

STUDENT HANDBOOK FOR STUDY ABROAD SUMMER 2024



OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

WILLAMETTE UNIVERSITY

The Office of International Education at Willamette University thanks AHA International and Central Washington University, Office of International Studies and Programs, for the substantial body of research that this handbook contains. The information in this manual came from various international education handbooks and travel guide publications, existing documentation, and other Internet sources.

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*This handbook can also be found on the [Accepted to Study Abroad](#) page on the OIE website.

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Important Contact Numbers

Fill in the following contact information before you depart. You should also consider taking an address book with your friends' and family's contact info so that you can easily stay in contact. Consider that you may not have as much internet access as you are used to and think about how you usually access contact information (i.e. Facebook, Fusers, etc.).

On-site

Emergency number in host country: _____
(is there a "911" equivalent?)

Police Department

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Fire Department

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Doctor

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Your on-site program director or main contact person at school or university

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Emergency information for school or university

Phone: _____

General contact for school or university

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Host Family or Housing Office

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

**Print this page and
share this contact
information with**

Connecting with home

International Calling Code for U.S.A +1

Calling Code for your host country _____ and
city/county _____ cell phones _____

Willamette's main switchboard

Phone: +1 503 370 6300

Willamette's Office of Campus Safety

Phone: +1-503-370-6911

Your academic advisor's contact information

Office of International Education

Willamette University

900 State St

Salem, Oregon 97301

phone: 503-375-5493

Fax: 503-370-6565

Email: oieadvising@willamette.edu

Important family and friend numbers, emails and
addresses

Before you start anything...

From now on, anytime you complete an application, form, contract or anything else official:

**KEEP A COPY OF
EVERYTHING
FOR YOURSELF!**

Throughout this process you will be filling out lots of paperwork and it is very important to get into the habit of making and keeping copies of anything you sign. It is ultimately your responsibility to have a back-up of all documents (consulates, governments and most universities will not keep copies on your behalf.)

Part One: The 'Don't Miss' Logistical Items

Congratulations on being selected to study abroad! We hope this will be an unforgettable experience, but there is a lot to do to prepare!

➡ **Read the entire handbook and create action items (a to-do list!) to stay on track.**

Example: when you read about international cell phone plans make a note to yourself to remember to contact your cell phone provider to ask about your options.

➡ **Keep a copy of everything for yourself!** It is ultimately your responsibility to have a back up of all documents (consulates, governments and most universities will not keep copies on your behalf.)

Questions?

As always, please don't hesitate to contact the OIE if you have questions about any of the information you find in this handbook.



1 – Preparing to Study Abroad: Getting Started

In this chapter you will find:

- Pre-Departure terms and resources
- Required pre-departure meetings and preparation
- Critical travel documents: Passports and Entry Procedures

Pre-Departure Terms and Resources

These are important terms and resources you need to be familiar with and should utilize frequently as you prepare for a summer study abroad.

Summer Study Abroad

Summer study abroad programs are shorter duration, faculty-led programs that usually take place in the summer. Billed separately from semester tuition and fees, program costs are determined by the location where the program will occur and what features are included. Costs are set for each program based on a minimum number of participants. If fewer participants register, the OIE can either raise the per-student cost or cancel a program. Participants earn specific WU credits, also outlined on the program page.

Program Page

The term “program page” refers to the page on the OIE’s website where your program is represented. This page gives basic and essential information about your program that you must know including when the program takes place, cost and credit information, and other useful details.

International Education Staff and Faculty Coordinator

By this point you have probably interacted with some staff in the Office of International Education. OIE staff will conduct the pre-departure meetings and are available to help you prepare to study abroad. The best way to communicate with the OIE staff is by email (oiadvise@willamette.edu). You will continue to work with OIE staff throughout your predeparture period. In addition to OIE staff, you will also work with your program’s faculty leader.

Required Pre-Departure Meetings and Preparation

In the semester prior to your study abroad, you will attend a series of required meetings organized by the Office of International Education that cover a wide range of important information to help ensure that your experience abroad is a safe, rewarding and successful one.

General Pre-departure Meeting

The General Pre-departure meeting is mandatory for all students accepted to study abroad on Willamette Sponsored Programs. The meeting date can be found on your Study Abroad Timeline and Checklist. At this initial meeting, valuable topics such as health and safety abroad and logistical preparations will be covered. A separate break out portion to focus on topics specific to summer program is included. The meeting is approximately one and one half hours long.

Site Specific Pre-departure Meeting

Each program will have a separate site specific pre-departure meeting where logistics and specifics regarding each program will be discussed. Past participants from the program will attend if possible. Meeting lengths vary depending on program. This meeting is mandatory for everyone.

Critical Travel Documents: Passports and Entry Procedures

In order to leave the U.S., enter and stay in the host country legally and return to the U.S. again, you need a series of travel documents issued by the U.S. and host governments. Here is an overview of those documents.

Passport

ALL STUDENTS MUST HAVE A VALID PASSPORT IN ORDER TO STUDY ABROAD. A passport is a document issued by a national government which legally verifies an identity and citizenship. If you already have a passport, check the validity dates—some countries require that your U.S. passport is valid at least six months beyond the dates of your expected return. If your passport expires within six months of your return to the US after the program, **apply for a new one immediately.**

Apply for a passport as early as possible—it usually takes 6-8 weeks from the time you submit the application. Complete instructions on the [U.S. Department of State](#) website. If you need to apply in person in Salem, you can schedule an appointment at the Main Post Office at 1050 SE 25th St. If you need an appointment more quickly than what the Salem post office offers, you may check surrounding towns (Dallas, Independence, Stayton, etc) to see if you can get in quicker. Pro tip: get your photos taken before you go to your USPS appointment (at Walgreens, Rite Aid, FedEx). It's usually faster to get an appointment that doesn't require photos to be taken during the appointment.

Entry Procedures

For most summer programs, a visa will not be necessary to enter the country or it can be procured while at the study site. You will be given specific instructions about entering your study location at your site-specific pre-departure orientation meeting. It is very important that you follow these instructions so that you can enter the study site easily and on time. If you have concerns or questions, please address them to OIE staff prior to your departure.



2 – Academic, Financial and Personal Planning

In this chapter you will find:

- Documents to complete before departure (not including the passport and entry documents)
- Using financial aid abroad
- Travel information and discounts
- International calling/communication
- Packing advice

Documents to Prepare Before Departure

Although your passport and entry documents (see Critical Travel Documents) are the most important documents, do not forget to take care of the following:

[Enroll in STEP: U.S. State Department Travel Registration](#)

If you are traveling internationally, you are strongly encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy in your host country through the U.S. State Department's travel registration system (known as the STEP program). You can find the travel registration system on the [State Department's website](#). This is a safety measure so the US consulate knows you are in the country in case a national emergency occurs.

Power of Attorney

It is highly advisable to designate an individual, usually a parent/guardian, to take care of legal or financial matters on your behalf while you are abroad. Find out what the proper procedure is and make those arrangements before you depart.

Online Access to Bills/Credit Cards/ Bank Statements

Before you depart make sure you know how to access your bank account information, bills and credit card through the internet. An important part of this process is informing your bank that you will be out of the country and notifying them of which countries you will be in while abroad. See "Managing Your Money in Another Country" in this handbook for more tips.

Using Financial Aid for Study Abroad

On summer study abroad, you are responsible for paying your program fees in full. Summer program fees must be paid in full by early May. Be sure to meet with your financial aid advisor on campus to determine if you are eligible to use financial aid toward the costs of a summer program. It is ultimately your responsibility to make sure all the correct forms are filled out on time. You cannot assume that everything will be done automatically. Failure to abide by regulations may result in serious consequences such as a hold up of grades, course registration, and financial aid disbursements.

If you are receiving financial aid that will be disbursed after the program begins, please make arrangements with the Student Accounts Office (Waller Hall) regarding the payment of your program fees. **In addition, you are responsible for any debts you may incur or damage you may cause abroad. Grades will be withheld until a student's account balance is paid in full.**

You may contact the Financial Aid Office while you are abroad for any questions or assistance at: fnaid@willamette.edu

Travel Information

You are responsible for planning your own travel to the place of your program. Here are some student friendly travel websites:

- CIEE — www.ciee.org
- SkyAuction — www.skyauction.com
- STA Travel — www.statravel.com
- Travel Cuts — www.travelcuts.com
- Student Universe – www.studentuniverse.com
- Cheap Flights – www.cheapflights.com

**These websites have not been vetted nor endorsed by OIE staff. They have been used by past students and are presented here as resources only.*

TRAVEL GUIDES – AREN'T THOSE JUST FOR TOURISTS?

No! Travel guides are very useful not only for hotel, airline and restaurant information, but also cultural history, colloquialisms, and money saving tips. You can find many travel guides in the Willamette Store, ask about discounts. The most appropriate series for students studying abroad are *Let's Go*, *Lonely Planet*, *Rough Guides*, and *Footprint*. (www.letsgo.com, www.lonelyplanet.com, www.roughguides.com, <https://www.footprinttravelguides.com/>).

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT IDENTITY CARD

The [International Student Identity Card](http://www.isic.org) (ISIC) is a bargain for students traveling to Europe. It entitles you to some insurance coverage while traveling, reduced airfares, entrance tickets to cultural events, and other travel benefits and is good for one calendar year. (If you apply in August, your card will be valid until December of the following year). If you are interested in applying for an ISIC you may obtain an application for the card at www.isic.org. Please also check with your particular program to see if an ISIC is included as part of the program.

OTHER STUDENT DISCOUNTS

Like the U.S., many businesses throughout the world have discounts for students with proper identification. Whether you use an ISIC (see above) or your host university ID, you should frequently ask about student discounts at museums, theaters, restaurants, hostels, transportation centers, etc. Ask your host country friends/host family about student discounts that they are aware of as well.

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS – CELL PHONES AND PHONE CARDS

Cell phones and the increasing ease of using your phone abroad is quickly changing international communications. That said, be sure to consult your cellular provider to know whether your phone is able to be used worldwide or whether it needs to be unlocked before you go abroad.

Cell phones and apps – Many students find purchasing cell phones while they are abroad is a convenient way to stay in touch locally and internationally. It is easiest to purchase a cell phone after arriving in your host country. Some programs require that you have local phone so you can be reached in case of an emergency. The price of cell phones and the service they provide varies significantly from country to country. An alternative option is to add international service to your U.S. phone. This can be somewhat expensive, so check with your

cellular provider well in advance. Some students choose to continue to use their smart phones for the apps and to communicate with home, while they purchase a local phone for communicating with local friends and program contacts. Usage rates tend to be higher as well. Most students are using internet based services such as Zoom, Skype and What'sApp.

International phone cards – While less commonly used than in the past, you may find it useful to carry an international phone card with you when traveling to your host site. International phone cards are available through most phone companies, online and at most grocery or electronics stores in the USA. In many other countries, you can purchase pre-paid phone cards for local and international calls. In country phone card rates are generally cheaper than those purchased in the U.S.

SUSTAINABILITY ABROAD

The Willamette community has a strong commitment to sustainability on campus and in the global sphere. As you begin to plan your means of travel and activities while abroad please consider the choices you can make to help make your time abroad more sustainable. For more information on sustainability in relation to study abroad and international travel please explore the following websites:

- Where Travel Abroad Meets Sustainability: The Green Passport, by Katie Bell, Director of the Green Passport Program (<http://melibeeglobal.com/2010/12/where-travel-abroad-meets-sustainability-the-green-passport/>)
- Ethical Traveler (<http://www.ethicaltraveler.org/>)
- Sustainable Travel and Study Abroad, by Astrid Jirka (https://www.transitionsabroad.com/publications/studyabroadmagazine/2006Fall/sustainable_travel_and_study_abroad.shtml)

PACKING YOUR BAGS

It is nearly impossible to pack everything you want to bring with you overseas. The trick is to pack what you need, and more importantly, what you can carry! Here are a few tips that may come in handy while you are deciding what you should bring. There is a lot of potential for over-packing.

Suitcases and Backpacks - It is much easier to have two smaller bags than one large suitcase. Backpacks are convenient to carry and they leave your hands free. Suitcases with wheels or portable baggage carts don't always work well on cobblestone or other unevenly paved streets, and large duffel bags are awkward to carry long distances.

Dimensions and/or weight determine the baggage limit on most international flights. Requirements vary depending on destinations and airlines so confirm the limit of baggage allowed when you choose your airline. If you are using two airlines, check with both.

Label your luggage with a sturdy identifying tag—a bright identifying marker or ribbon will help in picking your luggage out quickly from a large pile of similar-looking luggage. Be sure to put your name and address *inside* each bag as well. We recommend that you pack at least a day's worth of clothing and supplies inside your carry-on luggage in the unfortunate event that your luggage is temporarily lost. It is also recommended to take a copy of the address where you will be located abroad so your luggage can be sent to you if it is lost and needs to be delivered a few days after you arrive in country.

TIP

Pack what you think you need. Then, **carry** your bags around the block, and up and down some stairs. You may reevaluate your decision of what is really necessary!

Never leave your bags unattended, even for a second. The easiest target for thieves is an unwatched bag. Also, airport security is extremely cautious and confiscates and destroys unattended luggage.

Clothing - Talk to students who participated on your program previously about what to wear and read about average temperatures and weather in your host city. In most countries people dress more formally than many Americans. You will want to bring some nice pieces of clothing to wear. An ideal travel wardrobe consists of coordinated clothes made of easy-care, drip-dry fabrics that can be layered for different temperatures. For touring and exploring, we suggest clothes you are comfortable walking around in, such as a pair of jeans and comfortable shoes. Generally buildings and homes abroad are not heated or cooled to the extent they are in the U.S.; keep this in mind when packing.

Doing Laundry Abroad - Whether you live with a host family or you have to wash your own clothes expect the experience to be different than in the U.S. In many countries, driers are not frequently used and water is more expensive. You might find it is easier to wear fewer items more often.

Useful items to pack that you might not think about:

- Pocket flashlight
- Small notebook/address book
- Money belt
- Stationery
- Travel alarm clock
- Soap/soap dish
- Toiletries (adequate supply)
- Sewing kit/safety pins
- Sealable plastic bags for liquids and keeping snacks from critters
- Power adapter/converter
- First aid supplies (see 32 for more information.)
- Earplugs & eye mask
- Pictures of family, home, WU!
- Small gifts for the people you will meet or who help you
- List of important phone numbers (credit card numbers, bank numbers, family & friends, emergency numbers, etc.)

Items to leave at home:

- Valuable jewelry
- Anything you couldn't replace
- Electric razors, hair dryers or other styling equipment (it is generally better to buy inexpensive styling equipment with the correct voltage abroad.)

Important Documents - Passports and other documents should be securely carried with you yet readily accessible at immigration. Money (except for small bills and change), credit cards, and traveler's checks should always be carried in a money belt. Be sure that you are also carrying copies of your contact person's phone

What to wear to "fit in"

It is difficult to figure out what to wear to fit in with your host culture before you depart. Ask students who have traveled previously to your site for advice. When you arrive, you will slowly observe what other are wearing and you might adapt your own clothing to feel more comfortable in your new surroundings. You may also find that you really can't live without your jeans and you don't care what others think. Like most things related to moving into another culture – give yourself time to adapt and feel comfortable; don't expect to figure it out right away.

number in the country you are traveling to as well as documents pertaining to your arrival instructions when you are traveling to your study abroad site for the first time.

Medications - If you regularly take prescription medication, information about any restrictions or directions for bringing in and carrying medication(s)/supplies should be addressed to the consulate for the country of your study abroad program. Although most countries allow travelers to carry reasonable amounts for personal use, there may be restrictions on how much, how it's packaged, and the country may require a special permission letter from a source of their choice. Drugs and some medical supplies that are legal and easily obtained in the U.S. may not be legal in your destination country. Always carry medicines in their original container and bring the original copy of your prescription from the prescribing doctor with you.

Contact Lenses/Glasses - If you wear contact lenses, bring an extra set of contacts, cleaning solutions, extra glasses, and a copy of your prescription with you. Cleaning solutions and replacing lenses can get very expensive abroad.

MORE RESOURCES

For more information about preparing to study abroad go to the Office of International Education's website for students Accepted to Study Abroad: willamette.edu/dept/oie/abroad/accepted/

This website includes (but is not limited to) the following:

- Government Services
- Students with Disabilities
- Airfare
- Travel Links
- Safety and Health
- Travel Guide



3 - Staying Healthy Abroad

In this chapter you will find:

- Analyze your health before you leave
- Immunizations
- Packing a medical kit
- Disabilities

Forms associated with this chapter:

- Staying healthy when you arrive
- Health Information – Student Self-Assessment
- Health Insurance Information

Adjusting to life in a new country means excitement and experiencing the unexpected. Although no amount of preparation can guarantee a trouble-free transition, you should be prepared when it comes to your health. There is one area in which you do not want to face the unexpected: medical care for yourself. Even routine ailments or minor accidents far from home can have greater consequences than you anticipated. Take responsibility for your own health and wellness, both before you depart and throughout your time abroad.

Much of the following information has been suggested by the *Council on International Educational Exchange* and *NAFSA: Association of International Educators*.

Analyze Your Health Before You Leave

Before you travel abroad, take a close look at the many factors that contribute to your physical *and* emotional well-being. A trip abroad will almost certainly affect your health because so many factors of your daily health have to do with lifestyle and environment. Conversely, the state of your health will have a significant impact on the success and enjoyment of your stay. With proper planning, travel can be a happy and healthy experience.

ASSESS YOUR HEALTH AND YOUR HEALTH-RELATED PRACTICES

Going abroad is not a magic cure for concerns and problems you may be facing at home. Both physical and emotional health issues will follow you wherever you go. In particular, if you are concerned about your use of alcohol and other controlled drugs or if you have an emotional health concern, you should address it honestly before making plans to spend time away. Contrary to many people's expectations, change of geographic location does not minimize these problems—it can often exacerbate them to a crisis stage while you are away from home and your support network.

