

2014-2015
STUDY ABROAD
STUDENT HANDBOOK
UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Contents

Start Here.....	4
Factors in Selecting a Program.....	5
Studying Abroad Options	6
Academic Policies and Procedures	10
Application Process	11
Payments.....	12
Withdrawal	13
Passport and Visa.....	14
Acceptance Letters	15
Scholarships and Financial Aid.....	16
Insurance.....	16
Flight Arrangements.....	17
Pre-departure Orientation.....	18
In Country	18
Jet Lag	18
Sexual Orientation	21
Race and Ethnicity.....	22
Unexpected Difficulties.....	24
U.S. Embassy or Consulate.....	25
Medical Services	25
Emergency Plan.....	25
Returning Home	25
Returning to Campus	25
Health, Wellness and Safety	28
STEP and Other Services	28
General Health	29
UCF Travel Clinic.....	29
Vaccinations	29
Medical Conditions and Concerns	30
Prescriptions	30

Disabilities	31
Other Hazards	31
Health Tips	32
Food and Water	32
Dangerous Plants, Animals, and Insects	33
Alcohol	33
Health and First Aid Kits.....	33
General Travel Information.....	34
International Electricity.....	34
Family Emergencies	35
Cell Phones.....	35
Topics to Research	36
Preparing to be the “American” Abroad.....	37
Checklists	37
Traveling on Your Own While Abroad	41
Planning	41
Traveling.....	41
Lodging.....	42
Behavior	43

Start Here

Before you begin the Study Abroad process, it is essential that you take a moment to reflect.

First, consider the reasons that you want to study abroad:

- What are your interests, goals, and expectations?
- Will studying abroad enhance your academic, professional, or personal goals? How?

Second, think about the requirements of studying abroad:

- Are you in good standing with the university academically, financially, and with the Office of Student Conduct?
- Do you have access to the requisite financial resources?
- Will studying abroad affect your academic plan?

Third, reflect upon your learning preferences:

- Do you require quiet and/or uninterrupted study time?
- Do you learn best through practice?
- Do you prefer independent research?
- Are you very dependent on access to your instructor?
- Do stressful or unexpected situations impact your ability to learn?

Fourth, honestly describe yourself. The aspects of your self-identity that you choose to accentuate can play an important role in choosing a study abroad program:

- What ethnic, racial, temperamental, religious, or gender aspects of your identity would you highlight? For example, do you consider yourself a young, heterosexual female; a quiet, African American male; a homosexual, Catholic Latino?

It is not realistic to expect that a group of your peers or an institution abroad will adapt to your needs and learning preferences. If you feel that you can only learn within a very specific environment, you should be especially careful in selecting your program. You may want to look into non-credit bearing options. Conversely, if

you want a challenge, start developing your adaptation skills. These skills can pay handsomely in your future careers and life.

Factors in Selecting a Program

The following are factors to consider when making your decision about a particular program.

1. **Advising:** You are encouraged to discuss your options with your academic advisor to ensure that your academic needs will be met. Depending on how advising is structured in your academic program it may be advisable to speak to several advisors (e.g. college, department, athletics, or financial assistance). The courses offered may apply to your major, minor or count as elective credits in a language or other subject. If you are interested in learning a language, your current level of proficiency (e.g., beginner, intermediate, advanced, conversational) may be a factor.
2. **Credit:** Programs offered by Office of International Studies (OIS) are usually for academic credit; however, under specific circumstances, the option may exist to enroll in a zero credit course. Regardless of the credit options available, students must be registered in coursework associated with the program. Further, students should be aware that zero credit courses may still carry fees.
3. **Graduation Requirements:** UCF's summer programs serve to fulfill the summer enrollment requirement. Some minors, such as International Engineering and World Comparative Studies require a study abroad experience.
4. **Experiential Learning:** Some study abroad experiences involve internships, service learning, field experiences or research opportunities abroad. The skills developed will likely help prepare you for your career. You must coordinate with your academic department if you wish to use an experiential program to fulfill a requirement for your major.
5. **Language of Instruction:** Not all programs are delivered in English. Check the level of proficiency necessary to participate in a program to ensure that you will be able to understand and take advantage of the information delivered in the courses taught abroad.

6. Program Length: UCF study abroad programs vary in length from one week to two semesters. Make sure the program you choose will be compatible with your academic plan of study. Participation in an unplanned or incompatible program can delay your date of graduation.
7. Accommodations: Some programs incorporate home stays and others use dormitories or hotels. While home stays provide more opportunities to interact with people from the local culture, you may prefer a higher degree of independence. The types of accommodation available for each program are listed on the program webpage.
8. Cost: Program costs can vary significantly. Check the individual program webpage for fee details. Remember that program fees do not normally include tuition fees or travel costs. Develop a budget that includes program fees, tuition/academic fees, costs of travel, and the estimated costs of additional activities that you may want to pursue while in country. You may use federal financial aid and scholarships for credit bearing programs. You are also eligible to apply for OIS administered scholarships, as well as many prestigious scholarships.

Studying Abroad Options

Students have access to a dizzying array of study abroad options and there are few national standards or regulations for study abroad programs. It is your responsibility to review all aspects of a program to ensure that it fits your needs and expectations. We classify your options as follows:

UCF programs administered by the Office of International Studies:

1. Short-Term programs are intended to provide the maximum amount of exposure to a subject in the shortest period. These programs are often led by one or more UCF faculty/staff, may last anywhere from 1 to 8 weeks, and can include one or more UCF academic courses. The amount of credit that can be earned is discussed on the program webpage.
 - Courses associated with these programs must meet the same criteria for regular UCF courses and can be delivered completely abroad or as a complement to a course delivered on campus or online.
 - The minimum requirements for these programs will vary and are listed within the specific program information at <http://studyabroad.ucf.edu>.

2. Reciprocal Student Exchange Programs (RSE) provide an opportunity to become a student at a university abroad for one or two semesters, while maintaining your official registration at UCF. UCF will host a student from the same partner institution in exchange for them hosting you. The following requirements and expectations apply to RSE.

- Since RSE programs require more from the students and are more competitive, participation is limited to UCF students who have attained at least a junior status and who have a minimum 3.0 GPA. Students must be enrolled full time (12 credit hours or more for undergraduate), and the courses taken may or may not be complimentary to your degree program.
- RSE program courses may be delivered in the language of the host country. For these programs, you will need to demonstrate language proficiency at a level that will make you competitive in the classroom. Information on the level of language proficiency required is available on the specific program webpage.
- RSE participants will have to adapt to different academic environments and systems. You may have to learn to work more independently; be asked to read and find additional resources to support your learning; be tested only once or twice a semester; have no feedback until the end of the semester; have departmental exams rather than single course exams; or have professors who are not as accessible and may not have posted office hours.
- In general, RSE programs are more demanding and require greater personal commitment, maturity, and organization than short-term programs. RSE participants must learn to manage the requirements of a new academic system while adjusting to a new cultural environment.

3. Experiential Programs can include internships, service learning or volunteering. These programs will have identified learning objectives.

- Experiential learning at UCF is coordinated by Career Services and Experiential Learning (www.explearning.ucf.edu). These offices provide information and support for students interested in experiential activities.

- Specific information about study abroad programs with an experiential component is found at www.studyabroad.ucf.edu/.

4. UCF Approved Partner programs are short-term and semester long options that are facilitated by an approved study abroad provider in collaboration with OIS.

- Course work in these programs will be treated as transfer course work. OIS will work with students to complete the appropriate “transient” form and get pre-approval of course work acceptance.
- The minimum requirements and language proficiency for these programs will vary.
- Both OIS and the approved partner will approve a student’s application.

Non-UCF Programs:

These programs can be divided into four groups: in-state institutions (universities within the state of Florida), U.S. academic institutions outside of Florida, 3rd party providers, and direct enrollment in institutions abroad. The process and level of difficulty for transferring credits from non-UCF programs will vary and it is your responsibility to look into this issue before you commit to a particular program. Access to your financial aid and scholarships will also vary depending on the type of non-UCF program. Become well informed before committing to any program.

