

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

## Learning Abroad Center



# Know Before You Go

Preparing for  
Learning Abroad



**KNOW BEFORE YOU GO**



Learning Abroad Center

# University of Minnesota Names & Addresses

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## Learning Abroad Center

Office of International Programs  
University of Minnesota  
230 Heller Hall, 271 19th Avenue S  
Minneapolis, MN 55455-0430  
Phone: 612.626.9000  
Toll Free: 888.700.UOFM  
Fax: 612.626.8009  
Email: [UMabroad@umn.edu](mailto:UMabroad@umn.edu)  
**Web: [www.UMabroad.umn.edu](http://www.UMabroad.umn.edu)**

### Services

Study  
Work  
Intern  
Volunteer  
Travel

The Learning Abroad Center strives to respond to inquiries within two business days.

### Emergencies

The central Learning Abroad Center phone number is 612.626.9000. After office hours, a recording gives a phone number for emergencies.

## Office of Student Finance (Financial Aid)

University of Minnesota  
210 Fraser Hall, 106 Pleasant Street SE  
Minneapolis, MN 55455  
Phone: 612.624.1665  
Toll Free: 800.400.8636  
Fax: 612.624.9584  
Email: [osfa@umn.edu](mailto:osfa@umn.edu)  
**Web: [onestop.umn.edu/finances](http://onestop.umn.edu/finances)**

## Office of Admissions

University of Minnesota  
240 Williamson Hall, 231 Pillsbury Drive SE  
Minneapolis, MN 55455  
Phone: 612.625.2008  
Fax: 612.626.1693  
Email: [admissions@tc.umn.edu](mailto:admissions@tc.umn.edu)  
**Web: [admissions.tc.umn.edu](http://admissions.tc.umn.edu)**

## Office of Enrolled Students (Registrar)

University of Minnesota  
200 Fraser Hall, 106 Pleasant Street SE  
Minneapolis, MN 55455  
Phone: 612.625.5333  
Fax: 612.625.4351  
Web: [onestop.umn.edu](http://onestop.umn.edu)

## Office of Student Finance (Student Billing)

20 Fraser Hall, 106 Pleasant Street SE  
Minneapolis, MN 55455  
Phone: 612.625.8500  
Fax: 612.626.0387  
Web: [onestop.umn.edu](http://onestop.umn.edu)

## Other Contacts

For additional Learning Abroad Center contact information, refer to your program specific guide. If you are participating in an Outside Program, refer to the program materials sent to you by the program sponsor for more contact names, numbers, and addresses.

*Information in this guide is subject to change. Consult the Learning Abroad Center website at [www.UMabroad.umn.edu](http://www.UMabroad.umn.edu) for updated policies and information. Know Before You Go is part of a set of materials you will receive to assist you in preparing for your learning abroad opportunity. The Know Before You Go Guide builds on the information found in the Advising Handbook. You will also receive a program guide, and some programs distribute an academic guide.*

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*The University of Minnesota is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities, and employment, without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status or sexual orientation.*

# Welcome to Learning Abroad!

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The Learning Abroad Center welcomes you to exciting world of international experiences! You have chosen to spend time overseas as part of your educational experience—now it is time to begin preparation. Careful planning (both before and during the learning abroad experience) along with your active participation in the program and culture of your host country, will help you have a successful and rewarding time abroad.

In preparation, carefully read the contents of this guide. It contains essential information about health, safety, and security, as well as policies and guidelines you must follow while abroad. Relevant websites are also listed that can provide additional resources.

Additional information on your particular program will be included in the program specific handbook or materials provided by your program sponsor, and in your pre-departure and on-site orientations. It is essential that you have read the *Advising Handbook*, received as part of your application process, as it contains valuable information on program planning.

The Learning Abroad Center is committed to providing you with a meaningful experience abroad. However, it is your responsibility to follow all steps and guidelines in this guide and other materials.

*All the best in your upcoming adventure!*



# Predeparture Planning & Checklist

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Preparing to go abroad can seem like an overwhelming and endless task. It is, however, an integral part of the international experience.

It is recommended that you purchase a travel guidebook before you leave. Guidebooks explore regions, countries, and cities and offer invaluable information such as maps, recommendations, background information, and travel tips. Some of the more popular guidebooks that are geared towards students include *Lonely Planet*, *Let's Go*, *Footprints*, and *Rough Guides*. You can browse through these guides at the Learning Abroad Center. *Lonely Planet* and *Let's Go Guides* can also be purchased.

## Travel Documents

### Passport

A passport is an official government document proving your citizenship. **You are required to show your passport when entering and departing a country, including the US. Passports are generally valid for ten years.**

Apply for your passport as soon as possible. Your passport must be valid for the full duration of your stay abroad—if it is due to expire while you are out of the country, renew it before you leave. Many foreign consulates will not issue a visa if your passport is due to expire within six months of your application.

Complete information on how to receive a passport is available through the Learning Abroad Center Travel Services, the Hennepin County Government Center, or the City Hall Court House:

#### Learning Abroad Center Travel Services

230 Heller Hall  
Minneapolis, MN 55455  
612.626.9000

#### Hennepin County Government Center

300 S. Sixth Street, Skyway Level  
Minneapolis, MN 55487  
612.348.8241

#### City Hall Court House

15 West Kellogg Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55012  
651.266.8265

If you are not in the Twin Cities area, contact your local government agency, or refer to the US State Department web site, [travel.state.gov/passport\\_services.html](http://travel.state.gov/passport_services.html), for more information.

Documents that are not in order may prevent you from being able to travel, and you may still be responsible for all nonrecoverable costs of your program. Refer to the Learning Abroad Center's *Cancellation and Refund Policy* at [www.UMabroad.umn.edu/policies](http://www.UMabroad.umn.edu/policies).

If you are not a US citizen, be certain to inquire about the necessary immigration and visa requirements *well in advance of your departure*.

### Passport Photos

Before purchasing passport photos, contact your program sponsor to get an accurate count of the number of photos needed. Passport photos are available at reasonable rates in 230 Heller Hall.

### Traveling With Your Passport

As soon as you receive your passport, sign it and fill in the information on the inside cover. Your passport is not valid without your signature. Do not allow anyone else to use your passport or alter it in any way. Your passport is a valuable document for which you are responsible.

It is suggested that you make several copies of your passport. Take one with you, but keep it in a separate place from the original, and leave one with whoever is taking care of your business in the US. Be sure to leave a copy with the Learning Abroad Center as well. If your passport is lost or stolen, notify the local authorities and the American consulate immediately. After an identification investigation, the consulate will usually issue you a three-month temporary passport.

Never pack your passport in your luggage. When traveling from country to country, keep your passport with you at all times, preferably in a money belt or attached somehow under your clothes. Once you have arrived at your program "home base," you will want to locate a safe place to keep your passport. If you plan to travel over a long weekend or semester break, remember to take your passport and carry it on you.

Your US passport (or immigration documents for non-US citizens) is your official identity document overseas and must be available to you at all times. Do not send this document separately back to the US for any reason.

### Visas

Many governments require a visa for entry into their country. A visa is official/legal permission to enter a country for a stated purpose and specified period of time and is granted by the government of that country. If you are enrolled in a Learning Abroad Center sponsored program, you will receive more information on obtaining a visa in the program specific handbook, which will be available later in the semester, or at the orientation meeting. If you are enrolled in a program other than one sponsored by the Learning Abroad Center, check with your program sponsor for visa instructions. To further research the visa requirements of your host country, you can find current information online at [travel.state.gov/foreignentryreqs.html](http://travel.state.gov/foreignentryreqs.html). You can also contact the consulate or embassy of your host country directly. Most travel agencies can provide visa services, or you can contact Perry International, a company that specializes in visa requirements for students. There is usually a fee for these services.

### Perry International

100 West Monroe Street  
Chicago, IL 60603  
312.372.2703

If you are required to send your passport with your visa application, be certain to make a copy of your passport and any accompanying information, in case these materials are lost in the mail.

If you plan on traveling in and out of your host country, you may need to request a "multiple entry" student visa. In addition, you may be required to obtain a tourist visa for the country or countries you wish to visit. It is a good idea to research the entry requirements before you leave the US. If for any reason you drop out of your program, your student visa status may be revoked and you may be required to leave the country of your program immediately or be required to apply for a tourist visa.

