

Dear Bronco,

Welcome, and congratulations on your decision to study abroad! Studying abroad is an exciting opportunity to experience another culture and educational system by pushing yourself out of your comfort zone. In fact, most students report that their time spent studying abroad was one of the most impactful aspects of their higher education.

This handbook is a collection of resources that will provide you with useful information for planning and spending your time abroad. We strongly recommend you use this collection and also consult other recommended resources in preparation for your study abroad experience.



“Physically going to another country lets you see things you won’t find in a book. I was allowed to touch things with my hands and have my own experiences that will stay with me for a lifetime.”

*-WMU Student: Natalie Witham |
German Business & Culture, Summer
I 2017)*

<https://wmustudentsabroad.wordpress.com/2017/07/06/the-greatest-difference-between-class-study-abroad/>

Remember, **accept**. Do not **expect**. You will naturally compare the country you visit to the United States, but remain open-minded. Life in other parts of the world is not necessarily better or worse than life here: **it's just different**.

Enjoy your time abroad and your travels!

Yours for Western,
WMU Study Abroad



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CULTURE SHOCK



“I think if you are in another country you should always try to respect their rules and customs. You don’t have to agree with them, but it’s not your place to tell these people they are wrong. You also don’t have to change yourself to fit everything. I think that’s the beautiful thing about the world.”

(WMU Student: Holly Toner | Rikkyo University, Japan, 2017)
<https://wmustudentsabroad.wordpress.com/2016/01/18/you-are-a-foreigner-aka-gaijin/>

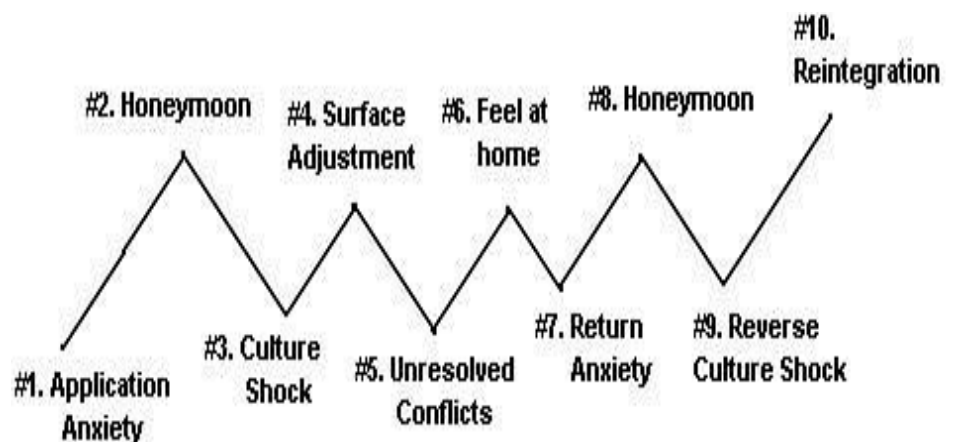
The process of cultural adjustment goes through various stages and moves at different rates for different people. Not all study abroad students will experience all stages or experience them for the same duration or in the same sequence, but being aware of them ahead of time can help prepare participants for some of the challenges they present. Becoming completely bilingual and bicultural does not happen overnight; **it is a long, on-going process.**

W CURVE OF CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

“It is completely normal to feel lost or uncomfortable”

(WMU Student: Michael Mikolajczak |
 Universidad de Burgos, Spain, Fall 2018)

<https://wmustudentsabroad.wordpress.com/2018/10/29/living-with-the-locals/>



THE STAGES OF CULTURE SHOCK

STAGE	SITUATION	APPROACHES	REACTIONS
HONEYMOON	First contact with the new culture	Observe, use preconceptions and stereotypes to understand the new culture	Excitement, curiosity, slight anxiety
INITIAL CONFRONTATION	First intensive interaction with the culture; must solve some basic survival problems	Respond behaviorally as one would in own culture; solve problems in familiar ways	Surprise and confusion; concern that we don't have an answer for new problems; can't understand why our own behavior doesn't produce the desired results; puzzled about others' behavior
ADJUSTMENT TO CRISIS	Ongoing confrontation with the new culture; problems intensify	Respond now with a mix of old and new ways of doing things; some tentative experimentation with new behaviors	Becoming judgmental about new culture; feelings of anxiety, embarrassment, frustration, anger; confusion about own identity
RECOVERY	Accommodation with the new culture replaces confrontation; sense of belonging to culture emerges	Creative use of a variety of coping strategies (see below) to help one function effectively	Regain confidence; feeling that the culture is understandable; very positive sense of personal accomplishment; enjoy many aspects of this culture

COPING STRATEGIES

The following coping strategies may help you accommodate to the culture:

"Where and when I encountered difficulty, I tried my best to meet it with adaptability."

(WMU Student: Sarah Jones | Universidad de Burgos, Spain, Fall 2018)

<https://wmustudentsabroad.wordpress.com/2018/08/31/a-balance-between-worry-and-acceptance/>

Avoidance



Effective Form: Temporary, occasional withdrawal to overcome "cultural fatigue"



Ineffective Form: Frequent or complete withdrawal; no interaction with the culture

Participation



Working to learn the ways of the culture (assertive behavior)



Fighting against the culture (aggressive behavior)

Utilizing Resources

- 👍 Using resources to promote learning and self-reliance
- 👎 Becoming totally dependent on resources

Utilizing Stereotypes

- 👍 Using only as a tentative guide to the culture; constantly challenging them
- 👎 Using as a complete guide to the culture; never testing them

Studying the Culture

- 👍 Striving to acquire cultural insights; learning new perspectives
- 👎 Fitting new culture into own framework; rejecting new insights, perspectives

Utilizing the Culture

- 👍 Developing effective coping strategies; enlarging skills; maintaining own identity
- 👎 “Going native” – totally adopting the culture as one’s own; losing own identity. Most cultures don’t want you to “go native” – they want you to learn and respect their culture

“I learned not only about the places I visited but was able to dig deeper into myself. I learned how important trust is within a group, how to speak to others who have different viewpoints than myself.”

