CONGRATULATIONS!

Your student has made the decision to study abroad and is about to embark on an adventure of a lifetime. We hope you are proud that he or she is interested in seeing more of the world, making new friends from other cultures, developing cross-cultural competence, and enhancing his or her academic interests and career prospects.

By now, your student has met with and discussed his or her program with a Purdue Study Abroad Advisor, completed and returned the Host University or study center program application and other requisite forms, received the “Savvy Student’s Guide to Study Abroad,” and is beginning or has already completed the mandatory Orientation Program. The online portion will cover various topics including pre-departure preparations, travel documents, cultural adjustment, course approvals, Purdue registration procedures, academic expectations, and health and safety. The Intercultural Awareness Presentation will address cross-cultural issues students will encounter while overseas. A Pre-departure Workshop offers advice on a variety of useful topics, and finally, a Pre-departure Meeting has been scheduled for later this semester. At this regional orientation, Purdue students who studied abroad last year, as well as international exchange students studying at Purdue this semester, will lead a panel discussion at which time your student can raise questions and concerns with others who “have been there, done that.”

For the rest of the semester, your student will be attending to logistical matters as well as the mental and emotional preparations involved in studying abroad. We know you will be with him or her every step of the way so we have prepared this guide to help answer some of the questions and concerns you might have on topics relevant to your student’s overseas experience. We hope you will find it useful. We also encourage you to read the Savvy Student’s Guide which your student has received. A copy of this handbook along with other useful websites and references are also on our website at:

www.studyabroad.purdue.edu

Study Abroad is a unique educational and cultural opportunity for all students at Purdue. The 18th century French author Fougeret de Monbron wrote that “The world is a great book, of which they who never stir from home read only a page.” We will try our best to help your student get a good start for a productive and enjoyable experience, but your support and interest are equally important. Together, we can ensure that our overseas scholar gets to read many pages of this Great Book!

-Purdue Study Abroad Staff
Benefits of Studying Abroad

In today’s global society, an international experience has become an essential component of higher education.

Studying abroad enriches students’ academic experience. They get to live in interesting places, have many opportunities to visit historically and culturally significant sites, examine artifacts they’ve only read about or seen on TV, and interact with local students and faculty. Many will become students at prestigious universities where they have to adjust and learn to thrive in an academic system that usually demands quite a bit of independence and initiative. It is common for returned students to tell us that they returned to Purdue after their term abroad more focused, more excited about completing their degree program, and with a better idea of what they would like to do after graduation.

The challenges that come with living in another culture force students to hone their interpersonal and communication skills, increase their sensitivity to other cultures, and become more adaptable, assertive, and independent. We are constantly impressed with the air of confidence and self-assurance that returned students possess after their term abroad.

Finally, students’ overseas experience can enhance students’ professional credentials. Returned students report that interviewers always discuss their international experience with them during job interviews. The personal characteristics and new perspectives that students developed while overseas are valued by more and more companies, organizations, and employers who seek staff members who can thrive outside their comfort zone, speak a foreign language, and/or live and work more comfortably in a multicultural environment.

Truly, your student’s decision to spend a semester overseas is going to be a very worthy investment indeed!

Student’s Responsibilities

Your student has a Study Abroad Advisor at Purdue. This advisor assisted him or her in completing the Host University program application and has already briefed your student about program features, accommodation options, academics, visa information, program costs, the course approval process, insurance, and other matters. While the Study Abroad Advisor will be available to answer questions and offer assistance for the rest of the semester, the student should assume the primary responsibility of staying on top of things.

We expect the student to complete all Purdue Study Abroad requirements, return host university or program forms in a timely manner, obtain course approval, secure the requisite travel documents, make travel plans, and do the necessary preparations for life overseas, such as familiarizing himself or herself with the host country, getting information about the academic program, talking with returned exchange students, setting up a communication plan with family and friends, and attending to financial matters.

To secure his or her place in the Purdue Study Abroad program, most students were required to return a “Participation Form” and remit a deposit to Purdue University. This deposit is applied to the cost of the program and is deducted from the fee statement you will receive from the Purdue Bursar. Additionally, the student’s “My Study Abroad” page, accessed from our website, contains a list of the forms that need to be completed and returned to the Study Abroad Office as well as the online orientation, list of current participants and returned students, a copy of the Savvy Student’s Guide, and links to important websites.

Upon acceptance to the Host University or Study Center, your student will receive a packet of information in the mail, be given access to a program website, or get important documents by email. These materials could include, depending on your student’s program, an official letter of acceptance, housing information, pre-registration form, visa application information, arrival instructions, and information about the onsite orientation program and university. We instruct our participants to go through these documents carefully, follow instructions, and share the information with family and significant others. Frequently, the acceptance materials will include time-sensitive materials that have to be returned to the host university or program organizer, i.e., university forms, instructions about remitting a deposit or the housing fee, or group flight information.

We also encourage students to keep you informed about his or her Study Abroad program or to refer you to the appropriate websites and resources for additional information. The federal law known as the Family Education Reform and Privacy Act (FERPA) prevents us from releasing information that concerns students even to immediate family members. If you have questions, your first point of contact should be your student who will most likely have the information already.
**Academic Policy**

Study Abroad programs are just that – study. They are not vacations, tours in foreign countries, or a break from a student’s studies at Purdue. Students must attend class, meet all course requirements, stay for the duration of the program, take their examinations, and earn respectable grades during their time overseas. All courses taken will be posted to students’ Purdue transcripts as the “equivalent” Purdue course.

Purdue has always insisted that students should still be able to graduate on time if they study abroad. Thus, we’ve encouraged students to make plans as early as possible if they wish to study overseas so they can choose the program that allows them to take courses that fit their Purdue degree program.