Non-US citizens should contact the appropriate consulate or embassy immediately for instructions, as visa requirements can be more complicated and can take considerably longer to process. Also, you may need permission from the US authorities to exit and re-enter the US. Check with your local US Immigration Service for assistance. Their telephone number can be found in the government information section of your local telephone directory.

### Work Abroad & Work Permits

Students on study abroad programs should give careful consideration to the practicality of working while participating in the program.

Full-time students who plan to stay beyond the end of their program may obtain a work permit through a variety of work permit programs. Students often find this a useful way to complement their study program and extend their stay. Students going abroad with the specific goal of working should work with a permit program or obtain all necessary documentation before departing for their destination. Information on work opportunities can be found at the Learning Abroad Center.

### Email Account

Your University of Minnesota e-mail account is the official mode of communication on all university matters, including learning abroad. Be certain to make arrangements to have access to this account while you are overseas or to forward it to your overseas e-mail address. Students participating from institutions other than the University of Minnesota will be provided with a student identification number and an internet identification to establish an account.

## Know Before You Go

### Travel Guides

It is recommended that you purchase a travel guide before you leave. Guidebooks explore regions, countries, and cities, and offer invaluable information such as maps, recommendations, background information, and travel tips. Some guidebooks geared towards students include *Lonely Planet*, *Let's Go*, *Footprints*, and *Rough Guides*. You can browse through these at the Learning Abroad Center. *Lonely Planet* and *Let's Go* guides can be purchased there as well.

### Checklist

The first section of the checklist below will help you manage your planning progress. As you read through it, you will notice that to complete many of the steps you will have to depend on the assistance of others (i.e., government agents, medical staff, and on-campus advisers). Working with other people and meeting deadlines always requires planning ahead. Please keep this in mind at each stage of your planning process.

The second and third sections of the checklist will help guide you through the steps you need to take while you are abroad and after you return home.

More information on the checklist items is provided in the text of this guide.

#### Before You Go

- Apply for your passport. For US citizens, a passport can take six to eight weeks to process. Passport application information and inexpensive photos are available at the Learning Abroad Center.
- Check to see if you need a student visa for your program.
- Have extra passport pictures taken for other program related documents.
- Read all material you receive from the Learning Abroad Center and your program sponsor (if other than the Learning Abroad Center).
- Attend all scheduled orientation meetings. If you cannot attend due to extenuating circumstances, please contact the appropriate Learning Abroad Center program contact.
- Schedule an appointment with a travel clinic or family physician for a physical. Have them complete your program's health information form, if applicable. Depending on where you are traveling, you may need a series of vaccinations, which can take up to six months to complete.
- Make plans to maintain health insurance in your home country, including hospitalization. For most programs you will have international health insurance coverage while on the program.

- Make logistical arrangements for your time abroad and your return:
  - registration
  - power of attorney
  - financial aid
  - academic plans
  - payment of bills including program fees
  - on- or off- campus housing arrangements
  - absentee voting
  - income taxes

- Be certain that your mailing address is correct so you can receive accurate and timely financial documents including invoices and credit balances. University of Minnesota students should visit their account at **onestop.umn.edu**. You are the only person that can change your address information.

- Consult with appropriate offices and websites for accurate, official, and up-to-date information related to your trip (i.e. US State Department travel advisory and warning web page, Center for Disease Control web page, your Learning Abroad Center adviser, etc.).

- Complete and return forms from your program sponsor and host institution by the dates requested.

#### While Abroad

- Register with the US consulate or embassy in your host country, if your program does not do it for you.
- Keep records of all academic information (including all course information: syllabi, notes, homework, compositions, exams, contact information of your professors).
- Correspond with your academic adviser at your home institution, if needed.
- Collect references from any relevant supervisors from internships, etc. for future use.

#### Upon Your Return

- Provide the Learning Abroad Center with your new email address and telephone number in order to receive pertinent information.
- Return program evaluation, if requested.
- Update your address information at **www.UMabroad.umn.edu** to receive current University of Minnesota information.

# Health Information & Health Insurance

## Health Information Form

Participants on Learning Abroad Center sponsored programs are required to complete the Health Information Form included in the acceptance packet. The information you provide is used to advise on-site staff of any special health conditions, and will not have any negative bearing on your participation in a Learning Abroad Center sponsored or cosponsored program. Since this information is used by study abroad administrators to make necessary arrangements overseas for individual participants, it is important that you share any learning or physical disabilities and/or any special health conditions that you may have (i.e., diabetes, asthma). Accommodating students with special needs often requires additional staff time and resources, so please complete and return this form by the stated due date. The information provided on this Health Information form is considered confidential. It will remain in the files of the Learning Abroad Center and with the on-site staff only. If you are participating on a cosponsored or outside program, the sponsoring institution may have a similar requirement.

A reminder: by signing the *Release and Waiver* you have authorized Learning Abroad Center staff or its agents to release medical information contained in Learning Abroad Center files to health care providers and to secure medical treatment on your behalf in the event of an emergency medical illness or injury. You have also agreed to accept financial responsibility for the treatment.



## Pre-departure Health Procedures & Precautions

Carefully read the information provided by your program sponsor about any required inoculations. While the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) publish guidelines for immunizations and other health precautions for travelers, only an individualized assessment can determine what *you* should do to prepare. Usually a family physician does not have the necessary background, since travel medicine is a unique specialty. A travel specialist is trained to consider your health history, current medications, drug allergies, and travel plans when recommending immunizations and other medications. Because travel clinics often book far in advance (especially around the holidays), you should find a travel clinic and make an appointment *as soon as possible* so that you can get a scheduled appointment in time to complete any recommended immunization series. *Be aware that some immunizations need to be started months in advance of your departure. Check your current insurance policy to determine if these costs will be covered before scheduling an appointment.*

Below is a list of clinics in Minnesota that specialize in travel medicine:

### **Boynton Health Service Travel Immunization Clinic**

University of Minnesota  
410 Church Street SE  
Minneapolis, MN 55455  
612.625.3222

### **Hennepin County Medical Center Traveler's Clinic**

525 Portland Avenue S  
Minneapolis, MN 55414  
612.348.2741

### **St. Paul-Ramsey County Public Health**

555 Cedar Street  
St. Paul, MN 55101  
651.292.7746 (no telephone consultation, only travel appointments)

The International Society of Travel Medicine (ISTM) provides a listing of its member clinics by state. For more information about ISTM or a listing of clinics and doctors in your area, contact:

### **International Society of Travel Medicine**

P. O. Box 871089  
Stone Mountain, GA 30087-0028  
Phone: 770.736.7060  
Fax: 770.736.6732  
Email: [bcbistm@aol.com](mailto:bcbistm@aol.com)  
Web: [www.istm.org/clinidir.html](http://www.istm.org/clinidir.html)

You can also get more information from CDC by calling 404.639.3311. The CDC Travel Health web page is located at [www.cdc.gov/travel/travel.html](http://www.cdc.gov/travel/travel.html).

### Prescriptions

You should bring enough of any current prescription medication and vitamins to last throughout your stay. For each prescription, carry a photocopy of the written prescription or a letter from your physician stating that you are required to take the medication. If it is a controlled substance, you may need to notify officials at the US embassy in the host country as well as the consulate officials of your host country. All medication should be stored in their original containers with the identification label attached and clearly visible. Carry enough in your carry-on luggage to last a week or two, in case your checked luggage is delayed or lost. It is also suggested that you learn the generic names of your medication in case you need to purchase more in your host country. If you have allergies—especially to dust, mold or pollens—plan ahead and take any medication that you might need.

In the event that you may need to fill your current prescription overseas, be certain to consult, prior to departure, with your physician, and, if necessary, with the host country embassy, to determine whether your medication is available. Not all prescriptions are available or exist in the same dosage abroad. It is not recommended to send medication overseas from the US, since medication can be detained by customs officials. It is also extremely expensive to send medications, and not all carriers will transport them.

If you wear glasses and/or contacts, you should bring a spare pair of each. As with medications, you should also bring an eyeglass prescription written by your eye doctor.