1. In-State Institutions include all members of the State University System (SUS) of Florida, public community colleges, and other accredited members of the Florida Statewide Numbering System. Transfer of academic credit within these institutions is made easier through the use of the same numbers for equivalent courses. Financial aid and non-UCF scholarships may travel with you as long as the coursework counts toward your degree.

- Note that there may be restrictions on the transfer of credit. For example, if the credit is not from an accredited academic institution, it may not transfer. Credit from institutions that only provide lower-level credit, like community colleges, may not be accepted as upper-level credit at UCF. UCF may also

restrict the use of credit for which there is no equivalent approved at UCF or that is noted in the Statewide Numbering System as non-automatic transfer.

2. U.S. Academic Institutions Outside of Florida: The process for participating in programs hosted by accredited U.S. institutions outside of Florida is similar to the in-state process, except that it may be more difficult for the transfer credit to be used toward your degree, as course equivalencies have not been previously articulated. There are also more limitations in the use of state financial aid and scholarships. For more information about transferring credit, please refer to the UCF Undergraduate Catalog or Graduate Catalog, respectively.

3. 3rd Party Providers (not approved by OIS): Non-Academic Providers administer and sponsor a wide range of study abroad programs. Some of these programs have been in existence for a long time and have great reputations. However, unless the credit comes from an academic institution, you will not receive credit at UCF. If you are evaluating a program that is sponsored by a 3rd party provider and it lists credits, ask questions about which institution would be issuing the transcript, otherwise you may not get any credit at UCF. Furthermore, you will not be able to use financial aid or scholarships if the program is not for credit.

4. Direct Registration at An Institution Abroad: This may be an appealing option for you; however, transfer credit from an institution outside the U.S. will require an evaluation by a UCF approved transcript evaluation firm (such as World Education Services or Josef Silny & Associates). The cost of this evaluation will be your responsibility and you should include it in your budget calculation. Furthermore, having the evaluation does not necessarily mean the credits will transfer or dictate how they will apply at UCF. Financial aid and scholarships most probably will not travel with you to these programs.

- Directly registration comes with varying levels of student support. Many foreign universities do not have the same level of student support services common in the U.S. and you may have to find your own housing. In addition to transfer of credit and financial aid, issues of health, safety, and welfare should all be considered when evaluating non-UCF programs. Make sure that you have thoroughly evaluated all aspects of the program before committing to anything. While OIS can provide tips on things to look for, we do not have any control over non-UCF programs and do not formally recommend them.

Academic Policies and Procedures

UCF academic regulations and procedures apply to most of the academic activities of study abroad programs. Study abroad participants for short-term and approved partner programs must be registered in one or more courses while abroad. The minimum course load required will be included in the informational materials for the specific program. Participants in a RSE must be registered full time (12 credit hours or more for undergraduates per semester, 9 credits or more for graduate students). UCF class and term overload policies also apply to study abroad programs.

Filing to graduate the semester before or the semester you plan to study abroad is not advisable and may result in ineligibility for your chosen program and/or financial aid. Consult with your advisors before making any decisions.

Credit seeking non-UCF students may be admitted to programs, contingent upon OIS and faculty leader approval. Undergraduate auditors, senior citizens, as well as State of Florida and UCF personnel must follow the policies listed in the UCF undergraduate catalog for their specific situations. Registration waivers may be applied to tuition but not to any program fees. Graduate student registration is addressed in the UCF Graduate Catalog.

UCF Study Abroad courses are subject to the regular UCF academic deadlines and registration processes. Study Abroad courses are identified in the class schedule and registering for them requires a special permission number. You must fulfill all application and commitment requirements before getting the permission number to register.

RSE participants must register at UCF and at their host institution during the same semester. Courses selected at the institution abroad must be approved in advance

to ensure that the UCF registration is consistent with the courses taken abroad. You are responsible for informing UCF of any changes in your registration at the host institution. You may not be able to get credit for courses that have not been previously approved. RSE participants must bring back course information, assignments, and copies of work produced, such as papers, exams and homework, transcript. This information may be required for the UCF faculty of record to be able to assign your grade.

Grades from study abroad programs are not always posted at the end of the semester spent abroad. Short-term program grades may be delayed days; RSE grades may be delayed for a month or two, while the information is received from the institution abroad. An "N" will show on your transcript until the grade has been posted by the UCF faculty of record. The late posting may create a issues with financial aid and scholarships. If you have additional questions, contact the Office of Student Financial Assistance and ask for advice regarding your particular situation.

All grades received while studying abroad in an exchange or short-term program become part of your UCF record. In addition, Study Abroad grades will be factored into your UCF grade point average.

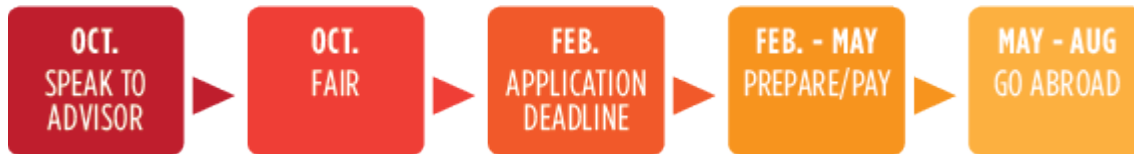
While out of the country, you must keep abreast of the deadlines for the semester following your study abroad program.

Application Process

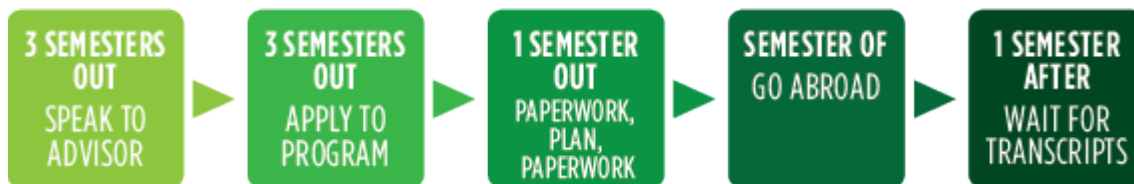
After you have selected a study abroad program click the "Apply Now" button on the program page to begin the application process. After you have submitted your application, the Program Leader associated with the program will contact you to schedule an "interview." After this "interview" the Program Leader will decide to "approve", "deny" or "waitlist" your application. If approved, you will be sent an email in which you will be asked to "commit" to your program selection. **After you have "committed", you will be considered a participant in the program and liable for all fees associated with your program.** Program costs will be posted to your UCF account according to the schedule on the programs' webpage. There is a non-refundable deposit built into the initial charge; for Semester Programs this deposit is \$350 and for Short-term Programs it is \$150. If you do not "commit", your application will become inactive and no fees will be posted. Approved students are able to "commit" based on available space. Be advised that programs sometimes reach capacity before the "commitment" deadline.



Short-term Program Time Line



Exchange Program Time Line



Payments

Charges for UCF study abroad programs are placed directly onto the student's UCF account. In most cases these charges are placed during the semester prior to the start of the program. Students will be notified via email when the charges are applied to their account. Specific due dates are listed on the program specific webpage. Registration & transcript holds will be placed on the student's account for failure to pay by the deadline of the specific charge. If you have committed to a program and are unable to pay by the deadline it is suggested you speak to the Office of Financial Assistance regarding short-term loan advances.

You have several payment options – you may pay:

1. By Mail:

University of Central Florida- Student Account Services
Attn: Payment Processing
P.O. Box 160115
Orlando, FL 32816-0115

- Make checks payable to the "University of Central Florida"
- Write "Study Abroad/(your PID)" on the check

- Mail it to:
- 2. Online at www.my.UCF.edu
 - UCF charges a 2% convenience fee for all online payments except for e-check
- 3. Main Campus 24-hour Depository Box located at the pond entrance of Millican Hall.

The fees posted to your account are fees owed to the university and are subject to the collection policies of the university.

Withdrawal

Prior to "commitment"

If you have applied to a program but have not "committed" you may withdraw your application at no charge.

