

UMW's Center for International Education (CIE) Pre-Departure Orientation for Education Abroad



SECTION 1: CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES – BE INFORMED AND BE AWARE

Robert Kohls, a renowned author of intercultural literature, defines culture as "an integrated system of learned behavior patterns that are characteristic of the members of any given society ... the total way of life of particular groups of people. It includes everything that a group of people thinks, says, does, and makes, its customs, language, material artifacts and shared systems of attitudes and feelings. Culture is learned and transmitted from generation to generation." **It is important to recognize your own "cultural baggage" when you go abroad.**

It is up to you to behave in a way that will show the people in your host country that these are in many ways unjustified stereotypes that cannot be applied arbitrarily, at least to you. It is important, however, to recognize your "Americanness" and to think about what cultural baggage you will be carrying abroad. To help you think about this, Robert Kohls has developed a list of thirteen commonly held basic American values. See if you recognize yourself in any of these values, and think about the fact that some cultures have values that are diametrically opposite to these American values.

- 1. Personal control** over the environment – U.S. Americans do not generally believe in the power of fate; they see this as superstitious and reflective of an unwillingness to take initiative. Life's problems tend to be viewed as coming from one's laziness or unwillingness to take responsibility, rather than from bad luck.
- 2. Change** – U.S. Americans tend to see change as good, leading to development, improvement, and progress. More traditional cultures see change as destructive; they value stability and tradition.
- 3. Time** - Time is of utmost importance to U.S. Americans. Time is something to be on, kept, filled, saved, lost, wasted, and even killed. Americans tend to be more concerned with getting things done on time than they are with interpersonal relationships. Americans stop discussions abruptly in order to make appointments on time and to be productive.
- 4. Equality** and fairness – U.S. Americans believe that all people are "created equal" and that everyone should have equal opportunities.
- 5. Individualism** and interdependence – U.S. Americans tend to view themselves as highly individualistic and resist being thought of as part of any homogenous group. Individualism leads to privacy, which most Americans highly value. It is interesting to note that the word for "privacy" does not even exist in many non-Western languages.
- 6. Self-help/initiative** – U.S. Americans tend to take credit for accomplishments as individuals, and they tend to value the "self-made" man or woman.
- 7. Competition** – U.S. Americans tend to believe that competition brings out the best in people, and "free enterprise" is valued in many areas of life.
- 8. Future orientation** – U.S. Americans tend to value the future, devalue the past, and to an extent, are unaware of the present. Many Americans work so hard and think so much about their future that a perfectly happy present often goes unnoticed.
- 9. Action/work orientation** – U.S. Americans tend to see any action as superior to inaction. Americans tend to schedule an active life and schedule in time for relaxation. Often the first question people ask each other when meeting is, "What do you do?" meaning what is their profession.
- 10. Informality** – U.S. Americans are more informal than many other cultures. For example, many Americans call their bosses by their first names, dress is more casual attire, even at formal events, and even greetings are casual (e.g., "Hi" rather than, "How are you?").
- 11. Directness/openness/honesty** – U.S. Americans tend to prefer the direct approach to delivering information, no matter how unpleasant. Americans tend to see honesty as most important, and anyone who uses an intermediary to deliver unpleasant information is seen as manipulative and untrustworthy.
- 12. Practicality** and efficiency - The reputation of Americans is practical and efficient. They tend to value rational and objective decisions over emotional and subjective ones, and the pragmatic approach is the overwhelming philosophy.
- 13. Materialism** and acquisitiveness - Foreigners tend to consider U.S. Americans to be very materialistic. U. S. Americans tend to give high priority to obtaining, maintaining, and protecting material objects, and they value newness and innovation.

BEING AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT IN THE U.S. AND THEN GOING ABROAD: Studying abroad affords you advantages over your U.S. counterparts. Having left your home country to study abroad in the U.S., you've already learned how to adjust to a new culture, educational system, and language. Your skills and experience may help you to enjoy a relatively smooth transition into your new host culture and university setting. However, please keep in mind that you may still experience culture shock, feelings of isolation, or adjustment difficulties.

AMERICAN VS. HOST CULTURE – Personal Inventory

Study, travel or work abroad is a whole-person experience. The parts of your identity that make you unique inevitably become part of your experience abroad. Time abroad often facilitates personal reflection and teaches people as much about themselves as it does about other people. Before you go, you will want to consider how your identity might affect, or be affected by, your experience abroad. Some factors to consider are:

- **GENDER:** Gender is a characteristic that can affect your experience abroad. Both women and men are often particularly aware of gender-based treatment in a foreign culture that differs from their home culture. It's good to talk with someone who has spent time in your host country about these differences before you go.
- **RACE, ETHNICITY, MINORITY OR MAJORITY STATUS:** Because of your race or ethnicity, you may be accorded different privileges or experience different barriers abroad than those you experience at home. Different cultures define "race" and "ethnicity" differently, create different categories, and expect different things of people within these categories.
- **CLASS:** Overseas you may experience class issues differently than you do at home. In certain contexts, working class Americans may be considered rich. In other contexts, upper-middle class Americans may be considered poor. Certain cultures have more rigidly defined or more openly articulated ideas about class than those in the United States. Think about who you will be meeting as a student engaged in higher learning in your host country. Think about who you would like to meet during your semester or year abroad.
- **SEXUAL ORIENTATION:** Depending on your sexual orientation you may be granted different privileges or encounter different challenges abroad than at home. At the same time, while overseas, people often examine, or reexamine, questions of sexual identity because of increased personal freedom or increased time for personal reflection. Since many ideas we have about sexual orientation and sexuality are culturally-based, students need to be aware of how this may affect their relationships with host nationals, cultural adjustment and reentry, and the overall study abroad experience. Please feel free to talk with CIE staff about this issue.
- **RELIGION:** People around the world have different ideas and expectations regarding religion. To be respectful of others, it is important to learn as much as possible about the religious beliefs, practices and norms of the area to which you are traveling. You may also want to research whether or not people of your faith meet and practice in the place you are going. Be aware that you may need to adopt certain standards of dress.
- **DISABILITY:** Travel is always a challenge to a person's problem-solving abilities; this is no different for a person with a disability. People with disabilities not only meet these challenges, but some people have written about their experiences, making it easier for the travelers who follow them. While overseas, people with disabilities will likely find some things inaccessible, but preparation and persistence can help. Mobility International USA is an excellent resource on travel for people with physical disabilities.
- **LEARNING STYLE:** You will probably find that the teaching styles and the learning expectations at higher education institutions in your host country are different from those at U.S. institutions. Classes in many other countries are often more formal, consisting almost entirely of lecture with little interaction between students and professors. Research the system of education in your host country before your departure. Be prepared to be an active participant in your learning.
- **DIETARY CONCERNS:** In the United States, we live in a society which offers a wide range of food choice. When traveling abroad, it is sometimes difficult to maintain a particular diet (for example, a vegetarian or medically-restricted diet). Vegetarianism can mean a variety of things to different people. Think carefully about how your food choices might affect your friends who invite you to dinner, your homestay family, or students with whom you cook in the residence halls. Prepare yourself for societies in which ingredients are rarely listed on packaging.
- **HEALTH:** Because an experience abroad can be physically, mentally and emotionally demanding, think carefully about your health. A certain amount of stress due to culture shock and a change in living conditions is a normal part of an experience abroad. In some cases, such stress may aggravate an illness you have under control at home. You may also have concerns about health care facilities and insurance.
- **SMOKING:** While there is currently a strong movement in the United States against smoking in public places, the situation in many other countries is quite different. While abroad, you may encounter more second-hand smoke