### Health Issues & Illnesses While Abroad

You should understand the health conditions in your host country before you leave, and obtain information about appropriate precautionary measures. A couple of tips are especially important no matter where you will be traveling:

- If you have a medical condition that is not easily identified (diabetes, epilepsy, severe allergies), you should wear a medic alert bracelet while you are abroad. You should also inform the Learning Abroad Center, traveling companions, and on-site staff so that they can be prepared in case of an emergency. If you have a medical problem that could be aggravated by conditions abroad (e.g. asthma), consider carefully how you will deal with the problem abroad and discuss it with your physician before you leave home.
- AIDS is a major concern in some locations. While abroad, avoid injections and blood transfusions. If an injection is required, make sure that the syringe comes directly from a sealed package or that it has been sterilized in boiling water for 20 minutes. Diabetics are encouraged to bring a sufficient supply of needles and syringes with a prescription or doctor's authorization. Avoid ear piercing and tattooing if AIDS is a concern in the area.
- Use protection if you choose to be sexually active.

- Medical conditions such as depression and anorexia can be impacted by the daily challenges of living overseas. Be certain to speak with your physician/psychiatrist and disclose any medical or psychological conditions on the Learning Abroad Center Health Information Form so that program staff can assist you in planning for your overseas experience.

Health information specific to your host country will be included in your program guide, discussed at your program orientation, and/or addressed upon arrival in your host country. If you are participating on an Outside Program, contact your program sponsor for health related information specific to your host country. It may sound like there are a lot of health risks to consider, but do not be obsessed with your physical health! Most travelers and students overseas will not experience anything worse than a mild case of diarrhea.

### Health Insurance

The Learning Abroad Center provides mandatory international study abroad health insurance coverage through Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI) for most students. The cost of this insurance is part of your final program fee.

A few programs offered through the Learning Abroad Center include country specific national insurance or require another form of insurance which we have determined to be comparable to CISI insurance. In most of these cases, the insurance will be included in your program fee, and you will not be covered by the University's CISI policy. You will be informed in your program specific information about the individual program insurance coverage. However, if the program insurance policy does not include repatriation/medivac at a minimum, the Learning Abroad Center will add coverage from CISI to cover these specific items.

You will receive a detailed policy description defining all items covered and not covered along with an insurance card prior to your departure. For a few programs (generally, those which include country specific national insurance), you will receive the information on site.

If you have insurance needs beyond what your program sponsor or host country requires, it is your responsibility to see that you are adequately covered. The CISI plan through the Learning Abroad Center covers participants for the duration of the study abroad program only. Students who plan on traveling before or after the program's stated beginning and end dates are strongly advised to retain coverage. CISI will allow you to purchase up to thirty days of coverage beyond your program dates. You can enroll online at [www.culturalinsurance.com](http://www.culturalinsurance.com). If you need coverage for longer than thirty days, inquire at the Learning Abroad Center about purchasing an additional travel insurance policy.

*We require that you retain US health insurance including hospitalization, even while abroad.* International health insurance coverage begins only when you leave the US and ends upon your return to the US. US health insurance will cover you both before you leave and after you return from your program. Should you have an accident or illness overseas that requires long-term care once you return, US health insurance will provide coverage for these expenses. You may find it difficult to purchase a health plan if you return with a pre-existing condition. Keep in mind that if you have special insurance needs, or if you plan any personal travel before, during or after the program, you are responsible for the coverage.

University of Minnesota students should be aware that they are not automatically covered by the University's health plan while on a learning abroad program. If you have not purchased the insurance during the terms prior to your learning abroad program, you may not be eligible to purchase the coverage. Check with Boynton Health Services if you have any questions, or if you wish to retain Boynton coverage during your time abroad. Additionally, check with your parents to determine if you are covered by their policy.

While abroad, you should carry your insurance policy number and medical information concerning allergies, medications, blood type, immunization history, and eyeglasses or other prescriptions. A good place to keep this information is with your passport.

### The CISI Health Insurance Policy

The University of Minnesota has chosen an international health insurance policy from Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI) to provide health insurance coverage for students participating on study abroad programs through the Learning Abroad Center. For those of you covered by this plan, the following are basic items included in the CISI health insurance policy and are only available while you are abroad:

- Accidental medical/sickness expense: up to \$100,000 per incident (unlimited number of incidents).
- No deductible.
- Mental and nervous benefit: inpatients are covered 100% to \$5,000 maximum. Outpatients are covered 100% to \$1,000 maximum.
- Emergency medical evacuation: \$50,000.
- Emergency family reunion benefit: \$5,000 maximum.
- Medical repatriation: \$50,000.
- Repatriation of remains: \$50,000.
- Accidental death dismemberment. Accidental death: beneficiary will receive \$15,000 (disappearance will be paid as an accidental death if the body is not found at the end of one year). Dismemberment is covered on a prescribed schedule.
- Prescription drugs: paid at 100% (only while abroad).
- Home country coverage up to \$5,000 (can be used if you return home for a visit during your program).
- Emergency 24-hour telephone assistance.
- Medical/travel/technical assistance services.
- Will guarantee payment and pay claims directly to foreign hospitals if possible.
- Maternity/complications of pregnancy: covered as any other condition.
- Pre-existing conditions as defined below (except emergency evacuation, medically necessary repatriation and repatriation of remains): defined as any injury of sickness which manifested itself or for which a licenced physician was consulted or for which treatment or medication was prescribed in the 12 months prior to the effective date of this insurance. Note: This policy does pay benefits to a maximum of \$500 for loss due to a pre-existing condition.



In order to minimize the need for on-site medical and dental expenses, we strongly encourage you to see your doctor and dentist prior to your departure. Since most insurance plans require that you pay up front and be reimbursed later, we also advise that you budget some money for medical situations while in-country. Although the University of Minnesota's international policy through CISI will often pay the foreign hospital directly, for non-major medical situations you will need to pay at the time of service and then get reimbursed later by submitting the appropriate forms. As with most insurance companies, CISI will need time to investigate the claim before paying it.

If you cancel or are dismissed from your program once overseas, your CISI insurance will be discontinued, and you will be responsible for making alternative insurance arrangements.

### Liability Insurance

Students should consider purchasing liability insurance prior to departure. Liability insurance will cover you for any damage to property and lost or stolen items while overseas. Check with your family's homeowner's insurance or rental insurance; it may also provide liability coverage.

# Academic Considerations

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## Academic Standing

Students must remain in good academic standing during the term prior to their overseas experience. Students not in good academic standing may be disqualified from participation.

## Registration Prior to Departure

Prior to departure, all students will be given instructions on how to self-register for their overseas program. Please follow these directions carefully when you receive them. Students who fail to self-register will be subject to late registration fee penalties.

## Grade Options

All courses will be graded on an A–F basis, unless otherwise noted by the specific program. Exceptions will only be considered if deemed academically warranted, in consultation with the overseas coordinator or program sponsor and the Learning Abroad Center. Any changes to the grading option must be in accordance with University of Minnesota policies and timelines.

## Credit Load

In general, students are expected to maintain a full load of coursework while overseas. For any exception to this policy, consult your program handbook. For programs that recommend that students take fewer than 13 credits overseas, University of Minnesota students should petition their college adviser for an exemption in advance. For details on the petition process, see [onestop.umn.edu/13credits/](https://onestop.umn.edu/13credits/).

Please note that the maximum credit load at the University of Minnesota is 20 credits per semester. For programs that grant more than 20 credits for the semester, University of Minnesota students should inform their college adviser in advance.

## Drop/Add

Unless otherwise noted by the specific program, the drop/add period is in accordance with University of Minnesota policies and timelines. Cancellation of a course after the program's drop/add period will result in a W on the student's University of Minnesota transcript.

## One-Time Drop Policy

All University of Minnesota students can, once in their college career, drop a course or cancel any part of their registration, up to the last day of class without any reason and without college scholastic approval. Using the one-time drop on study abroad is subject to the following additional parameters:

- Study abroad programs that require one or more mandatory courses may not allow a student to drop these courses.
- Students must provide proof of support from the overseas program for the request and will receive a W on their transcript for the dropped course(s).
- Students must provide verification from their college that they have not used their one-time drop. The Learning Abroad Center will work with the student's college to have the college process the drop, if approved.
- Students are responsible to be aware of any implications of the course cancellation for their financial aid package.

