



Pre-Departure Student Handbook for Faculty-Led Programs



The International Programs Center
127 McIver Street
UNCG
Greensboro, NC 27402

www.uncg.edu/ipg/studenthandbook.pdf

Dear Study Abroad Student,

You are about to begin what will probably be one of the most exciting adventures of your life -- studying abroad. With your departure only a few months or weeks away, you have likely begun to wonder what you should pack, what health precautions you should take before departing, and what it will be like living and studying in your program's host country. Hopefully, this handbook will help answer some of those questions.

The information that follows is a collection of advice from our office staff and former participants. All information was accurate to the best of our knowledge at the time of printing. If you have updated information upon your return from study abroad, please let us know. We would greatly appreciate it if you could help us update this handbook for next year's participants.

Remember to EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED. Ultimately, no written materials or suggestions are going to prepare you fully for what lies ahead. The best that you can do is to commit yourself to keeping an open mind, remaining flexible, and being patient with yourself as you adjust to your new environment. Most importantly, remember to have fun!

Sincerely,

The International Programs Center (IPC) Staff

Special thanks to Ingrid Schmidt and P. J. Shoulders at North Carolina State University for sharing their materials and expertise.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

0.0. CHECKLIST OF THINGS TO DO BEFORE YOU LEAVE THE U.S.	4
1.0. PASSPORTS AND VISAS	5
1.1. Authorized passport agencies in Greensboro	5
1.2. Cost.....	5
1.3. Passport Application forms.....	6
1.4. Passport Photos	6
1.5. Visas	6
1.6. Special Notes for Non-U.S. Citizens.....	6
2.0. FLIGHT ARRANGEMENTS	6
2.1. Arranged Flights	6
2.2. Individual Flights.....	7
2.3. General Flight Guidelines	7
2.4. List of Travel agencies	8
3.0. ISIC CARD	9
4.0. GENERAL TRAVEL INFORMATION	9
5.0. HEALTH INFORMATION	10
5.1. Before you go	10
5.2. When you arrive	11
5.3. Mental Health	12
5.4. Health Insurance and Emergency Assistance	12
6.0. SAFETY WHILE ABROAD	14
6.1. General Safety	14
6.2. Personal Safety	16
6.3. Sexual Assault/Harassment	17
6.4. Travel Safety	18
7.0. EMERGENCIES	19
7.1. Emergencies abroad	19
7.2. Emergencies at home	20
8.0. IPC STANDARDS OF STUDENT CONDUCT	20
8.1. Foreign Laws, Regulations and Standards.....	21
8.2. UNGC Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity Policy.....	22
8.3. Alcohol and Study Abroad	23
8.4. Illegal Drugs	24
8.5. Crimes (Assault, Violence, Vandalism, Harassment, etc.)	25
8.6. Other Standards of Student Conduct	25
9.0. SPECIAL NEEDS AND CONCERNS	26
9.1. Culture Shock.....	26
9.2. Cultural Issues.....	27
9.3. Gender Issues	28
9.4. Sexual Identity.....	28
9.5. Race and Ethnicity	29
9.6. Students with Disabilities.....	29
9.7. Resources for Special Needs	30
10.0. MONEY & BUDGETING	30

10.1. What to take with you	30
10.2. Accessing money during your time abroad	30
10.2.1. ATM MACHINES	30
10.2.2. TRAVELER'S CHECKS.	31
10.2.3. CREDIT CARDS	31
10.3. Budgeting	32
11.0. KEEPING IN TOUCH.....	32
12.0. HOMESTAYS.....	33
13.0. THINGS TO BRING WITH YOU	34
13.1. Luggage	34
13.2. Packing Hints	35
13.3. Packing List.....	36

0.0. CHECKLIST OF THINGS TO DO *BEFORE* YOU LEAVE THE U.S.

- Passport—If you do not already have a passport which will be valid for at least six months after your return to the U.S., apply for one **immediately** (see "Applying for a Passport").
- Visa—Programs to locations such as Africa, India, & China require a visa for US citizens. Please check with your Program Director to see whether a visa is necessary and how to apply for one. Also, non-US citizens may require a visa for any program and should check with the appropriate consulate/embassy on visas. (See Notes for non-US citizens.)
- Handbook—Read this Pre-Departure Student Handbook in its entirety. It includes many policies for which you will be held accountable and it also has many important tips based on past students' experiences.
- Orientation—Mark your calendar and save the dates for any mandatory pre-departure orientations. Consult your Program Director for dates. Non-UNCG students who cannot attend the orientation should read all materials thoroughly so they are prepared for their trip abroad.
- IPC paperwork— Be sure to return all required paperwork to your Program Director by the assigned date.
- Visit Financial Aid Office— UNCG students intending to use financial aid to cover the cost of the program, should call or schedule an appointment with the Financial Aid Office no later than mid-March.
- Pay Program Balance—Pay any program fees by the deadline. Consult with your Program Director for details.
- Flights—Make your flight arrangements with a reputable travel agency (see "Flight Arrangements"). Note that all programs have specific arrival instructions of which you must be aware prior to booking a flight. Consult with your Program Director for details.
- ISIC card—purchase your ISIC card through IPC (see below for details). Ask your Program Director whether the cost is included in your program fees.
- Photocopies—Make copies of all your important documents such as passport, airline tickets, prescriptions, credit cards, ATM cards, etc. Leave one set of copies in the U.S. with a family member or friend, and take another set with you in a place separate from the originals. The copies will help speed up replacements if lost or stolen.
- Immunizations—Make arrangements to meet with a health professional *at least 6*

weeks prior to departure to obtain necessary immunizations, vaccinations, and health information for your destination country.

- Prescriptions—Get copies of all medical and vision prescriptions to carry with you. If possible, have your doctor fill your prescriptions to cover your entire stay abroad (see "Health" section).
- Budget—Develop a budget for your trip and plan for multiple ways of accessing money while abroad (see "Money and Budgeting").
- Phone calls—If you plan to use a U.S. long-distance calling card abroad (see "Keeping in Touch"), contact your long-distance phone company to make sure you know the access codes you will need to dial from abroad.
- Pack light! Lay out everything you plan to take and then take a quarter of that (see "Things to Bring With You"). This is the #1 piece of advice from returning students every year.
- READ, READ, READ! You will be going to a place where everything is different (yes, even those of you going to an English-speaking country) from what you know here --the food, the customs, the weather, the toilet paper, the electrical outlets, the clothes --EVERYTHING. If it were going to be the same as home, why bother to go abroad? The more you can learn about your destination - its history, its culture, and its people - the better prepared you will be to enjoy the differences rather than be overwhelmed by them (see "Homestays" and "Culture").

1.0. PASSPORTS AND VISAS

If you have not already done so, you should apply for a passport IMMEDIATELY. Applications for a first-time passport normally take about four weeks, but during the late spring, you should allow six to eight weeks. A VALID PASSPORT IS REQUIRED FOR ALL PROGRAMS. This includes Mexico and Canada.

If you are really short on time, you may request express processing of your passport application for an extra \$60 plus overnight delivery costs. Processing a passport with this service usually takes about two weeks, but to request this service, you must show proof (such as an airline ticket) that you will be leaving the country in less than three weeks.

1.1. Authorized passport agencies in Greensboro

U.S. Post Office
Four Seasons Mall

1.2. Cost

\$97 for a first-time passport
\$67 for passport renewal
\$60 additional fee for expedited service

1.3. Passport Application forms

Full passport details are available on-line at <http://travel.state.gov/passport/>. Application forms can also be downloaded at this site.

1.4. Passport Photos (<http://www.uncg.edu/~pjpynes/ipc/outrient/passportinfo.htm>)

Kinko's ~ \$ 14.00 for 2 photos

AAA ~ \$4.00 or free for 2 photos for members (depends on membership)

Walmart ~ \$6.95 for 2 photos or sheet of 10 for \$10

CVS ~ most will process sheet of 10 ID photos for \$10-\$15, will copy a passport photo onto a sheet of photographic paper, producing a sheet of 9 ID photos for about \$10 (some require that you already have 1 photo).

1.5. Visas

Tourist visas are not required for U.S. citizens participating in most UNCG short-term and summer programs. Your Program Director will inform you of any specific visa requirements pertaining to your program. Generally, visas are required for travel to Africa, India and China. Non-U.S. citizens must contact the consulate or embassy for the program's host country.

If you plan to travel to other countries *before* or after your program, a visa may be necessary for those countries. You should check with the embassy of the countries you intend to visit and inquire about visas BEFORE departure.

