

MOU Template and Suggestions

This is the document referenced in the book *Flourishing Across Cultures*.

Attached is a sample Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), based the MOUs of several different organizations to build on the best of each. Ultimately, you will have to develop the document that fits your philosophy, principles, and practices—something leaders and team members can follow and under which they can experience success.

At a minimum, where you see <xxxxx>, this is a place that needs your language inserted.

This document provides you a template and thoughts to ponder, but no one is under any obligation to me (David Harakal) to cite this document, cite me as an author, or use any of the language contained herein. Contact me at DHarakalAuthor@gmail.com if would like help drafting your document.

Notes are in this color, and should be removed before finalizing your MOU. You will find a mix of suggested language and a place to insert the language from your specific team or organization.

Memorandum of Understanding

Introduction

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is between <team> and <team member(s)>. <Add any additional language your organization needs.>

Understanding MOUs

Definition:

From Dictionary.com, A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is “a document that describes the general principles of an agreement between parties, but does not amount to a substantive contract.” It should contain enough detail for you to understand expectations and enough flexibility to adapt to your specific gifts and goals. These are typically written by an organization or team leader and, unlike a contract, is not legally binding, but does set forth expectations for leaders and team member. Any exceptions to an MOU must be documented in writing. Nothing agreed to verbally is binding

How to use this MOU:

In agreeing to this MOU, both leaders and team members establish a set of mutual expectations within the team, including a decision-making matrix (see below). Exceptions should be requested well in advance to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. *Any exceptions (both to the MOU document or to a specific event) must be documented in writing <where, e.g., e-mail?>. <Note: This is absolutely key. Anything said but not documented is moot. Team leaders do not always remember a verbal commitment and may not remain in leadership for your term of service.>*

Team Vision

<Describe your team’s vision here. If you don’t have one, develop one collectively to share with your next new team member and keep the team focused on the same goals.>

Team Roles & Leadership Structures

<Describe titles and roles. Some people do not like titles, but for an MOU they are necessary for clarity.>

Team Commitments

Team Leader Commitments

The team leader(s) commit to providing the following for team members: <sample items to be considered>

- A **supportive community** and resources that aim to help individuals and families. <what does your team do, e.g., transition onto a region, dig wells, build schools, plant churches, etc.>
- A **developmental environment** that focuses on growing in <the areas your team expects people to grow>
- **Clear and timely communication**
- **Willingness to receive and provide loving accountability** to commitments outlined in the MOU and to personal development.

Team Member Commitments

A team member commits to the following during their agreed-to term <specify> with the team.

- **Actively pursue their own personal development.** Each team member is expected to pursue and take ownership of their own personal development.
- **Remain teachable** through a willingness to ask for and receive help, coaching, and support.
- **Pursue growth in <language>** through regular study. Different people have different capacities for language, and capacity changes over time, but these are the initial guidelines. Discuss with your team leader if you need a different schedule.
 - During the first <x weeks/months>, members are expected to study language full-time, defined as:
 - <15-25 hours/week of in-class study>
 - <5-10 hours/week of additional study, including at home or interacting with locals in the local language>
 - **After x weeks/months, or upon achieving level x or phase y**, language expectations are reduced to the following to provide more time for <xxxxxx>:
 - X-Y hours per week of in-class study
 - X-Y hours of at-home study or language-use in the community

Team Leaders and Members Jointly Agree To:

- **Mutual accountability.** By signing this document, both the team leader(s) and team member agree that this is the total set of expectations to govern the team member's term with the team.
- **Pursue personal rhythms** that promote a personal abiding relationship with Jesus and stay true to the tasks defined within this MOU <or amended via other written documentation (specify – e-mail dated xx.yy.zzzz, document named xxxxx) agreed by the team member and team leader.>

Team Leaders and Members Individually Agree to:

Each individual and/or couple agrees to:

- **Pursue community and foster a relationship of trust with others on the team.** This includes resolving relational tension quickly and in a loving manner.
- **Maintain good standing with their sending church and sending agency.** This includes understanding the church's and agency's expectations and fulfilling their requirement for training, travel notifications, annual reviews, expense claiming deadlines, etc.).
- **Nurture a healthy personal care team** (See the Self-Care chapter in the book *Flourishing Across Cultures* for additional details.)
- **Maintain adequate funding** (if one has raised their own support).
- **Respond to team members and leaders in a timely manner.** See communications guide in the appendix for expectations.
- **Comply with the security practices** detailed in the crisis management plan.
<If you do not have a crisis management plan, you need one!>

Team Rhythms

All team leaders and members agree to be fully engaged with the following: <Note, try to limit the number of “mandatory” things. Lack of autonomy creates unnecessary stress.>

- Daily - Personal time with the Lord <how long each day/week is reasonable? 1-2 hours per day?>
- Weekly
 - Team meeting?
 - Worship <is this with the team or otherwise? I recommend with the team early on, but encourage members to find an expression that is allowable with the sending fellowship or organization, wherever the authority lies. A community of local believers (local culture or international) outside the team is important for longevity.>
- Monthly <recommended>
 - Meet with team leader for personal accountability and coaching at least once, but more often as needed and mutually agreed
 - DOPE (Day of Prayer & Evaluation) day <recommended>
 - Considered a work day and replaces all other work or language
 - It may be helpful to establish the same day each month for the whole team, but allow adjustments as desired.
 - While a template is helpful, especially early in a team, allow freedom to adapt to individual needs.

Team Policies

The following policies apply to team leaders and members unless explicitly specified to the contrary.

Travel & Time Off

Time Off, Visitors & Vacations

Each team member receives xx days of vacation yearly. Additionally, there are xx designated days off for holidays: x days for Christmas/New Year, Easter, Local holidays, ... (# days).

Time off is important for long-term thriving. Thus, team leaders and members should use their time off. <Does your team have windows available for vacations, or can people go whenever they want? Windows can help if there are team activities which need a critical mass.> Check with your team leader before you make reservations to confirm there are no planned team events. <Note: This need can be avoided with a six- to twelve-month plan established at least three months in advance.> By the end of the first year, team members should take off at least a contiguous week in another nearby country in a relaxing context if the work context does not provide for that.

Locations shown as “Do Not Travel” on the [U.S. State Department map](#) require Team Leader approval and a waiver <see sample in appendix>. This applies to all travel (vacation, visa runs and vision trips).

Visa Runs

Team members must take visa runs every X to Y months as required by the government. These are generally taken over weekends so that a participant misses no more than x days of language and, ideally, does not miss any team functions. As such, check the team calendar before scheduling. <Team leaders, if you have quarterly or semi-annual calendars this notification would not be necessary to avoid team events, though you should maintain a separate team calendar to keep tabs on where people are. Leaders and participants all benefit from this.>

Travel to Passport Country

In general, team members should not travel to their passport country before <date, end of term, end of first year, or ?>. However, there are exceptions when you need to be with family, including but not limited to: death or life-threatening illness of an immediate family member, annual (or other frequency) medical requirements, or a sibling's or best friend's wedding. Notify your team leader as far in advance as possible so they can schedule team functions around your necessary travel.

All other travel to the passport country will follow the sending church's/organization's Home Ministry Assignment/Furlough/Home leave (or other name you use) policies.

Dating

<Are there any dating policies for your team? If so, document them, even if only a suggestion to set expectations.>

Having Children

<Does your team encourage or discourage having children during the first year, first term, at all? If there are encouragements or restrictions, document them.>

Pets

Given the frequency of visa runs and travel, it tends not to be fair to an animal or team members to have a pet. <Does your team have a different pet policy?>

Addressing Sin

If any team member or leader is unrepentant or stuck in a stagnant pattern of serious sin such as anger, greed, laziness, spreading division, sexual sin, etc., team leaders will follow the Matthew 18 process of discipline. For certain sins that endanger others (abuse, addiction, etc.), leaders or members may be required by sending-country law and/or sending organization/church to notify higher authorities without working through the Matthew 18 process (see below).

Sexual Sin

Sexual sin must be taken seriously and cannot be kept in the dark, given the risk of harm to oneself or others. If any leader or member falls into sexual sin they should confess this to their leader or accountability partner within 24 hours.

From there, the team leader must be informed within 24 hours by the individual themselves or their accountability partner. In the case of a male or female reporting to a leader of the opposite gender, a third person must be present. <Is this the case with your organization?>

Events To Be Reported Immediately <based on U.S. reporting laws>

There are certain things that, if they happen, ***must immediately and without question*** be brought to the attention of the team leader. These are:

- Child sexual abuse
- Intimate relationships outside of marriage (emotional affairs, sexual relations, etc.)
- Physical abuse within marriage or of children
- Any specific death/kidnapping/abuse threats or occurrences
- Physical or sexual abuse of a team member

In any of these cases, the sending church elders and sending agency leaders of all involved parties will be brought in, and an appropriate plan of action for care, discipline, reporting, etc., will be implemented.

Decision-Making

In general, as an adult you are autonomous in your decisions outside of what you agree in the context of this document. For specific items delegated to you or withheld by the team leader, see the Decision Matrix at the end of this document.

Conflict Resolution

<People often quote the Matthew 18 principle, but spell out the process if that is what you follow, and who is in each step. Some also like the Peace Pursuit process—which requires training if that is your decision.>

Feedback

We can only grow in what we know, and each person has different needs. Thus, feedback is important. Please share your feedback as soon as you have any.

Agreement

Confirm your agreement with this document by sending your team leader your concurrence via **their desired e-mail/signing document/or ??**. Do NOT agree if there are elements with which you are uncomfortable before resolving with the team leader.

[Appendix: Communications Guide](#)

Out of respect for others, all team members and leaders are expected to comply with the following:

Communication platforms:

Here’s an overview of how each communication platform should be used: <if this is too detailed, consider something simpler>

- **Slack or other workflow tool**: All team-related/required activity – things work related.
 - Includes team communication, announcements, prayer requests and updates, general language communication, work-related messages to and requests from leaders (including travel, visitor, or visa run approval), and work-related messages to other team members.
- **Messaging (Signal/WhatsApp/other)**: Social communication with teammates or leaders, or semi-urgent communications.
 - Checking in on a teammate, planning social time, any informal communication
 - Group social activities
 - Communication within an accountability group.
 - Communication with family and local friends
- **Phone**: Emergencies and urgent matters.
 - Call for emergencies.
 - If somebody calls you, answering immediately if at all possible.
- **Secure Email**: Sensitive information that needs to be kept available for longer than 1 week.

Engagement and Responsiveness:

Platform	You should check	Respond
Slack/Workflow	At least daily (excluding Sabbath)	Within 24 hours *
Email	At least daily (excluding Sabbath)	Within 24 hours *
WhatsApp / Signal / Messaging	At least every 2 hours	Within 2 hours *~
Phone	At least every 2 hours	Within 1 hour * ~

*The response can be either the resolution to the message/request OR the expected date of resolution.

~ These response times are outside of language/team meeting times.

Appendix: Decision-Making Process and Matrix

The following Responsibility Matrix details who is responsible for what decisions:

Action/Activity	Approver *	Notify *	Consult*
Just Do It (but you might need to let someone know or fill in a form)			
Anything listed in the MOU that does not require approval	n/a	n/a	n/a
Adjust your daily schedule without team impact	n/a	n/a	n/a
Scheduling a DOPE day	n/a	n/a	n/a
Host house guests during team vacation windows or on weekends/holidays	n/a	Form	n/a
Visa run including up to 3 nights away and 2 days missed language/prayer, no missed team events	n/a	Form, Agency	n/a
Take vacation (up to allowable vacation days per agency)	n/a	Form, Agency, TL	n/a
Take off up to two days of language (monthly) for personal reasons	n/a	Language Center	n/a
Miss language due to illness	n/a	Language Center	n/a
Miss team events due to illness	n/a	TL	n/a
Personal Decision (but consultation required and you may need to fill in a form)			
Change language schools	n/a	TL	
Significant language reduction	n/a	School	TL
Get a car	n/a	n/a	TL
Move apartments/houses	n/a	TL	
Vision trips (≤ 3 per year), up to 1 week each	n/a	Form, Agency	TL
Schedule HMA/home leave/furlough within approved team schedule	n/a	Form, Agency, TL	n/a
Travel to passport country before date in MOU	n/a	Form, Agency	TL
Travel farther than x,xxx miles	n/a	Form, Agency	TL

Host house guests outside of vacation/visitor windows (excluding weekend-only)	n/a	n/a	TL
Get a pet with legs (fish are fine)	n/a	n/a	TL
Dating someone from the local or proximate culture	n/a	n/a	TL
Pre-Approval Required			
Travel to a country restricted by your government or org	TL	Form, Agency	n/a
Visa run missing a team event	TL	Form, Agency	n/a
Guests attend team meetings, functions	TL	n/a	n/a
HMA outside of approved dates	TL	Form, Agency	n/a
Any other exceptions to the MOU	TL	n/a	n/a
Exception to decision by Team Leader	TLO	n/a	n/a

Approval/Notification needs to be as soon as possible, no less than 2 weeks prior to event

Abbreviations:

- TLO - Team Leader Overseer
- TL – Team Leader
- Form – e.g., Travel and Visitor Form – so that the team knows who is where in case of emergency, as well as who else is in country for consideration in case of emergency
- Agency – your sending church or agency may require permissions or notifications

Definitions:

- Approve: If a decision requires approval, approval is required before plans are finalized.
- Consult: If a decision requires consultation, discuss with the designated person before a decision is made, but you still have the right to make the decision.

Appendix: Waiver of Rights for Travel to Restricted Locations

Members who request—and are approved for—a short term trip to a country on the “[Do Not Travel](#)” list on the U.S. State Department website should be forewarned that there may be unforeseen risks involved. The political situation of a foreign country of residence may become unstable or hostile to Westerners or Christians very rapidly. This may result in temporary detention, even when no law has been broken. The potential for injury, perhaps of a serious nature, may be aggravated in some countries by the primitive conditions or health facilities. Moreover, the technology and financial resources for modern means of transportation and communication may be lacking in many third world countries.

Appropriate policies and procedures have been specifically written by <organization, church, or agency> to consider the protection, health, and freedom of these members. Each individual who serves internationally accepts personal risks for situations that may arise, and it is the individual’s personal choice to accept this risk. I, the undersigned, have freely agreed to the following to travel to _____ during the dates _____.

- I understand that there may be risks involving, among other things, changes in the political situation, different and primitive physical and health facilities, uncertain transportation and communication facilities, and the possibility of acts of terrorism.
- I have reviewed applicable current travel advisories relating to this assignment issued by the U.S. Department of State, the Center for Disease Control, and corresponding local authorities; I understand that I accept personal responsibility to stay informed of any further updates.
- I have been advised of and am fully aware of the inherent risks and dangers to myself and my property arising from ministering in other countries including but not limited to illness, injury, death, robbery, kidnapping, or other loss or destruction of life or property.
- I voluntarily and personally assume all these risks not covered by group benefits of <organization>, and release and hold harmless my team, its leadership, and the directors, officers, employees, staff, agents of <organization and/or sending fellowship>, and any partner organizations from any liability and expense incurred by me as a result of my participation in this travel, to the maximum extent permissible.

Signature _____

Date _____