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Chapter 1: Contact Information

Office of International Education: (251) 460-7053

USA Police 24 Hour: (251) 460-6312

Contact information abroad:

EMBASSY AND CONSULATE

Look online at <http://www.travel.state.gov> to locate the closest U.S. Embassy/Consulate to your travel destination and check on issued travel alerts and warnings. You should regularly check for updates.

Important links:

U.S. GOVERNMENT LINKS

U.S. Department of State Students Abroad <http://studentsabroad.state.gov>

U.S. Customs and Border Protections Agency <http://cbp.gov>

Travel Registration <https://travelregistration.state.gov>

Center for Disease Control (CDC) <http://www.cdc.gov>

Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) <http://www.osac.gov>

Transportation Security Administration <http://www.tsa.gov>

TRAVEL INFORMATION

Association for Safe International Road Travel (ASIRT) <http://www.asirt.org>

Lonely Planet <http://www.lonelyplanet.com>

Travelers Digest <http://www.travelersdigest.com>

The Bathroom Diaries <http://www.thebathroomdiaries.com>

EXCHANGE RATE CONVERTERS

Onada <http://www.onada.com>

Universal Currency Converter <http://xe.com>

Chapter 2: Policies

USA STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

Key points of conduct that you should be aware of:

- Off campus illegal activities, including possession of a false identification is a violation of USA policies.
- You may not engage in sexual activity with another person without their verbal consent and/or action that explicitly implies their consent.

* If the University is made aware of any misconduct, severe consequences and dismissal from the program may occur.

THE FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 is a federal law that protects the privacy and confidentiality of information contained within a **student's educational records. The University of**

Chapter 3: Emergency Plan

While most who study abroad have a safe and healthy experience, some students may encounter minor crises such as pick-pocketing, petty theft, or minor illness, or injury. In an unfamiliar environment with communication and cultural barriers, a minor crisis may be more difficult to handle. Similar to the realities existing on a U.S. campus, there may be a few students who encounter a major emergency while abroad, such as a serious illness or injury, traffic accident, natural disaster, or violent crime.

In case of emergency situations, students abroad should adapt an Emergency Action Plan.

7-STEP EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

STEP ONE: *Remain calm.* Take a deep breath. You will need a clear head in order to focus on your next move.

STEP TWO: *Assess the situation/get advice from program staff.* Identify the type of emergency situation. Contact program staff for advice.

STEP THREE: *Take action.* Exercise good judgment. Follow your Emergency Action

Chapter 4: Finances

Currency – You know, of course, your host country does not use U.S. dollars. Research the currency used and the exchange rate. Rates change continually so check them regularly. Onada (<http://www.onada.com>) and the Universal Currency Converter (<http://xe.com>) are commonly used Web sites. Keep exchange rates and cost differences in mind when making purchases. For example, a coke in the U.K. may be £2.00. In U.S. dollars, this would be around \$3.20. Exchanging some U.S. money for local currency before arrival (enough for a phone call and taxi) is wise. Currency exchange can be done at major banks or in most international airports and train stations.

Budgeting – Develop a weekly budget for your time abroad. Check websites and read travel books to become familiar with things you want to do while in country. Look for special student rates and discounts. To better estimate what your personal costs will be, talk with people who have been in the country before, are there now, or who have done the program before. Be realistic and keep in mind that currencies may vary drastically between the time you make your plans and actual arrival date.

Money and Banking – Credit or debit cards are an excellent method of payment while overseas. If you plan on using them while abroad, let your bank and/or credit card company know your travel dates and the countries you will be visiting. If not, the card may be cut off or cancelled. Pre-paid credit cards are also a good option. Also consider withdrawing from your bank about \$100 in local currency before leaving the U.S. in case money cannot be exchanged right away or an ATM cannot be found.

Credit Cards are widely accepted in most countries and are necessary in an emergency. Credit cards are convenient, reduce the amount of cash you need to carry, and generally give a fair exchange rate.

Chapter 5: Travel Documents

A *passport* is a document from your home country that confirms your citizenship.

