

STUDY ABROAD Student Handbook



www.studyabroad.ua.edu

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Dear UA International Traveler,

Welcome to The University of Alabama education abroad experience! This handbook will answer questions about studying abroad through UA and will offer contact information and resources for those with questions.

You are encouraged to share this information with your family and friends, as they will have many questions about how study abroad works at UA. Plus, it may encourage a friend or two to go with you!

Worldwide, there are many different cultures. Stepping outside your own culture and into a different one will be an eye-opening experience that will teach you a great deal about yourself and could impact your worldview. Take advantage of every opportunity presented to you. It's a once in lifetime journey of new experiences and personal growth.

You are ready to prepare for the adventure of a lifetime. Along the way, be sure to stay in touch with your UA Education Abroad Advisor. They will offer advice and support, as well as opportunities to share your adventure with others when you return. Let your journey begin!

UA Education Abroad Office

Pre-departure Checklist

- Apply for your passport immediately and a visa, if required.
- Complete the Study Abroad Credit Approval process, if applicable, for the courses you plan to take abroad.
- Request your scholarship to be used for studying abroad, if applicable.
- If you receive financial aid, complete a study budget sheet.
- Check the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to learn about recommended or required vaccinations for your host country.
- Review Health and Safety information.
- If you are an international student, consult an advisor in the Office of International Student and Scholar Services to make sure your visa and other documents are in order.
- Plan how to handle your money while abroad. This includes notifying your credit card company and bank of the dates and locations of your travel, being aware of foreign transaction and ATM fees, planning how much money to take and knowing how to access emergency funds if necessary.
- Review your plan for communicating while abroad. Contact your cell phone provider to arrange an international calling plan for the duration of your program. Alternatively, students may opt to buy or rent a cell phone while abroad or use messaging apps.
- Register for the study abroad course(s) required for your program of participation.
- Pay all required fees and clear all registration holds on your university account, if applicable.
- Familiarize yourself with the history, economy, and culture of where you are going.

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- Make copies of important documents (passport, visa, International SOS insurance card, prescriptions, credit cards, etc.), and back them up (in the cloud, or otherwise).
 - Download the International SOS Assistance app at <https://www.internationalsos.com/assistance-app>.
 - Register with the U.S. Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP): <https://step.state.gov/>.
 - Complete all post-decision items listed in your education abroad application.
 - If you take prescription and/or over-the-counter medication(s), verify that the medicine is legal to bring into the country. Verify if you can carry enough to last the duration of your trip, plus several days extra in case of travel delays during your return.
 - Make sub-leasing plans (if necessary) for your time abroad, as well as housing arrangements for after your return from your study abroad program.
 - Attend all pre-departure orientation(s).
 - Consider visiting Student Legal Services to draft a power of attorney to appoint someone to handle your business and financial matters while you are gone.

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CHAPTER 1

Contact Information



EDUCATION ABROAD (EA)

135 B.B. Comer, Box 870254
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35487-0254

Phone: (205) 348-5256

Web: <https://studyabroad.ua.edu>

(Note: send your international transcripts to this PO Box)

Education Abroad Advisors

ARTS & SCIENCES – Tristan Grammer, tagrammer@ua.edu

CULVERHOUSE – Eve Machado, eve.machado@ua.edu

ALL OTHER COLLEGES – Samantha Young, samantha.young@ua.edu

The Education Abroad Advisors are your main point of contact. If you do not receive a response in a reasonable amount of time, contact our main office email at studyabroad@ua.edu.

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

These contacts are to be used in emergency situations. If it is not an emergency, please contact an Education Abroad Advisor for assistance.

Education Abroad

- Chad Berry, Associate Director for International Health, Safety & Risk Management: chad.berry@ua.edu
- Carolina Robinson, Director: carolir@ua.edu
- Sarah Kidwell, Assistant Director: sekidwell@ua.edu

UA Police Department 24 Hour (205) 348-5454

**International SOS Travel Assistance (for insurance & crisis information) –
more information on page 23**

Inside & Outside US: (+1) 215-942-8478

International SOS Assistance app:

<https://www.internationalsos.com/assistance-app>

UA CONTACTS

Dean of Students, (205) 348-3326, <http://dos.ua.edu>

UA Registrar, (205) 348-2020, <http://registrar.ua.edu>

Financial Aid, (205) 348-6756, <http://financialaid.ua.edu>

Office of Disability, (205) 348-4285, <http://ods.ua.edu>

Student Health Center, (205) 348-6262, <http://www.cchs.ua.edu/shc>

Counseling Center, (205) 348-3863, <https://counseling.sa.ua.edu/>

Women and Gender Resource Center, (205) 348-5040,
<https://wgrc.sa.ua.edu/>

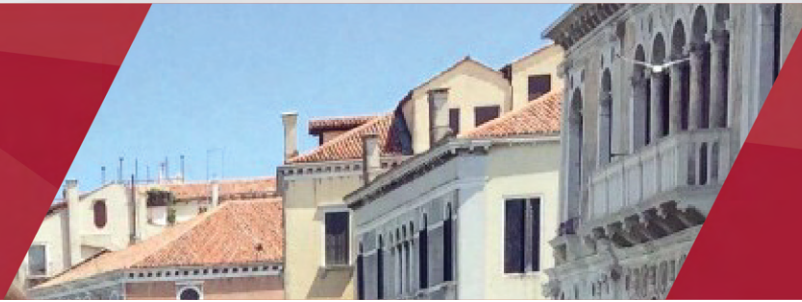
EMBASSY AND CONSULATE

Look online at <http://www.travel.state.gov> to locate the closest U.S. Embassy/Consulate to your travel destination and check on issued travel alerts and warnings. You should regularly check for updates.

Register with the nearest U.S. Consulate or your home country embassy so that in-country staff know how to contact you should the need arise. To register online with the U.S. Embassy, go to <https://step.state.gov/>.

CHAPTER 2

Acceptance



Upon receiving this handbook, you should have completed your UA Education Abroad application and met with your Education Abroad Advisor to discuss many of the things that you will read about below. There are several checklists throughout the book to help keep you on track. It will cover many important items that will take place before, during, and after your study abroad program.

APPLICATIONS

While UA faculty-led programs only require one application (through UA), many other study abroad programs will have a dual-application process. First, complete the UA study abroad application. Second, complete the admissions application for your chosen program. You may have already begun or even completed the admissions application for your program. If not, that should be your next step. For participants in one of UA's exchange programs, you will receive your admissions application or link to it by email if your nomination is accepted by your chosen host institution.

Admissions applications vary by program. It is important that you read through the material carefully. Your Study Abroad Advisor's signature or approval is often required for admissions applications. We are happy to sign application materials turned in to our office after the UA study abroad application is complete and approved, and will notify you when the forms have been signed. Some admissions applications can be fairly extensive, so please allow yourself plenty of time to complete all the requirements. Pay attention to the deadline and let us know if you have any questions.

INSURANCE

UA requires all students going abroad for academic purposes to carry international travel and health insurance. The current policy is administered through International SOS. You will be enrolled by our office for this coverage. International SOS is a travel assistance company whose coverage you will use as your primary carrier while abroad.

For more information on coverage and benefits, refer to the insurance brochure in your application and provided in the email you will receive after the pre-departure orientation session and visit the International SOS website at <https://www.internationalsos.com>. Further information can be found at <http://uasystem.edu/international-travel-assistance/>.

The international insurance fee will be billed to your UA student account. Insurance is paid per month, even if your program is less than 30 days. Once again, carrying this insurance is a requirement for all UA students studying abroad and cannot be waived. For UA faculty-led study abroad programs, the insurance is included in the program cost.

PRE-DEPARTURE ORIENTATION

It is important to be prepared as a global citizen before living overseas. Every UA student studying abroad must participate in a pre-departure orientation session prior to going abroad. Many program providers and faculty directors will also conduct similar sessions upon arrival in the host country. Since program providers are not aware of UA policies, it is important to attend our on-campus session before leaving UA.

At UA's pre-departure orientation, we will provide critical information regarding travel safety, UA policies and procedures, and practical advice for cultural adjustment. It also gives you an opportunity to meet other UA students traveling to the same area of the world. Failure to attend pre-departure orientation may result in dismissal from your program.

CHAPTER 3

UA Policies & Procedures



UA STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

While overseas, you are expected to follow your host university's/program's expectations of conduct, as well as the UA Student Code of Conduct.

The Code can be found in its entirety at <http://www.sc.ua.edu/conduct.pdf>.

Key points from the Code that you should be aware of:

- Consuming alcohol under the age of 21 and/ or partaking in illegal drugs anywhere on/off campus (**including other states and/or countries**) is a violation of the code of conduct.
- Off campus Illegal activities, including possession of a false identification, is a violation of UA policies.
- You may not engage in sexual activity with another person without their verbal consent and/or action that explicitly implies their consent.

