

**Study Abroad Pre-Departure Handbook**

Dear Study Abroad Student,

You are about to begin one of the most exciting adventures of your life – studying abroad. With your departure only a few months away, you have likely begun to wonder what you should pack, what health precautions you should take before departing, and what it will be like living and studying in your program’s host country. This handbook will help answer some of those questions. We will cover these topics and more at the Pre-Departure Orientation.

The information that follows is a collection of advice from our office staff, other universities and former participants. All information was accurate to the best of our knowledge at the time of printing. If you have updated information upon your return from study abroad, please let us know. We would greatly appreciate it if you could help us update this handbook for next year’s participants.

Ultimately, no written materials or suggestions are going to fully prepare you for what lies ahead. Remember to expect the unexpected**.** The best that you can do is to commit yourself to keeping an open mind, remaining flexible, and being patient as you adjust to your new environment. Most importantly, remember to have fun!

We are always open to suggestions to better provide information students who study abroad feel important. If you feel a topic needs to be added please let us know. The information provided here is what most students ask about, but is not all encompassing.

Also, please share this information with your family. Your family may have questions about your choice to study abroad so sharing this information may help answer some of their questions and address any concerns they might have.

Also, share this information with other students in your program. As you have chosen to study abroad your experience might encourage someone else to do so as well. Many times students are not sure what to ask or what to consider, by sharing your experience you are, essentially, an ambassador for study abroad.

Sincerely,

International Programs

ip@uncp.edu

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**IMPORTANT PEOPLE**

**International Programs**

The University of North Carolina at Pembroke
One University Drive

Ebert House
Pembroke NC, 28372
(910) 775-4095
ip@uncp.edu

**Academic Adviser/Department Info:**

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Fax:

Email:

**Financial Aid:**

Kyle McMahan
kyle.mcmahan@uncp.edu

**Registrar’s Office:**

Lourdes Silva

Lourdes.silva@uncp.edu

910-521-6301

**Campus Police:**

Phone: 910.521. 6235
Traffic Office: 910.521.6795
Fax: 910.521.6193
Relay: 910.521.6235
Email: police@uncp.edu

**IMPORTANT DATES**

Important dates depend on when you will be studying abroad.

**JANUARY –**

**FEBURARY –**

**MARCH –**

**APRIL –**

**MAY –**

**JUNE –**

**JULY –**

**AUGUST –**

**SEPTEMBER -**

**OCTOBER –**

**NOVEMBER –**

**DECEMBER -**

Notes \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**THINGS TO DO: Before leaving the U.S.**

**Read this handbook:** Read this handbook in its entirety. You are responsible to know content.

**Get your passport:** Apply immediately, unless you already have one that will be valid for at least six months after you return to the U.S.

**Get your visa:** Refer to the U.S. Department of State website (http://travel.state.gov/foreignentryreqs.html) to find entry requirements for your host country.

**Complete ALL post– acceptance requirements:** You must be admitted to your host university.

**Visit Financial Aid:** UNCP students intending to use financial aid toward the cost of the study abroad program must schedule an appointment with the Financial Aid Office.

**Make flight arrangements:** Do not make flight arrangements until your acceptance to the program is confirmed and you have verified your required arrival date.

**Get immunizations:** Refer to the website of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov /travel) to find health and vaccination requirements for your host country. Make an appointment with your health professional prior to departure to obtain necessary immunizations.

**Get prescriptions:** Get copies of all medical and vision prescriptions to carry with you. If possible, have your doctor fill your prescriptions to cover your entire stay abroad.

**Make photocopies:** Make copies of all of your important documents, including your passport, visa paperwork, airline tickets, prescriptions, etc. Leave one set of photocopies with a family member or friend in the U.S. and take the other set with you, separate from the originals.

**Make financial arrangements:** Develop a budget for your time abroad and plan for multiple ways of accessing money. If you plan to use your debit or credit card from the U.S., check with your bank or credit card company to verify locations of use and extra fees that may apply.

**Power of Attorney:** Consider arranging to give a family member or friend “Power of Attorney” to handle some of your financial affairs in your absence.

**Arrange for phone calls:** If you plan to use a U.S. long-distance calling card while abroad, contact your phone company to obtain access codes and rates.

**Plan ahead for Registration:** Make arrangements with a friend, family member, or academic adviser to register you for courses at UNCP for the semester after you return, in case you are unable to register while abroad.

**Arrange for housing:** Complete any applications necessary to obtain housing overseas and upon your return to UNCP.

**Confirm your permanent address:** Verify that the SA Coordinator and Registrar have your correct permanent address to mail bills and other information.

**Register** with the US State Department Smart Traveler Enrollment Program <https://step.state.gov/step/>

**PASSPORT INFORMATION**

If you have not already done so, you should **apply for a passport IMMEDIATELY**. Applications for a first-time passport may take only four to six weeks, but during busy times you should allow eight to ten weeks. A VALID PASSPORT IS REQUIRED FOR ALL PROGRAMS.

If you are really short on time, you may request express processing of your passport application for an extra cost plus overnight delivery costs. Processing a passport with this service usually takes about two weeks, but to request this service, you must show proof (such as an airline ticket) that you will be leaving the country in less than three weeks.

|  |
| --- |
| Previous 20   Next 20 |
| **Facility Name** | **Street Address** | **City** | **State** | **ZIP Code** | **Public Phone** | **Distance** |
| UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA PEMBROKE | ONE UNIVERSITY DRIVE | PEMBROKE | NC | 28372 | 9105216210 | 0 |
| DILLON POST OFFICE | 300 W MAIN ST | DILLON | SC | 29536 | 8437749481 | 23 |
| FAYETTEVILLE MAIN POST OFFICE | 301 GREEN STREET | FAYETTEVILLE | NC | 28301 | 9104862464 | 33 |
| SUPERIOR COURT CLERK RICHMOND COUNTY | 105 WEST FRANKLIN STREET | ROCKINGHAM | NC | 28379 | 9104197400 | 39 |
| MARION POST OFFICE | 201 S MAIN ST | MARION | SC | 29571 | 8434233522 | 42 |
| DARLINGTON POST OFFICE | 115 E SMITH AVE | DARLINGTON | SC | 29532 | 8433933223 | 46 |
| FLORENCE POST OFFICE | 1901 W EVANS ST | FLORENCE | SC | 29501 | 8436793445 | 49 |
| BROADWAY POST OFFICE | 101 S MAIN ST | BROADWAY | NC | 27505 | 9194205343 | 50 |
| CLERK OF COURT CHESTERFIELD COUNTY SC | 200 W MAIN ST | CHESTERFIELD | SC | 29709 | 8436237839 | 52 |
| CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT SAMPSON COUNTY | 101 E. MAIN ST. | CLINTON | NC | 28328 | 9105966603 | 54 |

**Cost (subject to change)**

$135 for a first-time passport

$110 for passport renewal

$ 60 additional fee for expedited service

**Passport Application forms**

Full passport details are available online at http://travel.state.gov/passport/get/get\_4855.html

Application forms can also be downloaded at this site.

**Passport Photos**

UNCP post office or Walgreens – 503 E 3rd St, Pembroke, NC 28372

**\*\*Special Notes for Non-U.S. Citizens\*\***

Non-U.S. citizens must contact the IP before studying abroad with UNCP. Non-U.S. citizens should also contact the embassy of the destination country for information on visa requirements for citizens of your home country. Check with your program regarding any field trips to other countries which may also require a visa entry.

**VISA INFORMATION**

A visa is an official document (endorsement or stamp) issued by the government of the host country, placed by officials of the host country on a U.S. passport that allows the bearer to visit that country. It is your responsibility to verify the visa requirements for your host country and obtain your student visa.

Visa regulations vary widely, and visa processing may take from a few weeks to a few months to issue, depending on the country. ***Therefore, you should check with the embassy of your host country AS SOON AS POSSIBLE to confirm visa application requirements.*** Begin collecting required documents, even if you do not yet have your passport, and submit your visa application as soon as you have all of the required materials.

Some embassies will accept (or require) visa applications to be submitted in person; others will accept (or require) applications to be submitted by mail. It is important that you begin the visa application process IMMEDIATELY to ensure that you receive your visa in time to depart for your host country.

**The U.S. Department of State website will provide links to your host country embassy or consulate. (http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\_pa\_tw/cis/cis\_4965.html). Check with the embassies in those countries BEFORE departure.**

Also, if you plan to visit other countries while studying in your host country you will need to ensure you have the proper documentation to enter that third country, including a visa if necessary, and reenter your host country. To see what documentation you may need to enter a third country you will want to visit the website of the embassy(ies) accordingly.

**WORKING WHILE ABROAD**

All countries have strict regulations governing the ability of foreign nationals (including students) to work while residing in the country. Often, foreign students are not allowed to work at all, and restrictions may be included with your visa. Even in countries which do allow foreign students to work part-time, you may find that jobs are scarce, it’s difficult to combine work and studies, or both.

In any case, do not plan on working while abroad as a way to cover your expenses during your study abroad program. Your host university may restrict you from working even if it is legal for you to do so. At best, a part-time job while studying abroad should serve as a supplement to your personal expenses and travel budget. The best source of information about work options in your host country is your host university coordinator.

**Working without legal permission will, in many countries, be considered grounds for deportation. Ignorance of the law is not accepted as an excuse. Be sure to check with your overseas program coordinator for updated details about work regulations in your host country.**

**MONEY MATTERS**

**Financial Aid:** If you will be receiving financial aid, it is very important to meet with Financial Aid, and it is recommended that you fill out a Direct Deposit Authorization with the Cashier’s Office. These forms will allow most aid to be deposited directly to your checking account, and will allow any aid which cannot be directly deposited to be mailed to the person you designate (family member or friend).

Failure to maintain full-time status while abroad could jeopardize your enrollment at UNCP and your eligibility for financial aid. **Students receiving financial aid may need to pay back a portion of their aid if they do not maintain a full-time course load.**

**Scholarships: S**cholarship deadlines are set. If you applied last year, you should have already been notified if you were awarded a scholarship. Check the IP website for scholarship details and deadlines.

For students on ISEP Exchange: Scholarship amounts will be deducted from what you owe.

For all other programs: When you receive your acceptance letter from your host university, we MUST receive a copy of your acceptance letter **before** we disburse your money. Scholarship funds will be deposited in to the direct deposit account that you have on file with the university. If you do not have direct deposit set up, a check will be sent to your permanent address on file with the university.