After "commitment"

If you wish to withdraw from your selected program after you have "committed" you will be financially responsible for any and all funds committed on your behalf. This amount may be the entire program cost as purchases are made quickly after your "commitment" is received.

When students "commit" their intent to participate in the program, they acknowledge having read and accept the OIS study abroad Terms of Participation, Assumption of Risk Agreement and Release as well as any other documents that OIS, the UCF program leaders or third parties require participating students to agree to. Students thereby also accept the associated financial commitments. When a student withdraws he or she will only receive funds that OIS has been able to recover.

OIS makes every attempt to limit the financial loss to the student, the program and the university. However, if a student withdraws for reasons other than those deemed exceptional by the university, he/she may owe the entire cost of the program.

After the program's application period closes, OIS begins paying program fees to vendors. If a student withdraws after the application period, any amount that may be refunded, if anything at all, by UCF to the student will be assessed and issued after the financial review of the program has concluded. This process may take several months after the program has ended.

All withdrawal requests must be submitted by e-mail to OIS

(studyabroad@ucf.edu). OIS will not accept verbal notifications of withdrawals.

Withdrawal requests cannot be made through the Program Leader or Instructor.

The withdrawal process is complete only after you have received confirmation from OIS that we received and approved your request. OIS may not issue any refund if the program participant cancels his or her application after "commitment", unless the circumstances of the cancellation are deemed by the University to be exceptional, including but not limited to severe illness, death, involuntary call to military service, or university administrative error.

Program Cancellations

OIS will refund all fees paid to the university if UCF decides to cancel a program for safety and security reasons prior to its start. If a program has to be cancelled by UCF after it has started, refunds of fees paid will be prorated and may be limited by non-recoverable payments that have already been made to vendors. Refund of tuition fees will depend on how much academic credit the participant will be able to receive for work already completed or to be completed through alternative arrangements. OIS will assist participants in arranging alternatives for completing planned academic credit.

Passport and Visa

A passport is an official document issued by a government to certify your nationality. In addition to being required by immigration officials, your passport will be your principal identification document while you are abroad. All international travelers need a valid passport and you will be required to provide OIS with a scan of your passport before participating in a UCF program. To obtain or renew a passport, please visit the U.S. Department of State website. You can fill out the application and turn it in at any U.S. Post Office. UCF has a location that accepts passport applications and does not require an appointment (The Spot). If you already have a passport, make sure that it will not expire for at least 6 months beyond your return date, as this is a requirement of many countries. You are responsible for ensuring that your passport is valid for the necessary period of time to travel. You will not be refunded if you fail to obtain a valid passport. The normal processing time for a passport application or renewal is from 4 to 6 weeks, but it may take longer during busy travel seasons. There is an expedited process that takes about 2 weeks, but you will incur additional fees. You must also sign your passport before it is valid.

We further recommend that you prepare a passport replacement kit before you leave, containing the following documentation and support items.

- Two passport photos (U.S. format in inches).
- A clear color copy of the photo and signed signature page of your passport, indicating passport number, date, and place of issue.
- Photocopy of your social security card.
- An additional official photo I.D. (driver's license, etc.).

Always report the loss of your passport to the U.S. consulate and the police, as well as to the Program Leader and OIS. You'll likely need to make an appointment with the nearest consulate passport office, visit with your kit and a police declaration of theft, and you can get another passport relatively easily. You should be prepared to pay a replacement fee.

In addition to your passport, many governments require a visa to enter the country. A visa is an official authorization appended to a passport, permitting entry into and travel within a particular country or region. Visa requirements vary from country to country and can be effected by your length of stay or the purpose of your visit. Many countries allow American tourists to visit without a visa, but some countries require Americans who are participating in specific type of study abroad programs to have a student visa. You will be provided with information on visa requirements for Americans as part of the specific program information if one is required. Be aware that visa requirements and costs may change with little notice. Traditionally, visa fees are not included in your program fees; please check each program page for specifics. Additionally, visa requirements differ based on citizenship. If you are not a U.S. citizen make sure that you include the appropriate citizenship information in your program application and contact OIS staff about your status at studyabroad@ucf.edu so that we can better assist you with the visa process.

Acceptance Letters

Exchange program participants will receive an acceptance letter from their host school. The acceptance letter is one of your most important travel documents because it provides supporting documentation for your visa status. You will find the letter particularly helpful when making your way through customs, arriving in your host city, and if you must apply for a visa.

Scholarships and Financial Aid

Joining a study abroad program requires a substantial financial commitment. Before applying to a program, check the program website and get an estimate of expenses including the program fee, tuition and fees, airfare, passport, visa, immunizations, and spending money. You should be able to use federal financial aid and scholarships if you are enrolled in a degree program and are registered in the minimum number of credits required by UCF Financial Aid or your scholarship provider. If you do not receive federal financial aid and want to apply for a need-based scholarship for studying abroad you must fill out a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>.

The FAFSA is required to determine your eligibility for Pell Grants and other federal and state grants, federal loans (need-based and non-need-based), work-study, and other scholarships. While the amount of your financial aid may be increased due to the program costs, do not assume that you will be awarded the money needed to cover all costs. Look for additional or alternative sources of funding. If you need additional information about financial aid, contact the UCF Office of Student Financial Assistance <http://finaid.ucf.edu/>.

The UCF Study Abroad website provides a listing of scholarships, including those administered by OIS. You can apply for these scholarships after you have confirmed your participation in a program

It is advisable to not limit your scholarship search to "study abroad" scholarships. Most academic scholarships can be applied to your study abroad expenses.

Insurance

The University has purchased a Travel policy with ACE American Insurance Company to cover faculty, staff and students traveling outside of the United States, while on University sponsored trips. This insurance is primary to all other insurance policies that may also provide coverage, such as health insurance or workers compensation. All faculty, staff and students are covered so long as the trip is sponsored by the University, be it through, a study aboard program, research work for degree or business conference for a staff member. Benefits Summaries and printable Travel Assistance Cards can be found here: <http://www.ehs.ucf.edu/insurance/travelins.html>

Please note the general exclusions including: "Covered Person being legally intoxicated as determined according to the laws of the jurisdiction in which the Injury occurred." & "Injury or loss contributed by the use of drugs unless administered by a doctor."

Please contact Risk Management at 407-823-0206 with any further questions.

Travel insurance, while not required, is highly recommended. Travel insurance protects you from costs associated with travel cancellations and interruptions, as well as loss or damage to property during the trip.

Make sure you save all of your receipts from doctors' offices and pharmacies. Some doctor's offices may require you to pay office visit fees up front. Many pharmacies also expect cash payment when you receive prescription medication. You will then submit your receipts to the insurance company for reimbursement. Pre-departure orientations will provide more details about insurance coverage.

Flight Arrangements

Most UCF programs do not include the airline ticket. You may purchase the airline ticket from travel websites, direct purchase from airlines, frequent flyer miles, or through travel agents. You also have the option of organizing with other group members to book your flight together. OIS recommends booking directly with the airline for the most flexibility in the event of a cancellation or change in itinerary.

The program cost does not cover UCF tuition, airfare (unless a program expressly and specifically includes this), independent travel, or personal expenses. Cost is approximate and may fluctuate due to changes in foreign currency or unforeseen circumstances. UCF reserves the right to alter or cancel the program at any time. In such cases, the university shall not be liable for airfare, transportation costs and/or any other costs incurred by the student. UCF, Office of International Studies will make reasonable efforts to notify students through reasonable means to inform the students to reserve their flights. Students should consult their travel agent about buying travel insurance to defray unanticipated costs in the event travel plans change. UCF will make reasonable efforts to notify students via Knights email when any significant changes are being made to the program. It is entirely within UCF's discretion as to what changes are considered significant.

Each program page includes information about the date and time that you are expected to meet in country. You will also find details about the arrangements that have been made to greet you at the airport. Be aware that, if you do not arrive at the date and time established for the group, you will probably have to make

personal arrangements at your own cost to get to the program site. For your own safety and security, you are required to submit a complete trip itinerary to OIS. It does not matter if your travel dates are not the same as the program dates, as long as your itinerary has you in the selected country for the duration of the program.