1.6. Special Notes for Non-U.S. Citizens

If you are not a U.S. citizen, contact the IPC and make an appointment with the Director of International Students and Scholar Services AS SOON AS POSSIBLE to ensure that you understand the USCIS requirements and do not jeopardize your residency status by participation in a program abroad. You will also need to contact the embassy or consulate of the program's host country for specific visa information.

2.0. FLIGHT ARRANGEMENTS

Generally UNCG faculty-led programs offer two types of flight arrangements: "arranged flights" and "individual flights." Please do not make any flight arrangements until you receive approval from your Program Director that you:

- have been accepted to the program,
- have the correct arrival location, date and time, and
- have been notified if your program will have an arranged or individual flight

2.1. Arranged Flights

Some programs offer arranged flights. The Program Director works with a travel agent to reserve a group of seats all on the same flight to and from the host country. In this case, the Program Director will make flight reservations and then give you instructions

on how and when to book your seat and pay for it.

Once you have been accepted to the program and the Program Director has made the flight reservations, s/he will notify you of the arranged flight information, including location, date and time, as well as deposit and final payment information and deadlines. When you book on the arranged flight, you are responsible for any payments and deposits to be made directly to the travel agent. **You must pay on time. If you do not make necessary payments to the travel agent on time, the travel agent will cancel your seat and you may lose your deposit.** If payment is not made on time and your reservation is cancelled, you will be responsible for your own flight and ensuring that you arrive when required.

Note for students on financial aid: Deposit and final balance payments on arranged flights are often due to the travel agent prior to the disbursement of your financial aid package. Please plan accordingly to ensure that you will have funds to cover these expenses when they are due.

Additionally, your Program Director will most likely have arrangements upon arrival in the host country that you will need to be aware of. In most cases, all participants arrive at the same airport, around the same time, in order to take a train, bus, or taxi to the program site. It is your responsibility to ensure you arrive when and where necessary in order to travel with the group to the program site. The Program Director will notify you of the required arrival date and time. If you miss the group transportation in the host country to the program site, it will be your responsibility to pay for and make your way to the meeting point.

If you choose to book your own flight instead of taking the arranged flight, we recommend you follow the general flight guidelines below.

2.2. Individual Flights

For programs that do not offer arranged flights, the flight and often the arrival arrangements are handled separately by each individual student.

Once you have been accepted to the program, the Program Director will notify you of the arrival location, date and time and any other instructions. It is then up to you to make and pay for your arrival arrangements. We recommend you follow the general flight guidelines below.

2.3. General Flight Guidelines

As a general rule, we recommend buying a round-trip ticket with a set return date and flying into the airport that is closest to your final destination.

Many students think they should buy an "open-ended" ticket if they are unsure when they want to return. These tickets are usually several hundred dollars more expensive than a ticket with a fixed return date. Many fares, especially student fares available

from the agencies listed in this book, require you to choose a return date but allow you to change the date for a small fee (usually \$50-\$75). This is usually a better investment than an open-ended ticket. Also, some countries may deny entry if you do not produce evidence of a return ticket.

When choosing your destination airport, look carefully at the cost, hassle, and time involved before deciding to fly into an airport that is NOT the closest one to your final destination simply because the ticket is cheaper. Remember that you will have all of your luggage with you, you will be tired, jet-lagged, and stressed out. A cheaper ticket is not always the best ticket.

Do not assume that the first travel agency you contact has the cheapest fare. Different agencies have access to different fares and these may vary by several hundred dollars, so it is best to compare the options. "Student" fares (those with more flexible change policies) are generally not available from regular travel agencies or on the Internet.

The following agencies are listed *because they offer student fares often not available from other travel agencies*. An International Student Identity Card (ISIC) may be required to get the student rate. Please see the following section on ISIC for more information. We cannot recommend any specific agency, nor do we endorse any travel agency. Thus, we recommend that you call many of the listed agencies and compare their prices/ services before making your purchase.

2.4. List of Travel agencies

<p>STUDENT UNIVERSE 100 Talcott Avenue East Watertown, MA 02472 Toll free: 1-800-272-9676 Fax: 617-321-3133 Email: helpdesk@studentuniverse.com www.studentuniverse.com</p>	<p>STA TRAVEL CHAPEL HILL OFFICE 143 East Franklin Street Chapel Hill, NC 27514 Tel: 919-928-8844 Fax: 919-928-9444</p> <p>STA NATIONAL OFFICE Toll Free: 1-800-781-4040 Email.go@statravel.com www.statravel.com</p>
<p>PRESTIGE TRAVEL (travel to Africa) 124 East 40th Street, Suite 304 New York, NY 10016 Tel: 212-779-8371 Toll free: 1-800-232-9638 Fax: 212-953-1953 www.prestigetour.com</p>	<p>CUSTOM TRAVEL 5107 Falls of the Neuse Road Raleigh, NC 27609 Tel: 919-872-4420 Toll free: 1-800-458-6765 Fax: 919-872-2150 Email: mcustom.lisa@wspan.co</p>

ISTC (International Student Travel Confederation)
A list of student travel agencies can be found at www.istc.org.

3.0. ISIC CARD

The ISIC card (International Student Identity Card) allows students to take advantage of student discounts all over the world on things such as:

- Flights
- Public Transport
- Ferries
- Museums and Cultural Places of Interest
- Accommodations
- Restaurants
- Entertainment and Shopping

For full details on discounts, please visit www.isicus.com.

Additionally, the ISIC card serves as an internationally recognized form of student identification. In many places, a UNCG Student ID card will not be accepted for discounts or as identification, as it has no expiration date.

You can obtain an ISIC card in the International Programs Center at UNCG. Many of our programs include the cost in their program fees; check with your Program Director to see if your cost is included. In order to apply for the ISIC, you will need to complete an ISIC application form (available in IPC), provide a passport size photograph (2" x 2"), show your UNCG ID card and driver's license (and pay for the card if not included in your program fees in cash or a check or money order made payable to UNCG). Check with your Program Director for deadline for applying for the ISIC.

4.0. GENERAL TRAVEL INFORMATION

One of the exciting things about studying abroad is the opportunity to explore your host country and other surrounding areas while you are overseas. If you are interested in learning more about traveling before or after your program, the best source of information will be one of the aforementioned student travel agencies and reading a country-specific guidebook about your country or region of interest. These resources can provide helpful information about student discounts, purchasing travel passes (e.g., Eurail) and flights to and from your study abroad location. Students traveling *before or after* a UNCG program are also eligible, and encouraged, to purchase an extension on the UNC system health insurance. Please see the insurance section (5.4.) for more details.

NOTE: You should check with your Program Director to make sure you understand any restrictions on personal travel *during* the program. Some programs have required field trips, excursions, or fieldwork and you will need to plan your personal travel around these required elements.

If you *do engage* in personal travel during the program dates, you are required to leave a copy of your itinerary and contact information with the Program Director in case of an emergency (e.g., death in the family). If preferred, this can be left in a sealed envelope only to be opened if necessary. Also refer to the "Travel Safety" section (6.4.) of this pre-departure guide for full travel safety information.

5.0. HEALTH INFORMATION

It is very important that you take care of yourself while you are abroad. Your health and safety should be your top priorities, and there are some simple precautions you can take to improve your chances of staying healthy and happy while you are overseas.

You are quite likely to get sick during the time you are abroad. At the very least you may get the "international cold". You may wish to take your favorite cold remedy with you. But there are also more serious health risks to keep in mind. While traveling to destinations beyond North America and Europe is common, so are health risks - especially where sanitation and medical conditions are poor. Diseases such as tetanus, diphtheria, polio, typhoid, hepatitis, yellow fever, malaria and travelers' diarrhea pose threats to the unprotected traveler. Most immunizations or health precautions are not mandatory, but they provide valuable protection for people who wish to travel in good health. While it is impossible to eliminate these risks, certain precautions can be taken to alleviate them.

5.1. Before you go

AT LEAST SIX WEEKS PRIOR TO YOUR DEPARTURE DATE, make an appointment with a health professional to go over recommended and required health information for your destination.

If you take prescription medications (including allergy shots, birth control pills, etc.), you should carry an adequate supply for the duration of your stay and an updated prescription accompanied by a signed and dated statement from the prescribing health care provider. The statement should indicate the generic name and brand name of the medication, as well as the dosage and notes on any major health problems. This statement will provide vital information for medical authorities in case of an emergency. You should also take an extra pair of glasses or lens prescription and a card, tag, or bracelet that identifies any physical condition that might require emergency care.

For those who take prescriptions on a regular and long-term basis, or who will need to take anti-malarial medication, IPC strongly encourages you to discuss with your health care provider how you will obtain medication for the duration of the program well in advance of departure. If prescriptions cannot be filled for the entire length of the program, students should investigate how they will be able to obtain medication while abroad (some countries do not allow the shipment of medications through customs).

Students should talk with their health care provider about the advisability of having prescriptions filled abroad and any legal issues (some U.S. medications are illegal in certain countries). Sometimes anti-malarial medication is actually cheaper abroad. IPC *cannot* deliver medications to students abroad.

You should carry your prescriptions and medications in your carry-on luggage in their original containers. Customs officials may ask to see everything. Make sure the name on the prescription matches the name on your passport. It is also helpful to have a note from the physician explaining the condition that requires the medication.

Speak with your Program Director to understand any particular health risks or precautions for your program's destination. You may also want to contact the Centers for Disease Control Hotline (404-332-4559) for current information about your destination. To order a free booklet, "Health Information for International Travel," you can write to the Superintendent of Documents, USA Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. You may also access the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/travel/. Additional travel health information can be found at www.tripprep.com, which is a guide to "Travel Health Online".

The HIV virus is prevalent everywhere in the world and can ultimately lead to death. The best way to protect yourself is not to have unprotected sex and not to use drugs intravenously or share needles for any reason. We strongly recommend that students pack condoms, and we encourage students to be cautious about their sexual activity while abroad. Please note: In some countries, availability of condoms and other prophylactics is restricted.

Certain items may be more expensive or difficult to obtain overseas, or it may be difficult to find brands with which you are familiar. Thus, you may want to consider taking the following items with you.

- feminine hygiene products
- contraceptives and prescription birth control
- syringes for allergy treatment, insulin, or other
- medical injections
- contact lens solutions
- extra pair of glasses or contact lenses

If you have (or have had in the past) any medical or psychological conditions which may require treatment while you are overseas, please be sure to indicate these on the Health History Form given to you by IPC. The stress of adjustment overseas may cause the recurrence of conditions for which you have successfully been treated in the past. If you have any questions or concerns, consult your physician or IPC.

5.2. When you arrive

On the flight to your program's host country, remember that jet lag can be worsened by

dehydration. Minimize the use of diuretics like caffeine and alcohol on the flight, and drink plenty of juice and water.

Take it easy! The first few days in your study abroad location will be very exciting, and you may be tempted to overdo it. Remember that in addition to psychological and cultural adjustment, your body will be going through a physical reaction and adjustment to a new climate, a new time zone, new food, etc. Eat reasonably, drink plenty of water (start with bottled if you are unsure how your system will handle the tap water in your new environment), get plenty of sleep, etc.

Make sure you know how to access health services, both for routine care and emergencies, in your new environment. Your Faculty Program Director can provide more detailed information. See below.

If you consume alcohol, consume it in moderation and follow the UNCG Study Abroad alcohol policy (details under Student Conduct section of this handbook). Because students under 21 are legally entitled to drink in many countries, American students are sometimes tempted to overdo it after arriving overseas. Alcohol dehydrates you, putting further stress on a body which will already be under strain (see above). It also impairs judgment, which can be particularly unwise when you are in a new environment. Note also that the UNC system health insurance does not cover any accidents or injuries that occur while a student is under the influence of alcohol.

5.3. Mental Health

Your mental health is also of concern while studying abroad. Stress is the number one cause of exacerbation of a preexisting mental illness, and adjusting to another culture typically involves stress for any program participant. The Program Director or IPC can help put you in touch with the appropriate resources for counseling and advice.

If you suffer from a mental health concern, it is important that you go to your doctor prior to departure and sign a release for medical records, as well as take a copy of your records with you on the program. This will aid the process if you need to meet with a doctor overseas. The insurance you carry through the program offers MEDEX Assistance and can help identify a counselor abroad in advance, so medical records can also be released directly.

5.4. Health Insurance and Emergency Assistance

The UNC system health insurance for study abroad is provided to all students participating in a UNCG faculty-led study abroad program for the duration of the program.

The UNC system policy (from HTH) provides excellent, low-cost comprehensive primary coverage with no deductible. HOWEVER, YOU SHOULD BE AWARE 1) THAT ANY INJURY OR ILLNESS RESULTING FROM *ALCOHOL* USE IS EXCLUDED FROM COVERAGE and 2) the insurance is only good while abroad. In the case of a

severe injury or illness in which you must stay beyond the dates of the program to receive treatment you should have your dates on the insurance extended. Be sure to contact IPC and HTH.

You will receive an insurance card prior to your departure. Your insurance card includes your certificate number for HTH and the number to call for assistance if a sickness or injury occurs. This certificate number is important because it is your password for the HTH student website (www.HTHstudents.com), and the number that HTH will require if they are contacted. Please read the instructions on your insurance ID card letter and **register** at HTH's student website. This will give you access to their Global Health and Safety Resources. **Carry this insurance card with you at all times.** Also carry your claim forms whenever you travel.

Reimbursements are most easily made with a completed claim form and appropriate backup documentation. Although arrangements can be made for the insurance company to pay the hospital directly for very serious and lengthy hospital stays or services provided by an HTH approved physician, it is much more typical for students to pay all costs up front and then be reimbursed later. Be sure you have access to adequate funds to cover a health emergency.

If you plan to travel *before* or after the program dates, you are encouraged to and can purchase an extension to your insurance coverage through the International Programs Center. The cost for extensions is \$2.22 a day and the coverage is the same as during the program dates. This can be purchased for one week before and one week after the program. Please contact IPC at least three weeks prior to your departure date to purchase before or after insurance. If you wish to stay longer you may purchase insurance directly through HTH.

If you have any questions about your insurance coverage, please contact:

HTH Worldwide Insurance Services
One Radnor Corporate Center
Suite 100
Radnor, PA 19087
Tel: 1.866.281.1668
Fax: 1.610.254.8780
<http://www.hthstudents.com>
studentinfo@hthworldwide.com

or refer to your insurance card.

Remember, you can also access your insurance account on the HTH website at www.HTHstudents.com. On this same site you can obtain a list of English-speaking doctors for your location, find a local hospital, etc. You must have the ID number for your account prior to logging into the HTH system. (This ID number will be provided to you on your insurance card prior to your departure once you have been registered in the HTH system by IPC.) Be sure to print out the materials pertinent to your study

abroad location and take this with you.

6.0. SAFETY WHILE ABROAD

The good or bad news is that few countries in the world have as high a rate of violent crime as the United States. Thus, you are statistically safer in many places abroad than you would be if you stayed at home. Most U.S. citizens who go abroad encounter no difficulty, and by far the vast majority of travelers who do encounter problems generally cope with minor theft or pick pocketing rather than a violent incident. However, no place in the world is completely without risks, and there are several simple precautions that can greatly improve your chances of staying healthy and happy while you are abroad.

In this handbook and at your pre-departure orientation we will address general, personal, and travel safety, along with emergency procedures. Your Program Director will provide any country specific information that may be necessary. Another good safety resource for students going abroad is the USC Center for Global Education website at www.globaled.us/peacecorps/.

6.1. General Safety

As student safety (both *before* departure and while abroad) is our highest priority, IPC has a variety of mechanisms in place to aid in decision making about the safety of upcoming study abroad programs, as well as programs that are currently overseas. The following is a list of the most commonly asked questions.

How does IPC monitor the international situation?

IPC pays special attention to the U.S. State Department website and monitors it for any new updates tied to international travel announcements and warnings.

The main source of information comes from the U.S. State Department (www.travel.state.gov). They issue periodic public announcements and warnings about the safety of Americans overseas. The highest level of urgency of a U.S. State Department announcement is called a travel warning. Travel Warnings are issued when the State Department decides, based on all relevant information, to recommend that Americans avoid travel to a certain country. In the case of a travel warning, it is often recommended that citizens do not travel to that country until the threat is no longer present.

The IPC Staff and Study Abroad Emergency Response Team (SAERT) review this information, along with a variety of other reliable sources such as announcements from the Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC), contacts in the destination country and conversations with Embassies when necessary, in order to have up to the minute information on any countries where students are or will be studying.

When would a program be canceled?

Although exceptions are possible, the general IPC policy is that we will cancel any UNCG sponsored program in a location where the U.S. State Department has issued a travel warning.

What if IPC must cancel a program *before* it has started?

Should a program cancellation become necessary for safety reasons prior to student departure, every effort will be made to refund recoverable costs to the participants. Well before a program's start date, your department commits funds to overseas vendors for services such as housing, travel, meals, etc. The time of program cancellation will determine the actual recoverable costs. The closer the program is to the start date, the less recoverable costs will be available. For example, 3 months before a program starts, funds have usually already been paid to many hotels for deposits on housing. These deposits would be considered non-recoverable.

What if IPC must cancel a program *after* it has started?

Should a program cancellation become necessary for safety reasons after students have arrived overseas, our priority is ensuring those students return back to the U.S. safely. If the U.S. State Department directs the evacuation of U.S. citizens from a program location site, the Program Director would arrange for students to return to the U.S. or to another safe location based on the recommendation of the State Department and U.S. Embassy. IPC and the Program Director would notify all students and their emergency contacts of the specific plan and timeframe.

As with canceling a program *before* it has started, our refund policy for canceling a program after it has started is that every effort will be made to refund recoverable costs to the participants. Because full refunds are often not possible, students may wish to consider purchasing trip cancellation insurance. This must typically be purchased from an insurance provider within 14 days of when the initial program deposit is paid to IPC. The UNC system-wide insurance provider, HTH, does offer cancellation insurance. Details can be found on their website at www.HTHstudents.com.

If the program is canceled *before* courses are completed, the Program Director will, to the best of his/her ability, assist students in completing the course work for the program.

What other steps does IPC take for student safety?

All UNCG students on faculty-led, UNCG sponsored programs are registered with the local U.S. Embassy upon arrival.

IPC also has a Study Abroad Emergency Response Team (SAERT) to manage any emergencies that may occur while students are abroad.

All students participating in a UNCG study abroad program are provided with the UNC

system health insurance, which includes emergency assistance. In the case of a medical emergency, HTH coordinates all arrangements for evacuation.

All students are provided with both an emergency contact card and an insurance card prior to departure.

All students are directed to the specific U.S. State Department travel information for their destination at the pre-departure orientation.

Students participating in personal travel during the program dates, or immediately before or after the program, are required to leave a copy of their itinerary and contact information with the Program Director in case of an emergency (e.g., death in the family). If *preferred*, this can be left in a sealed envelope only to be opened if necessary.

The previous list of questions is not meant to be exhaustive, but should answer some frequently asked questions about safety. Should you or your parents have any additional questions about safety or policies, please contact IPC.

6.2. Personal Safety

The most basic rule to remember is: **if it is not something you would do at home, do not do it abroad**. The excitement and adventure of a study abroad experience can sometimes lead students to forget the basic precautions that we all take on a daily basis: a student who never walks across the UNCG campus at night without calling a safety escort suddenly forgets that wandering the streets of Paris alone at three in the morning might not be a good idea. Be open to new experiences, but keep your wits about you.

Remember that, especially in the beginning, you will be on unfamiliar ground, geographically and culturally. You do not know what parts of town are unsafe, you may not be fluent in the language, and you do not know how to read situations in your host country the way you can at home. Be cautious, talk to your Program Director about things to do and not to do, and try to keep the following precautions in mind:

- Read the U.S. State Department travel information for your destination (online at www.travel.state.gov).
- Stay informed about developments in your host country, host city and in the world. U.S. foreign policy does affect how people overseas will treat you. If you plan to travel to another country, check with the nearest U.S. consulate as to what the situation is there. If the U.S. decides to launch a military or economic action, you will be seen as a representative of your country. If your travel destination is having political or military difficulties, ranging from demonstrations to terrorists attacks to civil war, stay away from all sites of such activity.
- Talk to students and/or faculty who have visited or lived in the area to which you are going. Pay attention to safety information presented at the pre-departure and on-site orientation sessions.

- Do not take valuable items (expensive jewelry, watches, etc.) with you overseas. They may get stolen, lost or damaged while traveling.
- Do not carry cash or personal identification in a purse as purse-snatchings are a risk anywhere. Wear your backpack in front if traveling on crowded trains, buses, metros, etc. If carrying a shoulder bag, have the outside flap against your body. Carry money in multiple locations such as in pouches under clothes. Carry a wallet in your front pocket rather than your back pocket. Do not fight attackers. If confronted, give up your valuables.
- Be alert in crowds, especially in train stations and other areas with lots of tourists; these are prime territories for pickpockets.
- Be aware of distractions on the streets. In large cities, thieves often work in groups, with one member distracting the target while another takes the target's bag/purse/wallet.
- Do not hitchhike.
- Do not stay out excessively late at night alone or with strangers.
- Do not travel alone.

6.3. Sexual Assault/Harassment

Sexual harassment or assault can happen overseas just as it can on campus. Harassment issues may be particularly difficult to identify abroad, where cultural norms are often different than those in the U.S. Knowing how to identify harassment, and what to do if you experience harassment or assault, is important to help maintain a safe environment.

Harassment can be between two students, between a professor or program staff and a student, between a homestay family member and a student, etc. Sexual harassment may include:

- unnecessary or unwanted touching or pinching
- derogatory remarks, jokes or teasing about clothing, body or body parts, or sexual activities
- visual materials or pictures which are offensive
- subtle pressure for sexual activity and/or dates
- demanding sexual favors for things such things as grades, letters of recommendation, etc.
- verbal harassment or abuse
- e-mail or any electronic communications which include any of the above
- physical assault

In general, the U.S. description of sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual advance

and/or behavior of a verbal, visual, written, or physical nature. You should note, however, that this description may not be the same for the country in which you are studying. In such cases, you are encouraged to discuss the issue with Program staff or the International Programs Center (IPC) staff to determine an appropriate course of action. You should trust your judgment and intuition.

If a situation makes you uncomfortable, it needs to be addressed. You should seek help from the Program Director, the International Programs Center or other UNCG staff. One of these people can provide you the resources for counseling and advice, and, if necessary, act on your behalf to address a problem. Per the UNCG Sexual Harassment Policy Statement:

The University affirms its desire to maintain a work environment for all employees and an academic environment for all faculty and students that is free from all forms of harassment. Harassment is completely incompatible with the values and goals of the University and will not be tolerated.

If you experience sexual harassment while studying abroad, report the incident to your Program Director or the International Programs Center (IPC) as soon as possible. They will help you resolve the issue following the UNCG Resolution Procedures for Harassment Complaints found under the UNCG PRR website at www.uncg.edu/apl/POLICIES/ibv010.html.

6.4. Travel Safety

Review the Center for Disease Control website at <http://www.cdc.gov/ogh/> and read the article regarding safety for international travel. In addition, please note the following when traveling:

The primary cause of death and serious injury to international travelers under the age of thirty-five is road traffic accidents. While the hazards are greatest in developing countries, many developed countries also have death and serious accident rates higher than those in the United States. Even in countries with low accident rates, you may be at risk if you are not familiar with local traffic rules. For this reason we urge you to use caution when considering your travel plans and always use your seat belt.

- Never ride with anyone under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- While traveling, leave your valuables, plane tickets, etc. in the hotel safe or a hostel locker. Unless local law requires you to carry your passport, consider leaving it in a safety deposit box and carrying a photocopy with you for identification. Remember that you must ALWAYS have your passport with you when crossing international borders.
- Wash hands often with soap and water.
- Do not stay in cheap hotels, which may be less secure - a few extra dollars saved

on a cheap hotel room will not cover the replacement costs of a passport, camera, rail tickets, etc.

- Get advice from residents and tour guides about areas to be avoided, going out at night, and going out alone.
- If you choose to be sexually active, always use latex condoms to reduce the risk of HIV and other STDs.
- Do not share needles with anyone.
- If you go swimming, find out about the body of water and its safety level first. Never swim alone or under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Never dive head first into an unfamiliar body of water.
- Never eat undercooked ground beef and poultry, raw eggs, and unpasteurized dairy products. Raw shellfish is particularly dangerous to persons who have liver disease or compromised immune systems. Also be wary of raw vegetables or other foods washed in local water and ice cubes made with local water.

7.0. EMERGENCIES

7.1. Emergencies abroad

An emergency is an occurrence or situation that poses a genuine and sometimes immediate risk to the health and well being of program participants. As student safety is our highest priority, UNCG has emergency procedures in place for study abroad programs, for both minor and major emergencies.

Undoubtedly, some type of **minor emergency** will happen to some participant during your program (sickness, broken bone, lost passport, etc.). Your Program Director should be the first contact for any minor emergency. S/he will be able to get you to a doctor approved by your insurance, help you replace your passport, etc. S/he also knows when to contact IPC for further details or instructions. If your Program Director is not available, you can contact any other on-site staff members, or if there are none, the IPC staff can assist you. IPC and the Program Director have measures in place to help secure your safety. Once the immediate crisis has been adequately addressed, you will probably then want to contact your family/friends at home to let them know your situation.

Additionally, your Program Director has a plan in place for any **major emergencies** for your location (natural disaster, car accident, arrest, etc.). This plan includes: a contingency plan if the director becomes incapacitated, participants being registered with the local Embassy, evacuation routes from your area, a centralized meeting place for your group in case of emergency, contact information for local police, hospitals, counseling professional, UN offices, other Study Abroad Programs, HTH insurance, local government officials, and the UNCG SAERT (Study Abroad Emergency

Response Team), which includes UNCG staff from Legal Affairs, Risk Management, Student Affairs, Campus Police, etc. Your Program Director will provide you with their procedures for major emergencies during orientation.

In an emergency, if possible, you should first always try to contact your on-site Program Director. In case there is an emergency that requires that you contact IPC directly, you can call one of the following:

UNCG Campus Police (24hr access):	336.334.4444
International Programs Center (voice) (8-5):	336.334.5404
International Programs Center (fax):	336.334.5406
Penelope Pynes, Director (home):	336.279.8475 or
cell (24hr access)	336.317.2535

If you can only make one call and your Program Director is unavailable, you may call UNCG Campus Police 24/7/365. They have instructions to try the home number of IPC staff and other trained administrators until they reach someone who can call you back immediately. The emergency contact card provided to you by IPC lists the numbers for insurance and Campus Police and you should carry this contact card with you at all times.

7.2. Emergencies at home

People need to know how to get in touch with you - especially if you are away from your program or after the program has ended. Unfortunately, experience shows us that someone on a study abroad program may have a relative die or become sick while they are overseas. You should have a conversation with your family before you leave about what you will do in the event that there is a death or serious medical emergency in your family. Please be sure that your Program Director and IPC have your complete contact information and inform both if there has been a family emergency. Also be sure that key family members have valid passports so they can travel to your host country if necessary.

If you are participating in personal travel during the program dates, or immediately before or after the program, you are required to leave a copy of your itinerary and contact information with the Program Director in case of this type of *emergency*. If preferred, this information can be left in a sealed envelope only to be opened if necessary.

8.0. IPC STANDARDS OF STUDENT CONDUCT

As a participant in a study abroad program with UNCG, you are expected to take responsibility for your own actions (or failure to act) at all times while studying abroad. You will be held accountable for your behavior and you are expected to abide by the

UNCG Code of Student Conduct, all International Programs Center policies, and the laws and customs that govern the host countries where you are studying or visiting. Additionally, it is expected that you will demonstrate respect for yourself and others at all times. These policies exist for a safe, fair and successful experience for all students participating in the program. Ignorance of the policies is not an acceptable excuse for policy violation. Also the International Programs Center Policies and Standards of Student Conduct are in writing to give you general notice of expected behavior. These standards should be read broadly and are not designed to define misconduct in exhaustive terms. Students should report any violation of the policies in the handbook to the Program Director.

Failure to comply with host country laws/regulations, the UNCG Code of Student Conduct, the International Programs Center Standards of Student Conduct, International Programs Center policies, and/or engaging in behavior which in the sole discretion of the Program Director jeopardizes the safety or well-being of yourself, others, or the program may result in immediate dismissal from the program, failure of courses, loss of program costs, and/or an early return home at your expense. The Program Director will provide notice of the allegation, an opportunity to respond, and take action based on available evidence. If you are incapacitated and unable to respond, the Program Director may act upon available evidence immediately in the event of a serious threat to the health and safety of any participant. Action taken by the Program Director is final. Due to the circumstances of foreign travel and foreign study programs, procedures for notification and time frames for response may vary.

If you are dismissed from the program, you may be sent home at your own expense with no refund of fees or expenses. In being dismissed, you may be subject to failure of courses and/or an early return home. You may also be subject to further disciplinary, civil and/or criminal action upon return to the University.

8.1. Foreign Laws, Regulations and Standards

Each foreign country has its own laws and regulations and has standards of acceptable conduct in the areas of dress, manners, morals, religion, social customs, politics, alcohol use, drug use and behavior. Behavior or conduct which violate those laws or standards could harm the program's effectiveness, the University's relations with those countries in which the program is located, your own health and safety or the health and safety of other participants in the program. Therefore it is important for you to become informed of all laws, regulations and standards for each country to or through which you will travel during your participation.

Many practices that are illegal or grounds for mistrial in the U.S., including extraction of a confession, entrapment, police searches without a warrant, etc., are admissible in court in other countries. In many systems, there is no bail requirement, no jury trial; the burden of proof is on the accused to prove his or her innocence, etc. You are fully responsible for any legal problems, any encounters with any foreign government or any individual, and the University is not responsible for providing any assistance under such circumstances.

Note that contrary to popular belief, the U.S. Embassy CANNOT get you out of jail if you are arrested. U.S. laws or constitutional rights do not protect you once you leave the U.S. You must abide by the laws of the country in which you are traveling.

A U.S. Consular Officer can:

- Visit you in jail after being notified of your arrest.
- Give you a list of local attorneys.
- Notify your family or friends (including the Program Director) and relay requests for money or other aid with your authorization.
- Intercede with the local authorities so that you are treated humanely and that your rights under local law are fully observed.

The U.S. Consular Officer cannot:

- Get you out of jail.
- Represent you at trial or give legal counsel.
- Pay legal fees or fines with U.S. government funds.

In addition to emergency assistance for American citizens and their families abroad, such as cases of death, serious medical emergency, and legal difficulties, the U.S. Embassy personnel also provide routine citizenship services such as passport replacement. In order for fast and easy replacement of your passport, be sure to have a photocopy somewhere secure.

8.2. UNCG Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity Policy (including Academic and Non-Academic policies)

As you will be enrolled as a UNCG student while attending the study abroad program, you are expected to abide by the UNCG student conduct policies, which can be found online at <http://studentconduct.uncg.edu>. These policies cover many topics, including but not limited to, academic integrity, cheating, plagiarism, disorderly conduct, harassment, hazing, drugs, theft, and weapons.

Please familiarize yourself with the content of the Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity Policy, as you are responsible for the policies outlined therein. It is especially important to note Appendix A under the subheading “Jurisdiction” of the Code of Student Conduct related to authority for off campus conduct:

INHERENT AUTHORITY FOR OFF CAMPUS CONDUCT

The University reserves the right to take necessary and appropriate action to protect the safety and well being of the campus community and to support the mission of the University. Such action may include taking disciplinary action as outlined in this Code against those students whose behavior off-campus poses a potential danger to others, to self, or would otherwise disrupt the campus environment or adversely affect the University.

COMMENTARY: The University will not routinely invoke the disciplinary process for

violations of this Code which occur off-campus, except for academic dishonesty, dangerous misconduct, serious criminal offenses, violations of the UNCG Policy On Illegal Drugs, violations that occur at University sponsored activities or significant community disturbances. Study Abroad is considered a "University sponsored activity", so your behavior on the study abroad program is subject to the Code of Student Conduct. As mentioned in 8.0, the Program Director will provide notice of the allegation, an opportunity to respond, and take action based on available evidence. If a student is incapacitated and unable to respond, the Program Director may act upon available evidence. Action taken by the Program Director is final. Due to the circumstances of foreign travel and foreign study programs, procedures for notification and time frames for response may vary.

8.3. Alcohol and study abroad

In studying abroad, you will most likely be going to a location where you will be of legal drinking age in that country and where alcohol may be more a part of the everyday culture. In addition, distance from home may lessen your inhibitions. However, you are encouraged to use good judgment if you choose to consume alcoholic beverages while studying abroad.

Occasional drinking of alcoholic beverages in moderation is permitted provided that you are of legal drinking age in the area you are visiting. However, excessive and irresponsible drinking leading to intoxication and behavior that interferes with the rights of others is subject to immediate disciplinary action, which may include termination from the program, parental notification and return home at your own expense. **Note that the Study Abroad insurance does not cover any injuries that occur while you are under the influence of alcohol, intoxicants or any drug not prescribed by a physician.**

Per the UNCG University Code of Conduct, a person who violates law or University policy while intoxicated remains fully responsible for his/her actions and the consequences thereof. The consumption of alcohol and/or the results of such consumption are never considered to compromise personal responsibility or accountability.

Students who choose to use alcohol must do so responsibly while studying abroad. This applies during program time, as well as during personal time. Program time is defined as any activity seen as contributing to course work or any event that is included in the program cost; all other time is considered personal.

Responsible use of alcohol is when:

- A student abides by the laws of the host country in which he or she is living or visiting.
- A student does not miss any scheduled event or course work because of alcohol consumption.
- A student does not become intoxicated or arrive intoxicated at any scheduled

- program event.
- A student does not become ill due to the effect of alcohol consumption.
 - A student does not engage in inappropriate behavior toward himself/herself or other individuals as a result of alcohol consumption.
 - A student does not engage in destructive behavior toward property as a result of alcohol consumption.
 - A student does not engage in behavior that causes embarrassment to the other members of the group, the faculty member(s), UNCG, or the in-country host(s) as a result of alcohol consumption.
 - Students in a group do not facilitate/encourage a fellow student who is abusing alcohol.

In general, avoid over-indulging. Be aware of the customs of the country. Drinking to get drunk is never acceptable, even in countries where alcohol is consumed with every meal. Overindulging is a real danger in a foreign country where the alcohol may be stronger and cheaper and there are no barriers to drinking before the age of 21. Always try to buy your own drinks; remember that drugging is always possible. Keep control of yourself. Never go home with a stranger. Always go out with at least one friend (especially if you are a woman), and return with that friend.

8.4. Illegal Drugs

Contrary to what you may have heard, the rest of the world does not have more lenient drug laws than the U.S. and being an American does not mean you will not be put in jail for carrying drugs. In fact, in some places, being an American may mean you are more likely to be suspected of carrying drugs. The U.S. Embassy **CANNOT** get you out of jail if you are arrested. **U.S. laws or constitutional rights do not protect you once you leave the U.S.** You must abide by the laws of the country in which you are traveling.

Additionally, the use or possession of narcotics, or any other illegal substance during study abroad is expressly prohibited and is cause for immediate expulsion from the program and may be subject to prosecution in the host country.

Some interesting facts to note:

- In a recent year, over 1/3 of all Americans arrested overseas were arrested for drug possession, and 37% of those were arrested for a drug offense involving marijuana.
- In several countries, including Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Turkey, and Thailand, possession of even a relatively small amount of illegal drugs can be grounds for the death penalty. In several others, including Mexico and the Dominican Republic, it can be grounds for mandatory jail sentences.
- It is your responsibility to understand the laws of a foreign country before you go. "I didn't know it was illegal" will not be considered an acceptable defense.

8.5. Crimes (Assault, Violence, Vandalism, Harassment, etc.)

The following list, although not exhaustive, provides examples of criminal behavior that are not acceptable in any case and may be grounds for immediate dismissal from the program. Please note that many of these are also covered in the UNCG Code of Student Conduct.

- Harassment (sexual or otherwise)
- Violence against others
- Verbal abuse of others
- Theft or damage to property, including property of host universities, residence halls, host families, apartments, hotels, facilities used by the program, or of fellow students
- Vandalism
- Unauthorized entry
- Use of technology for any illegal purpose
- Disorderly, lewd, indecent or obscene conduct, gestures or actions
- Self-endangerment, including involvement in activities or behavior that could result in personal harm (such as frequenting dangerous places, association with criminals, repeated intoxication, etc.)
- Alcohol or drug violations

8.6. Other Standards of Student Conduct

There are also other standards of behavior/conduct that apply while attending a study abroad program. These are listed below and on the next page.

The following will not be tolerated:

- Obstruction of classes or obstruction of other program activities.
- Violation of any requirements contained in the IPC Statement of Student Responsibilities.
- Violations of housing guidelines and/or rules including, but not limited to, excessive noise, rowdy conduct and intoxication.
- Failure to follow the program's established guidelines, directives, timetables and instructions of the UNCG staff or faculty members responsible for any trip.

The following are your responsibilities:

- You are to remain enrolled for at least 6 semester hours during the summer if you are receiving financial aid, and you may be required to repay part or all of your financial aid immediately if you do not enroll in at least 6 semester hours.

- Acceptance to the program is conditional upon your remaining in good standing with the University for the term prior to participation in the study abroad program.
- You are to read all materials provided to you at the University orientation meeting or sent to you in the event you are unable to attend orientation and to share those materials with your parent/legal guardian/next of kin.
- It is your responsibility to inform your parent/legal guardian/next of kin that you will be participating in the program.

In general, it is important to have common sense guide your behavior while abroad. Please take advantage of the resources described in this book when you need help.

The IPC staff, SAERT, Campus Police, and the Counseling and Testing Center at UNCG are all available to you via phone and email while you are studying abroad. This contact information is available on the Emergency Contact Card that you are provided prior to departure.

9.0. SPECIAL NEEDS AND CONCERNS

9.1. Culture Shock

The process of mentally, physically, and emotionally adjusting to a new environment - such as a study abroad experience - is commonly known as "culture shock".

This term covers a wide range of reactions from frustration to mild annoyance to depression to fatigue to excitement. It is a response to being in a situation where everything is different from your previous experiences. Differences in dress, body language, greetings, food, transportation systems, banks, shopping, making friends, etc. are only a few of the elements that can contribute to culture shock.

Of course, we encounter differences every day in our own culture. But as an American, in a very general sense, the differences we experience between ourselves and other Americans tend to be more personal, not cultural. When we interact with people from another culture, the expectations on each side are different, and communications may break down, leading to confusion or even hostility.

There are many ways of coping with culture shock:

- Know that everyone experiences some degree of culture shock (even if you don't believe you will now).
- Everyone's experience will be different, but your experience, whatever it is, is normal.
- Expect things to be different and try not to blow them out of proportion.

- Try not to label the differences as "good" or "bad." Instead, see them merely as "different."
- You do not have to adapt to every *difference* you encounter. Some you can incorporate into your routine, and others you may not.
- Maintain the ability to laugh at your mistakes. They are not the end of the world and, in fact, can help you in the learning process.
- Find support from your Program Director and fellow students on the program.

The feelings of culture shock are unavoidable. Simply recognizing its existence is an important first step. As long as you know in advance that you will experience culture shock in one form or another, you can prepare yourself to accept the temporary discomfort and turn it into an advantage by learning from it. And, remember that you are not the only one experiencing culture shock; that the frustrating, irritating, and depressing feelings will pass; and that you will end up having one of the best experiences of your life.

(Information adapted from Bill Hoffa's "Exploring Cultural Differences" at: <http://www.studyabroad.com/guides/handbook/handbook4.html>) Should you wish to read more about culture shock, please see the following web site: <http://www.uncg.edu/~pjpynes/ipc/outorient/cultureshock.htm> .

9.2. Cultural Issues

It is important to realize that cultural differences encompass such things as dress and body language. Facial expression, eye contact, clothing styles, the distance you stand from people while talking, and the way you carry yourself can have profoundly different interpretations in different cultures. What to you is simply a friendly gesture, or what you consider simply comfortable clothing, may communicate something totally different and unintended to those around you.

Each student's experience is different, and you will find your own comfort zone as you adjust to your new culture. You may feel that many of the adjustments you are being expected to make in your behavior or dress are uncomfortable or unfair.

Remember, though, that you are the foreigner and that the people around you will expect YOU to adapt to their expectations. As with most aspects of study abroad, the more preparation you do beforehand, the better; that way you will be able to make informed decisions about how much you are willing to adapt and what consequences there will be to those decisions. BUT, while some adaptation is essential to a successful experience, always remember that there is a *difference* between trying to find ways to adapt your behavior to your new culture and excusing real verbal or physical abuse cultural differences. If you find yourself in an uncomfortable situation, immediately speak with your Program Director. If the Program Director is unavailable, contact IPC directly. For more information about dealing with cultural issues and being prepared for international travel, please see the following website: <http://www.pacific.edu/sis/culture/>

9.3. Gender Issues

Adjusting to another culture can pose some challenges for male-female interactions and relationships. Often what Americans *perceive* as appropriate behavior between the sexes or acceptable gender roles is not the same in a different culture. Female students in particular may find their behavior restricted. Because many cultures around the world have been exposed to images of the U.S. and American women through movies, TV shows, and advertising, foreign nationals sometimes make stereotypical assumptions about American women.

Students should be aware of what their dress, body language, and eye contact communicate to people in their host culture. Students (females in particular) should:

- Talk to women from your host country for advice. Follow appropriate standards for dress and body language.
- Trust your instincts. Don't do something that makes you uncomfortable. It is better to look a little silly than to get into an unpleasant or even dangerous situation. Instead, remove yourself from the situation immediately.
- Be careful to avoid situations where date rape drugs could be slipped into your drink.
- Be assertive and say "NO" when necessary.
- Immediately speak with your Program Director if you find yourself in an uncomfortable, hostile or threatening situation. If the Program Director is unavailable, contact the IPC directly.

Overall when evaluating the gender differences in your host country, both male and female students should keep an open mind and see these differences as an opportunity to gain insights into a new culture.

9.4. Sexual Identity

You probably already identify yourself as a heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender student (GLBT), or you may still be exploring these issues; in either case, you may find that the social climate, laws, and personal interactions of your host culture differ from the U.S. Keep in mind that many of the ideas held in the U.S. about sexuality and sexual orientation are culturally-based and may be different in your program's host country.

In some cultures, Western understandings of "gay" and "straight" do not exist or do not carry the same importance; people involved in same-sex relationships may not see this behavior or preference as an identity. In other cultures, there are active social movements for civil rights for sexual minorities. Even if you do not plan to have a sexual relationship while away, you should be informed about specific laws pertaining to sexual behavior and sexual/gender orientation. So, in preparing for your study abroad experience, it is important for you to research the GLBT climate of the country you will be visiting. This type of research will better prepare you to face the world that you will encounter. When doing research, you should try to ascertain:

- The legality of same-sex sexual behavior
- The age of consent for sexual behavior
- Restrictions on freedom of association or expression of sexual identity
- Anti-discrimination laws (these can be national laws or specific to local areas)
- Sodomy laws

You may find that you will be more comfortable than in the U.S. or that you will need to hide your sexual orientation completely to avoid cultural ostracism or arrest. You can find more information on the web page of the Lesbigan Special Interest Group of NAFSA, the Association of International Educators, located at www.indiana.edu/~overseas/lesbigay/index.html

9.5. Race and Ethnicity

Although we tend to think of race and ethnicity as universally defined, they are very much culturally determined. While abroad, you may find that you are an ethnic minority for the first time in your life, or you may find that the ethnic identity you have always felt to be an integral part of yourself is viewed in a completely different way in your program's host country. Those of you visiting a country where you have ethnic or racial roots may find you are expected to behave according to the host country norms in a way that other Americans of a different background are not. Or, you may find that you are considered American first, and your ethnic or racial identity is considered unimportant.

In many countries, there are homegrown ethnic or racial conflicts, and you may find you are identified with one group or another because of your physical appearance, until people discover you are American. It is extremely unlikely that any of these situations will involve any threat of physical harm to you as an international student; however, by researching the situation in your host country, you can prepare yourself for the situations you may encounter. Please speak with your Program Director for additional information or to share any concerns you may have.

9.6. Students with Disabilities

UNCG is committed to working with students with disabilities. Thanks to increased awareness of opportunities, students with disabilities are actively encouraged to participate in study abroad programs around the world. As with the other issues mentioned, the key to a successful experience is advance planning. Unfortunately, the American Disability Act (ADA) does not apply outside of the United States and UNCG is not legally required to provide accommodations to participants studying abroad. Nonetheless, UNCG makes every effort to accommodate students. Availability and feasibility of accommodations vary by program locations. Students who desire accommodations should self report to the Office of Disability Services, the Program Director and IPC. There is no guarantee that a reasonable accommodation can be provided through the program. Students may at their own discretion and ability provide their own accommodation.

9.7. Resources for Special Needs

There are many resources available that cover the topics of culture shock, cultural issues, gender issues, sexual identity and race/ethnicity for students studying or living abroad. Check with your local bookstore or on the web. Some general resources include:

- Mobility International USA is an organization dedicated to international opportunities for the disabled (www.miusa.org).
- *The Real Guide: Able to Travel* by Alison Walsh.
- *Out in the World: Gay and Lesbian Life from Buenos Aires to Bangkok* by Shelly Anderson.
- *Half the Earth: Women's Experience of Travel Worldwide* by Miranda Davies, Laura Longrigg, and Luanda Montefiore.
- The Lesbian Special Interest Group of NAFSA, the Association of International Educators, is located at www.indiana.edu/~overseas/lesbigay/index.html.

10.0. MONEY & BUDGETING

10.1. What to take with you

Before you leave, be *sure* that you understand how you will access money while abroad. **AS A GENERAL RULE, YOU SHOULD HAVE MORE THAN ONE MEANS OF GETTING MONEY.**

If possible, bring a small amount of your host country currency with you in **CASH** when you leave the U.S. Most major banks can obtain foreign currency, but you should verify this in advance. You should have enough to cover bus/taxi fares, snacks, a phone call, etc. during your first couple of days -- we recommend about \$50.00 U.S. or the equivalent in local currency (if possible). You can look up current exchange rates at <http://www.xe.com/ict/>. Be sure to get small denominations; the equivalents of \$20 or \$10 bills.

10.2. Accessing money during your time abroad

10.2.1. ATM MACHINES

Automatic Teller Machines (ATM's) are becoming increasingly available overseas. ATM's tend to get you the best exchange rate, charge no exchange commission, and have 24 hour access.

- Check with your bank for a list of teller locations overseas.
- Locations can also be obtained from the Internet for MasterCard and/or Cirrus ATMs at www.mastercard.com or for Visa and/or Plus ATMs at www.visa.com.

- Make sure you have a four-digit *numeric* PIN code for your account; longer PIN codes are not accepted in many countries and many do not have letters on the keypads.
- Check to see what, if any, fee your bank charges for using an ATM card overseas and ask about limits on daily withdrawals.
- ATM machines overseas rarely give you the choice between accessing a checking account and a savings account - they will generally only pull from one account, so you will need to consult your bank about the ability of your card to work overseas, as you may need to set the card up to access one type of account only.
- If you plan to get a new ATM card for this trip, get your pin number now and try it here in the U.S. before you go abroad - do not expect a brand new card to work overseas.
- If your parents have access to your account, they can deposit money that you can access from overseas usually within 24 hours.

10.2.2. TRAVELER'S CHECKS

Traveler's checks are a convenient way to carry money safely, as they are easily replaced if lost or stolen, and they tend to be widely accepted around the world. You can purchase them from your bank, AAA (American Automobile Association), American Express, Thomas Cook, and various other financial institutions. Traveler's checks can cost a fee to purchase and usually cost a commission to cash as well. Although generally small, these fees can add up, especially if you cash checks in small amounts.

- If you are going to a country such as the United Kingdom, you should consider obtaining traveler's checks in the currency of that country (e.g., British pound sterling), as they are often easier to cash. Many banks can order the checks in foreign currencies with advance notice. Otherwise, U.S. dollar traveler's checks are generally easy to cash in most locations.
- Keep a record of the serial numbers in a separate place in case the checks are lost or stolen.

10.2.3. CREDIT CARDS

Certain credit cards are widely accepted both for purchases and for cash advances. We strongly recommend that you have a Visa credit card for emergencies (Mastercard and American Express are generally not as widely accepted, although this varies from country to country). If you are unable to qualify for a card on your own, your parents may open an account and get a card in your name for your use. Credit cards can be an easy way to pay, and you tend to get good exchange rates when used for purchases.

Credit cards should never be used as a means of getting cash, except in an emergency. There is a transaction fee for each cash advance you take, and you are

charged interest from the day the transaction is made. Receipts may have your credit card number printed on them, so either keep them for your records or destroy them thoroughly so no one can use your number.

10.3. Budgeting

Beyond the basic program cost and what it includes, how much you spend on personal expenses is largely a matter of personal preference. Previous participants' estimates of how much they spent vary widely, but most have recommended the following basic strategies:

1. Sit down and work out a preliminary budget for personal expenditures.

- Make sure you understand exactly what is included in your program fee and what is not; check with your Program Director if you have any questions.
- Check with your calling card company about rates to and from your host country. Usually AT&T, MCI, or Sprint will have the best international plans.
- Figure out how much you and your parents are willing to budget beyond that for discretionary expenses such as travel, entertainment, etc., and be sure to budget *at least* a minimal amount (\$50-\$ 100) for incidentals such as laundry, postage, film, toiletries, etc.

2. Purchase a good guidebook for your program's host country (*Rough Guide, Lonely Planet, Let's Go, etc.*). These books will list costs for accommodations; train, plane, and bus tickets; entrance fees for local attractions; and other items. These figures will help you make a rough estimate of the per-day costs of personal travel during weekends and before or after the program.

Note: You should check with your Program Director to ensure you understand any restrictions on personal travel *during* the program. You will need to plan your personal travel around any required elements.

3. Expect some items to be much more expensive than what you are used to at home, but don't assume there aren't local alternatives which are less expensive. Items which tend to be heavily taxed (and thus much more expensive) in most other countries are consumer goods imported from the U.S. (food, books, clothing such as jeans, etc.), "luxury" items such as electronics, and clothing. Specifics will vary tremendously depending on your destination. Check with your Program Director for details.

11.0. KEEPING IN TOUCH

U.S. long-distance carriers offer a wide variety of calling card options. Call around to compare prices or check with the carrier that your parents use to see what they offer. You will need to get the appropriate international dialing access allowing you to call

FROM overseas TO the U.S. In general, it is far more expensive to call from abroad to the U.S. than it is to call from the U.S. overseas. Many students arrange a calling schedule with family or friends, setting a time each week when they will be at a certain number at which the family member or friend can call.

As in the U.S., coin-operated phones are becoming increasingly harder to find in some European countries. Many countries have debit phone cards which can be used at public phones and which can be purchased from local stores or offices.

Taking a cell phone or buying one abroad is generally not recommended unless you have a tri-band phone with a chip that can be replaced. Many phones bought overseas cannot be used in the U.S. and many U.S. phones will not work abroad. International phones are available, but they are usually very expensive. Leasing may be an option you want to explore once you are on site.

You should not expect to access email every day while abroad, if you are able to access it at all. Your program activities will keep you very busy. However, there may be local Internet cafes you can use for a small fee. If you are able to access email through an Internet cafe, it may not be located near your housing or academic facilities. Check with your Program Director and/or the Internet for more information.

If you would like to access email via the Internet while abroad, consider opening a free email account through one of the Internet companies which provides this service. Simply go to the Internet site for one of these companies and follow the instructions to open an account. You can then access this email account via the Internet from any location, e.g., www.yahoo.com or www.hotmail.com.

12.0. HOMESTAYS

Programs that include homestays offer a great opportunity to expand your cultural experience beyond the classroom. However, living with a family also poses some special challenges. Remember that families abroad are as diverse as families in the U.S. Also remember that, while your family receives a stipend to cover the costs of your room and/or board, the money cannot possibly reimburse them for the inconvenience and annoyance of putting up with a "bad" student in their home. In most cultures, host families will appreciate it if you do the following:

- Bring a small gift (e.g., non-perishable North Carolina specialties, posters or calendars from your state or region, Spartan insignia items, craft items, t-shirts, etc.). The Greensboro History Museum gift shop is a good source of gifts. You should not spend more than \$20 on any one item, as it may embarrass the recipient.
- Offer to help with household tasks.
- Ask about the house rules for telephone use. In many countries, even local calls are

charged on a metered basis, and phone service is often quite expensive in comparison to the U.S. Families may prefer that you make outgoing calls from a pay phone or an internet cafe.

- Never snack from the family refrigerator or pantry without permission.
- Be careful with electric and water use - in many other countries electricity is extremely expensive. Turn out lights when leaving rooms, be careful about long showers, etc.
- Ask about things such as the family schedule and house rules at the beginning of your stay. Would they prefer that you not receive calls after or before a certain time? Can you have visitors in your room or overnight? Do they want to know when you will be leaving town for the day or the weekend? **BE PREPARED TO FOLLOW THESE RULES.** Remember, you are a guest.
- If meals are included in your homestay, don't skip meals with the family without letting your host mother or father know well in advance.
- Be open, be flexible, and don't be afraid to ask questions!

Host families, while they are typically interested in interaction with international students, are also being paid for their hosting duties and in most cases consider it an income supplement. While you should expect your family to provide a safe, clean living environment, adequate meals, and a cultural/language immersion environment, the amount of personal interaction will vary from family to family.

Of course, if your family is truly unreasonable or if you are uncomfortable with your family, you should discuss the situation with your Program Director. However, if you think you want to ask to be moved, be sure your reasons are more serious than small inconveniences and are not differences that are culturally based and likely to be the same from family to family (e.g., attitudes towards phone use or curfews).

13.0. THINGS TO BRING WITH YOU

13.1. Luggage

Most students suggest buying a good, internal-frame backpack from a luggage or travel store to use for weekend and vacation travel. Brands such as "Eagle Creek," "Jansport," or "REI" offer many different size and cost options.

Some suggested luggage combinations are: a) one small "wheelie" suitcase with a collapsible handle, one internal-frame backpack, and one small day-pack or b) one internal-frame backpack with a small removable backpack (to be used as a carry-on)

and one small duffel bag. Whatever combination you choose, all luggage should be very sturdy. Consider your luggage an investment - it is better to spend an extra \$50 on a good quality bag than to get a cheap one which breaks.

Consider purchasing baggage insurance, which is available through banks, travel agencies, ISIC cards, and some credit cards if you purchase your airline tickets with the card. Baggage insurance often protects your possessions the entire time you are abroad, not just while you are flying. If your parents carry homeowner's or renter's insurance, have them check with their insurance agent to see if your belongings can be covered under their policy while you are abroad.

Pack all of your important documents (passport, tickets, prescriptions, arrival and contact information, etc.), as well as some basics (change of underwear, toiletries, toothbrush) in your carry-on bag. These items should not be packed in your checked luggage, in case your luggage is lost. Be sure to:

- Label all luggage inside and outside with your name and permanent address.
- Check airline guidelines about what is allowed in your carry-on luggage because new restrictions are now in place.
- Check with the airline about luggage restrictions if you will be taking connecting flights within another continent (e.g., Lima to Cuzco or London to Paris). Many airlines allow only ONE checked bag on flights within Europe, Asia, or Latin America.
- Learn about and be respectful of the security procedures at the airports. It is not unusual now for customs and immigrations officers to ask detailed questions and/or to open and search luggage.

13.2. Packing Hints

The most common words of advice from former study abroad students: **PACK LIGHT!!!** Lay out everything you plan to take, then remove half the contents, reevaluate and remove half again. Remember that you will need to carry your luggage on and off planes and trains, up and down stairs, around the block, etc., so be sure you can comfortably carry what you plan to bring. Keep the following points in mind:

- You will also want to allow some room for purchases you make during the program (shipping things home after the program can be very expensive).
- Consider taking clothes that can be layered. Homes and residence halls abroad are often not kept the same temperature as buildings in the U.S. Also, for efficiency, consider packing clothes that can be mixed and matched, instead of bringing several individual outfits.
- Laundry facilities abroad are likely to be more expensive, time-consuming, and

harsher on your clothes than they are here. Try to bring sturdy, dark color clothes in fabrics that are easy to wash and dry. Leave anything that needs to be dry-cleaned at home.

- Make sure you understand your host country's standards for modesty and/or neatness in dress. In many countries, students dress more formally than American students. Often shorts and sweats are strictly for the beach or the gym. Even in parts of Western Europe, many tourist sites such as churches and historical monuments may not allow visitors to enter in shorts or sleeveless tops.
- Electrical sockets and electrical currents are not the same around the world. If you cannot live without your hairdryer or other small appliance, consider buying inexpensive alternatives in your program's host country. In the past, students have attempted to take adapters and converters for U.S. appliances and end up blowing fuses, etc. in their host families' homes.
- Unless your Program Director requires you to use a laptop computer while abroad, we do not recommend that you take one. You may not be able to plug it in safely, you may not be able to use it to access the Internet, and you may be at a greater risk for theft if you do take it.
- We recommend leaving valuable or sentimental items, such as jewelry, at home. If you take expensive items with you (camera, watch, etc.), be sure to register these with U.S. Customs *before* you leave, otherwise you may be required to pay duty on these upon re-entering the U.S. You may also want to verify that your personal property insurance covers your items during international travel.
- A valuable resource called "Know Before You Go" is available through U.S. Customs Office and can be found online at <http://www.customs.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/kbyg/> This brochure provides important information such as items requiring you pay duty upon re-entering the U.S., prohibited and restricted customs items, etc.

13.3. Packing List

Essentials you must take with you

- Passport
- Airline tickets
- Money
- Traveler's Checks and Traveler's Check Counterfoils (carried separately from checks)
- Credit card and/or ATM card
- Photocopies of all documents, prescriptions, etc.
- This handbook
- Prescription medications
- Emergency contact card, insurance card, & claim forms

Near essentials you may need:

- Money belt or pouch
- Local currency and some U.S. dollars in cash
- ISIC card (available from the International Programs Center) &/or UNCG ID card
- Immunization record and health record of current or serious conditions

Other items to consider taking:

- Extra passport photographs
- Clothing that can be layered and mixed/matched (don't forget pajamas!)
- Extra contact lenses, solution, glasses
- Battery-operated alarm clock (not electrical)
- Washcloth
- CD player/I-Pod/DVD portable
- Good, all-purpose waterproof walking shoes with thick soles
- Camera, plenty of film, batteries
- Sewing kit (not in carry-on luggage)
- Zip-Lock bags
- Moist towelettes
- Swiss army knife (not in carry-on luggage)
- Fold-up umbrella and rain poncho
- Full toiletry bag with dental floss, soap, shampoo, toothpaste, shaving kit, sanitary supplies, condoms, etc.
- Small first-aid kit
- Small flashlight
- Calculator
- Dictionary (e.g. English-Spanish, English-French)
- Swimsuit
- One set of "nice" clothes (not "dry clean only")
- Small combination lock and/or locks for suitcase
- Small gifts for your host family
- Country-specific guidebook (e.g., *Lonely Planet*, *Let's Go*, *Rough Guide*, etc.)
- Sleeping bag/sleep sack, if you plan travel on your own
- Shower shoes if staying in youth hostels
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If you have any questions before you leave or while abroad, please do not hesitate to ask your Program Director or the International Programs Center.