If you did not apply for a Study Abroad scholarship, you will be eligible to apply while you are abroad. Keep in mind that if you are applying for a scholarship while abroad, you should make sure to have other ways to pay for your expenses while abroad.

**Budgeting:** The amount that students spend while abroad varies greatly. Here is some advice on developing a budget:

* Gather information on program costs. Find out how much is included in your exchange, or what costs are expected for direct enrollment.
* Know what is included in your fees, and what additional costs you may have to pay while “settling in” (bed linens, toiletries, replacements for things you left at home).
* Determine how much you and your family are willing to budget for discretionary expenses (travel, entertainment, etc.) and incidentals (laundry, postage, film, etc.).Expect some items to be more expensive overseas. This may include food, books, and “luxury” items, such as electronics and clothing.
* Check the exchange rate and guidebooks for your host country. Guidebooks typically list costs for accommodations, transportation, entrance fees, and other items that will help you estimate for personal travel.
* Look for ways to cut costs. Evaluate your personal spending habits and where you are willing to cut back to afford other things while abroad. Consider getting an International Student Identity Card for discounts.

**Banking:** Before you leave, be sure that you understand how you will access money while abroad. You should have more than one means of getting money.

What to take with you: You should have a small amount of foreign currency with you in cash when you arrive abroad. Most major banks can obtain foreign currency, but you should verify this in advance. Currency exchange services are also available at most international airports (in the U.S. and abroad). Make sure you have enough cash to cover bus/taxi fares, snacks, and a phone call for the first couple of days. We recommend taking about US$100 or the equivalent in foreign currency. Be sure to get small denominations—the equivalents of $10 or $20 bills. You can look up current exchange rates on websites such as [www.oanda.com](http://www.oanda.com).

Personal Checks: It is virtually impossible to cash personal checks abroad. You should not expect to be able to cash checks abroad.

Traveler’s Checks: Traveler’s checks offer a convenient and safe way to carry money overseas. They are widely accepted around the world, and easily replaced if lost or stolen. However, this may not be a convenient option for accessing money if you are in a remote or rural area. You can purchase traveler’s checks at most banks, AAA, and various other financial institutions. They can be purchased in U.S. dollars or some foreign currencies. There may be fees involved in purchasing and/or cashing the checks. Inquire at your bank for more information.

ATMs: Automatic Teller Machines are widely available overseas. ATMs tend to give you a good exchange rate, charge no exchange commission, and have 24-hour access. However, your bank may charge extra fees for using an ATM abroad, or have limits on daily withdrawals. Check with your bank for the following:

* Get a list of ATMs or branch locations overseas.
* Make sure you have a four-digit numeric PIN; many countries do not accept longer PIN codes or may not have letters on the keypad.
* ATMs overseas may not give you the choice between accessing a checking account and a savings account—they may pull from one account. Consult with your bank about the ability of your card to work overseas, as you may need to set the card to access only one type of account.
* If you plan to get a new ATM card, get your PIN and use the card in the U.S. before you go abroad. Do not expect a brand new card to work overseas.
* If your parents have access to your account, they can deposit money that you can access from overseas, usually within 24 hours.
* Contact your bank and credit card companies to let them know the dates you are travelling abroad and where you are going. Sometimes banks and credit card companies will freeze an account if they see activity in a foreign country.

**Prepaid Currency Card (Europe Only):** If you do not have an ATM card, or you want to keep your travel funds separate from your regular account, some banks or companies offer prepaid cards which work just like a debit card. Only Euros or GB Pounds are available at

this time.

* The card can generally be used at ATM machines, stores, and restaurants for your everyday purchases. It stays secure through microchip and PIN protection.
* Be sure to check the exchange rate used when purchasing one of these, as it may not have the most favorable exchange rate. Some fees may also apply.
* One example: <http://www.us.travelex.com/US/Products/Cash-Passport/>

Credit Cards:

* Contact your credit card company to ensure your card can be used in the country(ies) you will be studying in and/or visiting.
* Credit cards can be easily used abroad and tend to offer a good exchange rate on purchases. Some credit cards, such as Visa, are widely accepted, while others may not work world-wide.
* Check with your credit card company to find out if they charge fees for international use. Some companies may charge per transaction; others may have a monthly fee.
* If you are unable to qualify for a card of your own, your parents may open an account and get a card in your name for your use.
* As with ATM cards, if you plan to get a new credit card, use it in the U.S. before you go abroad to ensure it works properly.
* Receipts may have your credit card number printed on them, so keep them in a safe place for your records. You may need to refer to receipts for customs paperwork upon leaving the host country and/or entering the U.S.
* ***Credit cards should never be used as a means of getting cash, except in an emergency***. There is a transaction fee for each cash advance, and you will be charged interest from the day the transaction is made.

Foreign Cables/Wires: In emergencies, money can also be wired overseas. While this is theoretically the fastest way to transfer money, caution is advised since it may take several weeks for delivery in practice. Cables/wires must be sent to a commercial bank, not to an individual post office box.

Foreign Drafts: Foreign drafts can be a fast, reliable, and relatively inexpensive way of transferring money. You can buy a foreign draft in U.S. dollars or foreign currency from your bank. The draft should be made payable to the student and mailed directly to you via an express mail service (FedEx, DHL, etc.). Drafts must be drawn on a bank abroad which maintains a relationship with your home bank. The name of the foreign bank will usually be written somewhere in the draft, and it is that bank that the student will go to draft the cash. Not

all overseas banks can receive transfers from the U.S., so have a backup plan for transferring money or in case of an emergency.

**Power of Attorney:** Consider arranging to give a family member or friend “Power of Attorney” to handle some of your financial affairs in your absence (i.e. to deposit checks made out to you into your bank account, sign official documents on your behalf, file your taxes, sign apartment leases, etc.) This is especially important if you will be receiving financial aid checks or other payments while you are abroad which would normally require your signature for deposit. You may also want to check with your bank to see what additional paperwork they may require in order to allow someone to access your account.

**Tuition Tax Information:** As you will be living abroad for a period of time it is very important you work with your tax assistance with regard to how living abroad, paying tuition, fees, room or board, etc. overseas may affect your tax status.

**REFUND POLICY**

It is important that you understand the you are responsible for all payments by the program deadline. You are also responsible for speaking with Financial Aid about what you qualify for. As your enrollment overseas affects your ability to receive financial aid you must be registered full-time and you must receive a grade of “c” or higher to maintain your financial aid.

You are also subject to the rules & regulations of your host institution, & the laws of your host country. It is your responsibility to maintain property, such as housing, books, equipment, & other materials entrusted to your care during your exchange period. In the event that you fail to pay the agreed rent and/or incur charges due to misuse or negligence of property, you will not receive credit for your exchange program until such payments are made. In rare cases and only with prior agreement UNCP may pay such charges on your behalf & assess them to your student account.

You must understand that if you cancel or terminate your participation in this program you are responsible for payments of all associated fees and expenses associated with the program, including but not limited to flights, hotels, transportation, admission fees, etc., that have been purchased or reserved in your name and/or on your behalf and understand that only refunds you will be provided, if any, are related to overpay funds at the end of the program and only refunds above $50.

**TRAVEL INFORMATION**

**Flights:** Please do not make flight arrangements until you receive your official acceptance from your host university. You should refer to the required arrival date and the final exam schedule of your host university/program when securing an airline ticket.

Here are some general tips to consider before buying your tickets:

* We recommend buying a student fare, round-trip ticket with a set return date, and flying into the airport closest to your final destination. Open-ended tickets are usually more expensive than a ticket with a fixed return date.
* Many fares, including student fares, require you to choose a return date, but allow you to change the date for a fee ($75—$200). This is usually more economical than an open-ended ticket. Also, some countries may deny entry if you do not show evidence of a return ticket.
* Look carefully as the cost, hassle, and time involved before deciding to fly into an airport that is NOT the closest to your final destination simply because it is cheaper. Remember that you will have all of your luggage, and you will likely be tired and jetlagged.
* Don’t assume the first travel agent or website you check is offering the cheapest fare. Different agencies have access to different fares, and prices vary. Shop around; student fares are not available from all agencies. See below for a list of recommended travel agents and resources.

**General Travel:** One of the most exciting things about studying abroad is the opportunity to explore your host country and other surrounding areas while you are overseas. Here are some general tips:

* If you are interested in learning more about traveling during weekend and school breaks, the best resources will be the student travel agencies listed in this handbook and people in your host country.
* You may find helpful information in country-specific guidebooks (Lonely Planet, Fodor’s, etc.). These resources can provide helpful information about discounts, flights, and train/bus passes, as well as historical and cultural information about locations around the world.
* Because you may not know your specific travel plans before leaving the U.S., some students suggest waiting to purchase items, such as inter Europe flight tickets, until after you arrive overseas. Please note: Eurail passes must be purchased in the U.S.
* Students traveling before or after their study abroad program are also eligible to purchase an extension on the UNC system health insurance.
* **U.S. Citizens-You should register with the U.S Embassy in your host country AND in the countries where you will be traveling.** You can do so on-line at <http://travel.state.gov/travl/abroad_registration.html>.
* N**on-U.S. Citizens-**You should register with the Embassy of your country of citizenship in your host country, and in those where you will be traveling.

**Travel Agencies & Travel Resources:**

* STA Travel - www.statravel.com
* Student Universe - www.studentuniverse.com
* JTA (worldwide travel) - [www.japantravel.com](http://www.japantravel.com), Akira Negi 919-878-2511 x 425
* World Travel - [www.worldtrav.com](http://www.worldtrav.com), 919-233-1822
* Prestige Travel (travel to Africa) - www.prestigetour.com
* WSA Europe (weekend travel tours in Europe) - [www.wsaeurope.com](http://www.wsaeurope.com), info@wsaeurope.com
* ISTC (International Student Travel Confederation - [www.istc.org](http://www.istc.org). **ISIC (International Student Identity Card):** The ISIC serves as an internationally recognized form of identification and allows students to take advantage of discounts all over the world for things such as flights, public transportation, accommodations, restaurants, and tourist attractions. You can also use the ISIC to establish an email account or international phone plan. For full details, visit [www.myisic.com](http://www.myisic.com). You can obtain an ISIC on-line. In order to apply, you will need to complete an ISIC application, and provide a passport size photo (2”x2”). The cost is $25, plus shipping.

**KEEPING IN TOUCH**

**Phone:** Many students arrange a calling schedule with family and friends, setting a time each week when they will be at a certain number. There are several options if you plan to use phone services.

