



STUDY ABROAD

PRE-DEPARTURE HANDBOOK



UF ABROAD

INTERNATIONAL CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA



CONGRATULATIONS

on your decision to take this exciting educational journey! You have already completed a major part of the process by finishing your application, but now comes the more challenging part: you must prepare yourself to live in a different country, with a different culture, where you are the foreigner. This will be one of the most exciting times of your life, but to enjoy it to the fullest, you must be prepared.

The following information is crucial and must be read before you go abroad. Because of the diversity of programs that we offer, some of the information presented only applies to certain students. If you are not sure if something applies to you, please contact us and we will be happy to assist you. It is also very important to keep copies of forms that you have filled out and/or signed.

If you have any questions, need additional information, or have concerns, please contact Study Abroad Services. We are located in the Hub, within the International Center.

You may also contact us via:



352.273.1539



sas@ufic.ufl.edu



<https://internationalcenter.ufl.edu/study-abroad>

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PART I: PROGRAM LOGISTICS

Program-Specific Information

Your program coordinator (whether UF, an exchange partner, or a non-UF program provider) will send you information that is more specific as your departure time approaches. Make sure to read this information closely and pay attention to any forms sent to you, filling them out quickly and accurately. It is your responsibility to make proper arrangements for non-University of Florida programs. Failing to meet their deadlines or provide them with information could prevent you from getting the classes and housing you request. Be sure to confirm with them that you have completed all necessary arrangements.

Uploading Post-Decision Documents Online

You will need to upload the following documents to your [online study abroad application](#) at least 60 days before your program start date:

- **Flight Information**

UFIC needs the flight number, time, date, and locations of your outbound and returning flights. This is both for risk management purposes and so that if you do not arrive to meet your program host at the specified time (if applicable), we can track your flights to see if you have been delayed. All airlines and travel agencies can provide you with an itinerary. See the Travel Preparations section of this guide for more information on arranging your flights.

- **Passport Copy**

A passport is a valuable document, especially abroad. You must be careful with your passport since it is the document that allows you to travel. However, since it is possible that you will lose your passport while abroad, we require that you provide a copy of the signature and photo pages to us. All students holding foreign passports must check with the relevant consulates to make sure you are eligible to travel in the country of your program. Ask UFIC for contact information of the relevant consulate.

- **Program Acceptance Letter**

Your program provider or host institution will send you an official acceptance letter that you will need to apply for a visa (should you study in a country that requires a visa). Please make sure to submit a copy to our office so we can assist you if your letter is misplaced. *If you are studying on a UF Sponsored program, please ignore this requirement.*

Program Fees

- **UF Sponsored Programs**

UF program fees will be invoiced 60 days prior to the program start date. Payment is due 45 days prior to the program start date. Program fees will be placed on your One.UF account. If you will be receiving Bright Futures, Florida Prepaid, loans and/or scholarships that will disburse through Student Financial Affairs, a [Deferment Request](#) may allow partial payment until funds disburse to pay the balance. The International Center can only defer program fees on UF Sponsored programs up to the amount of accepted funds reported on your Award File in One.UF along with Florida Prepaid. Deferment Request forms must be returned to the International Center before your program fee's due date. The International Center cannot

guarantee that all aid will post to program fee due to other charges. You will be fully responsible for program fee until paid in full.

- **UF Exchange Programs**

Students will be assessed UF tuition payable to the UF Bursar. Some summer programs are also exchange programs whereby you will pay UF tuition as well as a program fee for program-related expenses such as housing, excursions, ground transportation, etc.

- **Non-UF Programs**

Non-UF program fees are the sole responsibility of the student. All financial aid will be disbursed directly to the student with the exception of Parent Plus loans, which are paid to the parent(s). Any deferment request must be made to your program provider.

Financial Aid

If you anticipate receiving financial aid, you must review your Award File to assure sufficient funds are available. You are encouraged to visit Student Financial Affairs (SFA) in Criser Hall to explore your funding options. Summer aid, particularly grants, may not be the same as semester aid and will be based on the number of credit hours to be earned. You must meet the minimum enrollment requirement and meet the academic progress standards for the semester you plan to study abroad to be eligible for financial aid. Loans are the primary source most students use for funding study abroad. When visiting SFA, be prepared with your program's total budget and the number of credits to be earned so the SFA advisor can determine your eligibility for aid. The Study Abroad office will submit an official cost of attendance after your acceptance into the program.

After aid has been requested, or if aid has been moved:

- Check your “Aid Summary” on One.UF, and contact your financial aid adviser immediately if you have any questions or concerns about your aid.
- Check your “Action Items To-Dos” on One.UF to ensure you have submitted any required documents to SFA.
- Accept all financial aid awards on the One.UF Financial Aid Summary menu under “Financial Aid Awards”.
- Make sure all loan Promissory Notes have been completed for Stafford and Plus loans. First-time borrowers must complete entrance counseling on StudentLoans.gov. Failure to do so will prevent the federal aid disbursement.

Federal regulations prohibit SFA from disbursing any financial aid funds until the first day of scheduled overseas program classes. For overseas program classes beginning earlier than the regular UF semester, the first financial aid disbursement date will not be until UF's first regular financial aid disbursement for the term. Not all aid disburses at the same time. You may receive several disbursements throughout the semester, so be prepared for this when planning your finances. If UF program fee deferment is requested, students must authorize UF to pay charges with Title IV financial aid funds.

Financial aid will be direct deposited into your checking account, via direct deposit. Make sure your account information is correct in [ONE.UF](#). If you will be receiving an Alternative/Private loan, make sure that you have a valid “Local Home” address listed in the UF Directory. Checks for these loans must be mailed, and a bad address can cause long delays in receiving your money. Direct Deposit is required for all other types of aid. Checks will not be mailed overseas.

Additional Notes:

- Make sure you know your FSA ID. You will use this ID to complete a Master Promissory Note for Federal Direct Stafford Loans. If you do not have it, you can [obtain your FSA ID here](#).
- Complete an online “Student Authorization to Release Financial Information” form at ONE.UF. Completing this form authorizes our office to discuss your financial aid with a representative you select (for example, a parent) in the event you cannot contact our office personally while you are studying abroad. View the [Authorization to Release Financial Information video](#) for information on completing the “Student Authorization to Release Financial Information” form.

Bright Futures

Bright Futures will pay out based on current State of Florida policy. Students must be enrolled in at least 6 credits for the term to receive any aid including Bright Futures. For more information about Bright Futures, please visit the Student Financial Affairs webpage [here](#).

Florida Prepaid (FPCP)

If you are attending a UF Sponsored or UF Exchange program and receiving UF credit, your FPCP will be processed through University Financial Services the same as if you were attending classes on-campus. If you are attending a program offered through another State of Florida University system, contact that university for collection of prepaid benefits.

If you are attending any program that returns [transfer credits](#), you must complete the [Florida Prepaid College Plan – Request Form for Study Abroad](#). This form must be returned to UFIC for billing of the FPCP. You will not receive these funds until 6-8 weeks after the start of your program, when a check will be mailed to the address indicated on the form. Unfortunately, these payments cannot be direct deposited.

If you are attending a Non-UF program and in your study abroad application answered *yes* to the question, “*Do you plan use any of the following: Loans, Grants*” (located within the “How will you pay for your program?” document), then a Consortium Agreement will be sent to your host institution. This Consortium Agreement is needed to get an adjusted Cost of Attendance for your term abroad, which in turn is needed to recalculate your federal financial aid eligibility. This process is facilitated by the UF International Center.