(WMU Student: Morgan McCullough | Morocco, 2017)
<https://wmustudentsabroad.wordpress.com/?s=culture+shock>



INTENSITY FACTORS

Factors that can make an experience in a new culture more intense:

Cultural Differences: The level of difference between a traveler’s home culture and the new culture they are experiencing can impact the traveler’s attitude and ability to adapt.

Ethnocentrism: The more ethnocentric the traveler, the more difficulty they will have accepting the other culture. Conversely, the less accepting of difference the host culture is (the more ethnocentric it is), the more difficult it will be to engage with people from that culture.

Language: The less language ability one has and the more essential language is to functioning well in the host culture, the more difficult it will be to function in the culture.

Cultural Immersion: The more the traveler is immersed in the culture, the higher the anxiety.

Prior Intercultural Experience: If this is the first time the sojourner has been out of their own culture, the intensity of the experience will be higher.

Expectations: If the traveler's expectations are unrealistically positive – disappointment can be a serious factor.

Visibility & Invisibility: Being physically different from host nationals thus being very visible can make the experience more intense. Conversely, having to keep parts of one's identity invisible can also increase the intensity.

Status: Feeling that one is not getting appropriate respect can raise the intensity. Conversely, receiving attention that does not seem warranted is equally distressing.

Power & Control: When travelers feel they have no power and control in intercultural situations, especially over their own circumstances, the intensity of the experience rises.

Source: Paige, R. Michael. "On the Nature of Intercultural Experience and Intercultural Education, in Education for the Intercultural Experience (Michael Paige, Ed.) Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press. Inc., 1993

"One of the most obvious things I noticed on my study abroad trip was how it felt to blend in to a population. I am a Chinese adoptee and live in a largely Caucasian area in the United States. While in China, many of my classmates were stopped in the streets for photos. When everyone is of the same ethnicity, Caucasian and African-American people really stand out. But people never noticed me standing there. I was never asked to be included in the photos. People didn't automatically assume I was a tourist; often people would start speaking to me completely in Chinese. Returning home, I, once again, stood out."

(WMU Student: Hannah Wagner | Chinese Language & Culture, Beijing, China. Summer II 2016)



HEALTH & SAFETY ABROAD

We want you to be aware of some basic precautions. While studying abroad, you will be in a new and unfamiliar environment. Therefore, you likely will not be able to rely on the same instinctual knowledge of safety as you do at home. While travel to another country is not inherently dangerous, no matter where you go, it is always important to be **aware, informed, and prepared**.

“The best way to address the safety issue is to resolve to lose a little bit of the independence we take for granted in the United States. I try to walk with neighbors or friends, especially after dark. I don’t walk down dark alleys alone and I avoid any political demonstrations and large events in general. Common sense and heightened observational skills go a long way.”

(WMU Student: Morgan McCullough | Morocco, 2017)

<https://wmustudentsabroad.wordpress.com/2017/11/07/choosing-an-arabic-speaking-study-abroad-destination/>



TIPS FOR STAYING HEALTHY & SAFE ABROAD

Be Informed. Know what is going on in the world, especially in any country you plan to visit. Before you travel, check travel advisories and read about the customs and political situation of every country you plan to visit. Talk to individuals from the place you intend to visit before you go.

Watch and Learn from the Locals. Ask questions to your host family, local students, fellow residence hall residents, and your program director. When in doubt, try to do as they do. Talk to hostel or hotel owners, program staff, tour guides, and fellow travelers to find out if any scams are popular in the area.

Be Inconspicuous. Try not to look too much like a tourist. Don’t speak loudly or draw attention to yourself. Learn a few basic language phrases for each country where you plan to travel. Don’t wear your passport around your neck. Remember that your map can also give you away. Especially in heavily touristic cities, look at city maps and metro guides before you leave your hotel or check these resources discretely off the street.

Be Aware of your surroundings at all times. This often means keeping your eyes up and off your mobile device. Use the precautions customary in any major city. Travel with a friend. Plan your route and walk confidently. If you are being followed, feel threatened, or are lost, go into a store, restaurant, or other public area. You know what feels comfortable and what doesn't. If your instincts tell you a situation is "not right," trust them.

"While riding the train especially, it is very easy to tell who is a tourist and who is a resident. For the most part, Japanese people are silent on the train. However, if there is a group of tourists, they're frequently loud, almost yelling over each other at times. It's shocking to me that they don't realize that they're the only ones talking."

*(WMU Student: Pamela Gudobba | Ritsumeikan University, Japan
Academic Year 2018-2019)*

<https://wmustudentsabroad.wordpress.com/2018/10/15/public-transportation-in-japan/>



Use Common Sense. Use your common sense and your street smarts. If you would not camp out in a city park at home, then do not consider doing this abroad. Avoid walking alone at night. Stay in well-populated, well-trafficked, and well-lit areas. Be especially cautious if you have been drinking. Avoid arguments and remove yourself from confrontational situations. Be confident and alert.

Stay Healthy. Eat well and get sufficient rest. If you become ill, get proper care. Do not hesitate to tell your host family or onsite director if you are ill and do not be afraid to visit a doctor or hospital just because you do not speak the language fluently. All program participants are covered under international health and emergency insurance, so if you have questions about your coverage, be sure to inquire with WMU Study Abroad.