IDENTIFY YOUR HEALTH NEEDS

Be clear about your health status and needs when preparing for a program and when making housing arrangements. Describe allergies, disabilities, psychological treatments, dietary requirements, and medical needs so that appropriate arrangements can be made prior to your departure. Willamette University requires that you complete *Student Self-Assessment* form (see Official WU Forms chapter) to the best of your ability before you depart. Read through your medical insurance coverage in your program packet to be aware of what is covered and what is not. Learn how to use your insurance abroad and how to file a claim should you become ill or injured. When you arrive learn how to access medical care, **DO NOT** wait until you are sick or hurt!

HEALTH INSURANCE

You do not want to be surprised when it comes to health insurance. Some of the summer study abroad programs include specific health insurance for the time you are abroad. You will receive policy information at your site specific meeting. Consult the OIE staff if you have questions. You will also complete a form for Willamette University attesting that you DO have coverage that meets your health needs while you are abroad.

International destinations: You may choose to continue any existing personal insurance coverage you may have during your time abroad. This is useful especially if you have preexisting conditions and to cover you as you travel to and from your destination.

U.S. destinations: You must have health insurance coverage that covers you in your specific program location and covers the activities in the program.

MEDICATIONS

If you regularly take prescription medication, questions about any restrictions or directions for bringing in and carrying medication(s)/supplies should be addressed to the consulate for the country of your study abroad program. Although most countries allow travelers to carry reasonable amounts for personal use, there may be restrictions on how much, how it's packaged, and the country may require a special permission letter from a source of their choice. Drugs and some medical supplies that are legal and easily obtained in the U.S. may not be legal in your destination country. Always carry medicines in their original container and bring the original copy of your prescription from the prescribing doctor with you.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR HEALTH & TRAVEL INFORMATION

- Family Physician
- Bishop Wellness Center: (503) 370-6062 <http://willamette.edu/offices/wellness/>
- Center for Disease Control & Prevention 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) or www.cdc.gov
- State Department Overseas Emergency Center: from overseas call 202-501-4444; from US and Canada, call 888-407-4747
- State Department Travel Information Center, medical information for Students Abroad: <http://travel.state.gov/content/studentsabroad/en.html>
- Transportation Security Administration (TSA): <http://www.tsa.gov/traveler-information>
-

SEE YOUR HEALTH PRACTITIONERS

You should visit your family physician and dentist before you leave to help ensure that you are in good health—this may prevent emergencies abroad from arising. Additionally, a physical may be required by your program. Some exams are very detailed and require chest x-rays, blood tests (including HIV), respiratory assessments, etc. Do not wait until the last minute and find out you don't have enough time to get all the required testing/evaluations. Bishop Wellness Center can perform any required physicals, chest x-rays and/or HIV testing. Get needed immunizations and hepatitis protection, if appropriate. (See "Immunizations" later in this section.) Update your health records, including eyeglass and regular medication prescriptions.

Carry copies of medical records, prescriptions in generic form, and pertinent information in a safe place. If you expect to need regular medical care abroad, take a letter of introduction from your physician at home, providing details of your medical conditions, care, and specific needs. If you self-inject prescribed medication,

you may need to carry needles and syringes with you. *You'll need a physician's prescription for medication and medical supplies in order to pass through customs.*

Immunizations

Always consult with your host school to see if they require immunizations. There are no additionally required immunizations for most of Western Europe, Australia, and much of Latin America. Make sure your tetanus shot is current, and you should seriously consider a vaccination for Hepatitis A which can be caused by contamination of food or water by sewage and infected food handlers. This immunization is available in the Bishop Wellness Center (the series includes two injections given 6 months apart). Other precautions to consider include the meningitis immunization, which is available at Bishop, and malaria medication. If you are really concerned about possible health problems, you can call the Center for Disease Control (CDC). They have an International Traveler's Hotline at 877-FYI-TRIP where, by entering the country code of your host country, you can get recorded information on vaccinations, food and water, and current health problems. You can also access this information online: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>

Pack a Medical Kit

Don't underestimate the importance of keeping some basic medical supplies close at hand. Inevitably you'll need something when pharmacies are closed or not convenient to get to. You should always travel with a medical kit that includes the following items:

- Diarrhea treatment (such as Imodium A-D)
- Constipation remedy (natural bran or bran tablets)
- Pain/fever relief (aspirin, acetaminophen, ibuprofen)
- Cold/cough/allergy symptom relief (such as antihistamines, lozenges)
- Pepto Bismol tablets (be aware that taking too many of these will turn your tongue black)
- Adhesive strips (Band-Aids)
- Lip balm
- Antiseptic (alcohol wipes)
- Antibiotic gel (such as Neosporin)
- Motion sickness medication
- Sunscreen

Be sure to also pack regular medications (in their original containers), contraceptives (including emergency contraceptives), feminine hygiene products if you are traveling where they are not available, and any other routine health and medical products you think you may need or brands that you like. Check the expiration dates of all medications before you leave. Where your health is concerned, it is better to be safe than sorry!

Accessible Education Services

Resources and services for people with disabilities vary widely by country and region. If you have a disability or special need, identify it and understand ahead of time exactly what accommodations can and will be made. If you have special health needs, check on any particular conditions that may apply to your travel overseas. Any student eligible for and requesting program accommodations due to a disability is encouraged to contact Willamette Accessible Education Services at (503) 370-6471 as early in the process as possible to ensure timely services.

Mobility International USA (MIUSA) and the National Clearinghouse on Disability & Exchange offer guidance to students with disabilities. Contact them for a brochure at (541) 343-1284 or check out their web site at www.miusa.org.

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has [online information](#) and a helpline number designed to assist travelers with disabilities and medical conditions, prior to getting to the airport. Travelers may call TSA Cares toll free at 1-855-787-2227 prior to traveling with questions about screening policies, procedures and what to expect at the security checkpoint.

Staying Healthy When You Arrive

Successful planning for a healthy stay abroad does not end once you leave home. Because of cultural differences and adjustments you will need to make abroad, any concerns or questions you may have related to your physical and/or emotional well-being should be addressed after you arrive in your host country.

FIND OUT ABOUT RESOURCES

Learn how to get medical help, whether routine or emergency, before the need arises—preferably before leaving home. Is there a 911-style emergency number and, if so, what services does it access? Who will provide routine medical care, and how can you reach that provider? If you need any special resources, find out how to get them. These could include services for those with disabilities, self-help groups (such as Alcoholics Anonymous), or other health-related needs.

Make your medical conditions and medical needs known before you leave. If you require regular medical care for any condition you have, let Willamette staff know what kind of assistance you need. The site director or university in your host country can research possible resources before your arrival. This may mean simply identifying a doctor or other practitioner who will provide your care, or discussing your condition with your host family or in classes if you may need emergency intervention during your stay.

GENERAL CARE

At some point during your time abroad, and unfortunately often at the beginning, you will probably get sick. More than likely it will be something simple, without complications, due to changes in food and water, insufficient rest, or stress of travel. This is the time when you should focus on getting plenty of rest, eating healthy food, drinking plenty of fluids (particularly on the plane), getting some moderate exercise and washing your hands with soap and water every chance you get. Remember, alcohol will dehydrate you, limit your intake upon arrival.

GIVE YOURSELF SOME TIME TO ADJUST

Culture shock can sabotage your time abroad if you are unprepared and can have lasting effects if you do not take care of yourself. The emotional effects of facing new values, habits, lifestyles, and especially a different language (even if it is English), can leave you impatient, bewildered, or depressed. You may experience confusing emotional highs and lows during this period. Remind yourself that these will soon pass once you are well rested and eating normally—time is the best cure. If symptoms persist, however, consider it a possible medical issue and seek assistance from a counselor or physician. See more about what to do in this situation in the chapter on Culture Shock.

Take good care
of yourself from
the very
beginning so
that you can
enjoy all the
benefits (and
avoid the
negatives) of
being abroad.

STRESS

A moderate amount of anxiety and stress is a natural part of everyday life and is usually an indication that your body is responding to the problems it must overcome. Jet lag, a new language, unfamiliar foods, registration, beginning classes, and even changes in the weather can take their toll. Recognize that you are tense, then slow down and try to relax. Use the same stress-relief techniques you use at home—exercise, meditation, reading, etc. Get plenty of rest upon arrival!

Just as it does when you are at home, stress will come and go with the days. Sometimes, stress can be more augmented when you are studying abroad – there are different kinds of stress. Remember that some stress is natural, and think about what is specifically affecting you. Are you experiencing culture shock? (See the Cultural Adjustment and Culture Shock chapters) Are your usual stress-relief techniques not available? What makes you feel better? If the feelings of stress do not subside after time, or you are seeing symptoms of too much stress be sure to seek out help (i.e. significant weight loss/gain, sleeping issues, hair loss etc.).

ASK QUESTIONS

Lifestyles overseas may be very different from what you are used to back home. This is true even in cultures that seem relatively similar to the United States. You cannot assume that the experiences and practices you took for granted at home will be accepted in your host country. If you are not sure about something, whether it is a simple question about where a service can be found, or a more complex matter, such as expectations about friendship and dating, ask someone you trust.

Ask about safety issues such as local transportation, traffic patterns, swimming practices at regional beaches, and use of electrical appliances. Ask about security issues such as neighborhood or building security, personal security during evenings and other outings, and culture-specific behavior or security concerns related to gender.



4 - Managing Your Money in Another Country

In this chapter you will find:

- Advice on making a budget and forms of money
- Safeguarding money and other valuables

Managing your finances is an important and challenging aspect of a successful and enjoyable academic experience abroad. Dealing with a new currency and cost of living are the beginning of the challenge. Before you leave home, pay attention to the exchange rate between the U.S. dollar and your host country's currency train yourself to think in that currency.

Planning a Budget

When considering how much money you will need for your time abroad, it is difficult to make guidelines—you will likely spend as much as you take. You should first check your program description to see what items are included in the program fee. You will need to bring funds to cover all other expenses. The amount you will need for incidental expenses will depend to some degree on your lifestyle, as well as local costs. Take a close look at your current expenses and prepare a budget for yourself based on the estimated expenses. Use the following list to think about all the possible expenses you may have:

- Meals/drinks
- Transportation
- Books
- Personal expenses (toiletries, haircuts, prescription costs, etc.)
- Recreation and travel
- Communications (phone cards, Skype minutes, internet café minutes, etc.)
- Gifts
- Clothes
- Miscellaneous daily expenses
- Entertainment
- Emergency money (in case you get stranded due to weather, miss your train connection, etc.)

TAKING MONEY: TRAVELER'S CHECKS, CASH, DEBIT AND CREDIT CARDS, AND PAYPAL

A good rule is to have access to your money in more than one way.

- Debit cards with the symbols of exchange (*Cirrus* and *Plus*) and/or Visa or MasterCard on the front can usually be used at banks and/or Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs) abroad to get local currency at the current exchange rates (bank fees also apply). Before you leave, visit your bank to make sure your card and PIN number can be used to withdraw money abroad. You should also verify the cost of transaction fees and the maximum amount that you can withdraw per day. Your receipt at the ATM abroad will give you the amount of your withdrawal in local currency, but probably not your account balance. You may also use this card to make purchases abroad just like a credit card (if a Visa or MasterCard symbol is on the front) - just as at home, the amount debited will be taken out of your checking account.
- Credit cards are handy for larger transactions and purchases in most countries. They are also handy for emergencies. But, you will want to make sure to pay your monthly bill. You can use a credit card for cash advances, but usually at a higher interest charge. Debt can accumulate quickly while abroad as the temptation to go everywhere and do everything is ever present.

- Traveler’s checks are insured, safe, and reliable; however, there is usually a small fee to buy them as well as to cash them. They are becoming less commonly accepted at stores or restaurants for specific purchases, so you may have to change them into cash at a local bank. But having a few traveler’s checks as backup to a debit and credit card may be a good way to have money on hand in case of an emergency.
- It is a good idea to arrive in your host country with some of the local currency in cash on hand. It is possible to find currency exchange stores in most major airports in the U.S. – there will likely be a fee for converting the money. You do not want to carry large amounts of cash at any time. You should not expect to be able to use a debit/credit card for restaurants, food markets, and cafes- especially in smaller cities, towns, and rural areas.

Make sure to inform your credit card company and bank of the dates you will be abroad. Otherwise your accounts may be frozen under the assumption your card has been stolen.

Safeguarding Money and Other Valuables

Every year, several students have had to deal with theft or pick pocketing incidents during their travels. All of these thefts may have been prevented with simple precautions. Your cash, traveler’s checks, cards, passport, and other valuables should be kept close to your body and out of sight when traveling. You are especially vulnerable to theft when traveling, as your attention is diverted elsewhere—money belts are an easy solution. If you have a secure housing situation, you may want to leave valuables there. If staying with a host family, ask if there is a good place for your things if you will be away for several days.

Observe the people around you – Do they show their cell phone in public? What do they do when they get change back – put it in their pocket right away or pull out their wallet? A good strategy to protect your things and avoid attention is to observe how your host culture interacts with valuables, especially in public places. There is probably a reason no one else is using their smart phone on the bus.

Keep a record of your account numbers and a list of important phone numbers separate from the originals in case of loss or theft. You should also have an extra photocopy of the inside page of your passport (the page with your photo and bio information on it). Again, it is important to keep copies of these documents separate from the originals—if your wallet is stolen, a copy of your I.D. kept inside your wallet will be useless. We recommend that you consider purchasing travel insurance and/or look into a policy that covers personal property. You may already be covered under a parent’s homeowner’s policy.

Emergency Money

Mother Nature is unpredictable. She causes winter storms and volcanic eruptions that shut down entire airports and transit systems leaving students and passengers stranded away from their host university. For these reasons, and many more that might cause you to need financial support in a pinch, please consider having a stash of emergency money easily accessible to you while you are abroad. This money is best when it can be used as cash as some countries use credit cards far less frequently than the U.S. does. You can decide upon the amount that is best for you, however make sure it is enough to provide you shelter in a hostel or hotel and feed you for at least 2-3 days.



5 - Living Abroad

In this chapter you will find:

- Housing information
- Conditions of student housing
- General cultural differences in living situations
- Student behavior/dismissal
- Travel during program
- Travel safety
- Discouragement of vehicle rental

Housing Information

Most programs include housing, which may mean staying with a host family (homestay), sharing an apartment, or other student housing. Some programs include one to three meals a day, particularly if you live with a host family. Program specific information can be found on your program page on the OIE's website. Housing and meals will also be discussed at your Site Specific Pre-departure meeting.

Staying with a host family? Read here.

HOMESTAYS AND MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

A large part of your upcoming adventure is your stay with a host family. The relationship you build with your host can be significant in your overall experience abroad. Students frequently say that living with their homestay family is the highlight of their program. Hosts may be a family, a widow, or a couple. They are likely to be experienced in receiving international students and are expected to provide an enjoyable and beneficial environment for their student(s). They provide you an opportunity to experience daily life up close and increase your foreign language skills through daily conversations.

Though your hosts may be curious about and interested in U.S. Americans, it is important to realize that you are a paying guest and that they are receiving you into their home, in part, as a means of augmenting their income. Your host's apartment or house may be very different than what you are accustomed to. For instance, the home may have only one bathroom shared by all family members, rooms may be smaller and fewer in number or hot water may be carefully rationed. Remember, it is important to be respectful.

Try not to form preconceived notions about what to expect and be open to the situation in which you are placed. Chances are the reality of your living situation will be different than you expect which can cause disappointment and resistance to adaptation. It is hard – but try not to imagine what the experience will be like.

Some things you can expect:

Students stay in homes in town or in a nearby suburb. Generally, the hosts are of an economic level that provides a relatively comfortable standard of living and modern home facilities. Housing arrangements vary, from boarder situations to being accepted as one of the family. The individuals and families that host students have agreed to provide adequate accommodations for students, including a private bedroom with study facilities, heating, bed linens, and meals. You will not lack the basics, but you will not have luxuries you are used to like computers, unlimited phone access, and an open refrigerator.

TIP

Communication is a must with your host family. Be prepared to talk about everything from how to use the shower to whether you are allowed to use the kitchen.
Ask questions!

As a guest, you are the one who is expected to adapt to local customs and abide by household rules and expectations. Within the first few days of your arrival try to reach an early understanding with your hosts regarding rules and customs in the household, especially with regard to such things as the use of hot water, helping with meals, and having guests. Learn to be sensitive to others' reactions to your words and actions. Be aware that what is "normal" at home might not be at all acceptable in other cultures (e.g. having friends over, leaving lights on, entering certain rooms, etc.) It is important to be conscious of the culture gap that exists. A gracious attitude toward your hosts will go a long way in overcoming the cultural misunderstandings that inevitably arise. Sensitivity, awareness, and thoughtfulness are qualities that will help make your homestay a positive experience and will enhance your academic work and leisure time. A small gift at the beginning of your stay, such as something specific to your hometown, is a thoughtful way to ease awkwardness. Pictures of your family and school life are also good icebreakers and will help your hosts get to know you better.

HOTELS AND HOSTELS

Staying in a hotel or hostel? Read here.

At some sites, hotels or hostels are provided for student housing. Since you are renting the space and sharing the facilities with other students the same basic standards of courtesy you are used to in the U.S. apply. Loud music and noise may not be tolerated to the extent they are in the U.S. You are expected to abide by the housing rules.

Try not to form preconceived notions about what to expect and be open to the situation in which you are placed. Chances are the reality of your living situation will be different than you expect which can cause disappointment and resistance to adaptation. It is hard – but try not to imagine what the experience will be like.

If you are staying in a hotel or hostel situation then you will likely eat out for most meals. Be prepared to be flexible – what is inexpensive in the U.S. is not always cheap abroad. Explore the local cuisine and you may even find a new favorite food!

CONDITIONS OF STUDENT HOUSING

Everyone read here.

By enrolling in a Willamette program, each student recognizes and accepts that American customs differ from those of other cultures and agrees to the following conditions of student housing. Disregarding these conditions may result in dismissal from the program. As a participant on a WU or WU Approved program you:

- Accept full responsibility for any damage or ill you cause during your stay.
- Accept full responsibility for any debts that you incur during your stay.
- Accept full responsibility for the security of your personal property.
- Will make an effort to adjust to living with your host(s) (with reference to meal times, eating habits, having guests, difference in living standards and common courtesy).
- Understand and agree that if the host agrees to provide meals other than those included in the program costs, you are responsible for the additional costs, at a rate stipulated by the host.
- Agree that in the event that a conflict or grievance arises with the host/property owner, you will attempt to resolve it with the host/property owner directly. In the event that a resolution is not achieved, you will contact the on-site program staff or Office of International Education staff.

