Maximizing Your Experience Abroad

Georgia State University
Office of International Initiatives
Study Abroad Programs
Documents you *must* submit to the Study Abroad Office before you travel abroad

- **Student Health Clearance Form**
- **Login to complete post-decision steps:**
  - Upload a copy of your passport
  - Emergency Contacts
- **Intent to Study Off Campus**
- **Transfer Credit Approval Form**
- **Consortium Agreement** (non-GSU only)
Passport and Visa

- In order to travel abroad you will need to apply for a passport if you do not already have one. Please visit travel.state.gov for more information on applying for a passport.

- Many programs will require that you obtain a visa. You will first need a passport before you can apply for a visa. Please speak with your program director for more information about visa requirements as each country works a bit differently. The Study Abroad Programs Office can give you some initial guidance, but your best resource is going to be your host country’s consular website.
Course Registration

- You will enroll in courses at your host university (either ahead of time or once you arrive on campus, depending on your host university). Your Program Director should be able to help you with this process.

- You are responsible for tuition & fees at GSU. Exchange students will need to speak with Stephen Murray about registering for INEX courses equivalent to the course load they will be taking abroad.

- All students on non-GSU programs must submit the Transfer Credit Approval Form (more on that in a second...).
Transfer Credit Approval Form

- Auditing, pass/fail & no-credit are **not** possible with study abroad programs; financial aid is contingent upon being enrolled for academic credit.
- We recommend getting your courses pre-approved before departure:
  - Academic Advisor needs to sign off on academic good standing & general credit courses
  - Department will need to sign off on upper-level courses
- Get more course pre-approved than necessary!
- Courses transfer back incorrectly? Missing your transcript? If you have any issues with your credit transfer after study abroad, please [contact our office](mailto:ouroffice@school.edu)!
Grading & Teaching Styles

- The credit you transfer back will factor into your cumulative GPA at GSU, but not your institutional GPA.
- Grading & teaching styles differ from country to country
  - For example: in France, professors believe 10/10 is reserved only for God
  - Please speak to your program director about grading at your host university
- If you’re concerned about how you’re doing in your class, please make sure to speak up to your professors abroad, the international office at your host university & ask your program director for guidance.
Financial Aid

- IEF and GES are disbursed along with other forms of Financial Aid *starting the 2nd week of the semester* (Fall/Spring)
- Any outstanding charges (tuition & fees) on your account will be paid before you receive a refund.
- Make sure you have direct deposit to your bank account set up, *not* to your Panther Card.
- If you’re participating in a non-GSU program, the consortium agreement must be completed as well
IEF Scholarship Service Requirements

- **4 service requirements**: reflection, photos, survey, volunteer OR attend

- **Starting Spring 2017**, IEF service is due the following semester (excluding summer), i.e. for Spring 2017 IEF recipients your service is due by end of Fall 2017.

- Receive emails about IEF service & volunteer/attendance opportunities regularly

- For questions please email Emily Caskey ecaskey@gsu.edu
Funds Abroad

- Before you leave, notify your bank, credit card company, or other financial institutions that you are going overseas.
  - Research the best credit cards for international travel - [nerdwallet.com](https://www.nerdwallet.com)
  - Chip & PIN, Chip & Signature...What’s the difference!?
- Keep the equivalency of ~$100 in local currency in a safe space for emergency purposes.
- Change some money to the local currency before you go
- Diversify your sources of currency (cash, credit, use debit card as ATM card)
- Since you’ll be in-country for an extended about of time, you may want to look into a local bank account.
- Keep your money close to your person
- Never put anything in your back pockets or outside backpack pouches!
- **DO YOUR RESEARCH ABOUT THE COUNTRY YOU ARE TRAVELLING TO!**
Health Insurance: Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI)

- As a GSU exchange study abroad student, you are required to enroll in CISI Insurance for the duration of your time abroad. Please login to your application to find the GSU group rate code in your post-acceptance materials. This insurance is mandatory and the Study Abroad Programs Office will check to make sure that you have enrolled in the insurance plan before you depart. Please download a copy of the CISI Policy Brochure and share with your emergency contacts. Should you have any health need abroad, you will want to be in touch with CISI.

- Research local healthcare providers & your host country on mycisi.com once you’ve enrolled

- For non emergency contact CISI (M-F 9:00am-5:00pm) at:
  (800) 303-8120 inside the U.S. or (203) 399-5130 outside the U.S.
  claimhelp@culturalinsurance.com

- For emergency assistance contact AXA (24/7)
  (855) 327-1411 inside the U.S. or (312) 935-1703 outside the U.S.
  MEDASSIST-USA@AXA-ASSISTANCE.US
Health: Immunizations & Prescriptions

Recommended and Required Immunizations

- Research country-specific immunizations and talk to your *physician*.

Prescriptions

- Take enough prescriptions for the duration of your travels including some extra in case you are unexpectedly delayed.

- Keep prescriptions in their original, *labeled* containers and pack them in your carry-on bag since checked baggage is occasionally lost or delayed.

- Be careful travelling with over-the-counter medications: what’s legal here may not be there! Get a letter from your physician in case you are questioned about your carry-on medication; some countries have strict restrictions on bringing prescription or even non-prescription medications into the country without proper medical documentation.

- Ask your pharmacy or physician for the scientific name of your prescriptions in case you need to purchase additional medication abroad.

- Check out [mycisi.com](http://mycisi.com) to search local healthcare providers in country and the Center for Disease Control’s travel site [http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/)
Safety

- Practice good situational awareness: stay on your toes, keep your head on a swivel, constantly assess risk!
- You are subject to the *local* laws: the law will not care if you are an American citizen or a citizen of Oceana. [Read up on local laws via the State Department’s website.](#)
- Register for the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#) to receive alerts from the U.S. Embassy in your host country.
- Always let someone know where you will be & travel in pairs
- Avoid confrontations, demonstrations, & political activities
- Be hyperaware at popular tourist locations/destinations
- Keep your money close to your person and never put anything in your back pockets!
- Drugs: never, period, enough said.
- Alcohol: moderation & the laws of the land.
GSU Ambassadors

- You are bound by the **GSU Student Code of Conduct**
- You are not on a ‘trip’ although you are traveling abroad. You are **studying** abroad.
- You are representing your country, your state and GSU
- If you serve as an unfit ambassador or a poor representative for any of the above the consequences can not only be immediate removal from your study abroad program, but also disciplinary action back at GSU
Communicating with Friends & Family at Home & Abroad

- Set up a communication plan with your ‘framily’ before you leave: you will be wonderfully distracted upon arrival & they will worry and want to know that you arrived safely!
- Remember: we don’t all have the same internet! Popular websites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are banned in some parts of the world.
- You will probably want a local phone number for calling & texting your new friends! Check with your carrier about getting your phone unlocked or buy a cheap phone in-country.
- Use your phone on airplane mode so you don’t pay roaming costs, but you can still call home with Skype, FaceTime, etc.
Packing

- Pack half of what you think you need because stairs are no joke! If you can’t carry your bag ¼ of a mile without collapsing, you’ve over-packed!
- Pack an extra set of clothes in your carry-on bag in case your checked baggage doesn’t arrive at the same time you do.
- Do you need an adapter or converter? What’s the difference?
- Don’t pack what you can buy in-country!
- Pack according to the local weather and culture.
- Save room for souvenirs!
Culture Shock

- a state of **bewilderment, disorientation, doubt, nervousness, and distress** experienced by an individual who is suddenly exposed to a new, unfamiliar, or foreign social and **cultural** environment (way of life or set of attitudes)

Before you leave

- Feelings of anxiousness, depression, anticipation
- Feelings of not wanting to leave/regretting your decision
- Excitement
How to Cope with Culture Shock...

- There will be ups & downs on your culture shock continuum
- Know as much as possible about your host country before you leave
  - Read up on local cultural norms & practices, holidays & history.
- Find logical reasons for cultural differences:
  - Many norms have evolved over time for very specific purposes that are no longer apparent.
- Avoid stereotypes & criticizing the host culture:
  - Stay positive → differences and newness are challenging and help you grow!
  - Spending time with other Americans and bashing your host country will only heighten challenges and won’t help you adjust!
- Self-care strategies - do what you love & what makes you feel better!
- Keep a journal or blog to document your experiences
  - Looking back can be a great way to process your feelings of culture shock & the progress you’ve made!
- Talk to someone about it! The GSU Counseling & Testing Center offers individual counseling.
  - Front office: 404-413-1641; Emergency after-hours number: 404-413-1640
Returned Study Abroad Students

- Just as you may experience culture shock upon arriving in your host country, you may also find yourself feeling the same anxiety/excitement to be returning home.

- One of the BEST ways to combat reversed culture shock is to stay active with the international community on campus:
  - **Volunteer with international-focused organizations on campus**
  - Be a buddy to incoming international students through your college or department
  - Consider joining the [Global Living LLC @ the Lofts](#)
  - Join the Alumni Reference Network
  - Inquire with Study Abroad Office about Study Abroad Ambassador positions

- **Study Abroad Office events**
  - Study Abroad Meet & Greet - drink coffee & meet other returned students! Be on the lookout for an invite at the beginning of the semester after you return.
  - [Beyond “It Was Awesome” Study Abroad & Your Career Workshop](#)
  - Attend the [Lessons from Abroad Conference](#) (Date TBA Fall 2017)
Research Your Host Country

- Guide books, travel websites/blogs, local news sources are all great resources!
- **Department of State Website country profiles**
- CISI Health Insurance Website [mycisi.com](http://mycisi.com) (health & safety info for your country & local healthcare providers)
- Read up on your host country's profile on the [CDC's Travel Health website](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)
- Speaking with returned students -> [Alumni Reference Network](http://alumni-reference-network.com).
- **Contact the Study Abroad Programs Office** for **Country Reports** login info. You'll also find this information in the [post-acceptance steps when you login](http://studyabroad-acceptance-steps.com).
- Register for the **Smart Traveler Enrollment Program** to receive alerts from the U.S. Embassy in your host country.
- Your Program Director or host coordinator in the international office at your host university are wonderful resources!