Guard Personal Belongings. Pickpockets can be extremely adept. Do not carry your passport or money in a hip pocket, open purse, or outside pocket on your backpack. Pickpockets mingle in tourist crowds, especially in airports and public

transportation. A money belt or neck pouch is a good idea. If you need to sleep while in transit, use your pack as your pillow. On crowded city subways, always carry your backpack in front of you. Always have a hand or foot in a loop or strap of your luggage when you set it down to avoid having it snatched away while you are not looking.

Packing Valuables. Do not carry valuables in a backpack, never leave bags unattended, and never carry large amounts of cash. Take and use a lock. Take only as much luggage as you can carry and never let it out of your sight. Do not pack valuables (passports, documents, contact lenses, medications, and electrical equipment) in checked luggage.

Organize Your Funds. Organize your funds into two separate packs each consisting of a credit card and currency. When in-country, one of these packs should usually be left at your residence as a back-up. Keep the cash you are using separate from the rest of your money. Try to avoid reaching into your money-belt in public places.

Copy Documents. Before leaving, make two copies of all your important documents (passport, visa, traveler's checks, and travel itinerary). Keep these in a safe place, leaving a copy at home in the U.S. When you don't need your passport, carry the copy. Get a police report documenting any losses. Bring four extra photos in the event that you need to replace your passport or obtain visas.

Airport security. At airports, you should be prepared for lengthy check-ins since thorough security checks can take time. Accordingly, be sure to arrive early and pack your bags with care. Carry-on luggage will be X-rayed and possibly hand-searched.

Jet Lag. You should expect to feel jet lag on arrival overseas. It will take a few days for your system to adjust to the time and climate changes, so pace yourself. Get plenty of sleep before your trip and drink lots of fluids before and during the flight to prevent dehydration. Avoid caffeine and alcohol and eat light meals on the plane.

Traffic & the Road. According to the Association for Safe International Road Travel (ASIRT), the single greatest cause of death and serious injury abroad is road accidents. These far exceed the number of deaths resulting from disease, violence, or terrorism. Avoid car or bus travel at night. Discuss the safety of local transit with trusted local people. Always use a seatbelt when available. Do not hitchhike.

Note: We strongly recommend that you not own or operate a motor vehicle of any kind during your time abroad. Driving regulations and habits in many countries are different from those in the U.S. and driving overseas can be potentially dangerous. Your family's liability insurance may not be valid abroad. Pedestrians are also at risk, so be especially careful when crossing the street. Never assume that you have the right of way.

Avoid Demonstrations, especially in politically volatile countries. What appears to be a peaceful situation could suddenly become dangerous and you could become caught in the middle.

Leave Your Travel Itinerary with Friends.

Provide a copy of your travel itinerary to your family or friends while traveling. Always tell someone where you are going, where you are staying, and when you anticipate returning to your host location. Draft a list of important telephone numbers and addresses of the locations you are to visit and the telephone number of your nearest embassy or consulate. Leave a copy with your contact person.

Cell Phone. In some locations, you might be able to sign up for cell phone service. This can be very useful and can save a great deal of trouble.



“The more your loved ones know, the better they will feel during the trip because they will know who you’re with and what you’re doing. I left copies of my trip itinerary, passport, health insurance card, and flight itinerary with my mom so she had all of that information while I was away.”

(WMU Student: Miranda McDowell | Exploring Health & Healthcare Systems in South Africa, Summer I 2016)

<https://wmustudentsabroad.wordpress.com/2016/07/20/5-tips-for-studying-abroad-in-south-africa/>

SAFETY: RELATIONSHIPS & IDENTITY ABROAD

Socializing Safely. One of the truly wonderful aspects of study abroad is making friends with people from a different culture. It can be exhilarating to exchange ideas and find common ground with people who speak a different language and come from different backgrounds. Socializing abroad can be risky, however, because of cultural differences and misperceptions about North Americans. Some North American behavior that is acceptable at home may be viewed as provocative overseas. On the other hand, foreign tones of voice, gestures and perception of personal space may cause North Americans to feel threatened by people who mean them no harm. What is seen in the U.S. as casual dating may be seen in some countries as one step away from a lifetime commitment.

Relationships & Dating Abroad. Take time to learn about cultural norms regarding relationship roles and dating. Use discretion and common sense. Strive to blend in and thus avoid becoming a target for harassment. It is usually best to avoid making eye contact with strangers on the street. Above all, be aware of the unconscious messages you may give through your posture, gestures, tone of voice, clothing, and eye contact. Identify a local you trust and discuss cultural norms of behavior to ensure you are communicating messages consistent with your intentions.

If you find yourself in an encounter that makes you nervous, do not worry about being the ugly American. State your views clearly and get out of the situation. Ignore catcalls and move purposefully.



“I had always heard that traveling abroad isn’t exactly safe especially for a single female. However, when doing your research before your trip you can always check crime rates and the safety of the country. Additionally, you can sign up for text messages through the United States Embassy in that country and they will keep you updated on incidents happening in that country. Traveling will push you out of your comfort zone, and that’s okay.”

(WMU Student: Mattie Kirby| Focus on Health Care: Summer School in Utrecht, Netherlands, Summer II 2017)

<https://wmustudentsabroad.wordpress.com/2017/06/27/10-things-that-will-make-you-talk-yourself-out-of-not-studying-abroad/>

As for relationships, you may not know enough at first about appropriate behavior. Given the additional challenge of possible language problems, or stereotypes, you might unknowingly find yourself in an unwanted situation. Adding alcohol or other substances to these situations may cloud your judgment and you could find yourself in danger, including the potential for sexual assault. Remain in control and watch your alcohol intake.

