

# WCU STUDY ABROAD HANDBOOK



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## Table of Contents

.....	1
<b>I. About this Handbook</b> .....	5
<b>I. Before You Go</b> .....	6
WCU Pre-Departure Orientation .....	6
Your Study Abroad Location .....	6
Passport .....	6
Visa.....	6
Flight Ticket.....	6
Registration with the U.S. Department of State .....	6
Photocopy important documents.....	7
Luggage .....	7
Packing .....	7
Health.....	8
Primary health care.....	8
Travel Clinic .....	8
Medications Abroad.....	8
Mental Health .....	9
Travel Health Insurance .....	9
International Student Identity Card.....	9
Academics .....	10
Exchange/Direct Enrollment/Third Party Programs .....	10
Internships/Independent Study/Practicum/Clerkship.....	10
Faculty-led Students .....	10

Finance.....	11
Fee Payments.....	11
Program Costs.....	11
Financial Aid.....	11
Managing Your Money.....	11
Communication.....	12
Email.....	12
Telephone.....	12
<b>II. While You Are Away.....</b>	<b>13</b>
Health Abroad.....	13
Report Medical Conditions.....	13
Recommendations.....	13
Sexual Health.....	13
Health Insurance Summary of Benefits.....	13
Safety Abroad.....	14
Crime.....	14
Preventing Physical or Sexual Assault.....	14
Alcohol & Drugs.....	16
Gender and Women’s Topics Abroad.....	16
Legal Issues.....	17
Emergencies.....	17
Adjustment and Cultural Differences.....	18
Personal Adjustment.....	18
Cultural Differences.....	18

Cultural Shock .....	19
Documenting Life Abroad .....	19
Share Your Experience .....	19
Study Abroad Video Project .....	20
Academics Abroad .....	20
Full-time student status .....	20
Withdrawal from the Program.....	20
Credits and Grades .....	21
Transcript .....	21
<b>III. When You Return .....</b>	<b>22</b>
Re-entry: Reverse Cultural Shock.....	22
Academics .....	22
Transfer of Study Abroad Credits.....	22
Ways to Stay Involved.....	23
Acknowledgements.....	24

## I. About this Handbook

This handbook contains general information pertinent to students on all WCU exchange program, third party programs, and Faculty-led programs. Throughout the booklet, reference is made to information specific to either WCU exchange programs, third party programs, or Faculty-led programs. To fully benefit from the information presented, you should understand the difference between these designations.

1. **Exchange programs** are those in which WCU selects and orients students, but exchange partner institution arranges housing, classes and administration abroad.
2. **Third party programs** include ISEP, CIEE, ISA, CAPA, etc. WCU selects and orients students, but a program provider or host institution arranges housing, classes and administration abroad.
3. **Faculty-led programs** are those in which WCU selects, orients, and arranges housing and administration abroad.

In each section, you will find a [“Quick Links”](#) box on the right. This is to help you navigate through each session should you need to refer back to the handbook and find a specific section.

## I. Before You Go

### WCU Pre-Departure Orientation

- Attend the mandatory Pre-Departure Orientation held by Office of International Programs and Services (IPS) and/or held by your instructor (for Faculty-led Travel Courses)

### Your Study Abroad Location

- Take the time to research local conditions, the political landscape and customs of your host country before you depart and stay informed about current events and developing situations. For current news, safety bulletins and state travel warnings go to: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en.html>

### Passport

- If you DO NOT have a passport, apply for one as soon as possible at <http://travel.state.gov>
- If you DO have a passport, verify that it is valid for at least 6 months after the end of your program.
- Non-US Citizens: Visit the embassy website of your home country to find out your specific requirements.

### Visa

- You may need an entry visa or other travel documents to study in your host country.
- IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to verify the visa requirements of your host country and to obtain the student visa.
- Visit the consular and/or embassy website of your host country to find specific visa information.
- Non-US Citizens: You may have different visa requirements than US citizens.

### Flight Ticket

- Book your flight to and from your study abroad destination.
- Book regional transit (trains, buses, etc.) for any additional trips while abroad.
- For students who participate in Faculty-led programs, instructors may book tickets for you.

### Registration with the U.S. Department of State

- If you are a US citizen, you can register your trip in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) of the US Department of State (DOS) so that DOS it can better assist you in case of an emergency and provide important health, safety and security updates for your host country. <https://step.state.gov/STEP/Pages/Common/Citizenship.aspx>

### Photocopy important documents

- Photocopy your passports, visas, tickets and other personal documents and give a copy to someone at home you trust.

### Luggage

- Clearly identify your luggage from the inside and outside with luggage tags. It is a good idea to identify your U.S. address as well as your address within your host country.
- Confirm the sizes/weight limits for luggage and possible additional charges for checked luggage.

### Packing

- Certain necessities or brands may be difficult to obtain abroad. Thus, consider taking the following items with you:
  - Extra pair of glasses or contact lenses contact lens solution
  - Bee sting kit
  - Insect repellent
  - Medical kit
  - Band-Aids or gauze
  - Thermometer
  - Cough and cold medicine
  - Syringes for allergy treatment, insulin or other medical injections
  - Aspirin/aspirin-free products
  - A mild laxative
  - Anti-fungal/anti-itch agent
  - Anti-bacterial cream/spray
  - Sunscreen, sunburn medication
  - Feminine hygiene products
  - Contraceptives and prescription birth control
  - Water shoes
  - Water purification systems
  - Medical Checkup Forms

## Health

### Primary health care

- Develop a plan with your physician on how you will maintain your health while traveling. This is especially important if you have any ongoing health issues that may require attention while abroad. If you are on any medications, you should ensure that you have a supply to last the duration of your time abroad.

### Travel Clinic

- It is highly recommended that you schedule a visit to a travel clinic. A travel clinic will focus on immunizations and other health recommendations specific to the country.

Some vaccines are given as a series and some require a time interval before departure in order to be effective.

### Medications Abroad

#### *Prescription*

- If you have a pre-existing medical condition, take an adequate supply of your medication to last your entire trip. All medications must be carried in their original containers along with a letter from your physician indicating the generic name and brand name of the medication, as well as the dosage and a description of your medical condition.

### **BRING AN ADEQUATE SUPPLY OF MEDICATION ABROAD**

- If you need to take a prescription drug throughout the duration of the program but cannot bring an adequate supply with you, talk with your doctor before you leave.
- If you plan to purchase medication overseas, you will likely need to see a host country physician for a new prescription and should know some acceptable generic forms of your medication, as the exact same medication is sometimes not available overseas.
- It is also essential that you know if there is no substitute for your medication. There are times when physicians will not advise you to take generic forms, and it is important to know if that applies to you before you leave.

### **BE INFORMED OF THE LAWS REGARDING YOUR MEDICATION**

- Brand name pharmaceuticals sold in the United States are frequently sold under different names in different countries and, in some locations, may be illegal. Students who are taking prescribed medications for depression/anxiety/OCD or ADD/ADHD should know that in some countries, the drugs often used to treat these

conditions are severely restricted or even illegal. If this is an issue, make sure to talk to your physician and research your alternative options well before going abroad.

- For more information, please visit the consular website of the country you are visiting. Additional information can be found at <http://travel.state.gov/content/studentsabroad/en/health/prescriptions.html>

### Mental Health

- Traveling or studying overseas is not a cure for health conditions such as depression or attention deficit disorder. Sometimes going abroad may in fact amplify a condition. A student may not have adequate access to prescription medication or mental health facilities. In addition, culture shock, language barriers, and homesickness can deepen isolation or depression.
- Before traveling, create a workable plan for managing your mental health while abroad. The availability and quality of mental health services differ widely from country to country. In many countries, students will find it difficult—and sometimes impossible—to find treatment for mental health conditions. In consultation with your health services provider or your school, put together a workable mental health plan before you go overseas.

### Travel Health Insurance

- The State of North Carolina has arranged travel health insurance for participants in study abroad programs in UNC-system universities through **GeoBlue** ([www.geobluestudents.com](http://www.geobluestudents.com)). WCU requires that all students studying abroad have this insurance, which includes Medical Evacuation and Repatriation of Remains (ME&RR) coverage. The only exception to this coverage are students who study abroad with the International Student Exchange Program (ISEP). Students going with ISEP will purchase ISEP's insurance, not GeoBlue insurance.
- IPS will register you for this travel health insurance policy after you have paid your WCU \$150 application fee and have been accepted by WCU's Study Abroad office as well as your host institution/third party program provider.
- The cost of this coverage is minimal. For example, during the 2017-18 academic year it was \$1.42/day, amounting to approximately \$175 for a semester.
- The cost of your policy will be applied to your student account.
- *For more about this coverage see sub-point b. Health Insurance Summary of Benefits of section 3: While You Are Away.*

### International Student Identity Card

- You can often get student discounts while studying abroad or traveling with your own WCU student identification card or a student identification card issued by your host institution. Other international ID cards such as International Student Identity

Card (ISIC) and iNext will also garner discounts and other benefits. Depending on your program, one of these might be included in your study abroad fee, but if not, you may get one of these cards on your own. The cost is minimal.