**International Calling:** U.S. long-distance carriers offer a wide variety of calling options. Call around to compare prices or check with the carrier your parents use. You may need to get international dialing access to call *from* the U.S. and/or to call from overseas *to* the U.S.

**Calling Cards:** Your host institution may send you information about international calling cards and rates from overseas. If not, ask a representative from your host university if they can make recommendations. Some calling cards purchased overseas are more economical than calling cards purchased in the U.S.

**Public Phones:** In some countries, it is rare to find coin-operated pay phones. Some countries will have card-operated phones, and you can purchase phone cards at local stores and kiosks.

**Cell Phones:** Students typically use cell phones overseas only for calling others within the host country. Most cell phones purchased in the U.S. will not work abroad, and GSM (global) cell phones are expensive, so it is often cheaper to lease or buy a cell phone once you arrive overseas. Check with your host institution or fellow students after you arrive for options available in your city.

**Internet Phone Service:** If both users have a microphone and speakers/headphones on their computers, you can talk for free through an internet phone service such as www.skype.com. You can also use Skype to call from your computer to phone numbers in the US at very reasonable rates.

**Email & Internet:** UNCP Accounts: Because you will still be enrolled at UNCP while abroad, you will continue to have access to your UNCP email account. IP **is required to send correspondence to your UNCP email account, so please make sure you check this address frequently while abroad or have it forwarded to the account you are using.** Also, you are required to email IP every month to ‘check-in’ so that we know if you have any questions or concerns, or if IP needs to notify you of anything.

**Host University:** The majority of universities overseas will give students access to email and internet services, which is typically the least expensive way to keep in touch and access the web. You may find their computer centers to have fewer computers or limited hours, but it will help you appreciate the technology available in the U.S. If you choose to take a laptop, have it insured and check the technological requirements and facilities of the host university.

**While Traveling:** Many cities around the world have internet cafes, where you can pay for internet access on a minute or hourly basis. Prices will vary.

**Mail:** From the U.S., international mail can take up to 2-6 weeks for delivery. Postal services from abroad will vary, and could take longer. Generally, cards and letters are easy and inexpensive to send. However, if you or a family member wants to send a gift or care package, check with the customs agency of your host country to find rules and regulations about what can be mailed to/from the country.

**Websites & Blogs:** Keeping in touch around the world can be difficult, so more and more students are choosing to create their own websites or blogs. There are several free sites where you can write about your experience and post photos for friends and family to view, such as www.tripod.com, [www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com) and [www.blogspot.com](http://www.blogspot.com).

**SAFETY**

Be cautious about what you post; similar to Facebook, if your site is open to the public, you should not include specific information such as your full name, where you are, or where you’ll be this weekend. Be aware that anything you post on-line is public information, so if you are doing anything illegal or in violation of university policies, you can be held liable.

Most U.S. citizens who go abroad encounter no vast differences in safety or crime. However, no place in the world is completely without risk, and you should use simple precautions to improve your chances of staying safe, healthy, and happy while abroad.

In this handbook and at the Pre-Departure Orientation, we will address general health and safety, along with emergency procedures. It will be important for you to use common sense and remember: if it is not something you would do at home, do not do it abroad. Be open to new experiences, but keep your wits about you. For general safety, learn from the locals, but also follow some general guidelines. We suggest that you spend the first few days abroad orienting yourself to your new environment. Attend your host university on-site orientation, learn which neighborhoods should be avoided, learn the transport system, and observe social cues such as appropriate dress and language.

**Safety Tips:**

* Act like you know where you are going and what you are doing. If you are lost or need to check a map, step into a café or other business, but be aware of your surroundings and your belongings.
* Backpacks, purses, and camera bags can be a target. Wear them snug to your body and keep them closed. Carry your wallet in your front pocket rather than your back pocket. If confronted, give up your valuables instead of fighting the attackers.
* Don’t carry large amounts of cash, and don’t carry all of your money and documents in one bag.
* Be alert in crowds, especially in train stations or at tourist attractions. Thieves may use distractions to their advantage.
* Don’t carry your passport unless you absolutely need it or are crossing international borders. A photocopy of your passport will probably suffice for everyday use.
* Check the security of a hotel or hostel before booking a room by making sure your items can be secured in a safe or locker. A few extra dollars saved on cheap accommodations will not cover the replacement costs of a passport, camera, etc.
* Never drive or ride with anyone under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
* Do not stay out excessively late at night alone or with strangers.
* Don’t hitchhike.
* When traveling at night by bus or train, attach your bag to the luggage rack or your seat by using a lock or strap from the bag.
* Do not take valuable items with you overseas, such as expensive jewelry, electronics, etc. They may get lost, stolen, or damaged while traveling. If you can’t live without your iPod or laptop, consider having it engraved by the UNCP campus police.
* If possible, don’t travel alone. Stay in public places, travel with a friend, and always let someone know where you are.
* When making travel arrangements abroad, please consider safety and do not sacrifice safety for cost. There are some means of transportation that may be cheap but may also come with a greater degree of risk.
* Stay informed about developments in your host country and around the world. Read the U.S. Department of State travel information at (http://travel.state.gov./). If the U.S. decides to launch military or economic action, you will immediately become a representative of your country. If your destination is having political or military demonstrations or attacks, stay away from all sites of such activity.
* Talk to students, faculty, and others who have visited or lived in the areas where you will be traveling. You will be able to discuss this with other students and Study Abroad Office staff at the orientation.

**Dietary Safety:** Traveling can be exciting, educational, exhausting and energizing, and the food you enjoy while traveling can be absolutely enticing. However, culinary excursions while traveling can be a hazard to your health if you're not paying attention to proper food safety practices.

Food poisoning doesn't just occur in the home. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that each year roughly 1 in 6 Americans get sick, 128,000 are hospitalized and 3,000 die due to foodborne diseases. Don't spoil your trip and become part of these food safety statistics!

The golden rule when it comes to food safety anytime, anywhere is proper hand washing. Wash your hands whenever possible with soap and water, especially before you eat and after you use the bathroom. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water aren't available. Pack it so you have it.

There's plenty more that you can do to fend off food safety risks. When eating and drinking while traveling, follow these tips for making it the safest culinary adventure you can.

**Packing Food for the Car, Bus or RV Trip**

* Keep cold food cold. Place cold food in coolers with frozen gel packs or ice. Stashing it at 40°F or below prevents bacterial growth. Consider packing beverages in one cooler and perishable foods in another since you'll likely grab beverages most often.
* Keep hot food hot. That means your best bet when packing is to take a pass on hot food unless you have a portable heating unit that can be safely used.
* Rinse *all* fresh produce under running tap water before packing it in a cooler, including produce with peel away skins or rinds.

**On the Road: Restaurants and Rest Stops**

* Beware of buffets. There's always the potential that food has not been held at proper temperatures or may become mishandled by people with unclean hands.
* Choose cold or hot foods. Steer clear of any food that's served at room temperature — that's within the temperature "danger zone" where bacteria can thrive.
* Watch out for the water. Water is regulated and tested throughout the U.S., but, when in doubt, don't drink the tap or well water — or anything made with it, such as ice or fountain drinks. Stick with sealed, bottled beverages.

**Food on Planes and Trains**

* Clean your hands before you eat. Even if you don't need to use the restroom, you'll still want to wash away germs you picked up in the airport or train station with soap and water or hand sanitizer.
* Remember the two-hour rule. If you buy cold or hot food at the airport or train station, eat it within two hours of purchasing so bacteria doesn't have excess time to multiply. In hot weather, the safe time limit is one hour. Set a timer on your watch or phone to remind you.
* Think before eating. Clean off your tray table before you use it with disinfectant wipes that you've packed. If hot food is served on the plane or train, make sure it is, indeed, hot.

**Eating at Your Destination**

* Don't take a vacation from food safety rules just because you're traveling. Fish, shellfish, meat and eggs are still unsafe to eat when raw, even at a fancy hotel.
* Though the aromas may be tempting, consider skipping food from unknown street vendors. The safest strategy is to stick to tried-and-true dining establishments.
* Be adventurous, but not overly venturesome with meat selections. Just say "no thanks" to wild meat, such as monkeys, bats and unusual game meat.

A**nti-American Sentiment:** There may be times, for reasons of personal safety, that you do not want to be marked as an American or otherwise identified as an easy target for theft or assault. If you are concerned about anti-American sentiment, you may want to refer to an organization such as The Glimpse Foundation (www.glimpseabroad.org). They have published a Cultural Acclimation Guide called “American Identity Abroad,” which “aims to help study abroad students navigate the sticky issues that surround being a citizen of the world’s only superpower.”

**How does the Study Abroad Office monitor safety?**

* IP pays special attention to the U.S. Department of State website and receives immediate notification of international travel announcements and warnings. Travel warnings are issued when the State Department decides, based on all relevant information, to recommend that Americans avoid travel to a certain country. IP staff will review this information, along with a variety of other reliable sources, to have up-to-the minute information on any countries where students are or will be studying.
* **IP and the UNCP Safety Coordinator is in place to manage any emergencies that may occur while students are abroad. This team is available 24 hours a day through the UNCP Campus Police.**
* All students studying abroad are required to submit several forms, including an Emergency Contact Form, which enables the IP to aid in an emergency.
* All students studying abroad are required to purchase the UNC system health insurance, which includes emergency assistance evacuation, and repatriation. You should carry your insurance card with you at all times.
* All students are provided with an emergency contact card before departure. You should carry this with you at all times.

**Emergencies Abroad:** An emergency is an occurrence or situation that poses a genuine and sometimes immediate risk to the health and wellbeing of program participants. Student safety is our highest priority. If you have an emergency abroad, first contact your on-site program coordinator. If there is an emergency that requires you to contact the Study Abroad Office, you may call 910-775-4095 during business hours, or UNCP Campus Police at 910-521-6235 (available 24 hours/day). Both IP and Campus Police will accept collect international calls. If you can only make one call, you may call UNCP Campus Police. They have instructions to accept collect calls, and then to call a member of the Study Abroad Emergency Response Team until they reach someone who can call you back immediately. If you would like a family member or friend to be available to travel to your host country in case of an emergency, make sure they have valid passports.

**Emergencies at Home:** People need to know how to get in touch with you while you are away. You should have a conversation with your family before you leave to discuss what you will do in the event that there is a death or serious emergency in your family. Please be sure that your host university coordinator and the Study Abroad Office have your complete contact information, and inform both if there has been a family emergency.