* If the University is made aware of any misconduct, severe consequences and dismissal from the program may occur.

CRIMSON DIPLOMATS

As a University of Alabama student, you have the unique opportunity and responsibility to represent the University of Alabama as a Crimson Diplomat. It is expected that you will represent the Capstone as one of our best and brightest. Conduct yourself in a mature manner, exercising dignity and respect while abroad. By doing so, you will gain a better appreciation and understanding of your host culture.

THE FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 is a federal law that protects the privacy and confidentiality of information contained within a student's educational records. The University of Alabama is in compliance with FERPA's confidentiality protections. This means that without your consent we will not release any information from your educational record that would be in violation of this law.

A copy of the policy can be accessed online at <http://www.registrar.ua.edu>.



CHAPTER 4

Emergency Plan



While most who study abroad have a safe and healthy experience, some students may encounter minor crises such as pick-pocketing, petty theft, minor illness, or injury. In an unfamiliar environment with communication and cultural barriers, a minor crisis may be more difficult to handle. Similar to the realities existing on a U.S. campus, there may be a few students who encounter a major emergency while abroad, such as a serious illness or injury, traffic accident, natural disaster, or violent crime.

In case of emergency situations, students abroad should enact an Emergency Action Plan. (Appendix C, page 51)

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION ON PAGE #1

7-STEP EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN (EAP)

STEP ONE: **Remain calm.** Take a deep breath. You will need a clear head in order to focus on your next move.

STEP TWO: **Assess the situation/get advice from program staff.** Identify the type of emergency situation. Contact program staff for advice.

STEP THREE: **Take action.** Exercise good judgment. Follow your Emergency Action Plan (EAP) on page 51 and get to a safe location where you can get help.

STEP FOUR: **Get in touch.** Update others about your situation. Contact your emergency contacts, International SOS, and the UA Education Abroad office.

STEP FIVE: ***Move to a more permanent location.*** Consider transportation options and go to a safe location (Your place of residence, university, hospital, police station, embassy/consulate, emergency contact's home, counseling center, etc.)

STEP SIX: ***Stay in touch.*** Maintain contact and update your emergency contacts on your condition.

STEP SEVEN: ***Evaluate and revise your EAP.*** After the emergency is over, and once your condition has stabilized, evaluate your EAP and use what you've learned to revise it in case of future emergencies.

No one can guarantee your absolute safety while you are abroad any more than we can guarantee absolute safety on your home campus. Be assured, however, that we have taken precautions and routinely monitor information about the issues and conditions in the locales where you will travel.

Please respond to any communication from the EA office as soon as possible if there has been an emergency abroad.



CHAPTER 5

Before You Go



At this point, you have chosen a program, completed all applications, and finished last minute paperwork. We know you are excited about your upcoming adventure, but before jumping on the plane, make sure these basics have been covered.

ACADEMIC CONCERNS

Courses and Registration – Be sure to meet with your major/minor academic advisor and use Degree Works to determine what courses you might need to take while abroad. If you will be overseas for a semester or academic year, make sure to inform your academic advisor that you will need to be advised by email, phone, or video prior to registering for courses for the semester following your program. If you are unable to contact your assigned major/minor academic advisor while abroad, contact another advisor in the department, the undergraduate advisor for your degree, or the chair of your department.

Course Equivalencies (**Does not apply to UA Faculty-led Programs*) – As part of the UA education abroad application, participants in third-party (affiliate, direct enroll, exchange etc.) programs that award credit will need to complete the Study Abroad Credit Approval process. Detailed instructions are given in the student's online application.

Coursework awarded on an accredited international institution transcript will be recorded as transfer work on a student's UA academic record, with the exception of exchange programs, which award institutional transfer work. These courses will be transferred with pass/fail grades. Coursework awarded on an

accredited U.S. domestic institution transcript will transfer as whatever grade is shown on the transcript (whether letter grade or pass/fail).

When you arrive at your host university, if the courses you had evaluated are not the courses you are able to register for, you will need to get new courses evaluated through the online process. Bringing syllabi and assignments back with you may also be helpful if you changed any of your classes while abroad.

Registration and Enrollment – All applicants who are committed to a program will receive instructions and an enrollment permit for them to enroll themselves in a Capstone International Programs (CIP) placeholder course for the semester abroad.* You will need to confirm your enrollment for the course in myBama. Maintaining enrollment is crucial because it allows you to stay covered under health insurance, keep scholarships and financial aid, and maintain football ticket eligibility. You must confirm your schedule to keep your enrollment status. Failure to do so could result in the need for re-admission to the University of Alabama, loss of scholarships and financial aid, ineligibility for football tickets, and no credit transfer for the study abroad program.

**CIP registration does not apply to UA Faculty-led Programs, but every student still must confirm enrollment through their myBama account.*

Receiving Credit – Once your study abroad transcript is received by UA, the UA course equivalencies for the courses taken abroad will be officially posted to your UA transcript. Some international universities may take longer than expected to send transcripts. It is not uncommon to receive transcripts 2 or 3 months after a program ends. Faculty-led program participants receive UA credit like any other on-campus class and will, therefore, not have a study abroad transcript.

Duo - You have several choices when traveling abroad. Be sure to test them out before your travels so you can determine which solution is best for you.

If you do not have your two-factor authentication device with you, please visit UA OIT's self-service page to obtain temporary passcodes. These expire after 72

hours, so be sure to use one of these passcodes to register a multi-factor device you can use abroad.

If you do have a smartphone/tablet, the DUO Mobile App can provide a six-digit passcode even if your phone or tablet does not have cellular, network or Wi-Fi service. Launch the DUO Mobile App and press the key icon to obtain a passcode.

If you only have a basic cell phone, register your phone to receive SMS text notifications.

Graduation – If you plan to graduate immediately upon your return (pay attention to the dates of your program if you want to be home for graduation), you will need to apply for graduation before you go abroad. It is also important that your course equivalencies are done correctly and kept updated so there is no delay in transferring credits.



FINANCES: EDUCATIONAL EXPENSES

Fees – Any fees must be paid and your UA student account cleared before going abroad. Failure to clear your student account will result in late fees, as well as possible cancellation of your enrollment as a UA study abroad student.

Billing – Regardless of what program you are participating in, you will need to pay any outstanding balances on your UA student accounts and confirm your schedule before you depart.

Financial Aid and Scholarships – If you will be using any financial aid or scholarships to cover some of the costs of your program, please inform your Education Abroad Advisor. If you receive federal or state financial aid, your Study Abroad Advisor may need to complete an Estimated Study Budget for you to take to UA's Financial Aid Office to receive the funds. Our office (135 B.B. Comer) also keeps the necessary forms for the PACT and G.I. Bill programs.

The UA Education Abroad office, your department, private and public companies, and many affiliate providers offer scholarships.

Do not be afraid to do some research and apply!

ADDITIONAL UA CONCERNS

Housing – Students who live on campus will need to notify Housing and Residential Communities to be released from your current housing contract, before traveling abroad. If you plan to live on campus when you return, you must complete a paper housing application (not the same as the one online) and return it to Housing and Residential Communities (HRC). **If you have any questions about housing, please contact the HRC office (205) 348-6676 or visit their office located in Student Activity Center at the Presidential Village.**

Football tickets – If you will be studying abroad during the spring or summer, be aware of the most current process for ordering football tickets. If you miss the date and/or time to order tickets, there is nothing our office can do for you to ensure football tickets for the upcoming season.

Parking permits – For those going abroad for a semester or academic year, contact Parking Services to discuss paying the portion while you are on campus.

ACT cards – Your ACT card may be used overseas as a form of student identification, allowing you to receive student discounts at museums, retail stores, restaurants, and many other attractions. If lost, there is a replacement fee.

PROGRAM CHANGES AND WITHDRAWAL

In the event that you have to withdraw from your program, several steps must be taken:

1. *Inform your Education Abroad Advisor.* We understand life happens and plans change. It is imperative that you **inform us in writing** to officially cancel your study abroad plans. If your online application is “Pending,” then you may withdraw the application online yourself and submit the reason for withdrawal. If your application is no longer pending, contact our office immediately.

2. *Inform your program provider or faculty director.* Your program provider may have a separate withdrawal policy and process. Be familiar with their policies and procedures for withdrawal and refunds. We cannot guarantee that all monies paid to your program will be refunded to you. This is at the discretion of the individual provider or university. For faculty-led program applicants, you should let the faculty director of your program know you are withdrawing.
3. *Inform UA housing or landlords.* If arrangements have been made to give up housing, you will need to let the appropriate person know in order to secure a place to live in Tuscaloosa.
4. *Register for classes on campus.* Depending on where you are in the process when you choose to withdraw, you may already be enrolled in our CIP course instead of regular university courses. You must drop CIP and register as usual. If desired courses are full, the Study Abroad office cannot appeal to schools or departments on your behalf.

PASSPORTS AND VISAS

A **passport** is a document from your home country that confirms your citizenship.

A **visa** is a document provided by the government of the country to which you will be traveling that confirms your legitimate status as a foreign visitor.

You will need a current passport that is valid for a minimum of six months after the time you are scheduled to return home. It is necessary to have a passport before applying for a visa. Some visas are free and easy to acquire, while others may have a significant cost and require documentation. Check with the U.S. State Department, embassy or consulate of your host country to determine if a visa is needed and for information on how to apply.

Being granted a visa by a foreign government should not be taken lightly. There are regulations for being in a country with or without a visa. You must know what is expected of you as a student or visitor of the host country and abide by the visa regulations in order to maintain legal status.

PERSONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Record Keeping – It is imperative that you make multiple copies of all important documents such as your passport/visa, credit cards, driver’s license, insurance card etc. Be sure to bring physical copies with you and save copies in multiple locations (your phone, laptop, the cloud, etc.). Remember you have access to a scanned image of your passport in the online UA Education Abroad application if needed.

Power of Attorney – Getting a Power of Attorney will allow you to designate a person who would control your assets and other personal information in the event you become unable to do so. His or her signature will count as your signature. If you wish to do this, you and your designated person will need to visit your bank(s), a notary public, or lawyer to establish a Power of Attorney.

Absentee Voting – You may want to register to vote in U.S. elections while abroad. You can obtain absentee ballots abroad through the U.S. consulate or embassy. You can also contact your local board of elections officials.

Income Taxes – If you are overseas during tax season and you are responsible for filing your own taxes, prior arrangements will need to be made. Entrusting this task to a trusted friend or family member or filing online will be the best option.

Money and Banking – Credit or debit cards may be a good method of payment while overseas. If you plan on using them while abroad, let your bank and/or credit card company know your plans. If not, the card may be cut off or cancelled. Pre-paid credit cards are also a good option. Also consider withdrawing from your bank about \$100 in local currency before leaving the U.S. in case money cannot be exchanged right away or an ATM cannot be found. (See chapter 6 for more information on money and banking.)

Payment of Bills – There are several ways to pay your outstanding bills while abroad. Credit card bills, cell phone bills, and some debt payments can be paid online. If you cannot pay your bills online, consider paying them before you go abroad. You could also leave payment instructions with a trusted friend or family member if he or she is willing to make the payments on your behalf.

Family Crisis Plan – Sit down with your emergency contacts before your departure and discuss your plans should a family crisis occur while you are abroad. Discuss things such as what is an emergency, the best way to get in touch in case of an emergency, and under what circumstances should you return home immediately. ALWAYS notify UA’s Education Abroad office in the event of an emergency or an unexpected return home.

REMEMBER:
International SOS
for emergencies!
Page 1 & 23

FINANCES: MANAGING FUNDS

Let your bank and credit card company know your travel dates. They might otherwise freeze your accounts.

Currency – You know, of course, your host country most likely does not use U.S. dollars. Research the currency used and the exchange rate. Rates change continually so check them regularly. Onada (<http://www.onada.com>) and the Universal Currency Converter (<http://xe.com>) are commonly used web sites. There are several free apps you can download which can help with this. Keep exchange rates and cost differences in mind when making purchases. Items that may be relatively cheap in the U.S. could be more expensive abroad, and vice versa.

Budgeting – Develop a weekly budget for your time abroad. Check websites and read travel books to become familiar with things you want to do while in country. Learn the value of the local currency by looking at websites and look for special student rates and discounts. To better estimate what your personal costs will be, talk with people who have been in the country before, are there now, or who have done the program before. Be realistic and keep in mind that currency rates may vary drastically between the time you make your plans and actual arrival date.

Methods of Payment – Exchanging some U.S. money for *local currency* before arrival (enough for a phone call and taxi) is wise. Currency exchange can be done at major banks or in currency exchange offices at international airports.

Credit Cards are widely accepted in most countries and are necessary in an emergency. Credit cards are convenient, reduce the amount of cash you need to carry, and generally give a fair exchange rate.

ATM Cards and Debit Cards are very convenient abroad to obtain local currency. Find out from your bank your international PIN for overseas transactions (some are 4 digits, some 6). Also, ask if your card is connected to a world-wide system (like Cirrus or Plus), if fees are charged for using a foreign ATM, and your daily withdrawal limit (some banks will raise it if you ask).

Wiring Money – Funds may be wired to you from the U.S. through any U.S. bank that has a corresponding bank in the city where you are staying. Funds are typically received within 2 to 10 business days from the time the wire is processed. Wiring fees are generally paid on the U.S. side, but occasionally on both. This can be expensive, so plan accordingly. Also, Western Union might be a more affordable option.

Tipping – The custom of tipping varies greatly from country to country. Make sure you research protocol for your host country before you go to avoid offending anyone.

MODERN CONVENIENCES

Electricity – Electrical systems are different around the world. In some countries you need a converter to use U.S.-bought appliances due to voltage and outlet differences. Even with an adapter, however, U.S. appliances still might not work properly. A converter/ adapter kit can be purchased so that you can still use your U.S. appliances, but know that some U.S. appliances use different voltage and some outlets may not be able to accommodate your device.



Plumbing –The idea of a western toilet with a porcelain bowl and a seat is not universal. You may find things are different even in British bathrooms (or the “loo”). Bathroom facilities abroad can literally be holes in the floor, outhouses, the local river, or non-existent. Bidets are common, especially in Europe. Toilet paper is often not available, not commonly used, or something you must purchase even in public restrooms. You may want to carry spare change with you in case there are no free public restrooms. Sinks and running water to wash your face and hands or brush your teeth may not always be an option. If sink water is an option, be sure to ask if you can drink it or brush your teeth with it. You may need to use bottled water. Showers may also be different, as some cultures prefer to bathe in a tub or other water source instead, like a river or the ocean. Hand-held water sprayers may replace U.S. style fixed showerheads.

Facilities – Facilities may be modern or rundown, working or out of order, clean or dirty. Basically, you take what you get and deal with it. In many cases, especially in poorer areas of a country, you may have to change your expectations a bit and accept what’s available. Facilities do not have to be new to be safe.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

Packing – Most travelers pack too much. A little bit of research will go a long way. Look up weather conditions and seasons for your host country/location and plan ahead. Pack items that can be mixed/matched to maximize your wardrobe. Toiletries can be purchased abroad. You don’t have to pack enough to last the entire stay-utilize laundry facilities if available.



Practice lifting your bag and carrying it yourself. If you cannot carry your bags around the block three times by yourself, you have over packed.

Invest in good footwear. Do not bring new and unworn shoes no matter how fashionable they are. You don’t want aching, blistered feet.

Packing a few personal items in your carry-on can make your trip more comfortable. Good ideas are: medication, passport, toothbrush, change of clothes, and undergarments in case of flight delay/cancellation or lost/delayed luggage. (See packing guide in Appendix B for recommended items).

Consider taking a small token of appreciation to your on-site director, host university coordinator, or host family. Something with a UA logo or maybe a small, unique gift from your hometown would be a good choice.

TSA – Check the Transportation Security Administration website (<http://www.tsa.gov>) prior to departure to find out what items are allowed in your carry-on bags. Check out the 3-1-1 rule for liquids on TSA’s website. When in doubt, pack liquids in your checked luggage.

Flights – Do not make flight arrangements until you have been accepted into your program and can confirm the required arrival and departure dates. If you are going abroad on a UA Faculty-led summer program, consult with the faculty director regarding flight arrangements first.



TRANSPORTATION AND TRAVEL

Studying abroad gives you many opportunities to travel. Your program may have sufficient study breaks to enable you to visit neighboring countries or travel throughout your host country.

Public – We encourage you to use public transportation including buses and metros to help familiarize yourself with your host country. It is often the most convenient and affordable option. You should be able to find information in travel books or online. Be wary of pickpockets and use safety precautions when traveling. If possible, do not travel alone, at night, or on unsafe highways.

International Rail – If you are looking to travel to neighboring countries, traveling by international rail is often convenient and affordable. Remember, you can reserve your seat online before purchasing your ticket. Trains travel directly between city centers and are sometimes faster than flights with layovers. Take advantage of special promotions and rates for students when available.

Flying – If you are traveling between countries or between distant cities (i.e., London and Rome), consider air travel. Flying can save time, especially if you only have a long weekend to complete your trip. There are several reliable and inexpensive airlines to choose from such as Student Universe (www.studentuniverse.com), Ryanair (www.ryanair.com/en), EasyJet (<https://www.easyjet.com/en>), Air Italy (www.airitaly.com) and many others.



TRANSPORTATION

It is important to know what the safest modes of transportation are abroad in order to avoid accidents while traveling.

Walking – Get a pair of comfortable walking shoes. Without access to a car or public transportation abroad, you may have to do quite a bit of walking. Break in your shoes before you go to avoid blisters.