Pre-departure Orientation

All participants in a UCF study abroad program are required to complete an online pre-departure course and an in-person group session prior to traveling abroad. Failure to comply with this requirement may lead to removal from the program with no refund or reversal of charges.

The online "course" consists of 4 modules with information on Cultural Adaptation, Goal Setting, Safety Abroad and Incident Management.

The in-person session uses the material covered in the online course in a practical interactive setting. Topics covered include awareness of self and surroundings, emergency/crisis scenarios, managing money, avoiding pickpockets, packing, communication plans, expectations, developing a support group, etc.

Students will not receive a grade or academic credit for this course but all components must be completed prior to departure. There is no tuition charge for this course. The material covered in this orientation will prepare students for a rewarding, successful and safe experience abroad.

Students are also issued insurance cards and country specific emergency cards to take with them on their travels.

In Country

Jet Lag

Long trips that cross time zones can disrupt your circadian rhythm, resulting in a temporary condition called "jet lag." Some symptoms include fatigue, irritability, insomnia, and an impaired ability to concentrate. Keep the effect of jet lag in mind when you are planning activities for your first few days in country, as your body may not react normally.

In Country Orientation

Most programs usually have an orientation, following your arrival in country, to discuss the local environment, as well as program rules and local norms. You are required to attend these orientations. In the case of Semester Program, there may be a university-wide orientation for international students, or you may have a personal orientation conducted by the Host Institution's Exchange Coordinator.

Course Registration Abroad

The process of registration for study abroad courses will vary. If you are taking part in a short- term program or partner program that includes a single (or multiple) course option, OIS will work with you throughout the process. However, if the program abroad requires a placement exam or you are taking part in an RSE, you will need to learn the process of registration at your host institution. RSE students will also be required to work with an academic advisor in their college at UCF.

Reflections and Journaling

Regular reflections can provide an effective way to get the most out of an experience. Your program may have reflections incorporated as an activity. Otherwise, you can reflect on your experiences through journaling or by posting your experiences online. Online blogs have the added bonus of allowing you to share your experiences with others.

Culture Shock

Culture shock is disorientation caused by sudden exposure to cultural differences. Although most people experience culture shock, every experience and person is different; no one expects a student going to Paris to have the same type of culture shock as a student going to Cape Town. Prepare for its effects by being aware of the different emotions you may experience.

The various aspects of culture shock can last for weeks or months depending on your ability to adapt. Even if you are a well-travelled individual, you may still have problems adjusting. There are numerous ways to combat your feelings of disorientation until they pass:

- Learn as much as possible from local residents about their culture.

- Keep in touch with other American students. If you are directly enrolled in a foreign university, find out their local hangout for American students. It can sometimes be helpful to meet with them and share experiences.
- Keep yourself busy doing things you enjoy. When you have free time visit museums, go to movies, and tour local sites of interest.
- Keep in touch with your family and friends at home. Letters, phone calls, Skype calls, or email contact will make you feel less isolated.
- Try to keep your long-range goals in mind. Experiencing a new culture will often involve some frustration and feelings of loneliness, but they don't last forever.
- Do not overdo any of the preceding suggestions or you risk never making the adjustments to your new environment which are requisite to your purpose for being overseas.

For most students, the symptoms of culture shock decline after the first few weeks, as they begin to understand their host culture better. However, if you find that the feelings of irritability and depression linger, you may wish to seek help from a doctor or counselor. Your Program Leader or your international student office at your host university should be able to direct you to counseling or support organizations.

Local Customs

The topic of cultural differences and customs is a significant but somewhat elusive issue. On one hand, it is important to realize that there are some variances to consider. On the other hand, it is crucial to avoid making stereotypes. Furthermore, these differences are not written down and cataloged in any official document, so learning to adapt to these differences is often done through experience. However, there are some common areas where many students notice cultural differences, such as:

- Politeness and Etiquette During Meals
- Types of Humor
- Physical Contact and Space
- Appropriate Greetings
- Concepts of Time and Promptness
- Drinking and Drunkenness

Certain behavior can affront local custom and show ignorance or disrespect. In many countries for example, women traditionally cover certain parts of the body,

such as the head, arms, and legs. In others, it is frowned upon for couples to hold hands or display other types of physical affection in public. Most countries have customs associated with religion and sacred places. In certain Islamic societies, non-Muslims may not enter sacred sites. In Thailand, Buddhist monks must carry out an elaborate purification ritual if a woman touches them or even sits beside them on a bus.

Understanding local customs will help you feel a part of the new culture and avoid potentially embarrassing situations. Your body language can be extremely important, especially if you are not fluent in the local language. Saying hello and goodbye via a simple hand gesture, for example, is done quite differently from place to place. When to shake hands or kiss is signaled in different ways from culture to culture. How close to sit or stand when talking also varies greatly. These are just a few of the many simple habits for you to learn and then follow in order not to give unintended offense.

Gender

Gender and sexual orientation are significant factors in study abroad safety. In some cultures, gender roles and behavior are strictly defined. Become aware of the gender roles and behavioral expectation for the areas you will visit. Your behavior should be sensitive to the local norms, but do not feel pressured to do anything that you feel is inappropriate. If you feel harassed, contact your program leader or host institution's exchange coordinator. Your director or coordinator can provide guidance and support for medical, psychological, and legal issues.

Be vigilant and use good judgment. As a traveler, you may be more visible and thus more likely to attract interest. Sexual assault is not only rape. It can be verbal, visual, or anything that forces you to "join" in unwanted sexual contact. It can happen in different situations, by a stranger in an isolated place, on a date, or in the home by someone you know. If you are assaulted, please remember that you are not alone and you may do the following:

- Go to a safe place
- Do not shower or change clothes
- Get help from a trusted person
- Inform your program leader or host institution's exchange coordinator

Sexual Orientation

The way that sexual orientation is perceived varies greatly across the globe. No matter how you identify yourself it is important to become aware of the cultural norms, roles, behaviors, local laws and social climate associated with sexual orientation. In some cases, your host country may be more open about diverse sexualities than the USA, while in others engaging in sexual activities with someone

of the same sex may be considered a criminal act. Furthermore, do not assume that behaviors that you associate with a particular sexual orientation necessarily apply. For example, in some cultures, you can only associate with people of your own gender in public. In other cultures, showing affection is expected; therefore, men holding hands on the street would not imply anything beyond friendship.

If you are concerned about sexual orientation and your study abroad experience contact your program leader or OIS staff at studyabroad@ucf.edu.

Dating and Relationships

If you decide to date while participating in a study abroad program, be aware that the meaning of certain actions or behaviors changes with place. For example, accepting a drink or a kiss may be perceived as implying that something more is acceptable. Be cautious about giving out your e-mail, phone number, address, or even friending someone on Facebook because you may end up receiving unwanted contacts. Be aware that your accommodations may also have restrictions regarding visits by people who are not part of the program. It is important that you consider your behavior and inform yourself about how dating and relationships generally function in your host culture.

Dating for lesbian, bi-sexual, gay and transgendered (LGBT) participants may have additional implications. Inform yourself of specific laws pertaining to sexual behavior and sexual/gender orientation in your host country, including the following:

- The legal status of same-sex sexual behavior in the host country
- The age of consent for sexual behavior
- Restrictions on freedom of association or expression for LGBT people
- Antidiscrimination laws (these can be national laws or specific to local areas)
- Sodomy laws

Race and Ethnicity

Race and ethnicity are key factors in the development of personal identity. Perceptions or treatment of your ethnicity have implications on your well-being. Race and ethnicity are subjects of importance in selecting and having a good study abroad experience. You should become familiar with the local discourse on race and ethnicity, the racial and ethnic make-up of your host country, and historical relationships. A well-structured experience may provide excellent opportunities for personal growth. For example, if you identify yourself as an African American, you may be able to discuss the implications of being a racial or ethnic minority in the

U.S. Notwithstanding your ethnic or racial identification, you may have the chance to assess the local dynamics associated with race or ethnic relations and then compare those to your U.S. experience. Your race or ethnicity may also be a factor in the way that you relate to the local residents. You or they may feel more comfortable if you look like them or speak like them. However, these similarities in race and ethnicity may lead to some cultural expectations from your part or theirs, which may not be true for other members of the study abroad team. Be aware, if your study abroad is in a very homogenous society, you may easily stand out, and locals may show increased interest or curiosity. It is important to go with the flow and try not to be offended. You may even enjoy your “celebrity” status. Do not hesitate to share your thoughts and concerns with others in your group or with your program leader and OIS.