Talk with locals who you trust to find out more about appropriate behavior. To quote a student writing in *Transitions Abroad*, “The fact is that sex and love are problematic in every culture, but how they are problematic varies greatly from country to country. And when you throw in linguistic challenges, the potential for disappointment or disaster goes off the charts.”

Women. Learn quickly about situations where you might find yourselves being harassed. You may encounter not only the normal burden of sexism, but in many places you also have to contend with the notion that as a Western woman, you might be considered a target. Observe the behavior of the local women. Find out about non-verbal messages (eye contact, tone, gestures, and dress) to avoid or adopt. If you are verbally harassed on the street, the best path is to ignore it unless you are touched or your safety is threatened. Again, be very careful about alcohol consumption and avoid traveling alone, particularly at night.

LGBTQQIAAP+. People who identify at LBBTTQQAAP+ experience challenges and even oppression throughout the world, though there are different levels of acceptance in different countries. Before you go, it is important to reflect on culturally based ideas and definitions of sexual and gender identity and consider carefully how your identity may affect your relationships with host nationals, your cultural adjustment and your overall study abroad experience. Part of your pre-departure preparations should include reflecting on the larger context of your identity while abroad. What role as a visitor do you/ should you have in the host culture? Does your right to be LGBTQQIAAP+ in the foreign country conflict

with your host country's religious or cultural values and traditions? How will you reconcile your understanding of human rights with the cultural values of your host society? Most importantly, are there safety considerations which you should be aware of?

Before leaving, consider the following:

- Cultures vary in terms of what is considered appropriate behavior and how sexual identities are defined and understood. Learn as much as possible before you leave about the culture-specific norms of friendship and dating, styles of behavior and general attitudes. Behavioral signals (such as eye contact, a smile, touching) may lead us astray in a foreign culture. For example, in several Middle Eastern countries hand-holding among males is a custom of special friendship and respect and does not imply homosexuality. Is it possible for you to contact (through email, etc.) other LGBTTTQQAAP+ folks from the host country to ask them specific questions?
- Obtain country specific information on the support systems (meeting places, organizations, etc.) available in your host country. Are these appropriate for you? Do you visit similar places in your home community?
- Familiarize yourself with the laws of your host country. Homosexuality is illegal in many countries, and carries the death penalty in some. Inform yourself about country-specific laws on age of consent, traveling with print or other sexually-explicit materials, etc. If necessary, consider if you are willing to hide your sexual orientation. Is it in your best interest to consider a different, more welcoming destination?
- If you are open in the USA regarding your LGBTTTQQAAP+ identity, reflect on what it means to leave behind a support system of friends and family.
- For further information, talk with other people who have been in your situation abroad, preferably in your host country.

Study abroad is a time of personal growth and discovery. Many transformations in personal development and self-awareness can occur within the context of a new environment. Returning home is therefore a time of transition that can be difficult.

*The above is taken from a handbook, **Ready, Set, Go** developed by the University of Guelph (Canada). For more information, see www.quic.queensu.ca/information/booklet_eng1.html*

HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR HEALTH & SAFETY

Travel Warnings | Consular Information Sheets | Public Announcements | CDC Traveler's Health | Sindecuse

[https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/](https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html)

[traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html](https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html)

When you get the opportunity, and at least two weeks before your departure, visit the above website and view the informational pages for the countries to which you will be traveling. This information is distributed by the Department of State.

Travel Warnings are issued when the State Department decides, based on relevant information, to recommend that Americans avoid travel to a certain country, or regions within that country. Countries where avoidance of travel is recommended will have Travel Warnings as well as Consular Information Sheets.

Consular Information Sheets are available for every country of the world. They include such information as location of the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in the country, unusual immigration practices, health conditions, minor political disturbances, unusual currency and entry regulations, crime and security information, and drug penalties. If an unstable condition exists in a country that is not severe enough to warrant a Travel Warning, a description of the condition(s) may be included under an optional section entitled "Safety/Security." Consular Information Sheets generally do not include advice, but present information in a factual manner so the traveler can make her or his own decisions concerning travel to a particular country.

Public Announcements are a means to disseminate information about terrorist threats and other relatively short-term and/or transnational conditions posing significant risks to the security of American travelers. They are made any time there is a perceived threat and usually have Americans as a particular target group. In the past, Public Announcements have been issued to disclose information on political instability, bomb threats, violence by terrorists, and anniversary dates of specific terrorist events.

"The week leading up to Bastille Day I received two emails. The first from the WMU study abroad office. They advised us to be cautious, and reminded us that as Americans, avoiding confrontation on such a day would be the safest option. The second email was from the United States Embassy in France. They strongly advised me as an American student in France, to avoid the Paris area. There were many protests planned and they reminded me via email that they could easily become violent. Being in France does not often make me nervous or fearful, but I was on edge and extra vigilant on Bastille Day."

(WMU Student: Amanda Croft | Lyon Program, France, Summer II 2017)

<https://wmustudentsabroad.wordpress.com/2017/07/30/bastille-day-is-not-independence-day/>



CDC Travelers' Health | <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>

This site is the number one source for travelers' health information for the region they will visit. Go to this site to find recommended immunizations as well. Select the region of the world on the drop down menu and print the information.

Sindecuse Health Center | <http://www.wmich.edu/healthcenter>

Sindecuse Health Center has a Travel Health Clinic available to all students by appointment. While a meeting with a Travel Health nurse at Sindecuse is not required, this is an excellent resource for students to discuss health considerations related to international travel.

TSA TRAVEL TIPS

Before the Airport:

Do NOT pack or bring prohibited items to the airport.

Visit www.TSATravelTips.us for a complete list.

Leave gifts unwrapped. They may need to be opened for inspection.

Avoid wearing clothing, jewelry, and accessories that contain metal. Metal items may set off the alarm on the metal detector.

Put all undeveloped film and cameras with film in your carry-on baggage. Checked baggage screening equipment will damage undeveloped film.

Carry-on baggage is frequently limited to one carry-on bag plus one personal item. Personal items include laptops, purses, backpacks, briefcases, or camera cases. *Remember 1 + 1.*

Place identification tags in and on all of your baggage.

At the Airport:

Before you get in line...

Do NOT bring drinks or other liquids to the security checkpoint

Once you get in line...In, Out, Off

Put metal IN your carry-on bag. This includes jewelry, loose change, keys, mobile phones, papers, and PDAs.

Take OUT your laptop computer. Place it in a bin, separate from its carrying case.

Take OFF your outer coat. Place it in a bin. Suit Jackets and blazers do not have to be removed, unless requested by the screener.

*This information brought to you courtesy of Transportation Security Administration
www.TSATravelTips.us and subject to change*

PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST

Students are responsible for completing these tasks in preparation for study abroad.

☐ 1. PASSPORT, VISA & AIRFARE

Passport: If you don't already have a passport, APPLY early. Processing can take six to eight weeks, though expedited service is available at an extra charge.

Passport information: <http://travel.state.gov/content/studentsabroad/en/travel-docs/passports.html>.

Visa: Apply for a student visa if one is required for your host country. You are responsible for obtaining your student visa within the appropriate time frame.

Visa information: <http://travel.state.gov/content/studentsabroad/en/travel-docs/visas.html>.

Airfare: If you know the dates of your study abroad program and have received an acceptance letter from your host institution or confirmation from your faculty director that your program has been approved to run, you may want to buy your tickets—or, at least begin to investigate your options.

(Note: Discuss with a loved one whether they have a valid passport or would like to obtain one, in the event you have an illness or emergency and someone needs to travel to your destination.)

☐ 2. COMPLETE HEALTH AND SAFETY CONSULTATION

Please visit Sindecuse Health Center or your physician at least 8 weeks prior to departure to complete all necessary preventative vaccinations before your trip.

Call Sindecuse International Travel Clinic at 387-3298 for more information or visit:

<http://www.wmich.edu/healthcenter/clinic/travel>

(Note: WMU Study Abroad office does not provide health-related information to students. You must consult with the WMU Sindecuse Health Center Travel Clinic or your personal physician for required or suggested vaccinations and other health-related information pertaining to your travel and study abroad destinations.)

☐ 3. OBTAIN SUPPLY OF MEDICATION

You should obtain a full supply of your medication(s) for the duration of your study abroad program. Allow enough time to work with your insurance company, if necessary. **Any medications carried overseas should be in their original containers and clearly labeled so it is obvious they have been prescribed for you. Put them in your carry-on luggage so they are not lost in transit.**

Carry a letter from your doctor describing your condition and medications, including the generic names of prescribed drugs, in case you need it for customs. Bring prescription(s) with the generic name of the medication indicated (brand names can be different in other countries.) Remember to take extra contacts and eye glasses. If you have allergies or other unique medical problems, consider wearing a “medical alert” bracelet and carrying

a letter from your doctor explaining required treatment if you become ill. It might not be the coolest jewelry you could wear, but it could save your life.

Some countries restrict the amount of medication that can be brought to the country. We suggest you contact our insurance provider, GeoBlue, to discuss options for obtaining a prescription in the host country for medications.

Check with the foreign country's embassy here in the U.S. to make sure your medication is acceptable to carry into the country. See embassy search here: <http://www.state.gov/s/cpr/rls/dpl/32122.htm>

☐ **4. REGISTER ON GEOBLUE STUDENT WEBSITE: MEDICAL & EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE INSURANCE**

Register on the GeoBlue Student website (<https://geobluestudents.com/>) so they can better assist you.

If you anticipate needing medical care during study abroad, contact GeoBlue's Global Health and Safety Services (800.257.4823) as early as possible prior to departure. They will help you plan in advance how to receive health care abroad, refill prescriptions, and connect you with a medical care provider.

Read GeoBlue's security information about your destination and sign up for news alerts to be sent to your email address to stay informed about events in places where you plan to travel. You can also search for participating hospitals and physicians located in or near your study abroad destination.

(Note: You will be insured by GeoBlue during your study abroad program dates. To purchase additional insurance for personal travel, contact GeoBlue directly after you receive your welcome message and prior to departure.)

☐ **5. REGISTER WITH THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

WMU requires all students to register with the U.S. Department of State before departure.

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) at <https://step.state.gov/step/>. Also, it's important to add side-trips during your study abroad. You should do this as you make your travel plans.

☐ **6. HAND IN STUDY ABROAD COURSE APPROVALS (if applicable)**

Use the course pre-approval form you received from your Study Abroad Specialist to obtain foreign course pre-approvals and hand in your signed, completed form to WMU Study Abroad prior to departure. (This might not apply to some foreign language programs in which courses are not known in advance because students take a placement test when they arrive at the host university to determine which courses they will take.)

☐ **7. DROP NON-STUDY ABROAD COURSES**

Drop any non-study abroad courses for which you are currently registered and will not be completing during the semester(s) of study abroad. In addition, make sure that your account is free of any "holds" that could prevent your study abroad specialist from completing your registration.

☐ **8. FINANCIAL AID FORMS (Financial Aid Recipients Only)**

If you haven't already done so, please make an appointment with an advisor in the Financial Aid office in Faunce (269) 387-6000 to finalize funding for study abroad. Bring a copy of the program budget with you. At the top of the program brochure next to "Budget sheets," click on the appropriate semester to access the budget.

Complete a direct deposit form (available on GoWMU portal) in order to receive any electronic refund into your personal bank account.

(Note: You may also consider giving a loved one access to your student account if they will be helping you with it during the semester you will be abroad.)

☐ **9. CONTACT WMU RESIDENCE LIFE AND DINING SERVICES (if applicable)**

Contact WMU Residence Life and Dining Services to cancel your housing contract and meal plan for the semester you will be studying abroad.

☐ **10. UPLOAD PASSPORT COPY AND FLIGHT ITINERARY IN BRONCOS ABROAD**

Copy of the first page of your passport (pages with photo and passport number). Make sure it's signed.
Copy of your travel itinerary (departure from/return to the U.S.)

☐ **11. NOTIFY YOUR BANK AND/OR CREDIT CARD COMPANY OF YOUR TRAVEL PLANS**

Contact your bank and/or credit card company to ensure you will have access to your funds (so they don't freeze your account due to unexpected foreign transactions.) Verify whether your debit and credit card(s) are accepted in the host country. Ask about any transaction fees or conversion fees that your bank charges for using your debit and credit card(s) abroad so you can minimize these fees.

(Note: As a convenience, you may wish to obtain a small amount of local currency from your bank or travel agency (\$75-100) to take with you for incidentals upon arrival in the host country. It may take 2 weeks to order currency from your bank. Otherwise, travelers can normally exchange US dollars in the airport or use an ATM to get cash.)

☐ **12. MAKE COPIES OF IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS**

Make a copy of your passport, visa (if applicable) and the front and back of debit and credit cards to leave with a loved one in case your passport is lost and needs to be replaced or your bank card(s) need to be reported lost or stolen. Take at least one copy of your passport and visa page with you. You might also wish to take a photograph of your passport and/or visa on your cell phone.

(Note: Carry your passport and the copy in different carry-on bags. Do not pack them in your checked luggage.)

☐ **13. BRING CONTACT INFORMATION FOR HOST UNIVERSITY AND HOUSING**

Carry a paper copy of the contact information for the host university and your hotel, residence hall, apartment, or host family with you in your carry-on luggage.

☐ **14. DISCUSS COMMUNICATION PLAN WITH LOVED ONES**

Determine plans for the method and frequency of communication to clarify expectations. Skype is one inexpensive way to stay in touch with loved ones. Blogs also work well to share your experiences.

Keep your loved ones informed about your side-trips while you are abroad so they know your whereabouts at all times.

FINAL CHECKLIST OF STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

PRE-DEPARTURE: See “Pre-departure Checklist” for more information on what to do before you leave for study abroad

- ____ Please be sure **you turned everything in to your study abroad specialist** before departure (Copy of Passport, Copy of Acceptance Letter to host institution, Course Approvals, etc.).
- ____ For informational purposes only, please provide **a copy of your travel itinerary** to the Office of Study Abroad before you leave. This may be uploaded in Broncos Abroad.
- ____ **Drop any non-study abroad courses** in which you are currently registered for during the term(s) of study abroad. In addition, make sure your account is **free of any “holds”** so that the Office of Study Abroad can enroll/register you for Study Abroad credits.

DURING STUDY ABROAD:

- ____ Within a week of your arrival, fill out and submit the **Address Abroad questionnaire** that will deploy in your Broncos Abroad application (this is not required for students on faculty-led programs).
- ____ You can take certain **courses for CR/NC** if those courses do NOT count for WMU major or minor requirements and ONLY IF you notify your study abroad advisor of your desire to do so by the time frame outline on your course approval form. You will not be allowed to switch a course from graded to credit/no credit after the first week of classes.
- ____ **Registering for WMU classes** is your responsibility while abroad. If for some reason you cannot register online, then try to find a friend or relative to do it for you (it is advisable to make arrangements with a family member or friend in advance of your trip, as Internet access/reliability is sometimes difficult from overseas). You may also contact your academic advisor with requests for enrollment.
- ____ **Maintain and routinely check your WMU email address**, which will be used by the Office of Study Abroad to make contact with you while overseas. If you cannot communicate from your WMU email address for any reason, YOU ABSOLUTELY MUST inform your study abroad advisor as soon as possible. Do not leave voicemails on your study abroad specialist’s work phone. Instead, communicate by email.

UPON RETURN:

- ____ You are responsible for ensuring that the Office of Study Abroad receives an **official transcript** from the sponsoring/host institution and that the listed courses match the courses and approved equivalencies on the *Course*

Pre-Approval Form. Courses you take at the host institution for which you did not secure approval will transfer as ELECTIVE CREDIT at WMU, unless you inform the Office otherwise and secure the appropriate course approvals.

_____ The official transcript from the sponsoring/host institution must **indicate a grade for every course taken**, otherwise it will not transfer to WMU.

STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY

THIS IS A LEGAL DOCUMENT THAT INCLUDES A RELEASE OF LIABILITY. READ IT CAREFULLY BEFORE SIGNING. In consideration for being permitted to participate in the Study Abroad Program for which I have been accepted (Program), I hereby understand, agree and represent that:

1. Program Arrangements

The University will attempt to implement the Program as described in the provided documentation. It reserves the right, however, to change the Program at any time and for any reason if necessary to promote Program objectives; for emergency, health or safety issues; or due to institutional needs. If cancelled, I may not have any fees or expenses refunded.