than you are used to, with smokers showing little concern about whether or not it bothers you (for example, in restaurants or on trains). For smokers, traveling abroad might be a long-sought haven of smoking freedom.

Stereotypes of Americans on study abroad: Many stereotypes exist, and Americans are not excluded from this. Frequently, the stereotype of the American is not at all flattering, and can include characteristics such as: arrogant patriotism (the "ugly American" who expects everyone to speak English and thinks that every country should pattern itself after the United States); - loud and overly friendly behavior; drunkenness; immature behavior; obsessed with being hard working; wealthy; ignorant of other countries; promiscuous; always in a hurry; naïve (an easy target for swindlers)

Dealing with anti-American sentiment: There may be times when you feel as though you are being attacked personally for being an American. Sometimes you will be expected to answer questions about American foreign policy and to justify the actions of your government with which you may or may not agree. There is no right or wrong way to deal with anti-American slurs or suggestions, and you will certainly develop your own strategy for addressing these issues. However, some suggestions are not to reinforce the negative American stereotypes with your own behavior, and to try to understand the motives of the person criticizing you and your country. Ask more questions to try to understand why the person believes what s/he does. Most importantly, remain tolerant and avoid becoming defensive; keep an open mind and use the experience to learn about yourself and about cultural differences.

Particularly in the post-9/11 environment, students are encouraged to prepare themselves for conversations about U.S. foreign policies and the reasons behind them by brushing up on American political and cultural history. It is also critical to understand the current U.S. foreign policy towards the country you will be studying in, as well as that country's current political climate. **A well-informed student will be better able to engage himself/herself thoughtfully in conversations with host country nationals rather than taking criticism of U.S. policy as a personal attack or insult.**

CROSS-CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

Because of the cultural differences you will encounter, as well as the cultural baggage that you will inevitably take with you abroad, you will certainly encounter some adjustment issues. This is nothing to fear, and indeed it is a normal and common part of the process. It should help you to know a little bit about what you may experience.

Upon arrival in the host country, many students go through an initial phase of euphoria and excitement, sometimes known as the "honeymoon phase." You will probably be very excited by the newness of your surroundings and things that appear unusual will be interesting. Sometimes students in this first stage have a false sense of security, so it is especially important to keep safety precautions in mind. After this initial period wears off, it is common to feel that your usual ways of dealing with things and your habits and routines do not work in your host country. There are endless subtle cultural differences, and the most minor tasks may seem major. For example, you may encounter difficulties with language, housing, money, transportation, food, recreation, and health. You may begin to feel like an outsider, things may seem confusing and frustrating, and you may even start to feel a little depressed. This psychological disorientation is what is often referred to as "culture shock" or "culture stress."

There is no right or wrong way to deal with culture stress, but the most important thing is to be aware that this is a very normal phenomenon, so recognizing and accepting its existence is an important first step. It is suggested that you avoid seeking out other disgruntled or unhappy people, and do not isolate yourself. Do not sit around criticizing the culture and being negative; this will just prolong your gloom. Keep busy, set goals for yourself, and try not to be judgmental. Be aware that the problems probably are not so much with your surroundings, but with your own adjustment to it. In time, the negative symptoms of culture stress will disappear, and you will certainly adjust. Kohls states that, "Culture shock is in some degree inevitable . . . and is the occupational hazard of overseas living through which one has to be willing to go in order to enjoy the pleasures of experiencing other countries and cultures in depth."

COPING WITH CULTURE STRESS:

Be aware that it does exist. * Remember that the problem isn't with "them," but with you. * Don't think that you are "strange" or "abnormal." * While sometimes difficult, remember that culture stress can ultimately leave you with broader perspectives, deeper insights, and wider tolerance. * Don't sit around being negative and critical—go out and do something. * Look for the best, not the worst. * Before you go abroad, learn as much as you can about your host country. * Keep an open mind. * Practice laughing at yourself.

SECTION 2: ACADEMIC MATTERS

ACADEMIC MATTERS: In deciding to study abroad, students should be aware and be prepared to accept that educational philosophies overseas differ substantially from those at U.S. colleges and universities. While the American higher educational system is based on contract-like relations between faculty and students and continuous assessment, foreign educational cultures place primary responsibility for learning on the individual student. This is generally also true of overseas programs that are administered by a U.S. college or university, since in most cases their teachers are drawn from local institutions.

The biggest difference between most overseas institutions and U.S. higher education is the approach which the host institution will have to you as a student. They will work under the assumption that you are a serious learner who takes responsibility for your education. In most countries it is highly unusual for professors to go out of their way to ensure that you are doing your work. Chances are your progress will not be closely monitored by your professors, and you will not be told (without asking) how or when to do the work that is expected of you. That said, most professors are pleased to interact with students who seek them out. Needless to say, you will be expected to turn in papers and assignments on time and to perform successfully on exams.