Accommodations

The options for your accommodations abroad will be detailed on the specific program webpage. Options may include host families, university residence halls, or a modestly priced hotel. Be realistic about your expectations. The information on the website will include a list of what is provided by the accommodations and what you are expected to bring or purchase. Participants in RSE programs may have to arrange individual accommodations with the assistance of the host institution’s exchange coordinator (information about this process will be provided to you by OIS staff).

If you intend to arrive earlier or stay later than the program dates, you must arrange accommodations yourself and be prepared to cover those additional expenses. Arrangements for accommodations or logistics outside of the program dates are not the responsibility of OIS, the Program Leader or the host program, institution, or family. You are expected to stay in the accommodation provided for the full length of the program. If circumstances require that you leave early, you must notify, in writing, the Program Leader, or on-site Program Leader and OIS at least one week in advance of your departure; no refund will be given for early departures.

If you are dissatisfied with your accommodations, notify the Program Leader or host institution’s coordinator. If your lodging was arranged as part of your program, your situation will be evaluated and every attempt will be made to address and resolve any issue(s). If deemed appropriate, you may be reassigned during your program. However, you are only permitted to change your accommodations when it has been approved by the Program Leader(s). If you arranged your housing yourself, you will need to address your concerns with the housing administrator or

owner.

Serious infractions or repeated offenses of the housing rules and regulations may lead to expulsion from the home, facility, or even from the program. If you are expelled from the housing but remain in the program, you will be responsible for locating and paying for your alternative housing. No refunds will be provided in those circumstances.

You are personally responsible for any and all damages you cause to the home, dormitory room, apartment, or classroom. If you shared your accommodations with other program participants, and we are unable to determine who is responsible for the damage, the cost will be divided equally among all occupants. You will be financially responsible for any outstanding bills associated with your accommodations, such as telephone or Internet usage charges. If you depart without having paid your outstanding bills, OIS will request that your status with the university be changed to "not in good standing" until your financial obligations are met.

"Homestays" provide a window into a different culture by immersing you in the local culture. The more time you are with a family, the greater opportunity you will have to experience day-to-day life in your host country. This experience requires a certain amount of flexibility and an interest on your part in interacting with the host family. You should expect cultural differences as well as differences in rules and regulations. It is imperative that the rules set by the family are followed. It may or may not be like living with your family, as family relationships and dynamics vary. When arranged by OIS, homestay families are screened and trained by our local partners. If you choose a homestay accommodation, become aware of some of the cultural differences and prepare to have a period of adjustment. Host families are accustomed to hosting independent, adult students; however, just remember to be courteous and respectful. For example, please let them know ahead of time if you will not be home for dinner, intend to return late, or other schedule changes.

Unexpected Difficulties

The Program Leader represents UCF during short-term programs. He or she is the first person to contact if you have any questions or concerns associated with the program. Upon your arrival in country, you should be given a telephone number and instructions on how to best contact the Program Leader. If you are not, ask your Program Leader and notify OIS. Depending on the program, you may also receive other local contacts for issues such as housing or academics. Remember that these telephone numbers are not public and you do not have permission to share them with anyone outside of the program. In addition, at the pre-departure

orientation you will receive a UCF phone number that you can contact in case of emergency. During office hours (M-F 8-5 Eastern Standard Time), you can also contact the Office of International Studies at (407) 882-2300.

You are also encouraged to file an "Incident Report" for anything you feel needs documentation or follow-up by OIS and UCF. The Incident Report can be filed using the link at www.studyabroad.ucf.edu

U.S. Embassy or Consulate

Consular officers can provide a number of services to US citizens or residents while abroad. Information about services to Americans overseas can be found at the link below: (travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies_1212.html).

Medical Services

You should make note of the location of the nearest hospital, emergency room, pharmacy, and a physician recommended by the host institution's exchange coordinator. U.S. Embassies and Consulates also maintain a list of physicians and medical facilities

(travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/go/health/doctors.html). It is further recommended that you become familiar with the telephone numbers to call during an emergency (such as ambulance, police, or single emergency number).

Emergency Plan

All UCF programs require that the student plan how to address an emergency while in-country. This plan will be part of your pre-departure orientation. The plan will include what to do if there is an emergency in the country, including where you might go and creating a list of relevant phone numbers. It is expected that this plan will change as your experience progresses and new information is acquired.

Returning Home

Returning to Campus

Depending on the term and duration of your program, you may have to start making preparations for your return to UCF prior to leaving your host country. Some issues, such as your UCF housing and next term registration will need to be

addressed in advance. OIS cannot assist with the logistics of your return to campus, unless the issues are associated with your study abroad (for example, OIS may be able to assist with course substitutions associated with your study abroad program). However, we cannot help you with arranging housing at UCF for your next semester. You should continue checking UCF email to ensure that you do not miss important deadlines. Before you depart the U.S., you should check and arrange for what you will need regarding housing and financial aid for the semester following your return.

Courses and Substitutions

Courses conducted during the UCF short-term programs and RSE (Reciprocal Student Exchange) courses that have an exact equivalency articulated between UCF and the host institution are treated just like any other course at UCF. For RSE courses, you may need to provide the appropriate information for the UCF faculty of record to evaluate and post your grade. However, as is the case for partner programs, if the courses are to be treated as transfer credit or if the equivalencies have not been previously articulated between the two institutions, you will have to follow the appropriate transient or course substitution procedures for your college or academic department at UCF. If you have any questions about course substitution, contact OIS staff at studyabroad@ucf.edu.

If you are a non-UCF student and want the credits to be transferred to your institution, you must request that an official transcript be issued and sent to your home institution.

Financial Aid Considerations upon Return

Be advised that some UCF study abroad programs are partnered with institutions abroad whose academic calendars vary from the UCF academic calendar. The institutions abroad will likely issue your transcript after the UCF grade deadline, resulting in a delayed grade report at UCF. If your grades are received after the UCF grade deadline, you will need to file an Appeal with the Office of Student Financial Assistance to request a review for reinstatement of your financial aid, including scholarships. Please visit the Student Financial Assistance web site or contact the Office of Financial Assistance for further details.

Readjusting

As odd as it may sound, you should prepare yourself for a period of cultural readjustment or “reverse culture shock” when you come back to the United States. Returning travelers may experience physical and emotional disconnection, similar to the “culture shock” often experienced during the early stages of international travel. Some of the most common manifestations can be as simple as jet lag or as complex as depression or culture clash.

In fact, many returning students are surprised to find that adjusting to life “back home” is more difficult than the adjustment they made to life in a foreign country. Why is this? While students understand that study abroad is a life changing experience, many of them are not immediately aware of how their experience abroad has caused them to look at life in the United States through different lenses. Remember that while you were gone, you were not the only one who changed. Everyone and everything back in the U.S. may have also changed. Furthermore, your perspective – the filter through which you look at the world - may have changed. Take time to re-adjust. Take stock of your changes and make the most of those experiences. Maybe you will feel that friends or family cannot “really understand” your stories or positions. Remember that many people may have difficulty relating to what you are saying because they have not taken part in your experience. It is a good opportunity to continue any journaling that you were doing while in country. This will help you as you sort out your thoughts and emotions about the experience and your subsequent return. It is also a good idea to attend the OIS-sponsored “Welcome Back” event. This will allow you to connect with other study abroad students who will understand how you are feeling and will enjoy swapping stories with you. It is also recommended that you make an appointment with your health care provider for a wellness checkup. Share with your physician the list of countries you visited. Make sure that your regular health insurance coverage is active, as study abroad insurance will not cover you in the U.S.

