

# Education Abroad Pre-Departure Guide



International Affairs

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO  
COLORADO SPRINGS



1420 Austin Bluffs Parkway, Colorado Springs, CO 80918 | +1 (719) 255-5018 | [international@uccs.edu](mailto:international@uccs.edu)

*Last updated Dec. 21, 2020*

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## Before You Go

### Taking Care of UCCS Business

#### Complete Your UCCSAbroad Materials

If you have not done so already, you'll need to complete all questionnaires, materials, and signature documents in your UCCSAbroad portal before departing the U.S. Completion is mandatory, so be sure to get it done!

It's especially important that you complete your Study Away Course Approval Form (if applicable), so make sure to work with your academic advisor to get your classes taken abroad approved prior to your departure. This approval is mandatory, and failure to obtain it will result in issues with credit transfer and the disbursement of your UCCS financial aid and scholarships toward your study abroad program.

If you have trouble logging in to your UCCSAbroad portal, you can request a password reset by emailing [international@uccs.edu](mailto:international@uccs.edu).

#### Registration

If you're participating in a short-term program, you'll register for the class associated with the program as normal. For a semester or year program, you'll be registered for a placeholder by the Registrar. If you make a change in your course registration either prior to or after the start of your first week of classes overseas, you must receive the approval of the instructor or program director and then make your request for the course change in writing to International Affairs (IA) and your academic advisor so that the Study Away Form can be amended to reflect this change and credit transfer and aid can continue uninterrupted.

You are responsible for enrolling in classes both for the semester you're abroad and for the semester you plan to return at UCCS. Please mark your calendar and remember to register for your UCCS classes while abroad – if you're returning for fall semester at UCCS, you'll want to register in March, and for the spring semester you'll want to register in October.

#### Important Notes:

- Students who are not registered may jeopardize the release of their financial aid funding
- Students who are not registered may not be able to attend their desired class(es) as class(es) may become full
- Check your UCCS student email frequently!

#### Your Student Account

Note that when you are registered or directly enrolled for UCCS credit, the myUCCS portal account balance summary will show a balance due of the regular on-campus tuition fees.

## Preparing for Your Trip

Knowledge is power, and the more information you have the better your experience abroad will be. There are many ways to prepare for your journey: visit websites and read books about the history, geography and customs of the country or countries you're visiting; study maps; read newspapers with good international news coverage; and watch videos of the places you'll visit.

Below is a list of recommended activities you can do to learn about your host country:

- Review websites to access daily issues of foreign newspapers and for helpful information and advice.
- Read the U.S. Department of State's (DOS) Background Notes on your host country. The DOS publishes these notes on 170 countries worldwide. These are brief, factual pamphlets with information on each country's people, history, geography, economy, government, and current political situation, and are a very helpful starting place.
- Talk with students who have studied or lived in the countries you'll visit – this can provide invaluable personal insights.
- Check out the international travel sections of bookstores and purchase one or two good student guides such as Let's Go, Lonely Planet, Berkeley Guides, or Rough Guides.
- Learn some key words and phrases of your host country's language if you don't speak it already. The Excel Languages Center (<https://languagescenter.uccs.edu>) here on campus is great resource for learning these key phrases. Additionally, it's a good idea to purchase a small phrase book to carry with you when you're out and about.
- Finally, make sure that you know about your own country. In general, people are better informed about the U.S. than we are about the host country. In some cases, particularly with the foreign, economic, and environmental policies of the U.S., your hosts may be very up-to-date on current issues in the U.S.

## Keeping Informed Before Departure

Beyond learning more about your host country, between now and your departure you're expected to stay informed about health and safety developments in the country/countries where you will spend time (including any countries you'll visit that are not part of your study abroad program's itinerary). Please use International SOS' website, <https://www.internationalsos.com> (university membership/login number 11BCAS000006), as well as the U.S. DOS' website, <https://travel.state.gov>, to find information on the country/countries where your program will take you or that you will be traveling to independently as part of your time abroad.

On International SOS' site, you'll find detailed pre-travel country-specific information, which provides medical, security, and travel information to prepare for safe travel.

On the DOS' site you'll find three different types of information: Country Information Sheets, Travel Alerts, and Travel Warnings. This information is regularly updated based on current events worldwide. According to the Department of State,

- **Country Information Sheets** are issued as a matter of course and are available for every country of the world. They include such information as the location of the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in that country, unusual immigration practices, health conditions, minor political disturbances, unusual currency and entry regulations, crime and security information, and drug penalties.
- **Travel Alerts** are issued as required and are a means to disseminate information about terrorist threats and other relatively short-term and/or transnational conditions posing risk to the security of U.S. travelers.
- **Travel Warnings** are issued when the Department of State decides, based on all relevant information, to recommend that Americans avoid travel to a certain region, country, state, or local area.

We ask that you read this information carefully before you depart the United States. Please feel free to contact the International Affairs office if you have any questions or concerns regarding the information on this site.

## Travel Documents

### Passports

Plan to obtain your passport early! Processing can take anywhere from two weeks to eight weeks. Applying early helps avoid complications caused by misplaced original birth certificates or similar problems. It's also a good idea to have at least one other adult member of your family have a valid passport, as well, in case an emergency arises while you're abroad – you can apply together!

U.S. and non-U.S. citizens need a passport both to enter other countries (including Canada and Mexico) and return to the United States. If you already have a passport, make sure it is valid until at least six months after your return date (note: some countries, such as Russia, require that your passport is valid for eighteen months following the completion of your program). If it expires sooner than that six months past your return date, apply to renew your passport. New U.S. passports are good for ten years.

The easiest way to obtain a passport is to go to the U.S. Department of State's website at <https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/passports/apply.html> and follow the instructions. The fee for passports will vary. Passport applications and directions for submitting your passport are also at most post offices.

With your completed application you must also have the following:

1. Proof of U.S. citizenship (e.g. certified copy of your birth certificate)
2. Proof of identity (e.g. a valid driver's license)
3. Two (2) identical photographs (2" x 2" with white background)
4. Appropriate fees
5. A social security number

**Get a passport via the  
U.S. Department of  
State at  
<https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/passports/apply.html>!**

Passport photos can be taken at Walgreens, Walmart, or at many post offices that handle passport-processing. You must submit your application at a post office. Please note that most post offices require that you have an appointment when applying for or renewing your passport. We recommend that you DO NOT submit your application by mail and instead make an in-person appointment. Once you have your passport, be sure to sign it and fill in the emergency information page.

### Visas

A visa is permission, in document form, that a foreign government gives an individual to enter and/or reside in a country for a specific time for a specific purpose. A visa can come in several forms: a stamp in your passport, a printed piece of paper separate from your passport, an electronic document, etc. You will need a passport before applying for a visa, and the passport-plus-visa process may take three to four months, so start early. If you are a U.S. citizen or traveling on a U.S. passport, a visa is not required by most western European countries if you are spending fewer than three months in the country visited. However, the regulations change frequently, so check with the embassy/consulate of your host country.

The cost and requirements for obtaining visas vary. Your program provider may be able to offer guidance, and International Affairs will assist you to the best of their ability to help you properly obtain a visa as well, but ultimately it is up to you to submit all proper identification and documentation. Each country will have a different governing body that assigns visas. You can check the most up to date visa requirements by going to your host country's government website.

You may be denied entry into or be deported from a country for which you have not obtained a required visa. The International Affairs Office and the University of Colorado Colorado Springs are not responsible for obtaining visas nor are they in any way responsible for visa or entry denial. For some countries, certain medical requirements must be met before a visa will be issued. Many countries will not issue visas to persons with any type of police record.



There are companies that will assist you in properly and swiftly obtaining a visa. UCCS has an account with CIBT which can assist UCCS students at a discounted rate to obtain passports and visas. They offer concierge visa and passport services to ensure proper application and validation beforehand, decreasing the chance that your applications are denied. To use CIBT's services, visit <https://cibtvisas.com/> and enter account number 102493.

**Note:** If you are not a U.S. citizen, consult the embassy or consulate of the country or countries you will be visiting to learn their document requirements. You should check the U.S. State Department website for foreign consular office listings and for the listings of embassies and consulates. The procedures that you will follow may be different from those of U.S. citizens. It is important to initiate this process as soon as possible in order to assemble documents and allow time for lengthy procedures. International UCCS students must visit their UCCS international advisor to obtain a signature on immigration documents to permit re-entry to the United States upon return.

### Register Your Travel

Preparing for international travel and potential emergency situations outside of the U.S. is important and may be very different than in the U.S. To help you be prepared before departing, it's a good idea register your travel, including any excursions you plan to take outside your program's home base, with International SOS and STEP.

### International SOS

International SOS is a travel assistance provider that the university has a membership with. All UCCS students participating in an approved abroad program are covered and will simply need to register with International SOS to receive the information and services below. You can access the provider-hosted website at <https://www.internationalsos.com/> with the university membership/login number 11BCAS000006. You'll need to register with International SOS before departing the U.S. in order to access services while abroad. International SOS provides the following services:

- **Pre-travel country-specific information:** Provides medical, security, and travel information to prepare for safe travel. The travel guidance is accessible on the hosted website and/or is emailed to travelers booked through the university travel agency or who manually register their reservation.
- **Database of university travelers:** Traveler reservations booked through the university travel agency are uploaded to assist in responding to emergencies. Travelers can manually enter travel reservations as well.

**Make sure to register your international travel:**

**International SOS**

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

**Member/login # 11BCAS000006**

**STEP**

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

- **24/7 travel assistance:** Travelers can call for pre-travel and during-travel inquiries.
- **Real time global intelligence reports (email or mobile app):** Changes in medical or travel conditions will trigger alerts to travelers.
- **Emergency/crisis responder:** Your international medical and evacuation insurance carrier is your first call for medical and evacuation needs. The university uses the travel assistance provider for additional guidance in emergencies.

## STEP

The U.S. Department of State offers a free program known as the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program, or STEP, to U.S. citizens and nationals traveling or living abroad. The program allows enrollees to pre-register their trip with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate, ensuring that you receive alerts and information from the embassy/consulate about safety conditions in your host country, can be contacted faster by the embassy/consulate in the event of an emergency, and helps family and friends get in touch with you in the event of an emergency.

We highly advise you to register your travel with STEP, including any travel to other locations you plan to do while abroad on your program. More information on STEP, as well as registration, can be found online at <https://step.state.gov/>. There's a smartphone app for convenient registration as well.

## What & How to Pack

### General Luggage & Packing Guidelines

Below you'll find tips and guidelines we recommend you follow when packing for your time abroad.

- **PACK LIGHT!** Really, we mean it.
- Take only what you can carry by yourself for 2-3 city blocks. Bags with wheels, as opposed to duffel bags, are recommended for your larger suitcase as they're often easier to move over distances since they can roll.
- Generally, you are allotted one carry-on bag (e.g. a suitcase) that fits in the overhead storage bin and one personal item (e.g. a purse or backpack) that fits under the seat in front of you to bring onto the plane. You may also check a larger bag in the plane's cargo compartment. Always check your ticket's baggage allowance before packing.
  - On short-term programs, a carry-on and personal item will likely be enough.
  - For semester and year-long programs, you may want to pack a checked bag as well.

- For international flights on most major airlines, the first checked bag within the weight limit is free, but there will likely be a charge for more than one checked bag.
- Flights have very strict limitations on baggage size and weight. Generally, 50lbs/22kg is the maximum weight for a free checked bag (you'll need to pay for anything heavier), but you should always check your airline's website for information on carry-on weight and size restrictions and any variance to the checked baggage weight allowance. A portable baggage scale can be helpful in ensuring you don't go over the weight limit.
  - Remember to leave room for souvenirs you pick up while abroad!
- Make sure all of your luggage – checked bag(s), carry-on suitcase, personal item – has a luggage tag. Mark your luggage tags ahead of time with a clear indication of your name, address, phone number, and the phone number of your destination. Keep this information inside your bags as well.
- Keep your carry-on luggage close to you at all times.
- Lock your carry-on and checked bags with a TSA-approved lock!
- Get a durable backpack – most students find that a good backpack is easier to travel with on shorter trips or excursions than wheeled bags.

### Luggage

If you intend to travel before or after your program, make arrangements for storing your luggage. Do not assume that your luggage can be stored at your housing location during dates outside of the program. Most major airports and train stations have lockers which you can keep your luggage in. Know ahead of time if where you are traveling has these types of amenities.

### Packing

Speak with your faculty director or education abroad advisor about acceptable clothing for your destination. It's a good idea to speak to someone who has either lived/traveled there or look up travel forums online to research this as well. What is "in" here may be unacceptable in many countries or may serve as a way of accentuating your national identity in an unflattering or dangerous way. For example, in many countries, people may not wear shorts unless at a beach, and in some countries, showing your legs and/or shoulders is not proper in certain places like churches or mosques, particularly for women. Many of the popular places of worship (such as many of the cathedrals in Vatican City or temples in Thailand) require you to be completely covered. Knowing where you are going and what type of clothing is acceptable is important.

Bring items that are easily washed and that dry quickly. While all long-term stay facilities will have laundry, they may be limited, and you want to spend as little time as possible doing laundry or finding dry cleaners.

Leave all keys and other items not needed abroad at home. Make two photocopies/scans of your valuable documents and maintain an “emergency file” containing

- a copy of your airline ticket and flight itinerary
- a copy of your passport
- extra traveler’s checks/a list of the serial numbers of your traveler’s checks
- a copy of your driver's license
- a document with your blood type and Rh factor
- a copy of your prescriptions for your medications
- the name of your doctor and dentist
- supplemental insurance policies
- and the credit cards you take abroad.

Leave one set at home and keep another with you in a separate place from the originals. Prior to departure you will be provided with the address and telephone number of where you are going to live, so leave a copy of your itinerary and in-country contact information with family or friends at home as well. Creating these emergency files is extremely important, and we highly recommend taking the time to photocopy/scan important documents so that original copies can be retrieved in the event of loss or theft.

**NEVER pack your passport or any other important documents in your checked luggage or even your carry-on bag.** Passports (including the visa page), credit cards, and money should always be in your personal item (e.g. your purse or backpack). Be aware that certain reading material or literature may offend officials of some countries, so think carefully about your choice of reading material for the flight. If your passport is lost or stolen abroad, contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate for assistance with obtaining an emergency passport.

### Things to Bring

Here’s a list of items you’ll definitely want to remember to pack for your time abroad. Note that this is just a starting point; there may be other required items that you personally will need.

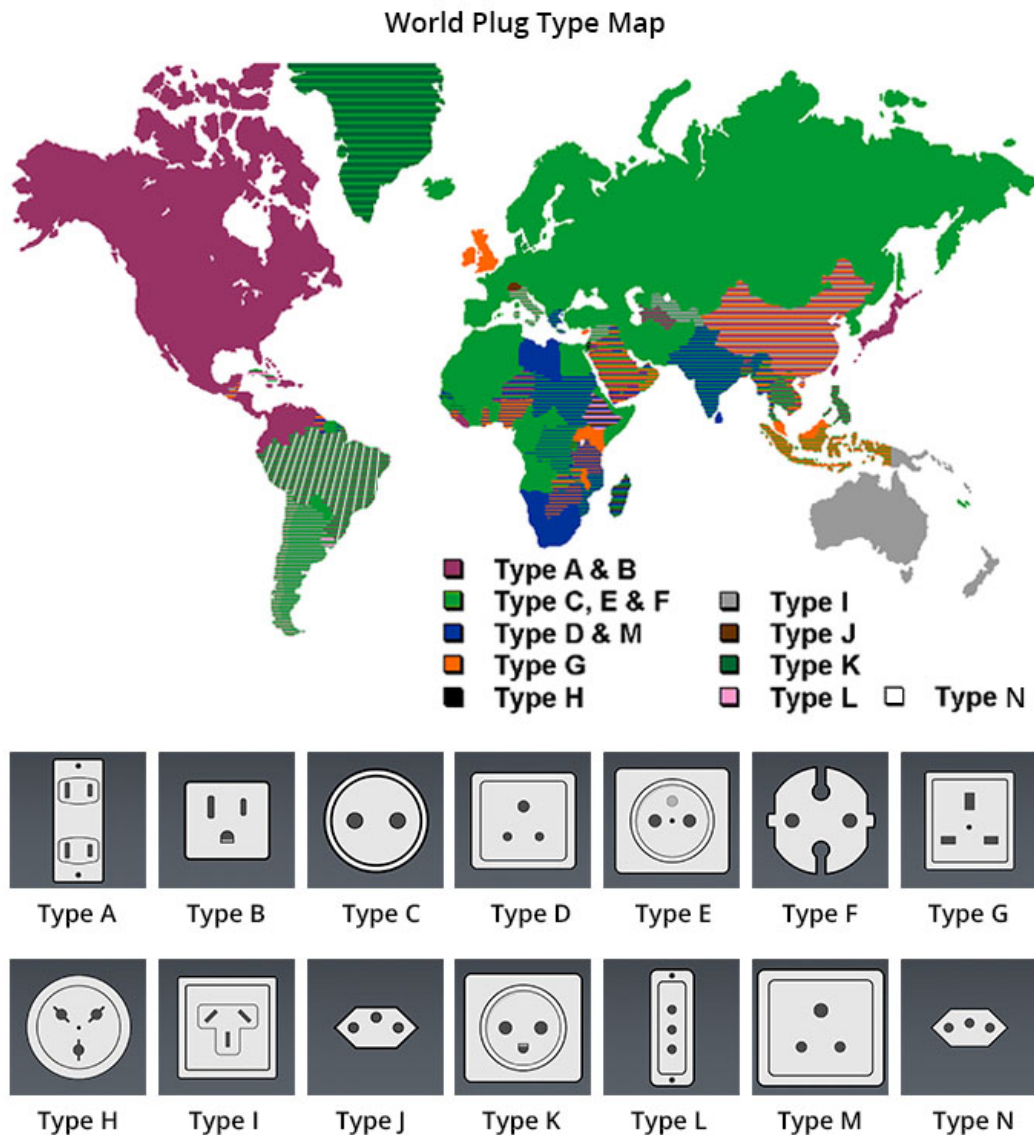
- All medications in original bottles with back-up prescriptions. Remember this goes for vitamins, supplements and over-the-counter (OTC) drugs too – do not condense into smaller packages or you’ll risk confiscation or difficulties getting through customs here and abroad. Make sure that everything that you are bringing is legal in the country to which you are going. Check out <https://www.embassy.org/embassies/> to make sure that all of your OTC and prescription drugs are allowed.
- Prescription glasses (2 sets preferred) and contact lenses and contact lens solution if you wear them. These, especially the contact lens solution, can be difficult to find in many countries, so bring more than you would normally use just in case.

- Contraceptives, feminine hygiene products (in countries where these items are not easily found), etc. Remember that AIDS and STDs are world-wide epidemics – condoms in some countries may be of sub-standard quality.
- First aid kit: band-aids, alcohol swabs, anti-bacterial lotion, skin lotion for any conditions you may have, anti-diarrhea medicine, small quantities of aspirin or pain-relief medicine, preferred cold treatments, insect repellent, sunscreen, etc. (Please also speak with your faculty director, IA staff, and El Paso County Health Department for required travel medicines – malaria prophylaxis, salt tablets, water purification tablets, etc.).
- Toiletries: bring whatever you will need (deodorant, shampoo, conditioner, soap, hand and body lotion, sunscreen, cosmetics), but remember that if you are going to be in-country for a long period of time, most of these items are easily purchased abroad and many major US brands can be found abroad.
- The minimum amount of clothing that is appropriate for your destination and type of program (as a general rule, pack about two weeks' worth of clothing and plan to do laundry regularly)
- Electrical adapters and converters (see the section below for more information)
- Any hard-to-find or more expensive items that will help support your mental health while abroad. Students have reported not bringing these kinds of items because they were bulky or they felt they wouldn't need them and then wishing they had them in-country as they worked through culture shock or homesickness. Your mental health is important, so make sure you're setting yourself up for success.

### Electrical Appliances

Electrical service varies throughout the world. Most outlets will not accept the two- or three-pronged plugs that are standard in the United States, nor have the same voltage we're used to here. As a result, for items like your cell phone and other small electronic appliances you may bring, you'll likely need a set of adapter plugs that will adapt U.S. plugs to the plug system of your host country. Additionally, you'll likely also need a voltage converter to convert the U.S. voltage of your electronic device to the local voltage. These items can be purchased Best Buy, Walmart, Amazon, etc. Make sure to buy these ahead of time, as they may not be easily found once in-country. If you're bringing more expensive electronic equipment such as a computer, it's best to obtain all necessary conversion information and/or items from a professional/from the company who makes the equipment before departure.

Note that electric appliances such as curling irons and hairdryers do not normally work well on foreign voltages even with a converter. If you're going to be abroad for a while, it's often better to purchase these items abroad once you've arrived in your host country.



Source: FS Community

### What to Pack in Your Carry-On Luggage

We suggest you include whatever you need for your first 24-48 hours, including:

- an extra pair of eyeglasses or contact lenses and cleaning solution (less than three ounces)
- a map or directions to your destination
- any medications you use, in their original labeled containers with a letter from your physician attesting to your need to take them (especially if they contain narcotics) to make customs processing easier
- basic toiletries (containers must be less than three ounces each and all must be placed in a quart-sized, clear plastic bag)

- a sweater or sweatshirt
- a change of clothes (including undergarments)
- a pair of pajamas

Do not pack any sharp items such as jackknives, scissors, etc. in your carry-on luggage. **Do not pack personal documents (passports, visas, airline tickets, etc.) in your main carry-on luggage; always keep this in your personal item.**

#### Money & Funds Before You Go

- Call your bank and credit card companies to let them know that you will be traveling. Some banks and credit card companies will also let you schedule travel online. If you don't contact your bank and credit card companies to alert them of your travel, you're at risk of your card being frozen. When you call or schedule your travel online, find out if your debit and/or credit cards have foreign transaction fees, and if so, what they are.
  - Inquire with your bank regarding partner banks in the country you will be visiting – this could reduce fees charged to your account for withdrawals.
  - If you feel comfortable with it, it may be helpful to grant a responsible party access to your bank accounts in case of emergency.
- Research your host country's policies regarding credit card usage.
  - Many countries have switched to chip-and-PIN cards, which include an encrypted chip in addition to the magnetic strip, or to touchless/tap cards. While most American card companies have introduced chip cards, they are only recently introducing touchless/tap cards. It is important to know if your host country has regulations regarding whether or not you can use cards with or without the encrypted chip or without touchless pay.
  - Learn whether cards or cash is the primary payment method in your country and plan accordingly. Some countries, such as the Netherlands, are almost entirely cashless and it may be hard to find an ATM if you do decide to use cash.
  - Know whether your credit card will be accepted – some U.S. brands such as Discover or American Express are not widely accepted abroad. Visa is the most widely accepted credit card brand internationally.
- Make arrangements for your bills to be paid while away.
- Have a source of funds for emergencies – an extra credit card, back-up ATM card, ways that family or friends can put extra cash into your checking account or wire to you if needed, etc.
- Get \$100-\$150 in the foreign currency for your host country from your bank or at the airport from a Cambio/Currency Exchange kiosk. Note that your bank will likely have a more favorable exchange rate than the airport kiosk. Regardless of the exchange option you choose, make sure to have a variety of large and small bills.



- Create a budget – talk to IA staff, read books, and talk to other students who have been to where you are traveling to understand financial needs. There are many apps that help with budgeting and currency exchange rates as well.
- Optional: Get traveler's checks from AAA, American Express, or a similar brand (regardless of brand, you'll want about \$300 worth, depending on destination). Traveler's checks can be purchased at a bank or local travel agency (American Express, AAA, etc.) in a variety of denominations and currencies. They can be used for payment at many local establishments or can be exchanged for cash at any bank or exchange agency. Traveler's checks come in both U.S. Dollars (USD) and in many foreign currencies and can be replaced if lost or stolen. Make sure to keep a list of the serial numbers from each check in a safe place so it can be given to the bank representative for replacement! More information about traveler's checks can be found on the American Express website or from your bank/AAA. Be aware, however, that traveler's checks are becoming increasingly difficult to cash, particularly in Europe and the Middle East, and may only be useful as a last resort.

### Export Control

When you leave the United States, you need to know your responsibilities under export control regulations regarding the export of University-owned equipment. Non-public technical information and encryption source code are subject to export control regulations, which means a license may be required to take or send it out of the U.S.; technology developed by or at the University may also be subject to these regulations. In most cases University employees may temporarily (<12 months) take common technology (e.g. laptop computers, commercial software, PDAs, cell phones) subject to the Export Administration Regulations (EAR) to most international destinations without an export license. For more information about what you can and cannot take with you under Export Control rules, please visit <https://osp.uccs.edu/export-controls/international-travel-and-export-controls>.

Additionally, it's important to know that outside export control regulations, you'll need to declare expensive and/or foreign goods you'll take with you before leaving the United States so that you're not charged duty on them when you return and pass through U.S. Customs.

## Getting There

### Overseas Flights

Booking an overseas flight is one of your first big hurdles when traveling abroad. It can be the easiest thing you do or the most complex, depending on how early you start planning. If you start early, you will save yourself time and money, since the closer to your trip you get, the higher the fares generally become.

We encourage you to purchase your flight early; however, we do not advise you to do so until you have been officially admitted to your program. For UCCS short-term programs, please



ensure that you have been informed by International Affairs that the program has the minimum enrollment needed to ensure that it will take place before you purchase your ticket.

Some programs will arrange to have the entire group fly together, while other programs will have no participation in your travel plans. You don't want to make a flight reservation if you've already paid for one through your program, so make sure to check with your program leader or provider before booking your flight.

If you do need to make flight arrangements yourself, make sure you find out when and where your program wants you to arrive. Budget airline tools such as Travelocity, StudentUniverse, or Kayak can be helpful for finding low fares. Purchasing travel insurance with your airline or travel company can also be helpful if you anticipate needing to change travel arrangements or to protect yourself from canceled flights and damaged luggage.

If you, or your parents, want to track a flight overseas or at your destination, <https://www.flightview.com/> will allow you to see where the flight is and whether it's on time or delayed. All you need is the flight number and the airline and the website will track the flight for you!

Many overseas flights will serve one or several meals depending on the flight time. If you have any special diet requirements, you'll need to notify your airline within a week of your departure in order for them to secure arrangements. Vegetarian, light, and kosher meals are possible on most flights.

## Airports

While airports can be confusing places, major international airports (and indeed airports in general) will have signage in several languages, including English. However, each airport is set up differently and will require you to pay attention to where you're going. If you're unsure about how to navigate the airport, there are a couple of things that you can do to help yourself. One, if possible, is to travel with other people going on the same program. Another suggestion is to look online and save a copy of the layout of the airport you will be arriving at. 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 get from one to the next. If the information changes mid-flight, most major airlines' seatback magazine will have airport maps for most of their major hubs towards the back of the magazine. Almost all airports have information counters after you clear customs and immigration and baggage claim where the staff will often speak English that you can consult as well.

In some airports in India and Africa, a printout (a hard copy) of your flight confirmation is required in order to enter the airport at all. When you arrive in your host country, it is advised that you find out about these requirements before you leave the airport, or well in advance before you leave to come home, so that you can be prepared with the proper flight documentation.

It's also important to keep in mind that airports are potential crime areas. Please be careful, and

- never leave your baggage unattended
- 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 to avoid the risk of becoming a carrier of drugs or other illegal or dangerous materials.

## While Abroad

### Personal Document Safety

While abroad, you should avoid keeping your passport and other important documents on your person as much as possible. Carry the photocopies you brought with you instead, unless you anticipate needing your actual passport (e.g. for checking in to a hotel) or other documents. Your local student ID or International Student Identity Card (ISIC) (visit <https://www.isic.org/> to apply for one) should be enough identification for most situations.

When not carrying your passport and other important documents, lock them in the hotel safe or lock them inside your larger suitcase to keep them safe until they're needed.

If your passport is lost or stolen abroad, contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate for assistance to obtain an emergency passport.

**While abroad, avoid carrying your important documents with you. Carry photocopies instead, and consider an International Student Identity Card (<https://www.isic.org/>).**

### Money & Funds While Abroad

The majority of students rely on ATMs to withdraw funds while abroad. While you don't want to pay transaction fees unnecessarily, it's also important not to take too much cash out at once. A good rule of thumb to start out with is to take out only as much as you anticipate needing for the week. If it lasts longer or doesn't last the week, you'll know you're withdrawing a bit too much/too little and can adjust accordingly.

If you're traveling away on a weekend, particularly if you're going to a remote area, plan ahead – you may not have access to ATM machines, and in certain places credit cards are not accepted. Note that debit cards do not function as credit cards in many countries like they do in the U.S., and that both your debit card and credit cards may charge up to \$5 or 5% of the purchase for each transaction if they have foreign transaction fees as part of the cardholder agreement. Remember, to use either your debit or credit cards, you'll need to call your bank and credit card companies or schedule your travel with them online before departing the U.S.

to prevent your cards from being frozen. When you reach out, you should be able to learn which of your cards have foreign transaction fees. Whenever possible, we recommend using the cards without foreign transaction fees for purchases – you can often get a better exchange rate.

Remember that you're withdrawing cash in the local currency. If your daily limit is \$300 in US dollars, you may be able to withdraw, for instance, just €250 or so (depending on the exchange rate). If you get an "insufficient funds" message, it may not be that your card has been rejected; in fact, it's more likely that you were asking for more cash in the local currency than your daily limit allows. Be aware that ATMs themselves also have withdrawal limits. Note as well that few ATM receipts list the exchange rate, and some machines don't dispense receipts at all.

### Tips on Budgeting

Below are some tips we recommend you follow in order to create and stick to your budget while abroad.

- For the first 1-2 weeks of the program, write down what you're spending money on to get a sense of your weekly budget and to make sure that you're spending wisely and will have enough to last the duration of the program. Remember that there may be some costs in those first few weeks related to getting set up in-country, such as bed linens or cookware, that won't reoccur. While it's important to note those down, you'll want to take those items out of the overall tally toward establishing your regular weekly budget for the rest of the program.
- Remember to leave room in your weekly budget for a few fun, non-essential things, like a restaurant meal or a museum ticket.
- Make sure that you understand the currency exchange rate. Since it may be hard to keep track of the local exchange rate if you're traveling to several countries, we recommend you download a currency exchange app that can work without data or WiFi.
- Make sure that you know how much you're spending on your cell phone.
- Know whether or not it's acceptable to barter – in many countries bartering is expected, and you'll want to adhere to the local custom.
- Understand whether or not you should tip or pay gratuities in restaurants. In many countries, tipping is not expected, so it's important to research the local customs.
- As much as possible, do your grocery shopping where the locals go, not in the places that cater to foreigners. Be aware that many grocery stores, such as those in Europe, require you to purchase bags, so you may want to bring your own.

## Communication

It is vitally important that you continue to communicate with your family while you are abroad. However, it's also a good idea to limit the amount of time you spend checking in on friends and family at home, since doing so excessively can contribute to culture shock and homesickness. Check in at least once a week, and more if you're going to be traveling outside your regular program location. Establish a set manner of communication that will work in your local area, as well, so that you'll be able to connect with them as planned.

Equally important is that you communicate with your fellow participants and program staff if you go away, whether for a weekend or just for a night. Remember that someone may be looking for you even if you've just spent the night out, so call in and let someone know where you are. Your program may require that you fill out a form to let them know the dates you'll be traveling, along with where to. Be sure to fill this form out each time you go away, even if it's just for a night.

## Cell Phones

Having a working cell phone that you can be reached at while abroad is vital to your safety. There are a few different options available to you for maintaining a cell phone while abroad; some will be better than others depending on the length of time you'll be abroad.

Check with your U.S. carrier to see if your phone will work at your destination and any other destinations you plan to visit. If it does, you may be able to activate the international roaming service that would allow you to receive and make calls while abroad. Note that this option is often expensive and provides very little data, so it's best used for shorter trips.

If you're going abroad for a longer duration, consider having your provider unlock your phone so that you can replace your U.S.-based SIM card with a local SIM card. Each SIM card comes with its own number, and having a local SIM card will ensure that you can make and receive local calls, though calls to the U.S. may incur long-distance charges (to avoid that, use internet calling – see the section below). Swapping the SIM card often won't affect any of the personal data on your phone (though it's always important to check and make sure), and many local providers will offer pay-as-you-go plans with more data than you'd get on the international roaming service from your U.S. carrier for less money, making this a great option for longer-term study abroad. Some will even have free international roaming as part of the plan, which is helpful in areas like Europe if you plan to travel to other countries while abroad.

If you do opt to swap your SIM card, it's important to research which international carriers are compatible with your U.S. network. Since different cell phone providers configure their phones differently to work on their network, not all international providers will be compatible with your phone, so make sure that there's one that is in your host country. A quick call or chat session with your U.S. carrier is often the best way to find out. Don't forget to save your U.S. SIM card to put back in when you're returning home as well!

Students have also found it easy to buy a cell phone upon arrival at their program site. You can usually rent or purchase from local vendors for an affordable cost after you arrive. When purchasing a cell phone and SIM card abroad, you will most likely pre-pay your minutes as you go. This option tends to be affordable and works well for both shorter and longer trips.

Regardless of the option you choose, be sure to turn off cellular data for apps you don't plan to use on cellular data while abroad. This will help save data and money and may help with your phone's battery life as well. If you're planning an extended excursion for the day, turning on low power mode can help preserve your phone's battery further. Consider purchasing a portable battery, as well, so that you won't ever be stranded without a working phone. Other tips for using your cell phone abroad can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lnUy1BqY4xw> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7DPSbLI3YAg>.

### Internet Calling

VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) is a type of service that allows you to make phone calls with a web service provider using a computer, tablet, or smartphone with an internet connection. Often, with WiFi, these calls are free. Skype, FaceTime, and WhatsApp are the most common. WhatsApp, along with apps like Facebook Messenger, are also useful as an internet messaging service if you don't want to use your cellular data. You can also call regular land lines and cell phones in the United States for free with Google Voice. Some of these services won't work and/or may be banned in certain locations, so make sure you know what options are available to you in your host country. Regardless of the option you choose, you'll want to set up these accounts before you leave. Additionally, make sure you know if who you are calling needs to have an account as well.

### Cultural Adjustments

When going abroad, you will experience differences in manners, beliefs, customs, laws, language, art, religion, values, concept of self, family organization, social organization, government, behavior, etc. All of these elements combine to form your host country's rich and unique culture.

Different cultures have their own social norms; gestures as simple as nodding or pointing or even looking someone in the eyes can be seen as rude or aggressive. For example, in America it's traditional to exchange a quick, firm handshake when meeting someone, while in Africa a loose but lengthy, handshake is preferred, and in many Arabic countries you would only shake hands with men in business situations and never with women. In Bangladesh, the "thumbs up" gesture is considered obscene; in Japan it's rude to tip; and in some South American countries, it's offensive to toss things to somebody rather than just handing them directly.

It's important to learn about the different customs of your host country as much as you can before going abroad. Though there will probably be many cultural differences in your host country, doing just a little bit of research will make a huge difference. Websites such as

<http://studentsabroad.com> are a great tool in helping you learn about the culture. Also, simply following cultural cues once you are in the country itself is usually enough to get you by. Observe how the locals act and follow in their footsteps. For example, if somebody takes their shoes off before entering a house, make sure you follow suit. For a great website about culture in different countries, visit <https://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources-types/guides>.

**Visit these websites for cultural insights into your host country:**

<http://studentsabroad.com>

<https://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources-types/guides>

All these changes will be unfamiliar and might cause culture shock at first, but before you know it, they will become as normal to you as your own customs! Still, allow yourself a period of adjustment, and know that even if it doesn't seem like it, your peers on the program are experiencing an adjustment as well.

### [Stereotypes Work Both Ways](#)

In adjusting to your study abroad environment, you'll have to deal with real as well as perceived cultural differences. Keep in mind that people of other cultures are just as adept at stereotyping Americans as we are at stereotyping them - and the results are not always complimentary. The following, for example, are a few of the qualities (some positive, some negative) that others frequently associate with the "typical" American:

- Outgoing and friendly
- Informal
- Hardworking
- Generous
- Sure to have all the answers
- Wealthy
- Lacking in class consciousness
- Disrespectful of authority
- Racially prejudiced
- Ignorant of other countries
- Promiscuous
- Politically naïve
- Wealthy
- Informal
- Loud, rude, boastful, immature
- Extravagant and wasteful (including in energy use)
- Always in a hurry

While a stereotype might have some grain of truth, it's obvious when we consider individual differences that not every American fits this description. Keep in mind that this same thing is true about your hosts vis-à-vis your own preconceptions. Remember that you are an ambassador from UCCS and the United States and try not to reinforce negative stereotypes.

### Adjusting to a Different Educational System

Educational systems will differ depending on the country you're going to, but you should expect to have lectures, seminars, laboratory sessions, papers, and examinations.

For instance, you may attend lectures, but a larger share of the classroom time may be spent in small tutorial and seminar groups. Most of the learning will likely take place outside the classroom, however. You'll be expected to provide your own motivation and to assume responsibility for your own education and learning and not to simply wait to be taught the course material. Additionally, grades for courses may be based entirely on one paper or exam, rather than the continuous assessment model used in the U.S.

Please note that while much of the learning will probably take place outside the classroom, attendance is still important. Educational systems will differ depending on the host country, but this is true almost everywhere, so make sure to attend your classes!

Before you take your first exam, ask for clarification of the grading system, since it's unlikely to match the one you're used to here at UCCS. This will help alleviate any surprises when you receive your results. We also recommend speaking to students of the host institution to get a feel for the type of exams that will be offered and how to study for them.

### Culture Shock

**"The process of adapting to a foreign culture is mostly about change, and the change must occur in you. If you are to function happily and productively in a culture foreign to you, then you have to meet that culture on its own terms, because it's not going to meet you on yours."**

— Orin Hargraves, *Culture Shock! Morocco: A Guide to Customs and Etiquette*

Going abroad requires that you adjust to the same sorts of things as if you would move to another part of the United States: being away from family and friends, living in an unfamiliar environment, meeting new people, adjusting to a different climate, and so on. These changes alone could cause high stress levels, but you'll also be going through cultural adjustments.

Culture influences our expectations of what's appropriate and what isn't. It reflects the values of our society, and is something we learn by participating in that society every day. It frames our experiences and provides us with patterns of behavior, thinking, feeling, and interacting. In another cultural context, though, you will often find that your everyday "normal" behavior becomes "abnormal." The unspoken rules of social interaction are different and the attitudes and behavior that characterize life in the United States are not necessarily appropriate in the host country. These "rules" concern not only language differences, but also wide-ranging matters such as family structure, faculty/student relationships, friendships, gender, and personal relations.

As a result of these differences, you'll likely experience some difficulties adjusting to your new country and culture. This is totally normal and should be expected. Cultural adjustment, or "culture shock" as it is commonly called, comes from:

- Being cut off from cultural cues and known patterns you're familiar with
- Living and studying over an extended period of time in an ambiguous situation
- Having your own values brought into question
- Being continually put into situation in which you are expected to function well, but where the rules have not been adequately explained

Culture shock doesn't result from just one event, and it doesn't strike suddenly, or with any cause. It builds slowly from a series of small events. It also comes from living and working in an ambiguous situation. Living abroad will make you question your values, which you may have taken as absolutes before.

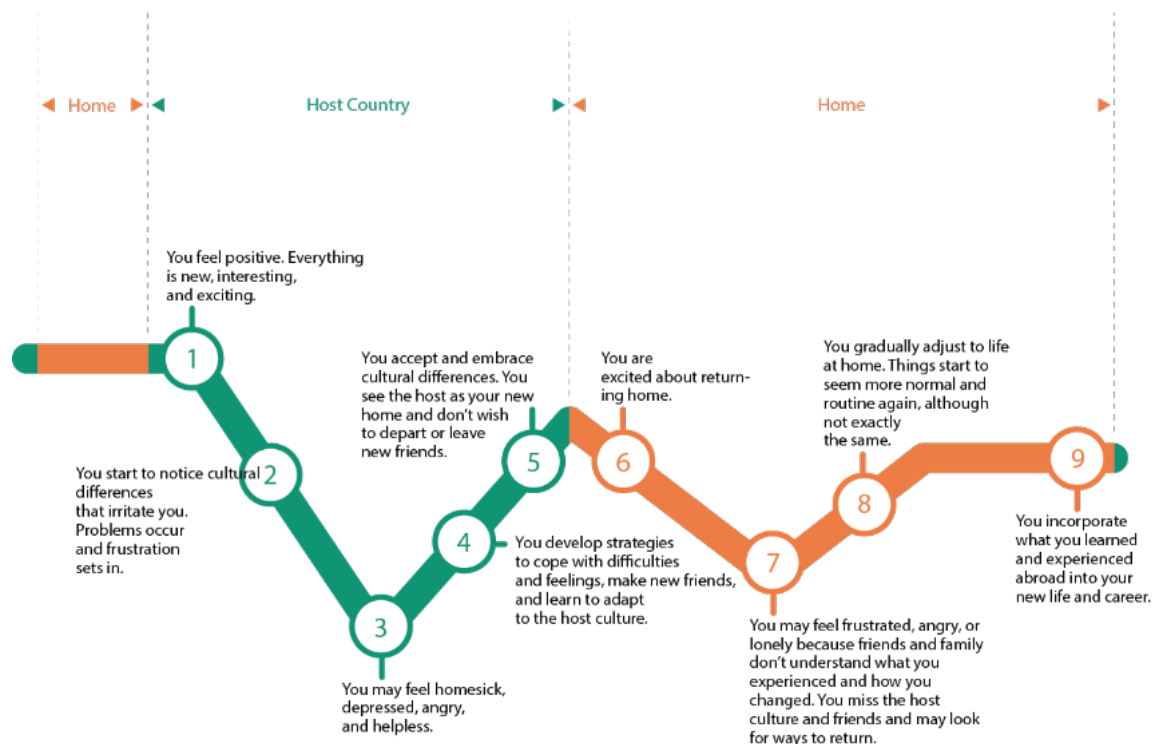
Culture shock affects different individuals in different ways and with varying degrees of severity. Its manifestations may include some or all of the following symptoms: homesickness, boredom, withdrawal, loneliness, irritability, excessive sleep or inability to sleep, compulsive eating or drinking, not eating, stereotyping of host nationals, hostility towards host nationals, unexplained fits of weeping, and an inability to work effectively. While culture shock is most common on longer programs, you may still experience it on short-term programs. This is totally normal.

You probably won't be able to identify culture shock while you're struggling through it, since it can be hard in the moment to connect the symptoms you may be experiencing to their root cause. But with patience, you'll be able to work through it and grow in the process.

#### Working through Culture Shock & Homesickness

One way to handle these social and personal changes is to understand the cycle of adjustment that occurs. You may experience some or all of these phases, but no one experiences culture shock the same way. **If you feel the impacts of culture shock are overwhelming, tell someone.** Your study abroad advisor, program director, parents or guardians, and friends can and will be great resources for you to express your concerns and help you come up with a coping mechanism that works best for you.





Source: CleanPNG.com

**Excitement/Honeymoon Phase:** You can expect to go through an initial period of euphoria and excitement as you are overwhelmed by the thrill of being in a totally new and unusual environment. This initial period is filled with details of getting settled into housing, scheduling classes, meeting new friends, and a tendency to spend a great deal of time with other U.S. students, both during orientation activities and free time.

**Withdrawal/Slump Phase:** As this initial sense of “adventure” wears off, you may gradually become aware that your old habits and routine ways of doing things are no longer relevant. A bit of frustration can be expected, and you may find yourself becoming unusually irritable, resentful, and even angry. Minor problems suddenly assume the proportions of major crises and you may grow somewhat depressed. Your stress and sense of isolation may affect your eating and sleeping habits. You may write letters, send e-mails, or call home criticizing the new environment and indicating that you are having a terrible time adjusting to the new country. Symptoms include anxiety, sadness, and homesickness.

**Adjustment/Realization Phase:** The human psyche is extremely flexible, and most students weather this initial period and make personal and academic adjustments as the months pass. They may begin to spend less time with Americans and more time forming friendships with local people. They often forget to communicate home.

**Enthusiasm/Adaptation Phase:** Finally, when the adjustment is complete, most students begin to feel enthusiastic, and that they are finally in tune with their surroundings, neither praising nor criticizing the culture, but becoming, to some extent, part of it. Realize also that now that

you've integrated into the host culture, there will be an adjustment period once you return, as well; you can learn more about that in the Home Again section.

Recognizing the existence of and your vulnerability to culture shock will certainly ease some of the strain. However, there are also several short-term strategies you can use beforehand as well as on-site when you recognize culture shock and are faced with the challenge of adjustment.

### Constructive Ways to Work through Culture Shock

Below is a list of ideas of positive ways to work through culture shock. Keep in mind that this is not an exhaustive list; you may find another strategy that works for you.

- **Research customs and traditions of your host country:** The more you understand your host culture, the smoother your transition will be.
- **Become more familiar with the local language:** Independent study in the local language should facilitate your transition. Begin or continue your study of the foreign language before and throughout your program. Rent and watch foreign films to become accustomed to the rhythm and sounds of the language of your new home. Remember, it's not about being perfect, it's about trying – don't become so concerned with the grammar and technicalities of a language that you're afraid to speak once you are abroad. The locals will appreciate any effort you make.
- **Bring some of "home" with you:** Items like your favorite books, movies, and music, pictures of loved ones, your favorite recipe and any non-perishable items you may need to create it can be a great way to alleviate homesickness. Be aware of customs regulations in your host country for bringing food.
- **Examine your motives for going:** Although you may do some traveling while you're abroad, remember that your program is not an extended vacation. Set realistic academic goals, particularly if you're studying in another language. Reduce your expectations or simplify your goals in order to avoid disappointment or disillusion and don't forget to study!
- **Set a tangible, non-academic goal:** This is a great way to keep yourself engaged in your time abroad. The goal can be as simple as trying one new thing (e.g. taking a different route home, cooking a new local dish, using a new phrase in the host language you've been practicing, etc.) every week, and then marking it down in a journal or a blog to keep yourself accountable.
- **Maintain important elements of your daily routine from home:** You won't be able to maintain all of your routine but, for instance, if you exercise regularly, try to find a place where you can continue that regimen, etc. Exercising can also contribute to improved mood and better sleep.

- **Recognize the value of culture shock:** Culture shock is a way of sensitizing you to another culture at a level that goes beyond the intellectual and the rational. Just as an athlete can't get in shape without going through the uncomfortable conditioning stage, you can't fully appreciate the cultural differences that exist without first going through the uncomfortable stages of psychological adjustment.
- **Expect to feel depressed sometimes:** Homesickness is natural, especially if you have never been away from home. Let yourself off the hook – there's no guilt or shame in it. Remember that your family and friends wouldn't have encouraged you to go if they didn't want you to gain the most from this experience. Try not to let thoughts of home occupy you to the point that you are incapable of enjoying the exciting new culture that surrounds you. Think of all the stories you'll have to share with your family and friends when you return home.
- **Expect to feel frustrated and angry at times:** You're bound to have communication problems when you're not using your native language or dialect. Even if they speak English in your host country, communication may still be difficult! Moreover, people will do things differently in your new home, and you won't always think their way is as good as yours. This will be frustrating and upsetting at times. Learn to accept that nothing you do is going to radically change the different cultural practices. Remember that you are the foreigner and a guest in the other culture.
- **Keep track of how you're feeling and what you're learning:** You can do this by maintaining a journal or blog, corresponding with friends from home, or using other media such as photography, drawing, or painting to express your feelings. Try to make this activity a regular part of your daily routine.
- **Look for logical reasons:** Think about everything in your new culture that seems strange or confusing and what the reasons might be behind those customs. Try to look at things from the host culture's perspective. For every behavior you don't understand, try to figure out what its underlying value is.
- **Make a positive list:** Write up a list of all the positive aspects of your new culture.
- **Try to make local friends:** Take advantage of the university structure and join clubs, participate in sports, attend worship services, participate in volunteer and service-learning projects, and attend other university-sponsored functions. Maintain a sense of meaning in your life and allow time for leisure activities. Keep in touch with friends and family, but not to the point you are so consumed with calling and emailing that you miss out on the study abroad experience.

- **Keep your sense of humor and positive outlook:** Almost all returned study abroad students have wonderful stories about how much fun they had during their time abroad. If you have a terrible day (or week) abroad, remember that it will pass. Time has a way of helping us remember the good times and turning those horrible times into fascinating stories!
- **Adopt coping strategies that work for you:** If there are tools you use here in the U.S. to support your mental wellbeing in difficult times, remember that those tools will likely still be helpful while you're abroad.
- **If you continue to struggle with adjusting to your host country and culture,** talk with your resident director, program provider, or international office staff members at your host university to find out what resources are available for you.

## Health, Wellness, & Safety

Prior to your departure, you should review worldwide health information and country-specific health requirements for all countries in which you'll be studying, as well as those you think you will visit. One of the best sources of this information for international travelers is the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/>. Note the special section under Travel Advice and Resources > Traveler Advice tailored to study abroad students. International SOS (<https://www.internationalsos.com/>, university/member login number 11BCAS000006) is another great resource for this as well.

If you have any questions regarding medical problems, immunization requirements, or other health issues that may affect your ability to successfully and completely participate in your program, you need to consult with either your personal physician or a local travel clinic, such as the UCCS HealthCircle Primary Care Clinic (<http://www.uccs.edu/healthcircle/primary-care-clinic.html>). Even if the countries you plan to visit have no required immunizations to enter, but you have a pre-existing medical condition or are on regular prescription medications, you should visit a health practitioner to discuss managing your condition and/or your medications abroad. This discussion should result in with a letter from your doctor explaining why you need the medications you're on if you take prescription medications, and may also include obtaining recommended, but not required, vaccinations regardless of prescription status.

For higher health risk areas where required or recommended vaccinations are likely (e.g. Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, eastern Europe and Russia, Latin America, and the Middle East), plan to visit a health care professional at least three months prior to departure.

Students traveling to countries with low health risks (e.g. Canada, western Europe, Australia, and New Zealand) should discuss getting your routine vaccinations up-to-date with your physician or the UCCS HealthCircle Primary Care Clinic.

## Insurance

All students in a study abroad program are required to have emergency health coverage that meets UCCS' mandatory minimum coverages during their study abroad program. You can learn more about those minimum coverages, along with UCCS' recommended international health insurance plan, online at <https://abroad.uccs.edu/going-abroad/international-health-insurance>. Students are also encouraged to consider the purchase of travel and trip cancellation insurance which covers you for any problems/costs associated with your travel – stolen luggage, delayed/cancelled flights, etc. – in addition to the required international health insurance.

**All students in a study abroad program MUST have international health insurance that meets UCCS' mandatory minimum coverages. Learn more at <https://abroad.uccs.edu/going-abroad>.**

## Coverage through Program Provider

Most third-party provider programs and UCCS short-term programs have health insurance included as part of the program cost, but some may require that you purchase a plan separately. This coverage is primarily for emergency treatment, and those students who will require ongoing treatment for a condition while abroad should consult with their regular health insurance provider and physician. For full information on these policies, please go to your program provider's website and review the basic and comprehensive plans which cover emergency medical treatment and evacuation in the event military or terrorist events or natural disasters. If your program doesn't include a plan with emergency evacuation and repatriation, we recommend that you purchase one prior to departure.

## Insurance Coverage Before or After Your Program

If you plan to travel before or after your study abroad program, it is very important to obtain additional medical insurance coverage, as the medical insurance provided by the program provider provides coverage only during the dates of the study abroad program. While you may believe your domestic health insurance policy will cover the costs for any medical care needed abroad, it's likely you'll be required to pay upfront and later seek reimbursement. Keep in mind that hospitalization or evacuation abroad can cost as much as \$40,000 USD.

## In-Country Insurance Coverage

Some country's visa regulations (e.g. Germany's and New Zealand's) require that students purchase national health plans in-country. With the potential of students traveling outside of that country's/region's coverage, all students are required to purchase a supplementary international emergency healthcare plan in addition to the in-country plan in this case.

## Immunizations

All countries recommend that travelers be up-to-date on routine immunizations. Still, always check with your doctor or health care professional before getting any vaccine – particularly if

you have allergies or other health conditions which could cause complications. Below is the list of routine immunizations you should be up-to-date on:

- Tetanus-diphtheria-pertussis (DTP)
- Hepatitis B
- Polio
- Meningitis
- Chicken pox (Varicella)
- Measles, mumps, rubella (MMR)
- Influenza

Some immunizations require a series of vaccines with spacing for protection, which can be as long as three months for a series of shots, so please allow as much time as possible prior to departure for immunization.

### Taking Medications Abroad

If you have a pre-existing medical condition that may require treatment or need prescription medication while traveling, be sure to bring an adequate supply of medication in the original container as well as a prescription with your physician's explanation of the condition and generic and brand names of the medication and dosage information. Be sure to check with your insurance company about your medications and how to obtain long-term doses. Be aware that some common prescription medications in the U.S. are illegal abroad. Check with the embassies of the countries you expect to visit and/or International SOS (<https://www.internationalsos.com/>, university membership/login number 11BCAS000006) to make sure your prescriptions and over-the-counter medications are permissible.

Be sure to maintain your usual dosage and pattern of taking your medication while you're abroad, and ask your physician how to make adjustments due to any time zone changes. Do not plan on sending medications abroad, since it will require customs paperwork and may be delayed in delivery.

Over-the-counter (OTC) medications should also be in their original bottles. For both OTC and prescription medications, it's a good idea to know the generic equivalent of your medication in case you need to obtain more while overseas.

### Mental Health

Learning abroad can be both fulfilling and challenging for all students and can present some additional challenges for students with mental health conditions. Experiencing another culture is an exhilarating, but often stressful, experience that can sometimes cause both physical and mental health symptoms or conditions to worsen, even if only temporarily. If you have a known mental health condition, you should discuss the rigors of going abroad and your particular program with your therapist or physician. It's a good idea to reach out to Disability Services (<https://disability.uccs.edu/>) as well, especially if you receive accommodations at UCCS.

Keep in mind that studying abroad will be different than the UCCS experience you're used to, which may be stressful. It's important to know that:

- You may not have your own space, may not be able to choose your roommate, and may be surrounded by more people than you are accustomed to. You may be living with a host family or continually traveling with the same group of U.S. students. Your access to private bathrooms and showers may be somewhat limited or non-existent.
- You may have far less down-time.
- You may have difficulty sleeping due to the time zone changes, full schedule, change in diet and climate, and unfamiliar and potentially noisy surroundings.
- You may not have the benefit of understanding what is being said around you. Even if language is not a barrier, cultural differences are significant and being a foreigner can be somewhat alienating at times.
- Over the past few years, there has been growing anti-American sentiment in some places around the world. Generally, this has been directed at U.S. policy rather than individual Americans, but it can be difficult to remove yourself, as a U.S. citizen, from the criticism you may hear.

Take the time to research your program and make sure you understand the living situation and any other aspects that you suspect may have an impact on your experience. In addition, many programs may be able to offer accommodations for mental health concerns, so it can be helpful to reach out to your program's program manager and inquire about options. The earlier you do so, the better set up for success in your program you'll be. If you need help finding the contact information for your program's program manager, reach out to International Affairs staff at [international@uccs.edu](mailto:international@uccs.edu).

Even if you have no history of a mental health condition, it's possible that the impact of culture shock or being in a foreign environment will influence your wellbeing. Remember also that beyond an unfamiliar culture and living environment, you'll be experiencing an unfamiliar academic environment that may challenge you in ways you're not used to.

Whether you have a known mental health condition or not, it's important that you take the time to care for your mental wellbeing. If there are tools or supports that are useful to you here at UCCS or at home when you're going through a hard time, make sure that you bring as many of those with you abroad as possible. If you can't pack it, see if it's something you may be able to buy in-country. Think about ways you may be able to adapt comforting routines or items to your new location as well. Above all, check in with yourself regularly, pay attention to how you're feeling, and know that if you need a break on occasion, that's okay. In fact, it's expected.

You're adjusting to a completely new and unfamiliar world. Allow yourself the time and space you need to adjust successfully.

However you choose to support your mental and physical wellbeing abroad, avoid non-constructive actions such as resorting to heavy alcohol use, staying in bed 12-14 hours a day or staying in your room all day, eating excessively, avoiding friends and neighbors, and escaping into sexual relationships. These choices are more likely to make the situation worse rather than help you move forward successfully. The benefits of study abroad often far outweigh the difficulties, and with good coping techniques you'll likely be able to work through those difficulties to a more positive experience.

Constructive coping techniques include:

- Keeping a journal or starting a blog of your experiences
- Consulting a local mental health professional referred to you by International SOS
- Making a new healthy routine, such as taking a walk through the park every day after lunch
- Practicing your faith through prayer, meditation, reading, etc.
- Writing letters/emails or making audiotapes to family and friends
- Visiting fellow students
- Meeting with your program's Resident Director or faculty to talk about the stress
- Continuing to meet with your U.S.-based therapist via telehealth, if possible, or maintaining contact
- Eating healthy and getting regular exercise
- Any and all techniques under the Constructive Ways to Work through Culture Shock section

We highly recommend that you identify ways of keeping in touch with support systems at home – family, friends, and your therapist – as well, especially if you're having a hard time.

Recognize, too, that experiencing some level of depression or anxiety about your study abroad experience even prior to departure is expected. However, if you begin to doubt your readiness to participate or you fail to complete pre-departure requirements, you should discuss your feelings with a medical professional.

### Everyday Safety Tips

You should exercise the same safety precautions you would at home while you're abroad. While it's tempting to assume that you're protected and safe because you're anonymous and no one knows you, it's actually more important than ever to be vigilant and take safety precautions. You're not local, and your unfamiliarity with the area and with local customs could make you an easy target in the eyes of local criminals.

- Don't travel with anything you're not prepared to lose.



- Use your common sense and avoid confrontations.

Try to blend in as much as possible. Familiarize yourself with the area, pick up on local customs, and make sure to wear clothes fitting the local style (see Appearances below).

- Ask people familiar with the area where the safe part of town is, and if you feel insecure in a certain place, don't go there.

### Appearances

Try to blend in. Foreigners are favorite targets of pickpockets; the less conspicuous you make yourself, the less attractive they will find you. In particular, t-shirts, shorts, baseball caps, and speaking loudly in English in public can act as markers that you are a student from the U.S. Stay undercover instead by following these tips:

- Avoid wearing expensive clothes or jewelry or carrying expensive luggage.
- Whenever possible, speak in the local language.
- Avoid using U.S. logos on your belongings or clothing, especially athletic and collegiate wear.
- Try not to stand out. While “safety in numbers” is a good rule to follow, traveling as an identifiable group of U.S. students may attract attention. It's vital to remain alert within your environment – always be aware of what's normal and commonplace where you live and work to immediately detect the unusual.
- Be aware that pickpockets exist and tend to prey on people who look lost or who don't seem to be paying attention to their surroundings.
  - Be on guard if groups of people act strangely around you. Thieves often work together and try to confuse or distract their target. Don't be fooled by appearances. Some professional thieves look quite respectable, and some are even children!
  - Keep in mind that thieves often wait near night clubs and bars popular with foreigners, particularly Americans, and target individuals who've had too much to drink.
- In large cities and other popular tourist destinations, avoid possible target areas, especially places frequented by U.S. Americans.
- Carry your valuables inside your clothes, preferably stowed away in a money belt or a pouch that hangs around your neck and under clothing – never in your back pockets. This includes your cell phone! Particularly when you are in a crowd or public transit, purses can be snatched by thieves on mopeds, purse and camera straps can be easily

cut, and backpacks can be slit and emptied without you even noticing. Never leave valuables unattended.

- If you're carrying a purse, choose a purse with a long strap that you can wear across your body. It's even better if the purse has metal fastenings between the strap and the purse. This will help eliminate someone snatching your purse off your shoulder or yanking it off its strap.
- When you're seated at outdoor tables, keep purse or pack straps looped around an arm or an ankle to keep them from being easily snatched. Try to keep your bag visible to you at all times.
- When residing in a hotel, always keep your door locked. When staying in a hostel, keep your valuables under your pillow or in a money belt around your waist while sleeping – not in a bag on the floor. Carry a lock with you, as many hostels provide lockers for their residents.
- We recommend you watch this video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U8JFxbevCQc>, on common pickpocket schemes as well.

## Student Identity

### Women

The majority of students who study abroad identify as women, and they report back that they've had incredible experiences. However, in certain locations, women (or those who are perceived to be a woman by the host culture) may have a difficult time adjusting to attitudes they encounter abroad, both in public and private interactions. Some men openly demonstrate their appraisal of women in ways that many women find offensive. It is not uncommon to be honked at, stared at, verbally and loudly approved of, and to be actively noticed simply for being a woman in general. Sometimes the attention can be flattering. However, it may become very annoying and potentially even angering or frightening. Local women, who often get the same sort of treatment, have learned through their culture how to respond to the attention. Women can provide support for each other; you may wish to get together several times early in your stay abroad to talk about what does and doesn't work for dealing with unwanted attention. As a general rule, it's a good idea to:

- Dress conservatively, in a less obviously American fashion. Take note of how local women dress and interact with strangers and copy their dress and demeanor.
  - Ask a female who you trust in your host family or at your host institution for advice on social norms, etc.
- Move briskly and avoid eye contact or smiles with men you do not know. This may seem rude but being friendly with strangers can result in unwanted attention.

- Be aware that some men from other cultures tend to mistake the friendliness of American women for romantic interest, particularly as there's a stereotype that American women are promiscuous.
  - Be firm and assertive in your language. Do not try to be polite, as this may encourage unwanted advances.
- Travel in groups with male students, especially in unfamiliar parts of town. When meeting friends, arrange to meet at a public place (e.g. a café or a store) in order to avoid having to stand idle and alone. If you find yourself in such a situation, such as at a train station, stand near groups or families.
- Do not agree to meet a person whom you do not know in a non-public place.
- Never go out at night alone (or even in small, all-female groups). Make your arrangements for getting home safely ahead of time.
- Respect your instincts. If you have a bad feeling about a place or situation, avoid it, even at the risk of seeming rude.

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

If, after acknowledging cultural differences, you still feel uncomfortable with what you interpret as sexual harassment, you should talk with your leader, resident director, or other on-site personnel. This conversation may provide you with some coping skills and a possible action plan to avoid future encounters. It may also help you gain a different perspective by understanding the local customs and attitudes. It could be possible that the behaviors you feel uncomfortable with are behaviors that are also considered unacceptable in the host culture.

If you feel you are being sexually harassed by your fellow American students, speak with your program leader. If you feel you are being sexually harassed by your program leader, resident director, or other on-site personnel, contact the International Affairs Office immediately at +1 (719) 255-5018 or [international@uccs.edu](mailto:international@uccs.edu). You can also call International SOS at +1 (215) 942-8226 in either situation.

Additional resources for women travelers are available from the groups and organizations below:

- U.S. Department of State Resources for Women Travelers (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/travelers-with-special-considerations/women-travelers.html>)
- Transitions Abroad: The Guide to Solo Woman Travel and Women Tours (<https://www.transitionsabroad.com/listings/travel/women/index.shtml>)
- JourneyWoman (<https://journeywoman.com/>)
- Diversity Abroad (<https://www.diversityabroad.com/>)

### LGBTQIA+ Students

It's important to realize before going abroad that although many countries have made great strides in the acceptance of LGBTQIA+ rights, there are also many where students may not only feel judged or discriminated against, but where being LGBTQIA+ is even punishable by law.

Before traveling abroad, it's important to research the local laws, perceptions, and customs around being LGBTQIA+ in your host country, as well as any countries you plan to travel to while abroad. A great resource for understanding local laws regarding homosexuality/queerness is EqualDex (<https://www.equaldex.com/>).

Discover whether it's safe for you to be out in-country, if the local language may be more gendered than you're used to here in the U.S., if the treatment of LGBTQIA+ individuals differs from local laws, etc. Knowing this information beforehand will help prepare you for the interactions between your identity and your host environment. Think about whether you need to update your passport to reflect your gender identity as well.

LGBTQIA+ students are encouraged to use the support of fellow UCCS students and faculty to help them if they ever feel out of place. The International Affairs Office welcomes any questions or concerns students may have concerning certain programs or laws in other countries.

Additional resources for LGBTQIA+ folx are available from the groups and organizations below:

- UCCS MOSAIC Office (<https://mosaic.uccs.edu/>)
- NAFSA's Rainbow Special Interest Group (<http://www.rainbowsig.org/>)
- International Lesbian, Gay, Trans, & Intersex Association (<http://ilga.org/>)
- Out Traveler (<http://www.outtraveler.com/>)
- U.S. Department of State LGBTI Resources (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/travelers-with-special-considerations/lgbti.html>)
- Diversity Abroad (<https://www.diversityabroad.com/>)
- University of Minnesota's Learning Abroad LGBTQIA Network (<https://umabroad.umn.edu/students/identity/lgbtqia/network>)
- EqualDex (<https://www.equaldex.com/>)

## Students of Color

In the U.S. you might be classified by your race or ethnicity, but abroad, you may be identified first as an American. The people you meet will likely have an opinion about the U.S. and may be eager to tell you what they think, positive or negative.

Whether or not people identify you as an American, they may make assumptions based on your physical appearance. Many people you encounter abroad will show a sincere interest in your culture. There may be people who stare at you or who are eager to touch your hair or your skin. Others may ask insensitive questions about your cultural heritage, physical features, or national origins. If you are abroad in an area where people have had little or no contact with minority students, people tend to be very curious, especially children.

Remember that people abroad have different cultural norms than in the U.S. Be aware that people may generalize or incorrectly identify your race or ethnicity. If somebody says or does something that is offensive to you, try to distinguish between a person who is genuinely curious about you and your culture and someone who has bad intentions. You may find yourself in some uncomfortable situations, and always remember to put your safety first.

Research your host country before you go, as well as any other countries you plan on traveling to while abroad and be familiar with how your race or ethnicity is perceived and interacted with there. Learn about the experiences of other minority students in your host country; if your program provider has a student blog section on their website, this can be a great resource from former students on your actual program. You may also have difficulty finding certain beauty products or specific U.S. brand name products while abroad, so you may want to bring those with you if you use them regularly.

Additionally, if you're used to being in the majority here in the U.S. where you live, but will be in the minority in your host country, think about what that may mean. Be prepared to navigate this redefining of your identity even before you arrive in-country.

It's important to be prepared in case an incident does arise, but don't go abroad expecting racism or discrimination. We encourage you to use the support of fellow UCCS students and faculty to help you if you ever feel out of place. The International Affairs Office welcomes any questions or concerns students may have.

Additional resources for students of color are available from the groups and organizations below:

- UCCS MOSAIC Office (<https://mosaic.uccs.edu/>)
- Diversity Abroad (<https://www.diversityabroad.com/>)
- University of Minnesota's Race Abroad guide (<https://umabroad.umn.edu/sites/default/files/race-abroad.pdf>)
- All Abroad (<http://allabroad.us/>)

## Disabled Students

Every country has a different attitude towards people with disabilities. For example, in the U.S., independence is highly valued, but in some other countries, people assume that those with disabilities want or need help.

Once you've been accepted into a program and if you're willing to disclose your disability, talk with International Affairs or program director. Talk with UCCS Disability Services (<https://disability.uccs.edu>) as well, especially if you receive accommodations on campus. Find out more about how people with disabilities are perceived in your host country and what accommodations may be available to you on your program. This will help you know what to expect in terms of discrimination as well as accessibility abroad.

Remember that your host country's attitudes towards people with disabilities may be drastically different from what you're used to in the U.S. You might see this in the way people treat you and in the kinds of resources available to you abroad. Remember also that neither braille nor sign language are universal, so you may want to learn a few key phrases in the local dialect before you travel. Mobility International (<http://www.miusa.org/>) is a great place to begin looking into that.

Most importantly, don't let these challenges dissuade you from studying abroad. By living in another country, you'll gain a new perspective on how other cultures treat people with disabilities. Your experiences abroad will help you grow and give you an appreciation of everything you have at home.

Additional resources for students with disabilities are available from the groups and organizations below:

- U.S. Department of State Resources for Travelers with Disabilities (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/travelers-with-special-considerations/traveling-with-disabilities.html>)
- Diversity Abroad (<https://www.diversityabroad.com/>)
- Mobility International USA (<http://www.miusa.org/>)
- University of Minnesota's Access Abroad (<https://umabroad.umn.edu/students/identity/disabilities>)

## Students of Faith

Do your best to understand the majority religion being practiced in your host country, especially if it is one you are largely unfamiliar with. Be aware that while you may be used to being part of the religious majority at home, you may be part of the religious minority abroad.

It's also important to know that many countries have laws that restrict religious expression. According to the U.S. Department of State, these laws may include restrictions on:

- public or private prayer or other religious practices

- wearing religious attire or symbols
- preaching in a private or public setting
- speaking to others about your beliefs
- possessing religious images
- criticizing or questioning the religious beliefs of others
- visiting certain religious sites if you are female
- possessing printed religious materials
- distributing religious literature; and
- participating in religious services or activities.

Research the laws and customs of your host country and any countries you plan to travel to while abroad before you go. Take a look at the U.S. Department of State's International Religious Freedom Reports (<https://www.state.gov/international-religious-freedom-reports/>) before traveling.

Be aware that even if religious practice is allowed in your host country, it may be hard to find worship services of any kind or keep to a religious diet – since kosher and/or halal foods may be hard to come by – and that you may be asked fairly forward questions about your religion and/or why you practice a religion. You may also want to reach out to your program provider or local program host for an idea of how religion is perceived in your host country before traveling.

Students of faith are encouraged to use the support of fellow UCCS students and faculty to help them if they ever feel out of place. The International Affairs Office welcomes any questions or concerns students may have concerning certain programs or laws in other countries.

Additional resources for students of faith are available from the groups and organizations below:

- UCCS Center for Religious Diversity and Public Life (<http://128.198.6.119/rdpl/index> or <https://www.facebook.com/uccsRDPL/>)
- U.S. Department of State Resources for Faith-Based Travelers (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/travelers-with-special-considerations/faith-based-travel.html>)
  - While this page assumes you're traveling primarily for faith-based reasons, its information is still helpful regarding personal religious practice abroad
- U.S. Department of State International Religious Freedom Reports (<https://www.state.gov/international-religious-freedom-reports/>)
- U.S. Department of State Human Rights Reports (<https://www.state.gov/reports-bureau-of-democracy-human-rights-and-labor/country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/>)

- “Connecting with a Religious Community as an International Student”  
(<https://www.usnews.com/education/best-global-universities/articles/2016-03-31/connect-with-a-religious-community-as-an-international-student>)

### Dating & Sex

All genders should be aware that the ways people interact vary widely by region and country, and issues around dating and sexuality can be particularly difficult in a cross-cultural setting. Such things as eye contact, the way one dresses, and body language can send very different messages in different regions and cultures. Observing interpersonal interactions within a culture can be useful in helping you choose the way you communicate verbally and non-verbally with others in that country.

If you choose to be sexually active, practice safe sex and protect yourself and your partner against unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, and misunderstandings about the meaning of the relationship. Be aware of what is and what is not available to practice safe sex where you are going. Remember to be responsible if using alcohol or other drugs because they can affect your behavior and ability to make decisions and give informed consent. Know that UCCS abides by Title IX regulations for students on education abroad programs as well.

If you feel you have been a victim of dating or sexual abuse, first and foremost, remember that it is not your fault. Inform your program director and seek medical care and support. Additional resources available to you overseas are below:

- The Americans Overseas Domestic Violence Crisis Center (AODVC, <http://www.866uswomen.org/>)
- Sexual Assault Support and Help for Americans Abroad Program (SASHAA, <https://sashaa.org/>)
- UCCS Office of Institutional Equity (<https://equity.uccs.edu>)
- International SOS (<https://www.internationalsos.com/>, +1 (215) 942-8226)

### Emergency Preparedness

Once onsite, your program leader will discuss appropriate emergency preparedness steps with you. These steps might reflect preparing for natural disasters such as hurricanes or earthquakes as well as communication protocols for electrical outages or cell tower overloads. For more information on personal emergency planning, visit the U.S. Department of

**Remember to consult International SOS and STEP as well!**

**International SOS**

<https://www.internationalsos.com/>  
Member/login # 11BCAS000006

**STEP**

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



State's Emergencies page at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/emergencies.html>.

Remember to consult other resources available to you, like International SOS (<https://www.internationalsos.com/>, membership/login number 11BCAS000006) and STEP (<https://step.state.gov/>), as well. They'll help keep you informed of and prepared for any emergencies in the local area.

It's also important to create an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) before studying abroad. For your EAP, you should know where to go in case of an emergency and how to get there. Essentially, where should you go and what transportation should you take?

In case of an emergency, the EAP plan follows these steps:

1. **Stay calm.** Take a deep breath. You will need a clear mind to focus on your next move.
2. **Assess the situation.** If possible, get advice from the program staff. Identify what kind of emergency situation you find yourself in. An emergency crisis can be:
  - a. *Personal:* accident/injury, death, illness, sexual assault, kidnapping, arrest, etc.
  - b. *Regional:* natural disaster, political uprising, terrorist attack, war outbreak, etc.
3. **Take action.** Exercise good judgment. Follow your evacuation plan/written instructions/maps you've developed as part of your EAP to help remove you from the emergency and get you to a safer location where you can get help. Remember the alternate transportation options available in your area.
4. **Get in touch.** Now that you're in a safer and more stable location, update others about your situation. Using a method of communication at your disposal, get in touch with your emergency contacts so they can help you. Have them assist you in finding what you need (medical care, a transport, lawyer, etc.).
5. **Move to a more permanent location.** After you've removed yourself from any immediate threat, regrouped at a safer location, and gotten in touch with your emergency contacts, you may need to move to a more permanent location for treatment/assistance. Consider your transportation options and try to get yourself to the appropriate location (hospital, police station, embassy/consulate\*, contact's home, counseling center, etc.).
6. **Stay in touch.** Maintain contact and update your emergency contacts on your condition. It would be useful to have a "communication tree," whereby your emergency contacts can collaborate to help you through the emergency situation. You may need to have signed privacy release forms on file in order for this to happen.

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

\*Note that in case of a terrorist attack, you should call your local embassy, but should not go there unless you know it's safe.

#### Tips for Preparing for an Emergency

Below is a list of tips to follow in order to keep yourself safe and prepared for any emergency situations that may arise.

- Keep up with the local news through newspapers, radio, and television and, in the event of disturbances or protests, do NOT get involved.
- Report suspicious events immediately. Contact your leader or Resident Director if you observe suspicious persons within the premises of your educational environment. Act similarly if anything might indicate threats or an actual terrorist attack on the premises or on student activities.
- If you have been a victim of a crime, report this immediately to your leader or Resident Director. If you wish to speak directly to someone in International Affairs +1 (719) 255-5018 or call the UCCS Police Emergency Assistance Number, +1 (719) 255-3111, which is manned 24 hours a day.
- Do not freely give out information about other students. Be wary of questions from people not associated with your program. Do not give out your or anyone else's address or telephone number to strangers. Do not give away your class or field trip schedule.
- Develop a plan for regular communication with your family at home so that in times of heightened political tensions or local incidents, you will be able to communicate directly with your family about your safety and wellbeing.
- Be aware of local conditions and customs that may present health or safety risks when making daily choices and decisions and promptly express any health or safety concerns to the program staff or other appropriate individuals.
- Become familiar with the local emergency number (i.e. the local equivalent to 911) and the procedures for obtaining emergency health and law enforcement services in the host country. Add the number(s) to your cell phone's contacts.
  - If your program provides you with an emergency contact card, be sure to put it in your wallet after entering all listed phone numbers into your cell phone's contacts.
  - Be aware that it may not always be safe to call in every emergency situation. Become familiar with when it's appropriate to call local services.

- Know the location of the nearest local hospital to your primary program site and/or living accommodations as well.
- Keep a working cell phone with you at all times, so that you can communicate and be communicated with easily in the event of an emergency. Make sure your program staff and fellow students have your contact information.

### Emergency Assistance

In a true emergency, the first two points of contact are your local in-country site coordinator, site director, or local university director and International SOS. They will be able to offer you assistance in any circumstances of an emergency.

If you feel comfortable, contact local emergency services. It's a good idea to know the local emergency services contact information for your country or area in advance just in case. However, there are situations where calling the local authorities may be unsafe, either for yourself or for the people involved. Be fully aware of when to call the local emergency services in your host country.

#### **Important numbers to remember:**

##### **International SOS**

**+1 (215) 942-8226**

##### **UCCS Police Emergency Assistance Line**

**+1 (719) 255-3111**

##### **International Affairs**

**+1 (719) 255-5018**

Follow the below procedures either after you've successfully reached out to your host country personnel and/or International SOS or if your host country personnel or International SOS aren't readily available and you feel there is a threat to your personal safety:

1. Dial the international access code for the U.S. (+1)\*
2. Call the UCCS Police Emergency Assistance Number, (719) 255-3111, which is manned 24 hours a day
3. Then dial (call collect if possible) International Affairs at (719)-255-5018
4. Identify yourself as an UCCS study abroad student and give the country where you are currently located
5. State your name
6. Tell the person what's wrong
7. Tell the person how to contact you
8. Respond to questions and listen carefully to any instructions

\*To prepare in advance, learn the international access codes for calling to the U.S. from different locations abroad via the Country Code.org website at <https://countrycode.org/>. Generally, if you are able to type + on your phone (most smartphones/mobile phones have + on the 0 key), the access code is +1. If you're not able to type + or your phone doesn't have that option, be sure to research the code in advance, as it will vary slightly by location.

The International Affairs Office may choose, in consultation with the program leaders or onsite representatives, to inform a student's emergency contacts about a potential emergency abroad without the student's permission, such as when the student:

- is unable to speak for themselves,
- has been missing for more than 24 hours,
- is perceived to be a danger to themselves or others, or when
- a significant health, safety, or security incident affecting the entire program has occurred abroad.

## Alcohol & Drugs

### Alcohol Policy

Drinking culture will vary depending on the region and country you're traveling to. While some countries and regions may celebrate alcohol and have a very social drinking culture, this may not be the case in other areas. Research and ask about the local drinking culture. Regardless of social norms in your host country, do not feel pressured to drink alcohol beyond what you are comfortable with, be that a little or none at all.

It is imperative to understand your own limitations regarding alcohol while you're abroad. If you attend Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings in the United States, be sure check the AA website at <https://www.aa.org/> for information about meetings abroad. If you do choose to drink, know that tolerance doesn't transfer, which means that if you're comfortable drinking a certain amount in familiar situations here in the U.S., that same amount may make you drunk in a new environment. Furthermore, the alcohol content of certain drinks in other countries may be more than what you're used to here.

Overindulging while abroad limits your ability to be aware of your surroundings, can be dangerous, and can also have legal implications. You may be tempted to slip into – or maintain – patterns of alcohol misuse while abroad. Such use may occur for a variety of reasons: a mistaken impression of how alcohol is used in your new surroundings, cheaper costs in some countries, a lower minimum drinking age, more lenient laws against drunkenness, or a desire to experiment or fit in. Alcohol abuse and misuse are not tolerated globally and will not be tolerated on UCCS study abroad programs. Violation of local laws and/or UCCS regulations or policies may result in (i) immediate dismissal from the program, (ii) academic withdrawal from the University for the semester in progress, and (iii) disciplinary action upon return to campus. Note that the Student Code of Conduct still applies, even though you're off campus.

Students are encouraged to use good judgment if consuming alcohol at private homes or other accommodations during non-program hours. Student groups are encouraged to discuss issues related to alcohol abuse by other members of their group with the faculty leader or resident director. Peers should look out for each other and keep each other safe.

If a student becomes incapacitated due to alcohol overuse, or if he/she/they are in need of medical attention, others need to contact a local emergency medical service, faculty leader, or Resident Director immediately, in order to protect the health and wellbeing of the affected student. Peers are encouraged to make the responsible choice to notify program or emergency personnel quickly.

### Illegal Drugs

University of Colorado Colorado Springs has a zero-tolerance policy regarding the possession, use, manufacture, production, sale, exchange, or distribution of illegal drugs by students participating in UCCS study abroad programs. Violation of this policy may result in (i) immediate dismissal from the program, (ii) academic withdrawal from the University for the semester in progress, and (iii) disciplinary action upon return to campus. Note that the Student Code of Conduct still applies, even though you're off campus.

Each year 2,500 U.S. citizens are arrested abroad. One third of the arrests are on drug-related charges. There is very little that anyone can do to help you if you are caught with illegal drugs. It is your responsibility to know the drug laws of a foreign country before you go. Some laws may be applied more strictly to foreigners than to local citizens; therefore, don't assume that just because local people are using drugs, it's acceptable for you to use drugs.

Information regarding drug penalties of your host country is available on the U.S. State Department's website under the Country Information section at <https://travel.state.gov/>. It's important to note that many countries have varying consequences regarding illegal drugs, including jail time or the death penalty without a trial. Individuals have been arrested abroad on drug charges for possession of an ounce or less of marijuana.

Although drug laws vary from country to country, it's 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 could receive the same sentence as a large-scale trafficker.

It is important to know the following:

- A number of countries, including the Bahamas, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Mexico and the Philippines, have enacted more stringent drug laws that impose mandatory jail sentences for individuals convicted of possessing even small amounts of marijuana or cocaine for personal use.
- Once you leave the United States, you're NOT covered by U.S. laws and constitutional rights.
- Bail is not granted in many countries when drugs are involved.

- The burden of proof in many countries is on the accused to prove his/her/their innocence.
- In some countries, evidence obtained illegally by local authorities may be admissible in court.
- Few countries offer drug offenders jury trials or even require the prisoner's presence at his/her/their trial.
- Many countries have mandatory prison sentences of seven years to life without the possibility of parole for drug violations.
- If someone offers you a free trip and some quick and easy money just for bringing back a suitcase...SAY NO!
- Don't carry a package for anyone, no matter how small it might seem, and pay close attention to your luggage to ensure that no one can place anything in yours.
- The police and customs officials have a right to search your luggage for drugs.
- If you violate local or international law, you could go to jail for years with no possibility of parole, early release, or transfer back the United States.

### Arrests Overseas

If you are arrested while abroad for any reason, it is important that you know what the U.S. government can and cannot do for you.

The U.S. Consular Office can:

- visit you in jail after being notified of your arrest
- give you a list of local attorneys (however, the U.S. Government cannot assume responsibility for the professional ability or integrity of these individuals or recommend a particular attorney)
- notify your family and/or friends and relay requests for money or other aid – but only with your authorization
- intercede with local authorities to make sure that your rights under local laws are fully observed and that you are treated humanely according to internationally accepted standards
- protest mistreatment or abuse to the appropriate authorities

The U.S. Consular Office cannot:

- demand your immediate release or get you out of jail or the country

- represent you at trial or give legal counsel
- pay legal fees and/or fines with U.S. government funds

#### Overseas Citizens Services (OCS)

- The Overseas Citizens Services of the Bureau of Consular Affairs is responsible for the welfare and whereabouts of U.S. citizens traveling and residing abroad. American Citizens Services and Crisis Management (ACS), a branch of OCS, assists in all matters involving protective services for Americans abroad, including arrests, death cases, financial or medical emergencies, and welfare and whereabouts inquiries.
- The OCS toll-free hotline is (888) 407-4747. From overseas, call (202) 501-4444. An OCS duty officer is available for after-hours emergencies and during Sundays and holidays at (202) 647-4000.
- OCS will register all participants with the U.S. Department of State in all countries included in your program itinerary. However, you should also register with the U.S. embassy or consulate via the STEP program or as soon as you arrive on site.
  - To register, you'll need to provide all the information on the front page of your passport. This will be helpful to you and your family if there is a need to locate you in the event of an emergency.
- Further information regarding emergency services for U.S. citizens abroad and related U.S. Department of State services can be obtained at <https://travel.state.gov/>.

## Home Again

### Customs Information

The U.S. government requires you to pay duty on goods purchased abroad and brought into the United States. It's important for you to know and understand these requirements before leaving so there aren't any problems when you return. Additionally, you'll need to declare expensive and/or foreign goods you'll take with you before leaving the United States so that you're not charged duty on them when you return.

Upon your return, group purchases together and keep receipts ready for your Customs inspection. If you bring back foreign pharmaceuticals, have the prescriptions ready to present.

You must declare, at the price paid, everything acquired abroad, including gifts given to you and articles of clothing worn or used. If you fail to declare or understate the value, penalties may be severe. In general, you can't bring meats, fruits or vegetables back into the United States. We advise that you visit the U.S. Customs' website at <https://www.cbp.gov/travel> for more customs information.

## Post-Travel Health Recommendations

There are a few health issues you need to consider when returning from travel abroad:

- If you become ill within 12 months after traveling, make a medical appointment and inform your physician of the countries you visited while abroad.
- If you've been taking anti-malarial medication, continue doing so for the prescribed length of time after you return home.
- Remember that your study abroad accident and sickness insurance covers you only while you're abroad, so make sure you have adequate coverage in the United States when you return.

## Grades & Transcripts

Overseas students are granted the same grading options and are subject to all the same grading policies as on-campus students. Unless you make a written request for an optional grading policy (i.e. S/U grading, course audit) and receive instructor approval for it, you will be registered for your courses on a pass/fail system.

If you're enrolled for direct UCCS credit (as on UCCS short-term programs), you'll have your grades posted to your UCCS record by the close of the term, regardless of the final date of your program.

If you're receiving transfer credit for any of your coursework (as on exchange and provider programs), you may experience a notable delay in the appearance of and receipt of these courses and credits on your UCCS record.

**Mail your study abroad transcripts to**  
**University of Colorado Colorado Springs**  
**International Affairs**  
**Copper House 9202**  
**1420 Austin Bluffs Parkway**  
**Colorado Springs, CO 80918**

Please note that many overseas institutions do not issue documentation of this coursework until after the close of UCCS deadlines. If you're studying overseas during your final semester prior to graduation, you should contact IA or the host institution to see whether official transcripts can be expedited. The university cannot give credit without a transcript from the foreign institution.

Official transcripts must be mailed to:

University of Colorado Colorado Springs  
International Affairs  
Copper House 9202  
1420 Austin Bluffs Parkway  
Colorado Springs, CO 80918



Once your transcript has been received, you'll receive an email to the address you created your UCCSAbroad account with confirming that IA has received your transcript. International Affairs will then process it and send it to Credit Transfer Services and the Registrar to be added to your Degree Audit and transcripts. Note that if you participated in a provider program, the placeholder will remain on your account and you'll be able to view the credits under the Transfer Credit section instead.

### Reverse Culture Shock

As difficult as it is to adapt to an entirely new culture, it can be just as challenging to come back home after being away for any period of time. It's best to know what you might encounter in order to prepare for this adjustment period.

Expect to experience some measure of reverse culture shock. Reverse or re-entry shock can be defined as the "unexpected confrontation with the familiar." Remember that the world at home hasn't stopped while you were gone. Upon your return home, you may find you aren't the only one who has changed during your absence – everyone and everything else will have changed too! Remember to take time to readjust slowly.

Symptoms of reverse culture shock may include isolation, oversimplifying your abroad experience, and a shift in attitude toward U.S. cultural norms. You'll notice that you may think differently about the United States. You'll spend time reflecting on the differences between the U.S. and your former host country, just as you did when you left. Friends and family may be interested in stories or photos for a while, but "really don't understand." It may be difficult to express your feelings about your experience in words or accept the fact that some of your friends and family don't understand your perspective or excitement. Remember that many people may have difficulty relating to what you're saying because it hasn't been part of their experience.

Helpful tools to work through this re-entry period include:

- **Campus resources:** Come to Returnee Chats! International Affairs hosts these one-hour sessions twice a semester for education abroad students from the previous term. This is a great way to get connected with other students who may be having a similar experience and to learn about what other resources are available to you.
- **Finding community:** Stay in contact and share what you're experiencing with other students who were abroad with you. It's important to find others who understand what you're going through. While it can be helpful to vent and share frustrations about being back, make sure that you make time to look ahead and plan how you'll continue to make your experience abroad relevant in a positive way.
- **Preserving your experience:** Another way to combat reverse culture shock is to acknowledge the importance of your experience regardless of whether those in your life

understand it. Keep a journal or scrapbook of things that pertain to your host country. Stay connected to friends, host families, and faculty you met while abroad. If you learned a foreign language, join conversation groups so you can practice your language skills.

- **Paying it forward:** It can be extremely rewarding to share your experience with those who are planning to go abroad. Look into working with International Affairs to help other students going abroad, come to IA events for prospective education abroad students, or get connected with foreign students coming to study at your campus.
- **Planning your next trip:** Just because this study abroad experience has ended doesn't mean it's the end of your global experience. Traveling, like learning, is a lifelong journey. Look into other opportunities to go abroad such as volunteering, interning abroad or going to graduate school abroad.