Students receive Purdue credits and grades for courses within approved academic areas. If a program has not been approved by a specific academic area students receive credit only for their coursework abroad. Before departure, your student must work with his or her academic advisor and the appropriate Study Abroad liaisons to choose the courses he or she can take overseas. Because these courses will count toward graduation, they must be equivalent to the student’s Purdue degree requirements. The overseas courses and their corresponding Purdue course equivalents will then be recorded on the Course Approval Form which the student should file with the Study Abroad Office by the start of their semester abroad.

Students remain enrolled at Purdue while participating in a Study Abroad program. Your student’s regular academic advisor will help him or her register for 12 credits (for a semester program) or 6 credits (for a summer program) of the SA number that corresponds to the student’s Study Abroad program.

While abroad, your student must maintain full-time status, i.e., he or she should take courses the equivalent of at least 12 (semester) or 6 (summer) Purdue credits. If the student does not fulfill this requirement, he or she will forfeit both financial aid and international health insurance.

Neither the Study Abroad Office nor Purdue University has any influence on how courses overseas are conducted, unless your student is participating in a program organized by a Purdue academic department. All Purdue Study Abroad Students have been instructed to find out as much as possible, from various sources (past participants, exchange students, program representatives, online information), about the academic system of the program in which he or she is participating and what can be done to be successful. We do not bump up grades or make adjustments to grades students earn when they study overseas notwithstanding the differences between U.S. and international academic evaluation standards. There is a standard conversion table that gives the U.S. letter grade equivalency scale. A completed Course Equivalency Form in the student’s academic department is required within a few months of the student’s completion of the program.

The student’s transcript generally arrives from the host institution within a few months after the study abroad period has been completed. There is no deadline for sending transcripts however, and they are mailed to the Study Abroad Office following the host institution’s timetable. Once we have your student’s transcript, the Study Abroad Office identifies the equivalent Purdue courses from the Course Approval Form in the student’s file and assigns U.S. grades to these courses in accordance with an approved grade equivalency scale. A completed Course Equivalency Form is then sent to the Purdue Registrar’s Office, where individual courses and grades are entered into the student’s official record. This entire process may take up to several months.

The Savvy Student’s Guide contains an extensive discussion of the academic policy governing study abroad. We
FAQ—Academics

How many courses should students take while studying abroad?

Purdue requires all students to take the equivalent of at least 12 (per semester) or 6 (per summer) Purdue credits. Typically, that will be about 4 or 2 courses respectively. Exceptions may be made ahead of time with approval by the Study Abroad Office and the Purdue Study Abroad academic liaison.

At the same time, students must abide by the host institution’s minimum credit requirement which in many cases is more than just 12 credits. For example, universities in Europe have a 30 ECTS minimum requirement which is equivalent to 15 credits at Purdue.

What is a Study Abroad Academic Liaison?

Study Abroad academic liaisons are professors or academic advisors who have the authority to designate and approve the appropriate Purdue equivalents of the courses students take overseas.

Can a student take less than the required minimum credits?

Generally no. Purdue requires all Study Abroad Students to take the equivalent of at least 12 Purdue credits every semester or 6 for the summer. So they can make progress on their degree program while abroad, students should try to choose courses that will take the place of some of their Purdue degree requirements.

Students must consult their academic advisor and the appropriate Study Abroad Liaison to determine (a) which courses to take while overseas and (b) how many credits will be assigned to each course. If students take less than 12 or 6 credits, they could lose their financial aid and insurance coverage.

Will a student receive grades for courses taken abroad?

Students receive Purdue credits and grades for courses within approved academic areas. If a program has not been approved by a specific academic area students receive credit only for their coursework abroad.

Can a student take courses for Pass/No Pass?

A Purdue student accepted into a Purdue-approved exchange, cosponsored, or direct enroll study abroad program may choose the P/N option for courses approved for direct credit that are completed overseas. If a student chooses to take one or more courses P/N, s/he must first discuss the matter and secure approval from her/his academic advisor. The procedures for this are found on the students My Study Abroad Page. The deadline for making the decision to take a course P/N is no later than the 8th week of the study abroad semester or, for shorter programs, prior to 50% of the program’s duration.

Once the Pass/Not-Pass Approval Form is signed and submitted to the Study Abroad Office, a P/N grade will be recorded on the Purdue transcript for the applicable coursework, and no student will be permitted to reverse this.

Why do students have to get course approval?

Students should continue progress toward their degree requirements while studying abroad. In fact, what gets recorded on their academic record are the designated Purdue equivalents of the courses taken overseas. Securing course approval ensures that students are going to take the appropriate course so that they and their academic advisor will know exactly what degree requirements they are satisfying while abroad.

What if a student is unable to complete a Course Approval Form before leaving the U.S.?

It is very important to secure approval for all courses to be taken abroad if the student hopes to graduate on time. If the student is unable to secure approvals before departure, or would like to get additional approvals, it is possible to get them from study abroad liaisons while overseas. The student should email his or her academic advisor, the appropriate study abroad liaison, and study abroad advisor to make the request. He or she must provide the syllabus for each course.

What if the student decides to take a course that has not been approved?

If a student takes a course that has not been pre-approved, there is no guarantee that the course will be an acceptable replacement for one of his or her degree requirements. The student should, however, continue to work with their Study Abroad Liaison, Academic Advisor, and Study Abroad Advisor during their time overseas.

My child is a year ahead and is studying abroad just for fun. Is securing course approval still necessary?

Yes.
Program Costs and Financial Aid

If your student is participating in an Exchange program, expect to pay the regular Purdue semester or summer tuition and fees, plus the cost of international health and medical insurance for the duration of the student’s program (about $30 per month). You will receive the Purdue invoice at the normal time the statements are mailed out by the Office of the Bursar.