Build on your Experience

After you have readjusted to life and studies at home, you may want to build on your study abroad experience. Here are some options; become a peer counselor for students who are considering study abroad, and help them make good planning choices. Volunteer as a “past participant” at study abroad orientations for the next group of outbound students. Polish the language you learned by taking advanced language classes or joining a language club. Join an international organization. Pursue other opportunities to study, work, or travel abroad.

Career Planning

Your study abroad experience may propel you to begin searching for an international career as soon as you return home. Consult publications on working abroad and pay attention to immigration policies in the countries that interest you. While you are abroad, make a list of contact information for anyone you meet who works in your field of interest. Once home, write to them to let them know you are interested in returning abroad to work after you graduate. Visit UCF Career Services (www.career.ucf.edu/) and ask for any resources they may have about preparing a “global resume” as well as tips for interviewing in other cultures. Be sure to include your study abroad experience, language skills, and cross-cultural adaptations skills when writing your resume. Attend job-hunters workshops that are relevant to your career goals. Find out if agencies and companies with offices abroad recruit on your campus. Investigate jobs in the United States that have an international focus. Look into teaching English as a second language abroad.

Health, Wellness and Safety

STEP and Other Services

The U.S. Department of State provides information for students planning to study abroad. DOS issues travel warnings in cases where, in their consideration, the conditions in the country make it dangerous for U.S. citizens to travel to it, or when the U.S. Government’s ability to assist Americans is limited by the closure of an embassy or consulate or reduction of its staff. UCF policy is to not develop or promote study abroad programs that take place in areas for which the DOS has issued a travel warning. Another DOS notice, the travel alert, is issued to disseminate information about short-term conditions that pose imminent risks to the security of U.S. citizens, as in the case of natural disasters, terrorist attacks, coups, anniversaries of terrorist events, election-related demonstrations or violence, and high profile events such as international conferences or regional sport events. UCF actions associated with travel alerts are specific to the situation detailed in the text of the alert.

In order to receive DOS travel alerts, all participants should register online with the Department of State’s Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). Registration also helps the local embassy or consulate locate you if they have a need to contact you, especially in a case of emergency. Please note that you must create an account and then register your trip with specific dates and locations. It is highly suggested that you use this whenever you travel abroad, not just when studying abroad. Registration is voluntary (but highly recommended) and it costs nothing.

General Health

Staying healthy will make your program much more enjoyable. You want to make your trip a pleasurable experience, not one hampered by illness or bad medical experiences. Fortunately, a little bit of preparation and common sense can help you avoid a number of pitfalls.

Begin planning for your travel well ahead of time so that you are not rushing at the last minute. There are many resources available to help you prepare. At least three to four months prior to your program, start finding out about travelers' health requirements and alerts of your host country. Organizations such as the Center for Disease Control (CDC) (www.cdc.gov/travel) and World Health Organization (WHO) (www.who.int/en/) post easy-to-use health information and advisories for international travel.

UCF Travel Clinic

Health conditions and services vary dramatically throughout the world and you cannot prepare for all possibilities. To stay healthy while abroad you must learn about the health threats that are common or probable in your host country. Some of this information is available on the program webpage, but it is highly recommended that participants research potential health risks on their own. Students preparing to study or travel abroad are encouraged to visit the UCF Health Center's Travel Clinic 6-8 weeks before departing. You can find out more by visiting the Health Center's website (www.hs.sdes.ucf.edu/healthcenter/).

The UCF Travel Clinic counselor will provide tips for a safe and healthy trip, required and recommend vaccinations, risks associated with local diseases for the country you will visit, the latest information from the Center of Disease Control for your host country, health precautions to reduce illnesses and what to include in a travel kit. You may also wish to discuss getting the appropriate immunizations through your physician or the local Health Department.

Discussing your travel plans with your personal physician may also be beneficial, although keep in mind that he or she may not be an expert on the types of diseases found at your destination. Take care of current illnesses and have information about any conditions for which you may need care while abroad.

Vaccinations

Make sure you have received all necessary vaccinations before leaving the U.S. If you are not sure which vaccinations to get, talk to a health care professional and check the web sites of the CDC, WHO, and International Society of Travel Medicine. The requirements are subject to change, so make certain that you keep current with any updates. Your general physician should be able to administer any necessary vaccinations but you can also work with the UCF Travel Clinic or the local Health Department.

Medical Conditions and Concerns

Take an active position when it comes to your healthcare as you prepare for your program and once you reach your destination. You can keep a list of the medications you are taking in your wallet, along with the generic name and dosage for a convenient reference. If you are prescribed medication in your host country, keep a list of medications that you receive overseas. If you are treated for an illness or injury while abroad, find out if you will need further treatment when you return to the U.S. You should also make sure that you have a medical and dental check-up several months before you leave so that any necessary work can be completed well in advance.

Prescriptions

If you are taking prescribed medications, you may wish to speak with your physician about purchasing enough medicine to last the duration of the program. However, this may not always be possible or advisable. For example, there are restrictions on the amount of narcotics that can be introduced legally into some countries.

In some countries, medications used to treat depression/anxiety/OCD or ADD/ADHD are severely restricted or even illegal. It is important that you check the regulations and plan ahead to ensure that you will be able to continue with your medication uninterrupted. If you must keep your medication under special conditions, they may not survive the trip. In situations pertaining to refrigerated storage, it is highly suggested that you contact your airline and inquire about in-flight refrigeration. To avoid problems with customs, you should have a detailed statement signed and dated by your healthcare provider listing the conditions for which the prescriptions were issued, the brand and generic name of the medication, the prescribed dosage and instructions. This would also provide vital information for health care providers in case of an emergency. Plan ahead for time changes and consider how this may affect your scheduled times for taking your prescription.

When traveling through customs, it is a good idea to get a letter on your doctor's letterhead stating your medical history and the need for certain prescribed drugs. Since some medications have a black market value, keep your medication in a safe place to prevent theft.

Pack prescriptions in your carry-on luggage in the original, labeled container. Make sure that the name of the label and prescription matches your passport. If you will be purchasing medicines abroad, ask your physician about getting the right medication while abroad. You will need to see a physician in the host country for a new prescription and should know the generic name of your medication, as the exact same medication may not be available. Keep in mind that medicines or vitamins mailed overseas may be held up in customs. Also, you may want to check with your insurance provider about what is covered in terms of your prescriptions and office visits while abroad.

If you have other medical conditions, such as severe allergies or reactions, diabetes, heart conditions, or epilepsy, you may wish to carry a card or wear a tag or bracelet that identifies the condition.

Disabilities

Students with disabilities are encouraged to participate in study abroad programs, as long as they understand that attitudes, legal rights, standards for accessibility, and accommodations for persons with emotional, mental, learning, or physical disabilities vary dramatically throughout the world. When researching your options, become aware of the specific circumstances in the host countries and be realistic. If available, information regarding accessibility and accommodations has been included in the specific program information. Share your interests and concerns with OIS staff. We will work with our partners abroad to make sure that your accessibility and accommodation needs are supported. However, we cannot guarantee the quality of accommodations abroad. To ensure that you have the best advice possible, please let your Program Leader or specific RSE coordinator know if you have a specific disability. All information that you discuss with either the director or coordinator regarding this issue is confidential. More information about study abroad for persons with disabilities can be found at Mobility International U.S.A. (www.miusa.org/).

Other Hazards

Terrorism, civil unrest actions, and catastrophic hazards such as earthquakes, volcanoes, floods, tsunamis, have a high profile and receive the most attention from the media. This creates an unrealistic perception of danger from these hazards. It is more probable to be injured in a mundane situation, such as looking in the wrong direction when crossing a street or misreading a warning sign in another language.

One of the skills that you are expected to develop as part of your study abroad experience is the ability to react quickly to unexpected situations and assess risks to your physical safety. It is important to know that “common sense” is contextual and you may not have the same references to gauge a threat until you have been in the country for some time.

Personal safety encompasses awareness and prevention, as well as knowing how to deal with an incident in progress. The first step in securing your personal safety is to get informed. Become familiar with the country you are visiting. Your specific program webpage has links to country information, such as the U.S. Department of State Travel information, Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and U.S. Embassies. You can search the UCF library, OIS materials, and your public library for information about your host country. Try reading newspapers, novels, nonfiction, travel guides; watch movies; search the Internet.