General Cultural Differences in Living Situations

Meals

The provision of meals varies across programs, so check specific program information for what is included in your particular program. As in the United States, some hosts are more prepared than others to adapt their cooking to varying dietary needs. If you have certain dietary needs or preferences, you should discuss these with your host to see what can be accommodated and what you may need to do on your own. Hosts are not expected to cater to dietary preferences, but most are open to helping you find food you like. You should prepare yourself to try new things!

Phones

Because phone service is extremely expensive outside of the United States, international and local telephone calls may not be made from your host family's home without the permission of the host each and every time. Families are often charged for local calls in the same way that long distance calls are charged in the United States. See the chapter on Preparation for Departure for more information on international and local calling.

Water and Electricity

Water and electricity are also extremely expensive and, thus, people in other countries tend to use much less of them than people do in the U.S. Your homestay or flat mates may have strict rules about when you may shower or bathe. In an effort to keep good relations, be aware of what may be considered excessive usage by your hosts—your host will appreciate your efforts to conserve resources. Also, while traveling, be ready to purchase water and pay for the use of public restrooms.

Local Transportation

In most cases you will use the local public transportation system to get around town, travel to your classes, and take care of personal needs. Your site director will introduce you to local forms of transport. You will soon become familiar with using local buses, trains, subways, or taxis on a daily basis. In compact cities, your main form of transportation may be on foot. In any event, you will find that most host nationals are very accustomed to traveling on public transport and walk far more often than U.S. Americans!

Alcohol Abuse

Many students mistake the lower drinking ages and easy availability of alcohol abroad as a cultural acceptance of drunkenness. However, other cultures have varying relationships to alcohol, and getting drunk is almost never socially acceptable. Abuse of alcohol can bring a variety of serious consequences, including dismissal from the program.

Diversity and Identity Abroad

It is important to consider how various aspects of your identity may be impacted during your experience abroad. Understanding identity issues in your host country is part of getting to know its culture. You will want to research your destination so you have some idea of what to expect. While the unknowns can be scary, being prepared for various possibilities will help you prepare to navigate the differences you might encounter.

In addition to the brief advice below, more extensive resources related these and other aspects of identity are available on the OIE website [Diversity and Identity Abroad](#) page under Accepted to Study Abroad. We strongly encourage you to utilize those resources prior to your departure as well.

Accessibility

Every country has different attitudes toward people with various disabilities. While many programs may be able to offer a range of academic or other accommodations, it is important to remember that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) applies only within the U.S. The accommodations available to you may be different from what you receive at Willamette and, depending on your needs, may be at an additional cost to you. It is important to discuss your plans to study abroad with the Accessible Education Services office at Willamette. We strongly encourage you also to discuss your needs with an OIE advisor who can help you explore resources available in your program.

Race and ethnicity

In the U.S., you may identify strongly with your ethnicity, but abroad you may find that people identify you first as an American. You may also find that people you encounter are much more direct in the way they talk about race and ethnicity. If someone says or does something that is offensive to you, try to distinguish between a person who is genuinely curious about you and someone who has bad intentions. Consider in advance your support network at home and abroad so you can be prepared if an incident does arise and cultivate local connections who can help you process your experiences in the host culture.

LGBTQ+

Depending on the local culture, you may feel more or less comfortable sharing aspects of your identity with others than what you do at home. Be informed and aware of the attitudes, customs, and laws of your host country. You are encouraged to observe the local culture for a period of time before you decide how open you want to be with your sexuality and/or gender identity.

If you are transgender, you may find that people in the local culture have little to no experience with transgender issues or people in transition. You may be asked a number of questions, some which may feel very intrusive. It may get tiring, but patience and understanding is key to communicating across cultures and building safe spaces. You are encouraged to discuss your questions, concerns or needs with an OIE advisor before you go abroad.

Gender Roles

As a guest in the host culture, you are expected to adapt your dress and behavior to conform to local norms. This is true for women and men. These norms often are related to dress or appearance, the role men and women play in the society, religion, and interpersonal behaviors to name a few. If you are considering dating, learning the dating rules in the host culture for both women and men can be helpful. Be aware of cultural differences, including body language, that may be misinterpreted in your host culture. Regardless of cultural differences, sexual harassment is never acceptable behavior and resources are available from Willamette if you experience harassment abroad. (see Sexual Harassment in the chapter on Staying Healthy Abroad).

REMEMBER:

The OIE and other campus resources continue to be available to you while you are abroad. If you experience any incidents related to aspects of your identity while abroad, please reach out for information or assistance.

Student Behavior/Dismissal

While abroad, students do not only represent Willamette University, but the United States of America as well. Your actions, good and bad, can affect the relationships that Willamette University maintains with other universities, partner programs and even other countries! Over the years the OIE has seen multiple examples where Willamette students have created special relationships with their host university, host families, etc. which have benefited the university as a whole and arguably, even the USA. The OIE and other international offices throughout the U.S. have also encountered situations where students have ruined exchange agreements and relationships between institutions because of poor behavior.

Do not underestimate the significance of your behavior abroad.

Program participants represent Willamette University and their respective third party institutions while abroad. You are expected to respect national laws, local ordinances, and cultural norms that may be very different from those in the U.S. Willamette University and the respective third party institutions do not tolerate behaviors judged to be excessive, illegal, or generally detrimental to the welfare of the individual, other participants, or the program.

Willamette University and its partner institutions reserve the right to terminate the participation of any student in the program for refusal to adhere to the appropriate standards of conduct. Any additional costs associated with early dismissal from the program are expressly the burden of the student. Please refer to the *Off-Campus Study Authorization Form* and *Willamette University Standards of Conduct* in the Official WU Forms chapter.

Travel During Your Program

Many students have traveled to faraway destinations only to realize they spent the vast majority of their time on the train and searching for lodging with little time left to see the sights.

When you do choose to travel on weekends, we recommend that you use this time to explore local sights and nearby cities. Save the more distant travel destinations for before or after your program, or during extended breaks if you are studying abroad for more than one term. Independent travel should never interfere with regular class attendance or program activities.

While you may consider leaving town every weekend to go "check out the sites," keep in mind that in the end you will gain more by getting acquainted with your hosts and immersing yourself in the local culture.

TRAVELING SAFELY

You will probably be doing more traveling than you would normally do at home. This means that you will be using buses, trains, subways, and taxis. Most countries provide convenient and inexpensive transportation for you as a student. However, there are a number of safety issues you should keep in mind, especially in urban settings:

- Wear a money belt.
- Keep your wallet in a side pocket; keep your purse closed and close to your body.
- Do not display money, jewelry, or other valuable items.
- Beware of pickpockets and purse-snatchers.
- Choose a car or compartment in a train or metro in which others are riding.
- Note the location of emergency equipment and emergency exits.
- Do not fall asleep on short rides: you could end up far from home.
- Do not stand on the edge of a train or metro platform.
- Never leave any luggage or bags unattended.
- If someone is bothering you, inform the driver, train operator, or other uniformed personnel.
- Avoid unwanted attention and confrontations.

DISCOURAGEMENT OF VEHICLE RENTAL

During any personal travel, Willamette University strongly encourages students to use mass transportation such as buses, trains, taxis, and the metro/subway, particularly in contrast to leasing a vehicle. Aside from the greater convenience and lower price afforded by these modes of transportation, this recommendation reflects concern for the safety of our program participants.

It is to be noted that Willamette University and our partnering institutions plainly discourage students from leasing or traveling by means of rented vehicles. If a program participant elects to do so, it should be understood that it is by his or her own volition, and that he or she is therefore fully liable for all risks associated with operating vehicles. Please refer to the *Off-Campus Study Authorization and Release Agreement for Willamette University Sponsored Study Abroad Programs* in the Official WU Forms chapter.



6 - Safety, Security, and Legal Issues Abroad

In this chapter you will find:

- Guidelines for participants
- Guidelines for parents and guardians
- Security guidelines and tips (political unrest, sexual assault)
- Legal matters

Participants can have a major impact on their own health and safety abroad through the decisions they make before and during the program; and by their day-to-day choices and behaviors.

Study abroad programs cannot guarantee the absolute safety of participants or ensure that the potential abroad risk will not at times be greater than at home. Nor can they:

- monitor the daily personal decisions, choices, and activities of individual participants any more than is the case on the home campus;
- prevent participants from engaging in illegal or risky activities if they ignore rules and advice;
- represent the interests of participants accused of illegal activities, beyond ensuring that legal representation is available;
- assume responsibility for acts and events that are beyond their control;
- ensure local adherence to U.S. norms of due process, individual rights, political correctness and sensitivity, relationships between the sexes, or relations among racial, cultural, and ethnic groups.

The Office of International Education is always available as a resource. *NAFSA: Association of International Educators* is another good resource and recommends the following to students and their parents:

“Because the health and safety of study abroad participants are primary concerns, these guidelines have been developed to provide useful, practical guidance to institutions, participants, and parents/guardians/families. Although no set of guidelines can guarantee the health and safety needs of each individual involved in a study abroad program, these guidelines address issues that merit attention and thoughtful judgment.”

Guidelines for Participants:

1. Read and carefully consider all materials issued or recommended by the program sponsor that relate to safety, health, legal, environmental, political, cultural, and religious conditions in host countries.
2. Consider your health and personal circumstances when applying for or accepting a place in a program.
3. Make available to the program sponsor accurate and complete physical and mental health information along with any other personal data that is necessary in planning for a safe and healthy study abroad experience.
4. Assume responsibility for all the elements necessary for your personal preparation for the program and participate fully in program orientations.
5. Obtain and maintain appropriate insurance coverage and abide by any conditions imposed by the carriers.
6. Inform parents/guardians/families, and any others who may need to know about your participation in the study abroad program. Provide them with emergency contact information and keep them informed about your whereabouts on an ongoing basis. When you have arrived at your destination and have specific contact information such as an address for where you are, give this information to those who will want to have contact with you while you are abroad.
7. Understand and comply with the terms of participation, codes of conduct, and emergency procedures of your program, and obey host-country laws.
8. Be aware of local conditions and customs that may present health or safety risks when making daily decisions. Express any health or safety concerns to the program staff or other appropriate individuals.
9. Behave in a manner that is respectful of the rights and well-being of others and encourage others to behave in a similar manner.

10. Accept responsibility for your own decisions and actions.
11. Become familiar with the procedures for obtaining health and law enforcement services in the host country.
12. Follow the program policies for keeping program staff informed of your whereabouts and wellbeing.

Guidelines for Parents and Guardians

In study abroad as in other settings, parents, guardians, and families can play an important role in the health and safety of participants by helping them make decisions and by influencing their behavior overseas. The Office of International Education will ask you to fill out a Parent Contact Form at the beginning of your pre departure process via an announcement on WISE. By filling out this form you are allowing us to send out a one-time letter introducing the office, a brochure about how to support students who are studying abroad, and references to information that can be found on our website. This form is not a requirement.

This is the only information that will be sent to your parents and we will not be able to send it to them without your submission of the Parent Contact Form. Your parents will not receive copies of materials, notices you receive from our office, or information about your program directly from us.

When appropriate, parents or guardians should:

1. Obtain and carefully evaluate health and safety information related to the program provided by the sponsor and other sources.
2. Be involved in the decision of the participant to enroll in a particular program.
3. Engage the participant in a thorough discussion of safety and behavior issues, insurance needs, and emergency procedures related to living abroad.
4. Be responsive to requests from the program sponsor for information needed regarding the participant.
5. Keep in touch with the participant.
6. Be aware that the participant rather than the program advisor may most appropriately provide some information.

Security

No matter how safe your campus and community appear to be, you should acquaint yourself with your new environment by reading and listening to the safety information given during your on-site orientations. You should push yourself to think about security differences to which you may not be immediately aware.

Consider the factors placing study abroad students at risk:

- You may not speak the local language well.
- You will generally be traveling by public transportation.
- You may stand out in a crowd.
- You have not yet learned the best way to say “no” in this culture.
- You may not yet have picked up the “clues” in this culture that you are in danger.

Tips to Reduce Risks:

- Familiarize yourself with your neighborhood and campus by walking around in the daylight.
- Ask fellow students or staff members about areas you should avoid at night.
- Do not walk alone at night.
- Locate the police station that serves your neighborhood.
- Locate the nearest fire-alarm box and learn how to report a fire.
- Identify the hospital emergency room nearest to your home and know what to do in case of an accident.
- Keep emergency numbers near your phone at home. Check to see if your host country has a system similar to “911”.
- Ask your site director for further information on safety, health, etc.
- Be cautious, not fearful—most incidents happen when you get careless.
- Exercise the same precautions you would in any U.S. city. In unfamiliar surroundings you may not know the real concerns.

- Use common sense.
- Never carry large amounts of cash! Use money belts or a concealed purse for your passport, visa, money, credit cards and other documents.
- Don't leave your luggage alone. If you want to explore a city, leave your belongings in the checked luggage area, which will probably only cost a couple of dollars in local currency.
- You will probably look like a tourist, at least for awhile, and you may be targeted as an "easy target," so be aware.
- Listening for what is being said around you, pay attention to how those around you behave.
- Avoid being in unfamiliar neighborhoods.
- Hitchhiking is definitely **not** recommended.

The following ideas are for emergency and non-emergency situations:

Keep in Contact with Home

Your parents and friends will have concerns while you are away.

Please keep in contact with your family on a regular basis and let them know how you are doing. If you make plans to call at a certain time, make every attempt to call at that time. Otherwise, people may worry unnecessarily. If you plan to travel during your program, leave your itinerary with the host coordinator and with your family.

Give your family more than one way to contact you while abroad, one of which should be a phone number for someone in your host country who will know how to reach you. This will alleviate some unnecessary worry for your friends and family if they need to reach you in an emergency situation.

Stay Informed

Stay well informed about local and regional news and conditions. Read local newspapers as well as U.S. media such as the *Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times* that have good international coverage and analysis of local problems and issues. You may want to research local and national laws and practices before you depart. The internet is a good start for your research. Talk to your host family and friends about news; find out what the stories mean to them and to the community around you. How does this news impact you as an American abroad?

Everybody faces challenges while abroad and it's easy to "vent" to family and friends; be sure to also include them in your joyful experiences to prevent them from worrying from afar.

Avoid Political Unrest

There is increased risk of anti-American activity during periods of political conflict and economic change that involve the U.S. and other nations. You can minimize risks and avoid obvious dangers by keeping a low profile, not wearing clothes that signal your nationality (baseball caps, college sweatshirts, etc.), avoiding large groups of other Americans, staying away from demonstrations, and generally keeping out of harm's way. Do not frequent places that may make you vulnerable by association. For example, some restaurants or clubs have reputations for being American hangouts, such as McDonalds and Burger King. Avoid them if possible.

Keep a Low Profile

Walk away from trouble and take a passive approach to any potentially volatile situations (including political protests). Do not give information about your school, the students, or professors.

Stay Alert

Be aware of your surroundings, including unknown individuals hanging around your building or any strange activity nearby. Be suspicious of unexpected packages, letters with no return addresses and/or excessive postage, and especially letters that appear to contain more than just paper. Be careful of who has access to your room or apartment. Visitors should be screened and delivery persons should be asked for identification, and should not be left unsupervised.

Take Precautions

Take the same precautions you would at home to ensure your safety. Do not give out your name or address to unknown people. Know where the nearest police station and hospital are and keep emergency numbers handy. Do not go into unsafe or unknown areas alone after dark.

Student Property Insurance

Willamette University's policy regarding student property is the same when students are abroad even when in a homestay situation. Students are responsible for maintaining their own personal property insurance and liability coverage for damage, loss/theft of property, or fire. Please refer to WU's website for more information: willamette.edu/dept/resservices/information/bring/index.html. We recommend that you purchase travel insurance and/or personal property coverage if you are not already covered under a parent's homeowner's policy.

Willamette Support

Collectively, the Office of International Education staff has many years of experience in dealing with the unexpected. They have an excellent track record of anticipating and helping resolve challenges students may face as they assimilate into a new culture, language, and environment. Please call us any time with questions or concerns; we are happy to help in any way we can. Contact us at (503) 375-5493 or oeiadvising@willamette.edu

Legal Matters

There are a number of common legal matters you should be aware of, regardless of your host country. Some of these issues are much more serious than others, so please read the following sections carefully so that you are aware of the risk and liability involved. While you are abroad, your university cannot assume ANY responsibility for your actions.

Registering

Some countries require students to register with the local police department. Your site director will advise you if you need to do this.

Illegal Drugs

Never travel with marijuana or any other contraband drugs. Your university cannot assume responsibility for you if you are apprehended for drug use. Therefore, it is Willamette University's policy that the use of marijuana and other contraband drugs by students on an overseas program cannot be tolerated. Whether it is by you alone or when you are participating in an organized program event, the use of even a small amount of an illegal drug can jeopardize your welfare and the future of the program. Please refer to the *Off Campus Study Authorization and Release Agreement* in the Official WU Forms chapter.

Even in places where the use of drugs by local citizens is either ignored or treated very lightly, U.S. American students, when apprehended indulging in or in possession of contraband, can be dealt with in a very harsh manner. If someone selling drugs approaches you, walk away. Do not talk with that person—a conversation with a suspected narcotics pusher is seen as an act of “intent to purchase” in some countries. Laws concerning drugs are much more stringent (and penalties more severe) in Latin America, Asia, and Europe than in the U.S. Conditions of imprisonment in a foreign jail are not something you want to experience. Remember that when abroad, being a citizen of the United States does not ensure special treatment or consideration. You are subject to the laws of the country you are in—the U.S. Consulate cannot get you released if you are arrested, they can only notify family and arrange for legal representation.

Legal Rights Abroad:

- Once travelers leave U.S. jurisdiction, they are not protected by U.S. laws and have no U.S. constitutional rights abroad.
- Few countries provide trial by jury.
- Pretrial detention may involve months of confinement in primitive prison conditions.
- Trials frequently involve lengthy delays and are conducted in the language of the foreign country.