Please note that tuition fee remission applies to Study Abroad Exchange programs but installment and deferred payment plans do not. Payment of the Purdue Bursar bill (tuition and fees and insurance) must be made in full by the request deadline. Failure to pay on time will result in the cancellation of a student’s registration at Purdue University. Reinstatement results after paying the late registration fee.

If your student is participating in a Co-Sponsored program, your student will not pay Purdue tuition. Instead, the student pays a comprehensive program fee to the program sponsor directly and a Study Abroad fee to Purdue University. Expect an invoice from the program sponsor, i.e., CIEE, IES, DIS, Arcadia, and others. You will remit payment to the sponsor according to the organization’s payment schedule. The Purdue Bursar will send out fee statements at the normal time you receive the bill for the spring semester. The Study Abroad fee is $914 for the semester and $304 per module in the summer. If insurance coverage is not included in your student’s program fee, then he or she will be enrolled in the Purdue insurance and the cost will be added to your Bursar bill.

Purdue offers scholarships to Purdue West Lafayette degree seeking undergraduate students applying for approved, credit bearing study abroad programs.

- Up to $3,000 for a semester-long experience earning at least 12 credits.
- Up to $2,000 for programs that spend at least 6 weeks abroad & earn 6 or more credits during the summer term
- Up to $1,000 for shorter term summer and spring/winter break programs

Students are limited to one short scholarship ($2,000 or $1000) and one full semester scholarship ($3,000) for the duration of their studies at Purdue.

If you are receiving federal financial aid, the money can be applied to Study Abroad fees. The award however will not be issued until 10 days before the start date of the Study Abroad program. Contact the program organizer to request deferment of program fee payment if your student is receiving federal financial aid. Just the same, you will most likely have to shoulder travel and other initial expenses.

If your student is a scholarship recipient, please confirm with the appropriate scholarship agency or administrative office that those benefits will apply if the student studies abroad. Students on tuition remission scholarship programs may not be able to apply the award to Co-Sponsored program fees.

Safety Issues

When the Chinese use the expression “May you live in interesting times,” they mean it as a curse. As evident from current events, we are indeed living in interesting times. While the Study Abroad Office believes that students are in no more danger by studying abroad than by staying in the United States, we take safety concerns very seriously.

You can be assured that the social and political climate in the area in which your student will be traveling is conducive to studying. Our approach to safety includes careful monitoring of U.S. Department of State travel warnings and advisories, regular consultations with colleagues around the country who are involved in the administration of study abroad programs, with onsite resident program directors, with responsible officials of foreign host universities, with contacts in the U.S. Department of State and other agencies, and with other experts who are well informed on international issues and events. We have also implemented an emergency preparedness and crisis response plan for our overseas programs by providing key individuals (on-site faculty and host institution administrators) with guidelines to follow under a variety of circumstances. The response plan calls for working with overseas contacts as well as the Dean of International Programs, the Dean of Students’ Office, and ultimately the Provost and President of Purdue University. For more information concerning the safety and health of your student, please see the Health and Safety page on our website.

We cannot, however, guarantee the absolute safety of each participant or ensure that risk will not at times be greater than at home. Similarly, we also cannot monitor the daily personal decisions, choices, and activities of individual participants any more than is the case on the home campus. We can only hope that our students use common sense when going about their daily life abroad.

To offset safety concerns, we address these issues thoroughly in the Savvy Student’s Guide and during the mandatory orientation and pre-departure meeting. We encourage you to go through the safety tips listed in the study abroad handbook and discuss them with your student.

Students should be mindful of the laws of their host country. If they run into legal trouble, there is nothing the United States government could do except provide a lawyer and check on their well-being.
Insurance Coverage for Your Student

The medical insurance that covers your family is not always valid outside the United States. U.S. Medicare and Medicaid programs also do not cover medical services outside this country. Furthermore, doctors and hospitals abroad often expect immediate cash payments for medical services. For these reasons, Purdue University has mandated that all students on Exchange and Purdue-Administered programs, as well as many students on Co-Sponsored programs.

Students do not need to file an application or complete an enrollment form — the Study Abroad Office will take care of the application paperwork.

The Purdue insurance is designed for Purdue University Study Abroad Students. It provides a comprehensive package of medical benefits and emergency services specifically addressing the risks associated with studying abroad.

The coverage is valid for the dates of the program. The 30-day premium rate is $32 and the charge for a semester or summer’s worth of premiums will be included in the Purdue Bursar invoice you will receive before the start of your student’s overseas study term. Prior to departure, your student will have access to an insurance card.

Individuals file claims directly with the insurance company. For routine medical services while overseas, the student should pay the physician, clinic, or hospital directly and then file for reimbursement later. Fortunately, health services in many parts of the world are not as exorbitant as they are in the United States, so paying for services directly should not present undue hardship to the student. Be sure to save the physician or clinic invoice for filing a claim at a later date.

If your student plans to do some traveling either before the official start date of the program or after the program ends, you may opt to extend his or her coverage up to a month before and after the official program dates. You will pay the extended coverage premium directly to the insurance company.

We are aware that some countries (ex: Japan, Australia) require the purchase of country insurance in order to secure an international student visa. In this case, your student will still need the Purdue Study Abroad insurance, even if he or she purchases the host country’s insurance. Coverage for travel outside the host country or benefits for medical, political, or security evacuation and repatriation are not provided by country insurance.

The study abroad insurance is for health and medical services only.

Coverage will not cover theft or loss of valuables. We ask students not to bring valuable items overseas, but it’s up to you if you choose to purchase insurance for your student’s computers and other gadgets. You might also want to check if your homeowners insurance extends to loss of property while overseas.