Bus – Buses may be the cheapest way to travel and are often a very popular choice. They can take you to short distance locations and even to a nearby train. If you can't find service to a particular location on national or regional bus lines, local service should be able to take you to your desired destination.

Train/Metro – Traveling by train is usually much faster than by bus, and can be a better option if you want to see more places in a short amount of time. You should avoid traveling alone at night, particularly in more urban areas. In major cities especially, you will find the metro system (where available) to be the most convenient form of transportation to move about the city, although beware of your surroundings and watch out for pickpockets.

Air – Flying can be a good value compared to a long bus or train ride. If you know of discount airfare websites, you can sometimes find tickets for less than a train ticket. If road travel is unsafe due to poor road conditions, and if train travel is too slow for your needs, then flying can be a safe and pleasant option.

Cars /Driving – Renting a car can be one way to see the countryside, but can also be a very stressful and sometimes dangerous way to travel. It is highly recommended that you do not drive in another country as a UA study abroad student. Many countries have driving laws significantly different than the U.S. (such as the UK or Hong Kong where drivers travel on the left side of the road). Insurance is often a requirement and may function under a different system than you are accustomed to. Obtain full coverage insurance when renting vehicles in any country. You may also want to see about getting an International Drivers Permit, which is accepted in over 150 different countries. If a driver is involved in a vehicle accident resulting in damages or injuries to another party, local

authorities may detain the driver until a settlement is arranged with the injured party. Also, depending upon the extent of damages or injuries to the other party, you may face charges resulting in heavy fines or even jail time.

COMMUNICATION

Internet Access – Email is by far the cheapest form of communication. Having a laptop or smart phone makes email quite easy with free WiFi available in many public places. Having a computer also makes class assignments and uploading photos more convenient. The AC adapter of most laptops are dual voltage and can be used anywhere in the world with a plug adaptor.

**Laptops and access to social networking sites may not be allowed in some countries.* Failure to research this difference could lead to confiscation of your laptop or even deportation. If you do not take a computer, most universities have computer labs. Internet cafes are also common and cheap in many large cities. In some areas Internet access may not be as readily available and the connection speed may be different. Unless you find an Internet café or use the host university computer labs, do not expect Internet to be immediately accessible to you upon arrival. It may take a few days to establish your account with an Internet provider.

Cell phones – Cell phones have become more common and less expensive around the world. Although local calls may be inexpensive, international calls often have a high cost. Texting may be a less expensive way to communicate internationally. Some multi-band phones used in the United States can also be used while abroad. If you plan to use your current phone with an international sim card while abroad you will need to make sure your phone is unlocked before. Contact your current phone service provider to find out more information. You can also purchase your own cell phone in your host country. One may also be included in your program fee. Additionally, there are many free apps you can use for calling and texting while abroad. Some examples are WhatsApp, Viber, and WeChat.

Zoom (<https://zoom.us/>), **FaceTime**, **Skype** etc. (<http://www.skype.com>) are some examples of cost-efficient forms of video communication. Skype, for example, is a program you can download to make phone calls from your

computer to another Skype user. There is a nominal fee for the international version but once you have it, you and loved ones can talk unlimitedly. For a small fee you can also make calls to any landline or cell phone in the world using this program.



Blogging and Pictures – Blogging is an excellent way to keep everyone updated on your adventure as well as an easy way to keep a journal of your experiences. You can even post your blog link on UA’s Education Abroad Facebook page. But a picture is worth a thousand words, so take several and don’t forget to take one with some Bama gear. Roll Tide!

Stay in touch – CALL HOME!!! – While it can be counterproductive to your cultural adjustment to call home several times each day, it is still very important to keep in touch with those at home. It is also important to stay in touch with your Education Abroad Advisor. You certainly do not need to call us regularly, but please make sure that we have your most current contact information. Should we have a question or an emergency, we need to know that you are having fun *and* are safe!



CHAPTER 6

Health & Safety



Consider your mental and physical health issues when applying for a study abroad program. Provide the necessary information to the program's administrators so they can assist you with any special needs and advise you on the risks you might face. Education abroad can include both physical and mental challenges for students.

INTERNATIONAL SOS

All UA students studying abroad will be automatically enrolled in an insurance policy administered through International SOS. The cost will be billed directly to your UA student account. As part of this UA policy, emergency assistance is also provided through International SOS. More information, an insurance card, and a policy will be given to you at pre-departure orientation and is found in your UA study abroad application.

If an emergency situation arises and an insurance claim needs to be filed, it is important that only one international insurance claim is filed. Do not have your emergency contact file a claim, then contact the UA Education Abroad office and ask to file a claim. Keep things orderly so that everyone can reference the same information, only one claim needs to be filed.

Filing a Claim - If at all possible, contact International SOS through the International SOS Assistance App or by calling (+1) 215-942-8478 prior to seeking medical attention.

If it's not possible to contact International SOS before receiving medical care, then you'll likely be asked by the medical provider to pay out of pocket

for your medical bills at the time of service. If this happens, please make sure to save copies of all medical documentation, copies of the medical bills, and receipts of payment and complete a claim form. Contact Health Special Risk, Inc. to submit your claim for reimbursement:

Health Special Risk, Inc. (HSR)
HSR Plaza
4100 Medical Parkway
Carrollton, Texas 75007
Phone: 1-972-512-5600 or 1-866-345-0973
Email: gallagher@hsri.com

**Complete and sign the medical claim form, indicating whether the doctor/hospital has been paid.

If a situation abroad arises and you need to use your emergency assistance, make sure to contact the UA Education Abroad office (+1 205-348-5256 or studyabroad@ua.edu). Also see the Emergency Contacts information on pp. 1-2.

MEDICAL CONCERNS

Consult The Center for Disease Control (CDC) for credible health information concerning your destination country. You can reduce your chances of getting sick or injured while traveling by following CDC recommendations.

<http://www.cdc.gov/>

Availability of Medical Care – The availability of medical care will vary from country to country. In some countries, it will seem similar to the care in the U.S. In others, finding an English-speaking doctor or medical facility might be difficult. It is important to research these conditions before any travel you do outside the parameters of your program.

Your Medical History – Have a checkup to know your current medical conditions. Your doctor or nurse can also advise you on what special precautions to take based on your medical history and your host country. You may need to go to a special travel health clinic to get clear advice on medical care abroad and

what vaccinations and medications for vaccine-preventable diseases and other diseases you might be at risk for at your destination

Special Accommodations – If you need any special accommodations, regulations for accessibility may not be as updated in other countries as they are in the U.S. Check to determine if accommodations like wheelchair ramps are provided in all modes of transportation, and to determine if the housing facilities are equipped to serve people with special needs.

Infectious Diseases and Inoculations – Research infectious diseases common in countries you will be traveling to. Get the appropriate shots and pills and take the appropriate medications with you if your doctor thinks it is necessary. Know about any potential side effects of shots and pills you may take. For more information on diseases prevalent in your destination country, please see the CDC website: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx>

Medications – If you regularly take any over the counter medications such as Aleve, antacids, Tylenol, sleeping aids, multivitamins, supplements etc., be sure to find out how you will get these while abroad. If they are not available and you plan on taking a supply with you, check with your host country's consulate to see if there are any laws against having these over-the-counter medications in large quantities. It is useful to get a prescription from your doctor verifying why you take them.

Prescriptions – Check with your host country's consulate to see which prescriptions are legal. If you want Education Abroad's help to determine if and how you may take your prescription into your host country, you will need to disclose what prescriptions you are currently taking. Get a doctor's signed prescription for any medication you have to take abroad. Some prescriptions may need to be translated if you wish to fill them abroad. Include your glasses or contact lens prescription. Take an extra pair of glasses if possible.

Mental Health – It is equally important to take care of your mental health as well as your physical health while abroad. Getting enough sleep is one of the most important things you can do to help manage this. Consider talking with a

counselor or health care professional before going abroad to develop a mental health plan if you feel it is necessary.

First-Aid Kit – Consider a well-stocked first-aid kit as a first line of defense. Some items to consider including are bandages, flashlight, batteries, sterile pads, insect repellent, adhesive tape, aspirin, antacid, anti-diarrhea tablets, anti-malarial medication, extra bottled water, rubber gloves, sunscreen, etc.

Prevent mosquito and other bug bites – Use insect repellent (with DEET or picaridin) on uncovered skin when outdoors, especially during the day. Repellents that have 30%-50% DEET are recommended for adults. Long sleeve shirts and pants are another form of protection.

WATER AND FOOD

Potable Water – Find out if water is safe to drink in the countries where you will be traveling. Purify unsafe water before drinking. Make sure water bottles come sealed when purchased. Remember that ice can also be unsafe, as well as the water from the kitchen or bathroom sink.

