# University of Rochester Center for Study Abroad

# Pre-departure handbook

# Fall 2014 and Full Year 2014-2015

## Part 4:

## Health and Safety

*Information from University Health Services, University Counseling Center, Dean of Students Office and the Safety Office*

**Information in this brochure is current as of February, 2014, and is subject to change**

**Photo by Anne Levy '14, Copenhagen, Denmark**

Safety is understandably foremost in the minds of students and of their families. Concern for student safety abroad has always been of primary importance to The College, and it remains an integral part of our standard procedures and practices. Most study abroad destinations are statistically less dangerous than the average American city. Our approach to promoting safety abroad is founded on communication, information, and cross-cultural sensitivity.

No university can guarantee the safety of its students overseas, any more than it can guarantee their safety on the home campus. The staff of the Center for Study Abroad has access to varied resources for information about the relative political and economic stability of host countries. We are in regular contact with our overseas partners who, in turn, work closely with American consulates and embassies. We monitor international conditions daily, with information from the U.S. Department of State, our overseas partners, and our colleagues here at the University of Rochester.

We **strongly** encourage you to enroll for the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP): http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/registration/registration_4789.html. STEP is a free service provided by the U.S. Government to U.S. citizens who are traveling to, or living in, a foreign country. STEP allows you to enter information about your upcoming trip abroad so that the Department of State can better assist you in an emergency. STEP also allows Americans residing abroad to get routine information from the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

U.S. consular officers assist Americans who encounter serious legal, medical, or financial difficulties. Although consular officers cannot act as your legal counsel or representative, they can provide the names of local attorneys and doctors, provide loans to destitute Americans, and provide information about dangerous conditions affecting your overseas travel or residence. Consular officers also perform non-emergency services, helping Americans with absentee voting, selective service registration, receiving federal benefits, and filing U.S. tax forms. Consular officers can notarize documents, issue passports, and register American children born abroad. Most embassies and consulates have web sites with more information (U.S. Department of State, accessed July, 2011).

Students who are well-informed about the international context of their study abroad host country will be best equipped to ensure their own safety. To that end, we provide students and families with the latest announcements and travel advisories from the Department of State. Also, prior to departure, all prospective study abroad students attend a mandatory orientation seminar. This seminar serves as the first meeting of a required online course. Students meet peer advisers who present important information about safety, managing money, packing, transfer credit, health issues and much more. Through good preparation, we make the transition to living overseas as smooth as possible. At the same time, students have responsibility for their own safety by monitoring developments on their own through public sources and by not intentionally putting themselves in harm's way.

Students should learn to exercise a high degree of cultural sensitivity. Those who are easily identified as Americans, either through appearance or behavior, may be more likely to be targeted for petty crime and other acts of violence. We advise students to blend into their host country culture as much as possible by striving for fluency in the local vernacular and by adjusting their habits and dress to conform to local cultural standards. This does not mean abandoning your own national identity; in fact, study abroad normally heightens that awareness. Understanding that there are adjustments to be made, and taking them seriously, will result in a more profound and safer educational experience.

It is important that University and program representatives are able to reach students' families quickly in case of emergency. Before students leave for the overseas program, we ask that families provide us with up-to-date contact information, as well as a written acknowledgement of the students' overseas study plans.

## UR HEALTH

### Health and Wellness

In order to have a successful and productive study abroad experience, students need to take steps to ensure good health. Depending on your destination, study abroad does not necessarily present more health risks than you would encounter in Rochester. Three keys to staying healthy are: knowing the health and safety risks present in your host country (or countries); preparing adequately before your departure; and avoiding risky behavior that could jeopardize your health.

If you are on prescription medication, have a chronic medical condition, or are under treatment for any physiological or psychological conditions, be aware that overseas travel may complicate matters. Even past conditions that are under control may be aggravated by changes in diet, climate and social environment. **Consult with your doctor or therapist about the availability of medication and continued treatment overseas.** Study abroad programs require you to disclose any health conditions prior to your departure so that they can be prepared to help you find treatment or accommodation. Do not expect that everything will be similar to life in the US.

Cultural differences, laws, and standards of behavior create an environment that can have a profound impact upon your health, particularly with respect to alcohol use and sexual habits. It is likely that alcohol may be more readily available and might be a normal part of daily meals. Before reveling in this freedom, pay attention to the nuances of the local customs and be respectful of them. Remember that you always remain a guest in the country, and will be held to a higher standard of behavior.

If you choose to be sexually active during your time abroad, knowing your partner takes on a whole new meaning. Dating practices will be vastly different; take time to

learn about them. People in your host country may take longer to get to know, or they may be more outgoing and friendly than you are used to. They are very likely to have media-based images of Americans as sexually promiscuous, and may expect that you will conform to this image. If you choose to be sexually active, practicing safe sex is as important as it is in the United States.

All students should be aware of the risks posed by diseases such as hepatitis and bacterial meningitis, which occur in developed countries and developing regions alike. Some students study in locations where diseases such as cholera, malaria, or yellow fever may be endemic. You may need to get vaccinations beginning as early as ten weeks prior to departure.

**Insurance**

You must have adequate health insurance while abroad. Becoming ill or having an accident overseas can ruin your study plans, and can even be life-threatening. Insurance can help you manage risks.