**U.S. Embassy Assistance:** U.S. Embassy personnel provide routine citizenship services (such as passport replacement) and emergency assistance for American citizens abroad. They also provide assistance to Americans abroad and their families in cases of death, serious medical emergency, and legal difficulties. You should locate the U.S. Embassy closest to your location by visiting <http://usembassy.state.gov>. You will also be required to enroll in the Department of State STEP program. This program will have a way for your family to reach out to you while you are overseas and vice versa.

**HEALTH**

We want you to enjoy your experience abroad, and hope that your health and safety will be your top priorities. Here are some simple precautions to maintain your health and enjoy your study abroad experience:

* **Before you leave assess your own health and any requirements for your host country.** Some countries will require you to have a physical exam due to visa regulations. Others may require or recommend vaccinations. See the Center for Disease Control for more information on your host country ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)).
* **Consult a travel clinic prior to your departure date.** Make an appointment with your medical professional or with another reputable healthcare service or physician. Although most family healthcare providers administer routine

immunizations, they may not stock specialized vaccines for your destination.

* **Update your prescriptions.** If you take prescription medication (including allergy shots or birth control pills, or if you wear prescription contact lenses), make sure you have an adequate supply for the duration of your stay. For medications, obtain statements from your prescribing doctor which are signed and dated by your doctor, indicating the generic and brand name of the medication, any major health problems, and recommended dosage. This will be vital information in case of an emergency.
* **Pack wisely.** Pack your prescriptions and medications in original packaging in your carry-on luggage. Make sure the name on the prescription appears the same as on your passport. It is also helpful to have notes from your physician explaining the need for the medication. Customs officials may ask to see this.
* **Plan for long term medication needs.** If you take prescriptions on a regular and long-term basis, or if you will need anti-malarial medication, we strongly encourage you to talk with your health care provider to obtain medication for the duration of the program well in advance of departure. If prescriptions cannot be filled for the length of your program, investigate if your prescription can be filled abroad OR how you will be able to have prescriptions filled in the U.S. and have the medication shipped abroad. If your medication has to be shipped, check with customs officials in your host country to check for any restrictions.
* **Document any medical conditions.** If you have asthma, allergies, diabetes, or any other condition that may require emergency care, you should also carry a card, tag, or bracelet that identifies your medical condition. If you have (or have had) any medical or psychological conditions, be aware that the stress of adjustment overseas may cause the recurrence of conditions for which you have been successfully treated in the past.
* **Pack necessities.** Certain products may be more expensive or difficult to obtain overseas, or the brands and products may be unfamiliar. Thus, you may want to consider taking the following items with you: your preferred pain reliever or cold medication, contact lens solution, extra pair of glasses/contacts, syringes for medical injections, and feminine hygiene products.
* **Practice abstinence or safe sex.** We encourage students to be cautious about their sexual activity while abroad. HIV and other sexually-transmitted diseases are prevalent everywhere in the world. In some countries, the availability of condoms and other prophylactics is restricted, so if you plan to be sexually active, we recommend you pack your own.

**While Traveling**

* **Avoid alcohol and caffeine.** Remember that jetlag can worsen by dehydration. Caffeine and alcohol contribute to dehydration, so avoid them and drink plenty of other liquids, such as juice or water. The extra vitamins in juice will also help boost your immune system.
* **Reset your body’s internal clock.** Try to adjust your sleep schedule to the time zone of your destination. If you start doing this a few days before you depart, it may help reduce jetlag.

**When You Arrive**

* **Take care!** The first few days or weeks in your study abroad location will be very exciting and you may be tempted to overdo it. Remember that in addition to your cultural adjustments, your body will be going through a physical adjustment to a new climate, time zone, food, etc. Eat reasonably, drink plenty of water, and get plenty of rest.
* **Drink water.** You may want to start with bottled water if you are unsure of the tap water in your new environment. This will help reduce the likelihood of becoming dehydrated or having diarrhea.
* **Look for health services.** Make sure you know how to access health services, both for routine care and emergencies, in your new environment. This information may be included at your host university orientation. If not, contact the international office at your host institution.
* **Use moderation when drinking alcohol.** If you consume alcohol, consume it in moderation and follow the UNCP alcohol policy. Because students under 21 are legally permitted to drink in many countries, American students are sometimes tempted to overdo it overseas. Alcohol can dehydrate you, further stress your body, and impair your judgment, all of which add strain to you in a new environment.

**Mental Health**

Your mental health is also a concern while studying abroad. Adjusting to another culture typically involves stress for study abroad students, and stress is the number one cause of exacerbation of a preexisting mental illness. IP and staff at your host university can help put you in touch with the appropriate resources for counseling and advice. If you have a mental health condition, it is important that you go to your doctor prior to departure, sign a release for medical records, and take a copy of your records with you on the study abroad program. This will aid the process if you need to meet with a doctor overseas. For students with the UNC system health insurance (required for most UNCP programs), the insurance provider (HTH) can help identify a counselor abroad in advance so that medical records can be released directly.

**HEALTH INSURANCE**

Additionally, the UNCP Counseling Center is available to you anytime from overseas. They have staff on-call for any emergencies during non-office hours. You can reach them during business hours at **910-521-6202**, or after hours via UNCP Campus Police at 910-521-6235. Both Campus Police and the IP will accept collect international calls.

**UNCP Programs & UNCP Direct Enroll**

If you are studying abroad through UNCP, ISEP or Magellan, you are required to purchase the UNC system health insurance (HTH). The UNC system policy provides low-cost comprehensive primary medical coverage with no deductible. Further information will be given to you at orientation. You can also maintain your own secondary insurance.

Prior to departure, you will receive your insurance card via email from IP. You should print this card and carry the card with you at all times. Also carry a claim form with you whenever you travel. Submitting a completed claim form, although not required, will expedite your reimbursement if you do need to file a claim. Although arrangements can be made for the insurance company to pay the hospital directly for very serious and lengthy hospital stays, or for services provided by an HTH approved physician, it is much more typical for a student to pay all costs up front and then be reimbursed. Be sure that you have access to adequate funds to cover a health emergency, and keep all receipts you receive in order to file your claim. If you plan to travel before or after the program dates, you are eligible to purchase up to 30 days of additional insurance through IP. The cost of the additional insurance **is $2.63** per day. You must request before/after insurance 2 weeks before you travel. Payment for the UNC system health insurance must be made to the IP. Your student account at UNCP will **NOT** be billed for this insurance. Insurance payments should be made directly to the IP, and are due at least 1 month before you leave the U.S. If you have any questions about the details of your insurance coverage, contact:

HTH Worldwide Insurance Services

One Radnor Corporate Center, Suite 100

100 Matsonford Rd.

Radnor, PA 19087 USA

[www.hthworldwide.com](http://www.hthworldwide.com)

Customer Service (U.S.) 1-866-281-1668

(From outside the U.S.) 1-610-254-8741

Fax: 1-610-254-8797

Email customerservice@hthworldwide.com

You can also access your insurance account on the HTH website (www.HTHstudents.com). On this site, you can obtain a list of English-speaking doctors for your location, find a local hospital, find common translations of medical phrases to the native language, as well as other helpful information. You must have your certificate number prior to logging into the HTH system. This certificate number will be on your insurance card which will be provided to you by IP once you have been registered in the HTH system.

**STUDENT CONDUCT**

As a participant in a study abroad program with UNCP, you are expected to take responsibility for your own actions or failure to act at all times while studying abroad. You will be held accountable for your behavior and you are expected to abide by the UNCP Code of Student Conduct, all IP policies, and the laws and customs that govern the host countries where you are studying or visiting. Additionally, it is expected that you will demonstrate respect for yourself and others at all times. These policies exist to ensure a safe, fair and successful experience for all students participating in the program. Ignorance of the policies is not an acceptable excuse for policy violation. Also the IP and Standards of Student Conduct are in writing to give you general notice of expected behavior. These standards should be read broadly and are not designed to define misconduct in exhaustive terms.

*Failure to comply with host country laws/regulations, the UNCP Code of Student Conduct, the IP Standards of Student Conduct, IP policies, and/or engaging in behavior which in the judgment of the Faculty Director jeopardizes the safety or well-being of yourself, others, or the program may result in immediate dismissal from the program, failure of courses, loss of program costs, and/or an early return home at your expense. Note that due to the circumstances of foreign travel and foreign study programs, a due process hearing may not be possible and therefore may not be available until after the trip or program has ended and you have returned*

*home.*

If you are dismissed from the program, you may be sent home at your own expense with no refund of fees or expenses. In being dismissed, you may be subject to failure of courses and/or an early return home.

You may also be subject to further disciplinary, civil and/or criminal action upon return to the University. Students will be held financially responsible for any damages or fines incurred on the study abroad program as a result of their misconduct.

**Foreign Laws, Regulations and Standards**

Each foreign country has its own laws and regulations and has standards of acceptable conduct in the areas of dress, manners, morals, religion, social customs, politics, alcohol use, drug use and behavior. Behavior or conduct which violate those laws or standards could harm the program’s effectiveness, the University’s relations with those countries in which the program is located, your own health and safety or the health and safety of other participants in the program. Therefore it is important for you to become informed of all laws, regulations and standards for each country to or through which you will travel during your participation.

Many practices that are illegal or grounds for mistrial in the U.S., including extraction of a confession, entrapment, police searches without a warrant, etc., are admissible in court in other countries. In many systems, there is no bail requirement, no jury trial; the burden of proof is on the accused to prove his or her innocence, etc. You are fully responsible for any legal problems, any encounters with any foreign government or any individual and the University is not responsible for providing any assistance under such circumstances.

Note that contrary to popular belief, the U.S. Embassy CANNOT get you out of jail if you are arrested. **U.S. laws or constitutional rights do not protect you once you leave the U.S.** You must abide by the laws of the country in which you are traveling.

**For US Citizens- A U.S. Consular Officer can:**

* Visit you in jail after being notified of your arrest.
* Give you a list of local attorneys.
* Notify your family or friends (including the program director) and relay requests for money or other aid with your authorization.
* Intercede with the local authorities to ensure that you are treated humanely and that your rights under local law are fully observed.

**The U.S. Consular Officer cannot:**

* Get you out of jail.
* Represent you at trial or give legal counsel.
* Pay legal fees or fines with U.S. government funds.

In addition to emergency assistance for American citizens and their families abroad, such as cases of death, serious medical emergency, and legal difficulties, the U.S. Embassy personnel also provide routine citizenship services such as passport replacement. In order to ensure fast and easy replacement of your passport, be sure to have a photocopy somewhere secure.

**UNCP Code of Student Conduct (including Academic and Non-Academic policies)**

As you will be enrolled as a UNCP student while attending the study abroad program, you are expected to abide by the UNCP University Code of Student Conduct, which can be found online at the UNCP website. This Code covers many topics, including but not limited to, academic integrity, cheating, plagiarism, disorderly conduct, harassment, hazing, drugs, theft, and weapons. Please familiarize yourself with the content of the Code of Student Conduct, as you are responsible for the policies outlined therein. It is especially important to note the section of the Code of Student Conduct related the definition of “University-sponsored activity”: *“University-sponsored activity” means any activity on or off-campus which is initiated, aided, authorized, or supervised by the University or a University organization.* Study Abroad is considered a “University sponsored activity”, so your behavior on the study abroad program is subject to the Code of Student Conduct. \*Note that due to the circumstances of foreign travel and foreign study programs, a due process hearing may not be possible and therefore may not be available until after the trip or program has ended and you have returned home.

**ALCOHOL, DRUGS & CRIME**

**ALCOHOL**

While studying abroad, you will most likely be going to a location where you will be of legal drinking age in that country and where alcohol may be more a part of the everyday culture. Distance from home may lessen your inhibitions. However, you are encouraged to use good judgment if you choose to consume alcoholic beverages while abroad. Occasional drinking of alcoholic beverages in moderation is permitted provided that you are of legal drinking age in the area you are visiting. However, excessive and irresponsible drinking, leading to intoxication and behavior that interferes with the rights of others, is subject to immediate disciplinary action, including termination from the program, parental notification, and return home at your own expense.

Per the UNCP Alcohol Policy, “A person who violates law or University policy while intoxicated remains fully responsible for his or her actions and the consequences thereof. The consumption of alcohol and/or the results of such consumption are never considered to compromise personal responsibility or accountability.” The UNCP Code of Student Conduct and all regulations are applicable while you are studying abroad.

**Tips for responsible use of alcohol:**

* Be aware of and abide by the customs and laws of the host country. Alcohol may be stronger and cheaper, and drinking ages may vary. Avoid over-indulgence. Do not become intoxicated, arrive at events/classes intoxicated, or miss any scheduled events or classes due to alcohol consumption. Do not drink so much that you become ill, engage in inappropriate or destructive behavior, or cause embarrassment to UNCP, the host institution, or any in-country hosts.
* Drinking to get drunk is never acceptable, even in countries where alcohol is consumed with meals.
* Remember that drugging is not uncommon. Always buy your own drinks, and keep them with you.
* Never go home with strangers. Use the buddy system—go out with at least one friend, and make sure each other returns home safely.
* Know who to contact in case of an emergency. Get contact information or local emergency services in your host city.
* Remember, injury or illness resulting from alcohol use is EXCLUDED from the UNC system health insurance (HTH) coverage. If alcohol is found in your system, they will deny your claim.

**DRUGS**

Despite what you may have heard about relaxed drug laws outside of the U.S., drugs are illegal in most countries around the world. In fact, drug laws are often more strict around the world. In some countries, possession of even a relatively small amount of illegal drugs can be grounds for a mandatory jail sentence or the death penalty. Once you have ventured beyond U.S. borders, U.S. laws and constitutional rights no longer protect you. Many practices which are illegal or grounds for mistrial in the U.S., including extraction of a confession, entrapment, or police searches without a warrant, are admissible in courts in other countries. In some judicial systems, there is no bail requirement, no jury trial, and the burden of proof is on the accused to prove his or her innocence. It is your responsibility to understand the laws of a foreign country before you go. “I didn’t know it was illegal” is not an acceptable defense. If you ever get into legal trouble abroad, you should immediately contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

**SEXUAL HARASSMENT & ASSAULT**

In general, the U.S. description of sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual advances and/or behavior of a verbal, visual, written, or physical nature. You should note, however, that this description may not be the same for the country in which you are studying. In such cases, you are encouraged to discuss the issue with staff at your host university or the Study Abroad Office to determine an appropriate course of action. You should trust your judgment and intuition.

There are many types of harassment, including psychological, sexual, and verbal. Harassment can be between two students, between a professor or staff member and a student, between a homestay family member and a student, etc. Harassment or assault can happen overseas just as it can on campus.

Harassment may include:

* Derogatory comments, jokes or teasing about the body, body parts, clothing, or sexual activities
* Visual materials or pictures which are offensive
* Subtle pressure for dating and/or sexual activity
* Demanding sexual favors for grades, letters of recommendation, etc.
* Persistent verbal attacks
* Unnecessary or unwanted touching or pinching
* Physical assault
* Emails or other electronic communications which include any of the above.

If a situation makes you uncomfortable, it needs to be addressed. Per the UNCP Unlawful Harassment Policy, “UNCP hereby affirms its desire to maintain a work environment for all employees and an academic environment for all faculty and students that is free from all forms of harassment. Harassment is completely incompatible with the values and goals of UNCP and will not be tolerated.” Make sure you are aware of any harassment and assault policies at your host university, and know how to report an incident or emergency.

**SPECIAL NEEDS & CONCERNS**

**Disabilities**

Students with disabilities are increasingly participating in study abroad programs around the world. As with other issues mentioned in this section, the key to a successful experience is advanced planning. Accessibility and accommodation for students with emotional, mental, learning, or physical disabilities may vary at different program sites. Be sure to consult with staff at your host university or IP about any accommodations you may need BEFORE you leave for your program. One resource to check out is Mobility International USA, an organization dedicated to international opportunities for people with disabilities

**Helpful sites:**

* <http://www.miusa.org>

**Gender Issues**

Adjusting to another culture can pose some challenges for interactions and relationships. Often what Americans perceive as appropriate behavior between the sexes, or acceptable gender roles, are not the same in other cultures. Take cues from natives of your host country to gauge what is appropriate. Overall, when evaluating the gender differences in your host country, both male and female students should keep an open mind and see these differences as an opportunity to gain insights into a new culture.

Female students in particular may find their behavior restricted. Because many cultures around the world have been exposed to images of the U.S. and American women in movies, TV shows, and advertising, foreign nationals sometimes make stereotypical assumptions about American women. Female students should be aware of how their dress, body language, and eye contact communicate to people in their host culture.

All students should consider the following:

* Talk to women or men from your host country for advice on appropriate standards of dress, body language, and dating.
* Trust your instincts. Don’t do something that makes you uncomfortable. It is better to look a little silly than to get into an unpleasant or dangerous situation.
* Be careful to avoid situations where drugs could be slipped into your drink. Buy your own drinks, and keep them in sight.
* Be assertive and don’t be afraid to say “NO.”
* Immediately contact a staff member at your host university or IP if you find yourself in an uncomfortable, hostile, or threatening situation.

**Helpful sites:**

* <http://studenttravel.about.com/od/womenstudenttravelers/a/womentips.htm>
* http://www.transitionsabroad.com/listings/travel/women/ index.shtml#women\_travel\_advisor

**Race & Ethnicity**

Although you may think of race and ethnicity as universally defined, they are very much culturally determined. While abroad, you may find that you are an ethnic minority or majority for the first time in your life, or you may find that the ethnic identity you have always felt to be an integral part of yourself is viewed in a completely different way in your host country. If you are visiting a country where you have ethnic or racial roots, you may find you are expected to behave according to the host country norms in a way that other Americans of a different background are not. Or, you may find that you are considered an American first, and your ethnic or racial identity is considered unimportant.

In many countries, there are homegrown ethnic or racial conflicts, and you may find you are identified with one group or another because of your physical appearance, until people discover you are American. It is extremely unlikely that any of these situations will involve any threat of physical harm to you as an international student.

However, by researching the situation of your host country, you can prepare yourself for situations you may encounter. Upon request IP staff will try to put you in contact with a student

or staff member at UNCP who has experience in your host country and can address these issues with you.

**Helpful sites:**

* **Minority Students:** <http://www.diversityabroad.com>
* **Black/African American Travelers:** <http://www.blacktravels.com/index.html> or <http://www.allabroad.us/discrimination_afam.php>
* **Asian/Pacific Islander Travelers:** <http://www.globaled.us/plato/statement_apia.html> or <http://www.allabroad.us/discrimination_apia.php>
* **Latin-Hispanic American Travelers:** [**h**ttp://www.allabroad.us/discrimination\_hispam.php](http://www.allabroad.us/discrimination_hispam.php)
* **Native American Travelers:** <http://www.allabroad.us/discrimination_natam.php>

**Sexual Identity**

You may already identify yourself as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender, or you may still be exploring these issues. In any case, you may find the social climate, laws, and personal interactions of your host culture differ from the U.S. Keep in mind that many of the ideas held in the U.S. about sexuality and sexual orientation are culturally-based and may be different in your host country. In some cultures, Western understandings of “gay” and “straight” do not exist or do not carry the same importance; people in same-sex relationships may not see this behavior or preference as an identity. In other cultures, there are active social movements for civil rights for sexual minorities. So, in preparing to study abroad, it may be important for you to research the LGBT climate of the countries you will be visiting. Though research might lead to frightening information, it will help you to be better prepared to face the environment you will encounter abroad. Even if you do not plan to have sexual relations while abroad, you should be informed about specific laws pertaining to sexual behavior and sexual/gender orientation. When doing research, you should try to ascertain:

* The legality of same-sex sexual behavior
* The age consent for sexual behavior
* Restrictions on freedom of associate or expression for individuals who identify as LGBT
* Anti-discrimination laws (national or local)
* Sodomy laws

You may find that other cultures have more liberal behavior than the U.S., or that you will need to hide your sexual preferences to avoid cultural ostracism or arrest.

**Helpful sites:**

* http://www.indiana.edu/~overseas/lesbigay/index.html
* http://www.gaytravellerguide.com
* http://www.studyabroad.msu.edu/forms/glbt.html
* http://www.ilga.org
* http://www.iglhrc.org
* <http://www.nyu.edu/lgbt>

**ACADEMICS**

**Differences in Academic Systems**

Part of studying abroad is learning how different academic systems function and understanding some of the comparative advantages and disadvantages of the American system. Although every host country will be somewhat unique, there are a few general points to keep in mind. Support services and office hours are generally less extensive than what you may be accustomed to in the U.S. You must actively seek information as to how the services and office hours work at your host university.

Course requirements will typically not be as extensive as you are accustomed to in the U.S. Other academic systems do not usually offer continuous assessment through quizzes, short papers, midterms, labs or discussions and reading assignments. You may be given only a recommended reading list and then have 70-100% of your final grade based on only one or two projects or a comprehensive exam. Students may be expected to work very independently. If you find that you have a lot of time on your hands, make sure that you clarify the course requirements with your professor so that you do not put yourself at risk of missing assignments or failing a course. Undergraduates must receive at least the equivalent of a C– at UNCP in order to receive transfer credit for your coursework abroad.

Accessibility of professors will often be less than in the U.S. Professors may have limited or no office hours. Nevertheless, you should make every attempt to speak with your professors if you have questions about course content or academic performance expectations. Teaching styles will vary. In most other university systems, professors are not considered responsible for motivating students or for ensuring good academic progress. You may encounter professors who only read prepared lectures, or who require a great deal of note learning. Classroom norms also vary across cultures. Be sure you understand policies and expectations regarding class attendance, late arrival, participation in discussion, and the importance of lecture details.

Grading systems differ at almost every university. You should refer to the Study Abroad Office website to find grade and credit equivalency guidelines for your host university. If you are studying abroad through another program, ask that agency for grade and credit equivalencies. (Remember, undergraduates must receive the equivalent of at least a C– at UNCP in order for credit hours to transfer to your UNCP transcript.)

Language issues may be of concern if you are taking classes in a foreign language. The first few weeks will require extra effort. In the beginning, you may want to focus on listening comprehension. Before class, ask your professor if you can record lectures, or ask a fellow student if you can borrow his/her notes. Another helpful strategy is to join or create study groups with other students.

**Course Requirements**

For all undergraduate students on UNCP programs,\* all credit from courses passed (equivalent of C– or better) from your study abroad may be awarded as transfer credit towards your UNCP degree. This will not count toward your GPA. If you receive any grade lower than the equivalent of a C-, you will not receive any credit. Credit will be granted at the discretion of your academic department(s). The “Course Approval Form” which you completed as part of your application, serves as preliminary approval for fulfillment of such requirements. Ensure that and WD or DE courses are discussed with your assigned academic advisor and approved before you go. The department will review your transcript and academic work upon your return before granting final approval. Only the credit hours will transfer; grades from your study abroad program will not be recorded in your UNCP GPA and individual courses will not appear on your transcript.\*

**Note for Graduate Students**

Graduate students should refer to the graduate student handbook and consult with the UNCP graduate school for information regarding the graduate credit transfer policies.

**Registering for Courses Abroad**

When you applied to study abroad, you should have kept a copy of the “Course Approval Form”, which you filled out in consultation with your department and college. This form should be your first point of reference when choosing your courses overseas. However, sometimes students get overseas and find they need to make adjustments to their class schedule, due to scheduling conflicts or lack of course prerequisites. Here are some general guidelines for registering for

classes overseas:

* Email your department and college contacts that pre-approved your courses before enrolling in classes that are not listed on your “Course Approval Form”. Once you give them as much information about the courses you are able to take, s/he should be able to tell you whether it will transfer for credit. Include information such as course titles, course descriptions, and any reading lists or course requirements that you can obtain.
* Make sure you have the UNCP Contact’s name, address, phone number, fax number and email address with you. (There is a place at the front of this handbook to enter the information.
* Your academic department at UNCP has the final authority in accepting (or not accepting) classes towards the fulfillment of degree requirements.
* Enroll in 12 credit hours. You must be enrolled in the equivalent of at least 12 credit hours (9 for graduate students) each semester you are abroad. Failure to maintain full-time status while abroad could jeopardize your enrollment at UNCP and your eligibility for financial aid. **Students receiving financial aid may need to pay back a portion of their aid if they do not maintain a full-time course load.** In some cases, your host university may have different full-time enrollment regulations. You should refer to the Study Abroad Office website to review credit and grade equivalencies for your host university. (If you are studying abroad through another organization, you may need to refer to them for credit and grade equivalencies.)
* If your host university requires you to enroll in MORE than the equivalent of 12 credit hours per semester, you are required to meet their minimum enrollment requirements. If you host university allows you to enroll in LESS than the equivalent of 12 credit hours per semester, you are still required to meet UNCP’s minimum enrollment requirement of 12 credit hours per semester. Distant Ed and audit courses do not count toward your required full-time enrollment.
* Complete the Enrollment Verification Form (available online) once you have arrived abroad and made your final course selections. Keep a photocopy for your own records, and mail or email the original to IP.
* Keep your work. Keep copies of reading lists, exams, papers, and other documentation of the coursework you complete overseas. This material is extremely important for the final approval of transfer credit by your academic department at UNCP. Do not mail or pack this material; carry it with you in your carry-on bag on your return flight home.

**Transcripts**

In order to receive credit for the courses you take abroad, you will need to have your overseas transcript sent to the IP (not to yourself). IP, Financial Aid and Registration and Records will only accept a transcript that is received in a sealed and signed envelope. IP receives and processes your transcript, we will notify you to pick it up from the office. After you pick up your transcript, you must then take it to your academic adviser in order to receive credit towards your major, minor, and/or general education requirements.

\* You must also take supporting materials (test, papers, notes, assignments, etc.) from your courses overseas. Course credits must be approved by your college in order for the credits to be transferred towards your degree at UNCP. Until then, the overseas credit will not be reflected in your UNCP credit totals or in your degree audit. This is not an automatic process, but is dependent on your initiative.

The timeline for transcripts varies, and in many academic systems, the transcript may not be available until several months after the end of the semester abroad. Therefore, if you need your transcript shortly after your return, because you are applying for scholarships, honors programs, or graduate school, you should:

* Consult with your academic adviser at UNCP before you leave, and make sure s/he understands that your transcript will be delayed.
* Consult with admissions and advising representatives at any post -graduate programs.
* Upon arrival at your host university, consult with international services staff to ask if there are ways to ensure that your grades and transcripts are processed as quickly as possible.
* Avoid incompletes. Trying to complete papers or make up exams after you have left your host university can be extremely difficult and will certainly cause significant delays in processing your transcript.

**Registering at UNCP**

Don’t forget to arrange registration via Braveweb for the semester following your return. You will receive an email from IP while you are abroad which will include detailed information and deadlines for on-campus course registration. It is your responsibility to email your academic adviser to release your advising hold while you are abroad.

Send your adviser an email with a reminder that you are studying abroad, a list of courses that you are considering for registration, and a request to release your advising hold. It is in your best interest to do this well in advance of your registration appointment to avoid complications!

If you are unable to register yourself online, make arrangements for a friend or family member to register you through Braveweb at the appropriate date/time. If you do not register by the registration deadline, UNCP will assume you have withdrawn from the university and you will be charged a late registration fee.

**Notes for Seniors**

* Some academic departments have residency requirements that state that you must complete a certain number of credit hours on campus at UNCP (such as 30 of the last 45 credits earned towards your degree). Study abroad may be regarded as an exception to this requirement, but you must apply for permission for such an exception from the dean, registrar, etc. of your school or college before leaving.
* If you plan to spend part of your senior year abroad, and particularly if you plan to graduate immediately after your return from abroad, remember that you may not receive your transcript from the overseas university until several months after your return. Therefore, you should not plan to receive your degree earlier than one semester after your return. You should discuss your situation with your academic adviser and the host university to request that special efforts be made to process your grades and transcript as early as possible.
* As with other students, your transcript should be mailed directly to IP. Once IP receives and processes it, you will be notified and you are responsible for taking it to your academic department(s) to have the credits applied to your degree.
* If you plan to apply to graduate or professional school, you may want to complete application requirements prior to leaving for your study abroad program. Speak with an admissions officer at the school before leaving to discuss your plans and the possibility of grades and/or your degree being delayed. If necessary, you may take the GRE, LSAT, MCAT, or other graduate and professional school exams at many locations abroad. For more information, contact the Educational Testing Service at (609) 921-9000 or visit their website at www.ets.org. For the MCAT, contact the Medical College Admissions Testing Service at (319) 337-1357.

**HOUSING**

**Housing Abroad**

Housing options at your host university will vary. Some may require all study abroad students to live in a certain area, while others may offer choices such as residence halls/dorms, apartments/flats, or homestay. Also know that the accommodations in your host country may not be as luxurious as you are accustomed to at home, so keep an open mind. You will find more in-depth information from your host university. It is up to you to research your options and make the decision that is best for you.

Homestay: If you have the option of homestay, you will have a great opportunity to expand your cultural experience beyond the university. However, living with a family can also pose special challenges. Remember that while the host family will typically receive a stipend to cover the costs of your room and/or board, the money cannot possibly reimburse them for the inconvenience and annoyances of having a bad student experience. If you choose homestay, here are some general recommendations:

* Bring a small gift (no more than $20), such as a t-shirt or other item with the UNCP logo, a cookbook of American recipes, or a CD of traditional American music (blues, jazz, etc.)
* Ask at the beginning of your stay about the family schedule and house rules. Are there expectations to participate in family activities? Do they expect you to be at family meals? Do they want to know when you’ll be out late or gone for the weekend? Will they allow you to have guests?
* Ask about the house rules for telephone use. In many countries, even local calls are charged on a metered basis, and phone service is quite expensive. Families may prefer that you make outgoing calls from another location. Also ask about appropriate hours for receiving incoming calls.
* If meals are included in your homestay, don’t skip family meals without letting your hosts know well in advance.
* Don’t snack from the family refrigerator or pantry without asking. Also ask where you can keep food of your own.
* Be conservative with electricity and water use. These services may be limited or more expensive in your host country. Turn off lights and appliances when not in use, and don’t take long showers.
* Offer to help with household tasks.
* Be open, flexible, and don’t be afraid to ask questions.

While host families are typically interested in interaction with international students, they are also being paid for their hosting duties, and in some cases consider it an income supplement. While you should expect your family to provide a safe, clean living environment, adequate meals, and a polite, respectful atmosphere, the amount of personal interaction may vary from family to family. If your family is truly unreasonable or if you are uncomfortable with your family, you should consult with your host university coordinator. Be sure the reason for wanting to move are more serious than small inconveniences (phone use, curfews, etc.), or culturally-based issues that are likely to be the same from family to family.

**Housing at UNCP**

If you have already signed a contract and are assigned to University housing for the semester you will be abroad, you will need a release from your contract. You may take your acceptance letter from your host university to the Housing office, and any fees should be waived. If you want to live on-campus when you return, you will need to reserve a room on-line through University Housing. We encourage you to consider continuing your international experience and live in the Global Learning Community (GLC) in Village! If you currently live off-campus, or if you want to live off-campus upon your return, it is your responsibility to make your own arrangements and any necessary payments.

**Luggage**

Don’t take more luggage than you can carry. You should be able to maneuver comfortably through airports and train stations with your bags. Check with the airline (of your originating flight and any connecting flights) to find restrictions on size, weight, and number of bags permitted. Whatever combination of luggage you choose (suitcase, backpack, duffle, carry-on, etc.), all luggage should be sturdy, and able to withstand the bumps and bruises of air, bus, and train travel. Consider luggage an investment—it is better to spend more money on a good quality bag that can be used for years to come. Label all luggage inside and out with your name and permanent address contact information.

Learn about the customs and security procedures of the airports where you will be traveling, and be respectful. It is not unusual for customs and immigration officers to ask detailed questions or search luggage.

If you or your parents carry homeowner’s or renter’s insurance, check with the insurance agent to see if your belongings can be covered under the policy. If not, consider purchasing baggage insurance, available through travel agencies, ISIC, and some credit card companies (if you purchase your airline ticket with the card). Baggage insurance often protects your possessions the entire time you are abroad, not just while you are flying.

**General Tips:**

Packing is going to vary for every individual. Here are some general guidelines to keep in mind:

* Pack as light as possible. Experienced travelers recommend you pack your luggage, remove half of the contents, reevaluate, and remove half again. Find some great tips at: [www.onebag.com](http://www.onebag.com)

**PACKING**

* Do not take more than you are willing and able to carry on your own.
* Consider leaving valuable or sentimental items (such as expensive jewelry or electronics) at home.
* Pack all of your important documents (passport, tickets, prescriptions, contact information, etc.) in your carry-on bag. You might also want to pack some basics (change of underwear, toothbrush and toiletries) in your carry-on in case your luggage is delayed or lost.
* Consider taking clothes that can be layered for warmth, as homes and residence halls abroad may not be as warm during winter as in the U.S.
* Laundry equipment and detergents abroad may be more expensive and harsher on your clothes, and some countries do not use dryers. Try to bring sturdy clothes in fabrics that are easy to wash and dry. Anything that needs to be dry cleaned should be left at home.
* Pack clothes that can be mixed and matched, instead of bringing several individual outfits.
* Make sure you understand your host country’s standards of modesty and/or neatness in dress. In some countries, students dress more formally than American students typically do, and shorts and sweats may be strictly for use at the gym or beach. Some tourist sites (such as churches) may not allow visitors to enter wearing shorts or sleeveless shirts. Some upscale clubs may not allow you to enter wearing tennis shoes or t-shirts.
* Electrical currents and sockets are not the same around the world. Look to see if your appliances have wattage settings that can be adjusted. If so, you may want to purchase electrical converters (plug adapters) or consider buying these items in your host country.
* Most universities abroad will provide computer access for their students. While some student take their laptop computers abroad for convenience, others choose to leave theirs at home to avoid the chances of damage/loss, or the extra weight it adds to their luggage.
* Allow room for the personal purchases, gifts, and other things you may acquire while abroad. Barring any baggage restrictions, consider packing a small, empty duffle bag in your luggage or buying a small bag overseas to allow for extra items on your return.

**PACKING LIST**

Essentials:

* Passport
* Airline tickets
* Money (~$100 cash in foreign currency)
* ATM and credit cards
* Study Abroad Handbook

Helpful Items:

* Toiletries—Consider taking only travel-size items and purchasing more overseas.
* Extra glasses, contact lenses/ solutions
* Clothes that can be mixed/ matches/layered.
* All-purpose, waterproof walking shoes
* Rain jacket/umbrella
* Swimsuit
* One set of “nice” clothes for special occasions
* Guidebook for host country

If you plan to travel extensively while abroad:

* Small lock for your bag and hostel lockers
* Small flashlight
* Swiss Army knife (not in carry-on luggage)
* Moist towelettes/anti-bacterial hand gel
* Sleeping bag
* Prescriptions Photocopies of all document, prescriptions, etc.
* Emergency contact information
* Insurance card & claim form
* Foreign-language dictionary
* Camera, film/memory card, batteries/charger
* Immunization/health record
* ISIC (international ID)
* Small first aid kit
* Money belt/pouch
* Travel towel/washcloth
* Small gift for host family
* Pictures of friends/family

**THINGS TO DO: When you arrive abroad**

* **Call home:** You may not be able to call home immediately upon arrival, but do call or email someone at home to let them know you arrived safely.
* **Register with the U.S. Embassy or that of your country of Citizenship** in your host country.
* **Send contact information:** Send your overseas address, phone number, and email to IP so that we can send you important information.
* **Keep in touch with academic contacts:** Correspond with your UNCP department and college contacts if you change your class schedule after arriving overseas. Keep copies of those correspondences so that you have record of what has been approved.
* **Send your Enrollment Verification Form:** After registering for classes abroad, complete the form (available online), keep a copy for yourself, and send the original to IP via mail or email.
* **Save your work while studying abroad:** Save copies of all academic work (class notes, syllabi, reading lists, tests, papers, etc.). At the end of your program, bring these materials home in your carry-on luggage. Your academic department may need to see your work before approving your transfer credit from the university abroad.
* **Arrange to have your transcript mailed to IP:** Make sure your main contact at your host institution has an accurate list of the courses you have taken, and will send your transcript to IP at the conclusion of our program. After we assess your transcript, you will be contacted to pick up the transcript and submit it to your academic department.
* **Register for UNCP classes for next semester:** Work with you assigned academic advisor well in advance of your return to ensure you enroll in the courses you need.

**CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT**

**CULTURE SHOCK**

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

The Glimpse Foundation has published several guides based on their extensive survey research with study abroad returnees. Here is their description of culture shock and its phases, excerpted from their *Culture Shock* guide: “...Culture shock manifests itself differently in different people, but research has detected general patterns of emotional highs and lows experienced by international travelers. These phases vary in duration and severity, and are not necessarily linear.

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

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

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

**Reentry or Reverse Culture Shock**—Upon returning home, you will be faced with integrating your abroad experience with life in the United States, where you might feel disoriented, out of place or changed by your experience in a way that makes relating to family and friends difficult.” ([www.glimpseabroad.org](http://www.glimpseabroad.org))

Here are a few ways to cope with culture shock:

* Know that everyone experiences some degree of culture shock, and everyone’s experience is different.
* Remember that you are the foreigner and that people will expect you to adapt to their expectations.
* Try not to label things as “good” or “bad,” but merely “different” and don’t blow things out of proportion. You may incorporate some cultural differences into your routine, and others you may not. Some habits may disappear when you leave the host country, and others may stay with you.
* Develop habits or join organizations that will help you interact regularly in the host campus and city.
* Maintain the ability to laugh at your mistakes. They can in fact help you in the learning process.

The feelings of culture shock are unavoidable, but recognizing their existence and knowing about them in advance will help you prepare yourself to accept the temporary discomfort and learn more from the experience. Everyone experiences culture shock and adjustment differently. Do research before leaving to try to understand what to expect. Utilize the resources listed in this handbook, talk to IP staff or other students who have been abroad, and enjoy the journey!

**KNOW YOUR HOST COUNTRY**

Researching your host country is one way to reduce culture shock, and also to be a responsible traveler and citizen of the world. Here are some questions to consider about the culture and history of your host country. Try to answer as many of them as you can before you leave. If you need help finding the answers, use the resources listed in this handbook. Also, talk to international students on campus, or students who have already studied abroad. If you haven’t met any of them, make an effort to do so! The Study Abroad Office can help.

* Politics: Who is the country’s leader? What is the country’s current political structure?
* History: What is the history of the relationships between this country and the United States? Who are the country’s most important national heroes and heroines? Who are the most widely admired public figures today?
* Language: Are languages spoken besides English? What are the political and social implications of language usage?
* Holidays: What are the national holidays? Why are they celebrated? Will the university, banks, post office, or other businesses be closed?
* Religion: What is the predominant religion? Does religion play an important role in the political and social life of the average citizen? What are the most important religious observances and ceremonies? How do members of the predominant religion feel about other religions?
* Social norms: What is the attitude toward drinking? What things are taboo in this society? What are some of the prevailing attitudes toward divorce? Toward extra-marital relations? Toward homosexuality? Toward contraception?
* Laws: What is the legal age for drinking alcohol? What other laws might affect your daily life (driving, traffic, drugs, visa regulations, employment)?
* Family: Are typical families nuclear or extended? At what age to people normally move out of their parents’ home?
* Shopping: Is the price asked for merchandise fixed or are customers expected to bargain? How is the bargaining conducted? If, as a customer, you touch or handle merchandise for sale (including such things as fruit or linen tablecloths), will the seller in the store or market think you are knowledgeable, inconsiderate, within your rights, completely outside your rights? Other?
* Daily life: How do people organize their daily activities? What is the normal meal schedule? Is there a daytime rest period? What is the customary time for visiting friends? What is the normal work schedule?
* Communication: How long do people talk when they use the telephone? Do friends call each other frequently to chat? How do people feel about having other people make long-distance (overseas) calls from their private house phones?
* Food: What foods are popular and how are they prepared?
* Clothing: What is the usual dress for women? For men? Are pant or shorts worn? If so, on what occasions? Is it o.k. to wear jeans or tennis shoes in certain settings? Is it o.k. to wear sleeveless shirts? What are expectations for dressing for class, a family dinner or a more formal event?
* Medical care: How is medical care structured (private or public hospitals)? How is medical insurance structured—am I covered by my U.S. insurance, or does the host country government require additional insurance?

**SEVEN LESSONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING**

Taken from *Cross-Cultural Dialogues: 74 Brief Encounters with Cultural*

*Differences* by Craig Storti

**One:** Don’t assume everyone is the same.

**Two:** What you think of as normal behavior may only be cultural. Much of human behavior is universal but certainly not all. Before you project your norms on the human race, consider the possibility that you might be making incorrect assumptions.

**Three:** Familiar behaviors may have different meanings. The same behavior – saying “yes”, for example – can exist in different cultures and not mean the same thing. Just because you’ve recognized a given behavior, don’t assume you’ve understood it.

**Four:** Don’t assume that what you meant is what was understood. You can be sure of what you mean when you say something, but you can’t be sure how this is interpreted by someone else. Check for signs that the other person did or did not understand you.