Food Safety – Poor refrigeration, undercooked meat, and roadside/outdoor vendors could pose problems related to food contamination. If you get diarrhea or food poisoning, drink plenty of fluids to stay hydrated. As with any illness, consider seeing a doctor if your condition worsens. This is your opportunity to be adventurous and try new foods but give your body time to adjust.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Alcohol and Drugs – The use and abuse of alcohol and drugs abroad can increase the risk of accident and injury. Many accidents and injuries are related to the use and abuse of alcohol and drugs abroad. Violating drug laws abroad may result in very serious consequences including imprisonment, or even death.

TRAVEL SAFETY

Precautions When Accepting Food and Drink – Use more caution abroad, than you would about accepting a drink (alcoholic or non-alcoholic) from a

stranger in the United States. Also be cautious about accepting food from a stranger.

Verbal and Non-verbal Communication – Non-verbal communication (like body language and hand gestures) considered harmless in the U.S. may be offensive to people in other countries. The list of gestures and phrases considered rude in other countries can grow beyond the obvious. Do your research!

Sexually Transmitted Diseases – Keep yourself free from STDs by using protection (like condoms or abstinence). Also, remember that “no” may not always be interpreted as “no” in other countries. Inform yourself about the common types of STDs prevalent in the area in which you are traveling.

You are American – Whether you know it or not, you probably display inherit American tendencies. It does not matter if you were born and raised here or if you just recently moved here. We are all members of American society and, as such, certain behaviors and mannerisms, we naturally exhibit calls attention to our Americanisms. While abroad, you may immediately be identified as an American – not by gender, race, or religion – but by association with American society. Try to maintain a relatively low profile and integrate into the host culture as much as possible.

****Setting an Example*** – Remember you are an ambassador not only for UA, but also for Alabama and the U.S. Behave in a way that is respectful of others’ rights and well-being and encourage others to do the same.

Risk Upon Arrival – Travelers, especially those having just arrived, are often targets of crime and at higher risk of harm, because they are:

- Unfamiliar with their surroundings
- Probably not fluent in the local language
- Clearly recognizable as foreigners
- Not yet accustomed to the social norms or unwritten rules of conduct
- Eager to get to know new people and the local culture
- Naive to the intentions of people around them
- Carrying all their valuables when they first step off the plane, train, or boat

Keep Control– In addition to the circumstances involved with being new in a foreign country, which are often beyond one’s immediate control, there are many situations that *can* be controlled. Some controllable factors to avoid include:

- Being alone at night in an isolated area
- Being in a known high crime area
- Sleeping in an unlocked place
- Being out after a local curfew
- Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs

Vehicle Safety – Accidents involving cars, buses, motorcycles, and other motor vehicles are one of the greatest risks students encounter while abroad. Avoid driving and use trustworthy taxi companies and drivers.

Travel Advisories – The U.S. State Department issues a Travel Advisory for each country of the world. Travel Advisories follow a consistent format and use plain language to help U.S. citizens find and use important security information. Travel Advisories apply up to four standard levels of advice, describe the risks, and provide clear actions U.S. citizens should take to help ensure their safety.

To see a complete list of Travel Advisories for every country in the world, see travel.state.gov/traveladvisories.

Levels 1-4

The Travel Advisory appears at the top of each country page, with a color corresponding to each level:

Level 1 - Exercise Normal Precautions: This is the lowest advisory level for safety and security risk. There is some risk in any international travel. Conditions in other countries may differ from those in the United States and may change at any time.

Level 2 - Exercise Increased Caution: Be aware of heightened risks to safety and security. The Department of State provides additional advice for travelers in these areas in the Travel Advisory. Conditions in any country may change at any time.

Level 3 - Reconsider Travel: Avoid travel due to serious risks to safety and security. The Department of State provides additional advice for travelers in these areas in the Travel Advisory. Conditions in any country may change at any time.

Level 4 – Do Not Travel: This is the highest advisory level due to greater likelihood of life-threatening risks. During an emergency, the U.S. government may have very limited ability to provide assistance. The Department of State advises that U.S. citizens not travel to the country or to leave as soon as it is safe to do so. The Department of State provides additional advice for travelers in these areas in the Travel Advisory. Conditions in any country may change at any time.

Varying Levels

The Department of State issues an overall Travel Advisory level for a country, but levels of advice may vary for specific locations or areas within a country. For instance, the DoS may advise U.S. citizens to “Exercise increased caution” (Level 2) in a country, but to “Reconsider travel” (Level 3) to a particular area within the country.

Risk Indicators - Travel Advisories at Levels 2-4 contain clear reasons for the level assigned, using established risk indicators and specific advice to U.S. citizens who choose to travel there. These are:

C – Crime: Widespread violent or organized crime is present in areas of the country. Local law enforcement may have limited ability to respond to serious crimes.

T – Terrorism: Terrorist attacks have occurred and/or specific threats against civilians, groups, or other targets may exist.

U – Civil Unrest: Political, economic, religious, and/or ethnic instability exists and may cause violence, major disruptions, and/or safety risks.

H – Health: Health risks, including current disease outbreaks or a crisis that disrupts a country’s medical infrastructure, are present. The issuance of a Centers for Disease Control Travel Notice may also be a factor.

N - Natural Disaster: A natural disaster, or its aftermath, poses danger.

E - Time-limited Event: Short-term event, such as elections, sporting events, or other incidents that may pose safety risks.

O – Other: There are potential risks not covered by previous risk indicators. Read the country’s Travel Advisory for details.

Resources for Safe Travel – Many websites, included in Appendix B, are useful resources when researching travel safety. Anyone can check on Travel Advisories and Travel Warnings issued by the U.S. Department of State by going online: <http://travel.state.gov>. Also, YouTube’s “statevideo’s” channel features official video produced by the U.S. Department of State: <http://www.youtube.com/user/statevideo>

LOCAL CURRENT EVENTS

International Sources of Information – Inform yourself as much as possible about your new environment, making use of as many different sources as possible - online, in the library, on television and radio news programs, and in the paper. Don’t limit yourself to U.S. sources. Instead, contrast the U.S. information with that provided by other countries.

Political Rallies – Avoid political rallies, which can increase tensions and emotions or breed angry mobs for which a U.S. citizen may serve as a scapegoat.

Political Conversations – Expect to hear criticism of the United States. If you educate yourself on U.S. politics and foreign policies, you will be more prepared to handle these discussions as they occur. Criticism of U.S. policies is not typically meant as a personal attack. Most foreign nationals are very interested in the U.S. and will want to know your opinions about our political system.

Try not to engage in conversations about contentious local political issues and avoid retaliating against hostile or bigoted remarks about Americans. It is best to stay away from elections, in general, as they can be dangerous and the crowds can rapidly escalate into an angry mob. Reading local newspapers will give you an opportunity to develop further understanding of your host culture, pick up more of the language, and is a useful way keep updated on what’s going on locally.

Sporting events – Sporting events can turn riotous quickly and be an unsafe place. Avoid crowds and celebrate in a controlled environment.



Photo credit: Andrea Jensen

CHAPTER 7

Social & Cultural Considerations



BEHAVIOR / CONDUCT

Crimson Diplomat – We cannot stress enough that you are, at all times, a representative of the United States, The University of Alabama, and your family. Everything you do will be seen through the eyes of those stereotyping who you are and where you come from. It is important to remember some people in your host country may have never met an American. You may be the one person on whom they base all their American stereotypes.

Stereotypes – A stereotype is a preconception, usually over-simplified, of a person or group. They may be based on generalizations from limited personal experiences or from the images that are presented through the media. People may base their expectations, feelings, and behaviors with others on these simplifications rather than their personal experience. Hence, they are linked to travel safety. Some stereotypes present Americans as “outgoing, friendly, informal, loud, hardworking, extravagant, wealthy, wasteful, confident, egocentric, ethnocentric, ignorant, disrespectful of authority, always in a hurry, generous, immature, rude, promiscuous, and politically naïve” (Crossing Cultures 2008). These stereotypes will mediate your relationships. Your awareness of them may facilitate your communication and relationships during your program. Learning about stereotypes may also help you become more mindful about how your behavior may reinforce or develop stereotypes. While abroad, you have the chance to correct negative stereotypes and reinforce positive ones others may have about the United States, UA, and your community.

DIVERSITY IN STUDY ABROAD

Relationships – Different cultures have different norms regarding gender. Women and men should both be aware that the ways people interact vary widely by region and country, and issues around dating and sexuality can be particularly difficult in a cross-cultural setting. Such things as eye contact, clothing choices, and body language can send very different messages depending on your host country. Observing interpersonal interactions within a culture can be useful in helping you choose the way you communicate verbally and non-verbally with others in that country.

Cultural differences may make male-female friendships more challenging. Consider the implicit messages you are communicating, messages you may not intend in your own cultural context. Above all, try to maintain the perspective that these challenging and sometimes difficult experiences are part of the growth of cultural understanding, which is one of the important reasons you are studying abroad.