Check your existing insurance policy to determine if it will cover you while abroad. If so, find out exactly how the coverage would be implemented overseas. Would you have to go to a particular hospital, clinic or doctor(s)? Would you have to pay the costs up front and then wait to be reimbursed by the insurance company?

If your existing health insurance will not cover you overseas, or if you aren't satisfied with the level of coverage, you may want to purchase an additional short-term policy specially designed for U.S. students abroad. The Center for Study Abroad can provide the names and contact information for companies that provide this coverage. While we strongly advise you to obtain adequate health insurance, we do not endorse any particular company or policy. The College provides insurance for medical evacuation and repatriation of remains for all students who study abroad during the academic year, with the exception of IES, DIS and UR-affiliated CIEE programs, since they provide similar coverage.

However, life insurance coverage is not included. If your study abroad program does not provide such coverage, then make sure that you have proper life insurance coverage before traveling abroad. In addition, you may want to consider purchasing property insurance to cover theft or loss of any personal property, such as a laptop computer, camera, or jewelry. Avoid taking items of great value with you; the possibility of loss or theft often outweighs the value of having them. If you must pack valuables, property insurance may help replace their monetary value. Follow this general rule: if it's irreplaceable (e.g. heirloom jewelry), leave it home in a safe place.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION FROM UHS

Scheduling an appointment with your primary care provider (PCP) at the University Health Service (UHS) prior to leaving the university is a good idea even if your program does not require you to do so. You may find it helpful to talk with your PCP about your health concerns, diet/nutrition concerns, prescription renewals, and other questions you may have. Female students may want to schedule an annual gynecological exam before going abroad.

To schedule an appointment at UHS, call 585-275-2662. It will be helpful to let the receptionist know that you will be studying abroad and are scheduling a pre-departure health visit. If you have a health form that needs completing, please let the receptionist know, so the appropriate amount of time can be scheduled for your visit.

## TRAVEL IMMUNIZATIONS

Many countries require you to have specific immunizations before coming into the country. Check the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) web site, www.cdc.gov, for information about immunizations you need before studying abroad. The web site provides requirements for every country. Travel advisories are also listed on this site.

If you need immunizations before you travel, you can receive them at UHS. There will be a charge for the immunizations, but not for the visit to UHS. You may prefer to go to your physician at home, to your county health department, to Passport Health (located in Helen Wood Hall across from the Medical Center), or to another health care facility. You may want to inquire about the cost when you call to schedule. Since some immunizations require more than one visit or cannot be taken in combination with others, it is recommended that you take care of your immunizations well in advance of your departure.

## HEALTH INSURANCE

All full-time UR students must have health insurance coverage while studying abroad. Students can remain on their own insurance or enroll in the University-sponsored insurance. Some study abroad programs offer a health insurance option for students. If your program offers insurance it is important to check the duration of the coverage while abroad.

If you are studying abroad in the fall semester, you do not complete the online Health Insurance Enrollment/Waiver Process prior to the start of the fall semester. You will, however, need to complete the online insurance process before the start of the spring semester. If you are studying abroad in the spring semester and want to enroll in the University-sponsored insurance or continue your enrollment in the University-sponsored insurance, you will need to complete a paper enrollment form. If you waived the insurance in the fall semester, your waiver will continue to apply in

the spring semester. For more information for Study Abroad students, check the UHS web site at http://www.rochester.edu/uhs/studentinsurance/StudyAbroad.html

Students who will be studying abroad can:

- Remain on their own, or their parent's, health insurance while abroad: If you will be staying on your own insurance, you do not complete the online Health Insurance Enrollment/Waiver Process or a paper form for the semester(s) you will be abroad. When you return to the University, you need to complete the online Health Insurance Enrollment/Waiver Process before the start of the next semester. Before going abroad, you may want to verify your coverage while you are outside the U.S. to be sure you have adequate coverage. You should take your insurance card with you.

- Enroll in the University-sponsored health insurance: If you choose this option, please contact the UHS Insurance Advisor for assistance with the enrollment process. You will need to complete a paper copy of the enrollment form. The form is available on the UHS web site at http://www.rochester.edu/uhs/studentinsurance/StudyAbroad.html. The UHS Insurance Advisor can be reached at insurance@uhs.rochester.edu. With this option, you will be billed for Aetna Student Health insurance and the mandatory health fee. The charges will appear on your tuition billing statement.

- Check with your program. Health insurance may already be included as part of the program.

About the University-Sponsored Insurance: The University-sponsored health insurance is offered by Aetna Student Health. For more information about the Aetna Student Health insurance, check the plan details on the University of Rochester page on the Aetna Student Health web site.

If you have questions about health insurance: Contact the UHS Insurance Advisor at insurance@uhs.rochester.edu

For students who study abroad during the academic year, UR provides them with a MEDEX insurance policy that provides coverage for emergency medical evacuation and repatriation of remains. This benefit does not cover routine medical services. Students who participate in UR programs sponsored by IES, CIEE, DIS and AUC or who are enrolled in the University-sponsored Aetna insurance plan already receive this benefit.

In addition, we highly recommend that students consider purchasing personal liability insurance against injury or damage caused by or resulting from students' acts or omissions during enrollment in any program.