In many countries you will find large lectures (similar to those at large universities in the U.S.), as well as smaller classes or seminars, and sometimes small-group or one-on-one tutorials. Participation is often not expected in lectures, but you are usually expected to fully participate in tutorials and seminars, as this is your opportunity to discuss the material. Science, language, and psychology courses will often have labs required as part of the course. You may be assessed by assignments, papers, and exams, just as you are at UMW; however, in many countries the majority of your grade for the course may be determined by how you perform on the final examination. Also, be aware of classroom etiquette – observe fellow students before speaking out of turn, questioning the professor, or going to the bathroom during class.

Admission to foreign universities is usually very different from the admissions process at U.S. institutions. In many countries students are not admitted to universities as a whole, but rather to a particular course of study within the university. Often students have a lot more preparation for their particular subject, and much less flexibility in taking courses outside of their course of study. The concept of a liberal arts education is unique to the U.S. Keep this in mind when you select your courses abroad, as you will need to be very careful that you meet any pre-requisites that are listed for each course. Also bear in mind that what you may perceive as a more casual approach to coursework among your peers at overseas universities is a consequence of the fact that they often have several opportunities to take final exams in any given course, where you will have only one chance.

Yet another difference you may find abroad is that of available resources (or lack thereof), such as libraries and computers. In many countries libraries are not as willing to loan out books, and you may have to visit several libraries in order to complete a paper or assignment. Computers may not be as plentiful, and hours of computer labs are not as long or as late as you are probably used to at UMW.

STUDY ABROAD COURSES, TRANSFER CREDITS, AND GRADES: Select the courses you take abroad with a careful eye toward what you need to fulfill your graduation requirements. Students should learn what type of credit system is used by their study abroad host institution, and determine what the U.S. equivalency is. For example, students at the University of Edinburgh typically take modules worth 20 Scottish credits, which is equivalent to 5 U.S. credits. In Italy or Germany, students may take courses worth 6 ECTS credits, which are worth 3 U.S. credits. Students must use the Study Abroad Course Approval Form to get their study abroad courses approved for transfer credit. Department Chairs approve courses to transfer as UMW equivalent courses, major elective credit, or be applied to your minor. CIE can approve courses to transfer as general elective credit. If your course schedule changes once you are abroad, you must communicate these changes with your department chair and CIE, and request approval for transfer credit via email.

All study abroad courses and internships must be graded to receive transfer credit. Courses taken pass/fail or audit are not eligible for transfer credit. **You must receive the equivalent of a “C” or better in each course for the credits to transfer.** Students should learn what grading system their host institution uses and understand what qualifies as a “C.” **Credits earned abroad are considered transfer credits, and do not affect the student’s UMW GPA.**

REQUEST TRANSCRIPTS: Do not assume your program or university knows where to send your transcript - please double check that they have the correct information. In addition, **please be sure that the transcript is sent directly from your host university to CIE and not UMW's Registrar. Hand-carried transcripts are not accepted.** Transcripts should be mailed to:

University of Mary Washington
Center for International Education
1301 College Avenue, Lee Hall Room 433
Fredericksburg, VA 22401 USA

SECTION 3: LOGISTICAL PREPARATIONS BEFORE YOU GO ABROAD

Know Your UMW Support Team:

Center for International Education:

Dr. Jose Sainz, Director (jsainz@umw.edu)

Sarah Moran, Study Abroad Coordinator (smoran2@umw.edu)

Jill Hyman, Study Abroad Coordinator (jhyman@umw.edu)

Financial Aid: Alicia Tisdale (atisdale@umw.edu)

Disability Resources: Jessica Machado (jmachado@umw.edu)

Student Health Center: Dr. Nancy Wang (nwang@umw.edu)

Talley Center of Counseling Services: 540-654-1053

Student Conduct and Responsibility: Ray Tuttle, Director, (rtuttle@umw.edu)

Title IX Coordinator: Stefanie Lucas-Waverly (slucaswa@umw.edu)

PASSPORT: Your passport must be valid for six months beyond the end date of your program. Check your passport expiration date to see if you meet this requirement. Also, some Middle Eastern and North African countries will not allow entry if your passport indicates travel to Israel; check with the embassy or consulate of the country in which you will be studying for their requirements. *Note to international (UMW) students: Please remember that studying abroad may affect your international student status.*

STUDENT VISA: A visa is an endorsement stamped into your passport by a foreign government, allowing you to stay in their country for a specific purpose and period of time. Most countries require you to have a student visa in order to enter the country and stay there legally as a student.

Each country has its own rules, so you will need to check on the regulations for the country in which you will be studying. If you are studying abroad through an education abroad provider, they should provide you with instructions on how to obtain your student visa. Always check with the embassy or consulate that has jurisdiction over your primary residence for the most up-to-date visa application requirements.

To obtain a student visa, one or more of the following *may* be required:

- Visa application form
- Current, valid passport
- Visa application fee (check to see acceptable payment method—cash, check, credit card, or money order)
- One or more passport-size photographs
- Letter of acceptance from the host institution
- Evidence of financial support during your period of study abroad
- Physical examination
- Proof of medical insurance
- A negative HIV test

If you plan to travel to other countries within your period of study or after your program finishes, check the entrance requirements for each country before you leave home. **It is your responsibility to make sure you have proper documentation abroad.**

A word of advice: DO NOT wait until the last minute to apply for your student visa! As with passports, this can take many weeks to process, and if you do not have your student visa (and passport), you may be denied entrance to your flight or be turned away at the immigration desk of your destination country.

REGISTERING AT THE EMBASSY: All U.S. citizens should register in the Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (travel.state.gov) BEFORE departing the U.S. In the event of international, political or family emergency, or in the event that your passport is lost or stolen, the U.S. Embassy is much better able to assist registered citizens. Be sure you have an address for your stay (i.e., university address, dorm, host family, or hotel). Please print out the confirmation page after you have registered; leave one copy at home and take one with you. *Note to international (UMW) students: Please check with your embassy to see if it is possible to register prior to departure.*

PERSONAL PROPERTY INSURANCE: You should consider purchasing insurance to cover loss of personal possessions while abroad. It is possible that you may be covered under a policy held by your parents, so investigate this prior to departure. Inexpensive but limited travel insurance coverage can be found at www.insuremytrip.com.