For your account information for the pre-paid program, please contact the Florida Prepaid College Program Office at 1-800-552-GRAD or visit [their website](#).

Scholarships

• **UFIC Scholarships**

Study Abroad scholarships awarded through the UF International Center will be reported to Student Financial Affairs prior to the beginning of the term for which it was awarded. These scholarships will disburse no earlier than the start date of your program. Disbursement for overseas program classes beginning earlier than the regular UF semester will be with UF’s first regular financial aid disbursement for the term.

• **Outside Scholarships**

You are legally required to keep Student Financial Affairs informed of all resources you receive. Students should use [ONE.UF](#) to report any outside resources not already listed on their award

file by using the “Additional Aid Reporting” link within “Awards & Disbursements” for the correct academic year.

If you receive any outside aid, your award file should list that aid. If you are receiving aid which is not listed on your award file, SFA may have to adjust your award. Certain programs require repayment of aid you receive that is in excess of your demonstrated eligibility for aid. Timely notification of any outside resources that you might receive will allow SFA to take these monies into account when assessing eligibility. Report outside resources early.

Students receiving scholarships should be aware that grades from your work abroad will be counted towards your GPA by the scholarship office. Students are advised not to take S/U option grades. This will affect your GPA with the scholarship office and might result in you losing your award.

Course Registration

- **Registering for Courses Overseas**

Each institution and study abroad program has its own unique way to register its foreign students for courses. At UF, our international students go through the same process of ONE.UF and drop/add that all other students do. American bureaucracy is certainly a cultural experience for our guests, and registering abroad will be a unique experience for you as well. Try not to get too frustrated if the process seems lengthy or difficult; absorb and reflect on it as a learning experience. Some programs have you sign up for courses before you arrive; others have you do so upon arrival during orientation. Summer programs usually have you register before arrival, but semester and year programs vary.

If you are participating in a UF sponsored program, UFIC will register you for the classes you will be taking abroad. There is nothing that you need to do in terms of course registration.

If you are participating in a UF exchange program, UFIC will block register you in placeholder credits for your term abroad. It is important that UFIC knows the correct number of credits to enroll you in, for tuition and financial aid purposes.

If you are participating in a non-UF program, you will not be registered at all, but rather receive a comment line on your student record indicating your status as a study abroad student.

- **Cancel Early Registration for UF Classes**

Once you are certain you are studying abroad, be sure to cancel any registration you made for classes here in the U.S. for that semester. It is your responsibility to do so as early as possible to prevent being fee-liable for courses you will not take.

- **Registering for Classes for the Semester You Return**

Remember that if you are returning to UF for the semester following your term abroad, you will need to register for classes while abroad. The UF Registrar's website www.registrar.ufl.edu/soc/ has the schedule of courses about 2-3 weeks before advance registration and is updated several times a week with new information. You should consult this site in order to make your course selections. You will receive an appointment time by email and can register online as you have done in the past.

Transcripts

All course work that is taken for academic credit is required to be reported back to UF. Please have an original, official transcript from your host institution sent to Study Abroad Services upon completion of your program. Our mailing address is:

University of Florida International Center
Study Abroad Services
170 Hub, PO Box 113225
Gainesville, Florida 32611-3225, U.S.A.

Please be aware that transcripts may take two months or longer to be sent from your host institution. If you have special needs (like graduating upon return), make sure the transcript is sent to us immediately. You can even arrange for courier service from the host school before you return home or bring the transcript back with you in a sealed envelope. Leave an addressed, paid courier envelope with your host institution if you cannot bring back the original.

Securing your transcripts for UF to process is your responsibility.

If you are receiving scholarships such as Florida Undergraduate/Bright Futures, National Merit, etc. your scholarship in the following year will not be released until the courses and grades are posted. This is because some scholarships require that students demonstrate that they have completed 24 hours of course work during the previous year and passed all courses. In most cases, the scholarship will be released sometime in the middle or end of the semester. It is therefore critical to arrange to bring an official, sealed transcript home with you or to have your transcript sent as soon as possible.

Other Considerations

Before departing for your study abroad program, there are a few more things you should arrange to ensure that everything goes smoothly while you're away:

- Academic Advising Approval**

Before going abroad it is important to make sure that you've completed the UFIC Academic Advising Form accurately. When this process is properly completed, it ensures that the courses you take abroad will transfer back to the University of Florida and be applied to your degree. Keep in mind that you may not get all the classes you request, so you should get approval for alternates as well and let your study abroad advisor know of any changes or updates. If you change majors before leaving, be sure to obtain approval from your new department and/or college so that when you return you won't have problems applying your overseas courses to your degree. It is also important that UFIC knows the correct number of credits you are taking.

- Change Your Address with the Registrar**

Make sure that you have updated both your local and permanent address with the UF Office of the Registrar. Choose one state-side address to serve as both local and permanent. In most cases, this is a parent or spouse address. In addition, important information about academic tracking, football tickets and University events are mailed to the address listed with the Registrar. You can change your address by filling out a form at the Registrar's office, or you can change it via ONE.UF at www.isis.ufl.edu. Do not request that the Post Office forward your mail to an international address. Some mail, such as Financial Aid checks, cannot be forwarded.

- Purchase All Needed Course Materials**

Check with your program advisor or sponsor to find out what materials you will need for your courses. If you can purchase any of these materials in the U.S. do so, as it will most likely save you money. Notebooks and paper should be purchased abroad. Furthermore, paper and paper hole size vary by country.

- **Power of Attorney**

Because you will be living abroad and may not be available to handle personal matters that arise in the U.S., we strongly encourage you to sign financial and medical power of attorney forms. These forms give a designated representative, such as a family member, the power to sign most documents, financial and medical, on your behalf. These documents can range from financial aid checks and lease agreements to medical decisions. Many unexpected situations can arise while you are living abroad. It is best to be prepared by signing a power of attorney form. This is more important for academic year participants than summer abroad students. You can pick up power of attorney forms from UFIC.

- **Voting While Abroad**

If there is a U.S. election that will happen while you are abroad and you want to participate, you can arrange to vote absentee. For this, you need to contact your local election office in person or over the phone before you leave and complete any necessary paperwork. If you do not make arrangements before you leave, you can try to contact your local election office from overseas and request a ballot, but it might be more complicated or past certain deadlines. You are guaranteed the right to vote while you're abroad; you just need to plan for this accordingly.

- **Housing Upon Your Return**

If you plan to return to your home institution for the next semester you will need to think about housing. Find out what your home institution's procedures are for housing once you return. For UF students, you must notify housing before you leave Gainesville that you want to be in the lottery for the term you return. This is especially critical for the fall semester. There are usually opportunities to live in on-campus co-op halls. Contact the Housing Office for more details at (352) 392-2161. For off-campus housing, try Apartment Hunters or the Alligator classifieds. Housing is ultimately your responsibility; UFIC does not secure living arrangements for you in any way, but we are happy to answer questions and assist you however we can.

PART II: TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

You will be requesting admittance to a foreign country where you are not a citizen. To do this, you must make sure that you have the correct documentation before you leave. A country will not allow you to enter their borders without knowledge of who you are. Carrying the proper documents provides that knowledge. Many of these documents may take months to process, so begin this process as early as possible. Allow ample time before your planned departure date to complete this process.

Passports

To travel outside of your home country, you must have a passport. For most of you, your home country is the United States. If you do not have a passport already, you must apply for one immediately. If you do have a passport, you must ensure that it is valid for at least six months beyond the last day of your program and that you have a blank page for every country that you plan to visit.