You may want to speak with past program participants and other members of your group, or UCF international students from your host country. OIS staff can assist in introducing you to international students. Informing yourself about your host country will help you get the most out of the time you will be abroad. Read travel advisories about crime and pay attention to warnings given at any in-country orientations by your Program Leader or exchange coordinator. For example, if they indicate that a certain location is dangerous and off limits, listen to them; they have likely learned from experience that a particular location is unsafe.

Health Tips

Food and Water

It is a good idea to get some information about the quality of food and water for the place you will be visiting. You should take the opportunity to try the local cuisine, but do not let your enthusiasm overcome sensible decision-making. Be wary of street vendors and open markets where food may not be stored safely. Many use modern storage and pasteurization techniques; however, be careful in rural areas and less-developed regions, where such standards may not be common. You may want to ask a server about unfamiliar menu items when dining out. Even when

translated, some foreign words may not make the ingredients obvious. If you feel uncomfortable about a certain item, do not eat it.

Drinking un-boiled tap water may be more than just a bad idea. Find out beforehand whether the water and ice cubes are suitable for consumption. This consideration also applies to washing produce before you eat it. If you need to boil water before drinking, let it come to a rolling boil for at least one minute. If you are in a high altitude, allow the water to boil for three minutes. Also, stay alert to reports in the local news of any emergencies, such as floods or breaks in the municipal water lines, which advise boiling water. It is always a good idea to keep up with the local news through the internet, TV, and newspapers.

Dangerous Plants, Animals, and Insects

If you enjoy trekking through rural settings, be sure to find out if there are poisonous plants or venomous animals that you will need to avoid. Even a minor rash or sting can become a major irritation, and a severe allergic reaction can do more than ruin your day.

Check the internet to find out if disease-causing pests will be a problem in your host area.

Alcohol

Excessive drinking that causes disruption of a study abroad program or jeopardizes the health and safety of yourself and others is cause for immediate removal from the program with no refund or reversal of fees. Remember that you are on an academic program and should consider the same expectations of classroom behavior apply.

Consider that some cultures have preconceived notions about public drunkenness. Although consuming alcohol is part of an accepted social ritual in many countries, moderation is important. You should know that the alcohol content of beers and wines varies throughout the world, and may be significantly higher than in the United States. If you plan to drink, find out about your host country's rules for alcohol consumption.

Health and First Aid Kits

Even if you do not need prescription medication, a small first aid kit can make a difference in your overall comfort. Remember to keep the kit in your checked

luggage if it includes sharp items like scissors and eyeglass screwdrivers. Do not feel that you have to lug around super-size bottles of everything in your medicine cabinet. You can get by on compact, travel supplies of these health and first aid items:

- Aspirin, Ibuprofen, or Tylenol
- Anti-Diarrheal Agents
- Antihistamine for Allergies
- First Aid Antibiotic Ointment
- Eye Drops
- Insect Repellent with DEET
- Hydrocortisone Cream
- Motion Sickness Medication
- Thermometer
- Scissors
- Tweezers
- Adhesive Bandages
- Antiseptic Wipes
- Butterfly Band-aids
- First Aid Tape
- Sunscreen

General Travel Information

International Electricity

In many countries you will need to a power adapter to use electronics made for American consumers. For example, in Europe the average outlet runs on 220-230 volt frequency, which is more than twice the voltage of American outlets. Although adapters are available for some products, you should check the electric current used by your host country before deciding whether to bring products that may not

work. Improper use of international outlets may even have dangerous consequences.

Consider buying these items before you depart:

- Plug adapters: You will need an adapter for each of your appliances.
- Transformer: You will most likely require 50- watt, 50/60 Hz transformers.
- Converter: Select converters that reduce 200 volts to 110 volts. For instance, if your hair dryer runs on 1600-watts, buy a 1600 – watt converter.
- Batteries: Pack spare batteries; those purchased overseas may not last as long.
- Rechargeable batteries: NI-card rechargeable batteries are a good investment.
- Battery charger: Pack a dual-voltage battery charger.

Family Emergencies

Discuss with your family what you will do in the event of a family emergency, illness, or death. It is much easier to have these conversations around the kitchen table prior to departure than via an intercontinental phone call in the midst of a crisis.

Cell Phones

Do you bring your cell phone? Do you buy a phone abroad? Do you need your phone? These are common questions that students going abroad ask. Below are some tips and advice that can help you decide what is best for you.

- Always check with your phone service provider regarding traveling internationally with your existing phone.
- Be very careful about data usage. If possible leave your phone in “airplane mode” or turn off data usage to avoid unexpected charges. Not doing so may result in your phone automatically and without notice connecting to cell towers abroad.

- Think twice about how much you will really need a phone. Often it can be a distraction from a once in a lifetime experience.
- Several expensive electronics just mean that much more to carry, lose, break or make you look like a good target for theft.
- Consider what cell and/ or Wi-Fi service will realistically be in the location(s) you will be traveling. Not every country has abundant Wi-Fi.
- Quite a lot of communication and information gathering can be done via Wi-Fi (email, Skype, iMessage, WhatsApp, Facebook, twitter, internet, maps, etc).
- Can you purchase a SIM card abroad and use your existing phone with a local number and at a more affordable rate? Your phone will need to be “unlocked”. Your carrier can tell you if it is.
- Is it financially plausible to purchase a limited international data or calling plan for your existing contract?
- In many countries a cheap “pay-as-you-go” phone can be purchased for your time abroad. But is it worth it for 2-3 weeks?

Topics to Research

The best way to prepare yourself for your trip is to research as much about your destination as possible. Several websites may provide information on your host country. These links can be invaluable, so visit them and take notes:

- U.S. Department of State: Visit the U.S. Department of State’s travel website and look up the country of your destination. These notes exist for every country with which the U.S. maintains diplomatic relations. (travel.state.gov/travel/travel_1744.html)
- CIA World Factbook: This comprehensive site provides access to detailed country reports, including valuable cultural, political, and economic information specific to your host country. (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>)

- Chamber of Commerce: Contact your local chamber of commerce and request information on your host country. They can recommend vaccinations and inform you of other potential health concerns. (www.orlando.org).
- Brigham Young University's Culture Grams: Researching your host country's Culture Gram can be extremely helpful. Individual Culture Grams are inexpensive, thorough reports on a single country or territory. Each individual Culture Gram contains current information on 25 different categories, including economy, religion, greetings and gestures, visiting, recreation, events and trends, development data, and country maps. You must however, register before you gain access (<http://www.culturegrams.com/>)
- Library of Congress: At this site, you will find detailed country studies written by the Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress under the Country studies/Area Handbook Program. Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Army, this site is a great resource for travelers. (lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html#toc).

Preparing to be the “American” Abroad

You may occasionally be put in the position of being an unofficial spokesperson about the United States and American culture. News accounts about the U.S. or foreign policy may cause some of your new friends to ask you searching questions. Returned study abroad students often remark on how they sometimes had a difficult time explaining the history, politics and culture of the US when pressed by their friends, much less in an academic classroom. They say that they wish they had brushed-up on American history and looked at their own cultural values more critically before they went abroad.

Checklists

Use our preparation checklists to help you remember the essentials. Although not all-inclusive, these lists are a good starting point for your journey.

Before You Go

- ☐ Verify your international calling access with your cell phone provider.
- ☐ Ensure your family members or trusted friends have all of your transportation, accommodation, and contact information.
- ☐ Verify if you will have access to the Internet.
- ☐ Remember, no liquids over 100ml on the airplane and they must be in a zip lock bag.

- ☐ Check to find out the fee for checked baggage so you can plan accordingly.
- ☐ Keep important documents, some toiletries, and a change of clothes in your carry-on bag.

