



STUDY ABROAD PRE-DEPARTURE GUIDE



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STUDY ABROAD PRE-DEPARTURE GUIDE

Let the adventure begin . . .

A successful international experience requires much planning and preparation and International Services Office (ISO) is available to assist you in making the most of your study abroad experience. Feel free to call, email or set up an appointment.

This guide is intended to provide general information to help you prepare for your time abroad. The organization or faculty member sponsoring your program will also provide you with information; most will require an orientation upon arrival that is specific to your program and your host country.

Remember that this is a learning experience—every step of the way; remain patient and plan ahead.

In case of emergency

Dial the international access code for the U.S.*

Then dial 239.590.1900 (FGCU Campus Police)

Identify yourself as an FGCU study abroad student and give the country where you are currently located

State your name clearly and slowly (spell if necessary)

Tell the person what is wrong

Tell the person how to contact you

Respond to questions and listen carefully to any instructions.

*To prepare, learn the international access codes for calling to the U.S. from abroad at the Country Codes web page. Write the numbers on the back of the card.

INTRODUCTION

Congratulations! Whether you plan to study abroad for a week, month, semester or year, you are about to embark on a very exciting, life changing experience. One of the main goals of ISO is to give you the opportunity to immerse yourself in a foreign culture academically, socially, and culturally. Take advantage of your experience abroad by taking initiative, relying on yourself, and utilizing the resources you have. We know that you are excited but maybe a little nervous about your upcoming overseas experience. To make your transition easier, ISO has developed this guidebook.

Please read it entirely. We also recommend that you share this handbook with your parents.

The members of our staff, former study abroad students, and current international students are an invaluable resource for you. Please take advantage of their experience and get in touch with them as you plan your study abroad program.

Have a wonderful and safe experience abroad!

The Staff of International Services



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BEFORE YOU GO

PREPARING FOR YOUR TRIP

Planning

The more information you have prior to your departure, the better your experience will be. There are many ways to plan ahead.

Learn about the history, geography and customs of the countries you will be visiting. Current events are helpful, too.

- Access daily issues of foreign newspapers and other information via websites
- *CultureGrams*, <http://www.culturegrams.com/>, provide a good summary of topics such as customs and courtesies, and lifestyles around the world.
- The U.S. Department of State publishes Background Notes on 170 countries worldwide; <http://www.state.gov/travel/>.
- Talk with students who have gone to the country(ies) you are planning to visit or who are from them.
- Purchase an international travel guide such as *Let's Go*, *Lonely Planet*, *Berkeley Guides* or *Rough Guides*. Read it!
- If you don't speak the language, learn some key words and phrases. Purchase a small phrase book to carry with you. Everyone likes to hear even simple words or phrases in their native tongue.
- Start reading the on-line version of the local newspaper—often there are English versions available.
- Make sure you know about your own country: in general people are better informed about the U.S. than we are about the host country. Regarding U.S. policy on foreign, economic and environmental issues, you need to be as well informed as your hosts.

Staying Current Before Departure

It is your responsibility to stay informed about developments in the country(ies) you will be visiting (including any countries you'll visit that are not part of your program's itinerary). Access the U.S. Department of State's website for information about these countries: <http://www.state.gov/travel/>.

At that site you will find three (3) different types of information: Country Information Sheets, Travel Alerts and Travel Warnings. We urge you to read this information carefully before departing the U.S. The ISO is available to answer any questions or concerns

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regarding information on this site. This information is updated based on current events worldwide. According to the DOS:

Country Information Sheets are issued as a matter of course and are available for every country in the world. They include information such as the location of the U.S. Embassy/Consulate, unusual immigration practices, health conditions, minor political disturbances, unusual currency and entry regulations, crime and security information, and drug penalties.

Travel Alerts are issued as required. They are a means of disseminating information about terrorist threats and other relatively short-term and/or transnational conditions posing significant risks to the security of U.S. travelers.

Travel Warnings are issued with the DOS decides, based on all relevant information, to recommend that American avoid travel to a certain destination.

ACADEMIC ISSUES

Responsibilities Before You Go Abroad

Please make sure that all of your signature documents and material submissions are complete prior to departure for your chosen program due to liability and safety while abroad. Check on your application home page to see if your file is complete and all required documentation has been completed. If you are using an independent study abroad provider such as ISA or CIEE, it is your responsibility to make sure all program provider paperwork is completed.

Educational Philosophy Abroad

Universities outside of the U.S. almost universally operate under the European education philosophy which is very different from that of the U.S. In general, you are expected to be much more independent and more actively involved in your education process. The bulk of the learning process takes place outside the classroom through reading, research and writing. Class lectures are designed to give you the framework necessary to explore the subject on your own. While you are expected to do extensive work outside the classroom, there are few, if any, of the mechanisms used in the U.S. to ensure that you are doing the work (i.e., required class attendance, quizzes, tests, required homework and/or papers). Your semester/year grade may be based entirely on a comprehensive final exam with oral and written components or on a final paper. This system can lead American students to develop a false sense of security. Students have returned to the U.S. talking about having "easy" classes only to find that they received grades at or below a "C". Remember that for transfer courses to be accepted and count toward your graduation requirements, you

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must receive a "C" or better. Be prepared. This system requires self discipline and no one except you will monitor your progress.

Registration at Your Host Institution

You conquered the FGCU system so you can figure out your host institution also, particularly with a little help from other students. Registration abroad is different and seldom relies on the same computer system you are used to using at FGCU. Prepare to run all over campus visiting each instructor for his/her signature and/or stand in lines at a central registration location. Think of the process similar to the FGCU drop/add period for every class. Again, do not hesitate to ask your host coordinator for help. Prior to leaving FGCU, you should complete the Study Abroad Course Transfer Equivalency Form during the post acceptance phase on your application home page. You are required to take a full course load, equivalent to 12 credit hours at FGCU during the semester and 6 credit hours at FGCU during the summer. Since you the courses you wish to take may not all be available by the time you get to apply, we recommend you select at least five (5) classes for pre-approval. Actual registration for courses abroad may take place before or after arrival at the study abroad location, depending on the program.

Tip: Take your academic advisor's e-mail address and phone number with you. You will need this information if you make changes to your planned list of classes. If you plan to use a course abroad to fulfill a general education requirement, contact the advising center for your college. Emails for course approvals should include the course description, number of credit hours at the host institution, and the FGCU requirement you would like the course to fulfill. Keep copies of all email communications as proof of approval by your department. You may also forward a copy to our office at internationalservices@fgcu.edu. (It is always good to have a printed copy as back up.)

Studying Abroad Your Last Semester

FGCU requires that your last 30 credit hours must be earned on the FGCU campus. Prior to going abroad, you can petition this requirement through your academic advisor. Petitions to substitute study abroad credits for residence credits are usually accepted so do not let the 30 credit rule stop you. To graduate at the end of your semester abroad, your host institution transcript must be received within two weeks of the FGCU graduation date and this seldom happens. Your grades will be posted to your FGCU transcript as soon as they are received, but your official graduation date will be the following semester.

Tip: Hand carry an official transcript home with you; it must be in a *sealed* host-institute envelope.

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Transcripts

Grades earned abroad and how they affect the FGCU transcript (this does not apply to short-term, FGCU Faculty-Led Programs): Grades obtained during the time abroad are not included in your GPA at FGCU, with the exception of FGCU faculty-led programs. The grades on all other abroad programs will be converted to Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory for posting on the FGCU transcript. This means that your GPA upon return from study abroad will be the same as prior to going abroad. **Note:** Graduate Schools and outside scholarship agencies frequently request a copy of the original foreign transcript. It is your responsibility to be sure your courses are complete and your record is clear at the host university abroad so that your transcript may be released. You must request that after the completion of your program the transcript for your study abroad be sent to:

Office of Undergraduate Admissions
ATTN Ms Susan Parker
10501 FGCU Blvd South
Fort Myers FL 33965-6565

The transcript will document the hours studied abroad and will be posted on your FGCU transcript. These hours will count towards attempted hours. If an official foreign transcript is not received in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions within five months of completion of the study abroad experience, hours cannot be posted. Should you not be notified of receipt of your transcript within five months of completion of the study abroad experience, contact the Office of Undergraduate Admissions immediately.