Drug Arrests Abroad:

- Sentences for possession or trafficking of drugs can range from 2 to 25 years and possible heavy fines.
- In some countries—like Turkey, Egypt, Malaysia, and Thailand—conviction may lead to a life sentence or even imposition of a death penalty.
- Several countries have stiffened their penalties for drug violations and imposed stricter enforcement of existing drug laws. Proposed laws in Mexico will increase the maximum sentence for drug trafficking from 15 to 20 years.

What U.S. Consular Officers Can Do:

- Ensure insofar as possible that the detainee's rights under local law are fully observed and that humane treatment is accorded under internationally accepted standards.
- Visit the U.S. citizen as soon as possible after the foreign government has notified the U.S. embassy or consulate of the arrest.
- Provide the detainee with a list of local attorneys from which to select defense counsel.
- Contact family or friends for financial or medical aid and food, if requested to do so by the detainee.

What U.S. Consular Officers Cannot Do:

- Demand U.S. citizen's release.
- Represent the detainee at trial, give legal counsel, or pay legal fees or other related expenses with U.S. Government funds.
- Intervene in a foreign country's court system or judicial process to obtain special treatment.

Sexual Misconduct including Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment, Stalking, Dating Violence and Domestic Violence

Sexual misconduct (sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, dating violence and domestic violence) occurs in all countries; how it is dealt with varies from culture to culture. Be aware that laws regarding sexual misconduct are not the same in every country and the philosophy regarding who is a victim and what rights you are afforded as a victim may vary significantly and be extremely different from what you are used to in the US. Law enforcement and criminal justice system response may be significantly different from what you are accustomed to here.

Your on-site program coordinator can help explain the laws of your host country and what to expect when reporting cases of sexual misconduct. Depending on your program, your on-site coordinator may be your site director, the international students' office (like OIE) or the ISEP coordinator at the host campus. In some cases, an immediate point of contact for help might be a housing coordinator or another staff member at the campus or program location where you are studying. If you are traveling on a program with a WU faculty member, he or she is also a good point of contact for help.

Understand that your program coordinator may not be a confidential resource. If your coordinator is a WU faculty member, they are not a confidential resource. All WU employees, except those designated as a confidential resource (see below), are required to report to Willamette if they find out someone has been hurt or is hurting others. If you disclose to a Willamette employee, the person can help you make a report to Willamette yourself and will also make one based on what you told them.

Even though you are abroad, you are still a Willamette student and therefore, the University is required to do what it can to investigate the incident and connect you with services that can help you feel safer and/or connect you with medical or mental health services.

Your Resources in a Crisis

While serious crises abroad are not common, it's important to know how to get help if you experience some form of sexual misconduct while abroad. If you are harmed by someone or receive unwanted sexual attention, you are encouraged to take the following steps:

1. Ensure your immediate safety and seek medical care, if needed. Contact local authorities or your program coordinator immediately to help you to access the appropriate resources on campus or in the community for care and support. If your program coordinator is a Willamette employee, they will also report the incident to Willamette so that support services can be offered to you as soon as possible.
2. **Confidential resources:** If you wish to seek confidential support or learn more about your reporting options, rights as a WU student or ways the university can provide remedies to help you, contact Andrea Doyle Hugmeyer, Confidential Advocate, at +1-503-375-5361 or ahugmeyer@willamette.edu. For confidential counseling support, you can call Willamette's WUTalk 24/7 confidential counseling line at +1-503-375-5353. Other confidential resources are listed below.
3. Contact the OIE at Willamette or request that your program coordinator contact the OIE on your behalf. Doing so allows Willamette to offer services and support to you as well. Office of International Education, Willamette University, +1-503-375-5493 or oiadvising@willamette.edu.
4. If you do not disclose the incident to OIE staff or other required reporters like WU faculty in their role as a program coordinator, you can access institutional support by submitting a report online through the sexual misconduct reporting form. You are encouraged to report the incident to Willamette as soon as possible. If you disclosed to a Willamette faculty, staff or volunteer, they will also make a report and can assist you in making yours.

Reporting the incident: Willamette's online form is the easiest way to report sexual misconduct. The form is found at this website (<http://www.willamette.edu/notalone/>) on the right side bar, click on "Report an Incident." Someone from the team at Willamette dealing with these issues will contact you promptly to talk with you about what happened and help connect you to the appropriate resources. Note that you can make an anonymous report, but that will make reaching out to you, providing you with resources and support, and ensuring your safety impossible. Be sure to include your email and phone contact information if you want the university to help you.

Confidential Willamette Resources

- Lisa Logan, Confidential Advocate +1-503-375-5361 or confidential-advocate@willamette.edu
- Sexual Assault Response Advocates (SARAs), Hotline: +1-503-851-4245 or -851-4245 or SARA-Resources@willamette.edu
- WUTalk – 24/7 confidential counseling for Willamette students. +1-503-375-5353. You can access this service while you are abroad. WUTalk can provide support for counseling needs.

Non-Confidential Willamette Resources

- Olivia Muñoz, Dean of Students for Community Care & Inclusion
+1-503-370-6810 or omunoz@willamette.edu
- Office of International Education, Willamette University, +1-503-375-5493 or offcampus@willamette.edu
- Office of Campus Safety, Willamette University, +1-503-370-6911 or safety@willamette.edu
- Ann James, Willamette University Title IX Coordinator, ajames2@willamette.edu

United States National Contacts:

- National Sexual Assault Hotline – a free, secure and confidential online hotline available at: <https://ohl.rainn.org/online/> If you are in the U.S., call 1.800.656.HOPE
- National Domestic Violence Hotline (also for dating violence and stalking) via online chat if you are abroad at: <http://www.thehotline.org/what-is-live-chat/>. If you are in the U.S., call 1-800-799-SAFE (7233).
- Stalking Resource Center: <http://www.victimsofcrime.org/our-programs/stalking-resource-center/help-for-victims>

Jurisdiction

The university maintains responsibility for and jurisdiction over students while abroad. As noted above that means Willamette is obligated to respond when made aware of a Willamette student being harmed. At the same time, if the Willamette student is the person harming someone, that student may be subject to an investigation and the university's Code of Student Conduct while still abroad or upon return, depending on the circumstances. Consequences vary, but could result in a student being removed from a study abroad program pending investigation or at the conclusion of an investigation. More about jurisdiction can be found here: http://willamette.edu/offices/conduct/student_rights/jurisdiction.html

Definition of Sexual Misconduct

Sexual misconduct encompasses any unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature that is committed without consent or by force, intimidation, coercion or manipulation. Sexual misconduct can occur between persons of the same or different genders. Sexual misconduct may vary in its severity and consist of a range of behaviors or attempted behaviors.

Sexual conduct norms vary from culture to culture. The definitions of misconduct below are based on U.S. culture and Willamette policy. You may find these definitions vary in the host culture where you are studying. Because of varying cultural norms, program coordinators or other local support people may hold similar or different perspectives about sexual misconduct than you would expect from faculty or staff here at Willamette. We encourage you to reach out to Willamette as an additional resource and point of support in the event that you experience any type of sexual misconduct while abroad.

Sexual Misconduct as defined by Willamette University but is not limited to:

- Sexual Harassment
 - Sexual Harassment is gender-based verbal, written or physical activity that is so severe, pervasive or objectively offensive that it interferes with an individual's academic performance or ability to benefit from the educational opportunities or activities of the University or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work, living or academic environment..
- Intimate Partner Violence (Including Dating and Domestic Violence)
 - Intimate Partner Violence is actual or threatened physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse. This type of violence can occur among partners of any sex or gender.
- Sexual Exploitation
 - Sexual Exploitation is taking non-consensual or abusive sexual advantage of another for one's own advantage or benefit or to benefit another person.
- Non-Consensual Sexual Contact (or attempt to commit same)
 - Non-Consensual Sexual Contact is any intentional sexual touching however slight, with any object (penis, finger, tongue, or other object), by a person upon another person without consent. Sexual contact includes intentional contact with the breasts, buttocks, groin, or genitals, or touching with any of these body parts, or making another touch another person or themselves with any of these body parts or any other intentional bodily contact of a sexual manner.
- Non-Consensual Sexual Intercourse (or attempt to commit same)

- Non-Consensual Sexual Intercourse is unwanted penetration of the vagina or anus with a penis, finger, tongue, or other object, and oral copulation (mouth to genital contact or genital to mouth contact.)

Definition of Harassment

Harassment can be any behavior that results in an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work, living or academic environment; includes harassment on the basis sex, race, cultural background, religion, political creed, marital status, age, sexual orientation or disability, as well as the existence of a hostile environment that is created, encouraged, accepted, tolerated or left uncorrected; and includes:

- Bullying (including cyber-bullying), a form of harassment, is abusive treatment (may be verbal, physical, written, or otherwise), the use of force or coercion to affect others, particularly when patterned and involving an imbalance of power (real or perceived); or
- Stalking (including cyber-stalking), a form of harassment, refers to repeated harassing or threatening behavior by an individual using various forms of contact to pursue, harass, or to make unwelcomed contact with another person in an unsolicited fashion. Any unwanted contact between two people that directly or indirectly communicates a threat or places the victim or a third party, such as a roommate or friend, in fear, can be considered stalking.

Willamette's complete policy pertaining to Standards of Conduct and Sexual Misconduct can be found through this link: https://willamette.edu/dept/conduct/student_rights/standards_conduct.html

The Willamette Sexual Misconduct Reporting form and other resources can be found through this link: https://willamette.edu/dept/policies/selected/students/sexual_conduct.html

These semester students have great tips applicable to summer programs too!

Advice from Abroad:

Eleanor Timmermann, Granada



NAVIGATING THE CHALLENGES

Study abroad can be one of the most valuable and exciting times of a student's academic career, however that is not to say it does not come with its challenges. Frankly, I believe these very challenges are what make study abroad so memorable and rewarding. So, be ready. For some, the excitement of being in a new country fogs these challenges at first, but trust me they come at some point for everyone and they also look different for everyone. Try not to compare your experience to others during these times. Social media can lead to glamorization of study abroad, so definitely keep that in mind when you're scrolling through Instagram and posting on your own. Your time abroad is completely different from that of even people in your own program. Instead of comparing and dwelling in these challenges, work through them, understand them and continue riding the rollercoaster because trust me it's a fast one (cheesy I know, but it is very true).

For me, the cultural differences were not too hard to adapt to, but as a result of being in such a personally special place I had to work through some really tough emotions that I was not expecting. As I mentioned, don't hesitate to work through these emotions, because feeling everything and coming to terms with all of it allows for you to appreciate your time abroad to the fullest degree. Embrace the unknown, embrace all the emotions and do whatever you need to cope. For me, I found bullet journaling to be very beneficial and now I have all my writing and doodles to look back on and see how much I have grown. I also talked to my host mom about what I was feeling which on top of helping me adapt, also allowed for great language practice and an opportunity to bond with her. I suggest that before going abroad you reflect on some sort of plan you will put into action when these challenges do arise. I promise it'll help, and on top of that it serves as something super cool to look back on.

Advice from Abroad:

Nell Hensley, Galway

ENGAGING IN THE COMMUNITY

As soon as I started my semester of study abroad, I knew I wanted to engage with the community I was living in as much as possible. This meant not only going to classes and having fun with my US peers, but really diving in on my own to see what local events and activities I could participate in. By doing so, I hoped to learn more about the people and culture and come out with a broader worldview and better sense of self. I also found this as an opportunity to become more independent and build connections with people. There is some risk involved in putting yourself out there, perhaps you feel nervous about looking foolish, but remember that study abroad is a time to make mistakes and learn and grow from them—you're not a local, of course you don't know everything! Accomplishing my goal took conscious and continuous dedication, as well as courage (especially as an introvert), but was very much worthwhile.

That all being said, how does one connect with a new, unfamiliar community in a short amount of time? That answer likely varies depending upon your study abroad program, but for me I found it useful to look to do online searches for interesting local hot spots and Facebook events within traveling distance. As someone who went to school and shared housing with students who grew up there, it also was great to talk with them and join whatever they were engaged in on and off campus (particularly school clubs with weekly meetings, as well as popular nightlife events young people attended.) Finally, I helped a good deal to just wander around outside as often as possible and seeing what and who you find on the streets, what events are posted on walls and lamp poles, and getting a feel of everyday life. While I always let at least one person know where I was going before exploring, I made sure to give myself time at least once a week (usually even more) by myself and with people from the area in order to become more fully engaged and not merely a tourist.



Part Two: The 'Can't Miss' Intercultural Training

This portion of the handbook contains a collection of readings, tools and resources that will be used throughout the preparation process and should be used as a resource when completing assignments while abroad. If this is your first time reading through the handbook please take a thorough read of the next few chapters now – the chapters must be read entirely before your **What's the Difference? Intercultural Preparation Seminar**.



TOP TIPS

Top 10 Tips for Immersing Yourself in the Culture

1. *Take your cross-cultural preparation seriously.*
2. *Request cross-cultural training.*
3. *Seek out others who've gone before you.*
4. *Embrace your new home and friends to be made.*
5. *Explore your neighborhood, the campus, and public transportation.*
6. *Serve as a cultural ambassador.*
7. *Recognize the signs of culture shock and how to deal with it.*
8. *Don't be too hard on yourself if you make mistakes.*
9. *Pay attention and listen carefully.*
10. *Have fun!*

Source: *A Student Guide to Study Abroad* by Stacie Nevadomski Berdan, Dr. Allan Goodman, and Sir Cyril Taylor

the Lincoln Commission (Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program, 2005) stated, "What nations don't know can hurt them. The stakes involved in study abroad are that simple, that straightforward, and that important. For their own future and that of the nation, college graduates today must be internationally competent" (p. iv).

Current research in a variety of academic disciplines is unequivocally endorsing precisely the outcomes that study abroad can provide. There is widespread acknowledgment of the need for intercultural competence, and growing recognition that sojourning abroad can be transformative. Although the majority of learners are pursuing academic and cultural outcomes, we are facing for the first time new agendas for study abroad, including corporate and healthcare internships, service learning, scientific research, and even humanitarian relief. While international educators have long argued for the intercultural perspective (Mestenhauser & Ellingboe, 1998; Paige, 2004), they have more recently been supported by other disciplines and, indeed, the academy as a whole.

In higher education, researchers have explored the interface of global citizenship, democracy, and liberal learning (Cornwell & Stoddard, 1999, 2001; Deardorff, 2005, 2006; Hovland, 2006; Meacham & Gaff, 2006; Stoddard & Cornwell, 2003) and have concluded that culture matters. According to McTighe Musil (2006),

The Association of American Colleges and Universities Greater Expectations Project on Accreditation and Assessment reported that global knowledge and engagement, along with intercultural knowledge and competence, have been identified as essential learning outcomes for all fields of concentration and for all majors. (p. 1)

From executive leadership studies to pragmatic applications, the research on corporate globalization also continues to emphasize core intercultural competencies (Boyacigiller, Beechler, Taylor, & Levy, 2004; Mendenhall, Kuhlmann, & Stahl, 2001; Osland, Bird, Mendenhall, & Osland, 2006). A recent Council on International Educational Exchange survey of over 300 employers concluded that employers value study abroad and overseas internships to a greater extent than any other form of education except foreign language learning (and, of course, the students' majors) (Vande Berg, 2007a). Summarizing the necessity of intercultural learning for future leaders, an

amicus brief (Supreme Court, 2003) was presented on behalf of 65 major U.S. businesses in the University of Michigan affirmative action case. It argued:

The students of today are this country's corporate and community leaders of the next half century. For these students to realize their potential as leaders, it is essential that they be educated in an environment where they are exposed to diverse ideas, perspectives, and interactions. Today's global marketplace and the increasing diversity in the American population demand the cross-cultural experience and understanding gained from such an education. (p. 2)

Finally, in the related field of language learning, culture has finally found its place "as the core" (Paige, Lange, & Yershova, 1999). The student guide *Maximizing Study Abroad* was designed for facilitating language acquisition in tandem with intercultural skills (Paige, Cohen, Kappler, Chi, & Lassegard, 2002). Its emphasis on predeparture, in-country and post-study-abroad self-guided observation, reflection, and practice illustrates both best practices of transformative learning and the integration of culture in language acquisition.

Across campuses, and across the world, there is an unmistakable sense that what international educators assumed was important the rest of the academy now recognizes.

Perspectives on Intercultural Competence

Often in the past, describing intercultural competence has been not unlike recognizing pornography, famously described by Justice Potter Stewart (1964) as hard to define, but "I know it when I see it."

In terms of intercultural competence, for many decades intercultural educators have known it and seen it. Ask nearly anyone in the field and she or he will regale you for hours with tales of students transformed by their overseas experiences, wise lessons learned, maturity gained, and worldviews expanded.

Times have changed. While the stories will forever thrive, now accreditation agencies are requiring more substantive attention to intercultural competence and its definition and measurement. Granting agencies are calling for greater accountability (Clayton-Pedersen, Parker, Smith, Moreno, &

Teraguchi, 2007). Organizations are developing benchmarks and scorecards by which to judge progress on diversity issues (O'Mara & Richter, 2006). Increasingly, institutions of higher learning are including in their mission statements such competences as "appreciating diversity," "building communities that acknowledge and respect difference," and "international and global understanding" (Meacham & Gaff, 2006, p. 9).

In addition, as education becomes more consumer oriented and the Ivory Tower is replaced by the student fitness center, the customers and their parents want a clear statement of outcomes and a specific return on investment: "If we underwrite our daughter's trip to Brazil, what outcomes can we expect? How will we know?"

With accountability and assessment comes a need for clarity of purpose. To measure intercultural competence, we must know what it is.

Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence has been variously related to "global competence/global mindset" (Bird & Osland, 2004), "global learning" (Hovland, 2006; McTighe Musil, 2006), "culture learning" (Paige et al., 2002), "education for democracy" (Cornwell & Stoddard, 2001), "cosmopolitan citizenship" (Stoddard & Cornwell, 2003), and "globalizing knowledge" (Cornwell & Stoddard, 1999), among others, no doubt.

However, despite the breadth of the disciplines examining the nature of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006), there is an "emerging consensus around what constitutes intercultural competence, which is most often viewed as a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts" (Bennett, in press).

