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Study Abroad

Work Volunteer Research Study

Study Abroad Handbook

Administrative Procedures
Finances
Travel
Communication
Cross-Cultural Adjustment
Health & Safety
Important Contact Information

Photo of the Taj Mahal, India by Giacomo Tinari
Class of 2011, Bachelor of Architecture

This handbook would not have been possible without the dedicated current and former Office of International Education staff: Eva Mergner, Jennifer McNabb, Lisa Krieg, Tricia Dugan, Kandy Turner, Brynn Cunningham, and Sue Jean Koh. Thanks also to the students who contributed.

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Preface

Dear Study Abroad Participant,

Congratulations on your decision to study abroad!

This experience upon which you are about to embark will be one of the most exciting, rewarding, and challenging adventures you will encounter. We hope this handbook will act as a guide and reference as you prepare to travel abroad.

While this manual provides a one-stop-shop for study abroad, we recommend visiting our web site as well: <http://www.cmu.edu/studyabroad>. The information in this handbook can be found here, and throughout the Carnegie Mellon University websites.

Now that you have made the decision to study abroad, you should be thinking about ways to mentally and physically prepare yourself. At our (required) Pre-Departure Orientations, we will address academic, cultural, and health related topics. I also recommend visiting our Carnegie Mellon *itravel* website: www.cmu.edu/itravel. This secure site, run by our Senior Director of Global Security, provides in-country reports, daily security updates, local emergency numbers; as well as driving, health, and safety tips while abroad. In addition, make sure to peruse the documentation received from your study abroad program or host institution, as well. They will be able to give you specific country and city information that will go-above-and-beyond our general study abroad resources.

You will also want to ask yourself how much knowledge you have regarding your future host culture. Consult various resources; making sure to pay particular attention to history, travel information, literature, and current events. In addition, become acquainted with the educational system of your host country. Understand your type of program, whether it be a

fully immersive direct enrollment program, a US program that academically caters to American students, or a hybrid of the two.

Overall, we want you to enjoy the experience, and return academically, culturally, and personally enriched.

If you have questions or concerns, feel free to contact us at 412-268-5231 phone, 412-268-7832 fax or cmenand@andrew.cmu.edu.

We wish you an exciting journey!

Sincerely,

Christine Menand
Coordinator of Study Abroad and Exchange Programs

Chapter 1: Administrative Procedures

Registration & Documentation

Administrative details are a large part of your preparation. Each study abroad program has its own procedures for enrollment, tuition payments, financial aid, etc. You should consult the institution running the program, or your department if you are going on a departmental exchange. The following items are required of *every* Carnegie Mellon student prior to going abroad.

I. Registration

Once accepted, make arrangements for registration at Carnegie Mellon to receive transfer credit:

Forms:

- Study Abroad Transfer Credit (SATC) form (with advisor(s) signatures)
- Personal Data Sheet
- Study Abroad Student Responsibilities Contract
- Liability Waiver
- Financial Acknowledgement Form
- Pre-Study Abroad Survey
- Submit a photocopy of ISIC

All students attending Carnegie Mellon Sponsored programs (paying through CMU) are required to also read and sign the Sponsored Study Abroad Financial Responsibilities Contract.

*You will not be registered unless you have attended a Pre-Departure Orientation and *all items* have been received by the last day of classes the semester before you study abroad.*

II. Passports and Visas

International travel requires a valid passport. If you already have one, check the expiration date and be sure that it will be valid for the duration of your travel. Please note, many

countries require that your passport be valid for 6 months after the end of your trip.

If you do not have a passport, you must apply in person at a passport agency, a designated courthouse, or a designated U.S. post office. This process takes about 6 weeks, so plan ahead! The nearest passport office is in the Allegheny County Clerk of Courts office at 436 Grant St., Room 222. Contact the office at 412-350-6071 or www.county.allegheny.pa.us/cofc/pass.asp. You will need:

- A certified copy of your birth certificate stamped with a raised seal
- Your social security card
- A photo ID
- Two 2x2" passport photos (available at FedEx/Kinkos)
- A check or money order (cash and credit are not accepted.)

See the state department website at www.travel.state.gov for more details.

You may renew your passport by mail only if it expired after you turned 18 or less than 2 years ago. If your passport was issued to you as a minor, you must reapply in person as if it is your first one. Renewal forms are available online and at passport agencies. The process takes about 4 weeks.

A visa states your purpose for entry into a foreign country. It is important to find out what the visa requirements are for the country in which you will be studying. You can find this information on the web. **Students in the U.S. on nonimmigrant visas (most commonly F-1 or J-1) should meet with a Foreign Student Advisor before leaving, as their immigration status may be affected.**

III. Housing

If you live in campus housing, and want to return to campus housing, fill out the housing form on-line. If you are studying abroad in the spring or fall, housing will contact you within two weeks of application.

IV. While abroad

- a. Complete the online SATC Update Form with your final course schedule at: www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/oie/sab/resources.cfm. Click on the Follow-up SATC form link.
- b. Provide OIE and your advisor with your email address, if different from your Andrew e-mail.
- c. Register for Carnegie Mellon classes during the registration period (November for spring or April for fall.)
- d. Ensure that your program will send an official transcript to OIE.
- e. Enjoy and take full advantage of this great opportunity!

V. Upon Return

When you return to Carnegie Mellon, attend our *International Reception* and *Welcome Back Workshop*, volunteer with *International Festival*, and participate as a panelist in our Information Sessions to share your experiences with other students interested in studying abroad.

Medical Insurance

Medical Insurance is extremely important. You need to make sure that your current medical insurance provides international coverage, and covers medical evacuation and repatriation (travel expenses for returning home if your medical condition warrants it).

Highmark PPO Blue Insurance is available through Carnegie Mellon's Student Health Services Office. The plans offered include coverage abroad. You can review plan details by visiting the following website: www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/healthservices/insurance, or by contacting the Student Health Services Insurance Office at x8-7010. You can also contact Highmark directly by calling 1-800-472-1506.

Carnegie Mellon does not endorse a specific health plan, though recommends remaining on your current plan required for study on the Pittsburgh campus, provided that the plan meets the needs stated above.

A listing of study abroad insurance providers can be found in your pre-departure packet.

The International Student ID Card (ISIC)

Carnegie Mellon requires that you purchase the ISIC card before going abroad. The card offers benefits to students traveling, studying, or working abroad. These benefits include low airfares (available through STA Travel), reduced rail, bus and ferry prices, discounts to museums, galleries, other attractions, accommodation and meals in the US and abroad. When you purchase an ISIC, you will receive a handbook with a detailed description of these benefits.

In addition, the most important benefit to ISIC cardholders is a supplemental medical/accident insurance package. This supplement insures students for hospitalization, accident-related medical expenses (including medical evacuation), accidental death, and dismemberment while traveling outside the continental US. The medical/accident coverage is also described in more detail in the ISIC handbook. Please remember that this insurance does **NOT** replace your regular, required health insurance. It is only a supplement.

Applications are available at STA Travel on the web at www.statravel.com. The cost is \$23; a photo will be needed, along with proof of student status. The ISIC card must be purchased in the U.S. to include all discounts.

Other Important Details

I. Photocopies

You should leave one set of photocopies of all your important documents in the U.S. with your parents or someone else you trust. Take another set with you and keep them separate from your original documents. This will make replacement easier if these documents are lost or stolen. You can also give your parents or someone you trust power of attorney to handle your finances (such as tax returns, bills, money transfers) on your behalf.

If something should happen to you, these items may be needed as references:

- Passport.
- All credit cards. Make sure the names, numbers, and expiration dates are visible.
- Driver's license and student ID.
- All traveler's check numbers.
- Several signed checks and deposit slips.
- Medical insurance information.