Transfer Credit Process

FGCU accepts transfer credits from accredited universities abroad as Satisfactory Credit (no grade recorded) providing courses are not duplicative or remedial, and your grade is a “C” or better. Transfer grades from study abroad are not calculated in your FGCU GPA. You are **strongly encouraged** to return from abroad with the course materials, which document the content covered (i.e., course syllabi, list of reading materials, papers, exams, etc.); these documents will facilitate the awarding of appropriate transfer credit and the petition process for major, minor, or general education requirements within your department. Upon receipt of your transcript, the Office of Undergraduate Admissions will contact you to pick up a copy of your transcript and an instruction sheet. A copy of the transcript for your file will be retained in UA’s office and the original sent to the transfer credit evaluator. If you wish to have the credits you earn fulfill specific requirements and/or you took courses for which you did not have approval in advance, you will need to meet with your academic advisor to assist you with the petition process. Be sure to take all course materials with you.

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Registration at FGCU (prior to departure)

FGCU Registration for Exchange Program Course: You will be enrolled at FGCU in the programs abroad course for the term(s) spent abroad. You must be enrolled in “exchange course” before the disbursement of financial aid. Enrollment in this course maintains your FGCU student status. You do not pay FGCU tuition or fees while abroad unless you are participating in a FGCU or ISEP reciprocal exchange program. Students participating in a FGCU or ISEP direct program will be billed appropriate program costs by the appropriate entities.

Faculty Led Summer, Mini-Term or Spring Break Programs: You will enroll for the course taught by the faculty member (not in the ISO office) and pay FGCU tuition. If you withdraw from your study abroad program, you must inform the ISO and the faculty program leader in writing immediately (emails not accepted). Simply dropping the course does not withdraw from the program.

Before departing, you need to notify the Registrar’s office of the stateside mailing address where you wish all correspondence sent. If you are receiving financial aid, you will want to supply the Office of Financial Aid with this address (we suggest you also arrange for direct deposit of your financial aid). By Federal law, no type of financial aid can be disbursed until after the start date of the FGCU semester and they will be mailed only to a stateside address or deposited directly into a bank account. Be prepared for the time lag of your funds catching up to you; plan ahead!

Scholarships > Bright Futures can be used towards hours taken during the fall and spring semesters IF you are enrolled full-time at the host institution. Bright Futures will pay the same amount as if you were studying at FGCU; it does NOT pay for summer semesters abroad.

If you are on a non-‘State of Florida institution’ program, Bright Futures will not pay.

If you receive any scholarships other than Bright Futures, you must notify the Financial Aid office.

FGCU-awarded scholarship will NOT be applicable to non-FGCU programs.

Florida Pre-Paid College Program (FPCP)> These funds only apply on ‘State of Florida institution’ programs. If an FGCU program, your FPCP will be processed as usual. If you are attending a program through another State of Florida institution, contact that university for collection of prepaid benefits.

Consortium Agreements> A Consortium (or Contractual) Agreement is for a student attending a non-FGCU program and using ‘federal financial aid’, i.e., Stafford loans. A student is allowed to receive federal financial aid funds while studying abroad; the home school must give credit for courses taken on the same basis as if it were providing that

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portion itself. The agreement also specifies which school is responsible for disbursing aid and monitoring eligibility. If you think you need a Consortium Agreement, please contact International Services immediately.

Planning Your Registration for the Semester after Studying Abroad: You will be able to register for the coming semester through Gulfline. The course schedule for the coming term is available online. The information will be sent to your FGCU email address so please arrange for your mail to be forwarded if using a different email address while abroad and make sure to check it often. If you cannot register yourself, ask a friend or family member to register for you. You will register at your regularly assigned time (you do not get to register early because you are abroad), so you will need to calculate the time difference between your host country and Fort Myers when going to Gulfline.

PREPARING TO GO

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

Passport

If you do not have a U.S. passport, you must apply for one immediately as it may take six weeks or more to obtain. The passport is valid for ten years and is your official identification as a citizen of the United States. It will be checked upon leaving and entering every country (including the U.S). Students participating in study programs in Canada and Mexico are required to obtain a passport.

If you already have a passport, make sure it is valid at least six months beyond the date of your return to the U.S. Passport applications are available on-line at www.travel.state.gov. You can also find information about the services of the processing center nearest you. Passport photos are taken at various places, including AAA, Kinko's, or Walgreen's.

The completed application must be submitted in person to one of the agency offices and must be accompanied by additional documentation. Again this information can be found on-line at www.travel.state.gov. Upon receipt of the passport, make three photocopies of the page with your picture and passport number on it. Leave one at home with your designated representative, give one to ISO and carry the other copy with you separate from your passport. If you lose your passport, having a copy will make it easier to get a replacement.

Visa (not the credit card)

You must have a passport in order to get a visa. A visa is official permission to visit a country for a specific purpose and is granted by that country. Most countries require a student to obtain a long-term stay visa; however, some countries do not. To learn about

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the requirements and the process for obtaining a visa for your host country and any countries you might visit while abroad, go to www.travel.state.gov. You generally apply to the consulate which serves the state of your permanent residence. If you have questions, immediately speak with ISO or your program provider. Start early: obtaining a visa could take as long as three months. Prior to sending your visa application and passport to the embassy/consulate, make a copy of the photo page of your passport and all documentation you send. **Note:** There are several countries which “may” require an in-person interview at their consulate. Japan, France, Italy, and Spain require you to report in person. Consulates may be located in Washington D.C., Atlanta, Detroit, New Orleans, Miami, etc. It is always wise to check with the consulate handling your visa.

Flight Arrangements

Most programs [except Faculty-Led] require you to make your own flight arrangements. Quotes from several agencies (locally or via the internet) will allow you to comparison shop for the best price. To get the best price on a ticket, begin working on this process as soon as possible. Two-to-three months in advance is NOT too early. However, be sure to confirm with your host university that housing will be available on your intended date of arrival otherwise you may require a hotel stay.

International Student Identity Card

Your regular student ID may not be honored in some countries. The International Student Identity Card (ISIC) gives students a single, uniform document recognized worldwide as proof of student status. ISIC cards are under \$25.00 and available for purchase from many travel agencies. Information can be found at www.myisic.com. Purchase is an option, not a requirement.

The ISIC card benefits vary widely from country to country, but may include student discounts on airfare, transportation, and accommodations, and reduced admission to museums, theaters, cultural events and other attractions. The effectiveness of the ISIC card has been mixed. In some cases, the card was not honored as expected. The phone card can only be used at public phones. Usually the greatest benefit it (1) a recognized identification card and (2) air fare discounts.

Traveling for Those Who Are Challenged: Physical or Emotional Disability

Students with disabilities should be aware that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) does not extend beyond our borders. Not all institutions have student services units that address disability issues. With adequate preparations and precautions, much of the world is accessible to the disabled traveler. *Mobility International* publishes a book “Survival Strategies for Going Abroad: A Guide for People with Disabilities” (approximately \$10)

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and a free online magazine “A World Awaits You” that provide useful information about both travel and study. You can order them from Mobility International, 132 E. Broadway, Suite 343, Eugene, OR 97401, Phone: 541-343-1284 (voice and TDD), www.miusa.org, FAX: 541-343-6812, E-mail: miusa@igc.apc.org. Please be aware that even if your host institution is aware of your needs, they may not be able to provide the same level of accommodations you are used to in the U.S.

Many students with mental health conditions or histories are attending college. Today’s students report dealing with bi-polar disorder, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, etc. With a combination of medications and therapy, most have productive and enjoyable experiences at home and abroad.