Important Travel Items

- ☐ Airline tickets, hotel confirmations, itineraries, etc.
- ☐ Insurance cards and copies
- ☐ Valid passport and visa (if needed)
- ☐ Second photo ID (driver's license, copy of birth certificate) and an extra copy
- ☐ Spending cash
- ☐ Bilingual dictionary
- ☐ Travel guidebook for your destination
- ☐ Orientation and course materials
- ☐ Journal/Notepad and pens
- ☐ Reading materials, playing cards, travel board games for the airplane and any layovers
- ☐ Camera/video camera, extra memory card, and charger
- ☐ Backpack
- ☐ Purse/Wallet
- ☐ Cell phone and charger
- ☐ Travel alarm clock
- ☐ Refillable water bottle (bottles with built-in filters can be especially useful)
- ☐ Electricity converters and adapters

Clothing

- ☐ Hat (for protection from the sun)
- ☐ Sunglasses
- ☐ Appropriate outerwear:

- ☐ FALL/WINTER: coat, gloves, boots, hat, scarf
- ☐ SPRING/SUMMER: light jacket or sweat shirt
- ☐ Appropriate clothing for each day of the trip:
- ☐ FALL/WINTER: long johns, long pants, jeans, sweaters, turtlenecks (dress in layers)
- ☐ SPRING/SUMMER: jeans, shorts, dresses, collared shirt/tie, tank top, polo, etc
- ☐ Tennis shoes, walking shoes, flip flops or sandals (wear the heaviest shoes on the airplane so they don't count towards the luggage weight)
- ☐ Undergarments (bring extra)
- ☐ Belts
- ☐ Pajamas & slippers
- ☐ Workout clothes
- ☐ Poncho/Raincoat/Small Umbrella
- ☐ Evening wear and shoes for any formal events

Toiletries and Medication

- ☐ Toiletries bag
- ☐ Toothpaste and toothbrush
- ☐ Deodorant
- ☐ Shaving items (cream, razors)
- ☐ Feminine hygiene products
- ☐ Skin moisturizer
- ☐ Sunscreen
- ☐ Make-up
- ☐ Hair care products (shampoo, conditioner, gel, hair spray)

- ☐ Hair care accessories (clips, scrunchies, hair brush). We do not recommend that you bring a hair dryer, flat iron, or curling iron. If you feel you need those items, purchase them in country.
- ☐ Bath towel and wash cloth (lightweight)
- ☐ Body soap
- ☐ Baby wipes (antiseptic)
- ☐ Hand sanitizer
- ☐ Tissues (small size to carry with you; not all bathrooms abroad have toilet paper)
- ☐ Personal medication (pain reliever, Imodium/Pepto Bismol, Benedryl, Chapstick)
- ☐ Prescriptions, medications, and asthma inhalers
- ☐ Eyeglasses and/or contacts and solution
- ☐ Nail clippers, tweezers
- ☐ Bug repellent
- ☐ Contraceptives (be aware that certain forms of contraception can be illegal or unavailable in some locations)

Miscellaneous

- ☐ Laptop and charger
- ☐ Bathing suit and beach towel
- ☐ Laundry bag for dirty clothes
- ☐ Flashlight and extra batteries
- ☐ Earplugs
- ☐ Camera
- ☐ Travel maps/guidebooks
- ☐ Sewing kit
- ☐ Digital copy of the Study Abroad Handbook

- ☐ Keys for home
- ☐ List of important phone numbers
- ☐ Small packets of laundry detergent

Do Not Take

- Fanny packs or purses that do not zip closed
- Expensive or expensive-looking jewelry
- Excess cash
- Credit/debit cards that you do not intend to use
- Anything irreplaceable

Traveling on Your Own While Abroad

You may want to take advantage of the fact that you are already overseas to travel on your own. Expenses, including transportation and lodging, are your responsibility if you choose to do your own traveling. Although it can be expensive, traveling on your own is a great experience and you should definitely plan at least one trip for yourself. Be sure to check with your instructor(s)/ Program Leader to make sure you have time to travel before other course requirements are due.

Planning

Before you leave the U.S., you should get a guidebook for the country or region you plan to visit. Lonely Planet & Lets Go and Hang Out In... are some of the best choices for travel guides. You can also get valuable information from tourist information offices, which can be found in airports as well as in most train and bus terminals. These offices can help you book cheap accommodations, sightseeing trips, and travel passes, as well as providing you with general advice (including student discount information).

If you are traveling in Europe, keep in mind that student travel offices are organized by the national student union of each country and can be found at most universities. These offices assist students with low cost travel options within that particular country.

Traveling

The best of modes of travel vary from country to country, but you can generally depend upon intercity buses and trains. Keep in mind that all forms of transportation can break down, so plan a backup method, and be prepared to wait if you need to.

A smart way to make sure you can get help when you need it is to learn a few key phrases in your host country's language. Some good words to know are track, platform, ticket, train, bus, arrival, departure, entrance, exit, and thank you. If you are in a country that uses a different alphabet, you might want to write these words so you can communicate that way.

Travel passes are available in many countries that make it easier to take trains, trams, airplanes, or buses. These passes can save money and some must be purchased in the U.S., as they are not offered in the host country. One such pass is the ISIC card (www.myisic.com/).

You may wish to visit a travel agency for detailed, country specific traveling methods if you plan to take your own side-trips.

Lodging

There are many safe lodging options while you are traveling, and you should make your decisions based upon your available budget. You can find plenty of helpful information online.

One of your lodging options is a hostel. Many hostels are members of the International Youth Hostel Federation and require you to purchase a card from the American Youth Hostel Association. You can purchase the card from any travel agency before you leave the U.S., or you can buy it on the Association's website (www.iyhf.org). The card entitles you to inexpensive lodging around the world that is clean, safe, and comfortable. Here are a few things to be aware of if you choose to a lodge at a hostel.

- Hostels range from outdated to modern. Your room will probably have white walls and small beds, but will still be clean and pleasant.
- Hostels typically accommodate four or more people per room, which means you will often lodge with people you do not know. It is a good idea to bring a light sleeping bag, as some hostels require you supply your own bedding.
- If you are in a communal room, you may be provided with a locker for your luggage, but you may need to bring your own lock.
- Hostels can be a fun and exciting part of your trip. You will meet new people from all over the world, share stories, and learn from each other.

A second option for lodging includes inexpensive hotels and pension hotels. Both can be found around bus rail stations and are a great lodging facility for students traveling alone in major cities. Most hotels include breakfast in the cost and offer lunch and dinner for an additional charge.

Behavior

We expect UCF study abroad participants to take stock of their options and use sound judgment when making decisions. Think through your decisions – do not rush. You are held to the standards of conduct established in the UCF Golden Rule. If you are part of a study abroad team, be mindful of the impacts that your behavior may have on other members of the group. Remember that the program leader and/or the host institution have the right to terminate your participation in the program with no refund if either one perceives that your behavior interferes with the learning opportunities for the team, or violates the local norms and established program standards.

As an adult, you are personally and legally responsible for your actions. Become aware of the laws and customs of the locations you are planning to visit – especially what is considered criminal behavior. Ignorance of the law is not a viable excuse.

Do not assume that you have the same legal and constitutional rights as in the U.S.; you are subject to the laws of your host country. If you are not sure if something is legal, do not do it.

UCF rules of conduct prohibit the possession, use, or sale of controlled substances. Participants violating this rule are jeopardizing the program and will be dismissed. If you are old enough to legally drink alcohol in your host country, we expect that you will use good judgment and moderation. While drinking may be part of a social event, it does not have to be the focus of it. Even if you are of legal drinking age, intoxication and public drunken behaviors may be cause for program dismissal. Actions that victimize a member of the community, causing emotional distress or personal intimidation, will not be tolerated. If you feel that you have been personally or sexually harassed, or suffered any form of victimization during the program, please inform the program leader, the host institution's exchange coordinator, and OIS staff (studyabroad@ucf.edu or via the "Incident Report" form at www.studyabroad.ucf.edu). If the harassment involves interactions with individuals outside of the program, speak with your program leader or the host institution's exchange coordinator at once and take steps to avoid further contact with the individual. Keep in mind that, while these actions may not be legal in the USA, the laws and regulations in your host country may differ.