II. Income tax

Even if you are abroad, or have earned income that is exempt from taxes, you are still required to file U.S. income tax returns. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) information and tax forms are available at U.S. embassies and consulates on the web: <http://usembassy.state.gov>. Tax laws change from year to year, so be sure to ask any questions you may have at the consulate. You can also find information on the web at www.irs.gov/forms_pubs. You can obtain other tax forms at the government agencies responsible for state and local taxation (if any.) The embassy will not have state or local tax forms or information. If you are not a U.S. citizen you should check with the appropriate authorities in your country for taxation information.

III. Voting while Abroad

If you will be abroad on Election Day, you may request an absentee ballot. You may do so in person or by mail to your local election office. It is generally an easy process if you are already registered to vote. If you do not make these provisions before leaving the US, you may still vote under the Overseas Voting Rights Act of 1974, which requires states to establish a means for persons residing overseas to apply for voter registration. While abroad you may inquire about voting at a U.S. embassy or consular office.

Chapter 2: Finances

It is very important that you have an accurate idea of how much your semester or year abroad is going to cost you before you leave. You also need to be confident that your financial situation is secure during your time abroad.

A semester or year abroad is likely to present some increased costs compared to a semester or year at Carnegie Mellon. This is due to increased traveling expenses, and the fact that you likely will be trying many new and different activities, foods, cultural events, etc. The costs depend on the activities you choose, the program you have chosen, the exchange rate of the country you are visiting, and your personal preferences. As you can imagine, many factors influence the cost of studying abroad. This chapter will address some of these factors, and:

- explain Carnegie Mellon financial aid policies for study abroad
- list options for handling money while abroad
- present a list of extra expenses to think about

Study Abroad Financial Aid Policies

There are 3 ways to study abroad at Carnegie Mellon: Exchange Programs, Sponsored Programs, and External Study Abroad.

I. Exchange Programs

These include university exchanges (EPFL, Keio, etc.) and specific departmental exchanges. Students pay their tuition directly to Carnegie Mellon and receive their regular financial aid package. With the exception of any student employment programs, you are eligible for all aid that you would normally receive. Students are responsible for paying all other fees, such as room and board, directly to the exchange institution.

II. Carnegie Mellon Sponsored Programs

Currently Carnegie Mellon has sponsored programs in many different countries. In these programs, students pay a sponsored program fee equivalent to Carnegie Mellon tuition, room, and board. Students are eligible for all financial aid that normally applies, except employment programs, such as work study. The difference is that Carnegie Mellon will pay the tuition and fees to the study abroad institution, and distribute funds to students for room, board, as well as some travel, and educational expenses that are not included in the institution's fees. (See page 3 for important information regarding the registration process.)

III. External Study Abroad Programs

These programs are sponsored by another university or study abroad institution. You pay tuition to the other organization directly and do not pay tuition to Carnegie Mellon. Thus, you are not eligible for any institutional aid from Carnegie Mellon (grants, scholarships, etc. which are administered by Carnegie Mellon). However, you are eligible for any state or federal aid and all loans that you would normally receive.

Handling Money while Abroad

Upon arrival at your foreign destination, you may not have a chance to exchange money at the airport. You will need cash to pay for a taxi, food, porters, etc. You should take about \$100 worth of foreign currency with you when you leave the US. You can exchange foreign currency from any bank in the US. However, some banks do not keep a supply of foreign currency on hand and must order it, so plan ahead. You should check out current currency rates before you leave: www.xe.com/currencyconverter

For the most part, receiving money while overseas is not very complicated. Options that may be available to you for receiving money abroad will be briefly explained next. It is worthwhile to have more than one option available for accessing money, such as a debit card and a credit card.

I. ATM machines

In many cities, the simplest way to obtain cash is through an ATM machine. Withdrawing money from your bank account in the U.S. through an ATM will also give you the best exchange rate for the day. You should check with your bank before leaving the U.S. to find out where their ATM cards are accepted. Be sure to ask about the country you will be living in and any countries you plan on visiting. Most banks now offer a Check Debit Card rather than a regular ATM card. A Check Debit Card can be used almost anywhere a Visa or MasterCard is accepted. Payment with the check debit card is processed as if it were a credit card. The only difference is that the debit comes directly out of your checking account. This is a very convenient method to pay for things while abroad, and, as with any ATM transaction, the best exchange rate for the day is given.

American Express provides a service called Express Cash for their cardholders. This service allows you to withdraw money from your checking account in the U.S. via any American Express ATM. American Express has many travel offices and ATMs worldwide.

It is also possible to make cash advances on a credit card through an ATM. This may come in handy in the event of an emergency and if you have someone back in the U.S. who can pay the bills for you. Just remember that when you make a cash advance, the interest starts to accrue immediately. Also, you must know your PIN number to make cash advances. If you do not know your PIN number, call the phone number on your credit card, and have it sent to you.

II. Traveler's checks/Traveler's check card

Traveler's checks are insured and can be replaced if lost or stolen. In order to make a claim for lost or stolen traveler's checks it is essential to know the numbers of the missing checks. You should keep a good record of your check numbers and keep this separate from your checks. You should also leave a copy at home in the US with someone you trust. Traveler's checks or the traveler's check card may be

purchased at any bank, through American Express or AAA. It is possible to buy traveler's checks in American dollars or in units of a foreign currency. Most banks and other businesses charge a small fee for cashing traveler's checks. Students report that traveler's checks are not often accepted at stores, so it is best to use this option as a back-up plan.

III. Bank Checks

If you have a large sum of money that you would like to take with you when you leave the U.S., you can take it in the form of a check issued by your bank. When you open a bank account in your host country, you can deposit the bank check. This takes less time to clear (about a week, depending on which country you are in) than a personal check from the U.S. which can take 4 or more weeks.

IV. Wiring Money

Wiring money involves transferring money directly from one bank account to another. Before leaving the U.S., it is a good idea to ask your bank if they have relations with a particular bank in your host country. This will make money wiring easier and possibly less expensive. The fee for wiring money is fairly expensive. The person in the U.S. who is sending you money will pay \$30-\$50 and you will be charged a similar fee upon receiving the money. The benefits of wiring money are that it is safe and quick, especially if you are in an area where there are no ATM machines.

Extra Expenses

Based on the experiences of other students who have studied abroad, some of the little things that can add up are:

- Cultural activities (movies, concerts, plays, museums)
- Eating out
- Laundry & dry cleaning
- Newspapers & magazines
- Gifts & souvenirs
- Postage & freight
- International phone calls

Chapter 3: Travel

Traveling is an important aspect of studying abroad. This chapter will discuss travel to and from the U.S. and travel once you are abroad. Several different travel guidebooks will also be reviewed and some useful packing tips will be provided.

Making Your Flight Arrangements

It is extremely important that you make your flight reservations in advance. If you start planning early, you will have more time to be on the lookout for special fares and good deals. Seat availability can also be a problem, especially if you are traveling in high season (for example summer for Europe.) This advice is applicable to planning your travel from and to the U.S.

You can almost always make a reservation and then cancel it if you find something better. Keep in mind, however, you may be assessed a penalty by the airline company. If you think you might cancel a reservation, ask about it first.

You have several options for your airline tickets:

Round-trip tickets are usually the least expensive, but you must specify your return date at the time of purchase. Travel must be completed within one year. Take this into consideration if you are unsure of when your courses or exams will be over or if you plan on doing any post-program travel. Most airlines will charge you a fee (\$75-\$100) if you change your flight.

Open-ended round-trip tickets are the choice of most students studying abroad. Open-ended means that you are not required to specify the date of your return flight at the time of purchase. Because of this convenience, open-ended tickets

are usually more expensive than regular round-trip tickets. Like round-trip tickets, open-ended tickets require travel to be completed within one year. Each airline will have its own conditions and restrictions that apply. If you buy an open-ended return ticket, you should book your return flight home as soon as you can.

One-way airline tickets are your third choice. Sometimes it is possible to find really good deals on one-way fares, especially with charter flights. Just remember that if you buy a one-way ticket to leave the U.S., you will have to buy a one-way ticket for your return. Start looking for a return ticket well in advance (4-5 months)!