Experiencing another culture can be very stressful; we recommend you discuss the challenges of the program with your therapist or physician. Consider:

- In many programs you will not have your own space, may not be able to choose your roommate, and may be surrounded by more people than you are accustomed to. You may be living with a host family or continually traveling with the same group of students. Your access to private bathrooms/showers may be limited or non-existent.
- You will probably have less down-time and may have a more regimented schedule.
- You will experience changes in time, schedule, diet and climate as well as being surrounded by new and unfamiliar smells, sounds and environment. These could result in difficulty sleeping.
- Cultural differences can be significant and even with an understanding of the country’s language can result in feelings of alienation.
- As an American, you may be subjected to questions or attacks about American policies. There has been growing anti-American sentiment and it can be hard to separate yourself as an individual from the policy.

U.S. Customs Information

Before you go, be aware of the customs regulations for reentering the U.S. To learn more about these regulations, visit <http://cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/kbyg/>. Read the section ‘**Know Before You Go**’ and follow the recommendations.

PACKING LIST

There are many packing list sites on the Internet and most travel books have packing lists, but the best idea is to talk with someone who has visited or lived in the country.

TIP: Pack one week before you leave then carry your packed luggage around the block. If you have trouble carrying the load, you have packed too much. Lighten your load and

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lessen your hassles and if you can't afford to lose it, don't take it! Many students recommend backpacks.

Clothing: This category is one you definitely want to talk with someone who is from your host country or visited there during the same season(s) you will be there. The best items of clothing to take are those which are lightweight, washable, and can be layered. Limit your clothing and be creative! Think in terms of being able to combine clothing in such a way as to dress up or down as the occasion warrants. You may buy clothing while abroad so consider this when packing.

Medicine: Pack medicine in your carry-on luggage.

- prescription medicine—keep it in the original bottle and carry a copy of the prescription and/or a letter from your doctor. If you are taking products containing narcotics such as codeine, you must have a letter from your physician.
- eyeglasses and eyeglass prescription (and an extra pair of glasses--maybe an old pair that you can use temporarily)
- contact lenses and prescription (an extra pair of contacts)
- lens cleaning solution
- contraceptives/condoms
- any other over-the-counter medications you use (be sure to keep them in their original containers and pack them in your carry-on luggage)
- A mini-first-aid kit: band-aids, alcohol swabs, anti-bacterial lotion, anti-diarrhea medicine, small quantities of aspirin or pain-relief medicine, preferred cold treatments and insect repellent
- Check for required medicines: malaria prophylaxis, salt tablets, water purification tablets, etc.

Toiletries: Take small amounts of personal care items unless you have a favorite you cannot live without. Personal care items ARE sold in other countries. The brands may be different and cost more but the alternative is carrying these items in great quantity which will be heavy and take up valuable space for other items.

- toothbrush and toothpaste
- soap and shampoo
- sunscreen, moisturizer, cosmetics
- deodorant
- first-aid kit
- tissue (theirs may be a little rougher than you are used to)
- tampons

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- razor blades
- comb and brush
- washcloth
- hand sanitizer
- cosmetics

Documents: Money belt or neck wallet filled with the following (DO NOT PACK THESE DOCUMENTS IN YOUR LUGGAGE):

- passport
- tickets and rail passes
- student ID card
- cash (if possible, some local currency – you can purchase this at the airport), ATM card, traveler’s checks, credit card
- ISO Emergency card

Miscellaneous:

- camera and extra digital card and photo storage device
- pocket knife (in your checked luggage -- NO sharp items in your carry on!)
- flashlight
- books, guides, and maps
- sewing kit
- plastic storage bags for wet clothes and liquid filled containers like shampoo bottles (Ziploc® type bags work well because they are light and do not take up any room in your luggage.)
- umbrella
- luggage tags (on your luggage both inside and out)
- battery-operated alarm clock (your cell phone may suffice if it is will work in country)
- sunglasses
- copy of passport/visa
- backback/daypack
- computer if adaptable (do NOT pack in luggage/carry on ONLY)
- COMFORTABLE walking shoes
- any batteries you may need (they are more expensive abroad, may be different, and may not last as long)
- pictures of your family and other people significant to you. (Your new friends will want to see the people you are talking about.)

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- cable lock if you are planning to stay in hostels (you can secure your backpack or luggage to your bed frame)
- bi-lingual dictionary (if going to a non-English speaking country)

NOTE: Adapter and voltage converters are best purchased abroad as are appliances such as hairdryers. If bought abroad, they will not require converters.

If you are bringing expensive electronic equipment such as a computer, obtain all necessary conversion information from a professional before departure.

Tips for Securing Valuables During Travel:

- Do not carry everything in one place. Example: do not carry your traveler's checks with your list of traveler's check numbers, your ticket with the photocopy of your ticket, passport with the photocopy of the passport. Some veteran travelers use two travel pouches in two different hiding places.
- Always put medications and anything else you **MUST HAVE** in your carry-on luggage. Items for your carryon might also include toothbrush and toothpaste, a clean shirt/ blouse, a pair of comfortable shoes, and several pairs of underwear. If your luggage goes somewhere without you, you will have at least a few essentials with you to make you comfortable while you wait for it to return.
- Never carry large amounts of cash. Carry a small amounts of cash in your pocket to buy snacks, a newspaper, etc. and the remainder of your cash in your money belt or neck wallet. The less often you have to go into your money belt or neck wallet, the less you will be displaying your documents, money, traveler's checks, credit card, etc. Some travelers recommend going into the restroom or some other private place when accessing your money belt or neck wallet. (You do not have to tell anyone, just excuse yourself.)
- Always check your luggage tags to ensure you have the correct luggage. Put a copy of your itinerary and the address of your destination in each piece of luggage. Be sure your luggage is tagged with your name and address.
- Mark your luggage so it is easily distinguished as it goes through the conveyor belt—a piece of colored tape on the side, a ribbon on the handle, a sticker from another trip.
- Check the tags as you pick up your luggage and always count your bags as you move through the various transfer points. Many people have similar if not identical luggage and it is very easy to pick up the wrong piece; always check the tags each time you move.

Registering Valuables: You can register certain items with Customs before you depart (including watches, cameras, laptop computers and recorders); they require a serial

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number or other unique, permanent markings. Take the items to the nearest Customs Office and request a Certificate of Registration (Customs Form 4457). It shows Customs that you had the items before leaving the U.S. and all items listed on it will be allowed duty-free entry. Customs inspectors must see the item you are registering in order to certify the certificate of registration. You can register items with Customs at the international airport from which you are departing. Keep the certificate for future trips. On a side note, remember that many items are banned from carry-on and checked luggage. Check with your airline for details.

Luggage: Check your ticket envelope, with your travel agent, or website for specific luggage dimensions and weight. The requirements may not seem like much space to pack all that you will need to survive for the time you will be away, but when you are maneuvering through airports and on public transportation, you will find that it is more than enough to handle. Make sure your suitcase is durable and light weight. Check the handles and seams; they will take a lot of abuse. Combination locks are harder to break into than key locks. Backpacks are more easily moved and carried; wheeled suitcases do not survive well on gravel or cobblestones walkways.

For carry-on, a backpack is great. Your computer and camera are safely with you and an extra change of clothes will fit, too. Add your necessities and on board entertainment--you're set.

Weight and Baggage Restrictions: Each airline has its own rules and restrictions for the amount of luggage you are allowed to bring and the weight of each piece of baggage. Please check with your airline carrier for specific details.

Airport Security and FAA (Federal Aviation Administration): For the latest information on permitted and prohibited items for air travel, please see the FAA website <http://www.faa.gov/passengers/>.