Passport applications may be obtained at [UF Mail & Document Services](#), which acts as a Passport Acceptance Facility for the U.S. Department of State. The Passport Services office is located 3030 Radio Road, on the Southwest portion of campus between Elmore Hall and the Physical Plant division. Lakeside Residential Complex is directly across the road. Visitor parking is available in front of the building.

To apply, you will need two passport-sized photos, a driver's license or official ID, and a certified copy of your birth certificate. If you do not have your official birth certificate, contact the Bureau of Vital Statistics in the state you were born to receive one. The cost of a passport is \$145 and the processing time is roughly 6 weeks with expedited services in 3 weeks. Note that processing times are subject to change.

Once you have received your passport, it is crucial that you sign it and then make at least two copies of the pages with the picture and passport number on it in case your passport is ever lost or stolen. Remember to upload a copy of these pages to your UF study abroad application. We also recommend you keep a copy packed separately from your passport. You may need the passport number for various reasons during your travels, so keep it handy.

Birth Certificate & Driver's License

Once you have left the United States, you must have proof that you are a United States citizen or have a visa to return. There are certain documents that provide this proof. The most important one is your passport. As previously discussed, you should keep this safe. United States citizens are granted easy access to many countries that restrict other nationalities from entering. This means that passports, especially U.S. passports are very valuable and in high demand.

If you are careful, you should not have a problem, but if something does happen to your passport, it will be important that you have other documents with you to prove your citizenship. We strongly

recommend bringing multiple copies of your passport, or saving a digital copy to your phone. If you lose your passport, you will have to go through a complex process to get another. Having these documents on hand can speed it up. Having a copy of your driver's license can also be of assistance, so bring that with you also. As a backup, we encourage you to bring a copy of these documents to UFIC, and we will store them in your file.



Visas

A passport is an international document that is recognized by all countries. Visas represent each individual country's way of regulating visitors' passage through their borders. Every country varies as to what its entry restrictions are. For some you will need a visa to enter, for some you won't, and some you will obtain after arriving and settling in. The website <http://www.visahq.com> is a good starting point.

If you do need a visa, you must apply with the nearest embassy, consulate or representative agency of the country in which you are planning to study. Our office only helps process visas for Spain, so if you are studying there and need assistance, please contact the Spain Study Abroad Advisor. Otherwise, we do not process visas but can provide needed support documentation, including letters of acceptance and proof of health insurance. The easiest and most direct way to have your questions answered about visas is to contact your host institution or the consulate or embassy of the country in which you plan to study. Speak with the Visa Officer there, if possible. Since they are who accepts and processes applications, Consulates offer the most current and detailed information.

In many cases getting a visa is a cultural experience in itself. It will be your first introduction to some of the bureaucratic processes you may experience when working with a different country/culture. UFIC will assist you however possible, but please keep in mind that ultimately you are responsible for making sure that you obtain all needed documents. Allow ample time to apply for and receive them.

*For NON-U.S. Passport Holders or those with Green Cards: Special visa regulations may apply depending on your home country and the passport/travel documents that you will be traveling under. Please look into this as soon as you decide to go overseas and be sure to speak with your International Student Advisor in UFIC, if applicable.

*Students will definitely need a visa for programs in the following countries: China, Cuba, Ghana, and Russia. Students studying in France, Spain, Japan, and many other countries will need a visa for stays over 90 days.

International Student Identity Card (ISIC)

The Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) issues International Student Identity Cards (ISIC). ISIC cost around \$22 and offer benefits such as low airfares and worldwide discounts for everything from museums to hotels to public transportation. It is the world's most widely accepted student identity card. For more information, visit ISIC.org. Note this card is optional and the insurance coverage provided with the card is not sufficient to meet UF's requirements.



PART III: HEALTH & SAFETY

As in other settings, you can have a major impact on your own health and safety abroad through the decisions you make before and during your program. You should:

- Carefully read and consider all materials given to you related to health, safety, legal, environmental, political, and cultural conditions in your host country.
- Consider your own personal health and safety needs when accepting a spot on a study abroad program.
- Make available to us accurate and complete physical and mental health information and any other personal data that is necessary in planning for a safe and healthy experience.
- Provide your family with emergency contact information and keep them regularly informed, including on any travel away from the program site.
- Understand and comply with the terms of participation and codes of conduct of your program, and obey your host country's laws.
- Be aware of local conditions and customs that may present health or safety risks when making daily decisions. Promptly express any health or safety concerns to the program staff or other appropriate individuals.
- Behave in a manner that is respectful of the rights and well being of others, encourage others to behave in a similar manner, and accept responsibility for and consequences of your own decisions and actions.

Health Abroad

It is important that you take some simple precautions to ensure that you have a safe and healthy trip. The following section outlines some basic steps that you can take to protect your health. This is an outline of health issues that you may face and is not a detailed orientation to health risks. You should always see a doctor before traveling abroad. Your physician will be able to answer specific questions that you may have. If you are a UF student, we have an international travel clinic in the UF Student Health Care Center that can answer your health care concerns.

- **Immunizations**

Immunizations are an important part of staying healthy while traveling. You should have all necessary immunizations and disease prevention counseling to ensure a safe and healthy trip. Some countries have immunization requirements. Check with your physician or the UF Health Travel Medicine clinic (352-294-5480; <https://ufhealth.org/uf-health-travel-medicine>) to find out what vaccines are required and/or recommended. You can also consult the [Center for Disease Control's website](#). This site allows you to search by country, seeing important vaccination information as well as any other health and safety concerns.

A tetanus immunization within the last five years is highly recommended. Yellow fever vaccine is required for travel to certain countries in South America and Africa and recommended by others. Malaria prevention medication is recommended for many countries throughout the world. Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Typhoid Fever, cholera and rabies are some of the other diseases of concern in various countries.

- **Medications & Medical Conditions**

If you have any medical conditions, it is recommended that you bring a letter from your physician detailing your condition and any treatment that you are undergoing. Once you arrive at your host site, give a copy of this information to your local program coordinator or host.

You may have difficulty getting prescriptions filled while abroad, so it is best to plan ahead and have the entire prescription amount that you will need while abroad filled in advance. Please keep all medications in their original containers and keep them in your carry-on luggage while traveling. If you wear glasses or contacts, bring a backup pair in case your primary pair is damaged or lost. You may also want to bring any preferred non-prescription medications with you, as it is sometimes difficult to obtain American name-brands abroad.

- **Precautions**

Remember that tuberculosis, hepatitis, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, and HIV/AIDS are a worldwide problem. In the case of STDs and HIV, please be aware that the quality of prophylactics like condoms vary dramatically worldwide. As with all personal hygiene items, you should bring with you anything that you think you will need to ensure that the quality will be what you are accustomed to.

First Aid Kit

Never underestimate the importance of being prepared. Always travel with basic medical supplies close at hand, such as:

1. Band-Aids
2. Rubbing Alcohol
3. Sunscreen & Sunburn Ointment
4. Anti-Diarrhea Medication
5. Gauze & Adhesive tape
6. Antibacterial Ointment
7. Pain Relievers
8. Contraceptives
9. Feminine Hygiene Products
10. Hand Sanitizer

*Depending on where you are studying, you may also need water purification tablets, antihistamines, salt tablets, insect repellent, malaria prophylaxis.

- **Food and Water**

When you visit a new country, you will want to try all of the local cuisine. This is part of the cultural experience, but let it be gradual. Don't feel that you have to try every new dish or drink during your first week; give your system time to adjust. Make sure that you investigate the purity and safety of the drinking water in your host country before going abroad. In most cases it will be best to drink and cook with bottled water, but some countries have safe water supplies. If you want to check on the condition of the supply, contact the Center for Disease Control [on the web](#) or by phone at 404-332-4559.

There is always an adjustment period when eating items that you are not accustomed to; be prepared for it. Many travelers experience traveler's diarrhea during the first weeks of their stay abroad. Many times this is short-term and a good dose of Pepto-Bismol will make all the difference. Pepto-Bismol is difficult to find abroad so it is best to bring it with you. During this adjustment period, it is crucial that you consume mass quantities of bottled water and stay away from caffeine and alcohol. Otherwise, you can become dangerously dehydrated.



Personal Safety

- You should expect to feel jet lag on arrival overseas. It will take a few days for your system to adjust to the time and climate changes, so pace yourself. Get plenty of sleep and drink lots of fluids before and during the flight.
- Protect yourself and your belongings. Do not leave your purse or wallet accessible to thieves or pickpockets. Be especially careful in crowded areas such as airports and train stations and major cities such as Barcelona or Paris.
- Avoid threatening or dangerous situations, such as walking alone at night or going to an unknown area of town at night (even in pairs or in a group).
- Whenever you leave the program site and choose to travel on your own, share your itinerary with the program director and a friend or roommate.
- Using illegal drugs (including marijuana) during the program will result in dismissal. If you see illegal drug use, quickly but safely leave the situation.
- Abuse of alcohol is not permitted. If alcohol consumption (including hangovers) affects your participation in the program, or reflects in a damaging way on the program, you will face possible dismissal.
- Use the same common sense that you would use here at home when meeting new people.

Sexual Harassment

Unfortunately, sexual harassment is a global issue and can happen at any time and in any place. However, how it is dealt with varies from culture to culture. Be aware that sexual harassment laws are not the same in every country and that you are expected to follow the rules of the University of Florida with regard to sexual harassment while abroad. Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. If you suspect that a behavior is sexual harassment, assume that it is. If you are the one engaging in that behavior, discontinue it immediately. If you are the victim of that behavior, seek assistance from a professional immediately, whether it be your program director, coordinator, or one of our staff at the UF Study Abroad office. Sexual harassment is a crime. Know that if you are the victim, it is not your fault. Please note that – by law – the staff of the UF International Center is required to report any sexual harassment incident that they have been made aware of to the UF Title IX Office. For more information about the Title IX Office, please visit [their website](#).

Below are a few actions you can take if you are the victim of sexual harassment:

- Keep a written record, noting incident(s) as they occur and any witnesses present. Keep any physical evidence (notes, letters, etc.) and anything else that may corroborate your story. When the harassment occurs, many people think they will never report it, but it is crucial to keep a record as you might decide later to come forward about your experience.
- Speak up when the incident occurs and tell the perpetrator to stop the offensive behavior in a direct and firm manner. Do not feel pressured to do this, as it is not your responsibility to prevent being sexually harassed. However, know that this is an option available to you.
- Tell someone, whether it be a trusted friend or administrator, about the situation. If you choose to inform someone in a position of authority, it is important to provide them with as much information as possible, a description of how you feel about what occurred, and a statement of what you want to happen next.
- Report the situation to the police or a medical professional. As mentioned previously, laws vary around the world, but in most countries sexual harassment is a crime taken very seriously.

Mental Health Abroad

Be aware of your overall physical/mental health status! Become familiar with how you handle the stress of novelty and new challenges, for example:

- Do you like to have others around you when in new circumstances?
- Do you seek out others to problem-solve new experiences and challenges?
- Do you tend to want to work things out for yourself?
- When in new situations, do you routinely rely upon others to give you direction and make decisions?

Normal stressors that you will encounter while beginning your program include:

- Adjusting to the change in time zones and establishing a healthy sleep pattern
- Becoming accustomed to a schedule of activities
- Becoming familiar with the dietary patterns of the culture
- Gaining an understanding of the values, attitudes and rituals associated with your host culture and its social environment
- Adjusting to the absence of familiar support systems and developing a local social support system
- Establishing achievable goals and managing the demands on time, energy, and resources

Signs of Distress include difficulties in concentration and motivation; persistent loneliness and sadness; episodes of crying; disrupted sleep (too little or too much); disabling anxiety or exaggerated fears; major loss of appetite; significant loss of personal energy.

Healthy Coping Skills

Talk to others about your experience; Set up a schedule of communicating with family or close friends (e-mail, letters, phone); Keep a journal of your experiences; Try to eat a healthy diet; Avoid over indulging; Walk; Use others to help you problem-solve.

If You Need Help

If symptoms of loneliness, sadness, or anxiousness persist and /or if you experience a pattern of energy loss, poor appetite, and difficulty in concentration – please consult with someone such as your program director, coordinator, instructor, a physician, counselor, friend or family member.

Cultural Insurance Services International

All students on UF Sponsored and UF Exchange programs will automatically be enrolled in the International Center's health insurance policy with Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI). For students on UF Sponsored programs, the cost of enrollment in CISI will be included in the program fee and will be billed with that item. Students on UF Exchange programs will be billed separately for their enrollment at the rate of \$38.50 per month (subject to change with contract renewals). Students participating in Non-UF programs are typically enrolled in separate health insurance coverage through their non-UF provider and as such, waived from CISI. If you are unsure if this applies to you, please contact your Study Abroad Advisor.



Students who are covered by CISI will be enrolled three (3) days prior to the start of their program through two (2) days after the reported end date of their program. Students will receive an email prior to the departure of their program with the specific terms regarding their coverage while abroad and their health insurance card. If you do not receive this email, please [click here](#) to view and print our insurance policy.

Continuous Health Insurance Coverage

It is important to note that there may be a gap between your domestic health insurance coverage and our CISI international health insurance coverage. If there is a period of time when you are not covered by any insurance, this means that your insurance is “not continuous”. For example, if your domestic health insurance is set to end on May 1st in order to accommodate for your summer study abroad program, but CISI does not kick in until May 31st, you will have a gap where you have no coverage at all. Some insurance companies refuse to insure people who have had a lapse in their coverage, so please be aware of your options.

If you would like to continue your United Healthcare coverage to be safe, you must opt for this before your current policy ends. Unfortunately, there is no way to prorate United Healthcare coverage as it is only sold per semester, meaning you may end up with two health insurance policies at once. Please contact the [UF Compliance office](#) if you have any questions or concerns about this process.

Illness Abroad

In the event that you become ill while abroad:

1. All students on UF Sponsored and UF Exchange programs are covered through CISI health insurance or insurance through a third party provider that we sometimes partner with for our Sponsored programs. You will receive an email with your ID card, dates of coverage, and other important policy details before your program starts.
2. Report any illness to your local host coordinator and/or UF or local faculty and ask for assistance.
3. You have every right to see a physician and should take extra care while abroad, as any common illness can become major when under stress.
4. If your illness is severe (hospitalization for any reason), our office will open a case with CISI to make sure that you receive all the necessary care needed. We will provide CISI with your contact information along with the information of the facility where you are treated. CISI works with AIG Assist, who will be in touch with you and the hospital / treating physician to ensure proper treatment and direct billing set up.
5. For routine medical care, please keep receipts for any medical costs that you incur in-country. You must have these in order to file a claim with CISI when you return to the U.S. If you have an insurance other than CISI, submit your receipts to your provider. If you have more than two months remaining for your program, you may wish to mail these receipts to your parents, family, or other trusted caregivers in the U.S. so they can file a claim for you. Please do not hesitate to contact our office if you have any questions regarding insurance procedures.

In Case of Emergency

In the case of any emergency, the first person you contact should be your on-site director, faculty leader. Then, contact your family. We recommend that you indicate your parents or other guardians/family members as your emergency contact in the UF study abroad online application.

Please note that you can also call the UF International Center anytime between 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday-Friday. After hours, please call UPD who will be able to contact UFIC personnel. Below are important emergency numbers:

- UF Emergency Hotline (UPD): (from abroad) 001-352-392-1111
- UF International Center: (from abroad) 001-352-392-5323
- Study Abroad Services: (from abroad) 001-352-273-1539
- Director of Study Abroad, Susanne Hill: shill@ufic.ufl.edu / 001-352-273-1500

The University of Florida has a 24-hour emergency number that connects you directly to the University Police Department (UPD). UPD will be able to contact us after hours to assist you during an emergency abroad. If you contact them, be ready to provide your name, your location/program name, the telephone number where we can reach you, your UFID, and the nature of the problem.

If the situation is not an emergency but you still need to talk to a university official, call UFIC between the hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday-Friday. If you call these numbers, please identify yourself and that this is an urgent call. This will ensure that we attend to your problem as quickly as possible.

Student Conduct Abroad

Remember that while you are studying abroad, you are a representative of the University of Florida and are held to the student code of conduct just as if you were on campus. When you first applied to study abroad, you electronically signed a Terms and Conditions document, in which you agreed to adhere to the UF Student Conduct Code.

While abroad you will also be subject to the laws and regulations of your host country and the host institution at which you will study. Please note that you don't enjoy the protections of American law and the U.S. constitution while abroad, so violations of a local law could cause the termination of your program. Violations may include expressions of political or other opinions which are perfectly legal in the U.S., since laws vary greatly from country to country. It is your responsibility to learn about what is or is not permissible in the country in which you will study.

Political Demonstrations

From time to time, every country in the world undergoes political change. This can result in changes to leadership, variations in the economy, and even social unrest. Such political changes may occur anywhere from the national level to the local level, or even on a university level. While abroad, you may encounter political party campaigning, student or union demonstrations, or political protests. Although it may be tempting to participate in such activities, it is highly discouraged. While you are free to observe such activities, participating jeopardizes your safety as these types of activities have the possibility of turning violent. Furthermore, if you do chose to observe, please do so from a distance, follow all safety advice from your host university, and most importantly stay in touch with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. Signing up for the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#), offered by the U.S. Department of State, is a great way to stay updated on local news and registers yourself with the local embassy and consulate.

PART IV: TRAVEL PREPARATIONS

One of the most exciting parts of study abroad is the opportunity to travel. Not only can you travel around the region and throughout the city where you are studying, but you also have the chance to explore other cities, countries, and even continents. We recommend seizing every opportunity you have. This can be exciting, but there is also some information that you should be aware of before departing for your program. This section will address these aspects of pre-departure preparation, with everything from booking your flight to getting around the city you will live in.

International Flights

Booking an international flight is one of your first challenges to traveling abroad. It can be the easiest thing you do or the most challenging, depending on how early you start planning. If you start early, you will save yourself time and money because the closer to your trip you get, the higher the fares generally will become. Flights also fill, so starting early ensures that you can secure a seat on the flight you want.



Study abroad programs handle flight plans differently. Some will arrange to have the entire group fly together, while others will have no participation in your travel plans. Make sure to find out how involved your program is before you start looking into flights, as you do not want to make a flight reservation if you have already paid for one through your program. It is also important that you are sure of when and where your program wants you to arrive, as changing ticket reservations once purchased is often expensive or not possible.

We recommend that all students traveling abroad purchase trip/travel insurance. In some cases, programs have changed their start date or even been canceled due to various circumstances. Travel insurance can cover the cost of any unexpected changes in plan. Talk to your travel agent about this insurance. If you have any special dietary restrictions, you should notify your airline within a week of departure in order for them to secure arrangements. Vegetarian, light, and kosher meals are possible on most flights.

Some websites you can use to search flights are listed below. We strongly encourage you to use multiple websites and compare prices before making a final decision. This will help to ensure you are getting the best deal possible.

- [StudentUniverse](#)
- [Google Flights](#)
- [Skyscanner](#)
- [Momondo](#)
- [Kayak](#)
- [Hopper](#)

Airports

Airports can be confusing places. This is especially true when you are in a country where you do not speak the language or understand the culture. However, there are a few things that you can do

help yourself. One is to travel with other people going on the same program, if you can. Another is to search Google or Google Maps for the layout of the airport(s) you will be traveling through. Most are now embedded in Google Maps, but if not they will be on the airport's website. If you are making a connection in a foreign country, find out what gate you will be coming into, what gate you will be going out of, and how to best get from one to the next. This said, it is important to realize that even if you do tons of advance preparation, complications will likely occur day-of. Keep calm and look for an information counter where the staff will speak English.

You should also keep in mind that airports are potential crime areas. Please be careful with your baggage – never leave it unattended and stay away from any unattended bags or packages in public places. Do not check luggage for anyone else onto airplanes, railroads, or buses. Do not borrow suitcases and do not allow anybody, not even a newfound friend, to put anything in your luggage.

Packing

Okay, so you've purchased your flight, completed all of your forms, readied your passport and visa, and you feel ready to go. But you still have one huge obstacle to overcome, especially if your program lasts for several months – packing. Packing is a process that you should put time and thought into, rather than throwing things in a suitcase last minute. Below are some guidelines and advice to help you pack smart and make the most of your space.

- **The Golden Rule of Packing:** less is best! Not only will you be responsible for carrying all of your luggage through airports, public transportation, and possibly your city upon arrival, but most of the time, you also won't use a lot of the items you *think* you should pack. Be smart with the items you pack, bringing clothes that can be worn in multiple combinations and layered. Furthermore, you will want to leave some room for any items you'll purchase while abroad. If you don't, you won't have anywhere to put them on the way home.
- **Make sure your luggage is durable, easy to pack, and easy to carry.** Check your luggage handles to make sure they are sturdy and buy luggage locks to keep everything secure. Remember that soft luggage with zippers is usually lighter and easier to fit clothes in than a hard-shell case. It is recommended that one of your bags is a large backpack, as they are light, easy to carry, and great for weekend trips once abroad.
- **Pack categorically.** Put clothes, toiletries, technology, and other items into separate compartments so you can find them easily. Packing cubes are a great way to organize like-items and maximize the amount of space in your luggage. Rolling your clothing is another great way to maximize space and keep everything organized.
- **Pack only what you can carry.** Remember that you will be responsible for carrying your own luggage while traveling through airports, as well as once you arrive in your host country. This will likely be a stressful time for you anyways as you try to make your way through a new city



and to your lodging – do not make it more stressful by having an unmanageable amount of luggage.

- **Identify your luggage.** Always put tags on the inside and outside of your luggage that include your name and address. Make sure to remove old tags with incorrect information. Putting an identifying sign on your bags such as a unique luggage tag, bandanna, stickers, etc. will also make your luggage much easier to locate at the airport.

Airline Luggage Regulations

Airlines provide a limited amount of space for luggage and have their own detailed luggage regulations and requirements. It is important for you to check your specific airline's policies for overseas flights to ensure a smooth boarding process day-of. If you chose to ignore the airline's luggage policies, they may refuse your baggage or charge you extra fees. Most airlines only allow you to bring two pieces of luggage on-board without paying to check a bag: a carry-on bag and a 'personal item'. Carry-on bags have specific size and weight requirements, as they must fit in the overhead compartment. The term 'personal item' is fairly vague and also has size and weight requirements. It typically refers to a purse, backpack, laptop case, etc. that will fit under the seat in front of you. It is important to also check your airline's policies for these items before departure day.

Packing List

The following list is intended to help you pack for your time abroad and includes suggestions made by former study abroad students. Please note that it is not a fully comprehensive list and what you need to bring may differ based on your lifestyle and personality. It is important to pack certain, irreplaceable items in your carry-on luggage, such as your wallet, passport, phone, laptop, camera, prescriptions, and glasses/contacts. This ensures that in the unlikely event your luggage gets lost, these items are safely with you. For the same reason, we recommend packing at least one change of outfit and a few crucial toiletries in your carry-on luggage.

Toiletries

- Shampoo
- Soap
- Face Wash
- Toothbrush
- Toothpaste
- Deodorant
- Hairbrush
- Razor
- Shaving Cream
- Cosmetics
- Sunscreen/Sunglasses
- Insect Repellent
- Prescription Medication
- Allergy Medication
- Over-the-Counter Medication (e.g. Advil)
- Glasses/Contacts, Solution & Case
- Feminine Hygiene Products
- Contraceptives

Technology

- Phone
- Chargers
- Portable Charger
- Adapter & Converter
- Tablet/Laptop
- Camera
- Headphones

Clothes

- Shirts
- Pants
- Dresses/Skirts
- Jacket
- Underwear
- Socks
- Pajamas
- Comfortable Walking Shoes
- Dressy Outfit/Shoes
- Swimsuit
- Hat/Scarf/Gloves

Miscellaneous

- Wallet
- Money Belt
- Copy of Passport + Visa(s)
- Portable Luggage Scale
- Packing Cubes
- Luggage Locks
- Quick-Dry Towel
- Umbrella
- Journal
- Books
- Gifts for Host Family

Do NOT pack: too many clothes or shoes; anything that you are very attached to such as jewelry or valuables (because of the possibility it can get lost or stolen); food; hairdryers; or hair straighteners.

PART V: WHILE ABROAD

Host Program Orientation

Most programs begin with a required orientation program. During orientation, your program will cover topics such as academics, location of contacts, safety and security, illness procedures, location of the nearest U.S. consulate or embassy, and other pertinent information. Some of these orientation programs are in your host city while others occur at a different location. **It is therefore essential that you are sure of all arrival details for your specific program.** It is also a good idea to build in extra time for yourself before the meeting, so that if for example your flight is delayed, you will still be able to make the meeting.

Consulate Information

A consulate or embassy is a country's office abroad. The United States, for instance, has consulates in almost all foreign countries to help deal with certain issues that Americans may face abroad. Consulates and embassies are your liaison should you encounter any difficulties. For most of you, this will be the local United States consulate or embassy. It is important that within a few days of arrival you become familiar with the location of your home country's consulate nearest to your program site and register with them by providing them with your local contact information. Speak with your program coordinator or host contact after you arrive to find out their location.

Excursions

Many students take the opportunity of living abroad to travel around the region in which they are studying. This is especially true in Europe, which has an extensive and efficient railroad system. If you are considering this type of travel while abroad, plan ahead. A first step is to look into any organized trips that your program may offer. Many programs offer pre-packaged excursions for an extra fee, and some are even included in your program fee already. These trips are recommended as

they will be carefully planned and your program will handle the details that you may not be prepared to cope with. If you plan to travel independently, you should inform your program advisor or faculty leader about your plans.

While planning independent travel, it can be helpful to ask locals or your program coordinator(s) for ideas on where to visit, how to get there, and when to go. Trains are a popular way to travel, especially in Europe, and taking the bus is another great option. See if the companies or agencies you book through offer a student rate or discount. If you are going abroad for a full semester or year, you can often learn more about travel logistics once on the ground. For shorter programs, such as Summer A or Summer B, you will want to do more preparation in advance.

Hostels

Many college students choose to stay in youth hostels while traveling. Hostels are inexpensive hotels where a group of people shares a room and bathroom. Although hostels can be of a lower quality than a hotel, they are cheap and a good way to meet other young travelers. You can get a listing of hostels in your region from online websites such as Hostelworld.com and Hostels.com. Most require advance reservations, especially during popular tourist times of the year (e.g. Oktoberfest). It is important that you do not leave any valuables in a hostel; they are potential crime areas since they are fairly open and unrestricted.

Housing

Depending on where you study abroad, there will be several different options for accommodations. You may choose to live independently in an apartment, with other students in a residence hall, or with a local family in a homestay. Regardless of which living situation you are in, it is important to remember that living conditions in other countries will be different from those in America. The point of living abroad is to immerse yourself in the lifestyle of another culture and your living situation will be a large part of that. We encourage you to be open to the differences in the way people live around the world and remember that this is part of the study abroad experience.

- **Homestays** – If you are living with a family while abroad, respect their culture, lifestyle, and rules. They are opening their home to you – respect this generosity by taking the time to get to know them and learn from them. Living with a foreign family can be an incredible experience if you are open and understanding. It is important to clearly communicate with them from the beginning, so you can be mindful of their rules and customs. For example, mealtimes are often set. They may also have a curfew for you to be home. If you plan on traveling away for the weekend, let them know. If you have special dietary needs or other accommodations, be sure to notify your program director/coordinator and include these needs on your housing applications. It is also customary to bring gifts to your hosts upon arrival, for example something unique to UF, Florida, or the USA. If any problems with your host family develop, speak with your program director or contact UFIC sooner rather than later. It is important to make the most out of this opportunity, and communicating is the only way to make it work for everyone.
- **Living with Other Students** – Many of you will have the opportunity to live with other students. Whether they are citizens of that country, another country, or the United States, this experience will be unique and another way to learn and grow during your time abroad. It will also be an easy way to make lifelong friends. However, as with any living situation in the States, you may encounter conflicts or misunderstandings. Be sure to handle these situations with respect and maturity. If you are living with only American students, this is also a great

way to make lasting friendships, but it can sometimes prevent cultural immersion. No matter your situation, we encourage you to connect with all kinds of different people, both in your living situation, your classes, and your time exploring your host city.

Public Transportation

Public transportation in many areas of the world is much better than in the United States. Some Americans go abroad with prejudices against public transportation, but you will quickly get over them. Public transportation can be the cleanest, cheapest, fastest way to get around. It is also a good way to get know the culture of your country and to see different areas of a city while on a ride. When you arrive in your host country, investigate the local options for transportation. Many train or subway systems offer monthly passes at a discounted rate for students. Due to the many variations in driving laws, insurance, speeds, and even on which side of the road to drive, we do not recommend driving in-country or renting a vehicle.



Biking

If you want to get to know an area, a great way to do this is by bike. Many areas of the world are perfect for biking and offer good deals on renting bikes, for example cities in the Netherlands. Other areas are dangerous and biking is not recommended. You can check with your advisor before leaving or use the internet to find out if your host country is bike-friendly. Biking is not only fun, but also allows you to get to

experience a city in a way you cannot do via public transportation. If you are going to be in an area for a while, you may even want to look into purchasing a bike and then reselling it at the end of your program. We also recommend bringing or buying a helmet and lock for your bike.