You will also find numerous companies that sell discounted airline tickets. These may be Consolidator or Courier companies. Consolidators (also known as “Bucket Shops” in Europe) are companies that buy unsold seats from airlines for international flights and then sell them at a cheaper rate. There are no baggage restrictions, and tickets don’t need to be purchased in advance (in fact, they are cheaper closer to the departure time). www.airlineconsolidator.com

Couriers are good if you don’t have too much baggage. Courier companies “hire” you: they use your checked luggage space for freight, so you can only bring on carry-ons. You must be over 21, have a passport and appropriate visas. Most flights are round-trip with fixed-length stays. To get information about Couriers, call 1-800-822-0888, or see www.aircourier.org

Another option is stand-by flights: you buy a promise that you will get to a destination near where you’re going within a period of time (5 days). You call in before your date range to hear all your flight options for the next week and your probability of boarding. You decide which flights you would like to try and present a voucher granting you the right to board a flight on a space-available basis. You can try Whole Earth Travel’s Airhitch by phone at 1-877-247-4482 or online at www.air-hitch.org.

To make your travel arrangements, you can contact a travel agent or do your own research on the internet. STA Travel is one travel agency that offers discount airfares for holders of the International Student Identity Card (ISIC). Contact them at www.statravel.com.

Other travel resources:

- Let's Go Travel
<http://letsgo.com>
- Discount Travel Sites
www.cheaptickets.com
www.travelocity.com
www.priceline.com
www.hotwire.com
www.orbitz.com
www.kayak.com
<http://budgettravel.com>
www.aesu.com (international airfare)
<http://sidestep.com>
- Discount Travel Info for Europe
www.discount-airfare.com

If you prefer not to use a travel agency, you may begin by calling different airline companies yourself. The phone numbers of airline companies may be found in the yellow pages under "Airline Companies." Ask about flight schedules, policies on open-ended return tickets, prices, and be sure to mention that you are a student; some airlines offer discounts.

Another good place to look for reduced fares is in the travel section in the Sunday New York Times or the LA Times. Most budget travel guides have good advice on how to find discount flights.

Travel while you're abroad

As a student abroad, you are most likely planning to travel within your host country, and possibly to neighboring countries as well. It is a fabulous opportunity for you to see a new part of the world. Take advantage of your weekends, your

program. The costs and logistics of traveling abroad will depend largely on the country in which you are studying. Public transportation abroad will most likely be by bus or train. Former study abroad participants are excellent sources of information about travel. Consulting a guidebook is also highly recommended.

If you are studying in Europe, one popular and economical method of transportation is the train. Eurail passes are available to American tourists and may be tailored to fit your travel plans. Passes are available for every country in Western Europe, as well as most Eastern European countries. For detailed information on the different passes available and prices, consult a travel agent or the Eurail Pass store on the web at <http://www.railpass.com>. Eurail passes may only be purchased in the United States. If you decide you want to buy a pass while you are abroad, you should ask a friend or family member to purchase it in the US and mail it to you. Paying full price for train travel in Europe will become very expensive.

Discount airlines are rapidly becoming the most inexpensive way to travel in Europe. Often they fly into smaller airports, but the savings can be significant.

After living in a European country for more than 6 months, you are eligible to purchase an Interrail Pass, or a Euro-Domino pass. Detailed information on these two options may be obtained at major train stations in Europe. They are similar to Eurail passes; however, they may be more or less expensive depending on the current exchange rate.

Besides Eurail passes, most European countries offer special deals for train travel within their borders. Rail passes can also be purchased for non-European countries. For more information, visit www.statravel.com.

IMPORTANT

Before you leave the United States you need to check on visa requirements for the country in which you will be living. If

you will be traveling to neighboring countries, you should check on visa requirements for those countries as well.

If, before leaving the US, you find out that a visa is not required for a country you would like to visit, you should still contact the US Embassy or Consulate office of your host country to double-check directly before your departure. Visa requirements are subject to change at any time. For a list of foreign embassies in the U.S. go to www.embassy.org

Popular Travel Guidebooks

A good guidebook is essential for your travels. If you want to have a guidebook in English, you should consider purchasing one before you leave the US. The Pitt bookstore, located at Forbes Quad (between the towers), has a very extensive travel section, and they sell guidebooks for any country, city, or region you can imagine. Here are a few suggestions from past students:

Let's Go

“Let's Go” is written and published by students at Harvard University. The information in “Let's Go” is directed toward budget and student travelers. They publish books on 21 countries, cities, and regions. “Let's Go” guidebooks generally contain very good practical information, such as locating a hostel or hotel. They provide general overviews of cities and list major tourist attractions. You can obtain a copy from www.letsgo.com

Berkeley Guides

In format and content, the “Berkeley Guide” is very similar to “Let's Go.” It is written by Berkeley students for the budget, student traveler. If you like nature and outdoor activities, the “Berkeley Guide” is probably a good choice for you. Their guides contain a lot of hiking information and help their readers avoid tourist traps.

Lonely Planet

“Lonely Planet” guides are popular with student travelers.

They provide very detailed, complete information on places to visit, history, and culture. Publishing over 100 guidebooks on over 100 countries and regions, they cover the globe the most extensively. For more information, visit www.lonelyplanet.com.

Blue Guides

“Blue Guides” are a series of guidebooks written by British writers. These guides are written differently than American handbooks in that they provide tips for living as a resident and traveler as opposed to a tourist. These are for those looking to delve deep into the culture and its idiosyncrasies.

Other Travel Resources

- <http://www.indiana.edu/~overseas/basics/life/diversity.shtml>

Helpful information for students with disabilities, minorities, GLBT students and women. Resources for religion abroad.

- www.hiayh.org

(Hostelling International) Information on hostels by location.

- www.hostels.com

Resource for hostels, guidebooks, and travel agencies.

- www.miusa.org/publications/

10 Tips for Travelers with Disabilities is included in “Free Tips for Travelers.”

- www.traveldocs.com

Travel Document Systems: get visa, travel, and general information on almost every country.

- www.travel-library.com

The Recreation Travel Library has lots of links to practical information on a wide variety of destinations and topics.

- www.umabroad.umn.edu/products/index.html

Travel products for purchase such as Eurail passes, money

belts and other accessories.

-http://internationalcenter.umich.edu/swt/study/women_abroad.html

Information for Women Travelers

- www.journeywoman.com

For women living and traveling abroad, includes information on clothing and safety.

- www.ilga-europe.org/

International Lesbian and Gay Association

- www.vegetariansabroad.com/index.html

Information for Vegetarian students

While you are traveling, you should always wear a money belt or pouch to keep your money, passport, traveler's checks, and other valuables safe from theft. This is especially important on long trips where you may fall asleep, and it would be easy for someone to go through your purse or backpack. You should also buy a padlock for your backpack. This is useful while traveling and when you leave your backpack unattended at a youth hostel.

Hostels

Hostels are low-cost overnight accommodations where travelers can sleep and eat. Accommodations are dormitory style with separate bedrooms and bathrooms for males and females. Many hostels offer private and family accommodations as well. A self-service kitchen where meals can be prepared and common rooms for socializing create an atmosphere that encourages travelers to share experiences. Some hostels have mail pick-up service, laundry facilities, baggage and bicycle storage. Generally overnight fees range from \$8-\$25 per night depending on the location and season. Information on hostels can be found in Hostelling International Budget Accommodation Guides. Check at a student travel agency.

Packing tips and suggestions

Packing all of your personal belongings that are essential to your survival for a semester or year into the weight and luggage constraints enforced by the airline companies will be the first big challenge of your study abroad experience.

Luggage

Call your airline company and find out the exact luggage restrictions. You will most likely want to pack as much as you can within these limits; however, there are other factors you may want to consider. Will you be able to manage all of your bags yourself once you arrive at your final destination? A good pair of wheels can help with this. You will also accumulate stuff while you are abroad, and you need to think about being able to bring these things home with you within the same luggage restrictions. If you cannot fit everything you need within the luggage restrictions, pull out the lightweight and bulky items such as coats, sweaters, linens, etc. and ship them.