Choosing Health Insurance for Study Abroad

You are responsible for considering your physical and mental health as well as other personal circumstances when applying for or accepting a place in a program. Traveling and studying abroad can be stressful. To make the most of the experience, you want to be healthy. Make available to the sponsor accurate and complete physical and mental health information and any other personal information that is necessary in planning for a safe and fulfilling study abroad experience. It is best to have a complete physical examination by your physician prior to departure. If you do not have a local physician, you may be able to visit a walk-in clinic. Ask your physician for a copy of your health exam report. In some countries, you might have to provide this information upon entry into the country. Some

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countries now require proof of a recent AIDS test. Some programs require that you register for a health insurance policy that they make available and they include the insurance cost in the program fee. If your program does not include insurance, FGCU requires that you provide proof of adequate coverage. A copy of the required coverage is available from ISO. Carefully check your current health insurance policy for information on benefits when you are abroad including medical evacuation and repatriation. Medical evacuation is generally defined as the evacuation of persons (usually by air transportation) to a place where they can receive medical care. Repatriation means to restore or return to the country of birth, citizenship, or origin if death occurs. Read the policy and/or call the provider. Some insurance companies do not provide coverage when you are away for an extended period of time. Other companies have providers abroad (usually in larger cities) and you may be required to use these providers to qualify for coverage. Check with your insurance company for details. Before you travel, be sure you know your insurance company's procedures for securing health care and making a claim. The process varies by company and it is important to know the procedure before you need to use it. Write down the instructions along with your insurance agent's name and phone number. Take them with you and leave a copy at home with someone you can call should you need the information. If your current policy does not provide the required coverage, ISO has a provider.

Immunizations

Some countries require immunizations for entry. Please consult with the staff of the Wellness Center on FGCU's campus for information on any required immunizations for your host country and any other country you plan to visit. Talk with your family physician to inquire if it is necessary to update your immunizations [tetanus shots should be current!]. You may wish to visit the Center for Disease Control's website [www.cdc.gov] for information on immunizations required or recommended for each country.

Bringing Medication Abroad

Take enough with you so you do not have to go through the hassle and inconvenience of trying to refill a prescription abroad. The U.S. drugs and those of other nations are **not** the same. You should ask your doctor to give you a generic breakdown (not just a generic name) of your prescription so *if necessary* you can try to refill your prescription. U.S. embassies often have a list of lists of physicians and medical facilities for American citizens needing medical care. See <http://usembassy.state.gov/>. The FDA (Food and Drug Administration) has a list of identical and similar drugs with different active ingredients: <http://www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/reports/confusingnames.html>.

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If you are unable to bring a sufficient supply of medication with you, check with the consulate for your host country about the legality of receiving your specific medication abroad. The consulate should also be able to inform you of the proper documentation, such as physician's prescription, necessary for shipment. For a list of Embassies in the U.S., go to <http://usembassy.state.gov/>.

Housing for Your Return

If you wish to secure on-campus housing at FGCU for the semester after study abroad, you must consult the Housing Office directly. It is your responsibility to make such arrangements prior to your departure.

WHILE ABROAD

ADAPTING TO A NEW CULTURE

Culture Shock

For some people, there are several phases to the study abroad experience consisting of highs and lows. You may experience some of these, all or none. If you are aware of these phases, they will be easier to identify and hopefully you will find it easier to cope.

1. Initial Euphoria (Honeymoon phase): After the stress of deciding to study abroad, deciding where to go, and completing what feels like a ton of paperwork, you prepare to leave. There is the anticipation of spending time in a new country, mixed with the sadness of leaving family and friends. You find yourself stepping off the plane and into a new place. Everything seems different, new and exciting. The language is different, the food is interesting, the buildings are charming and everything is wonderful. It is the "perfect" place. This phase is the first of many new experiences, excitement and adoration. This wonderful phase makes you feel great and is the perfect way to start your time abroad. Also known as the 'rainbow and roses' stage, many people who travel abroad for short trips never leave this stage.
2. Culture Shock: No, not the kind of shock someone experiences when they stick their finger in an electrical socket, but the kind that sneaks up on you, making you feel disconnected, confused, and/or anxious. Some people experience this stage fully, others not at all, but most fall somewhere in between. If it occurs, it is usually at about three to six weeks into your time abroad, when the things you may have found exciting and wonderful begin to appear as more of a problem. The language is a challenge and sometimes translation can be tiring, you long for U.S. food (though much easier to find now than it was several years ago) and you decide that the charming building does not have all the conveniences you are

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accustomed to at home. Be less judgmental and more open to exploration. Recognize this phase for what it is—a bump in the road. Get out with others who are upbeat. Go to events you enjoy, exercise, write in your journal, listen to music, and just relax. Smile—seriously, make yourself smile; laugh at yourself. If you are thinking of going home, do not give up. This phase passes quickly for almost everyone and once on to the next phase you will be happy you stayed.

3. Cultural adjustment, adaptation or bi-cultural: The final stage comes when the differences are narrowed down to a few of the most troubling. You have adjusted to these differences, and may not want to go home. You have made friends and may feel that your language skills are really just beginning to develop as you had hoped. You are not sure you want to trade the excitement of living abroad for the routine of home. You know you have changed but wonder if your friends at home have changed. On the other hand, you look forward to seeing family and friends and catching up on events. This is the phase that causes Reverse Culture Shock; something most students report as more difficult than their adjustment to the host country. At the midway point of any experience, time begins to quickly slip away. It seems like you just arrived and it is time to go home; often returning to the U.S. is the biggest adjustment. It's tough to leave a place that is now 'home,' yet you want to see family and friends. It is tough to be home because you expect others to be excited about your wonderful experience, but you find that after a few minutes they begin to view your conversation as the equivalent of looking at someone's vacation slides. (We know that is tough to hear, but true). Again, this is going to take some adjustment. If you find you are having a tough time, stop by and chat. We have been there ourselves and might be able to help.

Responsibilities of Participants

While abroad, you are the visitor and subject to all rules and regulations of the country. Your conduct reflects on you, your country and FGCU. You are expected to follow the rules and regulations of the institution in which you are enrolled overseas and may face academic or judicial sanctions at FGCU, including expulsion, for infractions of the Code of Conduct made abroad.

It is a myth that the United States government can automatically get you out of jail in a foreign country; they cannot. If you are arrested, someone from the U.S. Consulate/Embassy **may** visit you with a care package and recommend an attorney. However, being a U.S. citizen is not a get-out-of-jail free card.

Drugs which are illegal in the U.S. are also illegal almost everywhere else in the world, including the Netherlands. The penalties in some countries can be very stiff, even life

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threatening. If necessary, check out your host country's drug laws and the penalties for violating them before you go.

Socializing in pubs is the norm in many parts of the world, as is drinking responsibly. Whether or not to drink alcohol is your decision as an adult in the eyes of the law abroad, but becoming drunk can have hazards. If you are drunk and cannot find your way home, you may become a victim of robbery or assault. If you are drunk in public, you might be arrested and put in the "drunk tank" for the night. These are not the kind of intercultural experiences you want. U.S. students already have a reputation abroad as "drinking to get drunk" and acting obnoxious. Help dispel that stereotype and avoid problems through responsible behavior. Besides protecting yourself, it is about being respectful of your hosts and their culture. Believe it or not, you can still have a great time abroad without having a hangover every weekend. You might even enjoy it more.

Special Considerations for

GLBT Students: While some countries are known for their wide acceptance of homosexuality, the intolerance of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students may be extreme in other locations. Please take time to understand the cultural views held towards sexual differences before you leave the U.S. and consider how you will address this challenge. Do not be afraid to discuss your concerns with ISO or with your program sponsor. They can assist you in learning as much as you can about the resources available in your host country. A bibliography of resources for GLBT travelers can be found at www.indiana.edu/~overseas/lesbigay/biblio.html. In addition, *Planet Out* has a useful website with a section that focuses on international travel at www.planetout.com. This site includes information on gay friendly accommodations, restaurants, bars, events and organizations around the world.