Money

If you don't plan ahead, you may find yourself short of cash while you're abroad. It is important to plan for all expected (and unexpected) expenses, create a budget, and stick to it while in-country. A good rule is to estimate all expenses and then add 10-20% of that to the final figure, just in case. Many factors, including exchange rates and banking fees, can affect how your money holds up overseas. If participating in a UF Sponsored program, you should also make sure you know exactly what is included in your program fee and contact the UFIC if you have any questions.

Exchange Rates

Exchange rates can affect the amount of money you actually have to spend in-country. If the U.S. economy is strong, the dollar will be worth more overseas. However the opposite may also be true, so be prepared for changes during your stay, both good and bad. Furthermore, some countries have a currency that is even stronger than the U.S. dollar and in those countries your money will not go as far. For example you may exchange \$100 USD and only receive 90 Euro in return. In addition to being less money, items in Europe are often more expensive and those 90€ may not get you far. Again, this is why it's important to plan and budget



your money before going abroad. [XE Currency](#) is a helpful app/website for exchange rates and conversions.

Converting Currency

You may choose to convert some money to the local currency of your destination before departure. Alternatively, you may choose to wait until you arrive at your host destination. It is important to be smart about where you exchange currency in-country, as many currency exchange counters in airports and other tourist locations will charge you a higher conversion fee. If you choose to convert money in the U.S., go to your bank and inquire whether this service is available. Depending on the currency, it may take a few days or weeks for them to obtain what you need, so plan ahead. Main branch locations also tend to have more foreign currency available.

Transactions Abroad

There are several things to consider when making financial transactions abroad:

- You need to tell your bank of your plans to travel, otherwise your account is at risk of being flagged for suspicious or fraudulent activity. Most banks allow you to submit a ‘travel plan’ online, but you can also call your bank or visit them in-person to relay this information. They will need your dates of travel as well as which countries you will visit. We also recommend bringing more than one card with you abroad so that you have an alternative payment method should one of your accounts be frozen.
- Major debit cards like Visa and Mastercard will charge a fee for foreign transactions, and most banks will tack on an additional one or two percent to convert the transaction to USD. Check with your individual bank and card providers to determine which of your cards are the most travel-friendly. You also have the option to sign up for a new card such as Charles Schwab, which is known to have low travel fees.
- Exchange rates and conversion fees can add up when you’re constantly withdrawing money or making transactions. Therefore, it is important to limit your number of withdraws from the ATM and avoid using your debit/credit card when possible. Take larger amounts of money out of the ATM less often and use cash instead of card; this will help save you money in fees over time.

Keeping Your Money Secure

Unfortunately, pick pocketing is one of the most prevalent crimes abroad, especially in more touristy cities or areas. To avoid being pick-pocketed and having your money, passport, phone, or other valuables stolen, money belts or other methods of concealment are a good option. These are cheap and easy to buy on Amazon or in store before departure, but some stores abroad will also sell them. Money belts allow you to store your items underneath your clothing, making them invisible and hard to access for potential thieves. Another suggestion is not to carry all of your money or cards in one place. You may keep some cash in your wallet, some in your backpack, some in your shoe, etc.



Communicating With Home

You are about to embark on one of the most exciting adventures of your life and will want to share your experiences with friends and family back home. You will also likely experience homesickness and want to talk to those who you miss and who know you best. Below are a few ideas for staying in touch with loved ones while you are away.

- **Phone** – Keep in mind that you will most likely not have a telephone that can call overseas in your dorm, hotel, or homestay. It will be up to you to use public phones or bring a cell phone that has international capability. Many cell phone companies now have great international plans, including Verizon, Sprint, AT&T, and T-Mobile. We recommend contacting your existing phone company and asking what coverage you may already have or what plans you could add-on. Alternative options include buying a local SIM card in country and inserting it into your phone; buying a second, cheaper phone in country with data just for texts and calls; and not getting an international phone plan at all and relying solely on Wi-Fi and apps like WhatsApp, Viber, and Facebook Messenger.
- **Mail** – Sending international mail can be slow and unreliable, but it can also be a special, sentimental way to communicate with loved ones. For example, many people appreciate getting postcards or handwritten notes from those who are traveling. You may even want to collect your friends and family's addresses prior to departing the U.S. so that when you mail them something from abroad, they get it as a surprise. How easy it is to find a post office and use their services abroad varies from country to country. In general, however, if you're mailing a simple letter or postcard it should be easy to purchase stamps and find a mailbox.
- **Blogs** – Many students choose to have a blog while they're abroad, not only to document their adventures for friends and family, but also so they can have an online 'journal' of sorts to look back on. A few great blogging websites include [Squarespace](#), [Wix](#), [Weebly](#), and [Wordpress](#). The International Center also runs a student blog called [The Global Gator](#). If you are interested in submitting entries for this blog, click [here](#).



Student Life

Although you will only be abroad for a certain amount of time, make the most of your experience. Make sure to thoroughly explore the city and region in which you live by meeting locals, experiencing cultural activities such as sports or the opera, and visit historical sites and museums. Eat at as many restaurants as possible, find your favorite coffee shop, and attend events and festivals. You can do most of these things even if you are on a limited budget. While we encourage you to travel to other countries while you're abroad, try not to do this every weekend as it will limit how immersed you get in your host city. Don't return home without feeling like you truly got to know the city you were living in.

Language Immersion

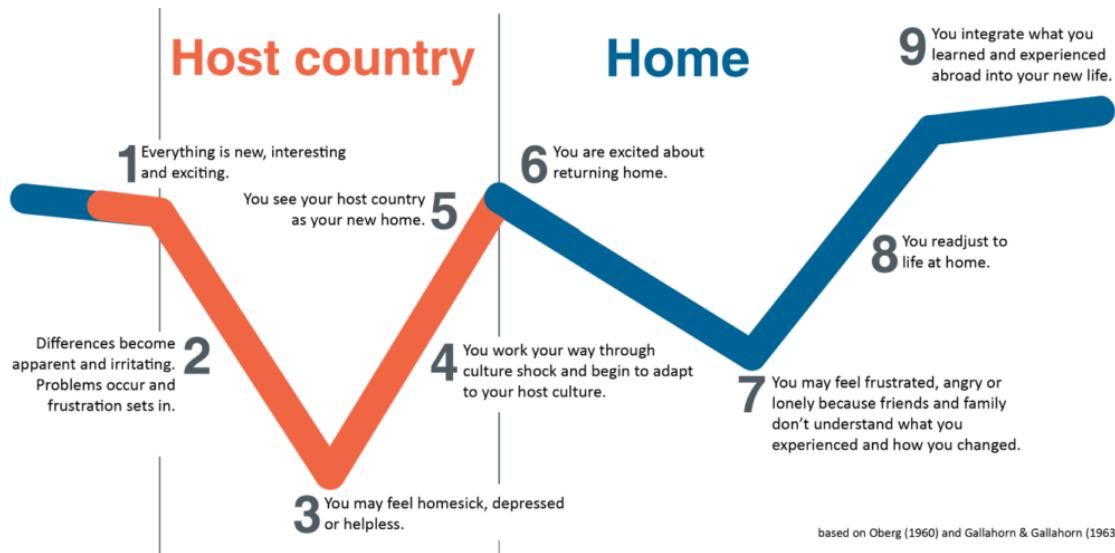
If you are traveling to a country of which you do not speak the language, it is very helpful and highly recommended to start learning some basics of the language before departure. You may choose to do so by taking a course at UF, using apps like Duolingo, Babbel, and Memrise, or checking out books from the library with common words and phrases. UF also has a [Language Studio](#) that provides

language-learning resources. Living in a culture where a different language is spoken is extremely exciting and your experience abroad will be even richer and more significant if you try to communicate in it. Once abroad, it is good intentionally seek out experiences that will allow you to practice the language, such ordering food, spending time with local students, seeing plays or movies, or just paying attention to the signs and conversations around you.