Five Foundation Principles

There are five principles for developing intercultural competence that provide a foundation for our examination of this process.

I recall a study abroad advisor who, when asked what he was doing to prepare students joining him on a program in Hong Kong, noted that intercultural preparation was not necessary, since they were going to study geology, and English is commonly spoken. His lack of understanding revealed two principles central to intercultural competence.

First, cultural knowledge does not equal cultural competence. Learners can be knowledgeable about objective culture (history, politics, geography, literature, etc.) and still be unsuccessful in their daily interactions. The learners in Hong Kong may very well have been able to identify streambeds and cliff formations but unable to navigate appropriate social interactions to discuss their discoveries. Such effectiveness requires attention to subjective culture, the learned and shared values, beliefs, and behaviors of a community of interacting people.

Second, language learning may not be sufficient for culture learning. If learners concentrate only on learning language and fail to learn the culture, they may become fluent fools, able to insult people at ever-higher levels of sophistication. When individuals are articulately rude, it is often an unrecolvable error.

A third principle of culture learning suggests that disequilibrium need not lead to dissatisfaction. Disequilibrium, upsetting the balance, "results from the experience of differences that causes cognitive irritation, emotional imbalance, and a disruption of one's own worldview" (Ottren, 2003, p. 15). The resulting teachable moments, or trigger events, are often the stimuli for developing intercultural competence. Well facilitated, such events can turn culture shock into culture learning.

A fourth principle notes that cultural contact does not necessarily lead to competence. The mere intermingling of individuals in intercultural contexts is not likely to produce, in itself, intercultural learning. Bennett and Salonen (2007), citing psychologist George Kelly, note, "learning from experience requires more than being in the vicinity of events when they occur. Learning emerges from our capacity to construe those events and then to reconstruct them in transformative ways" (p. 46). In the study abroad context, learners may be in the vicinity of Asian events when they occur but be having an American experience. It becomes the educator's task to facilitate reconstructing those events as *Asian*.

The fifth principle is that cultural contact does not always lead to a significant reduction of stereotypes. The well-known contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954; Amir, 1969) and the meta-analysis of 50 years of subsequent research (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000) suggest key conditions for intercultural contact to reduce stereotypes and prejudice, and note that international contact (apart from limited tourism) and optimally structured programs typically have larger effects than domestic contact. Once again, "intervention strategies are required to achieve these outcomes" (Ward, 2001, p. 27).

Defining the Illusive Intercultural Competencies

Frequently, researchers have enumerated lengthy lists of knowledge, attitudes, and skills that constitute intercultural competence. (For a comprehensive examination of this research, see Deardorff, 2006.) However, for purposes of centering international education at the heart of liberal education, this discussion will review those core competencies only briefly, instead concentrating on the unique educational potential of the intercultural encounter.

The Mindset: Cognitive Competencies

The most commonly cited knowledge areas within the cognitive dimension, or *mindset*, include culture-general knowledge, culture-specific knowledge, identity development patterns, cultural adaptation processes, and the first priority: cultural self-awareness.

When we talk of culture-general knowledge in study abroad, we mean more than knowing anthropological systems for analyzing culture, more than research on values. Instead, we refer to culture frameworks that are also contextualized in awareness of the cultural filters we use, as well as the filters used by others. Viewing truth as a "collaborative project" (Stoddard & Cornwell, 2003, p. 4) and using the contemporary metaphor of a Global Positioning System (GPS), Stoddard and Cornwell observe,

A GPS is not reliable when it is trying to position one on the globe through information from only one satellite. In fact, a GPS determines one's position by reconciling information from multiple sources; it works on an epistemology of triangulation. The more satellites used as sources of information, the more certain the location is. This serves as a model for the way one needs to collect perspectives from differently situated knowers and citizens around the world in order to be able to make informed judgments, to have a sufficient base for knowledge. (p. 5)

Consistent with the Stoddard and Cornwell metaphor, Paige (2004) describes necessary "positioning" competencies that include, among other cognitive tasks, "exploring alternative and sometimes contradictory theories" (p. 39) as well as seeing various disciplines and their origins, perspectives, and practices as culturally influenced.

While not often noted in the international education literature, the domestic concerns about cultural and racial identity and privilege are also essential constructs in the international arena as offered by McTighe Musil (2006), who urges an examination of "privilege, power, democratic opportunity, and patterned stratifications" (p. 11).

The Skillset: Behavioral Competencies

The behavioral dimension, or *skillset*, typically includes such characteristics and skills as the ability to empathize, gather appropriate information, listen, perceive accurately, adapt, initiate and maintain relationships, resolve conflict, and manage social interactions and anxiety.

For the learners on study abroad the ability to gather appropriate information entails not only reading, researching, and experiential learning but also the use of cultural mentors (Osland & Bird, 2000), those precious individuals who are able and willing to use awareness of their own culture for enlightening visitors, interpreting the local culture, and alerting them to the realities they have missed. In return, the learner has to be willing to apply new insights in ways that take cultural values, beliefs, and behaviors into account.

Daloz's (2000) work on transformative learning investigated individuals' experiences with someone they viewed as different. He entitled this experience "constructive engagement with otherness," and goes on to relate this to empathy:

For the experience to be more than simply an encounter, for it to be a constructive engagement, there had to be some sense of empathic connection with people different from themselves. In some significant way the inner experience of the other was engaged, a bond was formed, and some deep lesson about connection across differences was learned. (p. 110)

It is from such trigger events that transformative intercultural learning can take place. Daloz (2000) defines the condition on which engagement with otherness can lead to greater social responsibility: the presence of difference where "the encounter crossed some earlier boundary between 'us' and 'them,' and made available an alternative way of being, a different voice that challenged the earlier assumptions about how life is and made possible the construction of a new 'we'" (p. 113).

In addition, transformative learning includes the opportunity for reflective discourse, in a climate of safety, within a mentoring community with the possibility of forming durable commitments and acting on them. His recommendations are echoed in the study abroad literature, where the necessity of processing critical incidents and facilitating intercultural experiences—rather than just *having* them—is well-recognized.

The Heartset: Affective Competencies

The affective dimension, or *heartset*, of attitudes and motivations includes, first and foremost, curiosity, as well as initiative, risk taking, suspension of judgment, cognitive flexibility, tolerance of ambiguity, cultural humility, and resourcefulness.

Curiosity is often cited as the key to intercultural competence. Gregersen, Morrison, and Black (1998) described global leaders who “stated repeatedly that inquisitiveness is the fuel for increasing their global savvy, enhancing their ability to understand people and maintain integrity, and augmenting their capacity for dealing with uncertainty and managing tension” (p. 23).

As the keystone of intercultural competence, curiosity shapes the study abroad experience as no other skill or characteristic does. Whether exploring the unique perspective of a host family, confronting poverty—and sophistication—never imagined, or simply learning to slow down and smell the curry, the sojourner is best served and educated by engaging with curiosity. Opdal (2001) describes curiosity as a sense of wonder:

Wonder . . . always points to something beyond the accepted rules. Because of this, the feeling of being overwhelmed, or the experience of humbleness and even awe could accompany it. Wonder is the state of mind that signals we have reached the limits of our present understanding, and that things may be different from how they look. (p. 331)

Reaching that learning edge where things *certainly* are different than they seem is facilitated by cultural humility, wherein we question the primacy of our worldview and accept—or even enjoy—the creative tension of holding multiple perspectives (Guskin, 1991).

Cultural humility also provides a foundation for the capacity to suspend judgments and competitiveness. Stoddard and Cornwell (2003) describe this as

a disposition not to meet differences with a desire to win, to have one's own point of view triumph over others, but instead to meet differences as a project, a sign that power and point of view are likely in play. Intercultural communication skills emerge by this analysis not simply as useful in getting by in a diverse world, but as capacities essential to build a complex account of what is the case and what is important to do. (p. 5)

7 - The Importance of Defining “Culture”

When you first walk off the plane in your host country, you may feel nervous about the new sights and sound. However, you’ll probably also feel a sense of great excitement and curiosity, an eagerness to “begin,” whatever this might mean to you. As time goes by and you settle into your routine, register for classes, begin the process of making friends and explore the area you now call home, you will go through many emotional, psychological and possibly, physical changes. This is what is known as “cultural adjustment” or “cultural adaptation.” You cannot avoid these changes, but as long as you recognize them when they occur, you will be better prepared to deal with their consequences.

It is difficult to begin a discussion on cultural adjustment without first defining the word “culture” and what its parameters are. According to the American Heritage Dictionary, “culture” is defined as “the arts, beliefs, customs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought created by a people or group at a particular time.”

Dr. Robert Kohls (see list below) found through his research that “culture” describes the total way of life of any group of people. And to complicate matters, each individual has his or her own personal culture. For instance, you may have a preference for platform shoes over sneakers, or choose rap music over classical. In short, there is no one correct list of components of culture, but the following information is intended to give you a general sense of what makes up a culture.

Before you start, take time to complete the “You as a Culturally Diverse Person” worksheet at the end of this chapter. You may be aware of ways in which you already move between cultures in your everyday life. Consider how different aspects of your identity form you who are and how those identities will be important as you interact with the new host culture.

What is Culture?

If you were to ask several different people what they thought culture meant, you might get a list like Robert Kohls did when he wrote *Survival Kit for Overseas Living*:

- manners and customs
- beliefs and ideas
- ceremonies and rituals
- laws (written and unwritten)
- ideas and thought patterns
- language
- arts and artifacts
- social institutions
- religious beliefs
- myths and legends
- knowledge
- values and morals
- concept of self
- accepted ways of behaving

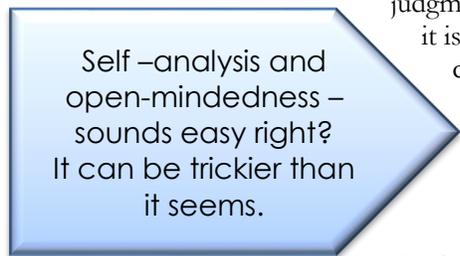
THE IMPLICATIONS OF CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

Cultural adjustment is a continuous, on-going process. It never stops, varying from one individual to another and from one culture to another. However, the end process nearly always results in changes for both the individual and the setting. Your own personal adjustment process may require you to confront not only differences in your new culture; it may also force you to take a good look at your own cultural values and practices. This is a completely normal and natural response to the cultural adjustment process.

The concept of cultural adjustment implies change. In cross-cultural adjustment, one is concerned with the changes in thinking and behavior required when moving from one cultural environment to another. In your case, you will be moving from your American culture to one overseas. The nature of the adjustment required depends on the differences between your original culture and the new one. It also depends on your personal objectives upon entering the new culture. The concept of adjustment assumes that you already have a well-established set of values and behavior for operating in your own culture. As you enter into new cultures, those patterns of behavior may no longer satisfy your needs. In developing new patterns of coping with your new environment, you may experience varying degrees of disorientation and discomfort. This is called “culture shock.”

IMPOSITION OF PERSONAL VALUES

The tendency of people to impose their own values and assumptions onto people in the new culture usually inhibits cross-cultural understanding. While you are abroad, you should avoid making definitive, prejudicial judgments that may result from your own cultural responses. For example, it is best not to move rapidly to the conclusion that a native of the new culture is cheating or lying, when that person’s behavior may be the result of other motives. You should be open-minded and receptive to different ideas, concepts and behaviors. A certain amount of self-analysis might reveal insight into your own motivations and value system.

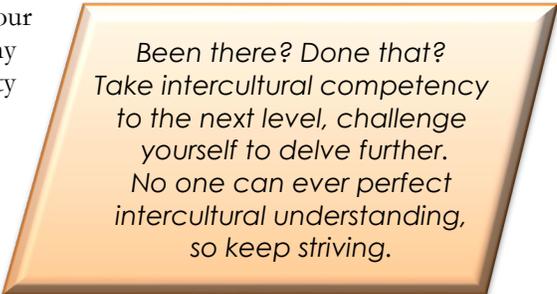


Self –analysis and open-mindedness – sounds easy right? It can be trickier than it seems.

Such knowledge can improve communication skills, increase acceptance and understanding of others, and create more productive interactions. Until you have acquired enough self-knowledge to realize the true extent to which your outward personality is shaped by cultural habits and values, you will not be completely capable of comprehending or learning from the cultural habits and values of a different society.

INFLUENCE OF TIME WITHIN A NEW CULTURE

Cross-cultural adaptation is a continuing process that involves the evolution of insights, knowledge, and emotional skills. Of course, it is possible to live for years in a new culture and never be affected by it, but those involved in cross-cultural adjustment never cease to learn from their experiences. It is important for you to be flexible with your new-found knowledge and be prepared to discover that any single piece of information might not have universal applicability in the culture around you. Language-learning provides an example: you will often learn new words or terms and until you learn more, you may use your new vocabulary in inappropriate situations. It is also possible to misunderstand cultural generalities and then misapply the generalization. For



*Been there? Done that?
Take intercultural competency to the next level, challenge yourself to delve further.
No one can ever perfect intercultural understanding, so keep striving.*

example, a non-American could, after perceiving with some difficulty that “Americans are frank,” misapply the insight and behave rudely in a given situation.

One possible reaction you might have to living for some length of time in the new culture is isolating yourself from the most threatening aspects of the culture, and perhaps clinging to people and material representations of your own culture. Another possible reaction you could have would be to view all aspects of the new culture negatively and to belittle it, considering these norms and values inferior to your own. Ask yourself: Am I doing this already through sub-cultures in the U.S.? (i.e. Republicans vs. Democrats, Doney Hall vs. Baxter Hall)

A more positive reaction you could have is to assume or take on many of the new culture’s norms, especially those involved in expressing yourself to others both in image and language. As the length of time in the new culture grows, your ability to learn from your experiences should increase, as should your awareness of your own culturally influenced assumptions, motivations, and value systems.

Throughout the period of cultural adaptation, take good care of yourself. Read a book or rent a video in your home language, take a short excursion if possible, exercise and get plenty of rest, write a letter or telephone home, eat good food, and do things you enjoy with friends. Take special notice of things you enjoy about living in the host culture.

Just as culture shock derives from the accumulation of cultural clashes, an accumulation of small successes can lead to more effective interactions within the new culture. As you increase your abilities to manage and understand the new social system, practices that recently seemed strange will become less puzzling. Eventually you will adapt sufficiently to do your best in your studies, enjoy your social life, relax, and fully enjoy the experience.

Making Friends in an Unfamiliar Place

Many students see their study abroad program as an opportunity to travel on weekends to see more of the host country and neighboring countries. Unfortunately, this weekend travel is a large barrier to building social relationships with locals, since that’s the time they’re available to socialize. So, try to...

- Stay in town on the weekends and look for places and events where locals congregate.
- Take part in activities offered by local youth or university groups.
- Meet with one or more language partners and get to know their friends.
- Join a club or association that meets for some activity you do at home.
- Just start talking to someone.
- Don’t hang out in a large group of Americans (more than 2!)

Intercultural Communication

Perhaps the major contributor to unease in a foreign environment is the increased difficulty, or even impossibility, of communicating and receiving information. You will bring your own communication habits, both verbal and non-verbal, that may not transcend cultural limits. Studies of intercultural communication have shown that the amount of time and energy needed for simple communication increases rather dramatically as cultural differences increase. Your gestures and other non-verbal cues can act as hindrances to communication unbeknownst to you. Your perceptions of any given person or situation can be quite different from another person’s perception.

You should try to recognize that other cultures may use different verbal and non-verbal communication methods. Body language, the use of personal space when talking to others, and other non-verbal communication can be very different than what you are used to in the United States. Likewise, some cultures are not as frank, sarcastic, or confrontational when discussing certain topics as Americans are. Others are more straight forward. Sometimes things are implied in conversation but not voiced. It is important to remember that differences in communication styles are just that - differences. You should avoid making judgments about a person's rudeness or abilities until you understand how verbal and non-verbal communication styles differ in your host culture. You will be studied and possibly judged by your own communication style.

Intercultural communication isn't just about words, but expressions, gestures and body language.

Language Acquisition

Speaking a foreign language will show your interest in the host culture and is, at the very least, a courtesy to your hosts. The desire to use the local language is a good basis on which to build new relationships with local people. Even if you are not on a program that requires you to speak the language of the country and culture around you it is a great idea to learn some basic vocabulary to use in daily life.

After you arrive, look for as many opportunities as possible to improve your language skills (even if you are interacting with English there is still TONS to learn). This can be very exhausting, sometimes even frustrating, when you get the impression that you are not able to express even your most basic feelings and thoughts in the correct way. However, practicing the language is very important. Discipline yourself to speak the local language at all times, even with your American contemporaries.



Goals, Indicators, and Strategies

Framing your study abroad experience by setting goals and mapping out how you will achieve them can bring context and direction to your time abroad. By identifying a handful of goals, indicators and strategies you are also providing yourself a context to what you have accomplished while abroad. This makes it easier to explain to peers, family, and even employers some of the things you accomplished while abroad and how you reached these goals.

Please use the space below to list three goals, indicators and strategies for your time abroad. These goals, indicators and strategies are changeable and should be specific to you.

GOALS: During my study abroad experience I would like to...

INDICATORS: I will know I am reaching my goals because...
(Keep Indicators small, simple. Treat Indicators as benchmarks to larger goals.)