Students with Apparent and Non-Apparent Disabilities: Students with disabilities have successful study abroad experiences if they choose the study abroad site carefully. Not all foreign institutions can accommodate students with disabilities. However, ISO will assist you in program selection and communication concerning your needs. If you currently require accommodation, and/or will need accommodation while abroad, please contact ISO and also visit the [Office of Disability Services](#) as you plan your study abroad experience.

Women: Unfortunately, the stereotype of "the easy and liberated American woman" is prevalent in many cultures. Because of this perception, you may unwittingly find yourself the object of unwanted attention whether through whistles and stares or through more direct propositions. If possible, talk to women from the host culture before leaving the

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U.S. Ask them what it is like to be a woman in their country. What are their perspectives of women's issues and rights? Depending on the culture, some women may feel more or less comfortable talking about gender issues. Try to respect the situation they are coming from, but do not feel that you have to put aside your beliefs and embrace their cultural values. There is much information for women travelers in books and online. One on-line magazine is *Journeywoman*: <http://www.journeywoman.com/>. This site gives women a place to share their thoughts and experiences and it provides advice about world travel.

Students of Color: Students of color often find that people abroad will classify them by nationality (American) rather than by race. For example, an African American student in Wales is more likely to be called "the American" than "the black student." BUT...there are occasions when students of color are mistaken for belonging to another national group. For example, an FGCU student of South Asian ancestry was mistaken for being Indian while studying abroad in Australia. However, as soon as he spoke, his American accent was recognized and correctly identified him as "American." Some students of color report that they had to dispel myths about their racial/ethnic group while abroad. These myths usually stemmed from inaccurate or exaggerated TV and movie stereotypes. While it is unfortunate that negative stereotyping occurs, FGCU students have used this opportunity to educate people about their racial/ethnic group in a positive way. It is important to remember that American students may hold stereotypes or myths about other cultures as well. Before getting angry or upset at people in your host country, check to make sure you are not committing the same faux pas! Before you go abroad, try to learn how race and ethnicity is constructed in your host country. Talk with students who studied abroad in your host country or connect with international students who are from the country where you will be studying. If neither of these options is possible, look for information on the web, read books, and watch films from your host country. By doing this, you will become more aware as to how you may be perceived when you go abroad.

Strategies For Academic Success

1. Attend all classes, labs, practice sessions-- even if the host country students do not.
2. Prepare for the upcoming lecture. Do the reading, review notes from past classes.
3. Get to class early and sit in the front of the class. Every day.
4. Take notes and notice when you do not understand. Ask a host country student if you can photocopy his/her notes or better yet, review the information with them. If you are nice and try to make friends, this request usually is not a problem. Use your own notes and the ones you borrow to help you study. Make note of what you do not understand and talk with the other students or the professor about this information.

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5. Join (or form) a study group.
6. Make sure your professors know who you are. Introduce yourself at the beginning of the term to each of your professors; tell them that you are an exchange student and really interested in the course. Do not worry if you feel very rusty with the host country language. After this early, initial visit, see each professor at least twice more each term. You can always ask for clarification of the material or ask them a question about the university or country. Many institutions in foreign countries may not have enough office space for all its professors or it may not be customary to hold office hours. In this case, you will need to approach the professor immediately before or after class.
7. Create and stick to a schedule for reviewing your notes and doing the required and optional readings. Do not put off your readings, papers or the review of your notes. Whereas in the U.S. there are many quizzes, papers and exams that make up the final grade, it is very common in other countries to have only one exam and/or paper that covers all the material for the entire term or year. The tendency of U.S. students to put off studying until the very end of the term can cause a feeling of being overwhelmed and panic. Keeping up with the reading, thinking and note review will allow you to approach the big exam and paper with more calm and allow you to take advantage of vacations and study periods to travel or work at a confident pace.
8. The first days and even weeks may be very disconcerting. If you are sitting in a class taught in a language other than English, you may feel that you understand absolutely nothing and begin to have a fear of failure. Do not worry. Follow steps 1-7 and, albeit slowly, everything will become more comfortable and familiar.

MONEY MATTERS WHILE ABROAD

Managing Your Money

Your study abroad experience can be one of the most valuable experiences you can have but if you are not careful, you can end up paying for it for years. It is always a good idea to create a budget showing how much money you have, how much you can spend, and when you can spend it. In other words, a weekly budget will help you manage your money. The next step is to stick to your plan. Many students theorize that they will 'never be back here again' and go wild with travel and shopping. The truth of the matter is, you will be back, probably several times. Europe, Australia, Africa, Asia and the Americas are not going anywhere. Think of your study abroad experience as the first chapter, not the only

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chapter. The truth of the matter is you cannot see all the 'must sees' in any country in just one year, much less a semester. You might be better off just picking a few places to see and then staying there long enough to actually enjoy and learn about them. The old "Europe in 7 Days" will just leave you in an exhausted blur. Try spending less time on trains and more time in a few quality places. Seek out student discounts and other bargains for accommodations, transportation, museums, food, etc. One bit of good news, there are many low-cost airlines around the world and train travel can be a good deal, too. Go online and compare prices; check out www.ryanair.com, www.easyjet.com, or www.thetrainline.com. Compare prices for air, train and bus transportation although bus travel is often the cheapest. Always know and understand the exchange rate in each country you visit. If you 'round' off exchange rates, you will be in for a shock when your credit card bills arrive. Even a 20 cent difference will add up faster than you can imagine--especially over several months. For example, students that think a euro and an American dollar are at about the same value will soon get an economics lesson that will come back to haunt them. Some students have had great experiences by joining local interest groups, sports teams, religious organizations and such. You meet lots of locals and spend very little money in the process.

Sending and Receiving Money

Currency Exchange: Prior to leaving it might be useful to know the current exchange rate for the country you plan to visit. Information on exchange rates can be found on: www.oanda.com or <http://www.xe.nt/currency/>.

Exchanging Money: If possible, you might want to have a little local currency with you upon arrival. You might be able to purchase local currency at international banks or work with a local bank that has international bank connections. Getting foreign currency can sometimes take a week or more so plan ahead. Often U.S. banks do not carry foreign currency. You can purchase local currency from a currency exchange booth located in the international terminal on either your departure or arrival however there are no guarantees that they will be open when you wish them to be. The exchange rate at some exchange booths may not be as favorable as it usually is at an ATM, so first look for an ATM (they are also often open 24/7). If you exchange money, plan to exchange only enough for a few days expenses.

Individual Travel Expenses: When traveling, it is said that you should take half as many clothes and twice-as-much money. You may not be able to take twice-as-much money, but do not underestimate how much you will need. It is a good idea to talk with someone who recently visited the country or check student directed travel books (*Let's Go, Berkeley*

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Guides or *Lonely Planet*) for information on travel costs such as hostel/hotel accommodations, food, transportation, sightseeing, etc.

Incidental Expenses: You will be responsible for personal expenses including personal care products, entertainment, travel and transportation. These expenses will vary depending on your individual lifestyle. Discuss these costs with former participants if possible. If you have never created a budget for yourself, start. Whenever you travel, it is never wise to carry large sums of money on your person. Below are some alternatives.

Debit or ATM Cards: ATM cards can be used in most countries, but it is wise to talk with someone who has recently been to your host country to confirm that machines are available. There is generally a charge associated with using ATMs, but students report it is still the most effective and least expensive way to access money. Prior to leaving, ask your bank about charges associated with using ATMs abroad. Carry your ATM and two credit cards. If you cannot use one, hopefully you can use another. If you have an account with Bank of America, you can avoid the access fee by using an ATM at the following banks in these locations: Barclays (United Kingdom), Deutsche Bank (Germany), Scotiabank (Canada), BNP Paribas (France), Westpac (Australia, New Zealand) and Santander Serfin (Mexico). For more information, see <https://www.bankofamerica.com/index.jsp>. If you do not use Bank of America, check with your financial institution to see if they have partnerships with banks abroad. **TIP:** Notify your ATM and credit card issuer in advance because some of them block foreign use by default and have to "unlock" the block AND be sure your card is acceptable overseas! Keep a record of your card number and customer service number in a safe place –other than your billfold!

