



International Program Participant Handbook



Welcome!

When we take a step out of our everyday routine; be it a step onto a plane or in a different country, we open the door to personal and professional growth. In today's global market, it is critical for faculty and participants to be able to communicate effectively in cross-cultural and inter-disciplinary environments.

International experience, cross-cultural communication skills, global awareness and foreign language skills are important in all areas of work and study. An international experience positively contributes towards your ability to successfully navigate as a global citizen.

When you travel to another country, you are exposed to a unique way of living and learning. An open mind and conscious effort to reflect and observe allows participants to embrace the experience. This handbook provides participants a roadmap for international experiences, and should be carefully reviewed well in advance of travel.

We are committed to adding a global dimension to your life journey, and we wish you an engaging, innovative, and impactful experience.

Bon Voyage!

Department of Global Engagement

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SECTION I: BEFORE YOU DEPART

Pre-Departure Checklist

- Apply for your passport immediately and visa, if required.
- Read every single page of this handbook.
- If you are a participant who will receive financial aid for an international program, or want to find out about applying for financial aid to cover international experience costs, meet with your financial aid counselor to review aid eligibility, qualifications and disbursement.
- Set up appointments for all required vaccinations to ensure you are fully immunized by travel.
- Make a budget and a plan to handle your money before, during and after your program. Notify your credit card companies and your banks of the dates you will be overseas.
- Make a plan for how to obtain emergency funds.**
- Pay all required fees and clear all registration holds.
- Read information about the history, economy and culture of where you are going.
- Make copies of important documents: passport, visa, insurance card, prescriptions, credit cards, etc., to carry with you and to leave copies at home.
- Complete required travel registration forms.
- Learn how to access your email while abroad.
- If you are on any medication, acquire enough to last the entire duration of your trip.
- If you have citizenship outside of the United States, meet with your campus DSO prior to departure to ensure that your participant visa documentation is up to date for re-entry into the U.S.
- Discuss any safety and emergency concerns with your family and friends.
- Make arrangements for child/family care and pet care while you are away.

Course Enrollment

Once you have been selected and have confirmed your participation in a program, you will be enrolled by the program administrator. If you are a participant and there is a course attached to the program, your campus registrar will register you for the associated course, you will not register yourself. If you are requesting a course

substitution, you must speak with your department and campus registrar to ascertain appropriate documentation for approved course substitutions.

Program Fees

Once you are registered for the course, you will be responsible for paying associated fees, which are explained in program materials. The program fee is specific for each program. Typically, the program fee will cover your accommodation and some meals, some in-country transportation and some admissions to venues. The program fee does NOT cover all expenses, so please be aware of this prior to travel. Participants may or may not have tuition associated with the program. Tuition is assessed via a participant's account with their home institution.

Tuition Refund Policy

Participants will adhere to the same refund policy for tuition as described in your participant handbook. Refund policies for each program are described in program materials.

Conditions for participating in an international program

Your acceptance and participation in the in-country portion of your program is contingent on the following:

- Fulfill all pre-departure requirements and pre-requisites indicated for your particular program.
- Obtain required passport and visa, if required, needed for travel. You are personally responsible for obtaining these documents and will not be able to participate in the travel portion of the program if you do not have these documents. You will not be refunded any money if you are unable to travel because you do not have your required documents.
- Obtain required vaccines for full immunization, as needed for travel. You are personally responsible for obtaining vaccinations and will not be able to participate in the travel portion of the program if you do not have vaccination and immunization level required for travel destination. You will not be refunded any money if you are unable to travel because you do not have your required vaccination and immunization level.
- For active students: Department head of your academic program and program administrators reserve the right to recommend a participant's record to be reviewed based on standing or academic performance at any point throughout the semester. If a participant is no longer eligible for a course based on the reasons below, the participants will not be refunded any fees or tuition.

- **Good Standing:** A participant's disciplinary, financial, and academic record may be reviewed to determine suitability for international experience. The program administrators reserve the right to deny participation of a participant who has an outstanding and/or unresolved conduct violation with their institution. Further, should a participant's standing change at any time, the program administrators may reconsider the participant's eligibility to continue in the course. The participant will not be refunded any fees or tuition if they are removed from the course due to standing.
- **Academic Performance:** Should a participant not meet academic performance expectations during the term of enrollment of the course, program administrators reserve the right to review continued suitability for international study. If necessary, the participant's program administrators will determine whether the participant may continue in the course and complete the travel abroad portion of the program. The participant will not be refunded any fees or tuition if they are removed from the course due to academic performance.

Financial Aid

Financial aid is available to eligible participants who travel abroad!

You are eligible to receive all the federal financial aid that you would have received if you were studying in the United States. Participants participating in an international experience may request a budget adjustment to accommodate expenses related to their program.

What can be considered for Financial Aid?

Expense	Aid Amount
Tuition	Full Tuition amount for all required courses.
Program Fees	Full Program amount for all required program fee.
Airfare	\$2000 USD per semester for length of program.
Miscellaneous	\$700 USD for travel-related expenses. (passport, immunizations, visas, etc.)*
Research Expenses	Up to \$5000 USD for programs requiring research outside the U.S. (translators, guides, etc).*

* If cost exceeds allotted amount, documentation can be brought to financial aid after travel has taken place to be considered on a case-by-case basis.

How to I apply for additional aid for my program? To apply for additional aid, participants must meet with their local financial aid advisor to determine if there is a need to increase their budget. If a budget increase is necessary, participants must complete a request for supplemental financial assistance form (provided by FA advisor) listing estimated expenses, along with supporting documentation. Once this form is submitted, the request is reviewed by Financial Aid, and a budget adjustment is completed. Financial aid adjustment notifications will provide dates and details about how the aid will be disbursed. Be aware that financial aid disbursement may be split into two or more payments. Financial Aid can only be disbursed after the semester starts. In most cases the participant will receive the additional funds with their normal financial aid disbursements.

Passport & Visa

A passport is an internationally recognized document that verifies the identity and nationality of the traveler. A valid passport is required to enter and leave most countries. Only the U.S. Department of State has the authority to issue U.S. passports. Every participant will need a passport that is valid for at least six months beyond the last date of the program abroad. If you do not have a passport, you should apply for one immediately. If you are traveling anywhere beside Canada or Mexico, you must have a passport and NOT a passport card. The process for applying for a new or renewed passport can take minimum 6-8 weeks, so apply as soon as possible!
http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html

Each passport must be accompanied by the following materials:

- Proof of U.S. citizenship. This is a copy of your birth certificate if you are a U.S. citizen by birth or your naturalization certificate if you are a naturalized citizen.
- Proof of identity, for example a driver's license.
- Two photographs that meet photo requirements for passport as stated on the passport application.
- Passport fee.

If you currently have a passport, check your passport expiration dates. Most countries require that your passport be valid at least six months beyond the end date of your international experience. If your passport will expire before then, you should apply to renew your passport immediately. When you receive your passport:

- Sign it in ink, and fill in the address and notification in pencil.
- Guard it as you would anything valuable.

- Make several copies of the official page to make it easier to replace if it's lost or stolen.
- Keep one with you in a separate but safe place from your passport.
- Leave a copy with a friend or family member when you travel. A scanned copy sent via email will suffice.
- Loss or theft of a valid passport should be reported immediately to Passport Services, or the nearest passport agency. If the loss occurs while abroad, you should notify the nearest US Consulate or Embassy. Theft of a passport also should be reported to the local police.
- It may be a good idea to know who of your family and friends has a passport in case you need someone to go abroad to help you in an emergency.

Non-US Citizens: if you are not a U.S. citizen, you must have a valid passport from the country in which you declare citizenship.

Passport Photographs

When you obtain your passport photos, you may want additional photos for a visa application, bus pass, etc., so we recommend purchasing a few extra passport-sized photos. Many Walgreens, CVS and other local chains will take photos.

Visa

A visa is a stamp inside your passport that is an endorsement from a foreign government permitting you to enter that country for a specific reason and length of time. To learn if your destination requires a visa, please visit http://travel.state.gov/visa/americans/americans_1252.html

Note to international participants who do not hold US citizenship: There are countries where a visa will not be required for American citizens, but will be required for international participants born in certain countries, and vice versa. It is the participant's responsibility to check the visa requirements prior to the trip and to obtain the necessary travel signatures.

Note to participants with Dual Citizenship, please discuss with international engagement office about the citizenship you would like to use when traveling. It may impact your benefit upon your return for aid if you use citizenship other than U.S.

<https://cibtvisas.com/?login=travelleaders>

Visas

Standard (more than 8 business days) \$116

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Rush (4-7 business days) \$129

Emergency (1-3 business days) \$194

Passports

Standard (11 or more business days) \$129

Rush (4-10 business days) \$129

Emergency (1-3 business days) \$194

Rates are subject to change. Government fees as well as ancillary fees including but not limited to money order fees, shipping, passport insurance, or any optional services are additional.

Travel Arrangements

Most programs may require you to make your own travel arrangements to your destination. It may be possible to travel with classmates or work together with a travel agent to obtain a group discount. You should purchase your airline ticket as soon as possible after determining the arrival and departure dates, for your program and when your program administrators have notified you that your program is confirmed for travel.

Here are some places to get you started:

- STA Travel www.statravel.com
- Participant Universe www.participantuniverse.com
- Booking Buddy www.bookingbuddy.com

You should research fares online at a variety of sites for comparison. Be sure to ask about change fees, cancellation policy, and change options. You may want to consider trip cancellation insurance if you have any doubts about your plans. If your program is cancelled due to health or safety concerns, having trip cancellation insurance may aid you in recouping the cost of your airfare. Your institution and the program sponsors are not responsible for the cost of your airfare or any changes or cancellations that may incur costs.

Immigration and Customs

When you arrive and depart from your host country, you will be required to pass through Immigration and Customs. Immigration will check your passport and visa and Customs may check your luggage to ensure that you are following import and export regulations. You will also pass through Immigration and Customs when you return to the U.S. If you plan to bring back items from your journey, be aware that there may be limits on items such as food, alcohol, plants and animals.

Environmentally-Conscious Travel

You may want to consider when traveling many time-saving measures, but many participants and faculty also consider their impact of their visit on their destination. You may want to consider using public transportation, walking or bicycles in safe areas as opposed to taxis or car services. This is just one of many ways you can make a difference when traveling when the temptation to not reuse and recycle can be high. Check out this website for more tips: <http://gogreentravelgreen.com/>

Grades

The portion of your course overseas is just as much a part of your grade as your work done in the classroom or online. An international experience course may be used to fulfill a degree requirement (e.g., core course or elective course). Permission to take the course or allow credit transferability will be determined at the discretion of the head of your academic program.

SECTION II: HEALTH

Health: Pre-Departure

Sharing Information

In your program registration, you may be asked to provide information about health concerns that may affect your international experience. Information you share on this form is confidential and will be only distributed to your program administrators to aid in your health and safety.

Primary and Supplemental Medical Insurance

While participating in study abroad, you are automatically enrolled in [CHUBB supplemental travel insurance](#) to cover you during the time that you are abroad. This policy provides modest accident and sickness insurance, emergency evacuation and repatriation of remains. Your travel insurance is considered supplemental and should not take the place of other insurance.

This policy covers you for the duration of your travel abroad program. It also covers you for seven (7) days before and seven (7) days after your program dates for private travel in the same destination country. Please note that traveling to a country other than your travel abroad program destination is NOT covered by this insurance policy.

Make sure to create an account on the CHUBB insurance portal prior to departure. You can check legality of medicines, required travel documents, recommended/required vaccinations & immunizations, and more. To create your account:

- Access the [insurance provider's portal](#) here. Login with the following credentials.
 - Username: medassist-usa@axa-assistance.us
 - Password: acea&h
 - You will be automatically prompted to create an account with a new username & password.
 - Note: You may need to input the username and password twice before being taken to the registration screen.

International Travel Appointment

We strongly recommend you make an appointment with your health care professional and all specialists prior to studying abroad. This appointment is to help you assess any and all health issues relevant to your upcoming international experience and to address immunizations, vaccinations, travel limitations, prescriptions, etc:

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- Make your appointment as soon as possible. Some vaccinations require a lot of lead time.
- When you make your appointment, you will want to specify it is to discuss needs for upcoming travel.
- It is important that you are familiar with your own vaccination record, as this can be helpful in your doctor's assessment.
- If you are traveling to a country that recommends/requires Hepatitis A or Hepatitis B vaccination, be aware that these vaccines are part of a series, and can take six months to complete. It is possible to take these in an accelerated series, so plan this as far in advance as possible.
- Health Insurance may or may not cover the cost of shots, visits, etc. that are needed for your travel. We will discuss this in further detail later in the handbook.

Immunizations and Vaccinations

Please visit your [CHUBB Portal](#) and the Center for Disease Control Web site for recommendations on immunizations/medications for your travel destination. <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/>. This website is an essential resource for you, providing extensive travel health information. If you find that you do need a vaccination or an immunization, talk to your doctor, find out if your records are up to date, and see if they can provide the shots for you, or recommend a place that can.

Health and Wellness

The pressures of new surroundings, the lack of familiar support, and a new language can all present special concerns. Going abroad is not an escape. Problems and issues that participants have at home can be exacerbated with travel. Participants on medication for a mental health condition should continue treatment unless advised by a physician to stop.

Participants with Disabilities

As a part of an international experience, all participants will experience cultures, environments, perceptions and beliefs that are different than what they are accustomed. When going overseas, you may be in an environment in which people perceive or handle your disability differently than they would at home. Please contact your school's Accommodation Advisor as far in advance as possible to begin the process of securing an accommodation to ensure there is an opportunity to consider reasonable ways of meeting your needs.

Prescriptions

Take an adequate supply of medication with you that you regularly use. It is imperative to take all medications as prescribed and to not stop or discontinue medications.

- Always pack medications in your carry-on luggage. Keep them in the original, labeled containers.
- Carry a copy of all prescriptions, including the generic names for drugs, and written instructions from your physician.
- Often medications prescribed in your home country can have different legal restrictions when abroad. Please consult with your medical professional prior and/or email CHUBB supplemental insurance prior to traveling with medication that may require accompanying information on its legality.
 - Email: Medassist-usa@axa-assistance.us
 - Email subject line: Taking Prescription Drug to (Country Name)
 - Email content: I am requesting to find out if I can bring the following prescription drugs to the country I am visiting.
 - Include in the email
 - Your Name
 - Program Name
 - Destination - City and Country Name & Duration of stay
 - Names of the Prescription Drug
 - Quantity of the drug / Dosage
 - You may also call 1-855-327-1414 or 1-630-694-9764 for assistance.
- If you become ill and need to purchase prescription medication while abroad, save your receipts to submit the claim to your insurance.
- Glasses and Contact Lenses: Take an extra pair with you and the prescription for them. Bring enough contact lens solution for the duration of your stay, as it can be very expensive or hard to find abroad.

Jet Lag

Jet lag is what occurs when you fly over time zones, and it disturbs regular sleep rhythms. You may have jet lag if you have sleep disturbance, feel 'groggy' and have disturbed appetite and sleep patterns. Since our programs require you to 'hit the ground running' as soon as you are off the plane, here are a few ways to minimize the impact of jet lag:

- Attempt to rest up at least a week before the trip, and try to sleep on your flight.
- Upon arrival, immediately reset all clocks to new time zone.
- Hydrate!
- During long flights, get up and walk around or stretch. This helps circulations and will make you feel less sluggish after the flight.

- Upon arrival, try to eat and sleep based on the local time.

Health: In-Country

Emergencies

In the event of a medical emergency, contact your program administrator immediately. If you are unable to reach the program administrator and you need immediate medical attention, go to the nearest medical facility. You should have some understanding of your basic medical coverage prior to your departure so that you can be prepared in a medical emergency. You are responsible for the cost of your medical coverage; please be sure you understand your insurance policy and also have a solid plan for reaching out to your family or emergency contacts to assist you should you have extensive medical costs while abroad.

For other types of emergencies that do not involve medical attention, contact your program administrator. Good practice is to file a police report if you are in doubt, especially if you have been assaulted or robbed. If your passport is lost or stolen, you must report this to the U.S. consulate in your home country as soon as possible. If you bank cards are lost or stolen, you should immediately notify your bank that issued the cards.

Healthy Living

- Visiting a foreign country can be stressful on the body, so take care of yourself. Get enough sleep, exercise, and eat balanced meals (as much as you can!).
- Inform yourself about common ailments and diseases at your international experience location.
- Don't forget the emotional as well as physical aspects of health. Don't isolate yourself. You may have to make the first move in developing new friendships, but they are an essential part of the overseas experience and your emotional well-being.
- Wash your hands often. It is the number one way to prevent sickness, from the common cold to viral and bacterial infections.
- Often a traveler will get sick because they are eating new and unusual food. Often times this takes some time to get used to, so be sure to bring your favorite upset-stomach remedies! It also helps to take it slow when trying a lot of new things, so try not to overwhelm your system.
- In many parts of the world, it is unsafe to drink the tap water and eat certain foods. Find out about the water and food safety issues in your travel area by checking the [CDC Travel Website](https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/).
 - CDC Travel Website: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/>

- Under "For Travelers," select the country you are traveling to and click "Go"
- Scroll down to "Eat and drink safely" and click "Show +"
- Find recommendations regarding what foods & drinks are safe & which to avoid.

SECTION III: SAFETY

Program administrators monitor the safety of travelers through the State Department's global security briefing and instant notification of all Travel Warnings and Alerts. If there is a need for any changes to a program based on these announcements, participants will be contacted via the email on file.

Although we will make every effort to prepare you for a journey abroad, no amount of preparation guarantees an individual's health and safety, but taking proper precautions will help. Participants must remain vigilant, keeping their health and safety a top priority. Communicating openly with your program administrator is a best practice. Please read through the following guidelines regarding safety; your best defense in most situations is preparing and getting informed in advance:

- Make photocopies of all important documents, including:
 - Passport (picture/signature page and visa)
 - Travelers checks (serial numbers and hotline)
 - Credit cards (both sides) and telephone numbers
- All participants are registered with the Department of State prior to their trip departure - however, you can register yourself to receive updates and also view participantsabroad.state.gov for excellent safety travel information.
- All participants must provide current contact information and emergency contact information with the program administrator.
- All participants are required to attend our health and safety pre-departure orientation, which includes a review of our emergency response protocol.
- All participants should have their own primary health care insurance and use the supplemental travel insurance in emergency situations as necessary.
- Emergency contact numbers will be provided prior to departure. All participants are required to save emergency contact numbers to their mobile devices.
- You should take responsibility for your own health and safety while abroad. Even if you are traveling in a group, you are always ultimately responsible for using your own best judgment.
- The program administrators will cancel a program at any time due to, but not limited to political instability and/or health and safety concerns in the host country, and upon recommendation of school's legal counsel. Should a program be considered safe for travel; the program will not be cancelled. If a participant decides for personal reasons that they are not able to travel, they

may elect to withdraw from the course and refund and grading policies still apply.

Safety Guidelines

Listed below are situations in which you should exercise heightened caution. We've listed several things to keep in mind and to look out for in each situation.

Safety on the Street

- Use the same common sense while traveling abroad that you would at in the US.
- Do not use short cuts, alleys, or poorly-lighted streets. Avoid traveling alone at night.
- DO NOT get involved in potentially volatile situations.
- Keep a low profile and avoid loud conversations or arguments.
- Avoid scam artists. Beware of strangers who approach you with "bargains."
- Be mindful of pickpockets.
- Wear the shoulder strap of your bag across your chest to prevent passers-by from snatching it
- Appear as if you know where you are going at all times. If you are in a central location, go into a shop to consult your map.
- Know how to use the pay phones and always have change or a phone card on hand. Stand facing outwards, with your back to the payphone so no one can approach you unnoticed.
- Learn phrases in the local language so you signal your need for help, police, or doctor.
- If you are confronted, don't fight back. Give up your valuables. Your money and passport can be replaced, but you cannot.
- Try to only use ATM machines inside enclosed spaces such as shopping malls and banks.

Safety on Public Transportation

- Taxis. Only take taxis clearly identified with official markings and ask what the cost will be upfront.
- Taking a taxi late at night can be dangerous in some places. Ask an employee at the restaurant or bar to call a taxi for you, and to tell you the company name so you will know when they arrive.
- Trains. On overnight trains, sleep on your luggage or take turns staying awake. Be aware of your surroundings and luggage at all times. When putting your bags overhead, store it slightly in front of you so you can see it.
- Buses. The same type of criminal activity found on trains can be found on public buses on popular tourist routes.

- If you see your way being blocked by a stranger and another person coming up behind you, move away.
- Do not accept food or drink from strangers, as it could be drugged.
- Do not hesitate to alert authorities if you feel threatened in any way.

Safety in Your Hotel or Hostel

- Keep your hotel door locked at all times. Meet visitors in the lobby.
- Use the hotel safe or hostel locker to store money and valuables while you are out.
- If you are alone, do not get in the elevator if there is a suspicious-looking person inside.
- Read fire safety instructions inside your room and know where the exits are located.

Lost or Stolen Possessions

- Report the loss immediately to the local police. Keep a copy of the police report for insurance claims.
- Report the loss or theft of the following to these agencies:
- Travelers checks - Nearest agent of the issuing company
- Credit cards - issuing company
- Airline tickets - airline or travel agent
- Passport - nearest US embassy or consulate

Safety When Going Out

- Always know how you're going to get home and what time the public transportation stops running.
- Go out in groups and keep tabs on each other. Use the buddy system!
- Drugs known as Rohypnal, roofies, GHB, and the "date rape" drug exist. Be cautious about your drinks (alcoholic or non) to ensure you're not a victim.
- Order bottled drinks and watch the bartender open them. If ordering mixed drinks, order from the bar and watch them being made.
- Never leave your drink unattended or let anyone else carry it. If you do, do not finish it.
- Know your limits. Alcohol reduces your inhibitions and makes you an easy target for a multitude of crimes, from robbery, to sexual assault and rape.

SECTION IV: CONDUCT

While abroad, not only are you representatives of your country, but you are also a representative of our school and your profession. Your program administrators use their own professional network to develop and cultivate relationships within your host country and this is the foundation in which the courses are created. Take every opportunity to show respect and professionalism for the hard work and dedication that goes into your course. Be prepared to be a professional participant in all activities of your course.

If you are a student participant in the program, you are expected to attend all classes and to participate in all program activities, including those that occur in-country. You are expected to conduct yourself in a manner that is appropriate as a guest in a host country and as a representative of our school and your profession.

In addition to program guidelines, each participant is responsible for conducting themselves in accordance to their institution's conduct policy. Inappropriate behavior abroad is a violation of an institutional Code of Conduct and can result in your dismissal from an international experience program. Should a participant's conduct standing change at any time, your program administrator may reconsider the participant's eligibility to continue in the international experience course. The participant will not be refunded any fees or tuition if they are removed from the course due to standing.

You are also responsible for the local and national laws of your host country. Once you leave the U.S. you are no longer protected by U.S. laws and constitutional rights.

Alcohol and Drugs

Each participant is responsible for adhering to their institution's alcohol and drug policy. Attitudes and customs regarding alcohol use vary widely among cultures. It is important to follow local culture when deciding to drink alcohol. Regardless, excessive alcohol consumption impairs judgment, can lead to disruptive behavior, and can impact your mental and physical ability to be a full participant.

Do not use, carry, buy or sell any type of drug, illegal or controlled. If you are purchasing prescription medications in quantities larger than that considered necessary for personal use, you could be arrested on suspicion of drug trafficking. The police and customs officials have a right to search your luggage for drugs. If they find drugs in your suitcase, you will suffer the consequences. You may be sent to jail with no possibility of parole, early release or transfer back to the U.S.

There is very little that a U.S. consulate or program administrators can do to help you if you are caught with drugs or get you out of jail. "I didn't know it was illegal" is not an excuse to get you out of jail. If you are caught buying, selling, carrying or using any drugs, it could result in:

- Interrogation and delays before trial: including mistreatment and solitary confinement for up to one year under very primitive conditions.
- Lengthy trials that are conducted in a foreign language, with delays.
- Weeks, months or life in prison: some places include hard labor, heavy fines, and/or lashings, if found guilty.
- Death penalty.

Although drug laws vary by country, it is important to realize before you make the mistake of getting involved with drugs that foreign countries do not react lightly to drug offenders. In some countries, anyone who is caught with even a very small quantity for personal use may be tried and receive the same sentence as the large-scale trafficker.

Controlled Substances

Traveling with controlled substances, including medical and/or recreational marijuana, is not recommended. United States federal law prohibits flying on a U.S. commercial airliner with marijuana or marijuana containing products, even with a doctor's written prescription.

Additionally, many countries consider marijuana illegal and if you are found in possession of a controlled substance, even with a US prescription, you can be arrested, prosecuted and deported.

Politics

When preparing for an international experience, it is essential to learn about the current topics and politics of your host country. You will also learn about the relationship between the United States and your host country. You may discover that people in other countries will want to discuss U.S. politics and relations.

You may run into unstable political situations while abroad, and may witness political demonstrations for in-country politics or possibly anti-American demonstrations. Whether you agree with the demonstrators or not, remember that you are in another country, and are subject to the rules and laws of that country, so you do not want to do anything that would jeopardize your ability to continue your program within your host country.

[U.S. Department of State Advisories](#)

The U.S. Department of State (D.O.S.) monitors political conditions all over the world in the form of travel advisories. Take advantage of these up-to-the minute advisories:

- Travel Warnings: issued when U.S. D.O.S. recommends that Americans avoid travel to a certain country.
- Travel Alerts: information about short-term conditions, such as a terrorist threat, that may pose significant risk to U.S. citizens abroad.
- Country Specific Information: Always available for every country. Information on crime, currency, drug policies, etc.

SECTION V: MONEY

It is important to budget your money while abroad. Remember that small expenses add up quickly, and that you will have many such items to purchase such as postcards, bus and train fares, stamps, newspapers, snacks, beverages, gifts, phone calls, etc. Most importantly, expect to have unexpected costs. You will discuss in-country budget specifics with your program administrators, however, below are some general guidelines to assist you in preparing your finances.

General Money Tips

- Exchange a small amount of money in the US to have some cash when you arrive.
- Upon arrival, you can often withdraw money using your ATM card at the airport. You can also convert money at the airport if needed, but they offer a poor exchange rate.
- Make a small guide to keep in your wallet listing different amounts of US dollars converted to host countries currency (i.e. \$10=5.50 GBP, \$50=27 GBP). This will help you realize how much you are spending.
- It's handy to have a small calculator or currency converter. (try www.XE.com)
- You will need to have your passport with you for identification when changing money.
- Use extreme caution while in any public situation. A money belt worn inside your clothing or a money pouch around your neck can help you with safekeeping of your passport, insurance cards, credit cards, etc.

How to Exchange Money

The key to successful money exchange is advance planning. When staying in country, keep in mind commissions and fees are taken out each time you change money. It is costly to convert all you have to a new currency, because each time you convert, you pay a service charge. Remember to exchange only as much as you think you will need, and that it is not possible exchange/convert coins. It is a good idea to obtain at least \$100-200 of the foreign currency before you leave. Often, banks will not be open on the weekends and national holidays and it may be a few days before you can change currency. Most larger banks provide this service. You can also exchange currency at the airport, but they have a less favorable exchange rate than banks.

ATM Card

Often, the easiest way to obtain foreign currency abroad is with your ATM card. ATM cards with the cirrus symbol or Visa logo are widely accepted. Check with your bank to determine if you can use your ATM card abroad and what the fees are. There is often a charge for using the local machine and a fee from your home bank for every transaction, plus a currency conversion charge. See if your bank has associated or partner banks you can use overseas without incurring fees. If not, take out large

amounts of cash at a time and keep it in a safe place. Don't take out \$20 at a time, because you will pay extravagant amounts of fees! ATMs often have a daily withdrawal limit of \$200-300, so plan ahead. In rural areas there may not be an ATM machine, so don't depend on it as your sole source of money. Be sure your PIN is 4 digits long and is numeric only as that is what most ATMs will accept. Notify your bank that you will be abroad so that they do not cancel your ATM card. When you arrive, check the airport for an ATM and withdraw cash before leaving the airport. Finally, it may be a good idea to leave a deposit slip with someone back home who can help you get more money in your account in the case of an emergency.

Credit Cards

Credit cards are invaluable in case of emergency. Take one with you, if you can, but use it wisely. Visa, MasterCard, and American Express are widely accepted. The charge placed on your card will be converted to dollars on your statement. Check with your credit card agency to see if they charge a fee for conversion into US dollars (usually 1% - 3% of your purchase price). You can obtain cash advances with a credit card, but these have high fees and can be quite costly, so cash advances are not recommended. Credit cards can come in handy to make purchases and avoid carrying a lot of cash. Keep in mind, however, that not all merchants abroad accept credit cards, regardless of the name brand: many of your gifts and/or souvenirs might be obtained at small shops and bazaars that do not take credit cards. Many credit card companies charge a two or three percent conversion fee, which can dramatically increase your costs over time. Check with your credit card company to see what their policies are.

Traveler's Checks and Cash

Traveler's checks are a safe way to carry large amounts of money, since they can be refunded if lost or stolen, but cash cannot. Traveler's checks are available for purchase at most banks in the US. The major companies dealing in traveler's checks are Citicorp (First National City Bank), American Express, Thomas Cook, Bank of America, and Visa. Often there will be a 1% commission for the purchase of traveler's checks. Check with the bank where you have accounts - they may not charge you anything. Keep in mind that while purchasing traveler's checks in small denominations means carrying a bulkier package of checks with you, it also means that you will have greater control over the amount of currency you will receive each time you cash one or more of these checks. Be sure to keep a separate record of the serial numbers and phone numbers in a safe place in case of loss or theft. Cross off the numbers as you cash the checks so you have an accurate record of your traveler's checks. Traveler's checks and cash can be exchanged to local currency at banks, post offices, and airports. You will usually find the best exchange rate at a bank or post office; we do not recommend changing currency at hotels, restaurants, or retail shops as they have very unfavorable exchange rates. You will need to have your passport for identification to exchange traveler's checks or money. You can also expect to pay commission, either a flat rate or percentage of what you're changing. Some places will charge you per check you convert; others will charge you based on the total amount converted.

Traveler's Checks, in recent years, are becoming a less effective way to exchanging money while abroad. They are a good, safe backup, but should not be your only method of obtaining money abroad.

How much money should you take?

This is an important question. The answers depend on your specific program and what is covered in the international experience fee, the cost of living in your home country, and your personal spending habits. Talk to former participants and your program administrator for advice. When you have a general estimate of how much you plan to bring, include a small cushion for emergency and unexpected situations.

Transfers from Home

Should you run short of cash while abroad, money can be sent from home in a variety of ways:

As discussed above, if you have enough credit or have not reached your daily limit, consider using your credit card or ATM card. You can also leave deposit slips with your family to deposit money into your bank account, which you can then withdraw from overseas. **It is your responsibility to create a plan to access emergency personal funds for emergencies; for example, if your money is stolen, you are hospitalized or have travel delays.**

If neither your ATM nor credit cards work and you are out of cash, the quickest way, although the most expensive, is by cable transfer from your American bank to a bank abroad. You should visit your hometown bank before your departure to obtain a list of overseas correspondent banks to which money can be transferred by cable and to let them know who is authorized to initiate cable transfers on your behalf. To pick the money up at the overseas bank, you will need identification (i.e., your passport). It may be necessary for your hometown bank to process cable transfer through a major, internationally recognized U.S. Bank which in turn probably will have to deal with a comparable internationally recognized bank overseas. The correspondent bank abroad can then complete the transfer to a local banking your international experience location. This will take some time.

American Express money orders also are relatively fast. Transactions must be initiated at an American Express office in the U.S. and completed at one of their branch offices abroad, either of which could prove inconvenient depending upon their location. Since not all American Express offices prepare money orders or cable money, call your local American Express office for the location of offices that can provide these services. Money wires are complicated and costly. Plan ahead to avoid having to use them!

SECTION VI: PACKING

Packing is determined by your destination. A general rule of thumb is to pack lightly and sensibly. Since you will have to carry your luggage, don't pack more than you can carry by yourself. Currently, airlines charge for checked luggage, so keep this into consideration. While overseas, it is perfectly acceptable to wear the same outfit more than once. Choose clothes that you can mix and match, layer, and don't need special cleaning, which will help you adjust to different situations and different weather. Remember that you are representing the school and your country, so dress appropriately out of respect for your host country. If you aren't sure what is appropriate, your program administrators will be more than happy to advise you.

Here are some general packing guidelines that may be helpful to you:

- Your program administrator is an invaluable resource in regards to the dress codes and needs of your time in the host country. Based on your itinerary, you may need clothes that you do not mind getting dirty, or you may need something that you can wear to give a presentation. With the added layer of a new cultural context, take your program administrator's recommendations very seriously as they want you to be as prepared as possible for all activities.
- Do not take jewelry or other items of monetary or sentimental value.
- You may want to take house slippers depending on your accommodations, especially if you will be staying in someone's home.
- Take enough prescription medication to last for the entire duration of the trip. Keep in original containers.
- Store some pictures of back home on your phone to share with your new friends abroad.
- Electrical service is not identical around the world. If you bring electrical appliances, you may need a converter. Go to kropla.com to find the type of service in your host country.
- Take personal hygiene products.
- Find out the luggage allowance for your airline before you pack.
- Thinking of taking a laptop? Be sure that you have the right converter and transformer. Laptops are also high-risk theft items, so may elect to get it insured.
- Other miscellaneous items you may want to consider:
 - adapters and converters

- phone and computer chargers
- camera
- pens
- extra eyeglasses or contacts
- small first aid kit with band aids and ointments
- Pain reliever, laxatives, diarrhea medication
- Sunscreen
- Comb/brush
- Toothbrush
- Very comfortable shoes!

Documents

Don't forget all of your documents, and to keep them in your carry on when traveling. Make two copies of everything, one that you keep when traveling in a separate location than the original document, and one set at home that a friend or family member can access:

- passport
- passport copies
- copy of visa
- vaccination documents
- airline tickets
- methods of payment (ATM, Credit Card, etc.)
- insurance information
- written prescriptions, etc.

SECTION VII: COMMUNICATION

Staying in Touch

All participants are required to maintain a cellular phone that supports international data & cellular service in the region in which you are traveling. Participants will be required to download select applications for use during the international experience.

It is easier and more affordable than ever to stay in touch with family and friends while you are abroad. Remember, your family back home in the US is concerned about you, so inform them if you will be traveling or unreachable for any period of time. Your program administrator may be able to let you know if there will be periods of time that you may be completely unreachable if you will be traveling to rural areas. Internet access will be available in many countries and will provide an opportunity to stay connected back home.

Telephoning from Overseas

When you make your first call, you will need to [learn a new telephone system](#), which is different in every country. When shopping for the best international rates, be sure that you indicate where the call will be originating. Check with your current long distance carrier to see what international plans they offer for international cellular service & data usage.

Connecting Via Internet

You can make phone calls over the internet through phone applications such as [Skype](#), [WhatsApp](#), or via Apple's mobile platform.

- [WhatsApp](#) is an international messaging & calling application for your smart phone. Users can connect with other users, for free, from anywhere in the world when connected to internet. We require all participants download WhatsApp prior to travel in order to stay connected with program administrators and other program participants.
- [Skype](#) services allow you to call and message other users (free), or connect with landlines and cell phones (for a fee).
- For those with Apple devices, connection can be made via internet for free to other Apple users via Facetime, Facetime audio, and iMessage.

Social Media

Social Media is a great way to let everyone know, up-to-the minute, what you are up to. However, consider that what you put out on the internet can be seen by every single person in the world, so think accordingly. Also, this could have implications in the future as anything that is put on the internet can be out there for many, many years to come.

You should always ask permission before posting/taking photos of anyone. Remember, when you are online, you are in a public domain, and while you may be comfortable with that, not everyone may feel the same way you do. Represent yourself, classmates, faculty, your university, and the U.S. (or your home country) in a respectful manner.

SECTION VIII: CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

So far, we've discussed the logistics, safety, and health issues to consider when preparing for your international experience. Just as important is preparing mentally and psychologically, as things will not be the same as they are in the US. One way to feel more secure about your preparedness is to research the culture of the country you will be living in.

Understanding Culture

What is culture? From the Peace Corp's ["What's Up with Culture?"](#)

One of first things you will encounter when you go abroad is something you can't really see, but which, if you don't understand what it is and how it works, can seriously affect how you adjust to and enjoy your time overseas. That "thing" is CULTURE. The kind of culture we will address here is not at all the kind of thing one refers to when talking about being a "cultured person" or possessing a taste for modern art, champagne, and opera. Nor is culture the exclusive province of educated elite.

Culture is a neutral term, neither good nor bad, and refers to the broadest conception about the learned knowledge that humans use to fulfill their needs and wants. It refers to the collective historical patterns, values, societal arrangements, manners, ideas, and ways of living that people have used to order their society. It is comprised of all those things we learn as part of growing up including language, religion, beliefs about economic and social relations, political organization and legitimacy, and the thousands of "Dos and Don'ts" society deems important that we know to become a member of that group.

When you go abroad you immediately meet individuals, perhaps a bewildering variety of them, but you also enter another "culture." The behaviors and attitudes you can externally observe in others are molded and motivated by their prior cultural learning, just as yours have molded you. You can't see a person's culture directly because feelings, judgments, and mental constructs are not always on display, although they may become evident through what people say or do.

For international experience purposes, culture can be most broadly defined as the shared sets of values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that are widely held by members of the host culture. You will not only need to be aware of these cultural patterns but will have to respond to them appropriately. Participants should keep in mind that the values the hosting country has may be different from their own. For example, it may be considered offensive in certain countries to take pictures of people without asking their approval, therefore always keep in mind to seek permission when taking photographs. In general, be respectful towards the people living in the country as well as towards your administrators and peers.

Educate Yourself

Learn about your host country before you go. Here are a few ways to educate yourself in advance:

- Read newspapers and magazines to find out about current events and politics in your host country.
- Listen to radio stations, such as National Public Radio, that has international news coverage.
- Talk to an international participant on your campus that is from your host country.
- Look in your community to see if there are any neighborhoods, events or centers that focus on the area in which you will visit.

'Culture Shock'

Culture shock is a term used to describe difficulties that you experience when you immerse yourself into a new culture. Everyone experiences and interacts with a new culture differently. Talk to your fellow participants and program administrator if you are feeling overwhelmed by the new culture. Everyone usually experiences some type of initial surprise when being faced with a new culture, so understand that it is a part of the experience, and will most likely dissolve within days, or less. The more that you have educated yourself in advance may make you that much more comfortable with differences.

Group Dynamics

While you are busy thinking about your trip overseas, it's often easy to forget that you will also be experiencing a different 'classroom' culture than you did when you were in the U.S. Your class in the U.S. may have been in a classroom, online, and perhaps you met just once a week and did not get to know your classmates. Now you will be instantly close with your group and program administrator, and perhaps eating, sleeping and traveling in very close quarters! Be open to these new experiences; these are great chances to get to know a really great group of people with like-minded interests. Try to keep a positive, healthy outlook and focus on the exciting adventure and be supportive, respectful and friendly to the group. Keep in mind that your program administrator has carefully shaped your program. This means that they may have restrictions on allowing spouse or any non-enrolled person to accompany you on the trip. Ask your program administrator what they are comfortable with prior to telling a friend to book a ticket.

Social Etiquette

As an example, the way that gender roles are defined in every culture is a very

complicated formula. What we may find as innocent behavior in the U.S. may be seen as something completely different in another culture. Perhaps in some countries, the honking of a horn is an acceptable gesture for a man to give women to indicate he appreciates her appearance. Consider that your standards of intimacy in a relationship may have different implications in different cultures. Your personal relationships may usually be considered exactly that; personal, in your own culture, however, it may be perceived differently in other cultures. For example, it may be considered a personal insult of a host family if you bring an overnight guest to their home. It's okay to discuss these unwritten roles with your administrators and fellow participants, it will help you better understand and prepare for different behavior than what you are used to. Some behavior, such as whistling, may be best by being ignored; however, other etiquette may be essential to observe to show respect of your host country.

Racial Diversity

Attitudes towards race differ widely everywhere; and what we may find intolerable, or even illegal in the United States, may be common in a foreign culture. Additionally, you may find yourself in a situation in which you are the one discriminated. It's important to prepare yourself for this situation, and to not take it personally. If possible, talking about racial differences may be an educational opportunity, and does not need to be one always met with tension. Part of the reason for international experience is to experience diversity, so try to be as open as possible to the experience and to make it a positive one, if possible. If you are experiencing a situation that causes you anxiety, your program administrator is there to talk the situation through with you.

Sexual Identity

Like many areas already discussed, attitudes in your host country may be very different than what you experience at home. It is important to know in advance your host country's attitudes and resources for the LGBT community. Talk to your program administrator before you depart to inquire about resources that they may be aware of. Search online for resources, at sites such as iglta.com

SECTION IX: RETURNING HOME

Share your experience

There are so many ways to capture and share the memories of your trip! Please don't be shy in sending pictures, videos, and journal blog updates to your program administrators.

Course Credit

There is a flurry of activity when you return, but don't forget to complete all of the necessary academic assignments for your program and your post-departure survey! Without everything turned in, your professor can not provide your final grade, so get everything in as soon as possible.

Wrapping it up

Did you make some strong connections while abroad? Emails to send out, books to look up, research to pursue? Don't lose the momentum while it is still fresh in your mind! Also, this may be a great time to thank your program administrators and all of those that hosted and aided you in your home country. A thoughtful message of thanks goes a long way in all cultures, and further confirms that international experience participants are excellent ambassadors of our country and our school.

Debrief

We want to know about your experience, and strongly encourage you to reach out to the program administrators to debrief.

SECTION X: USEFUL WEBSITES

Currency Exchange: <http://www.xe.com/>

Currency Exchange: <http://www.oanda.com/>

Travel Clinic Locator: <http://travelersvaccines.com/>

Time Zones: <http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/>

Worldwide telephone and electrical guide: <http://kropla.com/>

Mobility International: <http://www.miusa.org/>

LGBT Travel: <http://www.iglta.org/>

Sta Travel: <http://www.statravel.com/home.htm>

Green Travel: <http://gogreentravelgreen.com/>

Department of State:

- Center for Disease Control: <http://www.cdc.gov/>
- Passport Information: http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html
- Foreign Entry Requirement: http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html
- Drug Warnings: http://travel.state.gov/travel/livingabroad_drugs.html
- Embassy and Consulate Information: <http://www.usembassy.gov/>
- Travel Warnings: http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html
- Absentee Voting: <http://www.fvap.gov/>
- U.S. Department of State Study Abroad Guide:
<http://participantsabroad.state.gov/>

References

Guide for Short- Term Study Abroad Programs// www.cmu.edu/studyabroad

Study Abroad Handbook, Office of International Affairs, The Ohio State University

Study Abroad Pre-Departure Handbook, Center of International Studies, University of Missouri-St. Louis.