Additional information about the insurance policy is available at: http://www.studyabroad.purdue.edu/safety/insurance.cfm
Culture Shock

Being able to adjust to the new environment and culture is perhaps one of the most important facets of a student’s experience abroad. Not only will the cross-cultural adjustment help in his or her learning and development in a new country, it will make the experience more rewarding and interesting. While nearly everyone goes through a period of adjustment, i.e., when going off to college, beginning a new job, or moving to a new city, starting life in a foreign country is relatively more challenging.

“Culture shock” is the term given to the collection of feelings that sometimes arise when travelers are overwhelmed by cultural differences. The symptoms can include feeling lonely, homesick, overwhelmed, fearful, angry, confused or judgmental. The onset, severity, and length of time with which culture shock will affect any one student will vary. More experienced travelers could snap out of it rather quickly, while others might have to work a tad harder to get past the feelings of distress. The thing to always keep in mind is: culture shock is a common and a natural part of the study abroad experience.

When students first arrive at the host country, they all feel happy and excited. Everything is new and interesting, and they want to explore it all. An open air market appears picturesque, the vendors seem lively, the food items on sale fragrant and exotic. This is the honeymoon stage when students fall in love with the host country and nothing could possibly get in the way of a fabulous experience. A few days, weeks, or months later, the students start feeling somewhat disillusioned and while things in the environment have remained the same, they now regard everything negatively. The same open air market seems to have become run down and chaotic, the vendors seem aggressive or obnoxious, the food has become gross. This is the next stage of culture shock and the time when some students are apt to feel that they’ve made a mistake and would like to return home. The students are finally able to discern cultural differences and feel like interlopers in the new culture. They’re also exhausted from constantly making behavioral adjustments and frustrated because the usual emotional support system – family and friends – are not there. Fortunately, with effort and time, this stage usually passes and the students achieve a state of balance or equilibrium with the environment. This is the stage when the students become more integrated into the host culture, aware of cultural expectations, and cognizant of the behaviors and attitudes of people from that country. The anger and disappointment fade as the students realize that they can function effectively outside the home culture. It is clear that the open air market is different from the supermarket at home, but it has its appeal and advantages. The vendors are different from the grocery clerks at home, but they all get the job done. The food is indeed different from food at home, and the student feels proud at having tried so many new dishes.

If there is one sure thing about culture shock — it is that it has an ephemeral nature. It will end — but it will not disappear magically. We hope you would not become distressed and alarmed if your student starts complaining about his or her situation. In all likelihood, he or she is going through the second stage of culture shock. Empathize but urge the student to keep his or her chin up and soldier on. Remind him or her of all the things that could be gained from this experience. Applaud the student’s efforts to become immersed in the host culture. Encourage him or her to continue initiating interactions with fellow students or the host family, participating in local or university activities, and learning from mistakes. In a few weeks, the student is likely to look back at these seemingly dark days and be incredulous that he or she ever considered returning home! Thanks to you, the student did not have to miss out on this great experience!
The Supportive Family

Studying abroad will certainly be a defining period in your student’s educational experience. It will be a personal journey that will likely transform him or her into a global citizen with new ideas and perspectives about the world and its people. Studying abroad is also an experience that will distinguish your student from peers and enable him or her to stand out in the eyes of prospective employers or post-graduate interviewers.

Just the same, we understand that there will be conflicting feelings about the upcoming experience. You and your student are excited at the opportunities that lie ahead but at the same time, there is some trepidation about being several thousand miles apart.

Fortunately, there are some things you can do before, during, and after the Study Abroad period to support and maximize the learning experience of your student. Your support is very important and how you handle the time away will go a long way toward enabling your student to thrive and learn from the overseas experience.

Encourage your student to be in charge of pre-departure preparations.

Students will have to do many of the tasks involved in preparing to study abroad while attending to their regular semester activities. Yes it is a delicate balance: ensuring your student is prepared for the time abroad while letting him or her take the lead at the beginning of this new experience. As tempting as it may be to relieve your student of some of the responsibilities, he or she will be in a better position to cope with next semester’s challenges if the student attends to pre-departure preparations personally. Next semester, the reliable support network of family and friends will not be as readily available and the student must be prepared to fend for himself or herself. If the student has had very few opportunities to handle challenges at home, imagine how daunting it could be to have to do so in another culture. So stand back and let your student handle this responsibility.

There is no better time to start flexing those muscles to stand on one’s feet than now!

Stay in touch but maintain a level of distance. One way to reduce the feeling of homesickness next semester is to for you and your student to stay in touch regularly. There is a close correlation between morale overseas and messages from home. Stay informed about current events in the country and region where the student is studying. Many friends and family find reading about the overseas location to be both interesting and a good way to feel more in touch with the experiences of their student.

However, while you will be very eager to know everything about your student’s novel experiences, it is usually not a good idea to encourage your student to call or email home constantly. If the student is always on the phone or the internet communicating with family and friends, the incentive to integrate with the community abroad is much decreased. Instead of exploring the host country, learning the traditions and norms of the host culture, and making friends with the locals, the student is spending precious time emailing or calling people back home. If the student is participating in a language program, he or she would more readily improve second language proficiency by immersion in that language rather than communicating extensively in English by email or phone.

You can support your student’s efforts to become more immersed in the host culture by reassuring him or her that you do not expect frequent long email messages, a daily phone call, or text messages several times a day. By doing this, you are giving your student permission to spread his or her wings and fly — and in all likelihood, they will!

There is also a phenomenon that’s referred to as “destructive dialing.” This is a situation in which a student gets upset about something and calls home; the parent gets upset and calls back later, making the student more upset — and so on until the situation reaches a crisis point. You’ll want to avoid that, and regular, limited calling can help do so. Make it clear to your overseas scholar that you expect him or her to be resilient and resourceful enough to overcome minor road bumps along the way.

Time your visits to minimize disruption. If you are planning to visit your student, try not to do so when the term is just getting started. At this early stage, the student is still getting accustomed to the norms of the culture, to the academic system, to the city and how to get around. Instead, give him or her time to adjust to the new environment, acquire mastery of the local language, and develop new expertise, skills, and knowledge to show off when you do come. If you hold off your visit until later in the semester, your student would have gotten over culture shock and has already made the transition to life in his or her host city. The student will also really relish showing you around and you get the benefit of having a knowledgeable guide to introduce you to the city and country. For once, you don’t have to lift a finger! You can just sit back and let your traveler to do all the work planning the itinerary! You will be proudly introduced to his or her new friends, taken to the group’s favorite local hangout, given an informative walking tour — and so on until the situation reaches a crisis point. You’ll want to avoid that, and regular, limited calling can help do so. Make it clear to your overseas scholar that you expect him or her to be resilient and resourceful enough to overcome minor road bumps along the way.

Stay in touch – but not too often!

The acculturation process will be slow if the student spends too much time communicating with everyone back home. Instead, encourage your student to spend more time exploring the city, making new friends, and learning the ways of the host country.
tour of the city, and others. It will be a very positive experience for you and the student.

If you do visit, also try not to undermine the student’s academic commitment by pulling them from class for vacation jaunts. Instead, get a copy of the student’s semester schedule and schedule your trip during program vacations.

One thing we strongly discourage parents from doing is to accompany the student to the program’s location. This can be disheartening to the program staff and other participants and may prevent your student from getting off to a good start. The presence of a parent may quell whatever feeling of confidence the student has mustered. Again, make yourself scarce and believe in your overseas scholar’s ability to get along fine without you.

**Culture shock can and will happen — but it passes.**

Still, it is true that it won’t always be easy, and your student will encounter some challenging situations while overseas. He or she might have to adjust to a new academic system, find university procedures bewildering, dislike the most modest accommodations, or have trouble communicating in the local language. The onsite resident or host university staff are there to assist students and issues are usually resolved after direct intervention, usually after a student has had time to settle down in the new environment.

Remember too that complaints usually occur during the student’s first few weeks overseas. Many of the situations that cause students to feel anxious are simply new situations to which they will eventually adapt. Thus, resist the temptation to solve the problem yourself, intercede with host university or program staff on behalf of the student, or, heaven forbid, fly the student home.

For example, many returned students have reported being initially overwhelmed by the academic system at their host university. They had to get used to not having detailed syllabi, homework, reading assignments, pop quizzes, and attendance checks like at Purdue, yet they were expected to integrate an entire semester’s course materials in one final paper or exam at the end of the term that will determine their course grade. In time however, they adjusted, developed new study skills, modified their expectations and classroom behavior, and made a concerted effort to balance studies and fun activities. Many former Study Abroad Students ended up thriving in these less structured academic environments.

Though you might feel anxious or alarmed to hear your student complaining, there is really little that you or the Purdue Study Abroad Office staff can do from here. Instead, provide a sympathetic ear but encourage him or her to show some patience, learn to go with the flow, have a sense of humor, engage the people in the host culture, find reasons for perceived cultural differences, and not to despair if assistance is not immediately forthcoming. Urge the student to work on being more independent, figure out possible solutions to problematic situations, request assistance from program or university staff if the task seems too daunting, seek out local students who know the ropes and could provide invaluable suggestions, or discuss the problem with the host family to get tips on how to handle the problem. Express confidence at the student’s ability to handle the problem himself or herself. More than likely, the student will come through—in a blaze of colors!

However, if you feel your student is facing an unsafe or perilous situation, please contact the Purdue Study Abroad Office. We will follow up with the host institution on your behalf.

**Prepare for the transformation.** Your student will return home changed by the experience. He or she may dress a bit differently, like new foods, speak differently, express new political perspectives, or even speak somewhat disparagingly of the United States. This is not so unusual. Your daily routine probably changed very little during the time the student was abroad. On the other hand, your student’s life was anything but routine! He or she was exposed to a plethora of new ideas, practices, and philosophies. So do expect some changes and be patient. It will take time before this person sorts through his or her experiences to determine which traits and personal lessons learned abroad are worth keeping.

Be prepared also for some reverse culture shock. After the excitement of being back and regaling friends and family with tales of their adventures, many students find themselves moping and feeling sad because they miss their new friends, the novel experiences that happened almost daily, the exciting activities, or their favorite food. Your student might express boredom, assert that his or her life has become quite ordinary, and suggest that he or she spend time abroad again.

Again, your support, interest, and understanding will be crucial. Discussing these feelings and changes in your student’s outlook is an excellent way of sharing his or her international experience. Encourage him or her to stay in touch with overseas friends but to find local avenues in which the knowledge and skills gained from their time abroad could be useful. In time, your student will fully readjust to being back though most likely changed by his or her time overseas.

*It was a wise person who said:*  
“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn’t do than by the ones you did do.  

So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails.  

Explore. Dream. Discover.”
PRACTICAL MATTERS

Passport and Visas

A passport is the most essential document everyone needs in order to enter a foreign country. New passports could take 4-6 weeks for processing so we advised the students to apply early to avoid delay. If your student already has a passport, make sure it is valid until at least six months after his or her return date to the United States. General information about obtaining a passport can be found at the State Department website.

A visa is an entry/residence permit and official permission granted by the authorities of the country (via its Embassy or Consulate in the United States) where your student will study. Not everyone needs a student visa to study abroad. The Study Abroad Office will inform your student if a visa is needed or not. If your student is participating in a co-sponsored program, the resident coordinator will most likely work with your student to prepare his or her visa application. In most cases, the student’s original passport must be sent along with the visa application form, original letter of acceptance from the host university, and other required documentation. A visa is usually stamped or stapled to the passport.

If the student has to apply for a visa, know the appropriate foreign consulate that has jurisdiction in the student’s state of permanent residence. For example, an Indiana student applying for a student visa to Italy must mail his or her application to the Italian Consulate in Detroit — not Chicago — as the latter does not have jurisdiction over Indiana but the former does.

Consular websites will have this information.

Making Travel Plans

Because of the multitude of options and destinations available to students, we cannot just have one statement on this matter. Some program sponsors organize a group flight, but majority of Study Abroad Students will make travel plans on their own.

You can start researching travel costs and available flights, but you should hold off booking the flight until the student has been accepted to his or her study program, or has received assurance that the acceptance is forthcoming.

When booking the student’s flight, don’t focus solely on the cheapest airfare. Pay attention also to layover time between connecting flights, how many connections the student has to make, and arrival time at the final destination. Choose flights with reasonable layover times to avoid missing connecting flights should there be a delay. Traveling overseas can be exhausting and bewildering. The student will arrive in a more reasonable shape if he or she does not have to make so many connecting flights. If a direct flight costs just a little bit more than another that has several connections, opt for the former. The convenience will be worth the additional price.

The student should have received arrival instructions from the host university or Study Abroad program coordinator. Check with your student that he or she has gone through this list. We recommend that students plan on arriving on a weekday and during office hours. In an emergency, they can call the onsite program office or Study Abroad Office at the host university and more than likely reach someone who is in a position to help. It is also a good idea to make travel plans with other students participating in the same program. Two heads are better than one, and two or more students traveling together can watch out for and help each other during tricky situations. Finally, we encouraged students to have contingency plans in place in case something goes awry with their arrival plans. Follow-up with your student that alternate plans are in place.

We have told students not to leave home without purchasing the latest issue of a travel guide like Let’s Go, Lonely Planet, Rough Guide, Insight Guide, and others. These books give lots of practical information, useful phrases, even a history of the host country, plus some customs and traditions of which newcomers need to be aware. Surely, an experience that is costing you several thousand dollars is worth a $20 investment. Let’s Go is written by students, so this book always gives the cheaper alternatives and will always have a section on the nightlife attractions of a city.

If available, the student might want to bring $50-150 in foreign currency for food and drinks during a layover or to take a taxi immediately after arrival. Do not carry more than that. If none of your local banks sell foreign currency, it’s OK. The student can simply use his or her ATM card to withdraw money from a machine in the local airport. Bring U.S. currency also. In a pinch, this money can be ex-
PRACTICAL MATTERS

Know Before You Go

The Host University / program organizer should have provided arrival information in the acceptance materials sent to your student. However, one of the things you might want to do as the departure date nears is to review with your student what to do on arrival.

The first day at the host country is very important and we would like the student to get off to a good start. Specifically, we’ve asked Study Abroad Students to make sure they have the following information:

- What to expect at the airport (layout, immigration and customs procedure, location of ATMs, ground transportation, etc.)
- Directions to your apartment, residence hall, program office, or the university’s Study Abroad Office
- What form of transportation to take and where to get it
- Who to contact or where to go in case of emergency
- How to say a few key expressions and questions in the host country’s language
- Contingency plans in case Plan A goes awry

Family members and friends frequently ask students to call home immediately after arrival. We understand your concern but please be aware that it may not be always possible. On some programs, students may need to catch an airport shuttle immediately after retrieving their luggage and going through Customs and Immigration. Other times, the student may be swept into a program bus, through formalities, and into their accommodations where they are not immediately in a position to make special arrangements to call you. Some may arrive late at night or after having traveled for a day to reach their destination and are too exhausted to even think about calling home. Give them at least a day or two to get settled, and do not panic.

Gather all of the information and documents you and your student might need while he or she is away, including:

- Contact information for:
  - Your student (street address and cell phone number)
  - On-site resident director
  - Home office of program provider or host university Study Abroad Office
  - U.S. State Department Office of Overseas Citizen Services

- Citizen assistance section of the U.S. embassy or consulate nearest your student’s program site
- Insurance policy number and how to submit claims (Purdue Study Abroad insurance and insurance from the host site)
- Emergency and communication plan
- Student’s bank account, and credit card numbers and contact info in case of loss
- Student’s passport number
- Duplicate lost passport kit containing:
  - two passport photos
  - Official copy of his or her birth certificate
  - Copy of student’s passport information and visa pages
- Program calendar
- Name of local physician— if your student requires medical supervision
- Make sure at least one parent is in possession of a current passport in case of emergency

Data File

Gather all of the information and documents you and your student might need while he or she is away, including:

- Contact information for:
  - Your student (street address and cell phone number)
  - On-site resident director
  - Home office of program provider or host university Study Abroad Office
  - U.S. State Department Office of Overseas Citizen Services

- Citizen assistance section of the U.S. embassy or consulate nearest your student’s program site
- Insurance policy number and how to submit claims (Purdue Study Abroad insurance and insurance from the host site)
- Emergency and communication plan
- Student’s bank account, and credit card numbers and contact info in case of loss
- Student’s passport number

Surprise!

If your student is pinning for bags of Mac & Cheese, or microwave popcorn, consider sending him or her a care package using an International Priority Mail envelope or box from the US Postal Service. Your gift will cost a reasonable amount, and the surprise will be priceless!
Health Matters

We are sure you want your student to remain healthy and hearty while overseas. To be ill in another country, where Mom’s chicken soup won’t come to the rescue, is not going to be fun. Of more importance, a healthy person will have a sunny outlook and your student could regard his or her overseas experience in a more positive light.

Before departure, your student should have a general physical, eye, and dental exam. If your student has a chronic ailment, make sure he or she packs a complete medical record and typed copy of any prescription medication. Encourage the student to practice healthy lifestyle while abroad and to know the conditions at the host country. Is water safe to drink? Will the student need vaccinations? Check the Centers for Disease Control website for information. Stress can be a factor overseas and the student should be prepared with tried and tested coping mechanisms.

If your student has special medical or dietary needs, we suggest the following:

- Have your physician indicate the generic name of the medication. The brand name of your student’s medication could go by another name in the host country.
- Research how the student’s condition is typically treated in the host country, or how pharmacies dispense prescription medication.
- Know how the medical condition is commonly known in the host country so he or she can make the condition known without delay if medical attention is needed. For example, mononucleosis is called “glandular fever” in the United Kingdom.
- Inform the Study Abroad Office if the student needs special accommodations. We need time to work out arrangements with Purdue Adaptive Services and our overseas partners.
- Inform the overseas staff of the student’s needs and get set-up with a specialist or GP as soon as possible.
- Talk with your insurance company and pharmacy so the student can bring a term’s worth of medication with him or her.

Packing

When the students arrive at their destination, they will have to make their way from the airport to a train, taxi, or bus station, walk a few blocks, (more if they get lost), and go up a few flights of stairs to the apartment or residence hall. (Elevators may not be available!) They must be able to do all these while hauling their luggage. Definitely bring the essentials — change of clothes for a week, prescription medication, extra pair of shoes, computer and camera, small bag containing toiletries and cosmetics, and important documents. Do not bring anything you and the student do not want to lose, i.e., valuable jewelry or family heirlooms.

There are now stricter government regulations about luggage weight and what cannot be packed in a carry-on bag. Please check with the airline about weight limits and the State Department website about items that can be brought on board.

Here’s a test to see if the student has over-packed: have him or her walk around the block a few times and go up and down a flight of stairs with the entire luggage (check-in bags, carry-on with a laptop, and purse). If the activity becomes very trying after only a few minutes, take out a few items. As a traveler’s adage states: Take half as many clothes and twice as much money!

No student has ever complained of not having packed enough. On the contrary, every single returned student advises outbound students to not bring too many clothes and shoes. What’s fashionable could be different at the host country so students will most likely buy new things.

What to bring? Pack a sturdy, broken-in, comfortable pair of shoes. Your student will do a lot of walking. In many countries, it’s how people get around in cities. They’ll come back thinking nothing of a 30 minute walk to a grocery store. Pack clothes that can be easily washed and dried. Today’s modern fabrics — microfiber, fleece, jersey knits, are great for travel. Leave out the bulky and heavy Purdue sweatshirt. Layering and mixing-and-matching are key. Accessories can enhance one’s style. Most things that are available in the U.S. are generally also available overseas. Thus, hairdryers, toiletries, linens, eating utensils, and other everyday items are best purchased onsite.

Also, research what the electrical specifications are at your student’s host country before he or she packs items that need to be plugged in to the wall.

Your student might also consider bringing his or her overseas academic advisor, host parents, exchange student coordinator, or resident director a little souvenir from Purdue on arrival. The present doesn’t have to be extravagant: a Purdue keychain, T-shirt, pen, calendar, and other small items are quite appropriate. A gift is a small token of appreciation and a gracious gesture that will establish goodwill between the student and his or her hosts.
Handling Money

Decide with your student how to access money for both everyday financial needs and emergencies.

For the most part, students studying abroad secure cash by withdrawing money from an ATM using the debit or cash card they already use in the United States, and paying for large purchases with a credit card in their name. Using these two methods are not only convenient, they also offer the best exchange rate. ATMs are readily available all over the world and a student's current debit or ATM card can be used abroad as long as the card is in the Cirrus or PLUS network (check the logos at the back of the card). Students should withdraw a larger amount every once in a while rather than small amounts every day.

To withdraw cash using an ATM or debit card, the student will need his or her 4-digit PIN number. Know the numeric code as foreign ATMs typically do not have the alphabet code in the number keys. While the student will be able to get money in the local currency, the amount will be debited from his or her account in U.S. currency. Avoid sticker shock — be sure to know the current exchange rate! The dollar is weaker against many European currencies so be sure the student is not overdrawing his or her account. For example, a 100 pound withdrawal in the U.K. is equivalent to nearly $160!

Make sure to inform your bank that your student will be using his or her credit and ATM card abroad to avoid deactivation of the cards for irregular use.

Check with the bank to determine the daily limit of funds received. Many U.S. banks also charge a transaction fee every time the card is used on a non-bank ATM. You might want to inquire if this fee could be waived when your student is studying abroad. While each transaction may only cost a couple of dollars, if your student withdraws money a couple of times a week, the charges could add up by end of the term. Withdraw more, less frequently! Do not use credit cards, except for emergencies, for routine cash advances. Charges are immediately assessed for every withdrawal.

Also be aware that most banks assess a one percent or more fee every time a credit card is used for purchases. If the student uses his or her card for every purchase, including items costing less than the equivalent of $20, these fees could mount!

For some students, opening a bank account while studying abroad has proven to be quite convenient and a money saver. They did not have to pay any ATM transaction fees within the host country and in other countries, thus saving themselves a few hundred dollars in fees. Having a local bank account also made it easier to make housing and other local payments.

If you decide on this route, the onsite staff should be able to assist your student in selecting a bank and completing the required procedure. For the initial deposit, the student can use traveler’s checks or withdraw money from an ATM. If you are financing the student’s semester abroad, you could add funds to the account either by doing an international wire transfer or mailing the student a cashier’s check or bank draft by certified or insured mail. Your student will then deposit this check in his or her bank account. If you choose to do a wire transfer, we suggest doing large transfers occasionally rather than transferring smaller amounts more frequently. The latter will cost more as your home bank will probably charge a fee, usually about $40 per transaction.

With the convenience and ease of ATM and credit cards, traveler’s checks are not as common as they once were. However, we suggest that students bring a couple of hundred dollars worth of traveler’s checks for emergencies. Have the student make a copy of the numbers and keep this information separate from the actual checks. In case of theft or loss, he or she will have to provide these numbers in order to get replacements.

And one last thing – if you are financing the student’s time abroad, don’t forget to deposit funds in the student’s bank account!
The Frugal Student

Earlier this semester, your student was given a cost sheet containing actual program costs and estimated expenses. With careful and realistic planning, studying abroad need not tax your family’s budget, even if the dollar has taken quite a hit against some currencies, i.e., the British Pound and the Euro. You and your student should sit down and discuss how he or she can allot funds to the expenditures associated with studying abroad.

We’ve told the students that studying abroad need not cost that much if they are careful and spend their money wisely. Here are some of our suggestions for ways students can stretch their dollars.

Be frugal during the first few months. It is better to have a bit left over than to run out of money before your program ends. Purchase only necessary items during the first few weeks. Try not to immediately start shopping for souvenirs and fun items for family and friends. In a few months, the student will know which items are worth getting.

Eat out only occasionally. We applaud students who are enthusiastic about the local cuisine, however, rather than eating meals at restaurants all the time, buy supplies at a local grocery and prepare meals in the apartment or residence hall. Except in Asia (Hong Kong and Singapore especially) where food stalls and street food cuisine are popular and cheap, eating out is more costly abroad because people don’t do it on a regular basis. Dining at a restaurant is a treat or reserved for special occasions only. To stretch one’s budget, students should ask a new friend or a host family member for instructions on making a local favorite. As an added bonus, students can prepare a special meal for their friends and family after they return to the U.S. If cooking is not possible, or desired, then buying prepared foods at a grocery store is cheaper than eating at a restaurant. There are many wonderful bakeries in Europe! How about dining al fresco at a park with a loaf of freshly baked bread, a hunk of cheese, and a drink?

On a trip, pack sandwiches and fruit. Consult a travel guide for good meals at affordable places. Avoid restaurants that cater to tourists as the prices here are likely going to be higher. Seek out where locals eat!

Explore the host city and country. Some students are compelled to visit as many countries as possible that they hardly spend a free weekend “at home.” Yet, there is much to discover and learn about the host city and country. The student’s semester abroad will be more meaningful when he or she starts feeling like a native. This won’t happen however if the student is always trooping off to another country or city every weekend.

We hope you will encourage the student to stay put as much as possible. Be there. Get to know as many local people as possible. In the end, it’s not the number of places visited, but the friendships made that will make for a truly memorable time abroad.

Plan journeys with care. Of course the student must visit other countries particularly if he or she can do so easily – there are many regional low cost carriers all over the world. Nevertheless, you should encourage the student to plan these trips in advance. They should not be tempted to travel long distances at the spur of the moment. Students get better fares for tickets purchased in advance.

Also consider exploring the roads less traveled. There are many lovely smaller cities all around the world that are worth visiting and affordable: Cardiff, Tallinn, Budapest, Krakow, Macau, Vientiane, or Hanoi. Neighborhoods and suburbs also offer a glimpse of daily life abroad.

Investigate free entertainment. Visit local parks, the city center plaza, or the city’s free museums (many museums in the UK are free). Attend open-air concerts, street festivals, and local fairs. In Italy, the locals come out every evening for their nightly passeggiata (evening stroll). At 6:00 p.m., it seems like the entire city is out for a walk. Nothing fancy, no special events, nothing planned, just strolling about leisurely, smiling, and greeting others with a friendly “buona sera.” These events are not only culturally enlightening; they’re fun and cost nothing!
Before deciding on a course of action, make sure your student has contacted their cellular carrier to learn about options/associated expenses. Many carriers have international plans, but these often tend to be more expensive than other options.

Many students simply swap out the SIM card in their mobile device. This is an affordable option if your student will be making a lot of calls.

Other students opt to purchase an affordable local phone that they can use for calls and texting. Similar to a 'Pay as you go' phone.

Students often rely on Skype, Facetime or Google Hang Out to keep in touch with friends and family back home.

Both What’s App & Viber provide easy ways for students to keep in touch though free text messaging.

Returned students have told us that having a laptop computer made writing papers and downloading photos more convenient. The AC adapter of most laptops today are dual voltage and can be used anywhere in the world with a plug adaptor. Some students however, especially summer participants, had little use for computers and usually just went to numerous and affordable internet cafes in their host city to post photos online and communicate with family and friends by email.

In emergencies that occur after hours, the student should contact the Purdue University Police Department at +1 765-494-8221. This number is active 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. If the police department determines that the call requires the attention of Purdue personnel, Study Abroad staff members will be contacted. This number should be used for emergencies only, such as serious accidents or illnesses. Non-emergency calls may be made to the Study Abroad Office at +1 765-494-2383 during normal working hours, 8am – 5pm Eastern Time.

We strongly recommend doing some contingency planning before the student leaves for a program site. Should an emergency occur, decide now what steps should be taken. Will the student fly home? If not, consider ways to lend emotional support while he or she remains overseas. Who will relay information about the emergency to the extended family?

You might also consider getting a passport now in case you have to go overseas to attend to an emergency involving your student.

For a list of international emergency numbers please visit:

http://travel.state.gov/content/dam/students-abroad/pdfs/911_ABROAD.pdf