Questions regarding credit load, grade options, and drop/add while on study abroad should be directed to the Learning Abroad Center, since the implementation of the University's policies is dependent on the study abroad program calendar. Study abroad staff will respond to your query, after consulting with on-site study abroad staff and college advisers, as appropriate.

## Additional Considerations

Please consult the guide for your specific program to learn about the additional academic considerations to keep in mind while overseas.



# Emergencies & Safety Precautions

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## Emergencies

In the event of a political, social, health, or natural emergency, the Learning Abroad Center will be in close contact with the on-site staff for any study abroad program offered through the Learning Abroad Center. The on-site staff will in turn seek advice from the local authorities and the US Consulate or Embassy nearest the program location. Be sure to remain in contact with the on-site staff in an emergency situation.

## Safety Precautions

When traveling overseas, there are a number of precautions that you should follow in order to travel safely. You should also consult the US State Department Travel advisories for up-to-date information on travel precautions for the country where you will be studying or traveling. Travel advisories are available for reference at [travel.state.gov/travel\\_warnings.html](https://travel.state.gov/travel_warnings.html).

## Health & Safety Guidelines

Because the health and safety of study abroad participants are the primary concern for all study abroad providers, the following guidelines have been developed by NAFSA: Association of International Educators, to provide useful practical guidance to participants. Although no set of guidelines can guarantee the health and safety needs of each individual involved in a study abroad program, these guidelines address issues that merit attention and thoughtful judgment.

### *All Participants Should:*

- Assume responsibility for all the elements necessary for their personal preparation for the program and participate fully in orientations.
- Read and carefully consider all materials issued by the sponsor that relate to safety, health, legal, environmental, political, cultural, and religious conditions in the host country(ies).
- Conduct their own research on the country(ies) they plan to visit with particular emphasis on health and safety concerns, as well as the social, cultural, and political situations.
- Consider their physical and mental health, and other personal circumstances when applying for or accepting a place in a program, and make available to the sponsor accurate and complete physical and mental health information and any other personal data that is necessary in planning for a safe and healthy study abroad experience.
- Obtain and maintain appropriate insurance coverage and abide by any conditions imposed by the carriers.
- Inform parents/guardians/families and any others who may need to know about their participation in the study abroad program, provide them with emergency contact information, and keep them informed of their whereabouts and activities.

- Understand and comply with the terms of participation, codes of conduct, and emergency procedures of the program.
- Be aware of local conditions and customs that may present health or safety risks when making daily choices and decisions. Promptly express any health or safety concerns to the program staff or other appropriate individuals before and/or during the program.
- Accept responsibility for their own decisions and actions.
- Obey host-country laws.
- Behave in a manner that is respectful of the rights and well being of others, and encourage others to behave in a similar manner.
- Avoid illegal drugs and excessive or irresponsible consumption of alcohol.
- Follow the program policies for keeping program staff informed of their whereabouts and well being.
- Become familiar with the procedures for obtaining emergency health and legal system services in the host country.

### *Additional Safety Precautions*

- When traveling, do not leave your bags or belongings unattended at any time. Security personnel in airports, bus depots, and train stations are often instructed to remove or destroy any unattended luggage. Do not agree to carry or look after packages or suitcases for anyone. Make sure no one puts anything in your luggage.
- When using local transportation, avoid traveling in old, poorly maintained vehicles. Inquire about the safety records of different bus companies. When taking a taxi, it is good advice to sit in the back seat.
- Never keep all of your documents and money in one place or one suitcase.
- If you find yourself in uncomfortable surroundings, try to act like you know what you are doing and where you are going.
- Use caution when traveling alone. Women especially should not walk alone at night. Try to find an escort. In some countries it is dangerous to take a taxi alone at night for both men and women.
- Keep the on-site program coordinators informed of your whereabouts. You should let the on-site coordinators, your host family, or your roommates know of any traveling that you plan to do.
- Have sufficient funds or a credit card on hand to purchase emergency items such as an airline ticket.
- Be alert to your surroundings and the people with whom you have contact. Be wary of people who seem over friendly or overly interested in you. Be cautious when you meet new people, and do not give out your address or phone number. Be careful with information about other students or group events. Be alert to anyone who might appear to be following you, and to any unusual activity around your place of residence or classroom. Report any unusual people or activities to on-site staff immediately.

## Know Before You Go

- Exercise good judgment about what sorts of places to frequent during the day and at night, and avoid being on the street at late hours more than necessary.
- Avoid alcohol consumption in quantities that might impair your judgment.
- Don't flash money or documents in public places. Keep small bills in your pocket and use them whenever possible to pay for things. Be discrete in displaying your passport.

## Safety Precautions for Times of Political/Social Unrest or Conflict

In times of political or social unrest in the host country or region, or when the US becomes a party to a political conflict anywhere in the world, additional precautions are advisable:

- Keep in touch with the current political situations by listening daily to the television or radio if available. If not, ask friends, host family, and colleagues to share with you any relevant information they learn. In the event of an emergency, advisories may be made to the general public through the media. In case of an emergency, remain in contact with the on-site staff.
- Make sure that you are registered with the closest US Embassy or Consulate.
- When in large cities and other popular tourist destinations, avoid places frequented by North Americans: bars, discos, and fast food restaurants associated with the US, branches of US banks, American churches, US businesses and offices, and US consulates or embassies.
- Keep away from areas known to have large concentrations of residents aligned with interests unfriendly to the US and its allies. Always consult with the on-site officials before undertaking travel to neighboring cities or popular tourist destinations.
- Be as inconspicuous in dress and demeanor as possible. Wear moderate colors and conservative clothing. Avoid American logos on your belongings and clothing. Avoid large loud groups.
- Keep away from political demonstrations, particularly those directed toward the US. If you see a situation developing, resist the temptation to satisfy your curiosity and investigate what is happening. Walk the other way.
- Do not agree to newspaper or other media interviews regarding political conflicts. It is important to remain as inconspicuous as possible. Do not make reference to your program group. In such cases, always say "no comment" and hang up or walk the other way.

Refer to your program handbook or sponsoring institution for more detailed information on health and safety issues as they pertain to your particular program and destination. Additional health and safety guidelines can be found at the following web sites:

[www.secssa.nafsa.org](http://www.secssa.nafsa.org)

[www.usc.edu/dept/education/globaled/studentsabroad](http://www.usc.edu/dept/education/globaled/studentsabroad)

# Financial Arrangements

## Learning Abroad Center Program Fees

Participants in Learning Abroad Center programs are expected to make arrangements to pay all program fees prior to the beginning of the program or they will not be allowed to participate in the program. Students and/or their home institution will be invoiced through the University of Minnesota student billing system, and students will receive an official bill from the Student Finance Office according to the published schedule. Approximately one month prior to the beginning of the term (December for Spring Semester and Winter Break; April for May Session; May for Summer Session; and August for Fall Semester and Academic Year), the Learning Abroad Center will email you with instructions for payment.

Students participating on Academic Year programs can expect to be billed the equivalent of a Fall Semester program fee in the fall and the remainder prior to Spring Semester. The Academic Year fee will not appear as equal halves, as often the cost for a full year is not twice the cost of one semester. If you decide to stay only Fall Semester, you could be responsible for additional fees to equate to the cost of that semester.

Students should review their email address at [onestop.umn.edu](http://onestop.umn.edu) to be certain that it is accurate. University of Minnesota students need to verify their email address with the campus offering the program, as it is not possible to bill to the home campus. Late fees, special handling fees, and collection agency fees may be assessed if payments are not made by the due dates. You are responsible for all information on the statement regarding payment procedures. (See the *Acceptance, Release, and Waiver* form). Program grades and/or transcripts will not be released until you and/or your institution have paid all fees in full.

Participants in Outside Programs are responsible for program fees to the program sponsor. The University of Minnesota will not be party to payment arrangements for Outside Programs.

## Financial Aid

A copy of *Financial Aid for Study Abroad Frequently Asked Questions* is available in the Learning Abroad Center. Additional preliminary information on financial aid as it applies to study abroad may be obtained by contacting the Learning Abroad Center.