Meeting new, exciting, and different people may encourage actions that you would not have taken under similar circumstances at home. Don't be foolish in assuming that you are invulnerable because you are a visitor in the country. Before choosing to be sexually active, ask yourself why you are making this choice and be aware of and clearly set your boundaries and partner expectations. Don't leave the country with anything you didn't bring: this means a pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases.

Female Travelers – In certain locations and programs, women may have a difficult time adjusting to attitudes they encounter abroad, both in public and private interactions between men and women. It is not uncommon to be honked at, stared at, verbally and loudly approved of, and, in general, to be actively noticed simply for being a woman in ways that many women could find offensive. Local women, who often get the same sort of treatment, have learned through their culture how to respond to the attention.

Uncomfortable situations may not always be preventable but consider taking the following precautions:

- Dress conservatively; while short skirts and tank tops may be comfortable, they may encourage unwanted attention.
- Avoid walking alone late at night or in questionable neighborhoods.
- Do not agree to meet a person who you do not know well in a non-public place.
- Be aware that some men from other cultures tend to mistake the friendliness of U.S. American women for romantic interest.

It is ok to be frustrated or angered while adjusting to a new culture and unwanted attention. You most likely will not purposefully do anything to attract unwanted attention to yourself and the best way to deal with it, if you become uncomfortable, is to follow the example of local women and mimic their response.

Race and Ethnicity – You may be concerned about facing potential racial bias and prejudice without the comfort of your usual support system. Perhaps you are looking forward to being part of the majority population, or concerned about suddenly being part of the minority population. Maybe you are planning a self-discovery sojourn to the country or region of your family's heritage. Whatever concerns or plans you have, you will find that adjusting to different social and cultural environments abroad can be a positive growth experience.

Political and Religious Views – Political turmoil or lack of tolerance can make some ethnic and religious groups a target for mistreatment or even violence in many countries. Political rallies and certain dates like anniversaries of historic events can spur ethnic and religious conflicts in some countries. Certain hate crimes may not even be considered crimes in your host country. With regard to religion, the risk or censure you attract depends on your level of religious involvement abroad. If others where you will be studying have been attacked for practicing the religion you practice, any signs of your religious affiliation may put you at risk as well.

Sexual Orientation – Getting to know a country's culture that is unlike your own, whether it's political, economic, or social, is one of the most exciting parts of studying abroad. However, for some, it may cause more anxiety. If you identify as

lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer, intersexual, asexual, queer, or an ally planning to study in a country that is more conservative, you may have concerns. Alternatively, going abroad may be an excellent opportunity to experience a more inclusive culture!

Attitudes towards members of the LGBTQ+ community vary by location. Each country and culture has different laws and norms that reflect their attitudes. In some countries, being a member of the LGBTQ+ community is illegal and may be punishable by law, while other countries are much more accepting and supportive of LGBTQ+ members. Whether you're engaging in hand-holding in public, sexual activities in private, expressing your gender through clothing, or simply speaking out as an ally, you need to be aware of the potential consequences.

In order to ensure a safe and rewarding study abroad experience, it is incredibly important to research the laws and customs towards the LGBTQ+ community of the country of your choice. The information you find may greatly affect where you decide to study abroad. Additionally, the Education Abroad office can assist you in finding the right program based on you identify.

Students with Disabilities –Disclosing your special needs in advance will be key to your success abroad. By working with UA's Office of Disability Services (ODS) and your Education Abroad Advisor, you can discuss your accommodation needs and identify the site best suited to your capabilities. ODS serves as the central contact point for students with disabilities. The goal of ODS is to provide a physically and educationally accessible University environment that ensures an individual is viewed on the basis of ability, not disability. ODS works individually with students to determine appropriate and reasonable academic accommodations, and to ensure that students' academic performance is evaluated apart from the limiting effects of disability. UA's ODS office is located in 1000 Houser Hall.

Discrimination –If you believe you are being discriminated against, please discuss it with the resident director, faculty leader, or on-site staff. Discrimination is built on negative stereotypes and prejudices that are influenced by a variety of factors, including the media. Although these attitudes may be

frustrating at times, remember that one of the main reasons for your participation in study abroad is to learn about other cultures. This includes both the positive and negative aspects. What you perceive as a discriminatory act or remark may not necessarily be one in the context of the host culture, but rather a cultural difference.

CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

New Surroundings – Studying abroad is an invaluable experience providing an opportunity to live in a foreign country, learn its customs and culture, and adapt to new surroundings. The success of your experience depends upon your own efforts to acclimate yourself to living and studying in a foreign culture. **You will have moments of exhilaration and moments of real frustration.** Gradually, as you come to terms with the culture, the frustrations will become fewer and fewer.

Culture Shock – The process of mentally, physically, and emotionally adjusting to a new environment is commonly known as "culture shock." It is a response to being in a situation where everything is different from your previous experiences, including language/slang, food, transportation, body language, and everyday activities. Culture shock covers a wide range of reactions from mild annoyance to frustration, depression, fatigue, and excitement.

The Glimpse Foundation (<http://www.gvsu.edu/studyabroad/glimpse-resources-681.htm>) has published several guides based on extensive survey research with study abroad returnees. Here is their description of culture shock and its phases:

"...Culture shock manifests itself differently in different people, but research has detected general patterns of emotional highs and lows experienced by international travelers. These phases vary in duration and severity, and are not necessarily linear."

Euphoria: The first few hours, days, or weeks abroad are often characterized by the excitement of sensory overload. Both adrenaline and expectations are running high, and everything seems new and intriguing.

Irritability and Hostility: Once the initial "honeymoon" phase subsides, dissonances between home and host cultures begin to seem more pronounced, and a sense of alienation can set in. Curiosity and enthusiasm about-face, transforming into frustration, insecurity, negativity toward local culture, glorification of home culture, exaggerated responses to minor problems, withdrawal and/or depression.

Gradual Adjustment: With time, you'll begin to orient yourself to a different set of cultural practices and feel increasingly comfortable and confident in your new surroundings. Your sense of humor, which may have been lying dormant for a while, will reemerge.

Reentry or Reverse Culture Shock: Upon returning home, you will be faced with integrating your abroad experience with life in the United States. You might feel disoriented, out of place, or changed by your experience in a way that makes relating to family and friends difficult.

Dealing with Culture Shock –

- RESEARCH: Read about the cultural differences before your departure so you can better understand the culture.
- Try to look for logical reasons for why things happen. This may help you view your host culture in a more positive light.
- Be slow to judge; observe first, show respect, and invite conversation. Try not to dwell on the negative things about your host culture, and don't hang around with people who do.
- Explore! Get a sense for the physical environment, look for parks, sports facilities, bus stops, etc. Get a sense for the behavioral norms; how do they greet each other, wait in line, etc. Find out where people meet and socialize. Make an effort to go to those places.
- Try to fit into a rhythm of life in your host culture. Adjust to their time schedule for meals and work. Read local newspapers and books.
- Keep your sense of humor!
- Set small goals for yourself, as high expectations may be difficult to meet.
- Speak the language of the country you are in, and don't worry if you only know a few phrases.

- Take care of yourself by exercising, getting enough sleep, eating properly, and doing things you enjoy.
- Keep in touch with friends and family at home.
- Draw on your personal resources for handling stress. You've done it many times before, and you can do it again.



CHAPTER 8

While You Are Abroad



Once settled into your “home away from home”, you may not spend much time thinking about UA. After reading, go enjoy yourself, see the sites, meet new people, and study hard!

ARRIVAL

Jet lag – “Jet lag” is a temporary condition when your body clock is out of rhythm as a result of long trips that cross time zones. It may include fatigue, irritability, insomnia, and an impaired ability to concentrate. The more time zones you cross, the more noticeable jet lag will be. Drinking alcohol on the flight can exaggerate these feelings. Jet lag may last for several days. Keep this in mind when planning activities during the first few days in your new surroundings.

Getting to your Host University or Residence – Some programs offer pick-up service from the airport. If this is not offered for your program, it is imperative that you figure out how to get to campus or your residence from the airport. Program providers or host universities should be able to provide this information. Keep in mind that the nearest airport may be quite some distance from your university. Just think: the closest airport to UA is over an hour away in Birmingham!

Checking In– Immediately upon arrival to your host university, you will need to check in with your program provider or international office contact. They need to know that you have arrived safely so they can help you get checked into housing and settled into your new home. Also, once you are settled, let your family, friends, and Education Abroad Advisor know that you have arrived safely.

Travel Plans – Inform local program leaders and your family back home of your whereabouts if you plan to travel while you are abroad.

Accommodations – Options for accommodations abroad may include host families, university residence halls, or a modestly priced hotel. Be realistic about your expectations. Information from your program provider should include a list of what is provided in the accommodations and what you are expected to bring or purchase.

If you choose a home stay, be considerate, respectful, and keep the lines of communication open. Together you should discuss basic rules, such as phone usage, meals and other details. It is also a polite gesture to bring your host family a small token of appreciation for allowing you to be part of their family for a short time. It doesn't have to be a big, pricey, flashy gift. Think of something unique to your hometown or something with a UA logo (like t-shirts, postcards, coffee mug, or maybe even some grits) and be mindful of how it will be packed with the rest of your luggage!

ACADEMIC CONCERNS

Finding Your Advisor – Everyone will have some kind of advisor on site to help with anything from course registration to housing to minor emergencies. Locate that person soon upon arrival, especially if you have any questions or concerns. You may also want to bring your advisor a small token from home to express your appreciation for all they have done and will do to help you.

Class Registration – Depending on the university or program, you may be able to register for classes before arrival. This will not always be the case. You will need to know how and when to register for your classes. Many times this information is given in on-site orientation sessions. In some instances, you may not be able to see what courses are offered at the host university before arriving. In the latter case, do not worry – every other international student there will be in the same position. Do not be afraid to ask for help!

Academic Expectations – In short, *attendance is expected as part of the academic portion of your program, and typically a requirement for visa*

regulations. It is especially critical for short-term programs. Failure to attend classes may result in low or failing grades. You may even be dropped from the class and not receive credit. In severe cases, you may even be deported from the country. If you anticipate an absence, tell the instructor immediately and make arrangements to make-up or take quizzes, exams or labs in advance. Permission may not be given in all instances and should be asked well in advance.

Current Enrollment Verification Certificate* – If you are using federal financial aid, you may be asked by a department at UA to verify your enrollment at your study abroad institution. This verification is proof that you are enrolled full time abroad. Both you and a representative of the Host University/Program Provider abroad may have to complete and sign the document and return it to the appropriate department. Any verification of enrollment requests will be sent to your UA crimson email. **Does not apply to UA Faculty-led programs.*

Transcripts* – Your official transcript showing the classes you took overseas will need to be sent to Education Abroad upon completion of your program. The transcript can be sent to the Education Abroad office (address on page 1) or emailed to studyabroad@ua.edu if the transcript is emailed directly from the host institution or affiliate provider. It is also beneficial to secure additional copies of your transcript in the event you should need one later. Obtaining a transcript from the host university a couple of years later for graduate school or employment can be both costly and time consuming. It is best to bring sealed copies home with you. **Does not apply to UA Faculty-led programs.*

Academic Calendar – The academic calendar followed in the United States is not the same in other countries. This also includes holidays. Do not expect to have the same holidays in your host country as at home. You may have to go to class on Thanksgiving Day. The bright side is your host country will have holidays we do not have here – like bank holidays!

Registering for UA Classes While Abroad – If going abroad for a semester or academic year, you will have to register for UA classes for the following semester while abroad. Registration is done online. This can be easily taken care of overseas. Should you need academic advising, you will need to make

arrangements with your major/minor advisor prior to departure or do advising by email or phone. Be sure to know the dates of your registration ahead of time so you can register for the classes you need. When registering, also remember the time difference!

EXPECTATIONS V. EXPERIENCE

Adjustments – Living abroad will be a different experience. Anticipating some of the differences ahead of time can help better prepare for life abroad. An important thing to remember is to be flexible. You will have to adapt to new things you encounter. Accept that many things will be different from home. Learn to expect the unexpected!

Culture Shock- You may experience some discomfort before you are able to settle into your new surroundings. From food, hygiene, weather, language, dress, or even political and social norms, culture shock can be shocking. It is important to remember that adapting one's behavior to the customs and expectations of the host country is your responsibility as a visitor and guest. This is not to deny one's own culture but to respect that of others. Remaining open and flexible rather than judgmental is key. This can be the most rewarding experience in your education. Refer to pp. 36-37 for further information about culture adjustment.

Routines and Schedules – While abroad, your routine will change. There will most likely be a time difference and your city may adhere to a different schedule than you're used to. From late night dinners to shops closings early, each city is different, so plan your routine around these changes. You might also need to plan class or excursions around bus/metro arrival time, as well as your roommates' or host family's unique schedules. There are countless ways in which your routine abroad can differ from your routine in the United States. While it may be frustrating at first, be flexible and always look for ways to adapt and get the most out of your experience.

GOING HOME

Packing – You will return home with more than you initially brought. Packing lightly and efficiently is important and will be even more so as you bring back

souvenirs. Consider shipping your purchases home. This can sometimes be cheaper and less hassle than having extra bags on the plane.

Bill Payment – Just as you will need to pay your student bills at UA before leaving the U.S., you will also need to clear your host university account before coming home. If you leave unpaid bills, there will be repercussions, which can include not sending your transcript to UA (you will not receive credit), not releasing deposits (especially for housing), and even legal action.

Souvenirs – Buying local goods and souvenirs is an excellent way to remember your time abroad. Shopping in a new country can be fun but always keep in mind the logistics of taking souvenirs home. Be mindful of the size of your luggage and the amount of extra space. Also keep in mind what is acceptable to bring back to the United States. Please refer to the following section on Customs for a listing of what items cannot be brought in to the U.S.

Customs – Customs control regulations may affect what you can and cannot bring in and out of your host country. Following the events of September 11, 2001, U.S. airport and customs security have become much stricter, leading to longer waits prior to boarding planes, body searches, early arrival time and questions from officials in both countries. Remember to be patient, honest, and polite when answering all officials' questions. For complete information on border issues, please visit the U.S. Customs and Border Protections Agency website: <http://cbp.gov>.



CHAPTER 9

When You Get Home



“Many a trip continues long after movement in time and space have ceased.”
John Steinbeck

Congratulations on completing your education abroad experience! But never fear, your journey is far from over!

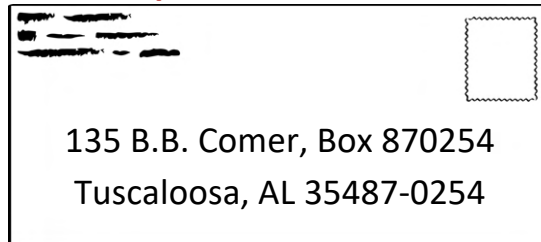
Adding an international component to your education is a wonderful accomplishment. However, what you do with the experience is just as important as what you learned while abroad. We look forward to hearing from you as you get involved in the many activities available to you as a new international ambassador. Below is useful advice and opportunities for tapping into your new world perspective and sharing it with others.



ACADEMICS

For students studying abroad on a non-UA program (i.e., an affiliate, exchange or non-affiliate), you should complete the Study Abroad Credit Approval process prior to your departure. After completing the program, the next step is to wait for your transcript from your program abroad. Once it arrives, the courses will be compared to your predetermined course equivalencies (via the Study Abroad Credit Approval process) and credit will be applied to your UA transcript. Transcripts being sent from international universities can take a few weeks to arrive. The credit transfer will not happen immediately upon your return. Try to secure an official transcript from your host university before your return to UA; it will speed up the process.

Transcripts should be mailed to:



Official transcripts may also be emailed digitally to studyabroad@ua.edu, but note that the transcript must be sent directly from the host institution or affiliate provider.

HOUSING

If re-contracting for an on-campus room, **this process must be done this before you go abroad** in the form of a paper application. Return the paper application to Housing and Residential Communities in Presidential Village.

RE-ENTRY AND CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

Similar to the cultural adjustment pattern when arriving in a foreign country, you may experience stages of cultural adjustment when returning home.

Euphoria (Honeymoon Phase) -The first few hours, days, or weeks abroad (or back home!) are often characterized by the excitement of sensory

overload. Both adrenaline and expectations are running high, and everything seems new and intriguing.

Irritability and Hostility -Once the initial "honeymoon" phase subsides, dissonances between home and host cultures begin to seem more pronounced, and a sense of alienation can set in. Curiosity and enthusiasm about-face, transforming into frustration, insecurity, negativity toward local culture, glorification of home culture, exaggerated responses to minor problems, withdrawal and/or depression.

Gradual Adjustment -With time, you'll begin to orient yourself to a different set of cultural practices and feel increasingly comfortable and confident in your new surroundings. Your sense of humor, which may have been lying dormant for a while, will reemerge.

Reentry or Reverse Culture Shock -Upon returning home, you will be faced with integrating your abroad experience with life in the United States. You might feel disoriented, out of place, or changed by your experience in a way that makes relating to family and friends difficult.

Like the "honeymoon" phase, where excitement upon seeing friends and family, familiar food and favorite hangouts is the overriding emotion, this period can be followed by frustration, disorientation and depression, known as "reverse culture shock." This can take on many forms and differs in length and intensity among individuals. There aren't universal symptoms that everyone shares, yet some common ones include: a sense of no longer belonging to your home culture, frustration of adjusting to a different pace of life in America, a sense that friends, family, or colleagues are not interested in discussing your experience, friends made abroad are missed as well as the culture and way of life in the host country.