ABSENTEE VOTING: If there will be U.S. elections in which you wish to participate while abroad, you should make arrangements for an absentee ballot before leaving the country, since that will prove easier than doing so through the embassy in your host country. Contact the County Board of Elections or the Secretary of State's office where you are registered to vote.

PHONE CALLS: Free services such as Skype, Viber, Zoom, and WhatsApp can be used to call home where a reliable internet connection is available. In addition, if you want to call a number in the United States and you want to call collect, you can check out <http://www.howtocallabroad.com/qa/toll-free.html> for international calling codes.

CELL PHONES: Purchasing a cell phone abroad is a convenient way to keep in touch with friends and family. Most foreign providers offer phones at reasonable prices with varying plans and packages. Buying one that takes a rechargeable minute's card will help keep your expenses down. You can also choose to enable an international plan on your smartphone or buy a removeable SIM card for use in your unlocked smartphone.

SECTION 4: PREPARING FOR DEPARTURE FROM UMW

CIE/UMW STUDY ABROAD APPROVAL: You must be approved by UMW to study abroad and receive credit for your study abroad experience. All study abroad students are required to register in Banner via international.umw.edu/registration. Students who have registered to study abroad for a semester or academic year will be approved by UMW for a study abroad leave of absence.

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM OR DIVERSE AND GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES GENERAL EDUCATION

CONTRACT: This contract must be submitted prior to your departure. Contracts may NOT be submitted after the program. Per the agreement between the student and faculty sponsor, the student must complete a reflective component (e.g., essay, portfolio, video project, travel blog) which is then evaluated by the faculty sponsor.

UMW COURSE CANCELLATION: If you registered for courses at UMW as a back-up to your study abroad plans, you must cancel your courses prior to departure. Otherwise, you will be responsible for tuition charges at UMW. Course cancellation forms are available through the Registrar's Office: <https://academics.umw.edu/registrar/forms/>

STUDENT ACCOUNTS: Make sure your student account is paid up and has no holds. If you have a hold on your student account, you will not be able to register for courses during Advance Registration while you are abroad. The UMW study abroad fee and health insurance enrollment fee (if applicable) are billed to your student account before you depart to study abroad. Make sure you pay these fees by the deadline established by Student Accounts.

FINANCIAL AID: In most cases, students can use loans, grants, and scholarships for study abroad. Working out financial aid arrangements for studying abroad requires more time and paper work than staying at UMW. Students who plan to use loans or scholarships must complete the *Request for Study Abroad Financial Aid* form and are encouraged to make an appointment with the Office of Financial Aid.

Financial Aid (continuation): Students are responsible for ensuring their study abroad program or university receives payments. The Office of Financial Aid does not send payments on your behalf. Instead, a Consortium Agreement, indicating how much you are receiving in financial aid and/or scholarships, is sent to your host institution. The Consortium Agreements outlines, in detail, the amount of aid you are receiving and the date by which the funds will be made available to the student. Once the financial aid funds are available, it is each student's responsibility to make payments to their program. Financial aid funds are typically disbursed much later than your program start date (mid-March for Spring semester and mid-October for Fall semester). Students are advised to set up direct deposit through the Office of Student Accounts so that your financial aid will be deposited into your bank account, rather than be sent in the form of a check to your home address in the U.S. (not applicable for parent PLUS loan).

Virginia529 prePAID (VPEP): If you participate in the Virginia529 prePAID program (formerly the Virginia Prepaid Education Plan or VPEP), UMW will need to be the school of billing for tuition. Contact CIE before you pay tuition to your program.

RESIDENCE LIFE: Students going abroad for a semester or year must complete the "Intent to Vacate" form with the Office of Residence Life in order to be released from their housing contract. If you have questions or concerns, please contact the Office of Residence Life (reslife@umw.edu).

SECTION 5: KEEPING PARENTS & FAMILIES INFORMED

While you know first-hand that CIE is a central resource for students planning and readying themselves for international education, CIE is also a great resource to parents and family members. Please share CIE's contact information with your parents and family members.

SECTION 6: TRAVEL PLANS

FLIGHT ARRANGEMENTS: You should start looking into arrangements for your flight as early as possible. The sponsoring organization or your host university can tell you the exact date you are expected to be there (usually for orientation), and when your program or university session is scheduled to end. Be sure you find out when the exams are scheduled to end, not just the course work. If the exam schedule is not set until after the semester begins, be sure to get an open-ended ticket, or make sure your ticket allows for one free or low cost change.

When making your flight arrangements, check several travel agencies or search engines to compare prices and options. Be sure to ask for student fares and/or student discounts. Check into price differences (and flexibility options) between buying a round-trip or two one-way tickets. If you are traveling after your program, you may want to consider an open-ended ticket, which allows you to set your return flight at a later date.

UPON ARRIVAL: When preparing for departure, the excitement of getting ready to go to a new country can overshadow some of the more mundane aspects of the traveling itself. One of the first issues you are likely to encounter is the question of how you are going to get from the airport to your accommodations on the first day. Each program handles the arrival process differently, so be sure to check with the program provider or the university to see what their policy is, and whether they have an arrival service. If not, students should know how to get from the airport to their campus or the location where they will first meet their program representative. Make sure you know the address to where you need to go first.

SECTION 7: PACKING

There are two words of advice that returning study abroad students offer regarding packing: PACK LIGHT! It is nearly impossible to take everything you want, and remember, you are the one who has to carry your belongings. A common suggestion is to pack your bags, then carry them around the block and up and down some stairs by yourself; then, re-evaluate what is really necessary to take. Also, remember that every airline has restrictions on how many bags you can check and carry, and how much they can weigh. *Check with your airline before you leave home, as airlines are becoming more restrictive about what they allow.* Keep in mind, as well, that you will acquire things while abroad that you will want to bring back with you, so consider taking an empty suitcase or duffel bag with you, or buy one abroad.

PACKING CONTINUATION

CARRY-ON BAGGAGE: Given the vagaries of international travel, it's a good idea to pack one complete change of clothes and some basic toiletry items (toothbrush, travel deodorant, comb) in your carry-on bag in case your luggage does not arrive at the same time you do. You should also carry any electronic items (camera, e-reader, iPad, computer) AND their cables/chargers with you. Particularly in developing countries, these small, high value items are often stolen in the transit process. Check the regulations for your airline as some carriers now restrict the weight of carry-on baggage as well as the size.