## UHS CAN HELP YOU

All full-time students have a primary care provider (PCP) at UHS. When you are abroad, you can communicate with your PCP through the UHS web site www.rochester.edu/uhs Click on "Contact UHS" to send a message to UHS. Contacting UHS can help you with general health questions; however, contacting UHS does not replace or provide direct care you may need while abroad. When sending a message to UHS, it would be helpful if you mention that you are abroad. The UHS web site provides immediate access to information on several health topics, as well as links to reputable health-related web sites.

If you would like to ask a general question about a mental health concern, you can do so through the UCC website www.rochester.edu/ucc. Click on "Ask UCC" to send an anonymous message and a UCC therapist will respond. Contacting UCC may help with general questions but does not replace any care you may need while abroad. Click on "Self Help" on the UCC web site for helpful information and online resources about many mental health topics.

## ITEMS TO TAKE WITH YOU

If you have a known and ongoing medical problem, such as allergies or diabetes, take special precautions in preparing for and managing your situation overseas. Living in a new environment, along with the stresses of studying abroad, can have an impact on your health. Scheduling an appointment with your UHS primary care provider and/or your doctor at home prior to departure will help you anticipate and prepare for medical situations that could arise while you are abroad. To schedule an appointment at UHS, call 585- 275-2662.

### A. Medications

If you are taking a prescription medication (including birth control pills), bring a supply to last you throughout your time abroad. Prescription medications vary in name, potency, and purity from country to country and cannot be sent through international mails. In fact, you should check with the local embassy to make sure that your medication is acceptable to carry into the country. Some countries may consider your prescription medication to be illegal. Bring a letter from your doctor listing your medications and explaining why you need them.

If you have over-the-counter (OTC) medications you prefer, it is a good idea to take a supply with you rather than assume you will be able to purchase the same medicine abroad. For customs purposes, keep all medicines (prescription or over-the-counter) in the original containers. If you bring syringes with you, be sure to bring a doctor's note. Syringes could be construed as drug paraphernalia.

Keep the medications in the original container(s) and carry any medications you take daily in a carry-on bag in case your luggage is misplaced while traveling. It is also wise to bring the written drug information provided by your pharmacy with you through customs in case the officer has questions about your medication. If you have questions about your prescription medications, ask your primary care provider and/or a pharmacist for advice.

**B. Glasses/Contact Lenses**

If you wear glasses or contacts, it is a good idea to bring a typed copy of your prescription and an extra pair of glasses or contacts with you.

**C. Your Medical Record**

Bringing information from your medical record when you study abroad is recommended. It is advisable to carry these documents in a place that is both secure and accessible by you at all times while traveling. Be sure to make a photocopy of your medical records in case of loss. We suggest bringing:

- Medications you are currently taking.
- List of chronic illness, allergies, and hypersensitivities.
- Your immunization history.
- Your blood type (if available)
- Your eyeglass and/or contact prescription.
- The name of your PCP at UHS and at home.
- The name and policy number of your health insurance company.
- Your health insurance card

**D. Medic Alert Emblem**

Medic Alert emblems are recognized internationally. If you wear a Medic Alert identification tag or bracelet, be sure to wear it while abroad. If you carry a card, you should carry the card with you at all times. This identification should indicate the specific nature of the problem and clearly spell what must or must not be done should you be unable to communicate this information yourself (e.g., in case of unconsciousness).

**E. First Aid Kit**

You may want to bring a small first aid kit with you. The availability of specific over-the-counter drugs and hygiene products is uncertain in other countries. Many of these products will have different brands in the countries where you will be traveling, so it is a good idea to have what you need for the duration of your stay before you leave home.

**Items to pack in a first aid kit:**

- Medication for pain or fever, such as Acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol), Ibuprofen (e.g., Advil, Motrin), or Aspirin for pain or fever.
- An antihistamine (e.g., Benadryl) for allergies, for motion sickness, and to ease the itch from insect bites or stings.
- Loperamide (e.g., Immodium) for diarrhea.
- Bandages and band-aids for minor injuries.
- Antiseptic, e.g., povidone-iodine (e.g., Betadine) and antibacterial (e.g., Neosporin) for cuts.
- Calamine lotion or 'AfterBite' to ease irritation from bites and stings.
- Throat lozenges, cough suppressants (e.g. Robitussin DM), decongestant for cold symptoms.
- Thermometer
- Condoms and contraceptives. If you are taking birth control pills, bring enough for the duration of your stay.

*A few other things to consider including in your first aid kit:*

- Multivitamins (especially for long trips when dietary vitamin intake may be inadequate)
- Feminine hygiene products
- Insect repellent
- Sunscreen and chapstick
- Scissors and tweezers (packed in your suitcase)

## YOUR PERSONAL HEALTH

Taking care of your personal health will help you have an enjoyable and successful time studying abroad. Living in another culture often entails a change in diet, different expectations about alcohol consumption, and stresses from living in a new place and culture. In this section, you will find information about nutrition, alcohol and other drugs, sexual health, cold self care, and the flu.

### A. Nutrition

Living in another culture often entails a change in diet and changes in daily eating routines and assumptions. Diets in other countries can be significantly more or less nutritious than diets in America. It is important to be aware of what you are eating. Traveling will bring your body into contact with new and different bacteria than you are used to. These bacteria are not necessarily harmful in themselves, but the change can unsettle your stomach or cause health problems.