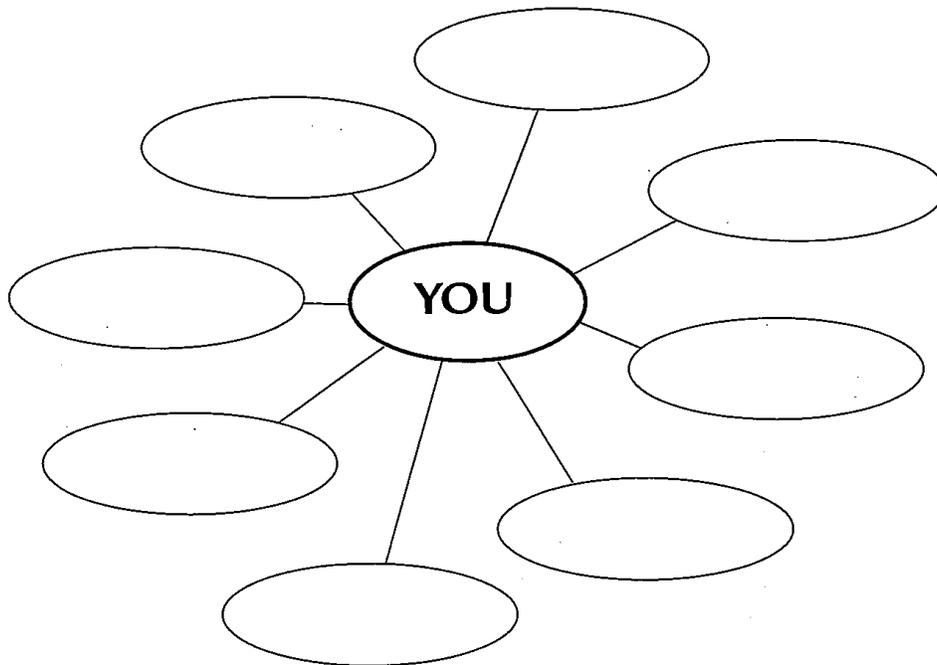
STRATEGIES: I will reach my goals by taking the following actions...
(Use action verbs to describe strategies. Keep them small and simple, then move to another strategy.)

You as a Culturally Diverse Person

Discovering your cultural diversity

Take a few minutes to complete this diagram. In as many circles as you can, write a word you feel describes you or is a significant part of who you are or how you choose to identify yourself to others (e.g., sister, student, African-American, Christian, Democrat).

Diagram of the Culturally Diverse You¹



¹Adapted from:
Gardenswartz, L., & Rowe, A. (1994). *The managing diversity survival guide*. Burr Ridge, IL: Irwin Professional Publishing.

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Reflection questions:

- If you had to pick just one circle, which would it be? Two circles? Why are these the most important parts of your cultural identity?
- Did you have difficulty filling in eight circles? Did you find eight was not enough? What insights have you gained about yourself from this exercise? Is there an identity that others don't readily recognize in you? Is this OK? Or is it frustrating?
- Go back to the diagram and add some of the values you attribute to the circles. For example, values from being a student might be "independence," "respect for knowledge," or "question authority." Are there places where the values conflict?
- How might these circles change if you were to travel/study abroad? For example, did you list your nationality in one of the circles? Your social class? Did you list the languages you speak? How might it feel to be seen as just one or another circle—such as U.S. American?
- How might the roles you play in the U.S. be similar and different in another country?

Although you know the many cultures that you belong to, others you meet will not automatically know this about you. One challenge about studying abroad or being with people from another country is that you may feel as if you are only seen as a U.S. American, rich, or a female, etc. Similarly, it is important to realize that all people are complex and have multiple layers of identity so that you don't fall into the trap of limiting them to one identity—just as you don't think of yourself as being just U.S. American. One strategy is to try to learn at least eight aspects of the identities of those people you meet in social situations or in countries that are different than yours.

8 - What it Means to Be an “American” Abroad

In this chapter you will find:

- Why it is important to recognize your Americanism
- U.S. cultural patterns
- How to react to criticism about the U.S.

Are you Swedish-American, Mexican-American, Vietnamese-American, just U.S. American or do you hold citizenship in another country? What aspects make up your cultural identity? Whatever those are, however you define yourself, you will take your “cultural identity” with you wherever you go. You may already be accustomed to moving among various cultures in your everyday life and at Willamette. Consider how these varying aspects of your identity interact in your life here and think about ways in which these different identities may impact you within the host culture. Some students find that while they identify more strongly with certain aspects of their identity within the U.S., other aspects of their identity may emerge more strongly when immersed in a new culture abroad. Understanding your cultural identity before you go abroad can help you navigate aspects of your experience abroad that might feel new to you.

Some students find that while they identify more strongly with certain aspects of their identity within the U.S., other aspects of their identity may emerge more strongly when immersed in a new culture abroad.

Why is it Important to Recognize Your “Americanism”?

Of course, a discussion of “Americanisms” is based on very broad generalization of the many cultures within the U.S. But it is useful as a starting point for considering how people abroad might perceive you because you come from the U.S. Most likely, your basic view of yourself as someone who lives in the U.S. may be that you are a good person, or that at least you have good intentions, and that most other people of the world do too. For this reason, you may be excited and eager to meet people from other countries, share in their culture and experience a different way of life. These interactions will probably be among the highlights of your stay abroad. However, you should be aware that some people may make assumptions about you because you come from the United States. In such situations, it is important to understand how others perceive U.S. Americans by looking at some basic U.S. cultural values.

U.S. American Cultural Patterns

Frustrated with your host culture? Start here to explore why.



Dr. Robert Kohls is a renowned writer and researcher on American cultural patterns and cross-cultural value differences. He has developed a list of 13 commonly-held values which help explain to first-time visitors to the United States why U.S. Americans act as they do. He is careful to avoid labeling these values as positive or negative, and cautions others to do the same. As an American, do you recognize these traits in yourself and your peers?

Whether you agree with Kohls or not, or are willing to recognize the validity of these generalizations about Americans, his observations are thought-provoking and may help you gain insight into your own variations of “Americanism.”

1. *Personal Control Over the Environment*

Americans do not believe in the power of fate, and they look at people who do as being backward, primitive, or naive. In the American context, to be fatalistic is to be superstitious, lazy, or unwilling to take initiative. Everyone should have control over environmental factors that might potentially affect him or her. The

problems of one's life are not seen as having resulted from bad luck as much as having come from one's laziness and unwillingness to take responsibility for pursuing a better life.

2. Change is Seen as Natural and Positive

In the American mind, change is seen as indisputably good—leading to development, improvement, and progress. Many older, more traditional cultures consider change to be disruptive and destructive; they value stability, continuity, tradition, and a rich and ancient heritage—these values are not considered to be very important in the United States.

3. Time and Control of it

Time is of utmost importance to most Americans. It is something to be on, kept, filled, saved, used, spent, wasted, lost, gained, planned, given, and even killed. Americans are more concerned with getting things accomplished on time than they are with developing interpersonal relationships. Their lives seem controlled by the little machines they wear on their wrists, cutting their discussions off abruptly to make their next appointment on time. This philosophy has enabled Americans to be extremely productive, and productivity is highly valued in their country.

4. Equality and Fairness

Equality is so cherished in the U.S. that it is seen as having a religious basis. Americans believe that all people are created equal and that they all should have an equal opportunity to succeed. This concept of equality is strange to the seven-eighths of the world that views status and authority as desirable, even if they happen to be near the bottom of the social order. Since Americans like to treat foreigners just like anybody else, newcomers to the U.S. should realize that no insult or personal indignity is intended if they are treated in a less-than-deferential manner by waiters in restaurants, clerks in stores and hotels, taxi drivers, and other service personnel.

5. Individualism and Independence

Americans view themselves as highly individualistic in their thoughts and actions. They resist being thought of as representatives of any homogeneous group. When they do join groups, they believe they are special, just a little different from other members of the same group. In the U.S., you will find people freely expressing their opinions anywhere and anytime. Yet, in spite of this independence, almost all Americans end up voting for one of their two major political parties. Individualism leads to privacy, which Americans see as desirable. The word “privacy” does not exist in many non-Western languages. If it does, it is likely to have a negative connotation, suggesting loneliness or forced isolation. It is not uncommon for Americans to say and almost believe: “If I don’t have half an hour a day to myself, I go crazy!”

6. Self-Help/Initiative

Americans take credit only for what they accomplish as individuals. They get no credit for having been born into a rich family but pride themselves in having climbed the ladder of success, to whatever level, all by themselves. The equivalent of this concept cannot be found in most other cultures. It's an indicator of how highly Americans regard the self-made man or woman.

7. Competition

Americans believe that competition brings out the best in an individual in any system. Value is reflected in economic success and is applied in the U.S. in all areas including medicine, the arts, education, and sports.

8. Orientation Towards the Future

Americans value the future and the improvements the future will surely bring. They devalue the past and are, to a large extent, unconscious of the present. Even a happy present goes largely unnoticed because Americans are hopeful that the future will bring even greater happiness. Since Americans believe that humans, not fate, can and should control the environment, they are good at planning short-term projects. This has caused Americans to be invited to all corners of the earth to plan, and often achieve, the outcomes their goal-setting methods can produce.

9. Action and Work Orientation

“Don’t just stand there, do something!” says a typical bit of American advice. This expression, though normally used in a crisis situation, describes most Americans’ waking life, where action—any action—is seen as superior to inaction. Americans routinely schedule an extremely active day. Any relaxation must be limited in time and aimed at recreating so that they can work harder once their recreation is over. Such a no-nonsense attitude toward life has created a class of people known as “workaholics”—people addicted to, and often wholly identified with, their profession. Often the first question people ask when they meet each other for the first time in the U.S. is related to work: “What do you do?” “Where do you work?” or “Who (what company) are you with?” The United States may be one of the few countries in the world where people speak about the “dignity of human labor,” meaning hard physical labor. Even corporation presidents will engage in physical labor from time to time and, in doing so, gain rather than lose respect from others.

10. Informality

Americans are even more informal and casual than their close relatives, the Western Europeans. For example, American bosses often urge their employees to call them by their first names and feel uncomfortable with the title “Mr.” or “Mrs.” Dress is another area where American informality is most noticeable, perhaps even shocking. For example, one can go to a symphony performance in most any large American city and find people dressed in blue jeans. Informality is also apparent in American greetings. The more formal “How are you?” has largely been replaced with an informal “Hi!” This greeting is often used with both one’s superior and one’s best friend.

11. Directness, Openness, and Honesty

Many other countries have developed subtle, sometimes highly ritualistic ways of informing others of unpleasant information. Americans prefer the direct approach. They are likely to be completely honest in delivering their negative evaluations, and may consider anything other than the most direct and open approach to be dishonest and insincere. Anyone in the U.S. who uses an intermediary to deliver the message will also be considered manipulative or untrustworthy. If you come from a country where saving face is important, be assured that Americans are not trying to make you lose face with their directness.

12. Practicality and Efficiency

Americans have a reputation for being realistic, practical, and efficient. The practical consideration is likely to be given highest priority in making important decisions. Americans pride themselves in not being philosophically or theoretically oriented. If Americans even admit to having a philosophy, it would probably be that of pragmatism: Will it make money? What is the bottom line? What can I gain from this activity? These are the kinds of questions Americans are likely to ask, rather than: Is it aesthetically pleasing? Will it be enjoyable? Will it advance the cause of knowledge? This pragmatic orientation has caused Americans to contribute more inventions to the world than any other country in human history. The love of practicality has also caused Americans to view some professions more favorably than others. Management and economics are much more popular in the United States than philosophy or anthropology, and law and medicine more valued than the arts. Americans belittle emotional and subjective evaluations in favor of rational and objective assessments. Americans try to avoid being too sentimental in making their decisions. They judge every situation on its own merits.

13. Materialism and Acquisitiveness

Foreigners consider Americans more materialistic than they are likely to consider themselves. Americans would like to think that their material objects are just the natural benefits that result from hard work and serious intent, a reward that all people could enjoy were they as industrious and hard working as Americans. But by any standard, Americans are materialistic. They give a higher priority to obtaining, maintaining, and protecting material objects than they do in developing and enjoying relationships with other people. Since Americans value newness and innovation, they frequently sell or throw away possessions and replace them with newer ones.

How to Respond to Criticism about the United States

As expressed previously, you probably consider yourself to be a good person, or at least someone with good intentions. But as you meet people outside of the United States, you will begin to discover that others don't always agree. In fact, you should be prepared for confrontation based on what and who others *think* you are as an U.S. American—to be judged not for yourself at times, but rather as a collective body of people who live south of Canada and north of Mexico.

The forms of confrontation may vary; sometimes you will be expected to answer questions about American politics, geography, values, and other issues as if you were the number one expert on the subject. At other times, criticisms will simply be words yelled in your face. With few exceptions, you should not expect to be confronted with actual physical harm. Commonly asked questions include:

- Why are Americans so materialistic? Why are they so wasteful of natural resources?
- Why are Americans so racist? How can you justify forcing the Native Americans onto reservations when the whole country belongs to them?
- Why are Americans so ignorant of other countries?
- Why does America give so much foreign aid to countries that abuse human rights?
- Why are there so many homeless people in the richest country in the world?
- Why are teachers so poorly paid in a country that claims to have one of the best educational systems?

There is no one right or wrong way to respond to comments that may be made about you for being American or about the United States in general. You will develop your own method for dealing with confrontation based on your experiences and your opinions. You may choose to take an active role by responding to the questions or accusations, or you may choose to take a passive role and not say anything in response. As you begin to respond to any criticism, keep the following strategies in mind:

- *Try to understand the critic's motive(s)*
Americans are fond of saying “Don't judge a book by its cover.” Outward appearances are not always enough to make a judgment about a situation where you are being confronted with anti-American sentiment. Ask your critic questions that may help explain this person's beliefs about the United States and why he or she might hold them. Does this person get ideas from the media? Is this something being taught in school? Has this person experienced some sort of harassment from an American? If you understand the critic's motive(s), or where his or her information comes from, perhaps you can find some common ground and a more tolerant way to respond.
- *Draw upon personal experiences and observations*

When someone asks you a question like, “Why are Americans so wasteful of natural resources?” your first response might be to say, “Oh, not me.” Whether or not the question is based on fact, one way to respond might be to draw on your own experiences and observations. In this case, you can say that while you cannot speak for the rest of the American population, you have your own personal practices, such as recycling, water conservation, or use of public transportation.

Use these phrases:
“I think...”
“I feel...”
“In my experience...”
“In my life...”

- *Avoid becoming defensive*
You sometimes can't help becoming defensive when your culture is being criticized. However you should try to avoid getting defensive as much as possible. Keep an open mind, and remember to try and understand your critic's motives.
- *Become more familiar with common U.S. facts and policies*
It's a common belief overseas that Americans are uneducated. How can you dispel that stereotype? People in other countries will probably ask you a lot of questions about the United States on such varied topics as geography, politics, pop culture, etc. They may be intelligent questions like, “Who decides whether a person is guilty of a crime?” and they may be very simple questions like, “Do all Americans wear cowboy boots and ride horses?”

It is not uncommon to find that people overseas know a lot more about U.S. politics and policies than you do. You should familiarize yourself with basic U.S. facts and policies because you do not want to appear uneducated or ignorant. Plus they may help you have great conversations with people you meet while abroad. Take the time to educate yourself about the following topics:

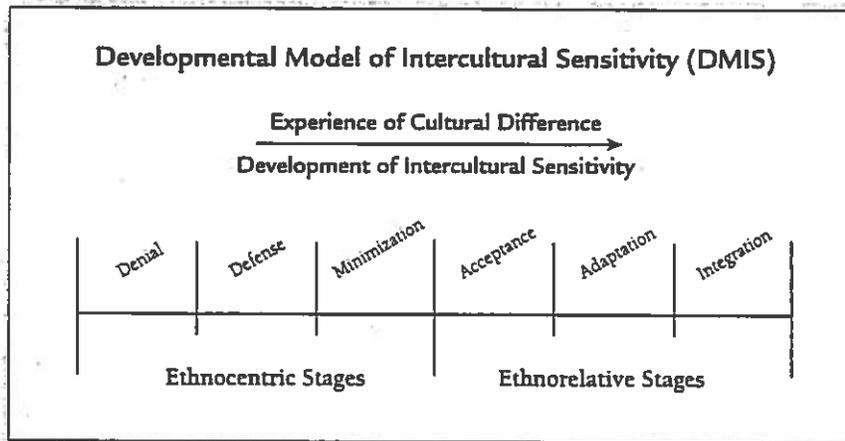
- U.S. geography (e.g., differences in regions)
- U.S. political system (e.g., how Congress differs from the Senate)
- U.S. judicial system (e.g., how the jury system works in theory)
- U.S. foreign policy (especially in regard to your host country)

Conclusions

Studying abroad will probably be one of the most memorable experiences of your life. As a visitor in a foreign land, you will get an objective view of a life, culture, and people different than the one you know. Having this “birds-eye-view” may broaden your mind, your world perspective and even help you understand yourself a little better. While your time abroad will not be without its moments of uncertainty and discomfort, these moments will probably be few in comparison to all the knowledge and experience you'll gain. In a nutshell, studying abroad may be difficult at times, but is ultimately enriching and exciting. Keeping an open mind and not making assumptions about things that are not part of your “cultural identity” will help those you meet do the same for you, and help to ensure that you get the most from your time abroad.



The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)



The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity is a tool to help you recognize where you are at in the development of your intercultural competence. The grid above of Ethnocentric and Ethnorelative stages and the continuum of intercultural sensitivity development will help you understand one of the theories behind Iceberg 101. Please read these articles and consider where you think you are on the continuum before your Iceberg 101: Intercultural Preparation seminar.

Reflection²

1. Reflect on your first intercultural encounter. What was the situation? How did you respond? Using the DMIS model, how would you characterize your behavioral, emotional, and cognitive response?
2. Now think about a more recent intercultural encounter. Using the DMIS, how would you characterize your cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses to difference in that situation?
3. What process have you gone through in your intercultural development that brings you to where you are now?

¹ Materials on pp. 62-64 adapted from M. J. Bennett (1993)

² Adapted from materials developed by M. J. Bennett (1993) and J. M. Bennett (1993).

9 - Culture Shock

Culture shock is not quite as shocking or as sudden as most people expect it to be. It is part of the process of learning a new culture and can be defined as:

“The feeling of frustration and anxiety which arises when familiar cultural cues are suddenly removed and replaced by new and seemingly bizarre behavior.”

Lewis and Jugman, *On Being Foreign*

You may experience some discomfort before you are able to function well within your new setting. This discomfort is the culture shock stage of the adaptation process. It’s important to remember that this is a very normal process that nearly everyone experiences.

Cultural baggage is unavoidable. Don't fight it, work with it.

Just as you will bring clothes and other personal items with you overseas, you will also carry invisible “cultural baggage”. That baggage is not as obvious as the items in your suitcases, but it will play a major role in your adaptation abroad. Cultural baggage contains the values that are important to you and the patterns of behavior that are customary in your home culture. The more you know about your personal values and how they are derived from your culture, the better prepared you will be to see and understand the cultural differences you will encounter abroad.