Culture Shock

Adjusting to life in a different culture is one of the most rewarding but also challenging parts of the study abroad experience. Everyone has a different reaction to cultural adjustment, but you will most likely experience some level of culture shock. First, you will be forced to leave your comfort zone and encounter new people and experiences every day. Keeping an open mind, being willing to try new things, and connecting with new people is key to making a smooth transition. Once you start immersing yourself in a new culture, you will also start to realize the many differences between that culture and America. For example, in the U.S. there are things that we each take for granted on a daily basis such as clean water, free public restrooms, quick cell phone service, and more. Getting used to these differences can be stressful at first, but you will soon warm up to your host culture and start to appreciate other ways of living. You will also gain a new perspective on American culture.

Culture shock occurs when you move from one culture to another, and experience anxiety upon doing so. The intensity and length of this anxiety varies from individual to individual and situation to situation, but everyone will experience a process of culture shock similar to this:



Source: Intern China

1. Arrival in Your Host Country: Upon arriving in your host country, you will likely be excited to experience all of the ways it is unique and different from America or other countries you have been to. You will constantly be meeting new people, trying new things, and having new experiences.

2. Excitement → Irritation: After you have spent a few days or weeks being excited about your host culture, you may start to get annoyed with how things are different from the way you're accustomed to. For example, if you are used to driving everywhere in the U.S., you may be annoyed that you have to take the subway everywhere instead. If you are used to eating dinner at 7:00 pm, you may struggle with your host family having dinner at 5:00 pm every night. Scenarios like these paired with changes in the food you're eating, your sleeping habits, a potential language barrier, and

more may have you longing for the comforts and familiarity of home. When this starts to happen, it is important to remember that your host culture is not wrong, stupid, or weird - it's just different.

3. Homesickness: Unfortunately, sometimes small annoyances and irritations can worsen to the point that you're homesick and/or depressed. You may feel alone, isolated, and cut off from loved ones back in the U.S. You may question your choice to study abroad and wonder if you made the right decision. You may even want to come home and abandon your program, no matter the consequences. It is important that to avoid this, you surround yourself with other students or people who can relate to what you're going through. By simply discussing how you're feeling, you will realize that you're not alone and that homesickness is completely normal. It is also helpful to practice self-care routines and/or seek out the comforts of home. For you this may be meditating, journaling, calling your friends and family, or simply visiting a McDonald's down the street.

4. Gradual Adjustment: After a few weeks, you will begin to adjust to your new lifestyle and environment. You may even tire of your negative feelings to the point that you intentionally seek to understand your host culture on a deeper level. You will soon begin to feel more comfortable in your surroundings and more excited to make the most out of your time abroad. During this period, you are likely starting to make good friends, pick up a bit of the local language, and navigating your host city with ease.

5. Integration & Acceptance: Eventually, you will feel the opposite of how you felt in Stage 3. You will no longer be as homesick for the U.S. because in a way, the city you are in has become your new home. Things that once seemed different and new will now feel familiar and normal. You have strong connections with the people around you, you know your host city like the back of your hand, and you're having the type of experience you hoped for when you signed up to study abroad.

6-9. Returning to the U.S.: Just as you're getting used to your new home, your time abroad comes to an end. You are now faced with the reality of leaving your new friends and host country behind. You may feel split between wanting to stay abroad and wanting to returning home, or you may feel guilty for simply wanting to stay abroad. It is important to realize that these feelings are all normal. When you first return home, you will be excited to share your experiences with others and will likely talk nonstop about every adventure. Eventually, however, you will miss the friends and experiences you left behind and feel that your friends and family in the U.S. do not understand. This is the beginning of the Reverse Culture Shock process, whereby you go through the same cycle again. See the Returning Home section of this guide (below) to learn how to navigate this process and make the most of your overseas experience now that you're back in the U.S.

PART VI: RETURNING HOME

Packing for Home

Packing for your trip home is both easier and more difficult than packing to go abroad. It is easier because you do not have limitless possibilities of what you can bring. However, it is difficult because if you are like every other student traveling abroad, you have collected new souvenirs, mementos, and gifts to bring back home. These items will be important to you because they hold memories of a time, place, and experience that you will never have again. The problem is that these items take up valuable space in your luggage – space you may not have if you didn't plan in advance. When it comes time to pack, you may have to make some decisions about what goes with you and what stays behind. Below are some tips for making these decisions:

1. Use, give away, or throw away most (if not all) of your toiletries. These are relatively inexpensive and easy to buy again once you're back in the U.S.
2. Consider getting rid of clothes, books, or other items that you can spare to live without. Research local thrift stores and non-profits to make sure these can go to a good home – don't just throw them away! Donate them to someone else who can appreciate them.
3. Take a long, hard look at those “memories” that you are taking home with you and only take things that are most important or sentimental. Just because you purchased or received an item abroad doesn't mean you *have* to keep it – you may consider leaving behind, for example, a cheap beach towel you purchased or a free bag your host university gave you.
4. As a last resort, look into mailing items home. Keep in mind that this option can be expensive and take time, especially for larger or heavier items, but is an option if there's something that just won't fit in your luggage.

Customs

The U.S. Customs Agency regulates what items enter the United States. Upon arriving in the U.S., you will have to pass through Customs and have your baggage checked. Please follow the U.S. Customs laws carefully. Be aware of custom regulations and respect them. Fraudulent claims can result in legal action against you. You can also face criminal charges if you attempt to bring illegal materials into the U.S. Illegal materials include narcotics, animals, animal skins, plants, and produce. Please do not attempt to bring any of these things with you. There are also regulations the quantity of alcohol and cigarettes you can bring into the country. If you are not at least 21, even if you met the legal drinking age in your host country, do not attempt to bring alcohol back into the U.S.

Reverse Culture Shock

Upon returning home, you will likely go through the same Culture Shock cycle that you encountered while studying abroad. At first, you will be excited to be home, see friends and family, and share your adventures. You may head straight to Chipotle, be excited to attend a UF sports game, or simply be glad to sleep in your own bed. Eventually though, this stage of Re-Entry will pass and you will start to question American culture and customs. Even though you're home, home is not the same as when you left. You are not even the same as when you left. People have changed, things have happened, and the people you love have memories that do not include you. Your friends and life in the U.S. may even seem boring compared to your overseas experience.

Know that these feelings are normal and eventually, you will adjust and re-integrate into American culture the same way you integrated into your host country's culture. A few ideas to help you re-adjust to life in the U.S. include staying in regular contact with friends you made abroad, reading journal entries from your time overseas, finding a local restaurant that serves your host country's food, and generally integrating your study abroad experience into your new life. It may be over but you will never forget it, and you shouldn't think of returning home to the U.S. as ‘going backwards’. You are still moving forward with your life, but with a new, profound experience under your belt.

If you need someone to talk to on a deeper level or are having serious problems re-adjusting, we encourage you to contact the [**UF Counseling and Wellness Center**](#).