2. Travel and Accommodation Arrangements

I am expected to adapt to differences in physical accommodations, which may be perceived as inconvenient or uncomfortable by U.S. standards. Changes in accommodations may be necessary, in the best interest of the Program, or the best interest of the University. The University does not represent or act as an agent for, and cannot control the acts or omissions of any host, travel, accommodation, tour, or other provider of goods or services related to the Program.

3. Financial Obligations

I shall be solely responsible for all financial obligations or liabilities that I may incur while participating in a study abroad Program, including living and transportation expenses.

I have reviewed the Withdrawal and Refund procedures, and I agree to abide by these policies. After accepting a placement in a program, I understand I will be charged a non-refundable Program Commitment Fee.

Events and circumstances beyond WMU's control may require fee adjustment at the time of Program commencement or at the time of receipt of billing for services provided. I am financially responsible for such changes. However, if fees increase by more than 20%, I may withdraw from the Program with no cancellation fees.

I agree to remain enrolled full time during my study abroad experience. I understand that I may be required to repay part or all of my financial aid immediately if I drop below full-time status at any time during the term of the Program.

I understand while some financial aid may be available for my study abroad experience, I might need

additional funds to cover costs that exceed tuition and Program fees. Disbursement of financial aid may not coincide with the start date of the Program. I acknowledge that I have sufficient personal funds, or have already been awarded sufficient financial aid, to support my participation in the Program, including the costs associated with airfare and living expenses.

4. Withdrawal or Dismissal

I will provide written, dated, and signed notification to WMU Study Abroad if I decide to withdraw from the Program after committing. I agree to be subject to additional fees based upon the timing and amount of notice of withdrawal that I provide to WMU Study Abroad.

After departure, I shall be solely responsible for any and all costs arising out of my voluntary or involuntary withdrawal or dismissal from the Program for any reason.

If I am expelled from the Program, I will be sent home at my own expense with no refund of fees or expenses. Expulsion from the Program may also include failure of courses, and I may be subject to further disciplinary, civil and/or criminal action upon my return to the country or the University.

5. Communication

Maintaining contact with program leaders, University officials and other program participants is important for safety, health and emergency purposes. Program staff and University officials will primarily use the University email system to communicate with me regarding the Program and while I am abroad. I will check my official University email account often during the Program, but no less than once a week. If University e-mail is not accessible while I am abroad, I will inform the Study Abroad Office of that fact and establish an alternate means of communication. I will provide the Study Abroad Office with a phone number at which I can be reached while abroad.

6. Independent Travel and Activities

Neither the University, nor any University employee, representative nor agent is responsible for any injuries, loss, or damage I may suffer when I am traveling independently or am otherwise separated or absent from the Program. This limitation applies even if a faculty member or other University employee, representative, or agent accompanies me in independent travel or non-University-sponsored or -affiliated activity. If I lose contact or become detached from the Program group, I will, at my own expense, contact and rejoin the Program group.

In the event that I undertake independent travel during, immediately before, or immediately after the Program dates, I will update my itinerary with the Study Abroad Office and provide a copy, with revised emergency contact information, to my Program's faculty director or other on-site University representative.

7. Health and Medical Issues

Travel abroad may expose me to certain conditions, diseases or illnesses. I have been advised to acquire all the immunizations recommended by the U.S. Center for Disease Control and all other inoculations necessary for safe travel in the areas I am visiting. I will make reasonable efforts to acquaint myself with health factors and issues endemic to these areas and to prepare myself accordingly.

I will make an appointment to be seen at the Sindecuse Health Center International Travel Clinic or by another health care professional at least six weeks prior to departure to discuss any required or recommended

immunizations and vaccinations. I have been advised to consult with a medical doctor or comparable health care provider with regard to my personal health status and needs.

I am required to be enrolled in health insurance through the University's vendor to cover my travel and study abroad activities. The University is not obligated to pay for any medical treatment or hospital care during my participation in the Program. The University is not responsible for the quality of such treatment or care. I will be responsible for all my own medical costs (including transportation/evacuation and repatriation) not covered by my insurance. I will pay such costs in a timely manner. Insurance coverage prior to and following the official Program dates is my own responsibility.

If I am injured or become ill, the University or its agents may secure hospitalization and/or medical treatment for me and I shall be responsible for paying all expenses related thereto. The University or its agents may release my medical and other personal information to other persons who need this information to assist me in securing such treatment.

If I become sick or injured and lose contact with the Program group, I will, at my own expense, contact and rejoin the Program group.

8. Standards of Conduct

Each 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. I recognize that behavior or conduct that violates those laws or standards could harm my health and safety, the health and safety of other Program participants, the Program's effectiveness or the University's relations with the countries in which the Program is located. I take full responsibility for my behavior and conduct regardless of whether I am under the direct supervision of the University, University employees, agents, or Program officials.

I will make reasonable and good faith efforts to become informed of and comply with all laws, regulations, and standards for each country to or through which I will travel during my time abroad.

I am subject to University policies, procedures, rules, standards and instruction, including the WMU Student Code of Conduct, at all times during my participation in the Program. I will comply with any supplemental rules or standards adopted by the University for the Program. The University may expel me from the Program and related activities for violating any policy, rule, regulation, or order of University employees or of any other lawful authority.

I will not use or possess narcotics or any other illegal substance while on the Program. Using or possessing such is cause for immediate expulsion from the Program, and may subject me to prosecution in the host country. The penalties for use or possession of illegal substances in other countries may be much more severe than in the United States. The University and its agents will not assist me if I violate host country laws or standards.

I recognize that, due to the circumstances of foreign travel and foreign study programs, a due process hearing may not be practicable or available until after the trip or Program has ended and I have returned to the United States. I explicitly waive any claims based on alleged inadequate procedural rights.

I agree to the responsible use of alcohol as outlined by the Study Abroad Office and the Student Code.

I must reside in the housing location designated by the program, if relevant. Students must abide by host program or host family's policy pertaining to house guests and obtain permission to host overnight guests in their housing.

Acceptance to the Program is conditional upon my remaining in good standing with the University for the academic term prior to participation in the Program.

I have read, understand, have been given the opportunity to ask questions about, and agree to abide by [WMU Study Abroad's procedures](#) and any Program-specific materials I received from the University or its agents. I have been advised to share those materials with my parent/legal guardian/next of kin. I also agree that I have informed my parent/legal guardian/next of kin that I will be participating in the Program.

I agree that the University has the right to enforce all of the standards of conduct, rules and regulations described above and in any other materials provided or available to me. If disciplinary action is necessary, the Program director and the Study Abroad Office will use their discretion regarding what interim disciplinary action to take, including removing me from the Program and sending me back to the United States. I am responsible for all damages caused by my actions or conduct.

I understand that I am fully responsible for any criminal or legal matters that may arise. I also agree that I am responsible for any encounters that I have with any foreign government, law enforcement, or any individual. The University is not responsible for providing any assistance under such circumstances.

9. Indemnification, Acknowledgement of my Responsibility and Assumption of Risk

I fully understand that this Program will expose me to risks associated with foreign travel and participation in a program abroad. I assume responsibility for all risks associated with this Program, known and unknown, to my property, and me and I am voluntarily participating in reliance upon my own judgment and knowledge of my experience and capabilities. I agree to release, hold harmless, and indemnify Western Michigan University, its trustees, officers, employees, and agents from any liability, losses, costs, damages, claims, causes of action, or expenses, of any kind or nature whatsoever, arising from, proximately caused by, or in connection with:

- emergencies, accidents, illnesses, injuries or other consequences or events arising from my participation in the Program,
- any cause, event or occurrence beyond the direct control of the University or its agents including, but not limited to, travel changes or interruptions, natural disasters, wars, civil disturbances, terrorist acts or the negligence of other persons, and
- events or occurrences caused by my behavior or conduct while traveling or participating in the Program.

There are safety risks and inherent dangers associated with the Program and travel incident thereto that no amount of care, caution, instruction or expertise can eliminate. The University is not responsible for any such risks, injuries, damages, or loss outside of its direct control. I am responsible for avoiding illegal, dangerous or unsafe activities, and for any injury or loss that may result from engaging in such activities.

This acknowledgement, hold harmless agreement, release, indemnification and assumption of risk shall be binding on me, my heirs, my assigns, members of my family, my executors and administrators and my

personal representatives.

10. Voluntary Acknowledgement

My agreement to the provisions herein is voluntary. Prior to signing this agreement, I was informed that I had the opportunity and right to ask questions and to consult with the advisor, counselor or attorney of my choice.

11. Interpretation of Agreement

The laws of Michigan govern this agreement. Michigan shall be the forum for any lawsuit, hearings or adjudications filed under or incident to this agreement or to the Program. Should any provision or aspect of this agreement be found to be unenforceable, all remaining provisions of the agreement shall continue to be valid, enforceable, and binding.

I have carefully read, understand and fully agree with the statements and responsibilities outlined in this agreement. This agreement represents my complete understanding with the University concerning the University's or its agents' responsibility and liability for my participation in the Program. This agreement supersedes any previous or contemporaneous understandings I may have had with the University or its agents, whether oral or written. I represent that I am at least eighteen years of age or, if not, my parent or guardian has signed this agreement on my behalf.

Approved by WMU general counsel May, 2018.

STUDY ABROAD CONTACTS & RESOURCES

WMU STUDY ABROAD WEBSITE | www.wmich.edu/studyabroad

USEFUL TRAVEL-RELATED WEBSITES

AESU Travel Information	www.aesu.com
BusAbout Europe	www.busabout.com
Center for Disease Control	www.cdc.gov
Dept. of State Travel	www.travel.state.gov
Embassies	www.embassy.org
RailEurope	www.raileurope.com/us
Foreign Currency Exchange Transactions	www.xe.com
ISIC Cards	www.isic.org
Lonely Planet Online	www.lonelyplanet.com
Mobility International	www.miusa.org
STA Travel	www.statravel.com
Student Universe	www.studentuniverse.com
Travel Document Systems	www.traveldocs.com
World Health Organization	www.who.int/ith/en/

USEFUL BOOKS

Getting the Most from Study Abroad (Students Helping Students) by Michael Gallant, Natavi Guides

Study Abroad 101 by Wendy Williamson

Study Abroad: A Parent's Guide: For Parents of College and University Students Contemplating a Study Abroad Experience by William Hoffa

Study Away: The Unauthorized Guide to College Abroad by Mariah Balaban, Jennifer Shields

Study Abroad: How to Get the Most Out of Your Experience by Michele-Marie Dowell, Kelly P. Mirsky

The Insider's Guide to Study Abroad by Ann M. Moore

HEALTH, SAFETY, & LOGISTICS

Promoting Health and Safety in Study Abroad	www.nafsa.org/students.sec
SAFETI Clearinghouse	www.globaled.us/safeti
Safety Monitoring Websites	www.nafsa.org/students.sec
Electronic Embassy	www.embassy.org/embassies/index.html
Travelers' Health	www.cdc.gov/travel