- The International Student Identity Card (ISIC) can provide discounts on international and local transportation, accommodations, and admissions to museums, theaters, historical sites, etc. <https://www.isic.org/>

## Academics

### Exchange/Direct Enrollment/Third Party Programs

- Be sure that your host university offers courses that you need to complete your WCU degree. This requires looking carefully on your host university's website and/or contacting them directly in order to find course descriptions and/or syllabi.
- Work with your major or minor department head and academic advisor to discuss how the courses earned will fit in with your degree program(s).
- The result of the above should be a completed *Study Abroad Course Approval Form* that is submitted to the Study Abroad office before you leave for your term abroad.
- Register for courses following the instructions of your host university.
- Once you have been accepted to your host university and completed the *Study Abroad Course Approval Form*, you will be given the course number and CRN number for a study abroad placeholder course that holds your place at WCU during your time abroad.
- Verify through MyWCU that you have been enrolled in the study abroad placeholder course <http://www.wcu.edu/mywcu>

### Internships/Independent Study/Practicum/Clerkship

- You can do an international internship, independent study, practicum or clerkship for credit or not for credit. Either way, you will need to apply via the Study Abroad office and get approval from your department head and your academic advisor.

### Faculty-led Students

- IPS works with the Registrar to enroll you in the course requested by your Faculty-led course instructor.

## Finance

### Fee Payments

- Students who are studying abroad (including internships, independent studies, practicums or clerkships) must pay a \$150 administrative fee. This fee is placed on your student account by the Student Accounts office during the term prior to going abroad.
- If you are going with a third party provider or to a WCU Direct Enrollment partner university, they may also have an application fee. This may be as high as \$400. Follow their instructions for paying their fee.

### Program Costs

- Budgets for all of WCU's bilateral exchange partners have been created to help you plan your costs for your term abroad. These budgets include tuition and fees, room and board, airfare, passport and visa fees, miscellaneous travel expenses, and textbooks. The figures are rough estimates; your spending habits may differ from these estimates.

### Financial Aid

- You can use financial aid to study abroad. Consult with a financial aid office before you apply to a program. WCU Financial Aid Office: [finaid@wcu.edu](mailto:finaid@wcu.edu) or 828-227-7290.
- Be realistic! Plan your foreign study according to the financial aid and financial resources you have and not what you hope to receive in additional aid or scholarships. Keep in mind that most programs and exchanges have a non-refundable deposit or application fee.

### Managing Your Money

- Contact your bank. Let your bank know that you will be out of the country and inform them of the countries you will visit and the duration of your stay.
- Know whether your bank charges international transaction fees if you use your card in another country. Be sure to check and see if your bank has partner banks in your host country where the fees may be waived.
- Consider opening a local bank account. For students going abroad for a semester or longer, it may be more cost effective to open a bank account with a local branch in the host country.
- Know the exchange rate from US dollars to the local currency. Check online (google "exchange rates") every once in a while to make sure that the exchange rate you have been using to calculate the cost in US dollars has not fluctuated dramatically.
- Make a copy of your debit/credit card. Keep a copy of your debit card and/or credit card scanned and emailed securely to yourself and someone that you trust.

## Communication

### Email

- Given that IPS will need to contact you throughout your time abroad, it is important that you continue to check your WCU email address.

### Telephone

- Students find that having a cell phone is a convenient way to stay in touch locally. Many cell phones can accommodate a SIM card that you can purchase once you arrive in your host country. You should contact your cell phone service provider to inquire.

## II. While You Are Away

### Health Abroad

#### Report Medical Conditions

- We strongly encourage that you inform your program director or on-ground coordinator of any medical or psychological conditions in person.
- The stress of being overseas – especially initially upon arrival – may exacerbate medical conditions you may have.
- If you have any questions or concerns about this possibility, consult your physician.

#### Recommendations

- Eat well
- Exercise regularly
- Get plenty of sleep

#### Sexual Health

- Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) & Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS, are among the most common infections worldwide.
- The most reliable way to avoid these is to abstain from sexual activity.
- If you are sexually active, correct and consistent use of condoms can reduce the risk. As the availability and quality of condoms can vary by country you might consider packing your own supply as a precaution.
- Do not use drugs intravenously or share needles for any reason.
- For more information, please visit <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/std>

### Health Insurance Summary of Benefits

- The State of North Carolina has arranged health insurance for participants in study abroad programs in UNC-system universities through **GeoBlue** ([www.geobluestudents.com](http://www.geobluestudents.com)). WCU requires that all students studying abroad have this insurance, which includes Medical Evacuation and Repatriation of Remains (ME&RR) coverage.
- GeoBlue covers you in any country you visit outside the U.S. It does *not* cover you inside the U.S. That is why you need to maintain your current health insurance policy, as well.
- The policy also provides Medical Evacuation, Political Unrest Evacuation, & Repatriation of Remains.

- The GeoBlue network includes doctors all over the world. Consult the website ([www.geobluestudents.com](http://www.geobluestudents.com)) to find available medical services in the city/country where you will be studying.

## Safety Abroad

### Crime

- Crime can occur anywhere and is not predictable. However, as a visitor in a foreign country you may be particularly vulnerable.
- As a visitor you may stand out from local people as different.
- You may also be initially unfamiliar with your environment and may not understand the verbal and non-verbal cues that might signal danger. This can place you at a disadvantage and make you a target for crime.
- Nevertheless, there are simple steps you can take that can significantly reduce the chance that you will be a victim of crime.
  - Situational awareness: Be conscious of what is happening around you at all times.
  - Trust your instincts: Take immediate action to remove yourself from situations that feel unsafe or uncomfortable.
  - Avoid behaviors and situations that put you at risk: If you consume alcohol and drugs, do not walk alone, never accept a drink from a stranger, and never leave a club or get into a car with someone you do not know.

### Preventing Physical or Sexual Assault

- What may be considered sexual harassment in the U.S. may be considered socially acceptable in another country. However, cross-cultural sensitivity does not mean you have to allow others to transgress your personal boundaries. If you feel you have been a victim of sexual harassment, you should immediately inform your primary on-site contact.
- Be aware of your surroundings and your “inner alarm.” If something does not feel right, remove yourself and others from the situation.
- Take responsibility for others with the Buddy System. Leave with the same people you arrived with, and take taxis or public transportation with at least one other person.
- Take preventative measures with respect to alcohol use. Do not take drinks from strangers; watch the bartender open the bottle and pour the drink; and if you walk away from your drink buy a new one.
- **RESPONDING TO PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL ASSAULT**
  - Assault is a traumatic event that can occur in any environment. However, as an international traveler, you may be more visible and thus more likely to attract interest. While physical or sexual assault is not always preventable, we

urge you to take every possible precaution and use good judgment. If you are assaulted, please remember that it is not your fault, and you are not alone. You should do the following if you are a victim of an assault:

- Go to a safe place
- Do not shower or change clothes
- Get help from a trusted person
- Inform your Faculty Director or on-site administrator
- Follow the guidance of the Faculty Director or on-site administrator for medical, psychological, and legal support
- It is critical that you inform your on-site director of any incident. She/he can help in a variety of ways. This person may assist you in contacting your family if you wish to inform them and connecting you with local sources of emotional support.
- SAFETY SUGGESTIONS WHILE ABROAD
  - Carry the WCU Study Abroad Emergency Number (+1-828-227-8911) with you at all times.
  - Do not draw too much attention to yourself as a foreigner or an American. College sweatshirts, baseball caps, etc. could be poor clothing choices in an area with strong anti-American sentiment, not to mention poor taste in style.
  - At a minimum, know how to ask for help in the native language of the country and know local emergency telephone numbers.
  - Always keep your eye on your purses, cameras & electronics. If you choose to bring an iPhone or smart phone abroad, conceal these. Consider using alternative headphones other than the white ones that are sold with the iPhones. Backpacks, laptops, and big purses can also be targets.
  - Do not carry large amounts of cash and do not carry all of your money and documents all in one bag. Also avoid carrying wallets and/or money in back pockets which tend to be easier prey for pickpockets.
  - Be alert in crowds, especially in train stations or popular tourist attractions. Thieves often use distractions in these locations to their advantage.
  - Do not hitchhike.
  - Do not rent cars, motorcycles, mopeds, or scooters.
  - Do not stay out or walk late at night alone.
  - When traveling long distances, attach your bag to the luggage rack with a bike chain or lock.
  - American foreign policy can affect how people overseas will treat you. You will often be seen as a representative of your country. If your travel destination is having political or military difficulties, ranging from demonstrations to terrorist attacks to civil war, stay away from all sites of such activity.

## Alcohol & Drugs

- Although it is true that in some countries laws concerning drug use and possession are less restrictive than in the United States, other countries are more severe. In some locations, possession of illegal drugs carries a mandatory prison sentence; in others, corporal punishment or the death penalty are potential consequences. The safe and smart approach abroad is to avoid drug possession and use altogether.
- Students who are of a legal age and choose to consume alcohol should do so with the knowledge that, like at home, they remain responsible for their actions at all times and are expected to drink responsibly.
- Excessive and irresponsible drinking leading to intoxication and behavior that interferes with the program or the rights of others is subject to immediate disciplinary action, and may result in dismissal from the program. In addition, intoxication is considered offensive in many cultures and even illegal in some.
- In both a legal and cultural sense, before you engage in drinking in your host culture, be aware of the customs of the country. Drinking to get drunk is rarely acceptable, even in countries where alcohol is consumed with every meal.
- Remember that “drugging” is not at all uncommon in situations where alcohol is involved. To try to prevent this, always try to buy your own drinks. Never go home with a stranger. Consider going out with at least one friend (especially if you are a woman), and return with that friend.
- CONSEQUENCES OF DRUG USE ABROAD. Despite what you may have heard about looser drug laws outside of the U.S., drugs are illegal in most countries. In fact, drug laws are often stricter outside U.S. borders. In several countries, including Thailand, China, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and Turkey, possession of even a relatively small amount of illegal drugs can be grounds for the death penalty. In several others, including Mexico and the Dominican Republic, it can be grounds for mandatory jail sentences. In addition, in some countries it can be illegal to even enter the country with drugs still in your system. This is called “internal possession” and is grounds for prosecution similar to what you would endure if you actually physically possessed drugs. Once you have ventured beyond U.S. borders, U.S. laws or constitutional rights no longer protect you. Thus, DO NOT do drugs abroad! The penalties are much too dangerous.

## Gender and Women’s Topics Abroad

- There are two primary reasons to consider gender within the context of health and safety abroad. The first reason is that women have specific safety concerns, both at home and abroad. Although men are also the targets of muggings and other crimes, women are often seen as easy victims and are more often the targets of sexual assaults. Therefore, women should remain extra vigilant while abroad and do their best to prevent themselves from ending up in a possibly threatening situation.
- The second reason to consider gender while abroad relates to how cultural expectations and practices often result in well-defined gender roles within a society. Gender roles abroad may differ greatly from those in the U.S. You may not choose to

behave in exactly the same ways as traditional local women or men do; however, it is important to educate yourself about cultural gender roles within your host community in order to make sensitive choices about how you will behave as a woman or a man while abroad, and to understand how your personal views and opinions may be interpreted by your host culture. Think about ways to deal with intercultural frustrations relating to gender and/or being a woman overseas, including your response to people's possible stereotypes of American women. American women have a reputation in many countries as being looser, more carefree, and often more relaxed with their personal boundaries. This opinion is often created/reinforced by American television shows, music, and films. This awareness may help you forestall any unwanted advances from men in the host country.

### Legal Issues

\*\*\*Regardless of your citizenship, as a visitor abroad you are required to obey the laws of the country you are visiting.\*\*\*

If you ever get into legal trouble abroad, you should immediately contact your program director. If you are a citizen, you may also contact a Consular officer at your local U.S. Embassy abroad. However, their ability to help in some situations is limited.

- A U.S. CONSULAR OFFICER *CANNOT*:
  - Get you out of jail
  - Represent you at trial or give legal counsel
  - Pay legal fees or fines with U.S. government funds
- A U.S. CONSULAR OFFICER *CAN*:
  - Visit you in jail after being notified of your arrest
  - Give you a list of local attorneys
  - Notify your family or friends and relay requests for money or other aid with your authorization
  - Intercede with the local authorities to ensure that you are treated humanely and ensure that your rights under local law are fully observed
- WCU Student Code of Conduct
  - Students who participate in study abroad are representatives of WCU and are expected to conduct themselves appropriately and respectfully. Study abroad students, just as on campus students, are expected to abide by the WCU Code of Conduct.

### Emergencies

An emergency is an occurrence or situation that poses a genuine and sometimes immediate risk to your health, safety or security. Situations that are an emergency include, but are not limited to:

- Medical: A life-threatening accident, injury, or illness; severe psychological or mental problem; any hospitalization
- Crime: Sexual assault; victim of a violent crime or physical assault; arrest, detention, or questioning by police or other security forces; disappearance or missing person
- Deaths
- Natural Disaster: immediately affecting safety, security, or health
- Political Crisis: immediately affecting safety, security, or health; terrorist attacks; outbreaks of war; riots or civil unrest

IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY, BE AWARE OF THE FOLLOWING RESOURCES:

- The local emergency number in the country where you are located
- On Call International Insurance at +1-888-243-2358
- Your on-site Program Director, Resident Director and/or the International Office at your host institution.
- The 24 hour WCU International Emergency phone number at (+1-828-227-8911) for further assistance.

## Adjustment and Cultural Differences

### Personal Adjustment

- American identity. Before you can understand another culture, you should understand your own. Once you have identified your American values, patterns and habits, think about the strategies that will help you adjust to different ways of dating, dressing, eating, shopping, banking, relating to professors and studying.
- Learn about the host country. Learn as much as possible about the country, since understanding the culture will facilitate your adjustment to living there.
- Your expectations. What do you hope to get out of the experience overseas? Outlining your goals and then keeping a journal abroad will help you map both your inner and outer journeys.
- Your appearance. Carefully consider how you will dress. You may want to plan to wear items of your own clothing that fit in better with the local culture. Part of the acculturation process is trying to blend in so that you minimize your role as an outsider.

### Cultural Differences

- You will adjust in many small ways over a long period of time to the new culture.
  - Gender roles. Both male and female students abroad will discover that growing up in the U.S. has prepared them for different roles in society. Learning as much as you can about your host culture will help you interpret the actions of local residents and avoid situations in which you feel unsafe or harassed.

- Sexual orientation. It should come as no surprise that distinct cultures approach the question of sexual orientation differently. A bibliography of international GLBT issues is available [www.rainbowsig.org](http://www.rainbowsig.org)
- Disabilities. Other countries are not bound by U.S. legislation, and physical facilities and academic resources vary significantly from one overseas site to another. IPS endeavors to provide reasonable accommodation for students with documented disability conditions (e.g., physical, learning, etc.), but only if you disclose your needs to us well before the program begins.
- Religion. Few countries have the religious diversity and pluralism as in the U.S. and few have such a strong tradition of separation of church and state. If you wish to be affiliated with a religious community abroad, check with your local place of worship or discuss your interests with program staff overseas.
- Ethnicity. U.S. citizens often identify strongly with their family's cultural and ethnic heritage and refer to themselves as Asian-American, Italian-American, African-American, or Hispanic-American. In other countries such ethnic differences are often overlooked.

### Cultural Shock

- “Culture shock” is the term used to describe the disorientation that every student experiences when spending an extended period in a new culture. The common symptoms include homesickness, boredom, withdrawing from the culture by spending excessive amounts of time alone or with other Americans, excessive sleeping, compulsive eating, irritability, stereotyping of or hostility toward host country nationals, weepiness or even some psychosomatic illnesses.
- During your period abroad, you may experience several normal stages of cultural adaptation. These include: Initial euphoria; Irritation and hostility; Gradual adjustment; Adaptation and biculturalism.
- There are several ways you can minimize the impact of culture shock.
  - Learn as much as you can about your host country before you go.
  - Keep an open mind.
  - Be flexible.
  - Go out and do things to meet students.
  - Look into local volunteer opportunities through a social service agency, a school or a church.

### Documenting Life Abroad

#### Share Your Experience

- Write a journal. Journaling can help you recall and recreate what you have seen and experienced in greater detail. It also provides you with material for future writing (essays, articles, research, a senior honors thesis or independent study, travel writing, etc.).

- Write a blog. Blogs are an easy way to keep in contact with lots of people while still being able to focus on your time abroad. You are representing WCU, your family, and the United States with everything you write. Please act accordingly and be appropriate.

### Study Abroad Video Project

- As a recently started project, we are asking students abroad to send us video clips of their experience. These can be in front of a landmark, in class, with locals, etc. These clips we will put together to create Study Abroad Promotional Videos to inspire future students to study abroad.
  - In at least one video clip, say “Come to (location where you are- city/country).”
  - Send us clips as you have them.
  - Horizontal clips only please!
  - They can be as short or as long as you like. There is no need for them to be edited either!

### Social Media

- Facebook
  - Like our Facebook page: “Study Abroad Catamounts.”
  - Take photographs and share them with us so we can post them to Facebook.
- Instagram
  - Use our hashtag #wcuabroad while posting photos on Instagram so we can repost your amazing photos!
  - Ask us about doing an Instagram takeover for our Instagram account so you can show us and our followers your experience.

### Academics Abroad

#### Full-time student status

- Students studying for a semester MUST maintain the local equivalent of a full load of classes (12 WCU credits). This is especially important for students using financial aid to study abroad.

#### Withdrawal from the Program

- Leaving a study abroad program is a big decision. If you feel that you must withdraw from your study abroad program, please first consult the host university international office and/or program director. Also speak with WCU’s Study Abroad Advisor about your feelings. Speak with your loved ones, as well.

### Credits and Grades

- *Be sure you understand the local grading system.* You must pass your courses abroad in order to receive credit for them here.
- Your credits will be treated as transfer credits by the Registrar's office. That means that they will be treated as pass/fail and will not affect your GPA.

### Transcript

- While still at your host university, check in with the relevant office there to inquire about when your transcript will be produced. Be aware that some universities can take 2-7 months to produce and send your transcript.
- Also be sure they will send it to IPS and not to you. Our Study Abroad office needs your official transcript in order to process your credits earned abroad.

### III. When You Return

#### Re-entry: Reverse Cultural Shock

- Once you have adapted to life abroad, coming home will require readjustment. You will have to integrate what you have learned abroad into your U.S. life. There are a few common symptoms.
  - Feeling as though your friends and family do not understand the experience you had abroad.
  - Feeling critical of U.S. customs and behaviors.
  - A desire to return to the country or community in which you were immersed.
- Try to share your experience with your family (photos, stories, etc.) and let them know how much you appreciate the chance they have given you.
- Ask and listen to what your friends experienced while you were away. Try to do new things together to get the relationship on a new footing. Maintain contact with friends you met on your program.
- Talk over your academic experience with your advisor. Make contacts with international students on your campus through IPS. Contact IPS and volunteer to talk to students who plan to study abroad. Seek out other students on campus who have studied overseas.
- Recognize that we all tend to look past the shortcomings of our home culture when we are away, and to criticize it on the basis of changed perceptions when we return. Seek out others on your campus who are interested in international and intercultural matters.

#### Academics

##### Transfer of Study Abroad Credits

- Once the Study Abroad office receives your host university transcript you will be contacted to set up a Credit Transfer Appointment with the Study Abroad Advisor. Together you will examine the transcript and your completed *Study Abroad Course Approval Form* to ascertain that you passed your courses and that they match your approved WCU course equivalents on the form.
- IPS will not approve study abroad credits if you have not attended a Credit Transfer Appointment, or if the *Study Abroad Course Approval Form* is not complete, or if the *transcript* and the *Study Abroad Course Approval Form* do not match.
- This is the final and crucial step to your studies abroad. It is your responsibility to ensure that your journey ends well.

## Ways to Stay Involved

- One of the best ways to stay involved with study abroad is to go again! WCU allows study abroad for one year and half, though you may want to check in with your academic advisor to ensure that you can stay on track to graduate.
- We also encourage you to get involved with an organization here on campus that helps to orient and integrate international students. Contact IPS for more information. Some are listed below:
  - I-Cats
  - I-Pals
  - IOL's
- Become a Study Abroad Ambassador. Share your study abroad experience and help promote WCU study abroad. Through giving presentations, peer advising, and creative projects you can help promote study abroad at the university. Contact IPS for more information at [international@wcu.edu](mailto:international@wcu.edu) or 828-227-3433

## Courtesy

Indiana University Study Abroad Handbook; University of Washington Study Abroad Handbook