**Five:** Don’t assume that what you understood is what was meant. We all hear what others say through the medium of our own experience. You know what those words mean to you, but what do they mean to the person speaking them?

**Six:** You don’t have to like or accept “different” behavior, but understanding where it comes from may help you find ways to deal with it.

**Seven:** Most people do behave rationally; you just have to discover the rationale.

**AMERICAN CULTURAL VALUES & ASSUMPTIONS**

Of course Americans, like any other cultural group, are a collection of individuals and we are extremely diverse! However, most visitors to the U.S. and most cultural anthropologists would argue that as a group, Americans tend to hold the following cultural values, some of which are very different from those of other cultures. (Adapted from *American Ways: A Guide for Foreigners in the U.S*., Gary Althen.)

**Individualism & Independence**

We see ourselves as individuals, responsible for our own situations. We emphasize self-fulfillment. We give choices even to very young children, and believe that it’s wrong to expect individuals to always sacrifice their wants and needs for the good of the group. We admire individuals who fought their way to the top, do something first or the longest or the best. We define ourselves by what we do, not by our birth situation.

**Privacy**

We assume that everyone needs time alone. In some cultures one is rarely alone and all translations of the word “privacy” carry a negative connotation of being isolated. U.S. children often have their own rooms and their own possessions. We have rules about confidentiality.

**Egalitarianism**

We generally express strong belief in the principle that all people are created equal, with equal opportunities; yet most Americans will admit that discrimination (racism and sexism) still exists in the U.S. We tend to enjoy stories of “self-made” individuals who rise from poverty to riches through hard work and initiative. Most Americans believe that individuals control their own destinies; children are told “you can be whatever you want to be.” We generally don’t like displays of social status – being bowed to, deferred to, etc. We show respect in more subtle ways; tone of voice, order of speaking and seating arrangements (getting the most comfortable chair). Children are often allowed or encouraged to question their parents and “discuss” their parents’ decisions. Questioning professors is often highly valued, and bosses often go out of their way to seem like “one of the gang”. We chitchat with taxi drivers, waiters, bellmen, doctors, and lawyers. We give respectable titles to all jobs (sanitation worker).

**Time**

We are very concerned with time and efficiency and look for faster and more efficient ways of doing things. We talk about not “wasting time” or about “saving time” – in many cultures time just is. We value organization and punctuality. We make “to do” lists, plan our leisure time, carry calendars and schedules.

**Informality**

We use first names, even with people older than we are and people who have more social status. We use idiomatic speech, prop our feet up on desks, wear informal clothing on many occasions.

**Future oriented**

We are less concerned with history than other cultures (in explaining conflicts, people from other cultures may go back several centuries). We value new things and ideas more than the old – products are advertised as “new and improved”. We believe we can and should improve our situation, as in “Don’t just stand there, DO something.” Some other cultures have more of a reverence for the past, and believe that it’s arrogant for human beings to believe they can change their fate.

**Achievement and action oriented**

We value hard work and continually want to improve our situation. We feel that we never achieve enough and should always keep bettering ourselves. We are always doing something and we feel bored or guilty after “doing nothing” for several hours.

**Honesty and Directness**

We value “getting to the point” more than maintaining “face” (prestige or dignity). We look up to the person who tells us directly and honestly when he is upset about something. We do not like to have a third person mediate. We believe it’s important to tell the truth even though it may put us in an unfavorable light. Some other cultures are more concerned with “saving face” and may say something indirectly or put a more positive spin on the situation in order to do so.

**A GUIDE FOR STUDY ABROAD RETURNEES**

You went, you saw, you conquered. And now, you’re back. Coming home from an extended period abroad can cause a confusing mixture of feelings, both positive and negative. You will probably remember hearing about culture shock at your pre-departure orientation.

Most of you probably also remember experiencing it, to one degree or another, while you were abroad. What you may not have been prepared for is the re-entry shock of coming home. Just as with culture shock, re-entry shock encompasses a wide range of feelings and responses, from mild frustration or fatigue to feelings of alienation and depression.

Everyone’s experience is different, but some aspects of re-entry shock typically mentioned by students are listed below.

**Reasons for Re-entry Shock:**

**1. Realities vs. expectations**

While abroad, many students combat homesickness and culture shock with thoughts of how terrific things will be once they return home. When the return home doesn’t meet those expectations, it can make adjustment harder.

**2. Personal changes and growth**

Most students returning from an overseas experience feel that they’ve learned a lot, grown as a person, acquired new attitudes and knowledge, etc. Many students come back to the “same old thing” at home and find that friends, family, and people at school don’t recognize or appreciate the new you or your experiences.

**3. Becoming ordinary**

As international students, many returnees got used to being automatically considered interesting, asked for their opinion as the American, or invited to interesting events, simply because of their status as a foreigner. Students also typically spent their free time doing exciting things (taking weekend trips to other countries, going to festivals and other cultural events, etc.) Coming back to the U.S. and returning to ordinary life and no longer being considered unusual can contribute

to feelings of isolation and depression.

**4. Isolation from changes at home**

Many returnees find that it’s hard to keep up with changes in friends, family, and pop culture that took place while they were overseas. While you may be excited about your experience and want to share stories from abroad, people here may not seem very interested or may be more interested in sharing with you what you missed while you were abroad.

**Symptoms of Re-entry Shock:**

Re-entry shock symptoms can be very similar to those of culture shock, and will also vary tremendously in specifics and in intensity from person to person. There is no standard reaction — your experience, whatever it is, is normal. Some common symptoms are: disruptions in sleeping or eating habits; fatigue; irritation; problems with concentration (mentally wandering abroad); feelings of isolation; and depression.

**Ways to Combat Re-entry Shock:**

Getting over re-entry shock is a balancing act. On the one hand, you don’t want to devalue your experience abroad; on the other hand, you need to find ways to fit back into your life in the U.S. There are many ways to integrate your experience abroad with your life here. Think about some of the ways that you got over culture shock while you were abroad; becoming involved with activities, forming a routine, trying to interact with host-country, international, and other U.S. students. These can also be very helpful ways to get over re-entry shock. On the following pages, you’ll find suggestions for ways to continue your international experience here at UNCP, as well as suggestions for possible additional experiences abroad. Whatever route you choose to follow, one way to ensure a successful re-entry is to find a peer group. Your fellow returnees are one of your best sources of support and of common experience; you’re all in the same boat, so remember that you can help each other! Also, keep in touch with friends from your host country. You’ll enjoy having those ties even years from now.

**When you get back, stay involved!** Who would be better to talk about study abroad or cultural differences than a student who has just returned from studying abroad? There are many opportunities to share your experiences once you have returned. Here are ways for you to get involved:

**Peer Presenters:** IP gets requests to do presentations in classes and residence halls throughout the year, and most often they want to hear from students! We offer a training session to help you become familiar with our programs. Commitment is minimal, and we encourage you to share your own experience and photos during the presentation.

Contact IP for more information.

**Study Abroad Fair:** IP hosts a Study Abroad Fair each fall, and a Summer Programs Fair each spring, in hopes of attracting more students to study abroad. We invite representatives from our partner universities, faculty directors from our summer programs, and students who have returned from studying abroad. If you are interested in volunteering at the Study Abroad Fair and sharing your experiences with interested students, contact IP.

**Global Learning Community (GLC):** GLC is a residence hall located in Village and is geared towards students interested in interacting with people from different cultures. It is the perfect place to live just before or after study abroad, so you don’t have to hassle with breaking a

lease or subletting an off-campus apartment. The community focus is one of global awareness and understanding. U.S. students are paired with international students as roommates, and there are lots of interesting activities throughout the year. Contact IP for more information.

**Getting Involved**

**Make Use of Your International Experience**

Get Involved at UNCP! There are many opportunities to get involved with study abroad or international issues after you return to campus. Contact IP about programs such as the English Partner Program, International Education Week, etc. Get involved with GLC, or any number of clubs and organizations available on campus.

**Orientation:** IP coordinates orientations throughout the year for outgoing UNCP study abroad students and incoming international exchange students. The pre-departure orientations for outgoing students is a great opportunity for you to help UNCP students who are planning to go abroad. Our on-campus orientations for incoming exchange students are a great way to meet international students from your host university and from all over the world. If you would like to help, contact IP.

**Resources for Learning About Options Abroad**

Links to a number of opportunities can be found on the IP website. There are also several reference materials at IP.

Here are some further recommendations:

* *Live & Work Abroad: A Guide for Modern Nomads* by Huw Francis and Michelyne Callan, *Survival Kit for Overseas Living: For Americans Planning to Live and Work Abroad* by Robert L. Kohls
* *Work Abroad: The Complete Guide to Finding a Job Overseas* by Clayton A. Hubbs
* *Teaching English Abroad* by Susan Griffith

**International Health Insurance**

HTH Insurance Brochure 2015-2016 Information Specific details about your health insurance coverage

**Travel Related Information**

US Department of State- http://www.state.gov

Information on living abroad, travel warnings, U.S. Embassy and Consulate websites, and other important information, including:

* Passports – *http://travel.state.gov* Includes information about applying for and renewing passports.
* Visas - [*http://travel.state.gov/visa/americans/americans\_1252.html*](http://travel.state.gov/visa/americans/americans_1252.html)*.* For Americans traveling abroad. Follow link to “Foreign Entry Requirements” to find visa information for the country where you will be studying.

International Calling: [www.countrycallingcodes.com](http://www.countrycallingcodes.com)

Translations: http://babelfish.altavista.com and Google language tools

Currency conversions: [www.oanda.com](http://www.oanda.com)

Guides:

* www.fodors.com
* www.glimpseabroad.org
* www.lonelyplanet.com
* www.roughguides.com
* [www.studentsabroad.com](http://www.studentsabroad.com)

**Culture & Etiquette**

* *Culture Shock* and *Culture Smart* cultural guidebooks. These books can be found on Amazon.com. There is a book for almost every country in the world and provides and useful and easy to read information related to culture & etiquette.
* What’s Up With Culture?, -*http://www2.pacific.edu/sis/culture -* An excellent online resource for pre-departure and re-entry exercises!
* Diversity Abroad, [*http://diversityabroad.com/*](http://diversityabroad.com/) *-* Destination guides, travel tips, and information to help you prepare for the cultural experiences you’ll encounter
* Mobility International, *-http://www.miusa.org -* A resource for traveling students with disabilities (both physical and mental).