Opening a Bank Account in Your Host Country: Ask your bank if they have a partner bank in your host country. If you are going to be in that country longer than six months, upon arrival, ask the staff at the host institution if they can recommend a bank that other international students have used in the past. Banks with experience working with international students will be happy to help you.

Credit Cards: If you plan to take a credit card, which is a good idea, speak with someone who has recently visited the country to find out which card (Visa, MasterCard, etc.) they would recommend. [American Express nor Discover are as widely.] Most cards charge an additional fee for each international transaction (2.5 to 7.5% per transaction). Prior to departure, check with your credit card company about their fees. **NOTE:** The cards offer cash advances for which a bank commission is charged and interest on a cash advance begins the moment you receive the cash. This can get very expensive so avoid unless a necessity. **TIP:** It is best to limit the number of credit cards you carry and to keep a list of

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your card number(s) and the company (ies) phone number. Leave a copy at home in the U.S. If you lose the card(s), you or your designated representative can call the company to report the loss. Make several lists of your travelers check numbers and keep them along with the company's phone number in different locations. Record when and where you cash them. If they are lost or stolen, you will have a record of which checks need to be replaced.

Money Transfer (sometimes referred to as **Electronic Wire Transfer**): Based on student comments, the safest, most efficient and least expensive way to get money is to have someone deposit funds in your ATM account. If your U.S. account is accessible overseas, this may be the easiest. If using an overseas ATM account, there may be a small fee charged with each deposit.

You may receive money from home by using an international postal money order. This service is available at most post offices but check with the post office before you leave to ensure that the country you are going to will accept these. In some countries you can have money transferred to you by Western Union. Contact Western Union at 1-800-325-6000 or <http://www.westernunion.com/> to verify if this service is offered at your program location. Again, there are charges associated with money transfers.

It is not recommended that cash or personal checks be sent via the postal service. Money can be stolen, mail may be delivered more slowly than anticipated and U.S. checks are difficult, if not impossible, to cash.

Identify Theft: If your credit card, social security card, checks, etc. are stolen you should immediately contact the issuing agencies. Also contact the credit bureau fraud departments of the credit reporting agencies: Trans Union, Equifax and Experian. You can find their phone numbers and addresses at: <http://www.transunion.com/>.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Staying Safe

Traveling to another country is not inherently dangerous; the fact is most U.S. citizens are safer traveling overseas than in the U.S. However, no matter where you go you inevitably stand out as a stranger, a "tourist", and therefore, as a target to the local criminal. You cannot rely on your seemingly instinctual knowledge of danger, of what is permissible, of what is and is not 'asking for trouble' as you do at home. The best way to avoid problems is to do your utmost to blend in. Americans are known for being more gregarious than people in many other cultures. When in another country, it is best to be a little more reserved until you have the chance to observe behavior. Do people look one another in the eye when passing on the street, do they smile at someone they do not know, and are

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they quieter, more formal around strangers? Observe clothing: is it simple, monotone, vibrant, trendy, jewelry or no jewelry. No doubt once you begin to observe, you will notice other cultural clues that you can follow. The advantage of this behavior is that it makes you really look at the differences and try to assimilate into the culture, it provides the opportunity to really experience more of the culture than you would if you were simply being an American abroad. We highly recommend checking the State Department <http://www.travel.state.gov/> website for information about any country you will visit. Bookmark this site and check it often as situations change. Feel free to call ISO to discuss anything that might be of concern to you regarding your abroad experience.

Safety Tips

- We recommend you register online <http://www.travel.state.gov/> with the U.S. Embassy or Consulate. Should you need their assistance, they will be familiar with your name.
- Read the local newspapers and keep up on what is going on in the area around you.
- If you are living with a host family, find out how host families are screened and what the procedures are for dealing with problems.
- Get several phone numbers to call in the event a problem occurs during non-office hours.
- If at any time you feel physically threatened, contact the international office of the host campus or the program representative and make arrangements to leave immediately. If you cannot get in touch with someone immediately, you may want to stay with a friend or stay in a hotel for the evening until you can visit the office in the morning. E-mail or call our office and let us know what is going on. We will do all we can to help ensure your safety.
- Find out which staff member on site is responsible for safety, health and security and find out what procedures are in place to handle emergencies. For example, where will the group meet if there is a crisis?
- Ask about health and safety standards applied to providers of transportation, tours, cultural programs and housing.
- Find out where the fire exits are in the building. Many countries in the world do not have the same fire codes as the U.S.

When Traveling

- Keep your host program administrator informed about your travel plans.

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- Carry your own luggage; do not let a stranger carry it or it may get carried away.
- Never put your luggage in the trunk of a car; you may need to get out of the car quickly.
- Important document [passport, travel documents, traveler's checks, money, and credit cards] should be kept in a money belt or neck wallet under your clothing to keep them out of the reach of a pickpocket. If your money belt is difficult for you to access, it will also be difficult for a thief. Keep small amounts of money in a more accessible place so you do not have to go into your money belt or neck wallet for cash for a soda. You do not want to display your cash or valuable papers any more than necessary.
- Know the people you are traveling with and always leave your itinerary and your approximate time of return with a friend or your host family.
- In many countries, they drive on the left side of the road. Be sure to LOOK BOTH before you step off the curb.

Additional Tips

- Do not walk alone at night; always travel in pairs or, preferably, larger groups. In large cities, this tip may also be true during the day. This suggestion does not guarantee your safety, but it can help.
- Wear clothing appropriate to the location. In some cultures, shorts and bare arms are very inappropriate. Know the culture of the country and conform to it.
- Do not give money to beggars. They may not be satisfied with the amount you give them and may demand more by using force.
- Do not carry large amounts of visible cash and do not place anything valuable in your fanny pack or backpack. Wear your fanny pack in front of you where you can see it and hook the straps through your belt loops.
- We know you have heard it before, but DO NOT hitchhike. You know the consequences and they can be deadly.
- One of the most common crimes is robbery which sometimes becomes assault. Think about things you might do to avoid becoming a victim and what you might do if you are robbed.
- If you hang your coat on the back of your chair or on a coat rack, remove all of your belongings first.
- If you have a bag or purse, keep it on your lap or between your feet.
- Do not advertise expensive belongings--it is recommended that you not wear extravagant jewelry, watches, carry expensive camera or video equipment, etc.

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- Never leave your food or beverage unattended.
- If a situation feels uncomfortable, stay calm and think of ways you can get out and away from the area. This might be by hailing a taxi or getting into a more public area.
- Remember your life is worth far more than anything you have. If need be, throw your stuff away from you and run in the opposite direction, scream “FIRE”, run around in circles, act out a seizure, act out of control, throw-up, cause a scene, do whatever you need to do to draw attention to yourself and to get to a safe place.

Safe Sex and HIV/AIDS SAFE

Excerpted from the brochure *Travel Safe: Aids and International Travel* produced by CIEE. The risk of getting HIV depends on you. Here are some general precautions you can follow regardless of where you are in the world:

- Avoid exchange of semen, blood, or vaginal fluids with anyone. Either abstain from sexual activity or practice safe sex.
- Use a condom. Both men and women should carry their own condoms. You may have trouble finding reliable brands of condoms abroad; some countries may not even sell condoms.
- Use water-based lubricants/jellies containing a spermicide in addition to a condom during vaginal and anal intercourse.
- Do not use illicit drugs. Do not use needles and syringes that may have been used previously.

Remember: one **acquires** HIV rather than “catches” it. With proper precautions you can virtually safeguard yourself from the virus. Additional information is available on the net: www.cdc.gov/travel.

Sexual Harassment

Cultural differences in interactions on romantic or sexual levels can be a problem area: some behaviors might be very inappropriate in the U.S., but considered perfectly acceptable in the culture in which you are living and vice-versa. Some of the new behaviors will be relatively easy to adjust to but others pose more of a problem.

Sexual harassment is a particularly difficult area because of the extreme variance in acceptable behavior between cultures combined with the different social and legal responses to such behavior.

Fortunately, there are ways to prevent or lessen the negative consequences. Harassment normally falls into one of two categories; the first being when a person requests sexual favors or verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. It often includes a trade

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relationship such as, “You do this for me, and I will do this for you.” This type of harassment is quite serious and even one incident should be reported immediately. The second category consists of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature directed toward a person because of her or his gender. This type of harassment usually takes place repeatedly over a period of time and creates an intimidating, hostile and offensive environment, plus may interfere with a person’s academic performance. The most important thing to remember is to stay safe. If you do not feel safe in a particular situation, remove yourself or distance yourself from that situation immediately. Go to the in-country program director, a foreign student advisor and go stay with a friend you can trust. Contact ISO as soon as possible. Do not wait to contact someone in the hope that the situation will improve. Maybe you can work things out, but do it with the assistance of the program director and someone in ISO. Until you know a place and a culture, you may be in danger of misjudging the situation. Listen to your instincts and think and act on the safe side even if that may not be the most "exciting" side. Most importantly, do not abuse alcohol while in a foreign culture. Losing full use of your faculties can cause errors in judgment and other situations that may lead to unwanted sexual harassment or assaults.

Food and Water

In areas where chlorinated tap water is not available or where hygiene and sanitation are poor, be advised that only the following may be safe to drink:

- Beverages made with boiled water such as tea and coffee
- Canned or bottled carbonated beverages, including carbonated bottled water and soft drinks
- Bottled water
- Where water may be contaminated, ice and containers for drinking should also be considered contaminated. It is generally safer to drink directly from the can or bottle of a beverage than from a questionable container.
- Food should be selected with care to avoid illness.
- In areas of the world where hygiene and sanitation are poor, you are advised to avoid un-pasteurized milk and milk products such as cheese and cream, and to eat only raw fruits and vegetables that you have peeled.

Locating a Doctor and/or Pharmacy

If you find yourself in a situation where you require a physician, you are not on your host campus, and you are not fluent in the language of the country contact one of the

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following for a list of doctors/dentists who speak English: the U.S. Embassy/Consulate, a large travel agency such as Thomas Cook or American Express, or go to the front desk of a large hotel. They can help you find an English speaking physician. When it comes to your health, you do not want a communication breakdown so be sure to seek an English-speaking doctor/dentist.

Other sources of information on physicians and hospitals are: The Bureau of Consular Affairs website at www.travel.state.gov, click on Lists of Doctors/Hospitals Abroad.

Crisis Abroad

A crisis can be a hurricane, earthquake or political unrest, or anything that changes the circumstances of the country you are in at the time. It is important that you are prepared. Stay informed. Know what is going on in the world, your host country and any countries you plan to visit. Read newspapers, check the Internet, visit the State Department website to view the Consular Information Sheets and to view travel advisories and warnings at <http://www.travel.state.gov>. Keep your host institution program administrator informed of your travel plans.

Carry a card with you which has information for contacting:

- Local police
- Host institution program administrator
- Emergency contact at home
- FGCU Emergency
- ISO
- FGCU Police
- U.S. Embassy or Consulate in the host country
- Insurance provider
- Nearest hospital
- Physician at home

The program administrator should identify a gathering place and you should visit this place early so you know where it is. **Avoid crowds.** You do not know what is going on and you do not need to. Stay away and read about it in tomorrow's newspaper. Try as much as possible to blend in or at least do as little as possible to draw attention to yourself. **Dress like a native.** Talk to someone who has been to the country and ask what people wear. **Do not wear expensive jewelry, clothes with U.S. symbols, etc.** Do walk like you know where you are going.

If a crisis occurs:

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- Know where you are to meet your program administrator and others in the program; attempt to get there providing you can do so without risking your personal safety. If this is not possible, try to get in touch with someone from the program, tell them where you are, how long you plan to stay, where you can be reached and let them know when you will contact them again. If you cannot reach anyone from the program, call ISO. We will work with your program in the U.S. and notify your emergency contact at home.
- Call your emergency contact at home and let them know you are safe, where you are and how they can get in touch with you.
- If there is a crisis, register with the U.S. embassy/consulate. They will then know (1) you are safe and (2) your current contact information. If a crisis happens in your host country while you are in another, get in touch with the U.S. embassy/consulate in the country you are visiting. Try to contact your program administrator. If you cannot, ask the embassy/consulate to contact your host country embassy and let your program administrator know that you are safe and where you can be reached. Call someone at home and ISO as soon as possible.

COMMUNICATING WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

E-mail:

All future communication from ISO will be via e-mail addressed to your FGCU email address. E-mail is a more efficient and cost effective for two-way communication than surface mail or phone.

Postal Address:

If you want to get mail during the first week or two of the program but do not yet know your address, ask if you can have mail sent to you in care of the program office. As a courtesy to your program provider, contact them before you leave and confirm that the office will accept mail addressed to you. Be sure it is addressed with:

Your name

C/O Program Name

City, Postal Code COUNTRY

Phoning Home:

One option for calling is a phone card. Many phone cards are offered through a variety of companies and some come with additional benefits such as voice mail, free email service, storage for important information from documents [such as your passport, credit card numbers, phone numbers, etc]. Some students purchase a cell phone while abroad. In some cases, it works out to be less expensive than using pay phones and is certainly a lot

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easier. Many safety-minded students often find this an attractive option. If you do purchase a phone, be sure you can use it to make and receive international calls. Not all phones have this capability.

TRAVELING IN THE HOST COUNTRY AND BEYOND

Rail Passes:

Combining convenience with inexpensive rates, perhaps the most widely used form of transportation abroad is the railroad. Information and application for rail passes (Eurail, Japan Rail, etc.) can be obtained from a travel agent, through a student travel organization or on the web. One site we recommend is <http://www.statravel.com/>. Rail passes can only be purchased in the U.S. and are the equivalent of cash [they cannot be replaced if lost or stolen]. In most cases, you must purchase the pass before leaving the U.S. or have someone purchase one for you in the U.S. and send it to you in your host country via registered mail. You may be able to purchase passes abroad but they will most likely not offer the same level of discount. In some countries and some circumstances, it might be best to purchase tickets as you go. Also, check at local train/bus stations about student rail/bus passes. In many Western Europe countries such as France and Germany, you can purchase a student pass for a small amount and then receive discount student tickets on every trip for a year. If you plan to use one mode of transportation often, this can save you money over time.

Bus Passes:

Another option for the budget conscious traveler is the bus. Bus travel is often cheaper and more frequent than train travel. STA travel at <http://www.statravel.com/> has bus passes available. Check the internet for information about purchasing a bus pass.

Air Passes:

Many airlines and alliances offer Airpass programs to visit multiple cities at extremely reasonable rates in different parts of the world. Usually these tickets must be purchased before leaving the U.S. in conjunction with an international flight. Some passes require the international segment be on a particular airline, some charge more if you do not use the associated airline, and some passes have no airline specific requirements. For more information, visit <http://www.airtimetable.com/> or <http://www.statravel.com/>.

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Road Travel via Motorized Vehicles:

Roads in the rest of the world are often narrow, have many curves, are poorly maintained, used by bicycles, motorbikes, motorcycles, animals, carts, etc. Vehicles may travel at speeds that exceed what is safe. Buses and rental cars may not be maintained at the level of those in the U.S. Be aware of the road conditions in the country (ies) you are visiting. Ask others who have traveled in the country; read the various guides: *Lonely Planet*, *Berkeley Guides*, *Let's Go*, *Fodor's*, *Rick Steve's*, etc.; or visit the US State Department page: www.travel.state.gov. Each resource will have a motor travel section addressing potential problems in the country you are visiting. If you do rent a car, be sure your auto insurance covers you in a rental car and in another country. Many policies do not. Be aware of the potential problems associated with driving abroad and use good judgment when making travel decisions. Motorcycles should be avoided at all costs as motorcycle accidents are one of the leading causes of fatalities for travelers abroad.

Bicycling:

Biking is popular in many countries and they are ready to accommodate the biker. Check a travel guide or the Internet to learn about biking in your host country. We recommend that you familiarize yourself with traffic laws of the city including those pertaining to biking. Also, be aware of traffic conditions where you are visiting and make an informed decision about the safety of biking. When biking, always wear a helmet. **NOTE:** You may take your own bike, but it will count as a piece of luggage and may quickly “disappear.” Buying a used bike or renting a bike from a local shop may be more convenient and cost effective.

RETURNING HOME

RE-ENTRY

Re-entry shock is a state of disequilibrium. You have had a wonderful experience that has taught you many things but somehow the new things that you have learned may not fit into your everyday world. You want to tell people about what you experienced but many friends would rather tell you what happened while you were away. People may see you as being more critical of things in your own culture and country and feel betrayed when you say you might want to go back to your host country someday. You prefer the company of those who shared your experience, and in some cases, your international experience takes on ideal qualities that cannot be matched at home. Re-entry adjustment requires that you and those who care about you recognize its symptoms and origins. You are a different person after being abroad and instead of undoing all of the changes that have occurred:

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- Take time to evaluate the two cultures and think about how you can incorporate parts of both into your lifestyle.
- Talk to family members and friends about how you think you have changed and listen to their observations.
- Listen to the stories of what happened at home while you were away and share some of your own experiences.
- Seek out others who have been abroad for extended periods.
- Volunteer for intercultural activities, activities with international students at FGCU through the International Club and other campus organizations, or for activities through ISO which will give you a chance to discuss your experiences with people who really want to hear about them.
- Try to keep perspective, recognize that some of the opinions you return with will change in the next several months as you readapt to your own culture.
- It's a great time to keep a journal.
- Remember: the uneasy feeling of being home that you may experience usually passes in a few months.

Health

If you become ill within 12 months of your return from abroad, be sure to let your physician know that you have been studying abroad. This information could be important in diagnosis and treatment.

Eagle I(nternational) Ambassador Program

Each year, ISO trains a small group of students to serve as ambassadors/mentors for incoming international students. Several times throughout the semester, the office will organize or sponsor social events. Watch for announcements about participating in the program.

TRANSFERRING CREDIT FOR COURSEWORK TAKEN ABROAD

(Not for students going on short-term, FGCU faculty led programs)

Before you go

Prior to your leaving the U.S., make sure you complete and file the [Study Abroad Course Transfer Equivalency Form](#).

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INTERNATIONALIZING YOUR EDUCATION AT FGCU

Foreign Language Study:

Even though a foreign language is not a requirement for most majors at FGCU, we encourage you to study a foreign language while here. Gaining insight into a foreign culture through proficiency in its language and familiarity with its literature furthers intercultural understanding and international perspective in a student's total program of study. Being able to communicate in a second language can also increase your chances in the job market.

Experiential Opportunities:

You might want to consider adding work, volunteer, internships or field study to the time before, during or after your study abroad. An experiential component allows you to become more involved in the culture as you live and work with the citizens, learning the language and learning about daily life in your host country. An alternative is to choose a specific time outside of your study abroad to take advantage of the many opportunities available.

Eagle I(nternational) Ambassador Program:

ISO sponsors the Eagle I program. This is a great way for you to continue learning about other cultures while sharing your knowledge about your own and FGCU/Fort Myers. Learn more by visiting <http://www.fgcu.edu/International/eagleIProgram.html>.

We hope that you have found this information to be useful and will share it with your family.

We wish you the best of luck in your abroad experience; we look forward to hearing about it when you return.

Credits:

University of Tennessee Knoxville, Center for International Education/Programs Abroad Office; Emory University, Center for International Programs Abroad; Colorado State University, Office of International Programs; *Travel Safe: Aids and International Travel* produced by CIEE; SAFETI Abroad First—Educational Travel Info (SAFETI) Clearinghouse; Tulane University, Center for International Studies; University of South Florida Pre-Departure Information Guide, Education Abroad.

Information presented is accurate on day of printing and is subject to change 5/1/2010.

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APPENDIX

FGCU Contact Info

International Services (ISO)

Reed Hall 122

Florida Gulf Coast University

10501 FGCU Blvd S

Fort Myers FL 33965-6565

Phone: 239.590.7925

(Monday – Friday, 8 am-5 pm, Eastern Time)

Fax: 239.590.7977

Email: international@fgcu.edu

Web: www.fgcu.edu/international

FGCU Police Department

239.590.1900/239.590.1991 (emergency)

Financial Aid Office

Office of Financial Aid

Telephone: 239.590.1210

Housing

Department of Student Housing

Phone: 239.590.1302

Bursar

Main Office: 239.590.7949

(excess financial aid distribution, mail payments)

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STUDY ABROAD CHECKLIST

- **Once you've been accepted to your study abroad program:** Pat yourself on the back and share the news with your friends and family!
- **Confirm your acceptance** of program participation by committing to your program through your online application homepage within two weeks of your admission to study abroad.
- **Complete all remaining forms** in the post-decision phase of your online application homepage no later than the date indicated for your program.
- **Apply for a passport!** Since processing may take up to two months (unless you want to pay a lot of money), do so early.
- **Apply for a visa** if required. Check with ISO or with the consulate of the country to which you plan to study to see if you need a visa (a stamp in your passport giving permission to enter and stay in a country). If you do need one, start the paperwork early. (**Note:** you must have a passport first to get your visa).
- Attend the required Study Abroad **Pre-departure Orientation**.
- Meet with your financial aid advisor to let him/her know about your study abroad plans and confirm the process for receiving financial aid while abroad.
- Complete and return the **Study Abroad Financial Aid Forms** (available in the post-decision phase on your application home page) and return them to the appropriate office ASAP to the. **Note:** This is only for students who receive financial aid.

Prior to leaving campus:

- Complete the [Study Abroad Course Transfer Equivalency Form](#) with your academic/major advisor and return executed form to ISO.
- Confirm arrangements for your **accommodations** in host country.
- Send a copy of your airlines reservations and pre-program travel plans to ISO as soon as you have made them.
- Bring your passport (and visa if applicable) to ISO; we will keep a scanned copy in our records while you are out of the country. In the event a replacement is required, it will come in handy!
- **Visit your doctor** and dentist for checkups and obtain copies of your medical prescriptions to take with you.
- **Remove "holds" from your record** (Gulfline) and confirm that you are registered for study abroad for the upcoming term.

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- If you live in the residence hall, talk with your hall director about **cancelling your current housing** (and meal) contract as well as your plans for your return housing.
- Check with your current **insurance** provider to determine if you have sufficient coverage while abroad and how to make a claim. If not, visit ISO.
- Check to see if your **ATM and credit card** are functional in your host country. Plan to bring at least \$200 worth of local currency for initial expenses.

While you are abroad:

- For students abroad during FGCU's spring term, **complete the FAFSA** (Free Application for Federal Student Aid).
- Obtain or **request copy/copies of your official transcript** from the host institution. Make sure that they send your transcript to the Undergraduate Admissions Office address identified at the beginning of this guide.
- Clear all outstanding housing expenses, library fines and other pending fees on your account at your host institution.
- Gather contact information from your new friends as you will want to stay in touch once you are home.
- Contact FGCU housing to confirm your housing/meal plan arrangements for your return.
-

When you are back on campus:

- Check-in with International Services and let us know you're back!
- **Share your experience** of study and travel abroad with other FGCU students.
- **Become an "Eagle I"** to an international student.
- **Participate in** orientations and study abroad fairs; become a peer advisor or work in the Resource Center for service learning hours.
- Participate in campus international events.
- Get to know international students on campus.
- Add your international experience and newly acquired language skills to your resume.

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