Emerging Differences

Culture shock does not happen all at once. It is a feeling that grows little by little as you interact with other students, faculty, and people in the community. Gradually, as you become more involved in activities and get to know the people around you, differences, rather than similarities, will become increasingly apparent to you. As these differences emerge, they may be troubling and sometimes shocking to you. Those differences may begin to seem more irritating than interesting or quaint. Small incidents and difficulties may make you anxious and concerned about how best to carry on with your academic and social life.

For many, this gradual process culminates in an emotional state known as culture shock, although it is seldom as dramatic as the term implies. There are ways to deal with this period of adjustment, and recognizing that culture shock may lie behind physical symptoms and irritability may help. Students are sometimes unaware of the fact that they are experiencing culture shock when these symptoms occur. Some common symptoms of culture shock may be:

- Homesickness
- Desire to avoid social settings which seem unpleasant
- Physical complaints and sleep disturbances
- Depression and feelings of helplessness
- Difficulty with coursework and concentration
- Loss of sense of humor
- Boredom or fatigue
- Hostility towards the host culture
- Change in eating patterns – weight gain/loss

Coping with Culture Shock

You may find yourself responding more strongly to seemingly minor incidents. It may be as small as what to say when you bump into someone, trying to figure out how to cross the street, or trying to figure out how to get a haircut. A more significant event may be inadvertently using inappropriate language or gesture and dealing with the consequences. The most effective way to combat culture shock is to step back from a given event or incident (big or small) that has bothered you, assess it, and search for an appropriate explanation and response. As you work through culture shock and new experiences during your time abroad (both the good ones and hard ones!) utilize the Describe, Interpret, and Evaluate (D.I.E) technique and the Experiential Learning Cycle that was discussed in your What's the Difference intercultural skills session.



D.I.E. – Describe, Interpret, Evaluate

Each day you consciously and unconsciously interpret the things you observe, experience and interact with. These interpretations help you make decisions about what to do with the information you are receiving. Our home culture, personal experiences, and values influence our understanding of the people and events around us. People tend to jump to interpreting and/or evaluating a situation without taking the time to examine alternative interpretations or evaluations of what happened. Sometimes the decisions we make are conscious decisions. Most of the time our decisions about things and people we encounter are made quickly without much reflection upon our thought processes.

The D.I.E. technique will help you objectively reflect upon what you are thinking and feeling during your time abroad. Practice the D.I.E. technique in the U.S. before you depart so that you become comfortable examining your thought process. As an example the D.I.E. process is used on a piece of jewelry.

Description (what I see):	It is gold, there are red stones in the gold, it is circular, it is about four inches wide and three inches tall.
----------------------------------	---

Your description should focus on the things that are easily observable which in our example are the color, shape, and size of the object.

Interpret (what I think about what I see):	It is jewelry, it is placed on the wrist or ankle, it is to be worn on special occasions
---	--

An interpretation applies your experience and understanding of items or interactions on to what you are observing. An interpretation is often dominated by your understanding of your home culture and is informed to a lesser extent to your knowledge about the culture of the country where you are studying.

Evaluate (what I feel about what I see):	It is beautiful, it is expensive, it is valuable, it is rare, its ugly
---	--

An evaluation ascribes value to an object or interaction. Our understanding of the values related to an object or situation are strongly influenced by our home culture as opposed to our understanding of the host culture. When observing an intercultural interaction it is important to refrain from evaluating the situation without asking a friend or cultural informant such as an international student advisor at your host university or program site.

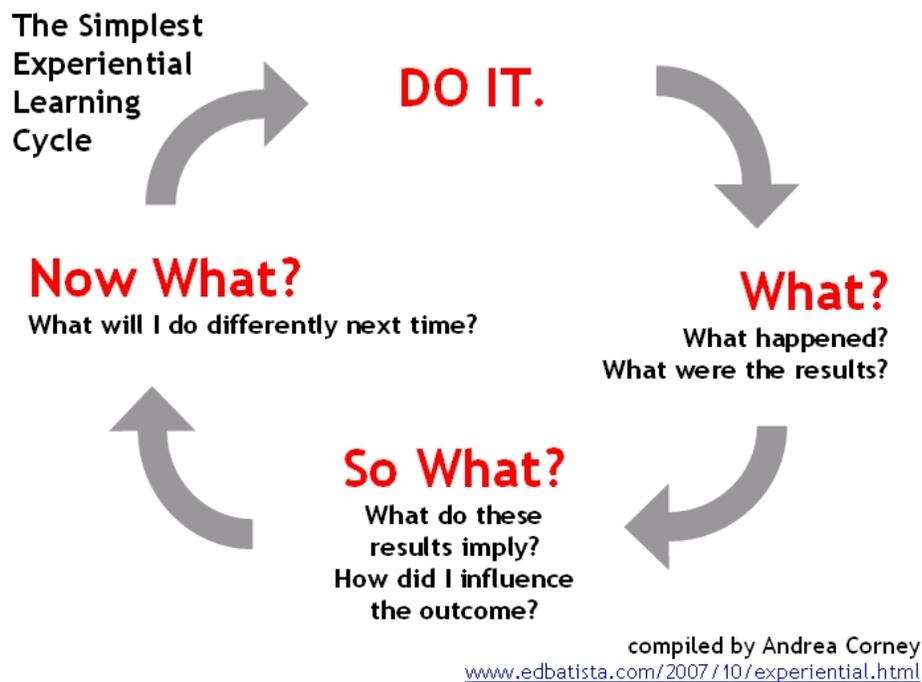
In your host country discuss situations you observe and experience with a cultural informant like an international student advisor, professor, or friend to learn more about alternative explanations. Start by describing what you experienced or witnessed. Refrain from evaluating or interpreting the situation when you describe what happened to your cultural informant. Remember an evaluation ascribes value to an object or interaction. Our understanding of the values related to an object or situation are strongly influenced by our home culture as opposed to our understanding of the host culture. When observing an intercultural interaction it is important to refrain from evaluating the situation without asking a friend or cultural informant such as an international student advisor at your host university or program site. Ask your cultural informant to help you interpret what happened and share your interpretation of the event with them. When we can first describe an event to ourselves or someone else and then look for alternative interpretations and evaluations we are likely to be more accurate and more effective cross-culturally. You will gain understanding of new cultural norms and rules in your host country that you might have missed if you had not stopped and taken the time to reflect on your experiences.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle

David A. Kolb developed a four-stage learning theory that is based on a cyclical process of experience, perception, cognition, and behavior where learning is gleaned from experiences. This learning cycle can help you understand the experiences you are having abroad, reflect on them, and brain storm ways to understand or react to the experience when it occurs again. The learning cycle can be used as a way to guide your choices when you encounter a similar situation in the future. There are four stages to the learning cycle:

- Concrete Experience (Do it)
- Reflective Observation (What? What happened? What were the results?)
- Abstract Conceptualization (So what? What do these results imply? How did I influence the outcome?)
- Active Experimentation (Now what? What will I do differently next time?)

Below is a sample of the learning cycle. You can begin the cyclical learning process at any point on the cycle. As you are working through the learning cycle try to imagine alternative explanations for the event you saw or the experience you had. Just as with the D.I.E. exercise considering multiple explanations and ideas related to the experience you had may help you understand the culturally appropriate reaction.



Learning cycle information has been adapted from:

- [Learning Theories Knowledgebase \(2012, February\). Experiential Learning \(Kolb\) at Learning-Theories.com.](http://www.learning-theories.com/experiential-learning-kolb.html) Retrieved February 3rd, 2012 from <http://www.learning-theories.com/experiential-learning-kolb.html>
- [Simplest Learning Cycle at edbatistia.com.](http://www.edbatista.com/2007/10/experiential.html) Retrieved February 7th, 2012 from www.edbatista.com/2007/10/experiential.html

While practicing your use of the experiential learning cycle try the following:

- Observe how others are acting in the same situation.
- Describe the situation, what it means to you, and your response to it.
- Ask a local resident or someone with extensive experience how they would have handled the situation and what it means in the host culture.
- Plan how you might act in this or a similar situation in the future.
- Test the new behavior and evaluate how well it works.
- Decide how you can apply what you have learned the next time you find yourself in a similar situation.
- Be open-minded and flexible.
- Keep your sense of humor - you are bound to embarrass yourself at least once while abroad.



10 - The Many Stages of Cultural Adjustment

Many returning students describe study abroad as an emotional rollercoaster. Knowing the stages of Culture Shock will help you at least understand why your emotions and actions are all over the place. **Generally these stages are sequential, but the amount of time each person spends at each stage can vary significantly.**

Stage 1: The Honeymoon Stage

Everything you see is interesting and exciting. Sure, you are having trouble navigating the transportation system, but you are generally happy and enjoying your new adventure.

- Be careful, these early impressions of the host culture could be unrealistic or inaccurate.
- Start writing in a journal or blog and continue through your time abroad. Later on you will love looking back at your initial days and weeks abroad!

Stage 2: The “Everything is Difficult” Stage

Going to the post office, the bank, the grocery store, everything seems hard! People stand too close to you in line, no one is ever on time, you are sick of taking the bus for an hour to class. Daily life is a challenge because everything is new and your cultural comforts may be clashing with your host culture. As a result of these frustrations and challenges you may feel homesick, angry, bored, or depressed.

Although it can be disconcerting and a little scary, the “shock” gradually eases as you begin to understand and adapt to the new culture. It is useful to realize that often the reactions and perceptions of others toward you—and you toward them—are usually based on a clash of cultural values, not personal evaluations. The more skilled you become in recognizing how and when cultural values and behaviors could come into conflict, the easier it becomes to make adjustments that can help you avoid serious difficulties and frustrations.

- Don’t take your frustrations out on the host culture. Try to understand why some of the culture’s characteristics are affecting you. Go back to the *What it Means to be an American Abroad* chapter for some clues.
- Continue to discover your host site and culture.
- Meet local people! It is hard but very fruitful. Be confident in yourself and your abilities to communicate with others.
- Get back to your goals; are there new ways you can work on accomplishing them?
- Exercise, eat well and get out and about.
- Ask a cultural mentor or contact the OIE for more suggestions or counseling.
- If you are experiencing any of the following symptoms contact your program administrators or the OIE because you might be experiencing too much shock: substantial weight gain/loss, loss of appetite, insomnia, sleeping or wanting to sleep too much, feeling depressed for two or more weeks, lack of desire for basic hygiene.

Stage 3: The “Hey! I am Figuring this Out” Stage

Cultural adjustment is fun! You are learning and using local slang in everyday conversation, you are making friends with the host-country nationals and last week you made a joke that they understood! At this stage you are becoming more confident in the culture and you are excited to learn more.

- Keep up the momentum! Don’t stall out in your comfort zone.
- Explore new avenues of culture; go to plays, local movies, a concert, a dance and museums.
- Revisit your initial impressions of your host culture; were you wrong about certain traits? What qualities have you grown to love? What aspects of the culture still bother you? why?

Stage 4: The “It Feels Like Home” Stage

You are finally feeling adapted. Your accent is sounding less and less foreign everyday, you are craving the local food and you hardly ever trip getting on the bus anymore.

- There is still a lot to learn about the culture, so although you are feeling comfortable, continue to ask questions.
- Get ready to leave. You are going to go through culture shock again when you return home, so be prepared, and see the chapter on *Returning Home* for more information.
- Make a list of all of the qualities or characteristics of your host culture that you hope to take home with you.

Conclusion

Chances are one of the reasons you are studying abroad is to explore new ways of living, meet new people, and learn about yourself in a totally new environment. These experiences can be uncomfortable initially, but you’ll adjust to your new surroundings and culture. Being nervous about using the wrong word when ordering in a restaurant or misinterpreting an aspect of your host-country’s culture is completely understandable. You are after all, in a world very different from the one familiar to you. Try to keep your sense of humor and take things in stride - making mistakes can be fun, and often enriching, for your experience abroad.



11 - Returning Home

Some of the material for the following sections was taken from *The Art of Coming Home* by Craig Sorti.

In this chapter you will find:

- Practical matters for returning home
- Preparing for reverse culture shock
- Levels of readjustment
- Coping strategies

As the date of your return ticket draws near, it's a good time to start thinking about what you've learned during your time abroad and how it will impact your life back in the U.S. Reflecting on questions such as "Why did I choose an overseas program?" and "What do I want to accomplish during my time here?" can help clarify how you are going to integrate your overseas experience into your academic, professional and personal goals for the future. Preparing for your re-entry after an extended period abroad will enable you to turn what can be an awkward time into a productive, exciting one.

Practical matters

Keeping in Touch with Home:

Part of the preparation for returning home includes staying in contact with your family and friends, consulting the Office of International Education about any academic or school-related matters and, to some extent, keeping up with political, economic, and social developments at home. For some students, these changes will be minute; for others, they may be very significant. Regular correspondence with family and friends via social media or email will help you stay in touch. You can even follow Willamette online too.

Making Travel Arrangements:

If you already have a return plane ticket you should contact the airline and reconfirm your seat at least 72 hours in advance. Airlines notoriously overbook flights back to the United States. You may decide to travel before leaving the country or have your family and friends join you. If you want to change the return date, contact the airline directly or visit a travel agency. They can tell you about any restrictions. Depending upon your ticket restrictions, this may be possible for a fee.

U.S. Customs:

Upon returning home you will have to go through U.S. Customs. The duty-free exemption, also called the personal exemption, is the total value of merchandise you may bring back to the United States without having to pay duty. You may bring back more than your exemption, but you will have to pay duty on it. In most cases, the personal exemption is \$800, but there are some exceptions to this rule. See the U.S. Customs website for more details. Duty fees ranging from 5% to 50% or more will be charged on anything over the \$800 duty-free allowance. Certain items will not be charged duty depending upon the country of purchase and type of item. You will not have to pay duty on gifts costing less than \$25 that are mailed from Europe, as long as you do not send more than one gift to any one person on one day.

Keep all receipts for purchases you mail home or bring with you, as you may need them when you go through Customs. If you are taking a foreign made item with you, such as a camera or watch, U.S. Custom's officials suggest you register it at the airport before you leave the country. Failure to do so may result in having to pay duty on it upon your return. In some countries, especially those belonging to the European Union (EU), you may get taxes back on certain purchases. All agricultural items (fruits, vegetables, seeds, some wood products, etc.) are subject to inspection and may possibly be denied entry to the U.S.

Preparing for Reverse Culture Shock:

The cycle of overseas adjustment begins the moment you plan to study abroad. You may think your adjustment ends when you have assimilated into the life of your host country, but in fact, the cycle of cultural adjustment continues through your return to the United States. Culture shock and re-entry shock are not isolated events—rather they are a part of the total adjustment process that stretches from pre-departure to reintegration at home. The rest of this chapter is meant to prepare you for leaving your host country. It is important to read this section before you leave on your study abroad experience, as well as when you are about to return home.

Change and Adaptation

You have just had the opportunity to live, study, and travel overseas. During your stay you have probably assimilated some of the host country's culture, learned new ways of doing things and, perhaps, gained some new views and opinions about certain topics. In short, you have changed. As one returnee comments, "Living abroad has a deep, broadening effect on a person—an effect that I didn't realize until my return." For some people, living overseas and having those changes occur outside of the United States can magnify their experiences, thus causing the return home to be a bit unsettling. In addition, some experiences are specific to being overseas and could not have occurred in the United States.

While overseas, you may have experienced a greater amount of independence, both academically and personally, than previously experienced in the United States. This independence can help make you more confident in your abilities to achieve your goals. You may have become increasingly more sure of yourself and possibly have gained a more mature or focused attitude about your future. You may even be a bit more serious and directed. Some of these new views and attitudes may be in conflict with the views and attitudes of family and friends. They may question your new way of thinking and doing things or even pressure you to "reform" to your old ways. These differences may often be unsettling and uncomfortable at first.

New Skills

Along with the new ideas, views and attitudes that you have developed, you have probably acquired some new skills. These may include discovering a new way to do an old task, a different perspective on your field of study, or an increase your foreign language skills. And, for those of you studying in an English-speaking country, the English language will acquire new meaning through idioms, lingo, and phrases specific to the host country.

These new skills will now become a part of your daily life. Increased facility with your foreign language will probably have one of the greatest impacts. If you have learned to become dependent on these skills to communicate from day to day, then it may feel strange to revert back to your native language. The degree of strangeness is directly connected to the amount of culture from the host country that you have assimilated and this will definitely influence your readjustment. You may feel frustrated and depressed if you cannot communicate your new ideas, skills or opinions. Again, similar to the beginning of your sojourn, patience, flexibility, and time will be required.

Loss of Status

In your host country, you may have been seen as an informal ambassador from the United States. This gave you a certain status of being "special." When you return home, you are just like everyone else and the loss of feeling a bit special can be a factor of your readjustment. One returnee describes it this way: "Being in a foreign country as a foreign visitor, you are to a certain extent a 'special person'; your views, accent, lifestyle are all interesting to your hosts. As such, you will receive a lot of attention, make friends and, generally, be popular. However, when returning home, you become a 'normal person' again. I found it very difficult to make that transition."

Friendships

Now that you have studied abroad, you obviously have a new circle of friends. You probably saw some or all of these people on a daily basis, and they became an important part of your life. For many, leaving your new friends can be the most difficult part of re-entry. Having to abandon intense friendships, girl/boyfriends, and cultural supports frequently brings disturbing feelings that are characteristic of a grieving process. Though you may seem to make a good surface adjustment once home, that adjustment may hide feelings of uncertainty, alienation, anger, and disappointment.

At first, friends back home will ask about your experiences and appear to be interested in what you did while you were away. They will often show a slight fascination in your adventures, but this may quickly fade. They will whip through pictures and stories once, but because they have not shared the experience, you should be prepared for their interest to be brief. After a while, you may find that your friends are more eager to talk about what has gone on in their lives as opposed to hearing more about your life overseas. If many of your friends have never lived abroad, you may also have to deal with feelings of envy or jealousy. When you talk too much about your experience, people may accuse you of being elitist, even though that may not be your intention.

People are often threatened by new and unusual points of view if they, themselves, have not had a similar experience. As much as you need to talk about your recent time away from home, it is advisable to be sensitive to the attitudes and feelings of others. Refer to the section on coping strategies later in this chapter, which discusses other options for support.

As with your family relationships, your relationships with your friends can alter because of the changes that have occurred in your life and the lives of your friends. Former friends may even have found new friendships and have priorities which are now different from yours. Be patient. If the friendship is worth maintaining, adjustments can and will be made. If not, developing new friendships can be as exhilarating as traveling.

Be aware that you may not notice the changes within yourself the same way others do - and vice versa - you may want people to see new aspects of your identity that they do not recognize.

Family Relationships

Your new independence, views and attitudes, your role as informal ambassador, your newly acquired skills and your new friends all have contributed to making you who you are now. The “changed you” will have to readjust to life in the United States, and, for some, this can be difficult. Initially, you may even have to live at home. Also, you may not be the only one affected by re-entry.

Since you are the one who has been away and had so many new experiences, everyone and everything at home should have stayed fairly stable. However, the home that you remember is not always going to be exactly the same as it was when you left. This feeling of dislocation occurs for two reasons. One, because you are now looking at what was once familiar through a new set of perceptions, you will see everything a bit differently. The new experiences and perspectives gained abroad may mean that home is never the same again. Secondly, like it or not, life at home did carry on while you were away. Things have happened to your family and friends, and events have occurred in their lives. These events may have caused changes in their feelings, perceptions, opinions, and attitudes. These changes may not have had an intense effect on your life. However, to specific individuals, their experiences are as important as your experiences are to you.

Remember, and be aware, that people at home change too, so expect things to be different and not entirely the same.

It is normal for you to want to hold on to the person you have become. Your overseas experience and life will now be a part of you and will reflect who you are right now. The “new” you cannot be discarded or forgotten for the “old” you. However, you and your family must come to terms with this “new” you and continue to build upon your existing relationship from this point forward. It will require a commitment to work toward mutual respect and an understanding of each other’s views. You may find that you have a totally different relationship with your family after returning home.

University/College Life

For those of you who will go directly to Willamette without time at home (or limited time at home) you may face a new set of readjustment issues upon return to academic life. For example, some students experience a greater amount of academic independence while overseas than they had previously experienced. If you have found this academic freedom to be particularly gratifying and challenging, then the readjustment to a more structured system can be difficult. Upon your return to university life, you may also feel a bit removed from your university and your department.

Levels of Readjustment

As stated earlier, no experience is the same for everyone. You will go through re-entry much differently than someone else. Research on readjustment to life in the United States after a prolonged stay abroad suggests that there are several variables that may affect the degree of difficulty faced by individuals during re-entry. Some of these variables include:

Age and Academic Level

Older students or professionals who were well established in their field before their sojourn sometimes experience a less troubled re-entry than younger students do. Younger students, anxious to discover new attitudes and explore new ways of living, may be more likely adopt the host culture’s way than to selectively integrate it with their own cultural or personal beliefs. Once home, they may constantly compare home country traditions and practices unfavorably with their host country experience, increasing feelings of alienation.

Previous Cross-Cultural Experiences

Students who have previously been away from the United States tend to have less trouble adjusting. A student who expects to experience some difficulties on return is better able to manage reacculturation problems.

Length of Stay in the Host Culture and Degree of Interaction with the Host Culture

The longer a student stays in the host country and the greater the degree of interaction and empathy with the host culture he or she experiences, the more difficult re-entry to the home culture environment may be. For longer stays abroad (more than one semester), observers have noted that students who are able to afford vacation visits home during their study sojourn seem to experience fewer problems upon returning home for good. It is thought that exposure to the home environment during visits results in more realistic expectations.

Readiness to Return Home

It has been hypothesized that students who strongly desire to return home at the end of their study sojourn are most likely to return home with a high motivation to resocialize, while those who strongly desire to stay on in the host country will seem alienated upon re-entry. Those who are moderately looking forward to returning home are expected to have the healthiest re-entry.

Degree of Similarity Between the Home and Host Culture

The greater the differences between the host culture and the home culture, the greater the reacculturation difficulty for the student. An Australian or British student returning home from the United States might expect an easier transition than a Thai or Tanzanian student. However, the less a returnee expects to experience reverse culture shock, the more likely it is that adjustment difficulties will cause alarm.

Changes (or lack of) in the Home Environment

This variable can work in several ways. A returnee may expect everything to be the same at home as it was when he or she left. During the student's absence, there may have been subtle or dramatic changes in political, economic, environmental, or social factors on a national scale. Family relationships or the standard of living may have altered in ways not anticipated. Such unexpected changes may be psychologically stressful. Conversely, a student may return home to find nothing seems to have changed. This can intensify the student's feeling that there is no one there who can understand what he or she is going through.

Individual Awareness

Even the most aware individual is not immune to reverse culture shock or reacculturation bumps. However, the returnee should be able to understand what is happening and why. Ideally, the student will be calm and capable of focusing on what he or she can do to ease the transition process. They will look for ways to assimilate their host cultural experience, and will translate it so that family and colleagues can understand and share in the benefits.

Availability (or lack) of a Support Group

Being able to share concerns and coping strategies with other recent or more established returnees may help reduce the frustration and sense of helplessness that can accompany re-entry. Students who return to places where few people have studied abroad may feel very alone since there is no one with whom they can discuss their concerns. It helps to locate even one other person who has shared this experience and see that one can successfully overcome reverse culture shock. You might also benefit from friendships with international students at Willamette.

Length of the Readjustment Period

The length of time for readjustment will, of course, vary from person to person, but it will also depend on the intensity of your experience. If your experience was very intense, your adjustment will most likely take longer than if your experience was less intense. In addition, the length of time the readjustment lasts depends on you and how you cope with the situations that occur.

Coping Strategies

The good news is this phase of readjustment to life in the United States does not last forever! Here are some suggestions of ways to make this phase a bit easier on you, and your family and friends.

Acknowledge Your Adjustment

First, and foremost, acknowledge the re-entry phase as part of the overseas experience. Just as you had to give yourself time while going through the culture shock phase (if you did experience culture shock) so, too, must you give yourself time to go through the re-entry phase. Acknowledging that reverse cultural adjustment is real will help avoid feelings of guilt that might occur if you are feeling depressed or unhappy about being home. As one returnee stated in the survey, "Don't blame yourself, give yourself time . . . I'd have felt less guilty and peculiar if I'd realized it was a common phenomenon."

Share Your Adjustment

Educate your family and friends about this phase of adjustment. Many people have never heard of reverse cultural adjustment and are not aware of its existence. If the people around you know a little about what you are experiencing, then, hopefully, they will be more patient and understanding. If you have difficulty communicating your feelings, share this manual with your family and friends. Remind them that you cannot unlearn what you have learned and that you need time to re-integrate new, often conflicting components within yourself.

Stay in Contact with Your Host Culture

Some returnees have the feeling of never having been overseas after their return to the home country. Keep in contact through letters (and, if possible, through telephone calls or E-mail) with the friends you made in your host country. It will help you feel that what you experienced was real instead of a big dream.

Seek Out Others and Get Involved

If possible, seek out other returnees that live nearby. If you return to Willamette University, find others who have also studied abroad to share experiences with. The International Programs Coordinator/Advisor can help you connect with students here on campus. Since they have gone through (or are going through) re-entry adjustment, they can offer support and advice about how to cope. Other returnees often want to hear about your overseas adventure because they have a multicultural and international perspective, allowing them to more fully appreciate your experience. Meeting international students here at Willamette is mutually helpful as international students are often looking for a way to connect with other students.

One strategy is to take an advanced level course in the foreign language that interests you or to take advantage of the Language Learning Center. Think about starting a language table, where a group of students interested in improving foreign language skills in a specific language can meet one to three times a week during either lunch or dinner and only speak that language. The topics of discussion are irrelevant; the purpose is to get a group together that has a common interest in a specific language and/or a specific region of the world.

Seek out other captive audiences who would have a natural interest in your overseas experience. Part of readjusting is being able to tell your story and describe the experiences that you have lived through. Such audiences include cultural organizations (you may want to consider becoming a member), civic groups that have an interest in the part of the world where you lived, and school groups studying the part of the world. Volunteering some time at the Office of International Education can help you affirm the importance of your overseas experiences while helping students learn about opportunities abroad. You are the perfect person to be an advocate for the office and your program.

Set Goals for Your Future

As you have finished one phase of your life and are ready to move ahead be sure to look toward your future. Think about your next challenge or goal. Begin to make plans for that goal and put those plans into action. Even if you are returning to Willamette University to finish a degree, you can develop goals for that period of time so that you will feel you are moving ahead rather than regressing. It is common for students who return to university to feel they have gone 10 steps forward (their overseas experience), and now are going 11 steps backward (the return to university). It is up to you to get the most out of that time by giving yourself new goals and challenges. Take the influence of your overseas experience and use it positively to help plan this next phase of your life.

Consider how your experiences abroad have helped you build skills that are marketable for your future career search. Many employers are interested in the skills that you developed while abroad that helped you adapt to a different culture, become comfortable in ambiguous situations, and communicate across cultural boundaries. The links at the end of this handbook provide many additional resources to help you identify and articulate

new skills you have gained as a result of your experience. They can also help you think about the next steps moving forward.

Here is some advice from other returnees:

First of all, realize it is very natural to experience uncomfortable feelings of readjustment. Secondly, try not to take yourself too seriously (if possible) . . . Keep up your ties with your friends abroad with social media and Skype calls.

Be patient with yourself and your mood swings. Keep in touch with friends you've met, but don't forget to build new bridges at home.

I think one of the best steps to take is to give yourself, your friends, and family time. It was good to visit with people and catch up on their news and listen to them. Listening is important.

Don't be surprised and shy; it will take time to readjust, but you'll feel at home again in time. Don't expect to view/see people or things as you did when you left. Try to look for the positive things in returning home, not the negative."

Try and reflect on the positive aspects of your time away and the positive aspects of your life here and now, and how they compare and contrast.

What's Next? Career Connections

Below are a number of online resources related to re-entry, career development and how to go abroad again. Taking some time to reflect on your experience abroad and lessons you learned is important. The resources below can help you to articulate the skills you developed and the new perspectives you gained to potential employers, graduate school admissions committees or whatever next step you may take. Click the text in each box to explore the resource.

[Home from Abroad](#)
OIE website

[Life After Study](#)
[Abroad: Career](#)
[Information.](#)
StudyAbroad.com

[Lessons from Abroad-](#)
[Virtual](#)
resources for study
abroad returners

[Go Abroad Again](#)
OIE website



WHERE TO NEXT?

CAREER PATHWAYS

Most returned study abroad students extoll the intellectual, cultural, and personal growth they gained from their international experiences, but many are unsure how to explain this to prospective employers; some even doubt such an experience has any value at all in the "real world." Yet more and more employers are seeking candidates with the very skills students gain while abroad. This is great news for the increasing number of students who are interested in charting rewarding career paths that build upon their international experiences.

Need inspiration for your own career-mapping? From academic backgrounds as diverse as anthropology, biology, economics, education, engineering, international relations, literature, political science, public health, and more, the stories and interviews in this section are living proof that study abroad alumni have forged interesting and meaningful careers that have benefited from their international experiences. Some followed a straight path while others meandered, but all agree that studying abroad significantly shaped their future career decisions.

This section was coordinated by Andrea Licavoli, Ela Rossmiller, Shannon Adducci, and Sherry Schwarz.

Andrea Licavoli studied abroad twice as an undergraduate student at Michigan State University; she recently completed the Communication and Rhetorical Studies master's program at Syracuse University, where she studied the topic of "student sojourner identity transitions" and worked as the Assistant to the Director of Programs at Syracuse University Abroad. Ela Rossmiller is the Director of Faculty-Led Programs at the Padnos International Center at Grand Valley State University. Shannon Adducci is a recent graduate from Northwestern University, where she studied journalism and Spanish. Sherry Schwarz is Founder and Director of The Abroad View Foundation.

CAREER BENEFITS

understanding & articulating the skills you gained abroad

This is adapted with permission from an article that was published in the NACE Journal March 2007, www.nacweb.org.

Much has been written about the “global economy,” but its influence on the job market for new graduates is just beginning to be understood. In a globalized workplace, most employees live and work in their home country but use technology to customize products and services for clients worldwide, communicate with suppliers, or collaborate on projects with overseas offices. Communications technology, particularly the Internet, has been key to accelerating the pace of globalization. The result is that many new college graduates will join the ranks of “domestic internationals,” employees whose international careers are based in their home countries. Although you may be immersed in many foreign cultures as a part of your daily job without even stepping foot overseas, there is evidence that experience working abroad enhances the cross-cultural competency that employers seek when hiring college graduates for a global job market.

According to a 10-year-old report issued by the RAND Corporation and the then-College Placement Council (now NACE), employers for globalized jobs cited four major sets of criteria they use when evaluating job candidates: cross-cultural competencies; knowledge of a specific field; interpersonal skills such as problem solving, decision-making, and communication skills; and, previous work experience.

It is worth noting that employers were more interested in the skills that students developed to adapt to a new culture rather than the particular international experience of the student. The assumption was that what a student learned about adapting to living, studying, or working in Germany, for example, could be applied to working with a multinational team based in Asia.

A RAND Corporation study of the expectations of managers hiring for multinational companies and nonprofit organizations, completed 10 years after the earlier study, asked respondents to rank 19 characteristics in order of importance for success in international organizations. While this study did not focus specifically on the college

job market, the top five characteristics are consistent with the 1994 study and, indeed, with most lists of what employers seek from recent college graduates:

1. General cognitive skills (e.g., problem solving, analytical ability)
2. Interpersonal and relationship skills
3. Ambiguity tolerance, adaptivity
4. Personal traits (e.g., character, self-reliance, dependability)
5. Cross-cultural competence (ability to work well in different cultures and with people of different origins)
6. Ability to work in teams
7. Ability to think in policy and strategy terms
8. Written and oral English language skills
9. Minority sensitivity
10. Innovative, able to take risks
11. Empathy, non-judgmental perspective
12. Substantive knowledge in a technical or professional field
13. Multidisciplinary orientation
14. Knowledge of international affairs, geographic area studies
15. Competitiveness, drive
16. General educational breadth
17. Internet and information technology competency
18. Managerial training and experience
19. Foreign language fluency

Students who have studied, worked, or volunteered abroad would do well to articulate how their experiences prepared them with the above-mentioned skills valued by employers. The following are examples of some of the key benefits students report:

- **Cultural immersion:** If you worked, interned, or volunteered abroad, it is likely you were the only American, or one of a few, working and living fully immersed in the setting. You probably had no choice but to do what the locals do.

- **Personal development:** Working and studying abroad likely challenged and strengthened your self-confidence, independence, tolerance, empathy, flexibility, adaptability, pragmatic know-how, and cultural insights.

- **Cross-cultural learning:** If you worked,

volunteered, or interned abroad, you likely had the opportunity to meet host-country nationals; you probably also experienced differences in social organization, such as class and cultural distinctions.

• **Language learning:** If you were in a foreign-language only setting or in a work experience, you probably found the give-and-take—and the immediate feedback—of communication was enormously beneficial in learning your foreign language of study. Work-abroad participants especially demonstrate dramatic gains in their language skills.

This is a challenging era of globalization, which

exerts pressures on everyone in the work force. If you haven't already, you can do much to prepare yourself to compete in this global environment by gaining international experience through unprecedented opportunities for obtaining such experience by studying or working abroad as an undergraduate or shortly after graduating. However, you should seek initial guidance from academic and career advisers in deciding which international experiences fit best with your career goals. Just as importantly, upon your return, meet with a career adviser to gain help in articulating how your overseas experience(s) have enhanced your skills in ways that are meaningful to employers.

Cheryl Matherly

Career Title:

Associate Dean for Global Education and Applied Assistant Professor of Education at the University of Tulsa
Recommended Resource: *How to Get a Job in Europe* by Cheryl Matherly and Robert Sanborn (2003, 5th. ed. Planning Communications, www.planningcommunications.com)

leveraging your overseas experiences

The following tips can help you leverage your time abroad to benefit your future career path:

• **Make a list of alumni living in your destination country.** The alumni affairs or career services offices can provide you with these lists, and many overseas alumni organizations have their own websites. Overseas alumni can be a useful resource for you to both learn more about particular career areas and also to obtain useful job leads for full-time or summer opportunities.

• **Keep a contacts notebook.** You should develop a record keeping system to track the names, address, and e-mails of people you meet. You may not realize the value of a contact until after you have returned home, and you will appreciate having a record of who you met.

• **If participating in a homestay, use every opportunity to talk with your host family about the local economy.** The more knowledgeable you become about the local market, the easier it will be for you to adopt a reasonable approach to finding a job.

• **Pay attention to jobs listed in local newspapers and publications.** These resources can be very useful for determining the employment sectors that have the greatest demand.

• **If considering graduate school in your destina-**

tion country, obtain application materials while abroad. Program representatives may be willing to meet with you to discuss particular degrees. If you are considering applying for postgraduate scholarships such as the Fulbright you should definitely research graduate schools.

• **Find out how other people found their jobs.**

The best way to learn how to find a job overseas is to ask other Americans who have been successful with finding an international job how they did it. Alumni, of course, are good people to ask, but so are the other American expatriates whom you will meet in the course of studying abroad.

• **Meet with the Career Center staff before going abroad.** Your college's Career Services staff can advise you about how to manage your job, internship, and graduate school deadlines that will come due while you are out of the country. Additionally, a career counselor can help you devise a job search strategy to take advantage of contacts you make while abroad and help you market your experiences when you return.

• **Keep in touch with useful contacts.** E-mail makes it very easy to periodically touch base with the interesting people you met while abroad in order to keep your network alive. **AV**

—Cheryl Matherly and William Nolting

William Nolting

Career Title:

Director of the Overseas Opportunities Office at the Univ. of Michigan International Center; Co-Chair of the Subcommittee on Work, Internships & Volunteering Abroad for NAFSA: Association of International Educators
Recommended Websites for Working Abroad and International Careers:
www.internationalcenter.umich.edu/swt/work;
www.nafsa.org/wivaresources