A large backpack is a good investment because it can function well as a carry-on bag. Backpacks are lightweight, comfortable, and leave your hands free. A backpack will also prove to be very useful for traveling on weekends and during vacations once you are abroad. There are also convertible backpacks that double as suitcases with wheels.

Do not bring your belongings in a trunk or footlocker because they are very heavy. Make sure that you have identification on the outside and inside of your luggage in the event that the outside tag becomes detached. Some locks are TSA approved. See this website for details
<http://www.thetravelinsider.info/roadwarriorcontent/searchalert.htm>

When you are packing to return to the US, you will probably find that the gifts and souvenirs will take up much more space than you imagined. So, don't wait until the last minute to pack. You may need time to mail boxes home. Mailing to

the U.S. is usually much more expensive than mailing from the U.S.

Clothing

Depending on where you are studying abroad, doing laundry may be less convenient than in the U.S. Plan to take comfortable clothes that require as little care as possible; you may end up washing a lot by hand. You should consider taking a limited amount of clothing, and just plan on wearing it out during your stay. Take comfortable shoes, appropriate clothing for the climate of the country you are visiting, and one dressy outfit for special occasions. Women should also check out www.journeywoman.com, a website for female travelers.

Electricity Converters

The voltage of electricity varies from country to country (i.e., in the U.S. and Mexico it is 110 volts, whereas in England it is 240 volts). This means that any electrical appliances that you use in the U.S. will not work in a foreign country. This includes hairdryers, stereos, alarm clocks, electric razors, etc. Department stores, travel agencies, office supply stores, and Radio Shack sell electricity converter kits (about \$25) that will allow you to use your 110-volt appliance in another country. However, if you are going abroad for a year, it is probably better for you to purchase anything electrical you need once you are in your host country. The converters work well, but they are not designed for extended use, and they tend to break (i.e., blow out) if they are used continuously. Besides the converter breaking, the appliance that is plugged into it can also be destroyed. Battery-powered devices are better options than electrical ones; batteries are the same everywhere in the world. Most computers have built in converters, so you would only need a plug adapter. Go to www.kropla.com for more information about electricity conversion in your host country.

Miscellaneous

A hint from a student who traveled in Ghana and India: “One thing I did going to Ghana after being in India was to take The Absorber instead of a towel. Sounds simple, but in

places and times when a towel never dries, its great. You get them in the car care section of Kmart or Target, or any Auto Supply Store.”

Packing List

The rule of thumb in packing is to lay out what you want to pack and cut it in half. Most people bring more than they need. Check out thetravelzine.com's packing list at: www.thetravelzine.com/friend.htm for a recommended packing list.. Below is a list of items that previous study abroad students recommend you pack:

Books

- A foreign language dictionary
- Grammar, and other foreign language books or phrase books
- English language guidebooks
- An address book
- Art supplies
- A travel journal or a good long book

Clothes

- Waterproof walking shoes, flip-flops
- Sweater, sweatshirt, light jacket
- Warm clothes (hat, gloves, scarf, long underwear, etc.)
- Bath towels, wash cloths
- Bathing suit, sunscreen, hat, sunglasses

Medicine & Toiletries

- Prescription medicine (may be expensive or difficult to obtain, bring an extra supply)
- Copies of prescriptions, including eye-glasses
- Eyeglasses, contact lenses
- Contraceptives
- Toothbrush, toothpaste
- Soap, shampoo, comb, brush
- Make-up
- Deodorant
- Small First-Aid kit (including aspirin and antacids)
- Bug Repellent

Sun Block
Tissues
Tampons, pads
Razor blades
Any American toiletries that you can't live without

Essentials & Documents

Passport, visa
Tickets
Eurail pass
International Student ID Card (ISIC)
Hostel membership card
Money belt, neck wallet
Money, traveler's checks, credit cards
Phone cards
Backpack
Camera, film
A small gift for your host family, if applicable
Electricity converter kit
Pens, pencils, calculator

Miscellaneous

A battery operated tape recorder for use in class/ ipod
Rechargeable batteries
Any food that you can't live without
Pictures of family and friends
Clothes hangers
Swiss Army Knife (but not as a carry-on item!!)
Flashlight
Sewing kit
Bed sheets for hostel
Luggage lock, tags
Alarm clock

Chapter 4: Communication

By Telephone

International phone calls can be very expensive if you dial directly to the U.S. from another country. Phone companies offer special services and rates to make international phone calls simple and more affordable. Call around to find the best phone card deals. Expect to pay a modest monthly fee, and then per minute rates that are usually under \$1 a minute. Another option to look into is SKYPE (www.skype.com). SKYPE offers a variety of free services to connect you to your friends and family at home. Avoid using hotel room phones, which can add surcharges that make calls more expensive. Of course, much of the world is connected to cellular service so you may want to look into expanding your domestic cellular plan to worldwide service or renting a cell phone in your host country. Here are a few services you may try for phone cards, cell phones, and/or other services to make calling home more affordable:

AT&T Direct:

www.att.com/traveler
1-800-222-0300

Sprint International Service:

www.sprintbiz.com:80/international/products.html
1-800-859-4626

International Cellular Phone Services and Rentals:

www.worldcell.com
www.myinternationalcellphone.com
www.dealtime.com
www.kropla.com—also has a list of country codes

Online Phone Cards:

www.cloncom.com

****Don't forget you will be in a different time zone than your friends and family back home! For more information go to: www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/****

By E-mail

If you will be studying abroad at a university, you will most likely have access to e-mail. If you do not receive an e-mail account at your university abroad, you can always telnet back to a server at Carnegie Mellon.

Remember you can also access your Andrew account online at www.cmu.edu/myandrew, using the "Andrew Webmail" link. The "Mail Filtering and Vacation" link will allow you to activate an auto-response message on your account. Or, you may simply forward your Andrew mail to another account using the "CMU Name and Forwarding" link. Please contact Computing Services if you have any further questions at 268-HELP.

Internet Cafés

Internet cafés are prevalent in many parts of the world. For a few dollars you can access the internet via the computers in the café. For a good list of internet cafés world wide visit: <http://www.cybercafes.com/>.

****Make sure to protect yourself from identity theft which can easily occur when using a public computer. Consider purchasing a USB flash drive and downloading a security program such as Spybot onto it. USB drives are small and can be carried with you. Simply connect the drive to the computer you will use and allow the program to detect and eliminate any threats before accessing online bank statements or other sensitive information.****

WIFI

WIFI is another way to access the internet abroad. Many restaurants and cafés have wireless internet access within their shops. If you bring your WIFI configured laptop with you abroad you can access the internet this way, assuming

your configuration is compatible and you buy a drink.

****If you bring your computer abroad make sure to insure your computer for theft and damage and bring an adapter plug.****

By Fax

If you ever need to send a fax abroad, most post offices have public fax machines. Faxing a letter is quick, reliable, and a lot less expensive than Federal Express. The fax numbers for many offices and departments at Carnegie Mellon are listed in Chapter 7.

Chapter 5: Cross-Cultural Adjustment

Based on L. Robert Kohl's "Survival Kit for Overseas Living"

Introduction

You have probably heard the term "Culture Shock." It sounds so dramatic. Although it can be dramatic, it is the term often used to describe the process of adjusting to another culture. How much you feel "Culture Shock" will depend on your personality and how immersed you are in the culture in which you are living.

Individual differences will also affect your cross-cultural adjustment and experience with Culture Shock. Being high-strung in a laid-back culture, a Muslim in a predominately Catholic country, a vegan in a country that serves meat at every meal, a student of color, a woman, a student with a disability, a member of the LGBT community, etc. will affect your cross-cultural adjustment. That is not to say that if you are a member of one or more of these groups you will not adjust to your host culture, it is simply to say that these are factors to consider when thinking about your own cross-cultural adjustment.