## Applying for Financial Aid

University of Minnesota students who have financial aid and wish to have their aid adjusted for study abroad need to meet with the appropriate Learning Abroad Center staff to complete a *Study Abroad Cost Estimate* (SACE). The SACE includes a breakdown of the costs attributed to the program and the number of credits to be taken each semester. This form needs to be delivered to the Office of Student Finance. Additional paperwork may need to be completed before the SACE is available.

## Financial Aid Disbursement & Billing

If you are a University of Minnesota student receiving financial

aid, you should contact the Student Finance Office regarding direct deposit and billing for the term(s) you are abroad. University of Minnesota students in programs on campuses other than their home campus should be aware that their financial aid, including scholarships, will be released on their home campus; however, the program fee will be assessed on the campus offering the program. You will need to arrange with your Power of Attorney to make payments on the appropriate campus on your behalf and arrange for direct deposit of your financial aid. Students from other institutions must make arrangements with their own institutions and with the Learning Abroad Center.

Financial aid is disbursed according to the regular University of Minnesota calendar. Students need to budget accordingly to cover up-front program costs. The Office of Student Finance cannot disburse funds early for study abroad purposes.

If you adjust your number of credits, cancel, or are dismissed from your study abroad program, the amount of financial aid available to you may change. You are responsible for notifying the financial aid office at your home institution regarding such matters.

Due to ongoing changes in federal legislation, you are advised to keep in regular contact with your financial aid office once you have applied and received financial aid.

## Filing Your Income Tax Forms

If you will be abroad at the time your State and Federal Income Tax forms are due (Spring Semester), make arrangements with your Power of Attorney to submit the proper forms or arrange for an extension on your behalf. Contact the IRS directly to discuss your situation and request an extension.

## Education Tax Benefits

Congress passed legislation in 1997 creating the opportunity for certain students or their parents to obtain a tax credit for tuition paid to attend a college or university. Congress has required that beginning with calendar year 1998 colleges and universities report, both to the IRS and to students, certain information relating to their attendance at a college or university. *The University is legally prohibited from providing this information directly to parents.* Students may wish to communicate with their parents about this matter. University of Minnesota students can find more information and forms related to education tax credit on the web at <http://128.101.150.185/forms/tax.html>. Information for tax reporting purposes will be available through the Student Finance Office and at [onestop.umn.edu](http://onestop.umn.edu). Students participating on Outside Programs should contact the program sponsor.

# Logistics

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## Pre-Departure Orientation

You will be notified of the date, time, and location of any required orientation meetings. All Learning Abroad Center program participants within a reasonable driving distance of the Twin Cities are required to attend. At orientation you will receive current program information, view a health and safety presentation, meet fellow participants, and have the opportunity to ask questions of past participants. Those who are unable to attend orientation will receive an orientation packet in the mail. Please contact your Learning Abroad Center adviser if you have questions regarding your study abroad program.

## Email Account

Your University of Minnesota e-mail account is the official mode of communication on all university matters, including study abroad. Be certain to make arrangements to have access to this account while you are overseas or forward it to your overseas e-mail address.

## Your Address

In order to ensure that all official communication and billing information is sent to the correct address while you are abroad, be certain to check your official contact information prior to departure. Students should visit [onestop.umn.edu](http://onestop.umn.edu) to verify that the information is correct.

## Travel Arrangements

In general, students are required to make their own travel arrangements to the program site. For most sponsored programs, the Learning Abroad Center works with a local travel agency to have a group flight arranged. The group flights are designed to offer participants a scheduled flight in the company of other participants. You will receive information directly from the travel agency regarding the flight. In most cases you are not obligated to take the group flight. However, if your program does not offer a group flight, or if you choose to travel on your own, you will need to consult your program handbook or program sponsor for important program details, such as arrival day, time, meeting place, program end date, etc., **prior** to making travel arrangements.

You are encouraged to stop at the Learning Abroad Center to review the travel library and resources available or meet with a peer adviser. Travel books, money belts, rail passes, and other travel products are available at discounted rates for University of Minnesota students.

### Customs & Immigration

When arriving and departing from your host country you will be required to pass through immigration and customs. Immigration will check your passport and visa (if required) and customs may check your luggage and carry-on to ensure that you are following the import and export regulations of the country. Individual rules and regulations vary from country to country and you should check with your program handbook or program sponsor to find out the specific regulations for your destination. You will also have to pass through customs and immigration when you return to the US.



### Voting While Overseas

If you are abroad during an election year, you can make arrangements to submit an absentee ballot. Further information on voting procedures can be found at [www.fvap.ncr.gov](http://www.fvap.ncr.gov).

### Travel While Abroad

#### International Student Identity Card (ISIC)

The International Student Identity Card (ISIC) may entitle you to discounts for airplane, train or bus tickets, entry to certain museums and other places of interest, and discounts at certain hotels. If purchased in the US, the ISIC will provide a limited measure of insurance. For more information and to purchase the ISIC, stop by the Learning Abroad Center or go to [www.UMabroad.edu](http://www.UMabroad.edu).

#### Rail Passes

Many economy rail passes can be purchased only in the US. The Learning Abroad Center Travel Services sells the Eurail and a variety of country-specific passes, such as BritRail and FranceRail.

### Other Travel

Travel by bus is an inexpensive way to get around in most cities and most countries. On the other hand, driving an automobile while abroad may be a more expensive and even risky mode of transportation. Traffic patterns and driving customs may be very different, possibly even dangerous in some parts of the world. In addition, insurance requirements or restrictions in some countries are costly or prohibitive, and your home policy may not cover you while driving abroad. The Learning Abroad Center does not recommend renting a car or driving while participating on a study abroad program.

### Travel & Visitors From Home

The Learning Abroad Center encourages you to travel during free time, but recreational travel must be confined to weekends, holidays, and breaks, and must not be allowed to interfere with timely completion of all coursework and assignments. If any friends or family wish to visit you in country, they should time their visits to coincide with breaks. Remember, you must always respect the rights and privacy of your roommates or homestay family if you plan to travel or have visitors. Check with your program specific handbook or program sponsor for any additional rules regarding travel and visitors.

### Preparing for Your Return

As you plan your trip abroad, make sure to arrange for your return to campus. The Learning Abroad Center and other university study abroad offices cannot make logistical arrangements for students to return to campus; this is your responsibility.

Before you go, check deadlines for registration, financial aid applications, residence hall applications, etc. and arrange with your Power of Attorney or a friend or relative to do whatever is necessary.

- You may need to register the next semester's classes at your home institution while you are still abroad. If you have access to the Internet overseas, you may be able to register for classes on-line.
- Plan for housing if you wish to live on campus. Contact the Housing and Residential Life Department prior to leaving the residence hall to determine if you may reserve a space for your return.
- Students from other institutions should make arrangements with their home campus for any necessary arrangements, such as housing and registration in classes to be taken upon return.

# Cultural Adjustment

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## Social Adjustments & Safety

As a study abroad student, you will need to take the initiative to meet people. Just as you have an established circle of friends in the US, students overseas have established friends and habits. Don't be afraid to start a conversation and to pursue contact in order to meet new people.

Females are encouraged to consult the cultural and travel books available in Travel Services about the possible differences in attitudes toward females overseas. It is important to be prepared for the possible differences in style and attitudes that may exist.

Remember to use common sense when giving out your address or phone number. It is wise to set up times and places to meet others rather than give out any personal information. For those living with a family, be sure to check with your host family before giving out their phone number, address, or inviting guests over. Do not have overnight guests without checking with your roommate or host family first. In general, overnight guests are not appropriate with a host family.

## Relationships

For many of you, your stay will be the first time out of the US. You may have the opportunity to make some very good friends. These types of strong friendships are not only encouraged but can lead to continued exchanges between you and your new-found friends after you return home. Nevertheless, please keep a few words of caution in mind:

- Be careful of persons wanting to get to know you very quickly, as they may have an ulterior motive. Meet people in public places during the day, preferably with a friend or two of yours. Do not give out your phone number or address freely, as this can lead to problems for you, program staff, other participants, or your host family. Agree to meet the person at a specific time and place.
- US citizens can be easy to identify. They often dress differently, speak loudly in groups, carry backpacks, wear tennis shoes, and speak with a US accent. Some people view US citizens as wealthy and may want to become friends in order to obtain your money or your passport. Use common sense and be cautious. Be aware of your surrounding environment!
- Entering into a relationship overseas should be approached with the same precautions as at home. It can be very tempting to be charmed by the idea of a once-in-a-lifetime romance, but you should consider any relationship carefully, particularly when you are overseas. Keep in mind that in your host country there may be many different cultural values and rules regarding dating and relationships. Proceed cautiously, realizing that you are only in the country for a short period of time. If you do enter into a long-term relationship, we recommend that you also see how the relationship functions in the US, where you are at home and no longer acting as a guest does.

- Proceed with caution with any relationship and only enter into a close relationship after knowing the partner for a sustained period of time. US women are often stereotyped as easy sexual partners, and each year women find themselves in difficult situations because they were not cautious. Do not go to the home or apartment of someone you do not know well, especially if there is drinking involved. Most problems of this kind are alcohol related. Be extremely careful of drinking in bars. There have been reported cases of drinks being drugged, so it would be a good idea to have the drink opened while you are watching and not to accept a drink brought to the table and paid for by "an admirer."
- Please be aware that in any type of relationship, whether heterosexual or homosexual, you could end up with a sexually transmitted disease, AIDS, or possibly a pregnancy. This is not meant as a scare tactic but rather for you to realize that it can and has happened. Be sure that you know the person very well before developing a more intimate relationship and always demand that you both take necessary precautions.

More detailed information about culture and relationships as it pertains to your program and country will be included in your program-specific guides.

## Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, & Transgender Issues

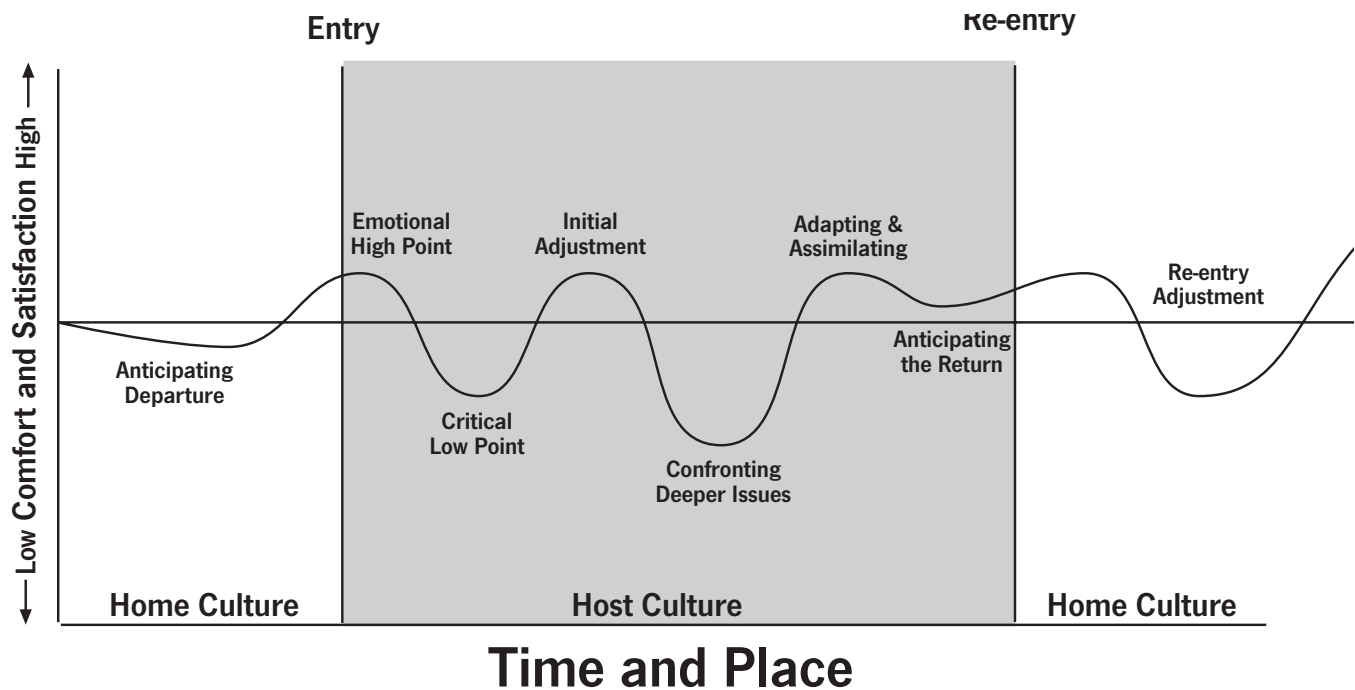
Attitudes towards sexuality vary greatly from country to country. Some cultures are open about homosexuality, and strong gay communities exist in many cities. However, some cultures and peoples are intolerant of different sexual preferences, and strict taboos or laws against such relationships may exist. We encourage you to find out how different sexual preferences are viewed overseas and where your support may exist, so that your time overseas can be as enriching as possible. Consult your program guide or program sponsor for more information on gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender issues in your country of choice.

For additional resources, University of Minnesota students can contact the Office of Multicultural Affairs at [www.oma.umn.edu](http://www.oma.umn.edu).

## Students of Color

You may wish to consult the resources available at the Learning Abroad Center on issues related to students of color and study abroad. Also, program specific material may include information more specific to the host culture. If you have questions about the country in which you will be studying, do not hesitate to contact a Learning Abroad Center staff member.

For additional resources, University of Minnesota students can visit the Office of Multicultural Affairs at [www.oma.umn.edu](http://www.oma.umn.edu).



## Students With Disabilities

Many of the disability accommodations or services that are provided at US universities may be different or unavailable overseas. Being in a new environment can also be stressful, and accommodations that you may not have needed at home may become necessary in an unfamiliar setting.

You should arrange for any disability accommodations at overseas sites before you depart. Receiving accommodations once you are abroad will be more difficult and may not be possible. Your acceptance into a program is not influenced by disclosing accommodation needs, and it is to your advantage to be certain that the accommodation you need will be available.

You are encouraged to begin the process as early as possible. The disability specialists and study abroad staff can discuss possible alternatives with you, if necessary. To make requests you can contact your home institution's disability services specialists. The University of Minnesota Disability Services Office is can be reached at 612.626.1333 (v/tty) or [www.disserv.stu.umn.edu](http://www.disserv.stu.umn.edu). The Learning Abroad Center staff will also work with you to inquire about necessary arrangements.

For additional resources and information, visit the Learning Abroad Center's web site or stop by the Learning Abroad Center.

## Culture Shock

Going abroad can be one of the most exhilarating learning experiences of a person's life; it can also include a series of bewildering and frustrating incidents that leave you longing for home and leaves your family and friends feeling helpless. Aside from the basic preparation for a trip, it is valuable to take some time to investigate what you are likely to encounter, so that you can better understand and enhance your experience abroad.

The following sections can be used as general guidelines regarding cultural adjustment and are partially compiled from evaluations from past program participants. The chart above illustrates the adjustment process from the time of application to re-entry.

While there are common themes in intercultural adjustment, keep in mind that individuals may experience these phases differently depending such variables as the individual personality, prior experience, and program length.

### The Pre-Departure Experience

During the pre-departure phase, you may experience the following:

#### *Application Anxiety*

When waiting for an opportunity to go abroad, you may experience anxiety over your chances of selection and your ability to handle this new opportunity. During this time, you may anticipate cultural differences but have only a superficial awareness of potential adjustment problems.

### *Selection/Planning*

Upon hearing that you will be going abroad, you may experience a tremendous elation coupled with frustration in dealing with items such as travel and financial arrangements, or applying for a visa. During this stage expectations are high, and the pre-departure proceedings and arrival introductions may be both overwhelming and exciting.

### *A Sense of Purpose*

It is important for you to identify goals and objectives in order to plan for your experience and mitigate some of your anxiety or apprehension.

Following are some questions that may help you clarify before leaving what you hope to accomplish while away:

1. Who am I? (awareness of personal beliefs and attitudes.)
2. Where do I come from? (awareness of US cultural beliefs and customs)
3. Where am I going? (awareness of foreign culture customs, behaviors and values)
4. Why am I going? (to practice a foreign language, interest in foreign countries, to see famous sights, to leave the US, etc.)
5. What am I willing to consider? (How open will I be to different ways of doing things? Will I “try on” some of the behavior and values of the foreign people?)

### **The On-Site Experience**

#### *Cultural Differences—What Are They?*

We are surrounded by elements in our own culture that influence who we are and how we relate to the world. Because we have grown up with this culture, we are comfortable in it. Our values and attitudes have been shaped by our experiences in our native culture. What happens when we suddenly lose cues and symbols that orient us to situations of daily life? What happens when facial expressions, gestures, and words are no longer familiar? The psychological discomfort one feels in a foreign situation is commonly known as culture shock.

#### *Reactions to Cultural Differences or Culture Shock*

Most participants will experience some form of culture shock. Some might experience it after only two days in the host country, others not until three or more months into their stay, and others may never experience it. In addition, the concrete indicators of culture shock vary from individual to individual. The following are the most commonly identified phases of culture shock:

- **Initial Fascination**—Upon arrival, you may experience a state of euphoria where surroundings seem glamorous and exotic, and you feel that you are the focus of attention and activity.
- **Initial Culture Shock**—The initial fascination and novelty of the new culture often fades as you settle in, and you may enter a decline.
- **Surface Adjustment**—After this initial “down,” which may last a few days to a few weeks, adjustment takes place and you settle into your new surroundings. Your language skills begin to improve, and it is easier to communicate basic ideas and feelings without fatigue. You also often develop a small group of friends and associates which helps you to feel integrated.

- **Feelings of Isolation**—At some point the novelty wears off completely and the difficulties remain. Frustration increases, and a new and more pervasive sense of isolation can set in. Many times this period is accompanied by boredom and a lack of motivation as you feel little stimulus to overcome deeper and more troublesome difficulties. Unresolved personal issues often resurface during this stage.
- **Integration/Acceptance**—When you are finally at ease with professional or academic interests, as well as language, friends, and associates, it is easier to examine more carefully the new society in which you are living. Deeper differences between you and hosts become understandable, and you find ways of dealing with them. You may experience a lack of true friendships but nonetheless appreciate all that the host culture has to offer. As you become more integrated into the surroundings, you come to accept both the situation and yourself in it, allowing you to relax and feel at home.
- **Return Anxiety**—Once you are well settled in, the thought of leaving new friends and the community raises anxieties similar to those felt before departure. You begin to sense how much internal change has occurred because of the experience, and apprehension may grow at the thought of returning home to people who may not understand these new feelings and insights. You may even feel guilty for wanting to stay, knowing that there are people waiting anxiously at home. This leads to re-entry adjustment, which will be discussed later in this section.

Culture shock may manifest itself in one or many of the following forms:

- Changes in sleeping habits
- Disorientation about how to work and relate to others
- Language difficulties and mental fatigue from speaking and listening to a foreign language
- Feelings of helplessness, hopelessness
- Loneliness
- Unexplainable crying
- Placing blame for difficulties on the program or host culture
- Homesickness, feeling depressed
- Getting angry easily
- Decline in inventiveness, spontaneity, or flexibility
- Stereotyping of host country/culture
- Increase in physical ailments or pain
- Compulsive eating or lack of appetite
- Unable to work effectively
- Boredom

Emotional and physical reactions to these various phases will influence how one relates to local citizens. Excitement and fascination with the host country’s behavior and customs will help to pave the way for positive interaction. Conversely, hostility and aggression toward those “strange and un-American” customs perpetuate the “ugly American image” and cause host nationals to remain at a distance.



### *Practical Advice for Friends & Family*

Although you will be overseas, you will also share your experience with friends and family at home through letters, phone calls, and when you return. The *Friends and Family Handbook* can be found at [www.UMabroad.umn.edu](http://www.UMabroad.umn.edu) to share with those who will be sharing your experience from afar.

Before you leave, you and your friends and family members may want to read as much as possible about where you are going in order to gain some perspective about the experience. This might include reading guidebooks, foreign and international newspapers and magazines, novels, plays, poetry, and political and economic analyses. You may also want to talk to international students and veteran travelers who have been where you are going.

Please keep in mind that you may not be able to call home immediately, as this may be too inconvenient, complex, or difficult. During this phase of adjustment, your friends and family members should be prepared to receive phone calls and letters in which you complain and talk about how frustrating everything is in the host country. While these feelings should be taken seriously, participants abroad tend to call and write home when things are not going so well and do not call and write when things are going well. Be certain to share the many new and exciting experiences you are having as well!

### **Re-entry: The Coming Home Experience**

*"I can't say why it was hard to adjust, but it was. I sat in my bedroom for three weeks doing nothing but looking at pictures of my time overseas. I couldn't put my finger on why. I had eaten couscous in Morocco and dipped my foot in the North Sea! It makes you question things again."*

As you prepare for your return, you may think your experience is about to end. However, another phase of the experience called re-entry is about to begin. Re-entry is the process of readjustment to the home culture and, in some cases, can be more difficult than the adjustment to life in a foreign country. When you travel abroad, you are prepared for life in general to be considerably different. When you return home to what was once familiar to you, you see it in a new light because you have changed, and this is often not expected.

Re-entry is a unique experience for every person, because people change in different ways and in varying degrees. You may feel alienated and alone, but there are many ways to prepare for this transition. Friends and family can be supportive during this process by allowing you to talk about your experience and feelings upon re-entry. If you miss the host culture, it can be helpful to get involved in international organizations, see a film in the language of the host culture, and keep up with the international news. Planning the next overseas experience is also a great re-entry tool!

The following information is organized in topics that returning students have identified as sources of difficulty in their reentry process.

### *Self*

*"My year abroad was a great adventure. It became a 24-hour-a-day obsession to take advantage of where I was, the time I had, and the people with whom I lived. I had never been so continuously stimulated intellectually and personally. It was a letdown to return home."*

Personal growth, new insights into our own culture, deep connections with people overseas, a new understanding of the issues facing our changing world, and new language skills are just a few of the changes noted by returning participants. You have become accustomed to a high level of activity or stimulation that your home and campus may not be able to match at first glance. As a result, you may feel restless or depressed after your return.

In some cases, the academic experience overseas can provide a new perspective on your academic or career goals. As a result, you may question or change your own long-term goals.

You can help yourself adjust by thinking through the many ways in which you have changed as a result of the overseas experience and to write these impressions in a personal journal. You can also find ways to incorporate your new interests and cross-cultural skills into your life through involvement with international groups, tutoring, or services in the community or on campus. It is also helpful to share what you have experienced with others who have studied or worked abroad.

### *Family & Friends*

*“I think that some people feel intimidated because they don’t understand the experiences I’ve had. They don’t know where I’m coming from and can’t grasp how it would be to live somewhere else.”*

You will have returned from an unusual social experience. You will have adapted to a different way of life and may find it difficult to fit back into the former expected roles. Sometimes you may want everyone to share in your new found knowledge and to adapt to new ways as you have. You may also find little in common with old friends and find it difficult to communicate effectively, because friends and family have not shared your overseas experience. The people that knew you before the study abroad experience may also be unprepared for the changes in your values and lifestyle.

As you share your stories and photographs, adjust at your own pace, and discuss your feelings. In time, you will readjust to your home environment.



### *Country*

*“I was so much more critical of things that are considered ‘normal’ in the US once I had adapted to another culture that did things differently. When I was overseas, I ate differently, I looked at time differently, I socialized and studied differently. Once I arrived in America, I felt as though I really didn’t have a ‘home culture’ anymore.”*

People generally take their country and its culture for granted, until they go abroad. Then differences in beliefs, customs, resources, and values become apparent. Out of necessity, you adjust. When you return home, your new awareness may give you critical insights. You may unconsciously accept again the conveniences you missed while abroad, and, at the same time, you may be sharply critical of practices that you once took for granted. Your home culture, from social conditions to mass media, may no longer be entirely to your liking. You may have the sense that you no longer fit in. Political changes, economic developments, and even fads in fashion and music that you may have missed make you feel like a stranger in your home country. You may even feel awkward speaking English again if you developed other language skills overseas.

Do talk about your experience and your feelings upon re-entry. Your attitudes and behavior will adjust as you integrate the overseas experience into your life at home.

### **Cultural Adjustments: A Summary**

Study abroad is one of the most challenging and rewarding academic and personal experience that universities offer. Choosing the right program and making the necessary arrangements is a big task because many program types and details need to be considered. Nervousness about the challenges you will face in your new environment, combined with the details of pre-departure arrangements, can create an atmosphere of anxiety. Positive excitement, however, is the overriding emotion.

After arriving in the host country, emotions run high as you begin to adjust to the program and to new surroundings. Culture shock takes many forms, and each participant reacts differently to the challenges of intercultural living. These ups and downs are a normal part of the adjustment process.

No matter what your reaction upon return home, be it excitement to be home or anxiety about returning to something familiar with an unfamiliar vantage point, re-entry adjustment is a natural part of cultural learning and reflects the depth of your experiences abroad. You will probably continue for many years to evaluate ideas and events in the context of the broader cultural perspective you have acquired.

If you or your friends and family have questions about culture shock, feel free to call us in the Learning Abroad Center. Once on site, do not hesitate to discuss any difficult transitions you are experiencing with the on-site staff and your fellow participants and friends.

# Student Rights & Responsibilities

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Over the years, the great majority of students have been excellent ambassadors for their programs. Some of the infrequent exceptions, however, have had a damaging impact on host families, agencies, and other students in the program. Policies set forth by the University of Minnesota and the Learning Abroad Center guide the administration, planning, and program development of all Learning Abroad Center activity. These policies and guidelines have been established to protect the safety of Learning Abroad Center program participants. You are required to read, understand, and abide by these policies. Failure to do so may result in your expulsion from the program. The following policies and guidelines are available on the Learning Abroad Center's website and are briefly described below:

## Acceptance, Release, & Waiver Form

The *Acceptance, Release, and Waiver* form along with the *University of Minnesota Student Code of Conduct* clarify the expectations of participants on programs sponsored and endorsed by the Learning Abroad Center. Be certain to read through these documents carefully and understand the conditions of your participation.

The *Acceptance, Release, and Waiver* form includes condition, procedures, and refund policies in the event of early withdrawal or expulsion. You can access this at [www.UMabroad.umn.edu/policies](http://www.UMabroad.umn.edu/policies).

## Cancellation & Refund Policy

For Learning Abroad Center programs, a copy of the *Learning Abroad Center Cancellation and Refund Policy* is available at [www.UMabroad.umn.edu/policies](http://www.UMabroad.umn.edu/policies). You are responsible for all information contained in the policy. It is further understood that when you sign the *Acceptance, Release, and Waiver* form you accept the conditions of the policy.

The Learning Abroad Center reserves the right to cancel any program at any time deemed appropriate or necessary due to unforeseen circumstances. Refunds will be made in accordance with the program cancellation refund policy outlined in the *Learning Abroad Center Cancellation and Refund Policy*.

## Student Code of Conduct

In addition to the University of Minnesota and Learning Abroad Center policies and guidelines, many programs will have their own rules of conduct that are specific to the program and the country. Consult your program guide or program sponsor for information about rules of conduct for your program. Failure to comply with these guidelines or the University of Minnesota guidelines mentioned above can lead to dismissal from your program. See [www.UMabroad.umn.edu/policies](http://www.UMabroad.umn.edu/policies) for a copy of the Student Code of Conduct.

## *Being a Good Ambassador*

During your time abroad you are an ambassador not only for your country and your university but also for the program. The good reputation enjoyed in the host countries by our programs is a tribute to your predecessors. It is because of these previous good ambassadors that so many families are eager to host students, so many agencies are willing to receive interns, so many host universities are willing to receive students, and that our programs are able to attract quality faculty and guest lecturers. Your program's future will in turn depend on the impression you create.

Some of the keys to creating a good impression are culture-specific. The Learning Abroad Center helps you acquire tools for cultural sensitivity through culture-specific information in the program specific guides and through pre-departure orientation activities. In-country staff will also provide coaching and advising concerning cultural adaptation.

One of the best ways to learn more about your host country is to talk to people who have lived, studied, or visited there. Students who were on your program in previous years, faculty and staff who have lived or worked in your host country, and international students from the country are all good resources for information and guidance. If you are interested in talking to a past participant or an international student from the host country, contact the Learning Abroad Center.

## *Sexual Harassment & Sexual Assault*

If you feel that any faculty or staff, or anyone with supervisory responsibilities over you, has behaved in a manner inconsistent with the University of Minnesota's policy on sexual harassment, please inform the on-site coordinator immediately or, if for any reason that feels uncomfortable, another staff member. If you have chosen another type of study abroad program, consult with the program guide or the sponsor for information and their policy on sexual harassment and sexual assault.

Local standards concerning what constitutes appropriate behavior may differ considerably from those in the US. In some countries, for example, women might experience suggestive catcalls on the street or rather aggressive advances by men in social situations. Your in-country orientation should include some discussion of relevant cultural norms, as well as suggestions for how to deal with behavior that you might find offensive. Sexual assault is illegal and unacceptable in all countries, although the degree of aggressiveness with which local authorities pursue violations varies greatly from country to country. In all locations, any attempt at forcible sexual advance, by anyone, should be reported immediately to the on-site staff or another staff member.

You can reduce the danger of sexual assault by exercising good judgment and taking some basic precautions. North American women are often stereotyped as being promiscuous, and study abroad participants sometimes find themselves in difficult situations that they could have avoided. In some countries the concept of date rape is almost unknown and the general feeling may be that if a female goes home with a man she is willing to sleep with him, regardless of how many times she says no. Avoid putting yourself in such a situation.

For more information, University of Minnesota students can visit the Program Against Sexual Violence at [www.umn.edu/sexviol](http://www.umn.edu/sexviol).

### Drugs

Please refer to the Learning Abroad’s *Acceptance, Release and Waiver* form for the strict policy on drug use. The Learning Abroad Center takes this policy extremely seriously and assumes you will also. The prohibition on drug use, purchase, or possession is absolute, and the Learning Abroad Center will recognize no extenuating circumstances for violations.

Students have been removed from the program and lost all credit for violation of this policy.

### Alcohol

The Learning Abroad Center expects moderation and good judgment in the use of alcohol. Drunkenness can seriously jeopardize student safety as well as damaging relations with host families or agencies or communities. Monitor carefully your approach to alcohol consumption. Unfamiliar surroundings and the emotional strain of adjusting to another culture can sometimes contribute to misuse. Keep in mind that the alcohol content in foreign beers and beverages is often higher than American made drinks. Also, consider any change in altitude as it will impact the effects of alcohol consumption. Patterns of alcohol abuse that affect adversely student safety, class attendance, academic performance, or relations with hosts can, if sufficiently serious, be grounds for expulsion from the program.

For more information regarding University of Minnesota and Learning Abroad Center policies regarding the use of alcohol and drugs, see *University of Minnesota Alcohol, Drugs, and Study Abroad* and *University of Minnesota Drug-Free Workplace Statement* at [www.UMabroad.umn.edu/policies](http://www.UMabroad.umn.edu/policies).

### Student Grievances

Academic grievances are complaints brought by students regarding the provision of education and academic support services affecting their role as students. For grievances concerning University of Minnesota sponsored or cosponsored study abroad programs offered through the Learning Abroad Center, students should make inquiries and appeals to the appropriate University officials, in the following order: the program representative in the Learning Abroad Center, the Director of the Learning Abroad Center, the Student Dispute Resolution Center, and the Office of the General Counsel. For complaints concerning non-University of Minnesota programs, students should make appeals to the program sponsor.

### Power of Attorney

Assigning power of attorney is a legal process through which you may assign another person the power to act on your behalf in specific situations. The Learning Abroad Center requires that any student with financial aid through the University of Minnesota obtain a Power of Attorney to deal with issues such as completing financial aid paperwork, issues related to deposit of financial aid checks, banking or insurance transactions.

### Friends & Family Handbook

For most programs, a *Friends and Family Handbook* can be viewed at [www.UMabroad.umn.edu](http://www.UMabroad.umn.edu) for those special in your life. This handbook can help those in the US provide support to you while you are abroad.

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