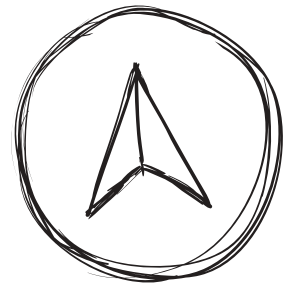


Buffalo State Study Abroad

PRE-DEPARTURE ORIENTATION

2018-2019

Office of International Education



BENGALSABROAD

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Checklist: Before You Go

- ☐ **Apply for a passport if you have not already done so. If you have a passport, check to make sure your current passport will be valid for six months beyond the last day of your program. Passport processing can take up to six weeks so be sure to get started now!**
- ☐ **Submit all post-acceptance documents and program deposit.**
- ☐ **Be sure you've submitted all documents required by your host institution.**
- ☐ **Meet with your academic advisor to complete your International Program Academic Advising Agreement, complete a degree audit using the "what-if" function found in degree works, and submit your form to the Financial Aid Office.**
- ☐ **Meet with a financial aid advisor to make arrangements to use any grants, loans, or scholarships toward your study abroad program.**
- ☐ **If you will be studying during your final semester, ensure you have received appropriate approvals to do so.**
- ☐ **Make flight arrangements (after receiving an official acceptance from your host institution).**
- ☐ **Ensure that your credit or debit cards will not expire while you're abroad and set travel notifications before departure.**
- ☐ **Make arrangements to register for classes for the semester following your program.**
- ☐ **Change your mailing address to your permanent address in Banner in order to receive all important mail from Buffalo State while you are abroad.**
- ☐ **Obtain cash in the currency of your host country.**

The information in this handbook is intended to help you make preparations for your study abroad experience. While comprehensive, this handbook is not exhaustive. You should seek as much information as possible from a variety of resources to prepare for your adventure such as program or country specific orientation materials, U.S. Department of State country-specific information, Center for Disease Control and Prevention resources, travel guidebooks, historical and fictional works about your host country, etc. In addition to reading materials, you should talk to people who are knowledgeable about your program or host country such as your study abroad advisor and former program participants. These people will be great sources of information and advice. In the end, it won't be possible to prepare yourself completely. There will be situations you haven't anticipated, and your flexibility will go a long way toward making your time abroad a positive one. Have a safe journey and we look forward to your adventures abroad.

Contact Information

Office of International Education

1300 Elmwood Avenue – South Wing 430

Buffalo, NY 14222

Email: studyaway@buffalostate.edu

Phone: +1 716-878-4620

24-hour emergency phone: +1 716-420-4222

University Police: 716-878-6333

Please note that the 24-hour emergency phone is only to be used in the event of a true emergency. A formal report will be filed with Buffalo State University Police following any phone call made to the 24-hour emergency line.

Travel Documents

If you haven't already applied for a passport, you should do so **immediately**. Passport applications can take up to eight weeks to process. Make sure that your passport is valid for at least six months beyond the end date of your program. If not, renew your passport now. You can find more information on applying for a passport here:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/apply-renew-passport/how-to-apply.html>

Visa Information

A visa is your official permission to enter a specific country and is granted by that country's government. Ask your advisor or go to travel.state.gov to see if your host country will require you to obtain a visa. For specific information, go to the consular or embassy website for your host country. Applying for a visa can take several weeks, so be sure to start the process early. If you plan to travel outside of your host country while you are abroad, be sure to check the entry regulations for any country you plan to visit. Some countries will require that you obtain a visa just to enter the country, regardless of the purpose or length of your visit.

Health Insurance

All SUNY students studying abroad are required to be enrolled in comprehensive international health insurance, administered through United Healthcare. The Office of International Education will enroll you prior to your departure. The plan's coverage gives students access to reliable global medical services while traveling internationally, which will minimize the risk of health related problems abroad. Additionally, this coverage provides assistance to students in cases where medical evacuation services are deemed necessary. Students may access their UHC coverage by logging into the online [UHC portal](#) or by downloading the UHC mobile app once an account has been created. It is recommended that students create an online account prior to departure so that information can be accessed quickly abroad. You may choose to print a copy of your insurance card to carry with you, although this is not required. You should never cancel your domestic health insurance while you are abroad, as it may be difficult to resume coverage when you return.

Pre-Departure Health Care

You should have physical, dental and eye exams to ensure you are healthy before you leave. You should also assemble your complete medical record, including information regarding current medications, any chronic health conditions, allergies, immunization history, blood type, name and contact information of your primary health care provider and a copy of your health insurance policy. Store your records in a secure place, make a copy to carry with you, and email a copy to yourself.

Disclosing On-Going Health Conditions

Having a pre-existing physical or mental health issue will not jeopardize your acceptance to a study abroad program. Each year, Buffalo State students who have on-going physical or mental health issues successfully study abroad. If you have an on-going health issue, you will want to work with your U.S. health care providers and a representative from GeoBlue to make arrangements for taking medications and continuing treatment abroad. Developing a plan to manage your health before you depart can allow you to seamlessly transfer the care you are receiving in the U.S. to your study abroad destination.

Immunizations

You should make sure all of your routine immunizations are up to date. Locate your childhood and adult immunization records and keep a physical or scanned copy of them with you. You can make a study abroad physical appointment at Weigel Health Center to have your immunization record reviewed. The Travelers Health and Immunization Center can provide travel vaccinations and discuss with you medications or precautions specific to your destination, including issues like traveler's diarrhea, malaria, food and water precautions, and insect precautions, as well as your personal medical history. Some immunizations require multiple injections over a period of time, so don't wait to schedule an appointment. Visit www.travelershealth.org for more information on travel vaccinations.

Prescription Medications

If you will be taking any prescription medications while abroad, you should consult with your physician prior to departure regarding any need for monitoring while abroad. You are responsible for confirming that any prescription medications you take are legal and available in your host country before you depart. You should check with the embassy of your host country to determine what is legal and what additional documentation you may need (e.g., original prescription, physician's letter). Some U.S. prescriptions cannot be brought into other countries, even when accompanied by extensive official paperwork such as medications that contain substances such as amphetamines that are often abused. In some countries, common over the counter medications in the U.S., including inhalers and allergy and sinus medicines, are illegal. It is critical that you discuss any such limitations in your host country with your health care providers before departure and to have a plan for obtaining adequate quantities of any medications that are legal in your host country.

If possible, you should plan to bring enough of any prescription medications that are legal in your host country to last for the duration of your program. It is generally not legal to mail medications overseas, so it is important to bring a sufficient supply for your stay. All medications should be in their original containers and be clearly labeled. Do not put them in pill boxes or organizers, as customs officials need to be able to easily determine that your medications are not illegal substances. You should also bring a letter from your physician that lists the generic name of your medication so a local physician will be able to more quickly identify the local equivalent medication if you need to obtain more during your program. Make a contingency plan in case your medication is lost or stolen, and verify whether providers in your host country will accept a prescription written from a physician in the United States.

Billing and Financial Aid

Study abroad program costs charged to your Buffalo State account will follow the Buffalo State Office of Student Accounts billing cycle. For more information about due dates and payment options, visit: studentaccounts.buffalostate.edu

Certain program costs such as housing or meals may not be billed through the Office of Student Accounts, depending on the specific program you are participating in. You may be responsible for paying these expenses directly while in your host country. If you have questions regarding what expenses will be billed by Buffalo State, please contact the Office of International Education or consult the program budget sheet you received.

Billing for non-Buffalo State Students

If you are participating on a Buffalo State study abroad programs from other SUNY institution, you must pay SUNY tuition and any required fees to your home campus. All study abroad program fees are paid directly to Buffalo State.

Using Financial Aid for Study Abroad

In most cases, your existing financial aid package can help you pay for your study abroad program. In order to remain eligible for financial aid, you must take coursework abroad that directly applies to your Buffalo State degree program. It is your responsibility to work with your academic advisor to ensure that the coursework you take abroad will fulfill necessary degree requirements. Please meet with a financial aid advisor as early as possible in order to determine the type and amount of aid you may be eligible to receive.

Money Matters

Contact your bank, debit/ATM, and credit card companies to inform them of your upcoming travel dates and destination(s). Be sure to include any countries you may travel to while you are abroad, including any countries you will have a layover in. Failure to notify your financial institutions could result in your account being frozen or your card shut off to protect you from what they see as potential fraudulent charges.

Managing Money Abroad

Before you go, figure out how much money you will need for expenses that are not included in your program fee. Research the cost of living and exchange rate in your host country and city. You can check daily exchange rates for your host country with [oanda.com](https://www.oanda.com). Determine how you'll be spending money abroad, considering the costs of entertainment, restaurants, housing (if not included in your program fee), and any travel you plan to do. Proper planning will ensure that you are prepared for expenses incurred while traveling. Your program budget sheet can be used for reference, but remember that many of these expenses are only estimates and that you should determine how much money you will need based on your own habits.

Currency

It is a good idea to take a small amount of host country currency with you when you travel abroad. Most U.S. banks will exchange currency for a small service charge, but you will need to give them advance notice of two or more weeks as they often do not have these currencies available on hand. Currency can also be exchanged in most international airports, as well as at most major banks abroad for a higher fee. It is not recommended that you exchange currency at hotels, currency exchange booths, restaurants, or retail shops as exchange rates tend to be much higher. When exchanging money at any of these places, expect to pay a commission charge each time you exchange. In some countries, the commission is based on a percentage of the amount you exchange, while in others there is a flat fee regardless of the amount. You will need to show your passport for identification anytime you exchange money.

Whenever you travel with cash, be sure to keep the money either on your person or in the carry-on that you will store under your seat on the plane. Money and valuables can be easily stolen out of bags that are stored in overhead compartments.

Opening a Bank Account Abroad

For students going abroad for a semester or longer, it may make sense to open a bank account in your host country. Research your options and talk to your study abroad advisor. For students going on short-term programs (summer or winter break), opening a foreign bank account is not recommended.

Debit/ATM Cards

Most students find that using a debit/ATM card to withdraw money while abroad is the most convenient way to access money. You can use your debit or ATM card to withdraw money from ATMs while abroad. Although your money is in U.S. dollars, the ATM in your host country will give you the local currency. Please remember that exchange rates fluctuate, and the rate applies on the date a purchase or withdrawal clears your bank, not the date you made the transaction.

You may want to have a parent or guardian added to your bank account so they can help solve any problems with your account while you are abroad. Additionally, you should consider setting up online banking so you can access your account information and balance from your host country.

You should ensure that your particular account is accessible in your host country and know how it will function abroad before you leave so you can plan accordingly. Be sure to ask about any fees that may be associated with foreign transactions and withdraws from international ATMs. Also be sure that you have set up a four-digit PIN that functions internationally. Please be advised that some ATMs or merchants in your host country may not accept your card, especially if your card does not have a chip. You should have some other way to access money in case an ATM does not take your card. Some banks also have daily withdrawal limits for debit/ATM cards to prevent excessive fraudulent withdrawals. It may be possible to increase or decrease this limit depending on your needs.

Several large banks participate in the Global ATM Alliance, allowing you to use ATMs without paying additional fees. You should check with your bank to find out if and where you might be able to use such ATMs. Some debit cards offer ATM usage abroad without ATM or conversion fees, or will reimburse your checking account for charges applied by the bank that owns the ATM. Keep in mind that not all merchants abroad accept all brands of debit cards. Generally, students have the most success with Visa and MasterCard. American Express and Discover tend to cause issues for students abroad. Additionally, many small restaurants or shops abroad may not accept cards at all so keeping some cash on hand may be a good idea.

Credit Cards

Credit cards can make foreign transactions easy, and they are invaluable in a financial emergency. Take a credit card with you, but use it wisely - it's easy to overspend. You should ensure that your particular card will be accepted in your host country and know how it will function abroad before you leave so you can plan accordingly.

You and your parent or guardian may be interested to know that, at a cardholder's request, most major lenders will issue an additional card in the name of another person authorized to use the account. If you plan to use someone else's credit card account, be sure that they request the additional card in time for you to receive it before you leave and that it uses your name as it appears on your passport. If you choose this method, the line of credit is the same amount as the cardholder on the account. The monthly bill will be sent to the primary cardholder. Additionally, most lenders will issue credit cards to students with a parent or guardian as a co-signer, but be aware that these cards often carry a very limited line of credit.

Another benefit may be that there are many credit cards available that do not charge foreign transaction fees. While your debit card may charge you a percentage of each transaction you make, a credit card without foreign transaction fees will not. Check to see if the credit card you plan to use abroad has a charge for foreign transaction fees. If it does, you or your parent/guardian may want to consider opening one that doesn't charge these fees - and be sure to apply early enough to receive your card before you depart.

Lost or Stolen Cards

Be sure to record your card numbers and the 24/7 phone numbers for all cards you are taking abroad and store them in a safe location. This way, you will be able to contact your bank or credit card company to have your card deactivated if it is lost or stolen. You may also want to leave this information with a trusted family member or friend in the U.S. so they could assist if necessary.



Pre-Departure Academic Advising

Students participating in approved programs will receive resident credit for courses taken abroad. These courses will appear on your transcript and be calculated into your Buffalo State grade point average.

You are required to set up a meeting with your academic advisor to obtain the appropriate departmental approval for the courses you plan to take abroad. You will work with your academic advisor to determine how the classes you take abroad will be applied toward your degree program by determining course equivalencies. When you meet with your advisor, please be prepared with course descriptions of classes you would like to take abroad. It is recommended that you determine course equivalencies for several more courses than you will take abroad. These additional courses will serve as alternates if you are unable to enroll in one or more of your preferred courses.

It is your responsibility to keep your advisor updated on any changes that are made while you are abroad so they can advise you properly. If you make any changes to the approved list you must complete a new International Program Academic Advising Agreement, obtain the appropriate signatures, and submit the new form to the Financial Aid Office.

Pre-Registration for Return

You should work with your academic advisor to plan for the semester after you return from your study abroad program. It may be difficult to set up a time to meet while you are abroad and you will need a PIN in order to enroll in classes for the following semester.

Seniors Studying Abroad

You may be required to submit an academic appeal if you are planning to spend your final semester abroad. It is your responsibility to check with your department chair to determine if an academic appeal is necessary. If you spend your final term abroad, please note that the posting of your degree may be delayed until the Office of International Education receives a final transcript from your host institution.

Make Flight Arrangements

You are responsible for arranging and purchasing your own airfare once you have been formally accepted into your study abroad program. You should not book your flight before the Office of International Education has confirmed your official acceptance and participation in the program. If you are participating in an exchange program, you should not book your flight before you have received an official acceptance into that specific institution. Once your acceptance has been confirmed, you will want to start searching for your flight. Prices will continue to increase so do not wait until the last minute to book your ticket.

You may want to consider coordinating your flight with other students on your program so you can travel to the airport and arrive in your host country together. Make sure to book your flight to arrive by the date provided by your specific program. It is recommended that you schedule your initial flight to arrive in the morning or early afternoon in your host country. Remember that arrival procedures and customs can take time. Arriving earlier in the day will give you time to find your accommodations before it gets dark and shops close for the day.

Preparing for Departure

If this is your first international flight or you haven't traveled in a while, check [tsa.gov](https://www.tsa.gov) for current baggage guidelines. Also check your individual airline's website for baggage restrictions and fees. It is also important to remember that for international flights you should plan to arrive at the airport at least two to three hours in advance of your boarding time. Check your specific airport and airline's recommendations.

Please be sure to check baggage weight restrictions for your airline. Remember that weight restrictions vary by airline, so you may also want to check weight restrictions for any airline you may consider using while traveling abroad. Overweight baggage fees can be costly.

Packing

Pack lightly! At the end of your adventure you will need to bring everything back home with you PLUS all of the things that you've collected along the way. You will be responsible for carrying all of your luggage through the airport, on trains and buses, etc - so keep things simple.

The items listed below are only a suggestion of what you might consider packing:

Suggested Items for Carry-On Luggage:

- Travel Documents – Passport, a photocopy of your passport, and the address of your final destination
- Medication (with doctor's note/prescription)
- Jewelry, Currency, Luggage Keys, and Other Valuables
- 1-2 extra outfits – you don't want to be stuck without an extra set of clothes if your luggage happens to arrive late!
- In-flight toiletries (travel size)
- Chargers (Phone, Laptop, Etc.); Adapter/Converter
- Anything else you wouldn't want to live without for a couple of days in the unlikely event you beat the rest of your luggage to your destination

Suggested Items for Checked Luggage:

Clothing

- You can plan to wear your usual U.S. attire in your host country. Some other countries tend to dress up a bit more than the average U.S. college student, but you will want to ensure you're packing clothing you will be comfortable in. If you never wear something at home, you likely won't wear it abroad. You know best what clothing items you will want to have.
- Rain jacket, hoodie/sweatshirt, a heavier jacket/coat, and a lighter jacket
- Dress for the weather. Search for average temperatures in your host city/country to help you decide what pieces of clothing will be appropriate for the season you are there.

Shoes/Footwear

- Comfortable Walking Shoes
- Flats
- Flat Boots
- Flip Flops – You will want these for showers if you plan to stay in hostels while traveling or for going to the beach, etc
- Floors are generally tile or similar so packing warm socks or slippers is not a bad idea!

Miscellaneous

- Copies of Passport (VERY IMPORTANT)
- Laptop
- Camera
- Luggage Lock/Combination Lock – You will want a luggage lock and a regular combination or key lock for stays in hostels and general travel outside of your host city/country.
- Hair Brush/Hair Ties

Helpful Packing Tips

Purchasing a quality converter is important. The voltage in many countries will be higher than the U.S. and cheaply made external converters do not work well and may end up damaging your devices. Remember that items such as hair dryers, curling irons, and straighteners with the host country's voltage will be available for purchase upon arrival.

Don't take expensive non-essential items with you. You don't want to risk losing these items or having them stolen while traveling.

You can buy toiletries when you arrive. There is no need to take huge bottles of shampoo, multiple tubes of toothpaste, etc. You may find many familiar brands abroad, however you may also find that certain brands you're used to in the U.S. are not available. If you can't live without your favorite brand of toothpaste or deodorant, you might want to consider taking extra with you.

Leave room for items you will bring back from your journey. Lots of room! Students tend to be shocked by how expensive it is to ship things home or check additional bags.

When traveling outside of or within your host country, you won't want to be dragging around a large suitcase. Rolling carry-ons or backpacks are great for weekend trips.

Register with U.S. Department of State

All Buffalo State students going abroad are encouraged to enroll in the U.S. Department of State Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) [here](#).

The STEP program is a free service that allows U.S. citizens traveling or living abroad to enroll with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

Benefits of enrolling in STEP:

- Receive the latest safety and security information for your destination country, helping you make informed decisions about your travel plans.
- Help the U.S. Embassy contact you in an emergency, whether natural disaster, civil unrest, or family emergency.
- Help family and friends get in touch with you in an emergency.

Checklist: While You're Abroad

- ☐ If you are on an exchange program, login to your Terra Dotta (study abroad applicant portal) to update your contact information to reflect your new international address and phone number.
- ☐ Contact your Buffalo State academic advisor regarding any changes in the courses you are taking abroad. It is your responsibility to keep your advisor updated on any changes that are made while you are on exchange so they can advise you properly. If you make any changes to the approved list you must complete a new International Program Academic Advising Agreement, obtain the appropriate signatures, and submit the new form to the Office of International Education.
- ☐ Register for the semester you return to Buffalo State.
- ☐ Take photos to be featured on the Office of International Education's social media sites.
- ☐ Before you leave, verify with your host institution that your transcript will be sent to the Office of International Education when your grades have been processed.

Staying Connected

Cell Phones:

Contact your current cell phone provider to see what international options may be available to you. Many providers charge high fees for students who wish to use their current plan abroad. In most countries, students can purchase pre-paid SIM cards with varying amounts of data and calling privileges. If you choose to purchase a pre-paid SIM card in your host country, you **MUST** have your U.S. phone unlocked before you depart or your new SIM card will not work.

Apps:

Whatsapp: free calls and texts to other WhatsApp users (very popular in Europe)
 *Make sure you download the app **BEFORE** you leave the United States. You will be required to verify your device with a SMS message.* This app is great for communicating with friends and family back home!

FaceTime – free video chat (Apple)

iMessage – free texts among Apple users – turn off “SMS” in phone settings

Skype – free calls and messaging to other Skype users

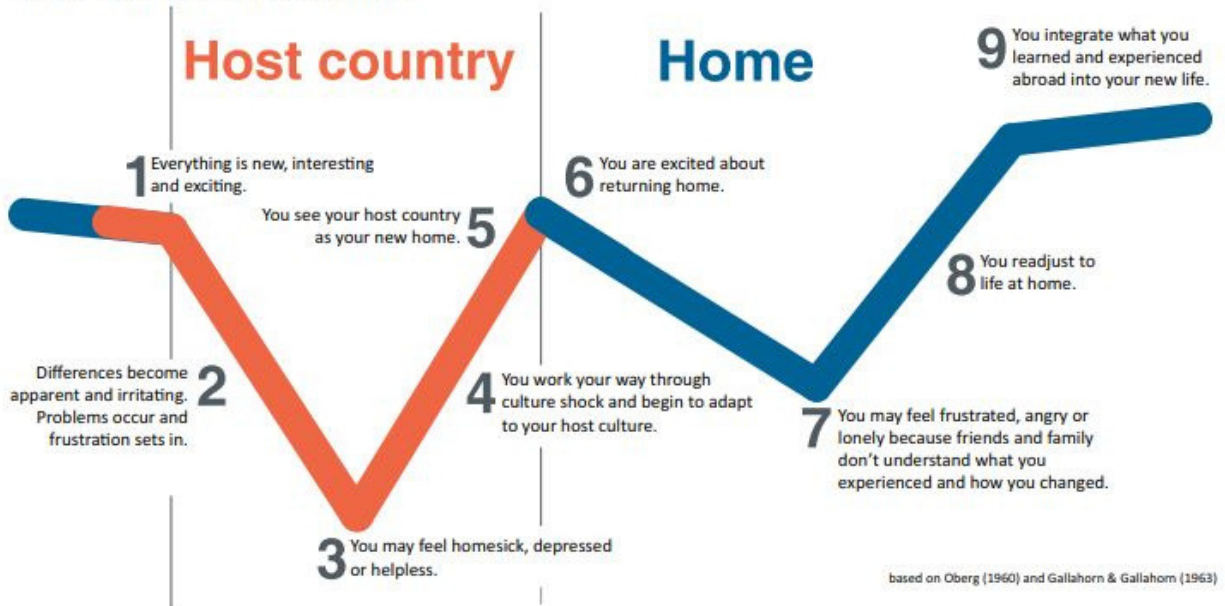
Email:

Be sure to check your Buffalo State (or SUNY) email regularly as this is the primary way the Office of International Education will communicate with you while you are abroad.

Culture Shock

Traveling abroad can be one of the most exhilarating learning experiences of your life or it can turn out to be a series of frustrating incidents that leave you longing for home. By thinking about and preparing for the process of cultural adjustment, you can enhance your study abroad experience.

The W-curve of culture shock



Adapting to the Host Culture

The difference between your expectations and what you actually experience is where you may begin to find problems in adjusting abroad. In spite of the fact that you may have already visited your host country, you will find it different to actually live there. It is easy to become frustrated by the differences in daily life. The easily-accessible facilities taken for granted in the U.S. may not always be available, and this can prove upsetting and stressful. Take this as an opportunity to find out one of the reasons why most students find study abroad so rewarding — it forces you to learn about your personal limits and strengths.

In order to best adapt to your host culture, be sure to:

- Maintain flexibility and be open-minded.
- Stay busy and set concrete goals. Resist withdrawing into yourself or surrounding yourself with only other American students.
- Get involved with aspects of the host culture that you can't easily do at home.
- Respect the customs and opinions of people you meet abroad.
- Engage in some familiar sports or activities to keep from feeling overwhelmed by a completely foreign situation.
- Acknowledge that culture shock is normal and will pass. If these feelings increase in severity, seek help from your overseas contact person. If you are not receiving the help you need, contact your study abroad advisor right away.

The Law Abroad

While you are in another country, you are subject to its laws. Legal protections and rights that are taken for granted in the U.S. are left behind when you depart. American embassies and consulates are very limited in the assistance they can provide and are unable to intervene on your behalf in the administration of justice in the host country. Bail provisions as you know them in the U.S. are rare in other countries. Pretrial detention without bail is quite common in other countries. Prison conditions are often deplorable in comparison to conditions in the United States, and the principle of “innocent until proven guilty” is not necessarily a tenet of the legal system abroad. It is your responsibility to become familiar with and obey all host country laws. The [U.S. Department of State](#) provides country-specific information that can provide details about host country laws.

U.S. Embassy and Consulate Services

Should you encounter serious legal, political, health or economic problems, the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate can offer limited assistance. It can provide you with a list of local attorneys or physicians, contact next of kin in the event of an emergency or serious illness, contact friends or relatives on your behalf to request funds or guidance, provide assistance during civil unrest or natural disaster, and replace a lost or stolen passport. An embassy or consulate is the primary source for information on where to obtain advice.

Arrest or Detention of a U.S. Citizen Abroad

It is important to understand that neither the U.S. government nor Buffalo State can get you out of jail if you are arrested abroad. It is vitally important that you understand and obey the laws of your host country and any countries you plan to visit while you are abroad. If you are arrested abroad:

- Do not make any statements to the host country police prior to contacting a U.S. embassy or consulate (or your home country embassy, if you are not a U.S. citizen) and do not make any statements without your lawyer present. Contact the nearest embassy or consulate immediately, tell them you have been arrested and request assistance. The embassy will almost always consider the arrest of a U.S. citizen to be an emergency and will send a consular official within 24 hours. In addition, the U.S. embassy maintains a list of attorneys, but does not verify the quality of the professionals who ask to be included on the list.
- Call the Office of International Education 24/7 emergency number (+1 716-420-4222) as soon as possible.

Staying Safe

For your general well-being, it is advantageous to become familiar with your host city as quickly as possible. You should also familiarize yourself with cities you will be visiting before you begin to explore them. You should review the country-specific information for any country you will be visiting on the [Department of State](#) website.

Cities in other countries, just like American cities, have their safe and less safe neighborhoods. Research areas you will be traveling to before arriving. Use common sense and do not take risks. Be cautious when meeting new people. Don't give out your address and phone number to strangers or divulge too much personal information.

When withdrawing money from an ATM, go with a friend who will help you stay aware of your surroundings. Pick your ATM locations for safety, not just convenience. Do not attract attention to yourself by speaking English loudly in public places and make sure to keep your personal items in sight at all times. If someone does try to rob or mug you, remember that your life is always more important than any of your possessions.

If you feel unsafe, listen to your instincts and remove yourself from the situation.

Taxis and Ride Sharing

You may find that taxis are a perfectly safe option in your host country/city, however taxis are not safe everywhere - especially late at night. Anyone can be robbed or assaulted by taxi drivers. In many cities, taxis have become so dangerous that people call for and identify reputable taxis. It is hard to resist the temptation of just flagging down a taxi on the street, but the wait is worth it. When you call a taxi, make sure to get the identification number or other information so you can be sure to get in the right one.

Your host country may support ride sharing companies such as Uber or something similar. These companies do not always operate the same way they do in the United States. Be sure to understand whether or not these companies are reputable in your host country and how and what you will be charged before using one of these services.



Health Abroad

You should follow basic health and wellness practices while abroad: eat balanced meals, get enough sleep, wash your hands often, exercise, etc. If you become ill while abroad and need to see a health care provider, you will be able to search for an approved provider through the United Healthcare app or online portal. You will receive additional information regarding your international health insurance plan from UHC after you have been enrolled by the Office of International Education.

Mental Health

Speaking another language all the time and adjusting to cultural differences can be tiring. Take care of yourself, and also learn how to recognize symptoms of distress or mental illness in your peers (e.g., engaging in risky behavior, personality changes like suddenly becoming more aggressive or more withdrawn, missed assignments, repeated absences from class, sleeping more or less than usual, lack of personal hygiene, excessive fatigue, constant sadness, expressions of hopelessness, focus on despair or death, giving away prized possessions). If you are in distress or see another student in distress, contact on-site staff and seek help immediately.

Alcohol and Drugs

Attitudes toward alcohol and drug use vary considerably from culture to culture. Remember, you are subject to the laws of your host country so be sure to research and understand the laws surrounding drugs and alcohol. Although some countries have more liberal laws concerning drugs and alcohol, in many countries the laws and penalties are more severe. You are an ambassador of Buffalo State and the United States. You will be held to Buffalo State's Standards of Conduct, which you agreed to by signing your Agreement and Release form.

If you are of legal age to drink alcohol in your host country, do so responsibly. Serving sizes and alcohol content vary by country, which, when coupled with your new environment, may cause alcohol to affect you differently than you are used to. Never let your beverage out of your sight — drugging drinks happens throughout the world.

Possession and use of illegal drugs will result in your immediate dismissal from your study abroad program. Drugs account for one-third of Americans arrested overseas, and penalties can be severe.

Sexual Assault Abroad

Sexual assault and rape can happen to people across gender identities anywhere in the world. Violence, specifically sexual assault, continues to be a serious problem both on and off of college and university campuses and students heading off campus to study abroad/away should continue to be vigilant about being aware and safe, as well as understanding your role in helping to look out for one another and be active bystanders. While most students do not experience sexual assault while abroad, it is important to know procedures, resources and care information in the event that this happens to you or a friend while abroad.

Cultural and societal attitudes toward rape and sexual assault victims may vary greatly in different countries and parts of the world. The support you receive from local law authorities, university/program staff and others, in addition to the resources available to you, will vary from country to country and program to program. In the United States, for example, if you tell a medical professional that you have been raped, he or she may be legally required to report your name and situation to the police. However, you have the legal right to refuse speaking with the police. Laws in other countries may provide you with more or less decision making power.

If you suffer sexual assault abroad, you should contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate to determine appropriate next steps. Alternatively, you or your family members can also call the Department of State in the U.S. at 1-888-407-4747 (from the United States or Canada) or 202-501-4444 (from overseas). Consular officers are available around the clock to help the students obtain medical care, explain the local criminal justice process, and connect students to local and U.S.-based resources. A full list of consular resources is available [here](#). Embassy or consulate staff can help victims understand whether police agencies may handle an investigation differently—slower (or not at all), less delicately, or otherwise—than police in the United States. Regardless, documentation of as much information as possible, as quickly as possible is very important. Many foreign law enforcement agencies will not begin to investigate unless a report has been filed. If possible, you should ask for a copy of the police report. Note that consular officers cannot investigate crimes or provide legal advice. You should also seek medical assistance if necessary. The embassy/consulate staff can provide a list of reputable resources in the area.

Although the physical trauma of sexual assault may be temporary, the emotional/psychological stress can take much longer to heal. Students studying or traveling abroad can also obtain help by contacting RAINN (Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network), SASHAA (Sexual Assault Support and Help for Americans Abroad), and the International Directory of Domestic Violence Agencies. Many of these organizations offer crisis centers that allow students to call, email, or chat online with someone. (Note: the agencies and organizations listed in this report have not necessarily been vetted by the U.S. Department of State or other federal agencies).

Checklist: When You Return

- ☐ Ensure that your host institution will send your transcript to the Office of International Education.
- ☐ Complete your program evaluation.
- ☐ Share your experiences!

Study Abroad Transcripts

It is your responsibility to determine if your host institution will automatically send a final transcript or if you will be required to request your transcript to be sent to the Office of International Education. Transcripts will be compared to the academic advising agreement you submitted prior to departure and forwarded to the registrar's office to be applied to your degree. **This process can take anywhere from 1-3 months to complete.**

If you plan to receive financial aid for the semester following your program, the disbursement of these funds may be delayed pending final grades from your host institution. If you spend your final term abroad, please note that the posting of your degree may be delayed until the Office of International Education receives a final transcript from your host institution.

Program Evaluations

At the end of your program, you will be sent an evaluation to complete. Evaluations are extremely valuable to our office and help us know how we can improve our programs! The Office of International Education will not release your transcript to the Registrar's Office until your program evaluation has been received.

Share Your Experiences!

Take the opportunity to share your experiences abroad when you return. Work with the Office of International Education to schedule classroom presentations, participate in pre-departure orientation for future students going abroad, and/or serve as a point of contact for future students interesting in your host institution.

Share your travel photos with the Office of International Education!



Bon Voyage