For more information on health and safety or travel as it may concern you and your lifestyle, please see the relevant chapters in this handbook.

Understanding Culture Shock

Culture shock is a slow, cumulative feeling of frustration. Many factors contribute to the mounting feeling of culture shock. It can cause intense discomfort, often accompanied by hyperirritability, bitterness, resentment, homesickness, and depression. In some cases distinct physical symptoms of psychosomatic illness occur.

Culture shock comes from:

- being cut off from the cultural cues and known patterns with which you are familiar — especially the subtle, indirect ways you normally have of expressing feelings.
- living and/or working over an extended period of time in a situation that is ambiguous.
- having your own values (which you had heretofore considered as absolutes) brought into question — which yanks your moral rug out from under you.
- being continually put into a position in which you are expected to function with maximum skill and speed but where the rules have not been adequately explained.

Not everyone will experience a severe case of culture shock, nor will all the symptoms be observed in any single individual. Many people sail through culture shock with relative ease, only now and again experiencing the more serious reactions. But many others do not. One might say that culture shock is the occupational hazard of overseas living that one has to be willing to go through in order to have the pleasures of experiencing other countries and cultures.

The following chart lists the multiple reactions which people normally have to culture shock.

Overall Symptoms	Withdrawal Symptoms	Aggressive Symptoms
Anxiety	Physical and/or psychological withdrawal	Compulsive eating & drinking
Homesickness		Exaggerated cleanliness
Helplessness	Spending excessive amounts of time reading	Irritability
Boredom	Need for excessive amounts of sleep	Family tensions
Depression		Relationship stress
Fatigue	Only seeing other Americans or Westerners	Excessive chauvinism
Confusion		Stereotyping
Self-doubt	Avoiding contact with host nationals	Hostility toward host nationals
Feelings of inadequacy	Short attention span	Verbal aggressiveness
Unexplained fits of weeping	Diminished productivity	
Paranoia	Loss of ability to work or study effectively	Physical aggressiveness
Physical ailments & psychosomatic illnesses	Quitting & returning to your home country early	Deciding to stay but permanently hating the country and its people

In order to understand culture shock better and therefore how to counteract it, you should recognize that there are distinct stages of personal adjustment while living abroad.

These stages are:

- Initial euphoria
- Irritability and hostility
- Gradual adjustment
- Adaptation or biculturalism

Progressive Stages of Culture Shock

1. Initial Euphoria

Most people begin their study abroad experience with great expectations and a positive mindset. If anything, they come with expectations that are too high and attitudes that are too positive toward the host country. At this point, anything new is intriguing and exciting. But, for the most part, it is the similarities that stand out. The newcomer is really impressed with how people everywhere are really very much alike. This period of euphoria may last from a week to a month, but the letdown is inevitable. You've reached the end of the first stage.

2. Irritability and Hostility

Gradually, your focus turns from the similarities to the differences, and these differences, which suddenly seem to be everywhere, are troubling. You overreact and turn little, seemingly insignificant difficulties into major catastrophes. This is the stage generally identified as culture shock, and you may experience any of the symptoms listed in the chart.

3. Gradual Adjustment

The crisis is over, and you are on your way to recovery. This step may come so gradually that, at first, you will be unaware that it is even happening. Once you begin to orient yourself and are able to interpret some of the subtle cultural clues and cues that passed by unnoticed earlier, the culture seems more familiar. You become more comfortable in it and feel less isolated from it. Gradually, too, your sense of

humor returns and you realize the situation is not hopeless after all.

4. Adaptation and Bi-culturalism

Full recovery will result in an ability to function in two cultures with confidence. You will even find a great many customs, ways of doing and saying things, and personal attitudes which you enjoy — indeed, to which you have in some degree acculturated — and which you will definitely miss when you pack up and return home. In fact, you can expect to experience “reverse culture shock” upon your return to the United States. In some cases, particularly where a person has adjusted exceptionally well to the host country, reverse culture shock may cause greater distress than the original culture shock.

The interesting thing about culture shock is that there are routinely not 1 but 2 low points and, even more interestingly, they will accommodate themselves to the amount of time you intend to spend in the host country! That is, they will spread themselves out if you’re going to stay for a longer period or contract if your initial plans are for a shorter time.

How long will culture shock last? As we have suggested, that varies with the length of your stay. But it also depends to some extent on you and your resiliency, and on the degree to which you are immersed in the culture. You can expect a letup after the first dip, but be prepared for the second downturn, which will probably be somewhat more severe. Stop a moment and consider what you can do on your own to combat the onset and alleviate the effects of culture shock.

Responding to Culture Shock

1. Realize that, in fact, practically everybody who goes overseas for a substantial period of time experiences culture shock in some form and to some degree. It’s natural and not a sign that you’re deficient or strange — and you’ll live through it as thousands of others have.

2. Be ready for the lesson culture shock teaches. Culture is a survival mechanism which tells its members not only that their ways of doing things are right but also that they are superior. Culture shock stems from an in-depth encounter with another culture in which you learn to the contrary that there are different ways of doing things that are neither wrong nor inferior. It teaches a lesson that cannot be learned as effectively by any other means: that one's own culture does not possess the single right way, best way or even a uniformly better way of providing for human need and enjoyments. Believing it does is a kind of imprisonment — from which the experience of culture shock, as painful as it may be, can liberate you.

3. Select one or two areas of interest and investigate them more thoroughly than the other topics. If you are a fan of American football, for example, don't just sit around and grouse about missing the weekly games. Cultivate an interest in their football – soccer — or other national sports.

4. Begin, if you haven't done so already, to consciously look for logical reasons behind everything in the host culture that seems strange, difficult, confusing, or threatening. Take every aspect of your experience and look at it from their perspective. Search for patterns and interrelationships. You may be surprised to find that the pieces fit together once you discover where they go. Relax your grip on your own culture a little in the process. There's no way you can lose it any more than you could forget your knowledge of English by learning another language.

5. Make a list of all the positive things that you can identify about your present situation. (Ignore the negative — which you've probably been concentrating on too much anyway.) Then tack the list up somewhere where you'll see it during the course of your day. You may find it helpful to find an American who has been there longer, experienced culture shock, and has a positive attitude towards the host country. Discuss your feelings and try to get a new sense of perspective.

6. Avoid those Americans or other foreigners who are in a permanent state of culture shock and who spend their days seeking company to commiserate with. They will only perpetuate any feelings of culture shock you may already have.

7. Don't succumb to the temptation to disparage the host culture yourself. Resist making jokes and denigrating comments such as "well, what else would you expect from these people?" They only reinforce your beleaguered sense of self or shaky feelings of superiority and slow down the process of adaptation and of recapturing the true feelings of worth you are searching for. Avoid other people who make such jokes.

8. On the other hand, work at maintaining a healthy sense of humor. Be ready to laugh at yourself. It's one of the best antidotes to culture shock there is. Making silly mistakes because of your unfamiliarity with the culture may cause you to feel foolish or childish, but the embarrassment will pass. Share your gaffes with family and friends and get them out of your system with a good laugh.

9. Make friends with host nationals and try to develop a deeper, more intimate relationship with one or two of them. Discuss with them the problems you've been having, taking care to present them in a way that doesn't sound like you're criticizing their culture. It is a truism that Americans who spend their time associating only with other Americans or others like them never do adjust to the host country.

10. When you look for advice, focus on how you are feeling — what is going on inside you — rather than on what you consider the causes of your problems, especially when you're inclined to think they lie in what is wrong in the host culture.

11. As you adjust to and function more comfortably within the value system of your host country, don't worry that you may lose your own values. This is a thought that comes quite naturally at some point or other to most people who live abroad. Your values are much deeper and more

permanent than that. To act according to the customs of your host country, when and where it is appropriate, does not make you less of an American. It only makes you more comfortable and enables you to feel more at home.

12. During the deepest plunges into culture shock, take a trip — get away to a scenic spot or a nearby country. When you return, be open to having good “coming back home” feelings.

13. Prepare some kind of presentation about the U.S. for your hosts, using slides, film or some other kinds of visuals. You will have to prepare this before you leave home. Become an “unofficial ambassador” whose mission it is to correct some of the many misconceptions which replays of *The OC*, *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, and *Friends* have created in people’s minds overseas.

There you have it, a program to get you safely through culture shock and to make sure that the rewards which come with the overseas experience will be yours to relive for the rest of your life.

Returning Home

Coming home is part of a complete cycle that includes leaving, settling overseas, and returning. There is more for you to consider beyond the bare logistics of the move. You know the language, the ways to get things done, and most likely, you will be returning to family, friends, and a familiar setting. What you may not be aware of is the degree to which you have been changed by the experience and now carry with you a whole new load of cultural baggage. Further, during your absence changes have taken place in the United States — rapid and sometimes radical changes — and reading about them in *Time* or *Newsweek* isn’t the same as experiencing them. You may think it will be easy to pick up where you left off; that’s where the reentry shock comes in.

What is Reentry Shock?

Some call it reverse culture shock. The culture shock adjustment curve is somewhat similar for reentry, though the time frames will probably be different. You'll recall we said that the stages of the adjustment process are:

1. Initial euphoria
2. Irritability and hostility
3. Gradual adjustment
4. Adaptation

In Stage 1, you may be very pleased, even euphoric, to be back in your own country, and others may be equally delighted to have you back. But after people express their pleasure at seeing you again and listen politely to your stories for a few minutes, you may suddenly and painfully realize that they are not particularly interested in what happened to you abroad and would much rather prefer to talk about their own affairs. You may also find that the support system you encountered when you first arrived overseas — people who were willing to help you settle into your own community — is not accessible back home. People may help if you ask, but they are busy and you feel embarrassed about being so dependent — especially in your own country!

You may, therefore, find yourself entering Stage 2 more rapidly than you did overseas. Suddenly you are irritated with others and impatient with your own inability to figure out why the way you are doing things doesn't work. While some people move readily into the adjustment and adaptation stages, others continue to feel alienated, even though they put on the outward appearance of doing well. Underneath, resentment, loneliness, disorientation, and even a sense of helplessness may pervade as they experience the kinds of culture shock symptoms identified before. Depression and relationship stress may also be associated with reentry shock. The gap between you and your family and friends, or your social group at college, may be a source of significant irritation. Finding common ground with your old social circle

after studying abroad will almost certainly be harder than expected. You also will have learned new things: a foreign language, perhaps, or some local folk dances, or how to bargain in a market. But there's no outlet for them at home. Ways to use your skills can be found, but it takes effort and patience, and the frustrations tend to mount. You may feel let down because daily life in the United States does not readily provide the opportunity to meet as many kinds of people as you've known overseas. And the people you do meet seem very provincial and uninterested in things international.

What can you do to counteract reentry shock? The battle is mostly won when you understand that returning home involves an adjustment process similar to the one you experienced when first going abroad. Indeed, the practical steps we are going to recommend are similar to those suggested for overseas adaptation:

1. Start your exploration of home through sympathetic friends or family members. Share with them some of the feelings you have had while living overseas. Sharing feelings instead of experiences sounds less like bragging.
2. Find informants about the United States just as you did about your overseas country. Be the learner. Ask questions about current issues: the price of common products and services, popular entertainment, politics and US foreign policy, the effect of recent changes on the society. Don't let your new attitudes, values, and perceptions block that learning process.
3. Explore places where you might find others with international experience, or seek foreign nationals with whom you can speak the language you've learned and continue to share common experiences you've enjoyed. Contact the OIE to see if there are students at CMU from the country you visited. You may want to connect with these students in an informal way to continue your connections to that culture, maintain your language skills, and generally extend your abroad experience back in the U.S.

Academic Issues

The education system you are entering into abroad is most likely to be very different from Carnegie Mellon. Unless you are attending an American institution or program, you will probably experience different approaches to teaching, studying, exams and projects in your host institution. This also depends on your field of study: for example, many architects from Carnegie Mellon have mentioned that the Swiss architects have a more theoretical approach to their work. They also don't have as many projects to do or deadlines to meet. However, other arts and humanities students have found fewer differences between their host institutions and the U.S.

In general, European education systems appear more relaxed than what you are used to at Carnegie Mellon. On the other hand, past study abroad students have also said that the professors in other countries expect you to do more work on your own and to take more responsibility for what you want to learn. Study with a partner. Ask a native friend to help you with your written language skills.

Talking to the professor is also very helpful. On your first day of class, introduce yourself to your professor. Let him/her know that you are on an exchange, that you may have some difficulties with the language, or that you are used to a different teaching style. Another advantage of making these kinds of connections is that you can obtain recommendations for job or graduate school applications, or help if you decide to return to your host country after you graduate. Finally, make yourself familiar with the add/drop/withdraw procedures if you need to add, drop or withdraw from any classes. Your host institution may be stricter or more lenient when it comes to switching classes. Adding or dropping classes also has implications for your Study Abroad Transfer Credit, so make sure you communicate with your academic advisor at Carnegie Mellon also. You may prefer to register, and approve transfer credit, for more classes than you really will need to take while abroad. This way, you can "test-out"

each class in your first week before you decide which one is for you. Remember that some classes may end up being more difficult than you expect!

Personal Experiences

The following personal experiences are from Carnegie Mellon students who have studied abroad. They will provide you with some insight as to what you may expect once you are abroad. It also may be helpful to reread them after you have been abroad for a while.

Nadya Yaghoubi
Business, 2006
United Kingdom/Spring 2005

I've been studying abroad in London for three weeks now, and I find my experience to be absolutely fantastic. So far, I've learned that what you put into studying abroad is what you get out of it. Researching programs, places, and schools is incredibly important. It is important to know exactly what your program offers and what the courses you will be taking are like. For example, I'm only allowed to take 3 courses per semester, which meet only once a week for an extended number of hours. Many people are not used to this because courses at Carnegie Mellon usually meet 2-3 times a week for shorter periods of time.

Overall, I find the most important aspect of studying abroad to be engaging in the culture of the place you choose to do your studies in. Understanding and taking part of a different culture is challenging at first but fulfilling in the long run. I guess my word of advice would be to prepare yourself as much as possible and try to take in as much as you can because experiences outside Carnegie Mellon are quite different and interesting.

Susan Gregg,
Business, 2006
Germany/Summer 2004

Studying abroad for 8 weeks last summer taught me many things about myself and about life in general. Looking at another culture as an outsider and learning another language made me realize many things about my culture that I would not have otherwise noticed. Also, the experience of flying to another country and knowing that when I got off that plane I wouldn't know anyone on the continent was scary and thrilling at the same time. The memories and experiences I took away from that summer will stay with me and affect me for the rest of my life. To anyone considering studying abroad, I say - go into it with an open mind and just do it! You won't regret it.

Demond Roberts
Drama, 2003
Australia/Spring 2002

At first, I was a little apprehensive about studying abroad. I mean, I was going to be in another country on the other side of the world!!! I immersed myself in the beautiful landscape and the customs of the people. I visited museums, parks and other cultural invents trying to absorb as much as I could. And within a very short time I had made a home away from home.

Studying abroad gave me the confidence that the skills I'd learned at CMU would allow me to function and thrive on a global level. I was also able to make contacts with individuals that will serve me in the future. Studying abroad was one of the most fulfilling, challenging, scary things I have ever done, and I loved every second of it.

Eric Hilton
Physics, 2003
United Kingdom/Spring 2002

I studied in Manchester, England during the Spring of 2002 and found it to be a wonderful experience. I was able to make close friends with several English students as well as other Americans and study abroad students from around the world. It was very interesting to see how English culture differs from ours, in particular how the educational system differs. As a study abroad student, I had more free time than I do here at home and I used this extra time to study topics I was interested in, as well as explore Great Britain and Western Europe.