REQUIRED PACKING LIST:

- Passport and visa (extra passport-size photos for any ID cards or additional travel visas you may need abroad suggested)
- photocopy of passport (kept separately from passport)
- proof of insurance
- acceptance letter from your host university & other travel information provided by your program or university abroad
- airline travel confirmation (hard copy)

SUGGESTED PACKING LIST:

- credit cards/ATM card (photocopy of front and back of credit/ATM cards (kept separately from originals))
- money belt and/or passport pouch
- prescription medications in original containers, copies of prescriptions in generic form, & personal medical records
- eyeglasses/contact lenses, including extras and prescriptions
- travel first aid kit, sewing kit, toiletries, & contraceptives
- phone, computer, camera (don't forget chargers), converter and/or electrical adapter
- language dictionary & country travel guide
- photos of your family and friends, and your home
- gift items for your host family and/or other friends you meet abroad
- dress outfit and shoes, swimming suit, exercise clothes, robe, slippers, & raingear

SECTION 8: MONEY MATTERS

Managing your money abroad can be challenging, and advance planning is important. Before you go, pay attention to the exchange rate between the U.S. dollar and the currency of your host country, and learn to think in the foreign currency.

HOW MUCH TO TAKE: Your program or university's international office should be able to provide you with estimates of how much spending money you will need. Also, consult students who have returned from studying in the country to which you are going.

Keep in mind that the amount of money you spend ultimately depends on the lifestyle you choose. One returned study abroad student noted, "I would even make a direct relationship here: the less money you spend, the better the experience. The more money you spend, the more you alienate yourself from the experience and miss a main point of the program."

You should budget extra if you are planning to travel before or after your program. Plane tickets are often more expensive than in the U.S., but train and bus travel has remained relatively inexpensive in many countries. If you are a big spender in the U.S., bringing more money would be a good idea. Students who plan to regularly sample the nightlife of their host city should budget extra money for taxis.

Remember, if you are receiving any form of financial aid that will be contributing to the cost of your program, it may take several months after the start of your program in order for the financial aid to be processed and the funds sent to you; be sure to take enough money to last you for the first month or two until the financial aid arrives.

Be sure to budget for the following potential expenses (some paid before program begins):

- tuition • room/housing • meals (board) • university fees • study abroad fee • health insurance fee • airfare • transportation in country • passport • visa • immunizations/preventive medicines • books and supplies • communication costs (phone, postage) • taxes • clothes • gifts • recreation and travel • expenses for any breaks • personal expenses

HOW TO CARRY YOUR MONEY: No traveler should carry large amounts of cash, but it is a good idea to change a small amount of money into the foreign currency before you arrive in your host country. You can change money at any international airport; however, the exchange rates and fees may not be the most favorable. You can carry the rest of your money in the form of credit cards and/or an international bank draft or bank check, drawn in the currency of your host country. Check with your program or with the international office at your host university to find out the best way to transport your money to your particular host country.

BANKING: It is important that you notify your local bank before you leave to go abroad. Let them know what countries will be part of your primary travels so that they will not be alerted of potential fraud and put holds on your account. In addition, you may want to open a bank account at a local bank when you arrive in your host country. Your resident director or the international office staff can advise you how to do this. You may wish to compare the account options and services at several different banks before choosing one. Be sure to ask if there are any restrictions for international students.

ATM CARDS: In many countries around the world (especially the more developed countries or those with high levels of Western tourism), you can find ATM machines where you can use your ATM card from home to withdraw money (in the local currency) from your bank account in the U.S. Be sure to check with your bank at home for availability and transaction fees, as well as making sure your PIN is valid abroad. It is a good idea to make sure your card is not just an ATM, but also has a Visa or Mastercard symbol on it. If it has either of these symbols, you can use it in machines that bear these symbols, and you can also use it to make purchases similar to a credit card. Note that fraud is widespread; only use ATM machines attached to banks. On occasion, ATM card get stuck in random ATM machines, so know how to get a replacement card BEFORE you go abroad.

CREDIT CARDS: In most places around the world, it is a good idea to have a credit card for emergencies. Check with your program or the international office staff for suggestions on which credit card(s) to bring, as there are always exceptions on what is accepted in particular countries. Credit cards can be useful for large purchases or for hotels, shops, and airline or train ticket purchase, and they can be used for obtaining cash advances from a bank. As with ATM cards, make sure you let your U.S. bank know that you will be using the card abroad to avoid service cancellation. Note: In some parts of the world, fraud is so widespread that using a credit card is inadvisable. This applies to most African nations and some other developing countries.

WIRE TRANSFER: Wire transfers are quick but relatively expensive and in some parts of the world, unreliable. In some cases, you may have to establish an account abroad in order to receive the money. Therefore, it is not recommended that you rely on wire transfers for your money, but they can be useful in an emergency.

CHECKS AND BANK DRAFTS: In most countries checking accounts are not as widely used as they are in the U.S. Do not rely on being able to cash personal checks from home from your own account or from your parents. It may take so long for the check to clear it would not be worth the trouble.

It is possible to obtain a foreign currency draft against a recognized bank in your host country from an American bank (e.g., a check in Japanese yen drawn against a Japanese bank). The exchange rate is not likely to be very favorable, but you can cash the check abroad (although it will take some time to clear). If you must get a check sent to you in American currency, it is advisable to get a check drawn against a major American bank (again, it will take time to clear).

PROGRAM PAYMENTS: Except for students participating on UMW exchange programs and UMW Faculty-led programs, all program payments will be made directly to the foreign university or the program provider. The only fees charged by UMW are the mandatory study abroad fee (see below) and health insurance fees if your program does NOT provide comprehensive international health insurance. Faculty-led program fees are generally paid to UMW and the inclusions are listed on the program's website.

UMW study abroad fee: All study abroad students are charged a non-refundable fee of \$20 per week for break (summer, spring, or winter) programs or \$300 per semester abroad. Be sure to notify your parents/guardians of this fee, which covers some of the costs associated with the administration of the study abroad process. This fee will be charged to your UMW student account.

SECTION 9: LOGISTICAL DETAILS WHILE YOU ARE AWAY

KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH UMW: Continue checking your UMW email, as this is the primary way for UMW to communicate with you while you are abroad.

