.</p> <p><i>(In every case, students will evolve to become their own resource and basic first-aid certification will improve awareness and confidence towards a better net experience)</i></p>
<p>3.1.3 - When available, Gap Year Consultant offers to share relevant information from previous students to prospective students.</p> <p><i>Students must be informed about what to expect for their own success, and learning from those who previously completed a gap experience is a great way to share insight.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Email introducing prospective student to past student(s) for referral</i></li> <li>• <i>Testimonials or summaries of experiences from past students</i></li> </ul>	<p>1.4.2 - Gap Year Counselor must share with each prospective student prior to their arrival, relevant information from previous participants.</p> <p><i>(Having great information is important, but only if it gets to those in the position to make a decision. Students must be informed about what to expect for their own success, but also as a matter of transparency and liability. Some considerations must be made for appropriateness too as not all students are capable of an independent experience.)</i></p>

Standard	Examples of Evidence	2019 Standard (for reference only)
<p>3.1.4 - Gap Year Consultant supports students in consolidating critical site details, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A) Dates</li> <li>(B) Fees</li> <li>(C) Arrival &amp; departure information</li> <li>(D) Site supervision</li> <li>(E) Rules, expectations &amp; responsibilities</li> <li>(F) Orientation</li> <li>(G) Food &amp; housing</li> <li>(H) Free time</li> <li>(I) Packing list</li> </ul> <p><i>Students need support in asking the right questions and organizing information about their gap experience. Gap Year Consultants should coach students to ensure they understand important program details.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Copy of communications between student and the hosting site / organization containing these details</i></li> <li>• <i>Discussion template reviewing these topics</i></li> </ul>	<p>DID NOT EXIST</p>
<p>3.1.5 - Gap Year Consultant needs to be in touch with the student or the host organization a minimum of every 4 weeks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A) Conversations and check-ins should focus on:</li> <li>(B) Quality of their experience</li> <li>(C) Physical health</li> <li>(D) Overall safety</li> <li>(E) Mental health</li> </ul> <p><i>Consultants should ensure that regular contact with a student is maintained throughout their experience. Students working independently may not reach out for help unless prompted.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Schedule or plan for regular check in with student</i></li> <li>• <i>List of topics for check in with student</i></li> </ul>	<p>1.4.1 - Gap Year Counselor facilitates regular contact (minimally every 4 weeks) between the student and preferably the Gap Year Counselor's office, or, minimally with the designated local contact.</p> <p><i>(Students working independently often will not reach out for help unless prompted and part of an existing relationship. Conversations and check-ins should focus on mental health, physical health, safety, and quality of experience.)</i></p>

Standard	Examples of Evidence	2019 Standard (for reference only)
<p>3.1.6 - Gap Year Consultant ensures that facilitation of fundamental re-entry and reflection is performed, either by the program or the Gap Year Consultant themselves.</p> <p><i>Making time to prepare and support a student for their return home is an important step for the integration of their learning and experience. Re-entry and reflection should be facilitated by the program, Consultant, or both.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Materials or discussion topics addressing re-entry, debriefing, and/or reflection of experience</i></li> </ul>	<p>1.3.7 - Gap Year Counselor ensures facilitation of minimal re-entry/transference process. <i>(These experiences inevitably will transform a student's life, but even more-so with proper context about the experience. Taking time to prepare a student for 'normal' life, or 'reverse culture shock' are critical towards their long term success and the integration of lessons learned.)</i></p>

**3.2 - Consultant encourages intentional and ethical service-learning and community engagement.**

*Service-Learning is an often-used tool on gap years. The benefits to the students are often profound; however, the importance of leaving a responsible footprint on the host communities cannot be overstated. Fundamental to such responsibility is that students enter their host communities focused on learning rather than "helping." Students often won't understand these nuances, so the onus for such framing of expectations falls on the organization and the staff.*

Standard	Examples of Evidence	2019 Standard (for reference only)
<p>3.2.1 - If service-learning takes place, the Gap Year Consultant provides resources for the student to learn about responsible service ethics.</p> <p><i>Student must be made aware and prepared for all relevant and reasonably anticipated concerns.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Resources on ethical services such as a link to GYA's Fair Trade Learning guide</i></li> <li>• <i>Organizational checklist for student preparedness</i></li> </ul>	<p>3.2.1 - If service-learning takes place, the Gap Year Consultant provides resources for the student about responsible service ethics. <i>(If service-learning takes place, then the student must be made aware and prepared for all relevant and reasonably anticipated concerns.)</i></p>

Standard	Examples of Evidence	2019 Standard (for reference only)
<p>3.2.2 - Gap Year Consultant has a clear and publicly available policy about ethical guidelines relevant to service placements, and specific to each of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A) Vulnerable populations (e.g., HIV-affected, orphans, Internally Displaced Persons, “poverty tourism,” etc.)</li> <li>(B) Medical service (e.g., appropriate medical-training)</li> <li>(C) Wildlife (e.g., trophy tourism)</li> </ul> <p><i>Gap year students rely on experts to know what appropriate service activities look like, whether a minimum service-commitment or a requirement for specific certifications. GYA encourages consultants to familiarize themselves with the Consultant Guide to Fair Trade Learning.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Publicly available policy for each of three specific considerations:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Vulnerable populations</i></li> <li>b. <i>Medical service</i></li> <li>c. <i>Wildlife</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Link from consultant website to GYA’s <a href="#">Fair Trade Learning webpage</a></i></li> </ul>	<p>2.1.2 - Gap Year Counselor has a clear and publicly available policy about their ethical guidelines relevant to service placements, and specific to each of the following:</p> <p><i>(Whether a minimum service-commitment, a requirement for specific certifications, or including links to relevant articles, gap year students rely on experts to know what appropriate service looks like longitudinally, especially:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Vulnerable Populations (e.g., HIV-affected, orphans, Internally Displaced Persons, “poverty tourism,” etc.)</i></li> <li>• <i>Medical (e.g., appropriate medical-training)</i></li> <li>• <i>Wildlife (e.g., trophy tourism)</i></li> </ul>

### 3.3 - Consultant considers appropriate factors for international travel.

*Advising and preparing students for international travel opportunities requires special considerations for Gap Year Consultants.*

Standard	Examples of Evidence	2019 Standard (for reference only)
<p>3.3.1 - Gap Year Consultant either registers or provides resources for students to independently register with the U.S. State Department’s STEP program for all U.S. citizens and nationals traveling internationally. Foreign citizens should link to their resident country’s state department travel warning equivalent.</p> <p><i>If traveling internationally, all appropriate resources should be notified to help address any emergencies that might arise and to keep students informed.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Copy of instructions or procedures for registering with STEP or similar travel warning agencies</i></li> </ul>	<p>3.3.1 - Gap Year Consultant facilitates registration with the US State Department STEP program for all US Citizens traveling internationally. <i>(If traveling internationally, all appropriate resources should be notified to help address any emergencies that might arise and to keep staff informed.)</i></p>

Standard	Examples of Evidence	2019 Standard (for reference only)
<p>3.3.2 - Gap Year Consultant provides information and resources about supplemental medical and travel/evacuation insurance for students traveling internationally.</p> <p><i>Having medical and evacuation insurance is critical; however, many travelers don't know what to look for, or more commonly, don't understand what existing insurance will cover while on a gap year program.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Copy of supplemental medical and travel/evacuation insurance resource shared with students</i></li> </ul>	<p>3.1.3 - Gap Year Counselor facilitates information and resources specifically about medical insurance, and evacuation insurance for all students traveling internationally. <i>(Having great medical and evacuation insurance is critical, however most Americans simply do not know what to look for, or more commonly, don't understand what existing insurance will cover while on a gap year program. Reputable carriers might include iNext, International SOS, HTH international, or MEDEX, to name a few.)</i></p>
<p>3.3.3 - Gap Year Consultant provides information and directs students to resources related to how their identities may be perceived or treated while traveling internationally, including information related to safety and identity-based discrimination in the local context.</p> <p><i>As not all expressions of identity are safe or accepted in every culture, gap year students rely on experts to advise them when considering a given environment (e.g. LGBTQ+, race/ethnicity, solo female travelers, etc.).</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Example of identity-based resources shared with students</i></li> </ul>	<p>DID NOT EXIST</p>

### 3.4 - Consultant offers additional coordination and support for independent site referrals.

*Independent* referrals refer to minimally supported, unique experience referrals. Generally, these opportunities do not have an established or reliable experiential education pedagogy. They offer nominal supervision and coordination, requiring students to take more ownership and overall responsibility during the experience. Examples include referrals to specific: internships, work exchange, unique volunteer experiences, and paid work opportunities.

Standard	Examples of Evidence	2019 Standard (for reference only)
<p>3.4.1 - Gap Year Consultant provides consolidated resources focused on: safety, travel, and referral logistics, thereby giving students access to critical pre-departure information and expectations, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A) Program policies</li> <li>(B) Housing</li> <li>(C) Food and drink</li> <li>(D) Local environmental concerns</li> <li>(E) Transportation systems &amp; safety</li> <li>(F) Vaccinations (based on CDC / WHO guidelines)</li> <li>(G) Possible challenges (e.g. personal, identity, group, cultural)</li> <li>(H) Regional &amp; local security</li> <li>(I) Visa, passport, entry/exit information</li> <li>(J) Name/contact information for local supervisor</li> <li>(K) Packing list</li> </ul> <p><i>In addition to Standard 3.1.4 that refers to Semi-Structured experiences, it is the responsibility of the Gap Year Consultant to physically provide students with this fundamental information for Independent experiences that offer less infrastructure.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Site-specific pre-departure information that includes the listed resources (A-K).</i></li> <li>• <i>A copy of MOU/formal agreement or details to families stating this list of shared information prior to departure (A-K).</i></li> </ul>	<p>1.3.8 - Gap Year Counselor facilitates written pre-departure information focused on safety, that includes the following details. <i>(Different people learn in different ways. While it's important to address details over the phone and 'on the ground', it's also vital to have these same details available for reference in print.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Program policies,</i></li> <li>• <i>Housing,</i></li> <li>• <i>Food and drink,</i></li> <li>• <i>Local environmental concerns,</i></li> <li>• <i>Transportation systems &amp; safety,</i></li> <li>• <i>Vaccinations (based on CDC guidelines),</i></li> <li>• <i>Possible challenges (eg personal, group, cultural),</i></li> <li>• <i>Regional &amp; local security,</i></li> <li>• <i>Visa &amp; passport information,</i></li> <li>• <i>Name/contact information for local supervisor,</i></li> <li>• <i>Packing list.</i></li> </ul>



Standard	Examples of Evidence	2019 Standard (for reference only)
<p>3.4.2 - Gap Year Consultant shares with the student a description of services for all details arranged by the Gap Year Consultant on the student's behalf including :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A) Financial responsibilities</li> <li>(B) Responsibility for meals and accommodations</li> <li>(C) Expectations for and of the student</li> <li>(D) Any formal agreements or MOUs</li> </ul> <p><i>Due to the highly independent and unstructured nature of Independent referrals, Consultants must ensure that the student has clear expectations about their and the hosting site's responsibilities.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Copy of commitment to share MOU/ formal agreement or site details with student in paperwork or online</i></li> <li>• <i>Example of updated MOU/formal agreement or details coordinated with and confirmed by the hosting site detailing all relevant expectations</i></li> </ul>	<p>1.4.3 - Gap Year Counselor shares with the student all relevant Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), as well as details arranged on the students' behalf including the following. <i>(Students necessarily are their own best advocates on independent placements. However, having the information to advocate for themselves is of course required.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Financial arrangements</i></li> <li>• <i>Responsibility for meals and accommodation</i></li> <li>• <i>Expectations for the student</i></li> </ul>
<p>3.4.3 - For students in Independent experiences, Gap Year Consultant ensures on-site orientation that includes at least the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A) Medical and mental health emergencies, including locations of the nearest hospitals/support centers, and how/whom to contact in an emergency</li> <li>(B) Safe transportation practices</li> <li>(C) Local security concerns (political, crime, environmental, etc.)</li> <li>(D) Work environment safety, program policies, and expectations</li> <li>(E) Awareness of diseases, cross-cultural interactions &amp; norms</li> <li>(F) Name and contact information for the designated site supervisor</li> </ul> <p><i>Comprehensive on-site orientations are critical to preparing students for both a successful and safe experience. Consultants must ensure that the student is provided a comprehensive on-site briefing for Independent experience referrals.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Example of guidance offered by Consultant to support student orientation at an Independent experience. Evidence might include:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>updated MOU/formal agreement or details coordinated with, and confirmed by the hosting site, detailing expectation for the stated orientation specifics (A-F)</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Copy of orienting details for a student to inquire about once they arrive with host/ experience that includes at least the stated orientation specifics (A-F)</i></li> </ul>	<p>1.3.9 - Gap Year Counselor facilitates on-site orientation notes, that includes at least the following: <i>(Orientations are critical to preparing students for both a successful and safe experience. The local staff must be able to provide either independently or in concert with organization staff, all life-safety details.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Medical emergencies, including medical kits and nearest hospitals,</i></li> <li>• <i>Safe transportation practices,</i></li> <li>• <i>Local security concerns (political, crime, environmental, etc.),</i></li> <li>• <i>Re-establishes any program policies or expectations,</i></li> <li>• <i>Addresses local concerns for disease, cross cultural interactions &amp; norms, and how to/ whom to contact in an emergency.</i></li> </ul>