Food should be selected with care. Any raw food could be contaminated, particularly in areas of poor sanitation. Foods of particular concern include salads, uncooked vegetables and fruit, raw meat, and shellfish. If you peel fruit yourself, it is

generally safe. Food that has been cooked and is still hot is generally safe. In addition, water, including ice cubes, unpasteurized milk, and milk products, could upset your digestive system until your body adjusts to new surroundings.

If you are a vegetarian, you may find it particularly challenging to maintain a healthy diet. You may want to research the foods offered in your host country. You may want to bring protein powder, vitamins, and other dietary supplements with you to provide good nutrition while abroad. Talking with other vegetarians who have studied abroad may be helpful, as well.

**B. Alcohol & Drug Use**

If you decide to drink while abroad, drink wisely. Alcohol abuse can lead to unsafe choices, poor academic performance, higher risk behavior, and/or regretted sexual activity. Do not endanger yourself, others, or property. Use good judgment whenever consuming alcohol.

Students studying abroad may abuse alcohol due to a mistaken impression of how alcohol is used in your new surroundings, the cheaper cost to purchase alcohol, a lower minimum drinking age, different portions of alcohol, different types of alcoholic beverages, more lenient laws against drunkenness, and/or a desire to experiment or fit in. A word of caution – standard drinks in the U.S. may not be the same as drinks available internationally. Although alcohol abuse may not carry the same legal penalties as use of illegal drugs, it can create dire circumstances for you and your personal safety.

Remember, you will be in a new environment and will often have to rely on public transportation to get you home at night. You may also have to make the journey home at night alone, so be sure to use caution and stay in control and aware of your surroundings. Use of inebriating or hallucinogenic drugs has very serious cultural and legal consequences (e.g., incarceration, deportation, removal from your program), as well as innumerable health risks.

Although there may be no minimum drinking age in your host country, the customs regarding alcohol use may be very different from ours. Most countries, with the exception of those with religious prohibitions, tolerate social drinking; however, alcohol abuse and drunken behavior are not socially acceptable or tolerated. Remember that you are serving as an ambassador for the University of Rochester and the United States and the rules of the University uphold while studying in another country.

If you or a fellow student becomes incapacitated due to alcohol overuse and/or is in need of medical attention, the local emergency medical service and your program director/faculty should be notified immediately to protect the student's health and well-being.

## C. Sexual Health

It is important for you to be aware of your host culture's view towards gender, dating, sex and morality. If you choose to be sexually active, protect yourself and your partner against unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and HIV/AIDS. Be responsible if using alcohol or other drugs because they can affect your judgment and your behavior. Take a supply of condoms and other birth control methods with you, as the availability of condoms in your new country may be limited. Additionally, the conditions of manufacture and storage may be questionable. If you are taking birth control pills, bring an extra pack in addition to what will be needed for the duration of your stay. For more information on sexual health topics, check "Health Topics" on the UHS web site.

## D. Cold Self Care

It is likely you will experience cold symptoms while you are abroad. Unfortunately, there is no cure for the common cold. Upper respiratory infections or colds are an inflammation of the upper respiratory tract caused by many different virus strains that cannot be cured by antibiotics. Most colds generally last 4-5 days. Over-the-counter medications may reduce your symptoms. The "Health Topics" section of the UHS web site provides recommendations for self-care for four common cold symptoms (cough, nasal congestion, sore throat, and fever). Also included is advice to help you decide if you should seek medical care.

Colds are spread mainly from person to person through coughs, sneezes, and mucus on a person's hands. You can pick up the virus from books, towels, door handles, etc. that people with a cold virus have touched.

*The best ways to reduce your chances of catching a cold are:*

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water often and every time you touch your face.
- Cover your nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing.
- Discard your tissue after using it once.
- Avoid kissing and sharing towels, utensils, cups, etc.
- Get an adequate amount of sleep.
- Eat well.

## E. About the Flu

The UHS web site also provides information about the flu. Symptoms of the typical flu come on quickly and usually include fever, chills, weakness, aches and pains, headaches, and a dry cough. If you suddenly develop these symptoms at a time when influenza is present in the community, you probably have the flu. Since flu is caused by viruses, antibiotics are not effective. The only real cure for flu is time. In cases of uncomplicated flu, the fever lasts three to four days and recovery occurs within a week.

While most flu symptoms disappear within a week, a dry cough and lack of energy may persist for a couple of weeks. Once the worst symptoms have passed, it is especially important to eat and rest well so that full recovery takes place as quickly as possible. For more information about the flu, check the UHS web site at http://www.rochester.edu/uhs/healthtopics/ColdCare/index.html

If you will be studying abroad during the spring semester, we recommend you receive a flu shot in November or December prior to leaving the U.S. The flu shot will help protect you from the most common strains of the flu for the upcoming flu season. To be protected, you need to receive a flu shot every flu season.

## YOUR EMOTIONAL HEALTH: IMPORTANT INFORMATION FROM UCC

If you would like to ask a general question about a mental health concern, you can do so through the UCC website (www.rochester.edu/ucc). Click on "Ask UCC" to send an anonymous message and a UCC therapist will respond. Contacting UCC may help with general questions but not replace any care you may need while abroad. Click on "Self Help" for helpful information and online resources about many mental health topics. Please make sure that you discuss implications of study abroad with your counselor.

Living in a new place and culture can cause stresses that may or may not be anticipated. There will be ups and downs to adjusting to new academics, surroundings, food, habits, customs, people, etc. Feelings of loneliness or frustration will pass as you make these adjustments. If they persist, however, consider it a possible medical problem and seek assistance from a counselor or physician.

Going abroad is not a magic "geographic cure" for concerns and problems 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 travel. Contrary to many people's expectations, travel does not minimize these problems; in fact, it often exacerbates them to a crisis stage while you are away from home.

### A. Cultural Shock

It is normal to experience stress when studying abroad. You are not only adjusting to being a student in a new and different setting, but you are also adjusting to a new living environment. Quite likely, you will be far away from friends and family and will experience feelings of loneliness and homesickness. These feelings are very natural. The difference between what you expect and what you actually experience may contribute to the level of distress you feel.

It may help to know that most people go through five fairly predictable stages as they adjust to their new environment.

1. The initial excitement about being in a new place is called orientation & honeymoon.
2. This stage is followed by a period of initial culture shock in which you may feel lonely, frustrated, and depressed.
3. This stage will pass in time to a point of adjustment, where you will start feeling more comfortable with your surroundings and your acquaintances.
4. As you complete the adjustment cycle, you will find yourself feeling integrated into the host culture and may find you enjoy most aspects of host country.
5. Returning to the United States may send you into a reverse culture shock. You may not want to leave and may find yourself trying to figure out how and when you can return.

Be prepared to undergo a fairly typical adjustment cycle during your stay; in other words, expect some ups and downs. You'll start out with a great deal of excitement; the host country seems to be the most fantastic place on earth, and you will be high with enthusiasm. After a while, the novelty will wear off, and you may feel lonely, frustrated, depressed, homesick, and irritable. You will complain about everything and everyone; you may wish you had never left home and long to be back in Rochester. Don't worry! Things will get better. The petty frustrations will disappear. As you complete your adjustment cycle, you will come to accept and then to enjoy everything, including the academics, food, drinks, habits, and customs of the host country. By the end of the term, you may not want to leave, and you will try to figure out how to get back again as soon as possible.

Some required reading on Culture Shock: The "What's Up With Culture?" website was created by Dr. Bruce LaBrack, an anthropologist at the University of the Pacific in California. It is specifically designed for students traveling abroad. It is a wonderfully thorough, informative, engaging and interactive presentation about crossing cultural boundaries. If you're majoring in anthropology, you may already be familiar with some of this material; for all students, this is an essential crash course in cross-cultural communication and adjustment. If you find yourself at a low point when you're abroad, refer back to this site: it can help you understand some of the cultural complexities that may be making your life difficult. This reading is posted in your Blackboard course.

Important Questions about Your Host Country and Culture Before you Leave

Take a proactive approach to encountering difference in your host country. These questions are designed to help spark your curiosity about the country, to direct your reading and research, and to sharpen your knowledge. How many can you answer? Once you arrive overseas, you might use them to fill a quiet moment with your host family, or to strike up a conversation at a pub.

People:

- How many people can you name who are prominent in the affairs (politics, athletics, religion, the arts, etc.) of your host country?

- Who are the country's national heroes and heroines?
- Are other languages spoken besides the dominant language?
- What are the social and political implications of language usage?
- What things are taboo in this society?
- How do people greet one another? Shake hands? Embrace or kiss?
- How do they leave one another?
- What does any variation from the usual greeting or leave-taking signify?

Customs:

- Can you recognize the national anthem?
- What are the most common forms of marriage ceremonies and celebrations?
- What is the attitude toward divorce? extra-marital relations? plural marriages?
- What is the attitude toward gambling?
- What is the attitude toward drinking?
- Is the price asked for merchandise fixed or are customers expected to bargain?
- How is the bargaining conducted?
- If, as a customer, you touch or handle merchandise for sale, will the storekeeper think you are knowledgeable, inconsiderate, within your rights, completely outside your rights? Other?
- How do people organize their daily activities?
- What is the normal meal schedule?
- Is there a daytime rest period?
- What is the customary time for visiting friends?
- On what occasions would you present (or accept) gifts from people in the country?
- What kinds of gifts would you exchange?
- Do some flowers have a particular significance?
- What are the important holidays? How is each observed?
- How are children disciplined at home?
- Are children usually present at social occasions? At ceremonial occasions? If they are not present, how are they cared for in the absence of their parents?
- How does society observe a child’s "coming of age?"

Religion:

- What is the predominant religion? Is it a state religion?
- What are the most important religious observances and ceremonies? How regularly do people participate in them?
- How do members of the predominant religion feel about other religions?

Food and Entertainment:

- What foods are most popular and how are they prepared?
- If you are invited to dinner, should you arrive early, on time or late? If late, how late?

- What is the usual dress for women? For men?
- Are slacks or shorts worn? If so, on what occasions?
- What are the favorite leisure and recreational activities?
- What sports are popular?
- What kinds of television programs are shown?

Gender Issues:

- What are the special privileges of age and/or sex?
- What are the minority groups in your host country? Are you a minority in that country?
- What are men's, women's, and minorities' roles (social, professional, religious, etc.) in your host country?
- Do men, women, and minorities have equal opportunity/protection under the law?
- Do men, women, and minorities have the same educational opportunities? Job opportunities?
- Do women and minorities serve in the military?
- Do women work outside the home?
- What type of leadership roles do women and minorities hold?
- How do men treat local women? American women?
- How does your host country view minorities within the country and elsewhere?
- Are pay scales equal for men, women, and minorities?
- Is there a women's rights or civil rights movements?
- Are there special concerns/issues that women and minorities should be aware of before they study abroad in your host country?
- Where do women and minorities fall within the social hierarchy?

Transport:

- What kind of local public transportation is available? Do all classes of people use it?
- Who has the right of way in traffic: vehicles, animals or pedestrians?

Politics:

- Is military training compulsory?
- Are the largest circulation newspapers generally friendly in their attitude toward the United States?
- What is the history of the relationships between this country and the U.S.?
- How many people have emigrated from this country to the United States? Other countries? Are many doing so at present?

Medicine:

- What kinds of health services are available?
- What are the common home remedies for minor ailments?

- Where can medicines be purchased?

Education:

- Is education free? Compulsory?
- What kinds of schools are considered best: public, private, parochial?
- Where are the important universities of the country?
- If university education is sought abroad, to what countries and universities do students go?

Peer Advisers

These students studied abroad recently, and are an excellent source of detailed information about student life overseas. They will be able to answer questions about topics such as: packing, making friendships abroad, dating, culture shock, travel arrangements, gender roles, differences in instructional methods & study techniques, advice on learning foreign languages, and how to research the history, culture and current events of your host country.

If you have questions about your study abroad plans such as: "What should I pack?" or "What can I expect from my program?" contact the Study Abroad Office for the name of a peer adviser. Your fellow students are your best resource for these types of questions.

**B. Dealing with Stress**

Many emotions and reactions are to be expected when you are stressed. Some common manifestations are:

- Irritability over small things
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep
- Queasy stomach
- Desire to run away
- Constant feeling or tiredness
- Psychosomatic illness
- Excessive criticism of others
- Poor work performance
- Difficulty making decisions
- Being unusually introspective
- Feelings of guilt, worry and anxiety

Based on feedback from numerous students, the following techniques are especially helpful in dealing with the stresses and strains of adjustment:

- Immerse yourself in study/reading that is satisfying.
- Find a local person with whom you can talk regularly.
- Practice your faith through prayer, meditation, reading, etc.
- Write letters/e-mails (or use Skype and similar online audio/visual communication services) to family and friends.
- Visit fellow students.

## C. Coping Strategies

You may find it helpful to think about the coping strategies that have worked for you in the past. You may also want to develop some new strategies to help you when you are experiencing periods of loneliness, sadness, or depression. It helps to anticipate that you may have non-peak times, so you can be prepared to work through them. Whenever your usual coping mechanisms are not working for you or you find yourself making coping choices that are not in your best interest, realize that you may need more support and seek help. You may find it helpful to talk with your program director/faculty to talk about the stress you are feeling.

You should be aware of the signs of a serious problem, either in yourself or in a fellow student, which require intervention. The signs include:

- Prolonged depression
- Marked changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- Excessive anxiety that interferes with the ability to function
- Self-destructive or violent behavior
- Alcohol or substance abuse
- Failure to comply with medical recommendations

(Adapted from "Maintaining Strong Mental and Emotional Health" module, Pre-Service Health Training for Volunteers Binder, Peace Corps Office of Medical Services)

## INFORMATION FROM CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING (CETL)

The Center for Study Abroad and CETL work in partnership to make every effort to ensure that students with disabilities can participate successfully in study abroad programs. Please be aware that we cannot guarantee that facilities or support services will be available at each location abroad in the same range and quality as the University of Rochester. Every country has unique architecture, transportation, and laws that may impact students' access to study abroad programs. Students with disabilities are encouraged to meet with their CETL disability support coordinator and Study Abroad adviser to discuss accommodation needs and identify appropriate sites overseas.

**Explore reasonable accommodations.**

Once accepted, talk to your disability support coordinator about your particular needs and possible site-specific information about disability issues

**Confirm your program accommodations.**

Follow up to coordinate your accommodation request between your CETL coordinator, Study Abroad adviser, and site coordinator about any questions you may have regarding approved accommodations, and to identify the overseas site contact who will be informed of your on-site reasonable accommodations.

Visit http://www.miusa.org/ncde MIUSA, National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange.

**Accommodations Can Differ**

- Equivalent disability services, facilities and assistive technology utilized at US universities may not be found at overseas placements.
- Disability terminology may differ. For example, in European countries "learning disability" is defined the same way "intellectual disability" is in the US.
- Sign language interpreters may not be certified or available at all times. Rather than ASL, interpreting will generally be in the sign language of the country.
- Guide dogs may be quarantined before they are allowed into the country.
- Bring mobility aids to use in restrooms without bars, and various transportation systems.
- Carry extra spare parts or differing types of casters for a wheelchair.

**Medical Concerns and Prescriptions**

- Contact the consulate or embassy in your host country to ensure your medication is legal.
- Make sure you have enough medications to last throughout the entire stay.
- Medications should be stored in original, labeled containers.

- Carry a letter from a physician that describes the medication.
- Always carry medication in your carry-on in the event your checked bag is delayed or lost.
- It is illegal to have medication sent abroad to you via postal mail.
- Confirm your health insurance covers any disability-related medical needs while overseas.

**Coping Strategies**

- Work well in advance with CETL and Study Abroad to arrange accommodations at your overseas site.
- Learn to explain your disability in the host language.
- Your disability may intersect with your host culture in unexpected ways. It is important to research your host culture before you go, discuss customs with your hosts, and be open to creative solutions.
- Read about the experiences of other students: http://www.miusa.org/ncde/stories

## Student Conduct and Safety Abroad

Code of Conduct for University of Rochester Study Abroad Students

**General Guidelines**
You are required to read and to understand the following Code of Conduct.

You are required to be familiar with and to adhere to the UR "Standards of Conduct." These Standards are outlined in the UR "Handbook on Student Discipline: Conduct Standards, Policies, and Procedures." A copy of this handbook can be found on-line at: http://www.rochester.edu/College/dos/conduct/. The same behavior expectations exist overseas, in matters relating to student-to-student relationships, class attendance, and academic honesty. Please be advised that if you are placed on disciplinary or academic probation before your study abroad program begins, this may affect your plans to study abroad. **It is your responsibility to notify the Center for Study Abroad immediately and meet with a study abroad adviser.**

Additionally, students on study abroad programs should be aware of two general guidelines: In terms of **academic** policy, the general regulations of the University of Rochester override those of the program. An example: the program may indicate that students have the option of taking less than a full load of courses. However, since we do not permit overloads or underloads on study abroad programs, you will be held to the UR policy.

In terms of program policies concerning **health and safety**, the general regulations of the University of Rochester override those of the study abroad program. For example, some programs may permit students' renting or operation of motorized vehicles, and we do not. However, in some cases, the judgment of local area experts may be based on more current and accurate information than is available to us. In such cases, we will rely on the recommendations of local security consultants and site directors.

The following are examples of behaviors on study abroad programs which will subject the participant to discipline and penalties. Discipline may include, and is not limited to: loss of privileges, community service projects, fines, and/or dismissal from the program, in the sole discretion of University of Rochester administration. The University of Rochester may, at any time, contact your parents (and your home school, if you are not a matriculated UR student) if program officers believe that your behavior is inconsistent with the terms of this agreement.

1. The use, distribution, or possession of any quantity of illegal drugs, including marijuana. Prescription drugs will be allowed, for use by the individual for whom it was prescribed.

2. The use or possession of firearms, ammunition, explosives, fireworks, and other weapons, including, but not limited to pistols, rifles, shotguns, handguns, BB guns, paint guns, swords, knives, spears, and dangerous chemicals.

3. Physical violence, including sexual assault.

4. The theft or damage of personal property of another individual or company, or University of Rochester equipment; jeopardizing the safety and the property of others by neglecting to secure common spaces (e.g. failure to observe directions for locking doors, windows, shutters; loss of keys).

5. Public conduct (in host countries and in the program location) deemed offensive by ordinary standards of courtesy (e.g., indecent exposure, drunkenness or abuse of alcohol, personal injury, property damage), or any other behavior, which directly impinges on the rights of others.

6. Unwillingness to participate fully in the academic program, such as refusal to attend classes or to turn in assignments.

7. Failure to read and to comply with written directions and pre-arrival materials provided by the University of Rochester and your study abroad program concerning your safety, adjustment and academic success.

8. Failure to respond in a timely fashion to any communication received from the University of Rochester, and from your program, prior to and during your time abroad. This includes failure to monitor and to keep in working order your UR email account. This also includes failure to provide your overseas mailing address to the College Center for Study Abroad at the beginning of your program.

9. Harassment, directed toward individuals or groups. Harassment may include, but is not limited to, threats of physical violence, coercion, intimidation, or persistent verbal or written statements (beyond a reasonable expression of opinion), which are likely to cause another person humiliation, stress, psychological harm.

10. Returning to the program late, intentionally missing the train, bus, or other type of transportation, or traveling to a prohibited area during elective travel. Failure to inform the local site director, to the best of your ability, of your whereabouts during elective travel

11. Knowingly furnishing false or misleading information to a representative of the University of Rochester, and the falsification, alteration, duplication, or misuse of the official identification card, passport, and/or other documents issued to participants.

12. Creating excessive noise resulting in the disruption of others' rights to a peaceful environment, privacy and rest in the living areas during quiet hours and failure to respect the rights of others during the remaining time periods.

13. Assisting with or bringing unauthorized visitor(s) or substances in program housing or premises. Animals, including dogs, cats, reptiles etc. are prohibited in housing on study abroad programs.

14. Unauthorized use of University of Rochester property and/or unauthorized entrance into offices, and common spaces.

15. Creating a fire, safety or health hazard; tampering with fire safety equipment of any kind, including sprinklers, smoke detectors, and/or operating a fire alarm or emergency signal without the existence of a fire or a similar emergency situation.

16. Failure to comply with the terms of any disciplinary sanctions.

17. Operating motor vehicles of any type (automobiles, moped, motorcycles, etc.), or engaging in behavior such as hitchhiking.

18. Failure to abide by smoking, drug, and alcohol policies established by the program.

19. Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty or facilitating any such act inconsistent with the standards of academic integrity established by the University of Rochester.

20. Unauthorized use of computers or use that is inconsistent with the local computer use policies. This can include downloading any files to public machines in cases where students have been forbidden to do so, violating time limits set by the program, or using applications not permitted on program computers, which might include Instant Messenger or music download software.

21. Failure to promptly meet financial responsibilities to the University of Rochester, including, but not limited to, knowingly passing a worthless check, money order, credit card, or other methods of payment to the University of Rochester or a member of the University of Rochester Study Abroad community acting in official capacity.

22. Unauthorized distribution of flyers, advertisements, informational materials, etc. The University of Rochester does not permit any type of unauthorized sales and solicitations for individual or company for private gain.

23. Failure to comply with the directives of University of Rochester staff or faculty acting in the performance of their duties.

24. Disruption or obstruction of teaching, administration, disciplinary proceedings, other study abroad activities.

25. Failure to follow the standards of conduct and behavior as established for all students while in the host country and on field trips, including failure to learn and to obey local laws as outlined by your program director.

**Steps Involved in Progressive Discipline**

If you engage in any of the prohibited behavior mentioned above, you will be subject to disciplinary action. The disciplinary process through which sanctions may be imposed will vary from location to location, however administrators in each location will generally consider the following:

- Seriousness of the conduct
- Student's academic and behavioral record
- The student's ability to correct conduct
- Surrounding circumstances
- Should the individual have been aware of the rule or behavioral violations
- Is there a reasonable excuse for the infraction?

If a student is deemed responsible for engaging in prohibited behavior the program administrator will determine appropriate sanctions for the student. Typical sanctions

include verbal warnings, written warnings, community service, revocation of privileges, and dismissal from the program. Some behaviors, including, but not limited to the use and/or possession of drugs, firearms, and physical assault, may result in immediate dismissal. Any case may involve the entire range of sanctions; however, in general, the University of Rochester administrators will use progressive discipline when addressing issues of student misconduct.

**Safety Tips**

University Security wants your study abroad experience to be a rewarding and safe one. Please review the information contained in the two U.S. State Department publications (linked below), as well as these common sense guidelines.

Remember, you are an ambassador for the University of Rochester, and of the United States. Bad impressions are lasting impressions.

Learn about the country in which you will be studying.

Learn about local laws and the consequences for their violations. What appears to be a minor infraction in the U.S. can have major repercussions in your host country.

Stay aware of your surroundings, no matter where you are.

Learn how to summon help in any emergency, either for you or someone else. Know how to use a pay phone and have the correct change or token on hand.

Inform yourself about the safety of areas that you will commonly frequent (residential, academic, social). Consult with your program director.

Ask about, and learn, the emergency exit routes in your residence and school buildings.

Have a safe place to store valuables at your residence.

Carry only the cash or credit cards that you'll need. Use travelers checks in place of cash.

When traveling, carry cash and credit cards in a money belt.

Whenever possible, travel with another person or in groups.

Keep your host program informed of your whereabouts. When traveling, let someone know with who you'll be, along with the date/time of your departure and return.

Keep a low profile in demeanor and dress. Conceal jewelry, or don't wear it at all.

Don't shout in public.

Do not hitchhike, even though local citizens may.

Exchange currency only at authorized and/or reputable establishments.

Before you go, make a copy of the identification page of your passport. Take the copy with you, but keep it separate from your passport.

Keep a record of your passport number, and the date and place of issuance.

Know the location of, and register at, the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

Keep up on current events, in the U.S. and your host country, especially as they relate to U.S. citizens in your host country.

Review on a regular basis all U.S. State Department Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts & Country Specific Information pages for the areas and regions you'll be residing in and visiting.

If taking a cell phone, make sure you have an appropriate calling plan.

**More Advice About Safety and Conduct While Overseas**

Clothing that immediately identifies you as a U.S. college student, such as fraternity/sorority logos, or baseball caps worn backwards, may hamper your efforts to blend in to your new surroundings and peers. More seriously, criminals often are able to seek out tourists or international students, simply because of their appearance. Many returnees recommend wearing black clothing, especially in Europe. If the locals don't wear white athletic shoes unless they are engaged in sports, don't use them for street wear!

Be especially careful to be polite and to observe signs and regulations in public places.

Whenever possible, travel with another person. Leave the following with your program director: name of travelers, dates of departure and return.

Inform yourself about the safety of areas you commonly frequent.

If you are staying with a host family, bring gifts from the U.S. --inexpensive, lightweight and representative of our culture, UR, or your hometown.

Don't be insulted or make a judgment until you have had time to think it over and discuss it with someone.

Make an effort to immerse yourself in your new culture. Become more than a guest. You will be a resident...act like one. Adapt to their way of life; don't try to change it. (That doesn't mean you need to compromise your own moral standards.)

Keep a journal or a log while you are abroad. Journals provide a wonderful opportunity to record all of your adventures overseas. This will be one of the most valuable pieces of memorabilia to look back at after you return to the United States.

Expect the unexpected. So you get off the plane and your luggage isn't there! Have those few necessities in your carry-on bag. Counteract something you don't believe is affecting you. But once you do recognize what is happening, there are a number of things you can do.

**Flexibility, a sense of humor, patience, and counting to ten before you speak are all keys to a successful international experience!**

**Useful Links**

Review the information from the following two web sites:

U.S. State Department publication, *Tips for Traveling Abroad*,
http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/tips_1232.html

U.S. State Department publication,
http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety_1747.html

http://www.rochester.edu/College/abroad/predeparture/safety.html#links