A *visa* is a document provided by the government of the country to which you will be traveling that confirms your legitimate status as a foreign visitor.

You will need a current passport that is valid for a minimum of six months after the time you are scheduled to return home. It is necessary to obtain a passport before applying for a visa. Some visas are free and easy to acquire, while others may have a significant cost and require documentation. Check with the U.S. State Department or **your host country's embassy or consulate** to determine if a visa is needed and for information on how to apply.

Being granted a visa by a foreign government should not be taken lightly.

Chapter 6: Health and Safety Matters

Consider your mental and physical health issues when applying for a study abroad program. Provide the necessary information to the program's administrators so they can assist you with any special needs and advise you on the risks you might face. Study abroad can present both physical and mental challenges for students.

It is important that you are familiar with the health care system of the country where you will be studying, including the quality of facilities and the cost of services. Locate the nearest hospital to where you are staying and know how to file a claim for your insurance policy on both your private health insurance and international insurance.

MEDICAL CONCERNS

Availability of Medical Care The availability of medical care will vary from country to country. In some countries it will seem similar to the care in the U.S. In others, finding an English-speaking doctor or medical facility might be difficult. It is important to research these conditions before travelling outside the parameters of your program.

Medical History Have a checkup to know your current medical conditions. Your doctor or nurse can also advise you on what special precautions to take based on your medical history and your host country. You may need to go to a special travel health clinic to get clear advice on medical care abroad and what vaccinations and medications for vaccine-preventable diseases and other diseases you might be at risk for at your destination.

Special Accommodations If you need any special accommodations, regulations for accessibility may not be as updated in other countries as they are in the U.S. Check to determine if accommodations like wheelchair ramps are provided in all modes of transportation, and to determine if the housing facilities are equipped to serve people with special needs.

Infectious Diseases and Inoculations Research infectious diseases common in countries in which you will be traveling. Get the appropriate shots and pills, and bring the appropriate medications with you if your doctor thinks it is necessary. Know about any potential side effects of shots and pills you take. For more information on diseases prevalent in your destination country, please see the CDC website: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx>.

Medications If you regularly take any over the counter medications such as Aleve, antacids, Tylenol, sleeping aids, multivitamins, supplement(ed)6 m(ed)6 m(ed)333s (u)4 t

WATER AND FOOD

Potable Water Find out if water is safe to drink in the countries where you will be traveling. Purify unsafe water before drinking. Make sure water bottles come sealed when purchased. Remember that ice can also be unsafe, as well as the water from the kitchen or bathroom sink.

Food Safety Poor refrigeration, undercooked meat, and roadside/outdoor vendors could pose problems related to food contamination. If you get diarrhea or food poisoning, drink plenty of fluids to stay hydrated. As with any illness, consider seeing a doctor if your condition worsens. This is your opportunity to be adventurous and try new foods, but give your body time to adjust.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Alcohol and Drugs – The use and abuse of alcohol and drugs abroad can increase the risk of accident and injury. Violating drug laws abroad may result in very serious consequences including imprisonment or even death.

TRAVEL SAFETY

Precautions When Accepting Food and Drink Use more caution abroad than you would in the United States when it comes to accepting a drink (alcoholic or non-alcoholic) from a stranger. Also be cautious about accepting food from a stranger.

Verbal and Non-verbal Communication Non-verbal communication (like body language or hand gestures) considered harmless in the U.S. may be offensive to people in other countries. The list of gestures and phrases considered rude in other countries can grow beyond the obvious.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases Keep free from STDs by using protection (like condoms or abstinence). Also, remember that “no” may not always be interpreted as “no” in other countries. Inform yourself about the common types of STDs prevalent in the area in which you are traveling.

You are American Whether you know it or not, you display inherent American tendencies. It does not matter if you were born and raised here or if you just recently moved here. We are all members of American society and as such, certain behaviors and mannerisms we naturally exhibit can call attention to our Americanisms. While abroad, you may immediately be identified as an American – not by gender, race, or religion – but by association with American society.

Setting an Example Remember you are an ambassador, not only for USA, but also for Alabama and America. Behave in a way that is respectful of **others'** rights and well-being. Encourage others around you to do the same.