In the event of an emergency abroad, students can contact the UMW Police at 540-654-1025 (collect calls are accepted 24/7).

Below is contact information for CIE.

- Jose Sainz, Director CIE, 540-654-1261, jsainz@umw.edu
- CIE staff: Sarah Moran, 540-654-2172, smoran2@umw.edu; Jill Hyman, 540-654-1870, jhyman@umw.edu
- CIE general email: cie@umw.edu, phone 540-654-1434; Fax: 540-654-1119
- Mailing info: UMW, Center for International Education, 1301 College Avenue, Lee Hall Room 433, Fredericksburg, VA 22401, USA

Other contact information for offices at UMW that you may need while you are away:

- Registrar's Office: rdunston@umw.edu; tel: 540-654-1063/ fax: 540-654-2145
- Financial Aid Office: finaid@umw.edu; tel: 540-654-2468 /fax: 540-654-1858
- Student Accounts: umwbills@umw.edu; tel: 540-654-1250 or 540-654-1289/ fax: 540-654-2003
- IT Help Desk: helpdesk@umw.edu; tel: 540-654-2255

ADVANCE REGISTRATION: Class registration for the following semester will occur while you are abroad. It is your responsibility to know the dates of the advising period and the date and time of your Registration Appointment Time. You should e-mail your advisor during the advising period. If you have forgotten who your advisor is, log onto the Eagle Net portal and click on the Academics tab. Under the UMW Academic Profile, click on the Academic Information/Advisor link. Since you are studying abroad, your advising session will occur via e-mail.

The e-mail to your advisor should:

- Inform your advisor that you are studying abroad;
- Let your advisor know the courses in which you plan on registering during Advance Registration;
- Ask your advisor to remove the **"advisor hold"** so that you can access registration.

Once you have communicated with your advisor, log into the Eagle Net portal and click on the Registration Status link under the Academics tab in the Registration Tools area to see if you have any holds which prevent registration. If you do, please work with the appropriate office to remove the hold(s) before your registration time. If you need assistance from our office, please email CIE (cie@umw.edu).

When registering for classes, remember that UMW passwords must be reset every ninety days. If your password expires, you must call or email the UMW IT Help Desk to receive a new password in order to have access to registration. If you have no or little internet access, you **must** notify CIE and ask them to register for you. You will need to provide the list of courses, including course title, CRN, section number, etc, in which you want to be registered.

SECTION 10: HEALTH ISSUES

Travel and study abroad will most certainly affect your health in one way or another, as many factors that influence your daily health have to do with lifestyle and environment, not to mention that good health (or lack thereof) will have a significant impact on the success and enjoyment of your time abroad.

INSURANCE: MANDATORY SICKNESS & ACCIDENT INSURANCE: In order to ensure that all study abroad students are fully covered by comprehensive health insurance while abroad, UMW requires all participants to purchase international health insurance administered by iNext unless insurance is already included in for their program. The cost of the policy is \$1.50/day + \$10.50/month and the student will be covered for the duration of their program. Students must provide CIE with program dates (e.g., when they arrive in host country and when they leave the program). If you plan to arrive before your program begins, or stay beyond your program end date, it is your responsibility to make sure you extend your coverage accordingly. **The fees for international health insurance will be billed to each student's UMW student account.** If a student's program includes health insurance, please provide proof to CIE.

In addition to providing comprehensive health insurance, iNext provides emergency travel medical insurance, including medical evacuation, political & security evacuation coverage, and natural disaster services. iNext has identified a network of doctors worldwide who will provide treatment and services as necessary (and in English language). In most cases, students will pay for services and medications out of pocket and file a claim for reimbursement following the incident. It is very important that students keep all documentation (i.e. receipts, prescriptions, etc.) to use in the claims process.

Upon enrollment, iNext will provide the Medical Insurance ID card to each student, as well as plan information, via emailed PDF documents.

ASSESS YOUR HEALTH AND IDENTIFY YOUR NEEDS: Please remember that study abroad is not a magical cure for concerns and problems that you may be having at home. Emotional, psychological, and physical problems will indeed follow you wherever you go, so it is important to consider honestly your health issues and needs before you go abroad. Contrary to popular belief, travel does not minimize these problems; rather, it often can exacerbate them to the point of crisis if you are not careful.

Be clear and honest about your health needs when applying for a study abroad program and when making your housing arrangements. This includes issues such as medical needs, allergies, psychological treatments, dietary requirements (including vegetarianism), and disabilities. Services for people with disabilities vary widely around the world; if you have questions or concerns about these issues, please feel free to discuss them with staff in CIE. If you have any kind of mental health problems or eating disorders (or if you have had in the past), think carefully about your decision to study abroad, and please discuss these issues with your physician and with your mental health practitioner.

SEE YOUR HEALTH CARE PRACTITIONERS: Before you go abroad, it is a good idea to visit your family physician, dentist, gynecologist, and any other health care practitioners that you regularly see. Make sure your health records are up-to-date and that you discuss any medical issues you have that may affect your experience abroad. You should take copies of your medical records with you abroad, especially if you have specific medical conditions or if you expect to need medical care abroad. Also, be sure you have an adequate supply of any prescription medications (in their original containers) with you, if they are not available in your host country. You will need a physician's prescription (in generic form) for medication and medical supplies to pass through customs in your host country.

IMMUNIZATIONS: Some countries require specific immunizations in order to enter the country, and there are also immunizations recommended for travel to specific areas of the world. Be sure to check this out well in advance of your departure, as some immunizations require a series of inoculations starting many months before your scheduled travel.

Detailed health information can be obtained from your local Public Health Department, your physician, or by contacting the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (phone 800-CDC-INFO/800-232-4636 or <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/>). **It is very important to discuss these health guidelines and recommendations with your own physician.**

Check with health care providers or your own records to ensure that your immunizations (e.g., tetanus and polio) are up-to-date. Under the International Health Regulations adopted by the World Health Organization, countries may require International Certificates of Vaccination against yellow fever, and a cholera immunization may be required if you are traveling from an infected area. Prophylactic medication for malaria and certain other preventive measures are advisable for travel to some countries.

An increasing number of countries have established regulations regarding AIDS testing, particularly for long-term visitors. Check with the embassy or consulate of the country you plan to visit to verify if this is a requirement for entry.

COVID-19 NOTICE: As per the Return to Campus—Fall 2021 plan, all students, staff and faculty planning to physically access the UMW campus must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2.), or must submit a waiver for health or religious reasons. Students, faculty and staff engaging in any UMW approved education abroad travel are subject to the University's vaccination requirement and any other entry requirements imposed by program location(s).

Approved format(s) for proof of vaccination for entry into a given country may vary. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that every traveler take all the necessary steps to obtain their state-held electronic record while safeguarding their white CDC vaccine card provided on vaccination.

Students, faculty and staff granted an exception to the UMW vaccination requirement on medical or religious grounds for study, live or work on campus at UMW should understand that it is highly unlikely that exceptions can be accommodated in an international program.

OTHER HEALTH QUESTIONS TO ASK: Are there illnesses that are endemic to the region? What medications should you take to prevent these illnesses? What is the quality of water in your host country, and what precautions, if any, do you need to take with your drinking water and food preparation? What precautions are recommended for safe sexual practices? What are the customs, beliefs, and laws in your host country regarding sexual behavior and the use of alcohol and drugs? What are the laws in your host country regarding bringing in medications, medical supplies, and contraceptives? What kind of medical insurance do you need?

WHEN YOU ARRIVE IN YOUR HOST COUNTRY: Because of cultural differences, travel, and other adjustment concerns, you will need to continue to pay attention to your health (both physical and mental) when you arrive and throughout your program. Be sure you know how to get medical help should you need it, including routine healthcare, as well as emergencies. Make sure you make your medical needs known to anyone in your host country who can be of assistance, particularly if you are living with a host family. Most importantly, give yourself time to adjust to the new culture, and be attentive to your personal well-being—make sure you eat healthy foods and get regular sleep and exercise.

SECTION 11: SAFETY AND LEGAL ISSUES

SAFETY ABROAD: Safety is an understandable concern wherever you may be going; however, it is useful to take a comparative perspective: the United States is known around the world as a relatively dangerous country, and our street crime statistics support this view. The U.S. certainly has more hand guns and more gun-related deaths and injuries than anywhere else. Even college campuses have their share of robbery, property destruction, drunkenness, violence, and sexual assault. It is also important to consider that the U.S. media coverage of the rest of the world focuses (often sensationally) on overseas political upheavals, violent strife, and natural disasters. One of the first reactions study abroad students have is how "normal" life seems abroad, in spite of cultural differences. However, although you may well be statistically safer abroad than at home, danger can occur anywhere, and *you can play a big part in minimizing risks and hazards.*

Steps to help ensure that your study abroad experience is a safe one:

- Read and evaluate all materials provided by your program or university that relate to safety, health, legal, environmental, political, cultural, and religious conditions in your host country.
- *Pay attention to the local conditions. Stay informed about local and regional news, read newspapers with good international coverage and analysis of local issues.*
- Keep a low profile and try not to identify yourself as an American by dress, behavior, or speech.
- *Avoid protests or potentially violent situations or places where Americans are known to congregate. In the event of disturbances, do not get involved.*
- Be street smart. Remember that adjusting to city life is part of the cultural adjustment process, since most cities where students study abroad are much larger than Fredericksburg, Virginia.
- *Keep your residence locked and report any suspicious persons hanging around your building or campus.*
- Register upon arrival with the U.S. consulate or embassy having jurisdiction over the area in which you are living.
- *Make sure your resident director, host family, or foreign university official knows how to contact you in case of emergency. Leave your itinerary if you are traveling.*
- Be wary of impairing your judgment through the excessive use of alcohol, and do not use illegal drugs.
- *Avoid walking alone at night.*
- Do not display money, jewelry, cameras, or other valuable items.
- *Never carry large amounts of cash.*
- Familiarize yourself with your neighborhood, locate your nearest police station and hospital, and be sure you have any emergency phone numbers.

- *Don't allow yourself to be vulnerable. Take the same precautions you would at home regarding giving out your name and address to unknown people.*
- Regarding road travel, be aware that driving customs vary a great deal, and in most countries pedestrians are not given the right of way. Find out which roads are safest and whether it is safe to travel on overnight trains and buses. You are advised not to drive at all while abroad, especially in countries where driving on the left-hand side of the road is the norm.
- *Unfortunately women travelers are more likely to encounter sexual harassment, but dangerous or uncomfortable situations can sometimes be avoided by dressing conservatively, not walking alone at night or in questionable neighborhoods, and not agreeing to meet anyone in a secluded place. In addition, be aware that there are many unfortunate stereotypes about American women.*
- If, during your stay abroad, there is a serious event involving casualties (whether or not it has put you personally at risk) that is likely to gain international media exposure, we urge you to contact your family by phone, fax, or e-mail, to reassure them that you are okay. Remember that what may seem like a relatively minor local event to you could cause alarm back home.

TERRORISM: Unfortunately terrorism is a reality today. Although it is unlikely that you will be the object of a terrorist act, there *are* precautions that you can take to minimize your exposure to risk:

- Keep a low profile.
- Do not draw attention to yourself through culturally inappropriate dress or behavior.
- Avoid traveling in groups of Americans and speaking English in public.
- Avoid areas with U.S. interests, such as the U.S. Embassy, McDonalds, Hard Rock Café, American Express, etc.
- Avoid crowds and protest situations.
- Keep abreast of news and stay in contact with your family.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON SAFETY

- State Department Travel Advisories: reports from the U.S. government which monitor political conditions in every country of the world: www.travel.state.gov
- Study Abroad Safety Handbook: www.studentsabroad.com/

LEGAL ISSUES: When you are abroad you are subject to the laws of the country in which you are living and studying. The laws are likely to be very different from those in the U.S. and in Fredericksburg, VA. You should know that the American principle of "innocent until proven guilty" does not apply in all legal systems abroad, so the best advice for you is to know the laws and obey them. Please remember that if you should get yourself into trouble with the law in your host country, there is nothing UMW can do for you, and there is little the U.S. Embassy or Consulate can do.

The only assistance the U.S. Embassy or Consulate can provide for you is to give you a list of local attorneys and physicians, contact your next of kin in case of emergency, contact friends or relatives on your behalf to request funds or guidance, provide assistance during civil unrest or natural disaster, and replace a lost or stolen passport. They cannot get you out of jail.