Throughout the entire trip, I grew as a person because I had to deal with many new experiences on my own. It was very enlightening to live outside the United States for several months and I learned a lot about my native country this way. Overall, it was a wonderful experience.

Chapter 6: Health and Safety

The health and safety risks in most foreign countries are often no greater than those in Pittsburgh. However, there are some additional concerns you need to be aware of as you travel. Certain cues or signs that you are used to and take for granted may not exist where you're studying abroad.

Before You Go

As a precaution, you should have a routine medical and dental checkup. In addition, medical authorities recommend that you have an up-to-date tetanus shot.

I. Immunizations

You may not be allowed to enter a country if you don't have the proper immunization. Contact your doctor, clinic, or local or state health department regarding immunizations. Check with the embassy of the country you will be studying in (as well as countries you plan to visit) about immunization requirements. Furthermore, you may not be allowed back into the US without quarantine if the US Health Service requires a shot that you did not obtain.

If you have questions about immunization and health issues, contact the Centers for Disease Control at (www.cdc.gov). Another good website is the U.S. Government Travel Advisory website (www.travel.state.gov). No immunizations are currently required for travelers to Western Europe. For travel in Southeastern and Eastern Europe, Central and South America, Africa, Asia and Australia, country-specific immunizations may be required.

II. Medical services overseas

The style of medical care abroad is largely dependent on the country you are living in. For some study abroad programs, medical services may be provided. If they are not, you may be given a list of who you can contact in case of illness or an

emergency. Non-routine medical costs (including hospitalization), dental care and eye exams are generally the full responsibility of the student. **Make sure that your medical insurance provides you with international coverage!**

III. Medic Alert

If you have specific allergies which are debilitating or life threatening, or if you have a medical condition that is not immediately apparent or easily identifiable (such as diabetes or epilepsy), you should wear a medic alert bracelet. Also, notify the contact person of your study abroad program so that he/she is aware of what to do in the event of an emergency.

If you have a condition that may require care, check what services are available before you go.

IV. Students with Disabilities Abroad

If you have a disability it is important to remember that many other countries are not as accessible as we may think they should be. It is recommended that you research the laws of your host country regarding persons with disabilities and the availability of services and accommodations you can expect to find in your host country. Please also be aware that attitudes toward disabilities vary by location. It is imperative that you notify your study abroad program and share with them what accommodations should be made for you.

If you have a learning disability, you should notify your study abroad program and explain what accommodations you need. American providers are generally able to easily accommodate students with learning disabilities. Direct enrolling in a foreign institution may or may not present accommodation challenges to students with learning disabilities, depending on the pervading attitude toward such conditions in that location. Be prepared to explain in detail what your needs are. Failure to disclose this information, though within your right to do so, is not recommended as the added stress of foreign study coupled with not having the accommodations you need, and are used to, could cause you to

struggle academically.

Make sure that the services you need will be provided to you free of charge. Do not assume that such services will be free as they are here. If you find that services are not provided free of charge, please contact the Office of International Education, the Disability Services Office at Carnegie Mellon, and/or Mobility International. They can help you work with the program or school to find a solution. The website for Mobility International is www.misua.org.

V. Physician's Letter & Prescriptions

If you take a narcotic or more than two medications, ask your physician for a letter that describes your medical condition and lists the generic name and dosage of each prescription. If you require routine injections, carry a physician's letter detailing your condition and the need to carry needles and syringes for medical purposes. Take sufficient amounts of all necessary prescription drugs with you, including birth control pills. You cannot use U.S. prescriptions abroad.

VI. Your Medical Record

Bringing pertinent information from your medical record with you when you study abroad is recommended. Carry this information with you at all times so it is secure and accessible wherever you are. Useful information to list includes:

- Medications you are currently taking
- Any chronic ailments you have
- Allergies and hypersensitivities
- Your immunization history
- Your blood type
- Your eyeglasses/contact prescription
- Name of primary care provider at home
- Name & policy number of your health insurance company
- Your weight in kilograms

VII. Corrective Lenses

If you wear glasses or contact lenses you should take an extra pair with you; a lost or broken pair of glasses can be difficult to replace in a short amount of time. If you have contact lenses you may want to also take a supply of your favorite cleaning solution.

VIII. Medical Directories

The International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers (IAMAT) publishes a directory of overseas, English-speaking doctors who are available 24 hours a day and have a set fee schedule. To obtain a directory, write to:

IAMAT
1623 Military Rd #279
Niagara Falls, NY 14304-1745

World Medical Association
536 North State Street
Chicago, IL 60610

International Health Care Service
New York Hospital
Cornell Medical Center
1300 York Avenue
New York, NY 10021

IX. First Aid Kit

Make sure to pack a small first aid kit with you, and include the following:

- Insect repellent (30% DEET)
- Thermometer
- Bandages
- Pepto Bismol
- Antacids
- Aspirin
- Cough & cold remedies
- Several pairs of latex gloves
- Mild laxative
- Sunburn medication
- Antibacterial cream

Once You're Abroad

Take good care of yourself! There is so much to do and see overseas that many students who go abroad have a tendency to try to cram everything in a very limited amount of time. Make time for adequate rest, especially when you are traveling. Differences in climate, food, water, and bacteria common to a given area can affect your health. These differences may cause health problems such as colds, sore throats, the flu, and the almost inevitable gastrointestinal problems. Your body simply needs time to acclimate itself.

In some places, you should not drink tap water or use ice cubes without checking on local conditions first; many people only drink bottled water as a precaution. You may wish bring some water disinfectant from home.

After your body is acclimated to your host country, you may find that the same problem happens when you go to other places. Before traveling to another country, you should find out about health precautions. For example, in some places, it's risky to eat food from sidewalk stands. Talk to your host institution and peers for country specific information.

I. Study Abroad & Mental Health

When you are overseas, you may feel more stressed rather than more relaxed. This is due to the added pressures of learning a new language, meeting new people, and the inevitable time management demands of studying and traveling. When you first arrive you may also experience jetlag, a condition where your body hasn't adjusted to your new time zone and sleeping and eating times.

If you have had psychological difficulties in the past or if you are hoping that time spent overseas will help you "solve" a problem facing you at home, you should talk with someone at Counseling and Psychological Services before deciding to study abroad. Consultations are completely confidential. Call 412-268-2922 to make an appointment.

While abroad, keep an open mind. Use your time alone to get to know yourself. Make sure you eat nutritious balanced meals, get adequate sleep, and regular exercise. Keep yourself active so you won't spend too much time thinking about home. The staff of your program should be available if you need some guidance, and many universities abroad also have counselors available for students.

II. Dietary Need and Eating Disorders

It is very easy when you are abroad to become susceptible to eating disorders; you are in a different place, and the food is different. Your stomach may not agree with the types of food there, or you may feel like you're eating too much. You may also experience depression or loneliness manifesting itself in the form of an eating disorder. If you think you may have a problem, talk to a counselor or nutritionist and learn about good nutrition.

Make sure to let your study abroad program know if you are a vegetarian, vegan, or have other dietary restrictions, food allergies, etc. They can work with you to find a living arrangement that supports your lifestyle needs. This is also important for students of religious backgrounds requiring a specific diet or dietary limitations, particularly if you are studying abroad in a country where your religion is not widely practiced. If you are living with a host family be prepared to explain in detail what you can and cannot eat. "Meat" may have different meanings to different people. Their definition may or may not include fish, eggs, etc. To find vegetarian restaurants abroad check out: <http://www.vegetariansabroad.com>

III. Alcohol, Drugs, & Substance Abuse

Especially when in a foreign place where you may not fully understand the culture or language, particular care should be taken when going out to bars, clubs, discos, etc. Be aware of the drug and alcohol laws of your host country. Punishment for public drunkenness or for possession of drugs can be much more severe than in the United States. You do not want to end up in a foreign jail!

If you struggle with alcohol or drug addictions now, studying abroad will not make the problem go away, in fact you may find yourself drinking more. Loneliness and other culture shock symptoms can cause drinking problems. If you think you have or are developing an addiction, please seek help immediately. Alcoholics Anonymous has meetings worldwide. You can find meetings near you at www.aa.org.

IV. Sexual Assault

Sexual assault can happen anywhere, and unfortunately study abroad is no exception. During your time abroad you will have many amazing experiences and try many new things, but you need to be aware of your surroundings at all times, especially when you are out at night.

- Never walk alone at night.
- Stay in well lit areas and avoid dark alleys.
- Limit alcohol consumption so you are better able to assess your surroundings.
- Be cautious about mixing different types of alcoholic beverages.
- Eat substantive food before consuming alcohol.
- Make arrangements to go home with a friend before you go out.
- Don't leave beverages unattended.
- Don't take any beverages from someone you don't know well.
- Do not accept open-container drinks at parties.
- Accept drinks at a bar only from the bartender.
- Be alert to the behavior of friends and ask them to watch out for you too.

If you have been sexually assaulted, get to a safe place and call a rape crisis center or the police. If you want to report the incident, you may not be allowed to shower, douche or change clothes until medical evidence is collected. Contact your program director or host institution. The Sexual Assault Advisory at CMU is also available to you while you are abroad. You can contact an advisor via phone, e-mail, or instant messenger. They are on hand to listen and provide you with support, resources and referrals to help you make

the best decision for you. All communication is completely confidential. A list of current Sexual Assault Advisors can be found at: www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/saa/. Phone counseling is also available through CAPS.

V. Contraception

Information on contraception overseas may be more difficult or more available to obtain, depending on the location. You should inquire at Health Services before you leave. If you plan to be sexually active, purchase condoms and a spermicide or water-based lubricant before you leave the U.S.

VI. Preventing AIDS & STDs

The Carnegie Mellon Student Health Services provides pamphlets about AIDS, HIV, and STDs that can answer some of your questions. In general, a lack of adequate precaution in situations where you might pick up a sexually transmitted disease can lead to serious complications. Use latex condoms during vaginal, anal or oral sex. Do not use intravenous drugs or share needles. Be aware that tattoos, acupuncture treatments, and injections for medical or dental procedures may put you at risk. Avoid the use of locally produced immune globulin and blood-clotting factors in countries where the blood supply is not routinely tested for communicable diseases. If a blood transfusion is necessary, contact the nearest American consulate for advice. If you are concerned that you may have a sexually transmitted disease, see a doctor immediately.

Safety Warning

The threats of terrorism and global epidemics are constantly in the news. The “what ifs” should not keep you from going abroad, but you should consider the risks and prepare appropriately. Keep apprised of the travel alerts issued by the CDC www.cdc.gov and the State Department www.state.gov and register with the State Department when you arrive in your host country. By registering with the State Department, you will be notified if an evacuation becomes necessary. In the

event of a crisis or other serious situation:

- Follow the advice of your study abroad program & host country.
- Look for directives from Carnegie Mellon.
- Keep your family apprised of the situation.

Legal Issues

You are responsible for obeying all of the laws of the country you are in, regardless of whether you are a traveler or a resident; penalties are often much tougher than in the US. Most programs cannot intervene if you are arrested or prosecuted for violation of local laws, including laws on drug use, currency exchange, and disturbances of the peace. If you do become involved in any legal problems, notify the director of your program immediately.

In some cities and countries, public political demonstrations are not uncommon. If you choose to participate in a demonstration, be aware that some of your hosts may not appreciate that you, a foreign visitor, are publicly opposing their political or social system. Your behavior abroad is your responsibility, not Carnegie Mellon's, and you should think about the consequences before acting.

Street Safety

While you are abroad, you will have to be particularly street savvy. Gender roles, attitudes toward homosexuality, attitudes toward people of color, traffic laws, and drinking laws may not be the same as in the United States. As a traveler, it is your responsibility to be observant and cautious.

It is recommended that you research your host country's attitude toward diversity and what you can expect to encounter. Indiana University's Study Abroad website is a good place to start: www.indiana.edu/~overseas/basics/life/diversity.shtml. The personal experiences of other similar study abroad students can also be helpful. Brown University has created a helpful link at: <http://www.brown.edu/Administration/OIP/>

pdf_docs/diversity_st_abroad01.pdf. Students are often surprised to find that many countries are very open to diversity. Many students of color report that they are treated first as an American.

In many places, pedestrians do not necessarily have the right of way. Traffic laws might not be obeyed. Use caution on busy city streets, and do not assume that any car, truck, bus, or scooter will stop for you.

Know where you are going when you leave. Just like in any big city, a foreigner holding a huge map could invite trouble. Take time to study a map before you go out, and get to know your city's layout and culture.

Observe local behaviors. Cues will be different than those to which you are accustomed. In particular, body language is not universal. Others may interpret your actions very differently than you intended. For example, Americans often present conflicting body language to what they say, such as smiling as you say no. Be aware of sending mixed signals, and remember that safety in numbers is a smart idea wherever you are.

Other Safety Guidelines

Here are some guidelines put out by the NAFSA: Association of International Educators Task Force for Safety & Responsibility for Study Abroad. They serve as a guide to your health and safety responsibilities as a study abroad participant:

1. Assume responsibility for all the elements necessary for personal preparation for the program and participate fully in orientations.
2. Read and carefully consider all materials issued by the sponsor that relate to safety, health, legal, environmental, political, cultural, and religious conditions in the host country(ies).

3. Conduct research on the country(ies) they plan to visit with particular emphasis on health and safety concerns, as well as the social, cultural, and political situations.
4. Consider physical and mental health, and other personal circumstances when applying for or accepting a place in a program, and make available to the sponsor accurate and complete physical and mental health information and any other personal data that is necessary in planning for a safe and healthy study abroad experience.
5. Obtain and maintain appropriate insurance coverage and abide by any conditions imposed by the carriers.
6. Inform parents/guardians/families and any others who may need to know about your participation in the study abroad program, provide them with emergency contact information, and keep them informed of their whereabouts and activities.
7. Understand and comply with the terms of participation, codes of conduct, and emergency procedures of the program.
8. Be aware of local conditions and customs that may present health or safety risks when making daily choices and decisions. Promptly express any health or safety concerns to the program staff or other appropriate individuals before and/or during the program.
9. Accept responsibility for your own decisions and actions.
10. Obey host-country laws.
11. Behave in a manner that is respectful of the rights and well being of others, and encourage others to behave in a similar manner.
12. Avoid illegal drugs and excessive or irresponsible consumption of alcohol.
13. Follow the program policies for keeping program staff informed of their whereabouts and well being.
14. Become familiar with the procedures for obtaining emergency health and legal system services in the host county.

NAFSA also provides recommendations for Parents and Guardians of study abroad participants. Parents should:

1. Be informed about and involved in the decision of the participant to enroll in a particular program.

2. Obtain and carefully evaluate participant program materials, as well as related health, safety and security information.
3. Discuss with the participant any of his/her travel plans and activities that may be independent of the study abroad program.
4. Engage the participant in a thorough discussion of safety and behavior issues, insurance needs, and emergency procedures related to living abroad.
5. Be responsive to requests from the program sponsor for information regarding the participant.
6. Keep in touch with the participant.
7. Be aware that the participant rather than the program may most appropriately provide some information.

Chapter 7: Important Contacts.

To send mail to any office or department at Carnegie Mellon:
Carnegie Mellon
the name of the office
5000 Forbes Ave.
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
www.cmu.edu

If you need to contact an office or department at Carnegie Mellon by phone but do not know the direct number, you can call the Information Desk at 412-268-2107.

Office of International Education
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www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/career**Carnegie Institute of Technology (CIT),**

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The Tartan Newspaper

UC 314

Phone: 412-268-2111

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www.thetartan.org