Risk On Arrival Travelers, especially those who have just arrived, are often targets of crime and are at higher risk of harm. This is because they are:

- Unfamiliar with their surroundings
- Probably not fluent in the local language
- Clearly recognizable as foreigners
- Not yet accustomed to the social norms or unwritten rules of conduct
- Eager to get to know new people and the local culture
- Naive to the intentions of people around them
- Carrying all their valuables when they first step off the plane, train, or boat

Keep Control The circumstances associated with being new in a foreign country are often beyond **one's imm**

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LOCAL CURRENT EVENTS

International Sources of Information

TRANSPORTATION AND TRAVEL

Studying abroad gives you many opportunities to travel. Your program should have sufficient study breaks to enable you to visit neighboring countries or travel within your host country. It is important to know what the safest modes of transportation are in order to avoid accidents while traveling.

Public We encourage you to use public transportation including buses and metros to help familiarize yourself with your host country. Additionally, it is often the most convenient and affordable option. You should be able to find navigation information in travel books or online. Be wary of pickpockets and use safety precautions when traveling. If possible, do not travel alone, at night, or on unsafe highways.

International Rail If you plan to travel to neighboring countries, traveling by international rail is often convenient and affordable. You can reserve your seat online before purchasing your ticket. Trains travel directly between city centers and are sometimes faster than flights with layovers. Traveling by train is usually much faster than by bus and can be a better option if you want to see more places in a short amount of time. You should avoid traveling alone at night, particularly in more urban areas. Take advantage of special promotions and rates for students when available.

Flying If you are traveling between countries or distant cities (i.e., London and Rome), consider air travel. Flying can save time, especially if you only have a long weekend to complete your trip. There are several reliable and inexpensive airlines and travel sites to choose from such as Student Universe (www.studentuniverse.com), Ryanair (www.ryanair.com/en), Air Italy (www.airitaly.com), and many others.

Walking Get a pair of comfortable walking shoes. Without access to a car or public transportation abroad, you may have to do quite a bit of walking. Break in your shoes before you go to avoid blisters.

Bus Buses may be the cheapest way to travel and are often a very popular choice. They can take you to short distance destinations and even to nearby train stations. **If you can't find service to a particular location on national or regional bus lines, local service should be able to take you to your desired destination.**

Metro In major cities especially, you will find the metro system to be the most convenient form of transportation to move about the city. Always beware of your surroundings and watch out for pickpockets. Never put your bag or purse under the seat.

Cars/Driving Renting a car can be a great way to see the countryside, but can also be stressful and sometimes dangerous. Many countries have driving laws significantly different than the U.S. (such as the UK or Hong Kong where drivers travel on the left side of the road). Insurance is often a requirement and may function under a different system than that to which you are accustomed. Obtain full coverage insurance when renting vehicles in any country. If a driver is involved in a vehicle accident resulting in damages or injuries to another party, local authorities may detain the driver until a settlement is arranged with the injured party. Also, depending upon the extent of damages or injuries to the other party, you may face charges resulting in heavy fines or even jail time.

Chapter 8: Communication

Internet Access Email is by far the cheapest form of communication. Having a laptop or smart phone makes email quite easy with free Wi-Fi available in many public places. Having a computer also makes class assignments and uploading photos more convenient. The AC adapter of most laptops is dual voltage and can be used anywhere in the world with a plug adaptor.

Laptops and access to social networking sites may not be allowed in some countries. Failure to research this difference could lead to confiscation of your laptop or even deportation. If you do not take a computer, most universities have computer labs. Internet cafes are also common and cheap in many large cities. In some areas, Internet access may not be readily available and connection speeds may be different. Unless you find an Internet café or use the host university's computer lab, do not expect Internet to be immediately accessible upon your arrival. It may take a few days to establish your account with an Internet provider.

Cellphones and Calling Cards Cellphones have become more common and less expensive all around the world. Although local calls may be inexpensive, international calls often have a high cost. Texting may be a less expensive way to communicate internationally. Some multi-band phones used in the United States can also be used while abroad. You can also purchase your own cell phone in your host country. A cellphone may also be included in your program fee. The most reasonable way to communicate by phone between the country where you will be studying and the United States may be by purchasing an international calling card, available through various companies or providers.

Skype (<http://www.skype.com>) is both a fun and cost efficient form of communication. Skype is a program you can download to make phone calls from your computer to another Skype user. For a small fee you can also make calls to any landline or cell phone in the world using this program.

Blogging and Pictures Blogging is an excellent way to keep everyone updated on your adventure as well as an easy way to keep a journal of your experiences. **If you're interested and meet the criteria, you may be able to have your blog featured on the study abroad website.**

Take pictures of everything. You can look back at them to remember your time abroad and also enter photo contest competitions once you return to USA.

Chapter 9: Social and Cultural Considerations

BEHAVIOR / CONDUCT

Diplomat We cannot stress enough that you are at all times a

Female Travelers In certain locations and programs, women may have a difficult time adjusting to attitudes they encounter abroad, both in public and private interactions between men and women. It is not uncommon to be honked at, stared at, verbally and loudly approved of, and in general, to be actively noticed in ways that many American women may find offensive, simply for being a woman. Local women who often get the same sort of treatment have learned through their culture how to respond to the attention.

Uncomfortable situations may not always be preventable, but consider taking the following precautions:

- Dress conservatively; while short skirts and tank tops may be comfortable, they may encourage unwanted attention.
- Avoid walking alone late at night or in questionable neighborhoods.
- Do not agree to meet a person whom you do not know well in a non-public place.
- Be aware that some men from other cultures tend to mistake the friendliness of U.S. American women for romantic interest.

It is ok to be frustrated or angered while adjusting to a new culture. You most likely will not purposefully do anything to attract unwanted attention; if you become uncomfortable, the best way to deal with it is to follow the example of local women and mimic their responses.

Race and Ethnicity As a multicultural student, you may be concerned about facing potential racial biases and prejudices without the comfort of your

Facilities Facilities may be modern or rundown, working or out of order, clean or dirty. Basically, you take what you get and deal with it. In many cases, especially in poorer areas of a country, you may have to change your expectations a bit and accept what's available. **Facilities do not have to be new to be safe.**

EXPECTATIONS VS. EXPERIENCE

Adjustments Living abroad will be a different experience. Anticipating some of the differences ahead of time can help better prepare for life abroad. An important thing to remember is to be flexible. You will have to adapt to new things you encounter. Accept that many things will be different from home. *Learn to expect the unexpected!*

Routines and Schedules While abroad, your routine will change. There will most likely be a time difference and your city may adhere to a different **schedule than you're used to. From late night dinners to shops closings early,** each city is different, so plan your routine around these changes. You might also need to plan class or excursions around bus/metro arrival time, as well as your **roommates' or host family's unique schedules. There are countless ways in which** your routine abroad can differ from your routine at home. While it may be frustrating at first, be flexible and always look for ways to adapt and get the most out of your experience.

CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

New Surroundings Studying abroad is an invaluable experience providing an opportunity to live in a foreign country, learn its customs and culture, and adapt to new surroundings. The success of your experience depends upon your own efforts to acclimate yourself to living and studying in a foreign culture. You will have moments of exhilaration and moments of real frustration. Gradually, as you come to terms with the culture, the frustrations will become fewer and fewer.

Culture Shock -

Gradual Adjustment- With time, you'll begin to orient yourself to a different set of cultural practices and feel increasingly comfortable and confident in your new surroundings. Your sense of humor will reemerge.

Re-entry or Reverse Culture Shock- Upon returning home, you will be faced with integrating your abroad experience with life in the United States. You might feel disoriented, out of place, or changed by your experience in a way that makes relating to family and friends difficult.

Dealing with Culture Shock

- Research! Read about the cultural differences before your departure so you can better understand the culture.
- Try to look for logical reasons why things happen. This may help you view your host culture in a more positive light.
- Be slow to judge; observe first, show respect, and invite conversation. Try not to dwell on the negative things about your host culture **and don't** hang around people who do.
- Explore! Get a sense of the physical environment: look for parks, sports facilities, bus stops, etc. Get a sense of the behavioral norms: how do locals greet each other, wait in line, etc. Find out where people meet and socialize. Make an effort to go to those places.
- Try to fit into a rhythm in your host culture. Adjust to

PREPARING TO RETURN HOME

Packing You will return home with more than you initially brought. Packing lightly and efficiently is important in the beginning and will be become even more so as your trip ends. Consider shipping your souvenirs and purchases home. This can sometimes be cheaper and less of a hassle than having extra bags on the plane.

Souvenirs Buying local goods and souvenirs is an excellent way to remember your time abroad. Shopping in a new country can be fun but always keep in mind the logistics of taking souvenirs home. Be mindful of the size of your luggage and the amount of extra space. Also keep in mind what is acceptable to bring back to the United States.

Customs Customs control regulations may affect what you can and cannot bring in and out of your host country. Following the events of September 11, 2001, U.S. airport and customs security have become much stricter, leading to longer waits prior to boarding planes, body searches, and questions from officials in both countries. Remember to be patient, honest, and polite when answering all officials' questions. For complete information on border issues, please visit the U.S. Customs and Border Protections Agency website: <http://cbp.gov>.

Gradual Adjustment With time, you'll begin to feel more comfortable in your home country. You may fall into some of your old routines, but you will be different than when you first left. The key is to find a way to positively blend your old life with the new life you created abroad.

Preparing for Re-entry There are ways to prepare for re-entry before returning home. While away, keep up on what's going on with friends and family and try to keep track of local and national news so you do not feel totally lost when you get back home.

Recognize that you will develop at a personal level. People at home are growing and changing, too. Think about what you want to do when you get back and try to have a plan for your return. Resist the tendency to think that your friends and family have not done anything while you were away. Plan your finances for your return: How will you pay for school, rent, gas, and food? Do you need to apply for student loans or other financial support?

It may take some time to feel at home again. Use patience to ease the transition.

- Keep your cultural sensitivity. Observe American culture the same way you observed foreign culture. Consider what you like about America and what you want to keep from the culture you experienced abroad.
- Stay positive and active. There will be frustrations and disappointments but work through it with the same enthusiasm that you brought to your overseas experience.
- Friends and family may have a difficult time understanding your readjustment difficulties. Try to explain that it is a normal phase in any **traveler's journey**.

SHARING YOUR EXPERIENCE

You are now in a unique position to further enrich your own life as well as the lives of others by sharing experiences and how they have affected your understanding of yourself, your country, and the rest of the world. You are now a part of the distinctive number of students who have studied abroad.

When you return, make the most of what you learned from your travels. Take time to reflect, and then turn your reflections into action:

- Become a Conversation Partner! This is where international students meet with USA students for informal conversation about cultural topics.
- Join student organizations.
- Write an article for the Vanguard.
- Become an International Education Ambassador! This internship opportunity is an excellent way to share your experience and encourage other students to study abroad.
- If you will not be returning to university, engage in a meaningful activity (volunteer at a hospital or school). Sitting at home while friends and family are busy with their everyday lives will not help your readjustment.

Chapter 11: Helpful Packing Guide

Packing requires planning and careful consideration. Below is a general list of suggested items you may consider packing.

Carry-on

- Passport and any necessary visas
-

Checked Luggage

- Extra copies of important documents and emergency contact information
- Seasonally and culturally appropriate clothing, undergarments, bathing suit, shoes, and accessories
- Toiletries
- First aid kit*
- Sewing kit*
- Eyeglass repair kit*
- Nail clippers*
- Electric or manual razor for shaving*
- Over-the-counter pain relievers
- Extra laptop battery, disks, and/or flash drive
- Small umbrella
- Extra sweater and scarf to cover arms, hair, or legs for certain holy sites
- Travel alarm clock
- Small purse or pouch
- Converter or transformer for 110- volt electrical devices
- Plug adapter
- Small flashlight

*May get confiscated if placed in carry-on baggage for security purposes. r 1-t

Additional Notes: