UNCW Education Abroad Handbook for Semester & Academic Year Programs

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# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IMPORTANT ITEMS TO BRING OR CONSIDER</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PACKING</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MONEY MATTERS</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEALTH &amp; SAFETY</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAYING SAFE</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALCOHOL &amp; DRUGS</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WARNING ON DRUGS ABROAD</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRAVEL TIPS FOR STUDENTS</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YOUR HEALTH</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YOUR MENTAL HEALTH</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CROSS-CULTURAL ADAPTATION</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CROSS-CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT STRATEGIES</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEING A GOOD AMBASSADOR AND GUEST</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CROSS-CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BODY LANGUAGE</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. AMERICAN CULTURAL VALUES AND ASSUMPTIONS</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VALUES OF THE TARGET CULTURE</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACADEMICS</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REGISTERING FOR STUDY ABROAD AND EXCHANGE AT UNCW</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REGISTERING FOR CLASSES AT THE HOST INSTITUTION</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REGISTERING FOR UNCW CLASSES WHILE ABROAD</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIBRARY SUPPORT AND RESOURCES</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRADES AND CREDIT FROM ABROAD</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOST INSTITUTION TRANSCRIPT</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRADUATING SENIORS</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WITHDRAWAL, REFUND, CANCELLATION AND DISMISSAL POLICIES</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTACT INFORMATION</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Congratulations on choosing to pursue this opportunity of a lifetime!

IMPORTANT ITEMS TO BRING OR CONSIDER

Required Items

Passport
A valid passport is required for you to enter and leave the United States and other countries. You can apply for a passport on UNCW’s campus at Passport Services in the Fisher University Union. Check out: http://uncw.edu/passports/quickpassportguide.htm for instructions on obtaining or renewing a passport. The application process typically takes from four to eight weeks. One can pay an additional fee to expedite the process so that you can usually acquire a passport within one to two weeks. Congressional representative’s offices can also help expedite obtaining a passport. It can often be returned to you in less than two weeks if you send it via express mail along with a pre-paid express mail envelope for its return.

When applying for a passport, you need the following:
- Completed application (available in UNCW’s Passport Acceptance Agency or the downtown Post Office or online at: http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html)
- Two identical passport photos
- Proof of U.S. citizenship
- Evidence of identity
- Application fee (Typically $135: $110 Application Fee, $25 Execution Fee)

If you already have a passport:
- Check to make sure that it has not expired and will not expire for at least six months past your planned return to the U.S.
- Keep a record of your passport number in a separate location from the passport.
- Make 3 copies of the identification page of your passport. Carry one with you, separately from your passport, leave one with our office, and leave one with a family member or friend; this will help if your passport is lost or stolen.

Visa
Many countries around the world require that foreign visitors obtain a visa. A visa is often a stamp on a page of your passport that signifies an agreement on conditions of entry. In some cases, stays of three or more months require that you obtain a residence permit instead of a visa.

If you are applying to participate in more than one Education Abroad program or in the same Education Abroad program for multiple terms, please be sure to inform your education abroad advisor so that you can be properly advised regarding visa application processes.

Be sure that you understand the type of visa that you are receiving. The visa may require you to leave the country after a specified period of time or to maintain a full-time status, or it may deny you permission to work for money. If you violate the terms of the visa, you may be subject to legal action or deportation.
It is your responsibility to determine what documents you are required to submit to the embassy or consulate. Some countries require visa applicants to make a personal appointment, and appointment slots can fill up fast. If you delay in submitting the necessary materials, your study abroad office can do very little to assist you in obtaining the documents required for entry.

If you are not a U.S. citizen or do not travel under a U.S. passport, you should allow extra time to obtain a visa to travel abroad. Remember to check regulation changes at www.embassy.org. Depending on your country, you should allow a number of weeks or even months for your host country to process all of the required documents.

Health Insurance

GeoBlue Travel Medical & International Health Insurance
Pre-Trip Planning Questions Contact: +1 610.254.8771
UNC System Group Plan – Policy #: 4EL1-2097-A-17

The State of North Carolina requires that all participants of study abroad programs have adequate health coverage for the duration of their official study abroad program dates. In order to accomplish this, we require participants to purchase the medical and emergency travel assistance program selected by the state. This covers provisions often lacking in other health insurance plans, including emergency evacuation and repatriation. We will enroll students in the insurance plan based on the dates of the program at a cost of $1.45/day (subject to change). UNCW students will see this as a separate charge on their UNCW accounts except for the following programs, for which the insurance is already included in the program fee:

- NC Paris
- Swansea University (spring program)
- Universidad San Francisco de Quito, Ecuador

And for participants on the following programs for which GeoBlue insurance is included in the program fee of that program provider:

- Semester in Spain (Santander, through UNCC)

Non-UNCW students participating on UNCW programs abroad will also be enrolled in this insurance through UNCW unless previous arrangements have been made for such enrollment to be handled by your home school. Non-UNCW students enrolled through UNCW will be invoiced for this health insurance coverage (either directly or through one’s home school based on our billing arrangements).

You will receive an email from GeoBlue when enrolled in the insurance. This message will provide your insurance number, policy details and access to their website where you can set up your personalized portal. Become familiar with the policy’s provisions and exclusions.

When you need medical attention, contact GeoBlue ahead of time for assistance in locating a doctor, getting an appointment or arranging for pre-payment or payment arrangements directly by GeoBlue. Contact numbers are provided on the GeoBlue insurance card. If you do not make such arrangements through GeoBlue, you will likely be expected to pay up front for medical services and seek reimbursement for procedures covered by the policy. Additionally, students...
studying abroad should maintain domestic coverage; if the student gets sick abroad and then returns home, he/she will need domestic coverage.

Students may extend this health insurance coverage period to cover additional days of personal travel abroad by directly contacting the insurance provider, GeoBlue, once enrolled in the plan. Payment to GeoBlue for additional coverage is the student’s responsibility.

**Consider Bringing…**

**International Student Identity Card (ISIC)**
You may wish to purchase an International Student Identity Card (ISIC) for identification purposes, discounts and travel bargains, as well as automatic accident/sickness insurance. The ISIC can be a useful form of identification for any full-time student abroad. It verifies student status to qualify for discounts on travel, tours, accommodations and food, and reduced or free admission to museums, theaters, cultural attractions and historic sites. It also provides a small amount of emergency medical insurance. This insurance will be valuable to you if you are planning to be abroad either before or after the official program dates. ISICs can be purchased at [www.myisic.com](http://www.myisic.com).

**International Youth Hostel Card**
The International Youth Hostel Card is occasionally required if you wish to stay in a youth hostel. Normally, it must be purchased in the country in which the holder is a resident. In the U.S., cards are available at all American Youth Hostel offices or through the national headquarters. Go to [www.hiusa.org](http://www.hiusa.org) for more information. After you have established residency at your study site, you can obtain a youth hostel card from any youth hostel in that country.

**International Driving Permit**
Although certain countries recognize a U.S. driver’s license, many do not, and others require translation of the U.S. driver’s license into the local language. If you expect to drive during your stay abroad, you should first check with the nearest embassy or consular office to see if there are any age restrictions or other requirements such as proof of insurance. It is also recommended that you obtain an International Driving Permit. To do so, contact any AAA office. You will need to pay a small fee and present two passport-sized photographs and a valid U.S. driver’s license.

**Other Considerations**

**U.S. Income Taxes**
You may need to arrange to have your income tax forms sent to you if you will be out of the country through April. Forms may also be available at the U.S. embassy abroad or online.

**Voting**
Be sure to arrange for an absentee ballot with your country election board if you will be away during election time. Information on absentee voting while studying abroad can be found at: https://yvo.overseasvotefoundation.org/vote/home.htm

**Cell Phones**

While most U.S. students regularly use cell phones for both calls and text messaging back home, it is not always necessary to have a cell phone while abroad. Prior to departure, you should consider the degree to which you may wish to use a cell phone while abroad, alternative ways to communicate, and the cost of various options. When choosing the best option for you, consider the following questions and options:

- How long will you be abroad?
- Will you be making or receiving many calls to/from the U.S.?
- Will you be making or receiving many local calls within your host country?
- How will you communicate with your program contact in case of emergency?
- Will you and those with whom you’ll communicate have access to internet-based communication tools, such as Skype?
- How may frequent calls and messaging with people back home detract from your goals for cultural immersion?
- Which of the following options best serves my needs:

**Option A) Bringing your U.S. based cell phone with you abroad**

You will first want to confirm that your phone will work abroad. Contact your service provider to find out if your phone has international capabilities or can be adapted for international use. Be sure to tell them what country or countries you will be visiting, as network compatibility varies. If your phone is compatible, inquire about rates and fees for usage abroad. Some companies charge high roaming fees for all calls made or received. As this option can be expensive, it may be best suited for someone on a short-term program or who plans to use a cell phone for emergencies only or only in areas with Wi-Fi connections.

**Option B) Obtaining a special host country/global phone prior to arrival**

Prior to departure you can rent or purchase a phone that is compatible for use in your host country. Most wireless operators and companies such as Cellular Abroad, Telestial, studentcell.net, and eKIT.com offer these services. A benefit of this option is that you have your phone and phone number ahead of time, which means friends and family will have your contact information and you may avoid a language barrier when finding a phone abroad. However, this option is generally more expensive than renting or purchasing a phone upon arrival.

**Option C) Obtaining a pay-as-you go, or no/short-term contract phone in country**

In many countries, you will be able to rent or purchase a local phone easily and inexpensively. A pay-as-you-go cell phone works similar to a debit card. Calls made on the phone are deducted from the balance on your account; when the balance gets low, you simply add more money. A local phone number makes it easier to contact people in your host
country. Ask your local contacts about where to get the best deals, as they can vary on rates and options for text messaging and some providers may allow for free incoming calls (even from the U.S.)

Option D) Using calling cards, or internet phone services (e.g. Skype) instead of a phone
If you decide not to have a cell phone abroad, there are plenty of ways to stay in touch with friends and family back home. Pre-paid calling cards (isic.org, ekit.com, pingo.com) can be purchased prior to departure or while you’re abroad. If you’ll have regular access to the internet, web-based phone services, such as Skype (skype.com) can be convenient and free.

Laptop Computers
Laptops can be useful to students depending on your program location and facilities. Electrical outlet adapters will usually be required, but these can be purchased very inexpensively. Internet access is widely available on most campuses abroad or in inexpensive Internet cafes, but not in all dorms or apartments abroad. If you do bring a laptop with you, make sure it is fully insured.

Note: Laptops are easily stolen and are not considered mandatory for study abroad. Doing computer work in the host school’s lab or at an Internet café is a free or cheap way to get your work done and interact with locals. Instant communication with home can prevent a student from building local support networks.

Go to www.laptoptravel.com for laptop mobility products as well as information and advice for traveling with your laptop.

Electronics and Electrical Appliances
Electricity voltage and plug sizes vary around the world. Consider buying electrical appliances upon arrival, substituting with battery operated appliances or, in some cases, doing without. Alternatively, you can buy converters and adaptors for existing appliances before departure. They are available at travel, hardware and electronics stores. Check the World Electric Guide at www.kropla.com for a guide to voltage, electric and telephone plugs worldwide.

PACKING

We recommend that you PACK LIGHT! You will be carrying your own bags. The general rule of thumb is to pack what you think you will need, let it sit, and then remove half.

Airlines have become more stringent about observing their weight limits on luggage in recent years. Each airline has its own maximum amount of luggage the traveler is allowed. Check with the airline(s) on which you will be traveling to find specific baggage allowances, weight or size restrictions and a list of restricted items for both international and domestic flights. If you will be taking an in-country flight after arrival to reach your abroad institution, that domestic flight may have different weight limits than the international flight. We also recommend arriving at the airport three hours before departure for international flights.

Nearly everything available in the U.S. can also be purchased abroad. We recommend purchasing or renting linens abroad, so as not to use up space in luggage and also because the
sizes of beds abroad may be different from the standard U.S. size. However, some students may want to purchase certain items here in the U.S. before departure because they will be either more expensive or unavailable abroad, depending on the country of destination.

Toiletries are available all over the world. Consider buying substitutes for U.S. brands after arrival. Even if available abroad, U.S. brands can be very expensive. However, your host country may not carry certain products (such as hair care items, make-up, etc.) that are designed to suit your specific needs.

We do not recommend shipping boxes abroad because customs fees will usually negate any savings that you might have incurred from shipping rather than packing these items in your luggage.

**Suggestions for Packing (Sample List)**

**Documents**
- Passport, visa (if required) and other IDs
  - Pack a photocopy of these documents in a different location
- Tickets (airplane, trains, etc.)
- Address book
- Journal
- Guidebook
- Bilingual language dictionary
- Luggage ID tags
- Insurance card or documents
- Inventory list of all items (& value) you have packed (in case you need to file an insurance claim)

**Clothing**

*When packing, consider clothing norms in your host country*
- Clothing that is easily hand-washed and drip-dried and appropriate for the climate (pants, shorts, long and short-sleeved shirts, pajamas, swimsuit)
- At least one nice outfit for going out on the town, special dinners, religious services, etc.
- Jacket, sweater, hat, gloves, scarf and other appropriate outerwear for the climate
- Raincoat, poncho and/or umbrella
- Sturdy, comfortable walking shoes
- Slippers and flip-flops for communal showers
- Bathrobe

**Medicine/Toiletries**
- Prescription medication in its original container (accompanied by prescription), and enough to last the entire duration of your travel
- Over-the-counter medications for colds, upset stomachs and headaches (in original packaging)
- Prescription and supplies/solutions for contact lenses and glasses
- Small first-aid kit with Band-Aids, antibiotic ointment, pain killer, etc.
- Toiletry items (comb, brush, toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo, soap, razors, sunscreen, feminine hygiene products, deodorant, cosmetics, insect repellent, etc.)
  - Caution: Liquids and lotions expand during flight and can leak or explode upon opening
  - Pack leakable products in large Ziploc bags or other spill proof containers

**Miscellaneous**

*You may want to pack many of these items, depending on your interests, destination and luggage allowance.*

- Washcloths, towel
- Twin sheets, pillowcases (for staying at hostels or if necessary for program)
- Video camera &/or camera and supplies (charger, batteries, memory cards, USB cable)
  *remember to pack film in your carry-on to avoid exposure to x-ray machines.*
- Wind-up or battery operated alarm clock (if you are not bringing a smart phone)
- Travel backpack
- Enough local currency to support you for 2-3 days (~$100 depending on the country)
- Credit card(s)
- Watch
- Water bottle
- Converter and adapter plugs for electrical appliances
- Sunglasses
- Small flashlight
- Pictures of your family, friends, home, campus and city
- Laptop computer
- Globally compatible cell phone
- MP3 player
- Portable USB drive/memory stick
- Entertainment- music, deck of cards, etc.
- Gift for host family

*IMPORTANT NOTE ON TAKING VALUABLES WITH YOU:* Our best advice is that you do NOT take expensive items with you while traveling as it may make you a target for thieves. If you do plan to take valuables with you abroad, i.e., camcorder, digital camera, laptop, iPod, jewelry, etc., plan to get additional insurance to cover loss or theft of your valuables while abroad. Contact your family’s homeowner’s insurance agent, or contact a travel agent regarding travel insurance that includes loss/theft of belongings.

**MONEY MATTERS**

The cost of your trip will depend on how you choose to live and where you plan to travel. You can lower your expenses abroad by doing such things as: purchasing food at grocery stores or markets rather than eating at restaurants, by staying at youth hostels instead of hotels, and by monitoring the amount of shopping you do.

**Debit Cards**
A debit card allows you to withdraw money from your bank account in the United States in the currency of your host county, which serves as an extremely convenient way of exchanging money while abroad. Before traveling, be sure to notify your card company and bank that you will be traveling abroad to avoid your card usage being frozen.

**Credit or Charge Cards**
It is a good idea to carry a credit card for emergency situations. If your card is lost or stolen, cancel it as soon as possible. Keep the telephone number for the credit card company separate from your card and leave a copy of it at home. Many credit cards can be used in ATM machines, but be aware of the charges this can incur. Visa and MasterCard are more widely accepted worldwide than are other cards like American Express and Discover.

Be aware of any foreign transaction fees your bank likely charges for debit and credit card use abroad. 3% per transaction is not uncommon. Set up online banking for these accounts so you can monitor your expenses and associated fees as they get translated into dollars. If your card is already fairly worn, consider getting a new one before departure.

**Cash**
Negotiating and bartering is much easier if you have hard currency rather than traveler’s checks, debit or credit cards. You may also need cash for other purchases like public transportation, and when sharing costs with friends or fellow students. Check exchange rates before you change money, and be aware that airports, hotels and train stations will often charge a higher rate of commission than a bank (the larger, the better). Also, do not carry more cash than you can reasonably afford to lose.

**Traveler’s Checks**
Traveler’s checks used to be the most efficient and trustworthy way to carry money internationally. However, times have changed as traveler’s checks are not able to be easily used in most parts of the world.

**Tipping Etiquette around the World**
Tipping practices vary greatly around the world. Do some research into the tipping practices in your host country and other countries you may visit. In some countries, tipping may be considered rude, while others may charge a cover to meals in lieu of a tip. Check out the link below for more information.

**HEALTH & SAFETY**

**Recommendations for Students**
In study abroad, as in other settings, participants can have a major impact on their own health and safety through the decisions they make before and during the program, as well as by their day-to-day choices and behaviors.

**Participants should:**
1. Read and carefully consider all materials issued by the university or program that relate to safety, health, legal, environment, political, cultural and religious conditions in host countries.

2. Consider their health and other personal circumstances when applying for or accepting a place in a program.

3. Make available to UNCW, and the program provider, accurate and complete physical, mental and personal health information necessary in planning for a safe and healthy study abroad experience.

4. Assume responsibility for all the elements necessary for personal program preparation and participate fully in orientations.

5. Obtain and maintain appropriate insurance coverage and abide by any conditions imposed by the carriers.

6. Inform parents/guardians/family and any others who may need to know about their participation in the study abroad program, provide them with emergency contact information and keep them informed on an ongoing basis.

7. Understand and comply with the terms of participation, codes of conduct and emergency procedures of the program, and obey host-country laws.

8. Be aware of local conditions and customs that may present health or safety risks when making daily choices and decisions. Promptly express any health or safety concerns to the program staff or other appropriate individuals.

9. Consult the website for the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov/travel) to determine vaccinations and protective measures recommended for travel to your host destination (i.e. Yellow Fever, Zika Virus, Dengue, etc) and follow.

10. Behave in a manner that is respectful of the rights and well-being of others and encourage others to behave in a similar fashion.

11. Accept responsibility for one’s own decisions and actions.

12. Become familiar with the procedures for obtaining emergency health and law enforcement services in the host country and know the local equivalent of 911 (www.sccfd.org/travel.html).

13. Follow the program policies for keeping program staff informed of student’s whereabouts and well-being.

Staying Safe
When traveling abroad, be sure to use common sense and abide by the following safety precautions:

- Label your luggage inside and out, but not so that it can easily be read by someone else passing by.
- When traveling, bring only those items that you need and never keep all of your documents or money in one place. Keep records of your credit card numbers and copies of your passport, visa and ID separately in case they are lost or stolen.
- If you find yourself in uncomfortable surroundings, stay calm, keep a low profile and try to blend in to the environment.
- Avoid crowds and demonstrations and beware of potential scams or pick-pocketing set-ups. Sometimes these are disguised as interviews or involve children.
- Use caution when traveling alone, and try not to walk alone at night; try to find an escort.
- Do not stop to be “interviewed” by anyone. This approach is usually a scam or set up for harassing you.
- Do not engage strangers in discussions about drugs or black market exchanges of any type for any reason.
- Be cautious about to whom you give your address and phone number, or who might overhear a conversation about where you are staying or where you are traveling. Report any suspicious people or activities to on-site staff immediately.
- Avoid clothing and behaviors that will draw attention to you or identify you as an American. Flashy jewelry, shirts depicting U.S. sports teams, fraternity/sorority letters, American flags, etc. should be left at home. Don’t speak loudly, and stay away from American hangouts (McDonald’s, etc.).
- Keep the on-site director and your host family informed of your travel plans.
- Stay out of the bad parts of any given city. Ask a local or a program representative which areas to avoid. Traveling alone in risky areas is especially dangerous. In large cities, stay on well-lit streets, or call a taxi.
- Don’t flash around your money, valuable electronics or credit cards. You may wish to use an around-the-neck wallet or an internal waist belt for valuables and keep it inside your shirt. Try to avoid large denomination bills.
- Familiarize yourself with the exchange rate and currency system in each country so that you are in control of your financial dealings (oanda.com is a helpful site).
- Maintain sufficient funds or a credit card to purchase emergency items.
- Diversify your money and don’t keep it all in the same place. Carry cash, bankcards and credit cards, but in different places. Even if you lose one, you still have a backup source. If you leave some in your suitcase, pack it creatively. Even if someone rummages through your things, they may not check a vitamin C bottle for cash.
- Never, ever count money in public. This is an open invitation to be mugged.
• Women should be especially cautious about maintaining eye contact with men. This action can be considered either rude or an invitation to trouble.

• Do not be naïve enough to believe that AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases don’t exist in other countries.

• If you should run into personal difficulty abroad, contact the on-site staff, the Office of International Programs at UNCW or a consular officer at the U.S. consulate.

**Airport Tips**

• Do not leave your bags or belongings unattended at any time. Security staff in airports and train stations are instructed to remove or destroy all unattended items. Do not agree to carry any packages or bags for anyone. Keep an eye on your luggage to be sure that no one places any items in your bags.

• Don’t send anything through x-ray machines until you’re ready to go through yourself. Someone in front of you holding up the line could leave your items unattended on the other side.

• Keep your luggage in sight at all times. It’s also a good idea if you have small carry-ons or purses to tie or hook all the pieces together. A light scarf or removable shoulder strap is great for this.

• If you’re planning on sleeping in the airport or on a train, locking your luggage or back pack to the chair with a bicycle lock can protect it from being taken. It could still be cut or opened, so be cautious. Small luggage locks are good to keep people out of your bags.

• Check out the Transportation Security Association website for packing rules, lists of prohibited items and other airport travel tips at: [www.tsa.gov/travelers](http://www.tsa.gov/travelers)

**Train & Subway Safety Tips**

• Have your fare ready when entering the subway. Buying day/weekly passes keeps you from pulling out your wallet in the station so thieves never see where you keep it.

• When waiting on the platform, stand far back from the tracks.

• Be extra cautious in over-crowded subway cars. Pickpockets and thieves are less likely to be noticed by their targets because of the close quarters.

• Avoid riding in an empty car. If you find yourself alone, simply exit one car and enter another at the first available stop. Remember, it’s usually the center cars that receive the most use.

• Constantly referring to your subway map advertises that you’re not sure where you’re going. Instead, sit where you can see the route map posted in the car.

• Stand defensive and prepared.
• Keep one hand occupied, and the other hand free.
  o Keep a hand on your purse and close to your body and use the other hand to stabilize your body while the public transportation is in motion. Don’t hold on with the same arm that should be protecting your bag! To further stabilize yourself, if you can’t get a seat, make sure to center your body in front of the pole, seat or other handhold so you won’t be thrown off-balance. Stand with your knees slightly bent to react with turns and bumps. Angle one foot in the direction of the braking action (forward for example).

Tips on Avoiding Pickpockets

• If carrying a purse, try to put the strap across your body so it can’t be snatched. It’s a good idea to have a thick enough strap to prevent its being cut or to carry a purse with two straps. If it has an opening flap, place the front against your body to make it harder to get into. Get in the habit of holding your hand over the opening.

• If you’re carrying a day pack or small backpack, do not keep valuables in the outside pockets; the best way to prevent theft is to wear it in front, kangaroo style.

• If you put your bag on the floor, even for a second, slip the strap through your foot to secure it.

• Remember, thieves can work in teams, so if a stranger is causing a distraction, you may be in a high-risk situation for theft.

• Be a difficult target – make it hard for them to get to you!
  o Walk with purpose and keep moving
  o Be unpredictable
  o Don’t stop to talk or answer questions from strangers
  o When traveling in groups, designate lookouts

• Protect your belongings – make it difficult to get to your stuff!
  o While drinking or eating outside, NEVER put your purse/bag on the ground or hang it on the chair behind you
  o Consider using a money belt
  o Bring the bare essentials when you can

Alcohol & Drugs  (Source: http://www.umabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/alcoholdrugs.php)

Alcohol Consumption or Drug Use in a Foreign Country
Many countries have laws regarding alcohol and drug use that are more severe than laws in the United States. In some countries, those caught with illegal drugs can be subject to death. Your consumption of alcohol or drugs, and/or your behavior while under the influence, might lead to a violation of local laws.
Alcohol
Certain types of alcoholic beverages may be stronger than what you are used to in the United States.

- Never accept drinks from anyone you may have just met.
- Never leave a drink unattended as the number of drink spiking incidents is on the rise.
- Do not leave your group of friends in order to accompany someone you may have just met.
- If you see a friend having too much to drink, please take care of them and, if necessary, take them home.

Accidents and Injuries
Accidents and injuries are common among those who consume too much alcohol. Alcohol impairs judgment, coordination, perception, and concentration. Impairment of these skills can result in a range of accidents, including falling down a flight of stairs or tripping on the sidewalk. The injuries resulting from such accidents can be minor or they can be severe. Within the past few years, a number of college students have died in accidents while intoxicated. These accidental deaths include several students who have fallen from balconies or bedroom windows, drowned in lakes or ponds on the way home from a party, or tripped on the sidewalk.

Unprotected Sex and Sexual Assault
Alcohol and drug use can result in unplanned negative consequences, including unprotected sex and sexual assault. Many sexual assaults involve the use of alcohol or drugs on the part of the perpetrator or the victim. Substance abuse can result in impaired judgment, which can put you at risk for either committing a sexual assault or becoming the victim of assault.

Methanol Poisoning
Methanol, is a commonly used organic solvent that, because of its toxicity, can cause metabolic acidosis, neurologic sequelae, and even death. It is a component of many commercially available industrial solvents and of poorly adulterated alcoholic beverages. Be aware in places such as Southeast Asia and parts of Mexico.

Alcohol Poisoning
Alcohol, when used in excess, can cause alcohol poisoning. The effects of alcohol poisoning can range from vomiting to falling into a coma and subsequent death. Too much alcohol can cause vital organs, such as the heart and lungs, to slow down and even stop, which results in death. Very often someone who dies from alcohol poisoning passes out and is allowed to “sleep it off.” This is a mistake. Anyone who drinks so much that they become unconscious or exhibit any of the signs below should receive immediate attention.

Warning signs of alcohol poisoning include:

- Cold, clammy, pale, or bluish skin
- Slow rate of respiration (eight breaths per minute or less)
- Irregular rate of respiration (ten seconds or more between breaths)
- Vomiting while "sleeping" or passed out without waking up
• Disoriented to time and place (doesn’t know where they are)
• Unconsciousness and inability to be awakened

Drugs
Drug use is not tolerated at UNCW and will not be tolerated abroad. Drug use can alter your behavior, negatively affect your health and safety, and possibly result in severe legal consequences. More information on the legal issues of drug use is provided below in the section Warning on Drugs Abroad.

Warning on Drugs Abroad

Each year, approximately 2,500 Americans are arrested abroad. One-third of the arrests are on drug-related charges. Many of those arrested assumed that they could not be arrested because they were U.S. citizens. From Asia to Africa, Europe to South America, U.S. citizens are finding out the hard way that drug possession or trafficking equals jail time in foreign countries.

There is very little that anyone can do to help you if you are caught with drugs.

It is your responsibility to know what the drug laws are in a foreign country before you go. "I didn’t know it was illegal" will not get you out of jail.

A number of the Americans arrested abroad on drug charges possessed marijuana. Many of these possessed one ounce or less of the substance. The risk of being put in jail for just one marijuana cigarette is not worth it.

If you are purchasing prescription medications in quantities larger than that considered necessary for personal use, you could be arrested on suspicion of drug trafficking.

Once you’re arrested, the American consular officer CANNOT get you out!

You may say "it couldn’t happen to me," but the fact is that it could happen to you if you find yourself saying one of the following:

... "I’m an American citizen and no foreign government can put me in their jail."

... "If I only buy or carry a small amount, it won’t be a problem."

If you are arrested on a drug charge, it is important that you know what your government CAN and CANNOT do for you.

The U.S. consular officer CAN
• Visit you in jail after being notified of your arrest
• Give you a list of local attorneys (The U.S. Government cannot assume responsibility for the professional ability or integrity of these individuals or recommend a particular attorney.)
• Notify your family and/or friends and relay requests for money or other aid - but only with your authorization
• Intercede with local authorities to make sure that your rights under local law are fully observed and that you are treated humanely, according to internationally accepted standards
• Protest mistreatment or abuse to the appropriate authorities

The U.S. Consular Officer CANNOT
• Demand your immediate release or get you out of jail or the country
• Represent you at trial or give legal counsel
• Pay legal fees and/or fines with U.S. government funds

IF YOU ARE CAUGHT BUYING, SELLING, CARRYING OR USING DRUGS OF ANY KIND, IT COULD MEAN:

Interrogation and Delays Before Trial - including mistreatment and solitary confinement for up to one year under very primitive conditions

Lengthy Trials - conducted in a foreign language with delays and postponements

Weeks, Months or Life in Prison - some places include hard labor, heavy fines and/or lashings if found guilty

The Death Penalty - in a growing number of countries (e.g. Malaysia and Pakistan)

Although drug laws vary from country to country, it is important to realize before you make the mistake of getting involved with drugs that foreign countries do not react lightly to drug offenders. In some countries, anyone who is caught with even a very small quantity for personal use may be tried and receive the same sentence as the large-scale trafficker. Don’t let your trip become a nightmare!

Be Aware
• A number of countries, including the Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Mexico and the Philippines, have enacted more stringent drug laws that impose mandatory jail sentences for individuals convicted of possessing even small amounts of marijuana or cocaine for personal use.
• Once you leave the United States, you are not covered by U.S. laws and constitutional rights.
• Bail is not granted in many countries when drugs are involved.
• The burden of proof in many countries is on the accused to prove his/her innocence.
• In some countries, evidence obtained illegally by local authorities may be admissible in court.
• Few countries offer drug offenders jury trials or even require the prisoner’s presence at his/her trial.
• Many countries have mandatory prison sentences of seven years or life without the possibility of parole for drug violations.
• If someone offers you a free trip and some quick and easy money just for bringing back a suitcase…. **SAY NO!**
• Don’t carry a package for anyone, no matter how small it might seem.
• The police and customs officials have a right to search your luggage for drugs. If they find drugs in your suitcase, you will suffer the consequences.
• You could go to jail for years and years with no possibility of parole, early release or transfer back to the U.S.
• Don’t make a jail sentence part of your trip abroad.

The Department of State’s Bureau of Consular Affairs’ Office of Overseas Citizens Services provides emergency services pertaining to the protection of Americans arrested or detained abroad, the search for U.S. citizens abroad, the transmission of emergency messages to those citizens or their next of kin in the United States, and other emergency and non-emergency services. Contact the Office of Overseas Citizens Services from Monday through Friday, 8:15 a.m. to 8 p.m. at (202) 647-5225. For an emergency after hours or on weekends and holidays, ask for the Overseas Citizens Services' duty officer at (202) 647-4000. Internet home page: [http://travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov)

**Travel Tips for Students**
(Source: [http://travel.state.gov/](http://travel.state.gov/))

Although most trips abroad are trouble free, being prepared will go a long way to avoiding the possibility of serious trouble. Become familiar with the basic laws and customs of the country you plan to visit before you travel. Remember: Reckless behavior while in another country can do more than ruin your experience abroad; it can land you in a foreign jail or worse! To have a safe trip, avoid risky behavior and plan ahead.

**Top Ten Travel Tips for Students (from the U.S. Dept. of State Publication 10679)**

1. Make sure you have a signed, valid passport and visas, if required. Also, before you go, fill in the emergency information page of your passport.
2. Read the Consular Information Sheets, Public Announcements and Travel Warnings, for the countries you plan to visit.
3. Leave copies of your itinerary, passport data page and visas with family or friends at home, so that you can be contacted in case of an emergency. Keep your host program informed of your whereabouts.
4. Make sure you have insurance that will cover your emergency medical needs (including medical evacuation) while you are abroad.
5. Familiarize yourself with local laws and customs of the countries to which you are traveling. Remember, while in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws!
6. Do not leave your luggage unattended in public areas and never accept packages from strangers.
7. While abroad, avoid using illicit drugs or drinking excessive amounts of alcoholic beverages and associating with people who do.
8. Do not become a target for thieves by wearing conspicuous clothing and expensive jewelry and do not carry excessive amounts of cash or unnecessary credit cards.

9. Deal only with authorized agents when you exchange money to avoid violating local laws.

10. When abroad, avoid demonstrations and other situations that may become unruly or where anti-American sentiment may be expressed.

Preparing for Your Trip Abroad

Learn about the countries that you plan to visit. Before departing, take the time to do some research about the people and their culture, and any problems that the country is experiencing that may affect your travel plans or health while abroad. The Department of State publishes Background Notes (www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/) on about 170 countries. These brief, factual pamphlets contain information on each country's culture, history, geography, economy, government and current political situation.

Utilize the U.S. Department of State’s new smartphone app: Smart Traveler tool designed to provide easy access to frequently updated official country information, travel alerts, travel warnings, maps, and U.S. embassy locations.


Read the Consular Information Sheet. Consular Information Sheets provide up-to-date travel information on any country in the world that you plan to visit. They cover topics such as entry regulations, the crime and security situation, drug penalties, road conditions, and the location of the U.S. embassy, consulates and consular agencies.

Check for Travel Warnings and Public Announcements. Travel Warnings recommend U.S. citizens defer travel to a country because of dangerous conditions. Public Announcements provide fast-breaking information about relatively short-term conditions that may pose risks to the security of travelers.

Register with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. Register with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate through the State Department's travel registration website (https://travelregistration.state.gov/step/). Registration will make your presence and whereabouts known in case it is necessary to contact you in an emergency. In accordance with the Privacy Act, information on your welfare and whereabouts may not be released without your express authorization. Remember to leave a detailed itinerary and the numbers or copies of your passport or other citizenship documents with a friend or relative in the United States. (U.S. embassy and consulate locations can be found in the country's Consular Information Sheet.) If your family needs to reach you because of an emergency, they can pass a message to you through the Office of Overseas Citizens Services at 202-647-5225. This office will contact the embassy or consulate in the country where you are traveling and pass a message from your family to you. Remember, consular officers cannot cash checks, lend money or serve as your attorney. They can, however, if the need arises, assist you in obtaining emergency funds from your family, help you find an attorney, help you find medical assistance, and replace your lost or stolen passport.
How to Access Consular Information Sheets, Travel Warnings and Public Announcements

You may obtain Consular Information Sheets, Travel Warnings and Public Announcements by:

- **Internet:** [http://travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov)
- **Telephone:** Dial the Office of Overseas Citizens Services at 202-647-5225.
- Also available at [http://travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov): passport applications and procedures, foreign and U.S. visa information, travel publications (including the pamphlet *Travel Warning on Drugs Abroad*), and links to several U.S. embassy and consulate web sites worldwide.

For Further Information on Safety and Travel in your Host Country:

- **Study Abroad Student Handbook**

- **Student Travel Abroad Website** (sponsored by the U.S. Department of State)
  [http://studentsabroad.state.gov/](http://studentsabroad.state.gov/)

- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

- **Safety Abroad First Education Travel Information (SAFETI) Clearinghouse**
  [www.globaled.us/safeti/](http://www.globaled.us/safeti/)

- **World Health Organization: International Travel and Health**
  [www.who.int/ith/en/](http://www.who.int/ith/en/)

Additional links to Health and Safety information can be found at: [http://www.uncw.edu/international/abroad/healthandsafety.html](http://www.uncw.edu/international/abroad/healthandsafety.html)

**YOUR HEALTH**

Good health is a prerequisite to an enjoyable stay abroad and is crucial while you are traveling. You may be exposed to unfamiliar climates, food, medicine and health care systems. In most cases, common sense and a healthy respect for your body and its limitations will help avoid medical problems. A few preliminary precautions can spare you a great deal of unpleasantness.

**Medical and dental check-ups**

Medical and dental check-ups prior to your departure are highly recommended. Review your travel plans with a physician who knows your personal medical history. Frequently, a health statement from your doctor is required to obtain a visa to enter your host country.

**Vaccinations & Education**
Consult the website for the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov/travel) to determine which vaccinations are recommended for the countries to which you will be traveling and other health advice. Many vaccinations are available at little or no cost from the New Hanover County Health Department. Also take time to educate yourself about any health issues or concerns that could exist in the country(ies) to which you will travel. These concerns may include such topics as the quality of drinking water and bacterial, viral, or insect-borne diseases like malaria, encephalitis, and Zika.

**Jet Lag**

As you know, each of us has peak periods during the day and times when we are a little less than peak. This cycle is called the circadian rhythm and the disruption of this rhythm results in jet lag. Some of the changes experienced from jet lag are that you feel energetic at 4 p.m. rather than at 9 a.m., you need to use the bathroom more in the middle of the night, and you are hungry at times other than the usual breakfast, lunch and dinner hours. Of course, not everyone has the same experience with jet lag and length of recovery differs from one to several days. There are many different suggestions for dealing with jet lag, but here are a few things to remember:

- Be patient with yourself. After traveling for long periods of time, it is not uncommon to feel exhausted, easily confused, frustrated, etc.
- Prior to leaving, try to have an idea where you will spend the first night and how to get there. Write this information down. Knowing that you have a place to rest and how to get there will lessen the stress.
- Try to get outside and walk or exercise your first day abroad.
- Try to get on the local sleep schedule as quickly as possible.

There are many different recommendations for eating before and during the flight. Do a little research and decide what is best for you. None are a magic pill; you will still have some adjusting to do. However, there are a few things all plans agree on:

- Avoid alcohol and sleeping pills before and during the flight as they only increase fatigue without making you sleep better.
- Avoid smoking; the combination of carbon monoxide in your blood and altitude also increases feelings of fatigue.
- Drink lots of water.

**Sexual Health**

Traveling abroad is an educational and exciting time, but for those who are sexually active, an STD or unplanned child is not a souvenir you want to bring home. Read over these few tips before traveling abroad:

- Using a condom correctly and consistently during vaginal, anal, and male oral sex can greatly reduce a person’s risk of unwanted pregnancy and STD’s.
- If you are sexually active with men, bring your own stock of condoms along to ensure you have them on hand and that they are a brand you trust.
- Women taking contraceptive pills or using a prescription-type birth control should bring a supply from home in order to avoid locating a local doctor to fill a prescription abroad.
• Keep in mind that many STD’s are asymptomatic, meaning there aren’t any visible symptoms. Just because things “appear” normal, doesn’t always mean that they are. You can still acquire an STD, even if your partner doesn’t have symptoms.
• To prevent infections such as HIV and Hepatitis B, avoid receiving tattoos, body piercings, or injections of any kind.
• STD’s are transmittable through oral-genital contact. Make sure to use a condom for male oral sex, and a dental dam for anal oral sex and female oral sex.
• Avoid any sexual activity with prostitutes, individuals who have multiple sexual partners, and intravenous drug users.

Make sure to protect yourself regardless of what your partner says or does, and don't be afraid to call a halt to any activity that you feel puts you at risk. Have fun abroad, but be smart, be safe, and don't compromise your health for the sake of one night - or hour!

Helpful Websites for More Information:

• www.uncw.edu/healthpromo
  Get your questions answered confidentially. Click “Ask the Health Educator”
• www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/
• www.cdc.gov/Features/StudyAbroad/
• www.cdc.gov/travel/content/study-abroad.aspx

Traveler’s Diarrhea
Traveler’s diarrhea is caused by a bacterial infection 90 percent of the time. The remaining 10% is due to viruses or protozoans (Giardia, Amebiasis, etc.). Somewhere between 20-50 percent of persons traveling to a foreign country will develop diarrhea during or shortly after their trip. The risk is highest when traveling to developing countries of Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

Traveler’s diarrhea is usually caused by a toxin-producing bacteria that is acquired by ingesting contaminated food or water. Risky items include:
• Tap water, including ice cubes
• Raw vegetables, raw meat and raw seafood
• Food that has been sitting out, such as a buffet
• Unpasteurized milk or other dairy products
• Fruits that cannot be peeled by the consumer

To prevent traveler’s diarrhea, you should avoid the high risk items listed above and avoid buying food/beverages from street vendors.

Treatment of Traveler’s Diarrhea
There are a number of measures that can be used to reduce the severity and the duration of the episode and avoid dehydration.
• Drink bottled fruit juices or caffeine-free soft drinks
• Eat salted crackers (you need salt and water)
• Powdered oral rehydration fluid mixed with bottled water is ideal
• Avoid alcohol and caffeinated beverages
• Avoid dairy products, which may make the diarrhea worse
• If diarrhea is severe, only drink clear liquids

Additionally, products such as Pepto-Bismol or Imodium may shorten the duration of the episode. Kaopectate will probably have no effect. Always follow the manufacturer’s directions and warnings when using these products. If your symptoms do not respond to this course of treatment, you may need treatment with an antibiotic. We suggest you seek medical advice on an appropriate antibiotic.

Your Mental Health


Consider your own mental health issues when preparing for your program, and make all your necessary health information available to your program's administrators in the U.S. and abroad so they can assist you with any special needs, or advise you on the risks you might face. You completed the Health/Emergency Treatment section of UNCW’s online application, but consider if any details have changed or you have new health information to share. Studying abroad may include both physical and mental challenges for students, so make sure you establish a support network of program administrators, family and friends who can help you.

Traveling or studying overseas is not a cure for health conditions such as depression or attention deficit disorder. Sometimes going abroad may in fact amplify a condition. A student may not have adequate access to their prescription medication or mental health facilities. In addition, culture shock, language barriers, and homesickness can deepen isolation or depression.

Workable Plan

Before traveling, create a workable plan for managing your mental health while abroad. The availability and quality of mental health services differ widely from country to country. In many countries, students will find it difficult — and sometimes impossible — to find treatment for mental health conditions. With your health services provider or your school, put together a workable mental health plan before you go overseas.

• If you have a medical or psychological condition that may require treatment while you are abroad, discuss this ahead of time with your doctor. A vacation or study abroad is a great opportunity to try new things, but this is not the time to experiment with not taking your medicine or mixing alcohol with medicine.
• Research the social culture of your destination to learn about how mental illnesses are viewed. Attitudes toward mental health can vary greatly between countries.
• Talk to your university about access to mental health services at overseas programs. Your study abroad office can help you decide what program would be best for you.
• If currently receiving mental health services — including prescription medication — find out if those services and/or medication are available at your destination.
• Consider the support system you’ll have in place while abroad. If possible, know ahead of time who you can consult with about your mental health.

Stress
Stress has many definitions. Stress affects everyone differently. The additional/new kinds of stress you may encounter in the country of your choice may lead to anxiety/panic disorders, depression, paranoia, eating disorders, and other phobias. Any mental health challenges you have prior to going abroad may become more severe once you experience the effects of culture shock. Even mental fatigue from constant language immersion and time change may cause the symptoms of culture shock to seem overwhelming.

Identity and Mental Health
One’s identity, including how it may be perceived differently abroad than at home and how it may present unique challenges in your host environment is an area for exploration and preparation. Consider the following questions and preparations from the perspective of your gender, ethnic or religious background, your sexual identity, as one with disabilities and as an U.S. American, as applicable.

• How can you prepare yourself to deal with any prejudice you may face?
• Does it matter that your cultural background, race, religion, skin color, disability, sex, or sexual orientation, etc. may place you in the minority or the majority in countries to which you will be traveling?
• I am aware of the prevailing local sentiment towards people of my cultural background, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, etc.
• I am aware of how past and current U.S. policy has affected/affects the countries where I will visit.
• I know how to avoid confrontations over politics/religion, and how to avoid provoking unwanted attention by not flaunting my "American-ness".
• I am aware of the prevailing national sentiment towards the U.S. and U.S. citizens in the countries I will visit.

CROSS-CULTURAL ADAPTATION

The process of mentally, physically and emotionally adjusting to a new environment is commonly known as cultural adjustment, or cross-cultural assimilation. It is a response to being in a situation where everything is different from your previous experiences, including language/slang, food, transportation, body language and everyday activities. One may be elated when first arriving abroad and may not initially attempt to adjust to the local culture or may find
the adjustment going smoothly. Cultural adaptation can also be difficult, frustrating confusing, and include periods of “culture shock.”

The Glimpse Foundation has published several guides based on their extensive survey research with study abroad returnees. Here is their description of culture shock and phases of cross-cultural adaptation:

Culture shock manifests itself differently in different people, but research has detected general patterns of emotional highs and lows experienced by international travelers. These phases vary in duration and severity and are not necessarily linear.

**Euphoria** - The first few hours, days or weeks abroad are often characterized by the excitement of sensory overload. Both adrenaline and expectations are running high, and everything seems new and intriguing. This phase is often referred to as the honeymoon period.

**Irritability and Hostility** - Once the initial "honeymoon" phase subsides, dissonances between native and host cultures begin to seem more pronounced, and a sense of alienation can set in. Curiosity and enthusiasm about-face, transforming into frustration, insecurity, negativity toward local culture, glorification of home culture, exaggerated responses to minor problems, withdrawal and/or depression.

**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, which may have been lying dormant for a while, will reemerge.

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

**Cultural Adjustment Strategies**
It is perfectly normal to experience some culture shock when you move away from family and friends, live in an unfamiliar environment and try to meet new people. Here are some things to anticipate while abroad and ways to adjust to your new surroundings.

**Talk to someone if you have a serious problem.** Talk to a fellow student, faculty member, the on-site coordinator or contact the OIP at UNCW. Realize that you are not alone, and there is someone to help.

**Keep your sense of humor.** One thing that is almost universal among study abroad students is that they come home with wonderful stories about how much fun they had during their time abroad. If you have a terrible, frustrating day (or even week) abroad, remember that it will pass. Time has a way of helping show the humor in every situation.

**Don’t expect local people to seek you out.** When was the last time you approached a lonely looking international student with an offer of friendship? Things are not necessarily any different abroad. If you are not meeting people through your classes, make other efforts to meet
them. Take advantage of the university structure to join clubs, sports teams and university functions.

**Expect to hear criticism of the United States.** Educate yourself about U.S. politics and foreign policies before heading abroad, and be willing to hear an outsider’s viewpoint. Remember that such criticism is probably not personal in nature, as most foreigners are able to differentiate between U.S. politics and U.S. citizens.

**Expect to feel frustrated.** People are going to do things differently in your new setting, and you may not always think their way is better than what you are used to in the U.S. Remember that you are a foreigner and a guest in their culture and should respect these cultural practices.

**Expect to feel depressed or alone sometimes.** Homesickness is natural, especially if you haven’t been away from home before. The best way to combat homesickness is to get involved in your new location and immerse yourself in your new culture. Don’t let thoughts of home detract from your ability to make the most of your time abroad.

**Keep a journal.** A great way to deal with culture shock and to reflect thoughtfully on cultural variances/similarities is to keep a regular journal. As you think about what you write, you may be able to recognize negative reactions resulting from cultural and linguistic unfamiliarity. Use your journal to make meaningful comparisons and as a lasting record of your changing attitudes and of the growth you experienced abroad.

**Examine your motives for going.** Although you will certainly travel while you’re abroad, remember that you’re there to STUDY abroad, not go on vacation.

**Being a Good Ambassador and Guest**

When studying abroad, you are not only representing yourself, but are also serving as an ambassador for your university, city, state and country. Education abroad can be a wonderful way to create international understanding and to facilitate dialogue between cultures. Please keep the following in mind during your travels:

- Be aware of the feelings of other people, thus preventing what might be offensive behavior on your part. Remember this especially with photography. Always ask permission to take someone’s picture – people do not want to be photographed in some cultures.

- Don’t just listen and look passively as we may afford to do at home. Practice active listening, observing and greater awareness in communication.

- Realize that people in the country you visit often have time concepts and thought patterns different from your own. *Not inferior, just different.*

- Discover the enrichment that comes from seeing another way of life through other eyes, rather than looking for the 'beach paradise' of the tourist posters.

- Acquaint yourself with the local customs. What is courteous in one country may be quite the reverse in another (i.e. we consider making eye contact to be a sign of
attentiveness and respect, in other cultures it can be considered rude or defiant). Respect local customs.

- Cultivate the habit of asking questions instead of knowing all the answers.
- Remember that you are only one of thousands of visiting tourists. Do not expect special privileges.
- Do not make promises to local people unless you are certain you can fulfill them. “Hey, I’ll call you later!” could be taken with more certainty than you intend.
- Do not expect life to be like it is at home. Remember you went abroad to experience something different, not home away from home.
- Never speak to someone in English and expect him/her to answer you in English. A smile and beginning a phrase with “please” in the local language will get you off to a good start. Try to learn the local language, at least how to say, “I am sorry, I do not speak XYZ, do you speak English?”
- What you think of as natural (i.e. normal) behavior may only be cultural (socially constructed). Much of human behavior is universal but certainly not all. Before you project your norms on the human race, consider the possibility that you might be making incorrect assumptions.
- Familiar behaviors may have different meanings. The same behavior - saying "yes", for example can exist in different cultures and not mean the same thing. Just because you've recognized a given behavior, don't assume you've understood it.
- Don't assume that what you meant is what was understood. You can be sure of what you mean when you say something, but you can't be sure how this is interpreted by someone else. Check for signs that the other person did or did not understand you.
- Don't assume that what you understood is what was meant. We all hear what others say through the medium of our own experience. You know what those words mean to you, but what do they mean to the person speaking them?
- You don't have to like or accept different behavior, but understanding where it comes from may help you find ways to deal with it.
- Most people do behave rationally; you just have to discover the rationale.
- Travel in a spirit of humility and with a genuine desire to learn more about the people of your host country.
- Reflect daily on your experiences; seek to deepen your understanding. Journaling is a great way to do this.

Cross-Cultural Considerations

Photography
Some countries impose strict requirements about what may not be photographed, such as police stations, military posts, etc. Taking a picture of a harbor may seem harmless to you, but it might be construed as a threat to the country’s national security. Before you take out your camera,
check for any signs posting restrictions or ask an official if it is okay. In some other countries, being photographed is a violation of cultural beliefs. In others, it is used as a means of making money from tourism. Educate yourself about the beliefs of the culture in which you are studying or traveling, and in some cases, be prepared to pay those people whom you photograph.

**Holidays, Elections, Political Demonstrations, Major Sporting Events**

Educate yourself and be aware of local and national holidays, elections, political demonstrations and major sporting events in your host country. These types of events can sometimes be accompanied by demonstrations in the streets and a disruption of normal travel schedules. If possible, do not plan to travel on days during which these events are taking place. It is also not advised to participate in such demonstrations.

**Appropriate Dress**

When traveling, consider the cultural appropriateness of your attire and be respectful of the host culture. Sleeveless shirts, shorts or skirts may not be appropriate, and in some cultures, it might be suggested that females cover their hair or neck. Research these customs prior to packing.

**Perceptions from Abroad**

Be aware that political events or natural disasters in your host country might be in the news at home. News accounts often give a distorted picture of events and a false sense of imminent danger to those not on the scene. If an event happens in the country in which you are studying, please be sure to contact your family and the Office of International Programs to let them know that you are safe and give them a sense of the local situation.

**Racial Issues Abroad**

In addition to culture shock, students may experience greater acceptance abroad, or perhaps encounter discrimination or racism. Whether and to what extent students have such experiences in their dealings with society at large will vary greatly depending on the cultural, socioeconomic and political situation of the host country, where the host institution is located within the country, and the education level, perceptions and attitudes of the people they encounter. Remember to be aware of your own self-image and expectations, and realize that it is possible that other people’s actions might reflect their curiosity about you. Keep in mind your own cultural assumptions when encountering new situations before jumping to conclusions.

**Body Language: *Here’s How to Keep Your Friends - and Your Teeth - When You Travel* by David Baker**

Say it’s your first week in Australia. Some of your new found Aussie friends invite you to a rugby match, and, itching for local color, you go. They try to explain the game to you, you think you get it, and when their favorite team emerges victorious, they ask you what you thought of their mighty players. You flash an enthusiastic thumbs-up. Your friends promptly beat you to a pulp.

What happened? You said the wrong thing— with your hands. To Americans weaned on Siskel and Ebert, a thumbs up sign means “great, couldn’t be better.” To Australians, however, it means
“up yours.” Maybe while you’re recuperating in the infirmary, someone will have the decency to explain it to you.

Better yet, try learning to translate gestures before you innocently anger a crowd full of pumped-up rugby fans. In most cultures and countries, the local body language can be as foreign to you as the words the natives speak. If you know people from the country you plan to visit, ask them. Or read up on the subject. *Gestures: The Do’s and Taboos of Body Language Around the World*, by Robert E. Axtell (John Wiley & Sons), covers the basics from Algeria to Zimbabwe.

Here are a few tips:

**OK:** You’ve used this since childhood and probably assume everyone else has, too. But the “OK” gesture—with the thumb and index finger forming a circle—can get ugly abroad. In Russia, Germany and much of Latin America, it represents a certain part of the body and translates as an emphatic “screw you.” In Japan it is a sign for money, as if your fingers were outlining a coin. In France, it signifies “zero” or “worthless.” Few use it the way Americans do, so leave it at home.

**V:** We use the classic two-fingered “V to signal victory” or “peace.” You may think it’s safe since it was popularized by a Brit, Winston Churchill. But if you’re in Britain, and you do it with your palm facing toward you instead of out, you will have found yet another way to say “screw you.” Use with extreme caution.

**Whistling:** Americans are an enthusiastic breed, and when we want to applaud something, we often whistle while we clap. Unfortunately, no one else does. In fact, most Europeans whistle as a form of boooing. Avoid it, unless you want to do a lot of explaining in public.

**Handshake:** Faster than you can say “cultural imperialism,” the rise of global business has spread the handshake to all corners of the world. Even in countries with their own traditional forms of greeting - such as India, where they make a praying motion with their hands, or Japan, where they bow - many locals will accommodate the Western urge to shake. Be careful how you do it, though. The bone-crushing squeeze favored in the United States is interpreted as a sign of aggression in many regions, including the Middle East and much of Asia. Your best bet is to keep it gentle.

**Nodding:** “But,” you insist, “surely some body language must be universal. Basic stuff, like nodding your head to say ‘yes’ and shaking it for ‘no’ must work everywhere.” Unfortunately, this is not the case. In Bulgaria and parts of the former Yugoslavia, Turkey, Iran, Greece and Bengal, the locals actually nod to say “no” and shake their head for “yes.”

**Eye Contact:** Sometime in your youth, some adult probably drilled into you the idea that people only respect you if you look ‘em square in the eye. Saudis would agree, but not Japanese, Koreans or Thais. To them, staring for any length of time is a major faux pas, as it is for residents of the West Indies and Puerto Rico. If the locals look away while you’re talking, they’re probably just being polite, maybe even showing respect.

**Personal Space:** You know the feeling. Someone stands a little too close to you, and suddenly you either want to push him away or smack him. Or at least take a step back. Westerners are protective of our personal space and don’t take kindly having it violated.

But the amount of space that people require varies from culture to culture. Stand at what you would consider a normal distance from Chinese or Japanese people, and they will feel crowded.
Visit any Latin American or Islamic country, and you will find that people stand much closer to each other than we touch phobic Yanks prefer. They may even touch you during a conversation. To them, it's just acting friendly, so get used to it.

The bottom line is that, with the possible exception of the smile, no gesture is safe.

If even the most basic body language can betray you, how can you ever hope to fit in abroad? A pre-emptive conversation with someone in your host country can’t hurt. Just say that you have noticed some differences and ask if there are any others to watch out for. Whoever you ask will, at the very least, be amused.

Whatever you do, don’t assume.


U.S. American Cultural Values and Assumptions
Of course Americans, like any other cultural group, are a collection of individuals and we are extremely diverse! However, most visitors to the U.S. and most cultural anthropologists would argue that as a group, Americans tend to hold the following cultural values, some of which are very different from those of other cultures. (Adapted from American Ways: A Guide for Foreigners in the U.S., Gary Althen.)

Individualism & Independence: We see ourselves as individuals, responsible for our own situations. We emphasize self-fulfillment. We give choices even to very young children and believe that it's wrong to expect individuals to always sacrifice their wants and needs for the good of the group. We admire individuals who fought their way to the top, do something first or the longest or the best. We define ourselves by what we do, not by our birth situation.

Privacy: We assume that everyone needs time alone. In some cultures one is rarely alone and all translations of the word "privacy" carry a negative connotation of being isolated. U.S. children often have their own rooms and their own possessions. We have rules about confidentiality.

Egalitarianism: We generally express strong belief in the principle that all people are created equal, with equal opportunities; yet most Americans will admit that discrimination (racism and sexism) still exists in the U.S. We tend to enjoy stories of "self-made" individuals who rise from poverty to riches through hard work and initiative. Most Americans believe that individuals control their own destinies; children are told "you can be whatever you want to be." We generally don't like displays of social status - being bowed to, deferred to, etc. We show respect in more subtle ways; tone of voice, order of speaking and seating arrangements (getting the most comfortable chair). Children are often allowed or encouraged to question their parents and "discuss" their parents' decisions. Questioning professors is often highly valued, and bosses often go out of their way to seem like one of the gang. We chitchat with taxi drivers, waiters, bellmen, doctors and lawyers. We give respectable titles to all jobs (sanitation worker).

Time: We are very concerned with time and efficiency and look for faster and more efficient ways of doing things. We talk about not wasting time or about saving time - in many cultures
time just is. We value organization and punctuality. We make to-do lists, plan our leisure time, carry calendars and schedules.

**Informality:** We use first names, even with people older than we are and people who have more social status. We use idiomatic speech, prop our feet up on desks, wear informal clothing on many occasions.

**Future-oriented:** We are less concerned with history than other cultures (in explaining conflicts, people from other cultures may go back several centuries) We value new things and ideas more than the old - products are advertised as "new and improved." We believe we can and should improve our situation, as in "Don't just stand there, DO something." Some other cultures have more of a reverence for the past and believe that it's arrogant for human beings to believe they can change their fate.

**Achievement and Action-oriented:** We value hard work and continually want to improve our situation. We feel that we never achieve enough and should always keep bettering ourselves. We are always doing something, and we feel bored or guilty after doing nothing for several hours.

**Honesty and Directness:** We value "getting to the point" more than maintaining "face" (prestige or dignity). We look up to the person who tells us directly and honestly when he is upset about something. We do not like to have a third person mediate. We believe it's important to tell the truth even though it may put us in an unfavorable light. Some other cultures are more concerned with "saving face" and may say something indirectly or put a more positive spin on the situation in order to do so.

**Values of Target Culture**
It is much easier to make observations about and participate in the life style of the target culture you are going to visit if you understand certain basic concepts before you leave. The questions listed below will help you outline important values of the target culture. Apply these questions to your own knowledge of the United States as well. The people you will meet during your visit are quite interested in our way of life and will ask you many of these questions.

1. Who are five prominent individuals who are currently leaders in politics, religion, education, business, banking, the arts (theatre, movies, music, writers, etc.), athletics, military service, women’s activities, etc.?
2. Who are the country’s national heroes?
3. Can you recognize the national anthem?
4. What is the native language? What other languages are known or used?
5. What is the predominant religion? Is it a state religion? Do you understand any of its doctrine or know the names of its prophets?
6. What is the attitude of the predominant religion towards other religions?
7. What is the most common form of marriage? (Civil - church - common law)
8. What is the attitude towards divorce?
9. What are the important holidays? How is each observed?
10. What is the normal pattern of work days and days off? What are normal working hours? When are stores open?
11. How do people spend their leisure time?
12. What are favorite recreational activities of the people?
13. What games do children play?
14. What recreational facilities are available for teenagers?
15. What sports are popular for adults — for children?
16. What is the attitude towards gambling?
17. What is the attitude towards drinking?
18. What types of films are shown at local movie theatres?
19. Is television available? How widely used is it?
20. How many people own automobiles?
21. What local public transportation is available? Who uses it?
22. How much traveling is done beyond national borders? What other countries are usually visited?
23. Who has the right of way in traffic: vehicles, animals, pedestrians?
24. What mechanical items are usually found in use in the home?
25. If, as a customer, you touch or handle merchandise for sale, will you be considered knowledgeable, inconsiderate, within your rights, outside your rights?
26. What money is used? What are the denominations of bills and coins - what is the exchange rate for U.S. money?
27. Is the price asked for goods the actual selling price?
28. What is the usual mealtime schedule?
29. What foods are taboo?
30. What is the equivalent of the American drugstore?
32. What type of public hygiene and sanitation is observed?
33. Do most people read and write?
34. Is education free? Compulsory?
35. What kinds of schools are considered best: public, private, parochial?
36. In schools are children segregated? Race? Caste or class? Sex? Religion?
37. How are children disciplined at home? In school?
38. At social occasions are children usually present? How about elderly family members?
39. In business and social events do people arrive early? On time? Late? Very late?
40. On what occasions would you present (and accept) gifts from people? Do some flowers have a particular meaning?
41. How do people greet one another? Shake hands? Embrace or kiss? Bow? How do they leave one another?
42. If you are invited to a party, would you expect to find among the guests: foreign businessmen, men only, men and women, politicians, wives, teachers, intellectuals and professionals, religious clerics, members of the host’s family, etc.?
43. Are the large circulation newspapers friendly in their attitude towards the U.S.?
44. What is the history of the relationships between this target country and the United States?

**ACADEMICS**

**Registering for Study Abroad and Exchange at UNCW**

The Office of International Programs (OIP) will register all UNCW students participating in semester or year-long study abroad or exchange in the corresponding placeholder course:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Type</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Credits</th>
<th>UNCW Tuition and Fees Charged?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Study Abroad</td>
<td>STA 294</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Abroad (graduate)</td>
<td>STA 594</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange</td>
<td>EXC 294</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange (graduate)</td>
<td>EXC 594</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC in Paris Consortium</td>
<td>UPS 294</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FRH494s</td>
<td>3-6</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dual Degree/Other
Consult with the Office of International Programs

These are *placeholder* courses. They serve to identify you as a student participating on an international program, while maintaining your full-time student status at UNCW. Non-UNCW students should check with their home schools regarding registration and placeholder practices. OIP will proceed to register participants during the regular registration period for the term(s) abroad, not during pre-registration. Any courses for the term in which you previously enrolled will be dropped at time placeholder registration unless you arrange otherwise with OIP. If registration is blocked for any reason (library fines, parking tickets, advising blocks), it is the student’s responsibility to clear these holds. Please confirm your registration through SeaNet a few weeks before the start of the term abroad.
Registering for classes at the host institution

Each university or program abroad has its own policy on class registration. For some universities it is not possible to register in advance of arrival because it is not the custom of the university to do so. In these cases, students will register after arrival at their host institution.

Some programs or universities can facilitate registration in classes before departure from the U.S. In these cases, students will know their schedules before arriving abroad. In either case, flexibility is necessary, but advance planning will go far in easing anxiety about class schedules.

Registering for UNCW classes while abroad

Prior to departure from UNCW, you should meet with your academic adviser and establish a list of courses needed for the semester of intended return. Take your course list abroad in order to simplify the registration process. You should plan ahead if you need to register for special permit classes or those with pre-requisites – the OIP cannot clear registration holds, so please stay in touch and work with your academic advisor.

OIP will email you a reminder when the registration period is approaching. You will need to get in touch with your academic advisor to obtain your registration PIN.

You will register for classes for the semester you intend to return using the online registration system at https://seanet.uncw.edu. Don’t forget! Speak to your academic adviser before departure or contact them from abroad prior to your registration date to have your academic advising hold lifted so you can register.

Course Load
You are expected to maintain at least a minimum full-time load of classes as:

   a) Defined by UNCW (12+ credits for undergraduates, 9 credits at the graduate-level),
   b) Defined by your host institution or immigration policies of your students visa;

Whichever is higher.

Library Support and Resources

UNCW’s Randall Library has developed a wonderful webpage specifically for students who are studying abroad: http://library.uncw.edu/study_abroad_students. It is full of resources to help you utilize libraries abroad, access Randall Library’s resources and support from abroad and other tools and links to help you have a positive academic experience.

Grades and Credit from Abroad
The host institution may use very different credit values and grading scales than those to which you are accustomed. You can find general grade conversion scales from the OIP website at: http://www.uncw.edu/international/abroad/academicresources.html. If your program is not included on the linked lists, you may seek credit and grade conversion scales from OIP or your program provider.

You will not receive credit for any courses completed abroad until course equivalencies are determined and have approval signatures on an Education Abroad Advising Agreement and Permit for Transient Study (transient study form). Enrollment in any courses abroad that do not appear on your original transient study form must be assessed with a supplemental transient study form, available on the OIP website at: http://uncw.edu/international/abroad/documents/UpdatedTRANSIENTSTUDYFORM.pdf upon your return. It is strongly recommended, but not required, that you complete this form before departure.

All students are expected to maintain good academic standing while abroad (GPA of 2.5 or better.). Any student who intends to enroll in an academic year abroad, but falls below this GPA standard at the end of the first semester, may be required to return to UNCW.

You must earn a grade equivalent to UNCW’s C or better in order to be eligible for credit at UNCW. The actual grades and credits earned abroad will appear on your internal record (viewable through SeaNet), but will appear only as transfer credit rather than UNCW courses on your official UNCW transcript. These transfer credits will not be calculated into your UNCW grade point average.

The exceptions to the rules above include those courses which are taught abroad but for which you enroll at UNCW (e.g. some NC Paris Program courses, and subjects taught by UNCW faculty such as on faculty-led programs). In these instances, you do not need to complete a transient study form for these courses. The grades earned in these types of courses will be reflected on your UNCW transcript and calculated into your UNCW GPA.

**Host Institution Transcript**

Please notify the host institution or program to send your transcript to the UNCW Office of International Programs. The OIP mailing address appears on the cover of this handbook. This will expedite the process of having your courses, credits and grades posted to your UNCW record transcript. Students are responsible for paying all debts at the host institution. Failure to do so will delay posting of grades and credits at UNCW.

**Graduating Seniors**

You must apply for graduation prior to departure from UNCW if the graduation application deadline occurs during your absence from campus. Follow the checklist below and contact the Registrar’s office if you have additional questions.
• Apply for graduation before you depart if the due date occurs during your absence from campus. You must apply at least six to eight months before the date of graduation. For more information check out:

www.uncw.edu/reg/graduation-deadlinesApp.htm

• Review your degree audit with your academic adviser before departure to be certain that you will meet all degree requirements for your intended graduation date.

• If you will be returning to UNCW for your final semester, prepare your course schedule and have it reviewed and approved by your academic adviser prior to departure.

• Ask your host institution program to release your transcript as soon as possible upon completion of your studies abroad and have it sent to the UNCW OIP. If your host institution transcript(s) will be arriving more than six weeks after the graduation date for which you applied, you may need to defer your graduation until the following semester.

Withdrawal, Refund, Cancellation and Dismissal Policies

Withdrawal
In order to withdraw from a UNCW-sponsored study abroad or exchange program prior to departure, you must inform the Office of International Programs (OIP) in writing. Your letter or e-mail should state the reason for withdrawal. To withdraw from an affiliated program (AIFS, CIEE, ISA, Semester at Sea, etc.), you must also notify the program provider by their posted deadline.

Withdrawal from a study abroad program prior to the start date may provide some program refund, but this varies by program, date of withdrawal and policies of associated parties.

Cancellation, Alteration, Reentry and Refund Policies
View the policies including definitions at: www.uncw.edu/policies/academic.html

A. UNCW Tuition and Mandatory Fees
The refund of UNCW Tuition and Mandatory Fees related to a Program, due to either cancellation authorized by the university or Associated Program, the student withdrawing from the Program or the student being removed from the Program, falls under the UNCW Tuition Refund Schedule. In general, the timing of the separation from the Program, whether the course is deemed completed and whether credits are earned will affect the amount available for refund. The Financial Aid Office will review program cancellations on a case-by-case basis for students who are receiving financial aid.

B. Programs Fees
1. Program Cancellation Authorized by UNCW Administration
a. In General

UNCW reserves the right to cancel or alter any portion of a UNCW-sponsored program. Unavoidable events, such as natural disasters, epidemics, civic unrest, or acts of terrorism, may result in cancellation of a program in order to ensure the safety of our students. UNCW further reserves the right to cancel any program for any reason at our sole discretion, including without limitation under-enrollment. Alterations to a UNCW program may become necessary if circumstances beyond our control, such as fluctuating currency exchanges, areas in the host country identified as unsafe for travel during the program, or rising travel costs, warrant and make these changes necessary in order to maintain a viable program.

b. Refunds

The refund of UNCW Program Fees, due to cancellation authorized by the university, will be governed by when it occurs:

1) If prior to the beginning of the program or semester, whichever is earlier, all program fees paid to UNCW will be refunded, contingent upon availability of funds.
2) If after the beginning of the program or semester, whichever is earlier, a prorated portion of program fees paid to UNCW, will be refunded, contingent upon availability of funds. An appropriate evaluation of academic credit will follow.

These actions will terminate any further responsibility on the part of UNCW.

c. Airline Rebooking Fees

If a UNCW Program is cancelled before the starting date, the Office of International Programs will try to find an alternative program and, contingent upon availability of funds, will reimburse students for the rebooking fee to use the ticket for a UNCW approved program within a year of date of issue on the same airline. Most rebooking allows for change in travel destinations. If a UNCW Program is cancelled after the start date, contingent upon availability of funds, UNCW will reimburse students for rebooking fees associated with immediate return to the point of origin.

2. Program Cancellation Authorized by Associated Programs

If the program is canceled by another party other than UNCW, considerations for refund fall under the policy of said entities. Each Associated Program will have its own policies regarding withdrawal. Students must contact the Associated Program provider for details.

3. Withdrawal from Program by Participant

a. Withdrawal from a UNCW Program

If a student withdraws from a UNCW Program prior to the start date, UNCW will make
every effort, contingent upon availability of funds, to refund all recoverable and non-committed portions of the UNCW program fee. In order to qualify for any refund, the Office of International Programs must receive notice from the student of her or his intent to withdrawal in writing prior to the beginning of the program. Letters or emails should state the reason for withdrawal. No refunds will be made available to students who withdraw once the program has commenced.

b. Withdrawal from non-UNCW Program
To withdraw from an Associated Program, students must notify both UNCW and the program provider directly. If a student withdraws from an Associated Program, he or she may be subject to penalties and/or be responsible for any deposits or charges incurred on his or her behalf. Each Associated Program will have its own policies regarding withdrawal. Students must contact the Associated Program provider for details.

4. Exclusion or Detachment of Participant
If a student is excluded or detached from a UNCW Program for any reason, there will be no refund of program fees paid or expenses incurred. The student may be subject to further disciplinary, civil and/or criminal action upon return to UNCW.

5. Sources of Funds Available for Refund of Program Fees
Refunds may only be paid out of funds from the Office of International Programs at the direction of the Assistant Provost for International Programs with prior approval from the Office of the Provost.

Dismissal (i.e. Being Excluded) From the Program
The Participant Agreement, electronically verified by all participants, states:
If I am excluded from the program, I consent to being sent home at my own expense with no refund of fees or expenses. I further understand that I may be subject to further disciplinary, civil and/or criminal action upon my return to UNCW.
Contact Information for the
UNCW Office of International Programs

University of North Carolina Wilmington
Office of International Programs
118 Friday Annex
601 South College Road
Wilmington, NC 28403-5965
U.S.A.

Phone: +1 (910) 962-3685
Fax: +1 (910) 962-4053

Email:
Kara Pike Inman, Director, Education Abroad - pikek@uncw.edu
Katrena Henderson, Assistant Director, Education Abroad- hendersonk@uncw.edu
Ashley Krutz, Education Abroad Advisor- krutza@uncw.edu
Stephanie Leroy, Education Abroad Advisor- leroyss@uncw.edu
Kathy McDaniel, Contact for Education Abroad Grants- mcdanielk@uncw.edu
Rhonda Lamarsh, Office Assistant, Contact for Insurance- lamarshr@uncw.edu

In Case of Emergency
Contact the Office of International Programs (OIP) staff through numbers above. If OIP is closed, contact UNCW police +1 (910) 962-2222. Tell them you are studying abroad; give them your name, your location, the nature of the incident and how to contact you so they may share these details with OIP.

We hope you make the most of your education abroad.
Have a safe and exciting adventure!

Last Updated: 11/28/2018