The experience of a foreign jail is not something with which you want to become familiar in your host country. In many cases the conditions are deplorable, and bail provisions as we know them in the U.S. are rare in many countries.

Students should avoid all involvement with illegal drugs. In most cases, drug laws are extremely severe (more so than in the U.S.), regardless of whether the drug is in possession for personal use or for sale, and in many cases regardless of the amount. (There have been cases of Americans arrested and jailed for long periods abroad for possessing as little as 1/10 ounce of marijuana.)

TRANSFERRING YOUR CREDIT TO UMW

Once official transcripts are received from your program abroad, CIE will process your study abroad transfer credits in concert with the Registrar.

Independent study or internship: If an independent study or internship is part of your program you must coordinate with a UMW faculty member to have your project/written work reviewed. Credit will only be transferred after this faculty member has read and approved your independent study or internship.

CROSS-CULTURAL RE-ENTRY

We shall not cease from exploration

And the end of all our exploring

Will be to arrive where we started

And know the place for the first time.

--T.S. Eliot

When you return from studying abroad, it is very common to experience what is known as "re-entry." You may have heard it referred to as re-entry culture shock, or reverse culture shock. Regardless of the name, coming home from study abroad can be a challenging and difficult time, and it can also be the time when you learn the most from your cross-cultural experience. As you re-adjust to the culture of the United States, it may be helpful to know a little more about what you are going through and some positive ways of dealing with it.

What is re-entry? Re-entry can be defined as the often unexpected and sometimes difficult experience of re-adjusting to life in one's home culture after living abroad. Some study abroad returnees do not find re-entry to be difficult; however, most returnees experience some degree of stress upon returning home. In fact, for many students the process of re-adapting to home after study abroad is even more difficult than adjusting to your host culture!

Re-entry is different for everyone, just as your experience abroad was unique and special. However, there are some common re-adjustment issues that study abroad students report:

Personal Growth and Change--You may have experienced a challenge to your beliefs, convictions, values and world view while you were immersed in a different culture. You may have also experienced more academic freedom and personal independence while abroad. You may feel that you have matured and become more self-confident. You have undoubtedly changed in many ways. One of the greatest challenges of re-entry is adjusting to your "new" self to your "old" home. It is very common for returnees to experience loss of identity during this time.

New Knowledge and Skills--Just as your attitudes changed while you were abroad, you probably developed new knowledge, skills, and behavior patterns. For example, you probably developed competencies that helped you survive in your everyday life overseas, such as learning to find your way around a new city, to act in a culturally appropriate manner, and to converse about new subjects, and of course, foreign language skills. Other new competencies may include new knowledge about your major, new research skills, and new problem-solving skills. Some returnees feel frustrated if they feel these skills are of little use once they return home.

Relationships with Family and Friends--Some study abroad returnees say the most difficult issue to deal with when they return home is relationships with family and friends. It is important to realize that other people did not stay the same while you were gone (or in some cases they did not change). Also, all of your changes will undoubtedly affect your family and friends. Many returnees describe feelings of alienation, and some say they feel pressure from family and friends to revert back to the person they were before study abroad. Perhaps the most difficult, and most common, aspect of this issue is telling others about the overseas experience. Many returnees find that beyond polite inquiries and general questions such as, "So how was Australia?" their friends and family do not seem to be very interested in hearing about their experiences.

HOW DOES ONE COPE WITH RE-ENTRY?

There are many positive ways of coping with re-entry. The process of re-adjustment can take weeks or months, and it is very important to give yourself time to cope with the experience. Perhaps the most vital coping strategy is to recognize that what you are going through is normal and very, very common. Expect a period of stress, and know that re-entry is a natural part of the re-adjustment process. The following are coping strategies suggested by study abroad returnees:

Talk with people who understand your situation. Share your stories and experiences with CIE! Also, reach out to returnees. Keep in touch with people from your host country and from your program.

Tell others about your study abroad experience. Let CIE know if you would be interested in speaking with prospective study abroad students or helping with pre-departure meetings or other international events. Talking to others who really want to hear about your experience can be a wonderful way to keep your study abroad experience alive.

Write about your cross-cultural learning. Writing will help you interpret your experiences and will advance your thinking forward. Self-empowerment comes from writing in that the more you write, the more opportunity you will have to better understand your host culture, your own culture, and yourself. Write an article for *The Bullet* or other publication (such as CIE's Postcards from Abroad), or simply keep your own journal of reflections and learning.

Continue being a multi-cultural person. Seek out situations in which international experiences and perspectives are appreciated.

In conclusion, re-entry can be a time of stress, confusion, and tremendous personal growth. As you go through this experience, remember that re-entry is just another phase of cultural adjustment, and just as you adapted to your host culture, you will be able to re-adapt to the United States and to UMW. Remember to look positively on your re-entry experience, and allow it to help you look at your own culture as if you were discovering it for the first time.

CHECKLIST: TO DO UPON RETURN FROM STUDY ABROAD

- Be sure your program or university sends an official transcript to CIE, and know how to obtain additional official transcripts (for grad school or internships, for example). *Make sure your study abroad credits transferred correctly.*
- Promote study abroad! If you were unable to contribute to *Postcards from Abroad* while you were abroad, it is not too late to submit a brief article about your experience and how you grown as a result, plus a photo to cie@umw.edu with "Postcards" in the subject line.
- Keep in touch with your friends and contacts that you made while studying or traveling abroad.
- Consider studying abroad again, teaching abroad, or applying to the Fulbright Scholar Program. To learn more about the Fulbright Scholars Program, contact Professor Al-Tikriti (naltikri@umw.edu) in the Dept. of History and American Studies.
- Update your resume to include your abroad experience. Need help crafting language to include on your resume? If so, visit the UMW Center for Career and Professional Development and they can help you incorporate your abroad experience into a resume.
- Share your photos and stories with other UMW students, whether they are planning to study abroad, already studied abroad, or just love to hear about the WORLD. At least once a year CIE holds a photo contest, and the winning photos will be displayed on canvas in the CIE office suite, featured on the CIE Website, and students could win EagleOne Cash. Contact CIE to learn when the next contest will be held.