There are ways to prepare for re-entry before returning home. While away, keep up on what's going on with friends and family and try to keep track of local and national news so you do not feel totally lost when you get back home. Recognize that you will develop at a personal level. People at home are growing and changing, too. Think about what you want to do when you get back and try to have a plan for your return. Resist the tendency to think that your friends and family have not done anything while you were away. Plan your finances for your

return. How will you pay for school, rent, gas, and food? Do you need to apply for student loans or other financial support?

It may take some time to feel at home again. Use patience to ease the transition.

- Keep your cultural sensitivity. Observe American culture the same way you observed the foreign culture. Consider what you like about America and what you want to keep from the culture you experienced abroad.
- Stay positive and active. There will be frustrations and disappointments but work through it with the same enthusiasm that you brought to your overseas experience.
- Friends and family may have a difficult time understanding your readjustment difficulties. Try to explain that it is a normal phase in any traveler's journey.
- If you find re-entry particularly traumatic, seek support from UA's Counseling Center (<http://counseling.ua.edu>).

SHARING YOUR EXPERIENCE

You are now in a unique position to further enrich your own life as well as the lives of others by sharing experiences and how they have affected your understanding of yourself, your country and the rest of the world. You are now a part of the select number of students who have studied abroad.

When you return, make the most of what you learned from your travels. Take time to reflect, and then turn your reflections into action:

- **Culturally Speaking or Conversation Partners** - international students meet with UA students for informal conversation about cultural topics.
- **Student Organizations** – Apwonjo, Alabama International Relations Club, and various language clubs. Find these and more on the Source website <http://thesource.ua.edu>
- **Write an article** for the CW or to be featured on EA's homepage
- **Volunteer to help with International Student Check-In and Orientation** and help greet new international students coming to study at UA
- Ask the housing office about **international living communities** at UA

- **Become an Education Abroad intern!** This internship opportunity with EA is an excellent way to share your experience and encourage other students to study abroad.
- If you will not be returning to university, engage in a meaningful activity (**volunteer at a hospital or school**). Sitting at home while friends and family who are busy with their everyday lives will not help your readjustment.
- Volunteer with EA events such as Study Abroad Fair, Get on Board Day, etc.

CAREER PLANNING

Visit the Career Center (3400 Student Center or online <https://career.sa.ua.edu/>) to find out how to utilize your international experience in preparing for the job market. Ask them why and how to include it on your resume. Careers for those with international experience can be found in the business and trade industry, State Department, the Education Abroad field, and many other fields. Think of using your newly acquired experience to join the Peace Corps or apply for a Fulbright Scholarship.



PROGRAM EVALUATION

Your opinion is valuable! The program evaluation presents an opportunity for you to tell us about the program. It also helps us in advising future participants about the program – what they should know, be cautious of, and definitely check out if they choose the same program and/or location. You will receive an email with an evaluation attached upon completion of your program. Please complete and return it so we know how things went. If for some reason you do not receive a program evaluation from Education Abroad, please let us know.

Appendix A: LINKS AND WEB INFO

UA LINKS

Education Abroad <http://studyabroad.ua.edu>

UA Career Center <https://career.sa.ua.edu/>

The Source <https://thesource.ua.edu>

INSURANCE

International SOS <https://www.internationalsos.com>

SOS Assistance app: <https://www.internationalsos.com/assistance-app>

U.S. GOVERNMENT LINKS

USA Study Abroad (Department of State) <https://studyabroad.state.gov/>

U.S. Customs and Border Protections Agency <http://cbp.gov>

Travel Registration <https://step.state.gov/step/>

Center for Disease Control (CDC) <http://www.cdc.gov>

Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) <http://www.osac.gov>

Transportation Security Administration <http://www.tsa.gov>

TRAVEL INFORMATION

Association for Safe International Road Travel (ASIRT) <http://www.asirt.org>

Lonely Planet <http://www.lonelyplanet.com>

Travelers Digest <http://www.travelersdigest.com>

The Bathroom Diaries <http://www.thebathroomdiaries.com>

EXCHANGE RATE CONVERTERS

Onada <http://www.onada.com>

Universal Currency Converter <http://xe.com>

Appendix B: PACKING GUIDE

Packing requires planning and careful consideration. Below is a general list of suggested items you may consider packing.

Carry-on

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Passport and any necessary visas | <input type="checkbox"/> Prescription medication in original container, back-up supply, and letter from doctor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Entry letter from host institution/provider | <input type="checkbox"/> Instructions for treating any allergies or unique medical conditions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Airline ticket(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> Camera |
| <input type="checkbox"/> U.S. and foreign currency | <input type="checkbox"/> Laptop and other small electronic devices |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Copies of important documents and emergency contact information | <input type="checkbox"/> Cell phone and charger |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Credit and debit cards | <input type="checkbox"/> Extra change of clothing/undergarments |
| <input type="checkbox"/> State driver's license | <input type="checkbox"/> Books and/or magazines |
| <input type="checkbox"/> International Driving Permit | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eye glasses and/or contact lenses | |

Checked Luggage

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extra copies of important documents and emergency contact information | <input type="checkbox"/> Extra laptop battery, disks and/or flash drive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seasonally and culturally appropriate clothing, undergarments, bathing suit, shoes, and accessories | <input type="checkbox"/> Small umbrella |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Toiletries | <input type="checkbox"/> Extra sweater and scarf to cover arms and hair for certain holy sites |
| <input type="checkbox"/> First aid kit* | <input type="checkbox"/> Travel alarm clock |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sewing kit* | <input type="checkbox"/> Small purse or pouch |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eye glass repair kit* | <input type="checkbox"/> Converter or transformer for 110-volt electrical devices |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nail clippers* | <input type="checkbox"/> Plug adapter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric or manual razor for shaving* | <input type="checkbox"/> Small flashlight |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Over-the-counter pain reliever | |

**May get confiscated if placed in carry-on baggage for security purposes. Check with <http://www.tsa.gov> for updates on restricted items.*

**Do not carry baggage for other persons*

Appendix C: PERSONAL EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN (EAP) -

Adapted from the SAFETI Study Abroad Handbook

Knowing the answers to the questions below is a good first step in developing your personal EAP. Drawing a map, finding escape routes or writing emergency preparedness directions/steps are good components of an EAP.

KNOW WHERE TO GO

- Where should you go first in an emergency, and what method of transportation will you use to get there? _____

Be aware of all your emergency transportation options and how to access them.

Airport: _____

Train Station: _____

Boat/Ferry/Port Authority: _____

Bus Station: _____

Metro Station: _____

Rent-A-Car: _____

KNOW YOUR EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

In addition to your personal emergency contacts, we also recommend you find the numbers for the following nearest to your travel location(s):

911 equivalents: _____ Translator Service: _____

Local Gov't/Visa office: _____ Lawyer: _____

Consulate/Embassy: _____

Police: _____ Red Cross: _____

Fire: _____ 24-Hour Assist/Insurance Hotline: _____

Hospital: _____

Post Office: _____ Other: _____

Who will you call first, second, third, etc. in an emergency?

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

- Do your emergency contacts have each other's phone numbers so they can communicate and relay information about you to each other?
- What are some alternate ways of communicating with your emergency contacts?
- Who would you like those assisting you to contact in the event of your illness, injury, incarceration, kidnapping, etc...?
- Do all of your emergency contacts know what your wishes are in the event of your serious injury or death?
- Where does your nearest emergency contact live? How fast can you get to him/her?

BACK-UP PLAN/SPECIAL CONDITIONS

- If the situation does not permit you to follow the original emergency plan, what is the back-up plan (Plan B)?
- Are there any other special conditions to consider which are unique to your situation (i.e. weather conditions/hazards in your region of study/travel, a personal physical disability, poor public transportation or phone service in your area...)?

EMERGENCY KIT/MONEY

- Which items do you still need to add to your emergency first aid kit before it is fully stocked and ready?
- Do you have emergency cash reserves, credit cards, etc. on-hand, in case you can't count on banks/ATMs, or get to a bank/ATM?
- Using the emergency supplies and reserve money you have set aside, for how many days would you be able to sustain yourself and what would you use each day?

Appendix D: Study Abroad Essentials Check List

Check List:

- I have **read and will adhere** to the **UA Student Code of Conduct**.
- Develop an **Emergency Action Plan** (Appendix C).
- Confirm my schedule and pay my bill online** through myBama for my study abroad.
- My **emergency contacts** both in the U.S. and overseas have my contact information and I will have theirs.
- I know the address and telephone for my **residence overseas** and have given it to my family and friends.
- I understand it is normal to experience **culture shock**. I expect to have both good and bad days when learning to overcome my culture shock.
- If participating in a non-UA study abroad program, I will ensure an **official transcript of courses taken abroad** is sent back to EA to secure transfer credit.
- I will have all **important documents to carry abroad**:
 - Copy of passport/Visa
 - Copy insurance card
 - Copy of Credit Card
 - Copy of International SOS insurance Policy

Notes: