Norton named advisor on foreign study pondered

By Bob Horvitz
To provide MIT students with the opportunity for overseas study, Prof. John Norton has been appointed to the newly created position of Advisor of Foreign Study.

Prof. Norton will gather information on overseas study opportunities and will discuss prospective programs with all interested students.

At a meeting to be held late this week, he will explain the program and answer any questions about it. Those interested should check with Prof. Norton in room 508-B for the time and the location of the meeting.

"Although many other schools have had programs for foreign study," explained Prof. Norton, "MIT has always sent each student abroad on an individual basis. However," he continued, "in the last few years interest has greatly increased." The problem of developing a formal program of overseas study for MIT is a complex one. Students interested in it are not only the European universities but also those in Latin America, the Far East, Africa, in fact, the whole world.

The basic objectives of the students vary significantly. For some, the professional aspect is paramount. For others, the personal development associated with working and living in another country is of prime importance, and scholarship is secondary.

In addition, transfer of credit also creates difficulties. "MIT has a rigid degree requirement," Prof. Norton explained. "To find an equivalent program elsewhere may not be possible."

Learning the foreign language is an obstacle which any student interested in overseas study must conquer. To handle a program comparable to the third or fourth year at MIT requires more than a casual acquaintance with the language.

"Because of the great number of Spanish-speaking countries," said Prof. Norton, "that language will probably soon be offered at the Institute for the first time."

Finally, there is the financial problem. "Although the travel abroad is considerable," said Prof. Norton, "living expenses are lower and tuition abroad is much lower. Therefore, the cost for a year is about the same.

"However, because of the credit situation, it is possible that the time to obtain a degree will be increased by a year or two, and that means added cost. In the future," he added, "it is possible that funds may be made available specifically for overseas study."

"But first," Prof. Norton concluded, "we need evidence that the program will be successful."