

Points to cover at Pre-Departure Orientations



- Arrival Information: plane tickets, airport transportation, housing check-in, on-site orientation
- Passports & visas: passports must be valid for at least 6 months beyond program end. It is recommended to email a copy of your passport to yourself.
- Recommendations on purchasing airline tickets. The International Center recommends the purchase of changeable, refundable tickets. Some countries require return tickets.
- Class schedule & program itinerary
- Communication protocols and emergency contact information (distribute Contact Info Cards)
- Setting Expectations Exercise (Inside/Outside Circle – group discussion about what to include/not include in the program)
- The Buddy System. Local Meeting Point.
- Student conduct, expectations, and responsibilities; appropriate behavior in the host country
- Personal and group safety; expectations and appropriate use of alcohol
- Mental health resources while abroad; culture shock
- Requirement to inform the Faculty Leader via email of all travel plans outside of the program site (during weekends and free time)
- Housing, Meals, Local Transportation
- Health & safety considerations (travel.state.gov, cdc.gov)
- Cross-cultural awareness / Cultural considerations
- Weather, climate, packing
- Use of prescription medications: take enough medication in the original containers and an official doctor's note. This step is especially important if the particular medication is not allowed in the country to which you are traveling (e.g., some anti-depressants are only used in North America).
- Handling money & budgeting. Currency and exchange rate.
- Books & Supplies.
- Disability accommodation requests
- Using health insurance (distribute Health Insurance Cards)
- International Center multi-media outlets (#LearnByGoing)
- Upon Return: Attend the Returnee Conference every Jan/Feb, apply to be a Study Abroad Ambassador or Peer Advisor, go abroad again!
- Q & A

Cal Poly International Center

Social Media

Share your study abroad experience and inspire others!



- [Facebook.com/calpolystudyabroad](https://www.facebook.com/calpolystudyabroad)
- [Twitter.com/CalPolyAbroad](https://twitter.com/CalPolyAbroad)
- [Pinterest.com/cpstudyabroad](https://www.pinterest.com/cpstudyabroad)
- [Instagram.com/cpslostudyabroad](https://www.instagram.com/cpslostudyabroad)
- [Linkedin.com/in/calpolystudyabroad](https://www.linkedin.com/in/calpolystudyabroad)
- [Youtube.com/channel/UCZFWigqPusw_LU-pOZwqDqA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZFWigqPusw_LU-pOZwqDqA)

#LearnByGoing

Pre-Departure Learning Content

abroad.calpoly.edu

PolyPlanner Instructions

PolyPlanner Instructions for Study Abroad and Exchange Program students

1. While abroad you should be checking your Cal Poly email messages.
2. You should not have any courses planned for the terms in which you will be away from Cal Poly on Study Abroad, or for any leave of absence. Your PolyPlanner should only include courses you plan to take here at Cal Poly
3. Indicate your plans to study abroad in your PolyPlanner by selecting the choice of "on study abroad or exchange program.
4. To keep your future registration priority, follow the directions in each of the PolyPlanner emails. The Office of the Registrar will specify which terms you should update, which term you should plan (if any), and which future registration (if any) will be impacted if you don't login by a specified date. If you are away, you will still be responsible for logging in by the specified date to keep your registration priority for the term that you return to campus
5. For up to date information on PolyPlanner please visit the [PolyPlanner FAQ page](#).

Pre-Departure Orientation: Alcohol & Illegal Drug Use

Alcohol & Illegal Drug Use While Abroad

This module will address the use of alcohol and other drugs while abroad. While the use of these substances has been a challenge on college campuses in the United States, it becomes even more so when students are abroad. Your consumption of alcohol or other drugs, and/or your behavior while under the influence, might lead to a violation of local laws in addition to your program and Cal Poly conduct codes.

Know the cultural norms that surround alcohol and drug consumption before you leave home. Many countries have laws regarding alcohol and other drug use that are more severe than laws in the United States. Ignorance of the law is not an excuse!

Alcohol & Culture

The use of alcohol is encouraged in some societies and prohibited in others. In most cultures there are methods for controlling drinking (i.e. age restrictions, location & hours of consumption, type of alcohol consumed), but some methods vary and may not be obvious to a person unfamiliar with a particular culture. Alcohol may be part of religious ceremonies, local festivals, or enjoyed while sharing a meal. It is up to you to research customs on alcohol consumption in the country you are studying in and how you plan to resist or partake in alcohol as the locals do. Talk with students that have studied at your site before. What advice do they have for you?

Why Students are at Risk

Study abroad represents exciting challenges for you as you begin to learn about a new culture and customs. But it can also be stressful. You might become lonely or bored. You may feel pressure from other students or the host

culture to drink alcohol. Maybe you are an inexperienced drinker or you've learned to use alcohol as a way of coping in stressful situations. For many, alcohol may be a method to initiating intimacy. Some studies reveal that drunken sex leads to unprotected sex. In this regard, alcohol consumption while abroad could result in coming home with an STI or an unwanted pregnancy. Whatever your particular reason for deciding to drink alcohol – know it, learn from it, and create strategies to curb it.

Resisting Social & Cultural Pressures to Drink

When you are abroad, some personal strategies might include:

- Understanding why you are choosing to use alcohol
- Making rules for yourself to guide drinking
- Setting a personal limit for drinking and sticking to it
- Drinking less (fewer drinks) and less frequently
- Opting for non-alcoholic beverages
- Drinking only with meals
- Being aware of how drinking impacts yourself and those around you

If your alcohol consumption interferes with your participation in your program or that of other students, you may be asked to leave with no credit for courses or program refund.

You are required to seek medical attention for a student incapacitated due to alcohol or other drug use. Seek medical attention and then contact your in-country Faculty Leader or program staff to inform them of what occurred. Alcohol overconsumption can be a matter of life and death.

Illegal Drugs Abroad

According to the U.S. Department of State, every year several hundred Americans are arrested abroad on drug charges. Persons caught with illegal drugs are subject to the drug laws of that country, not those of the U.S. Again, ignorance of the law is no excuse.

Drug Violations

More than one-third of U.S. citizens incarcerated abroad are held on drug charges. Some countries do not distinguish between possession and trafficking, and many have mandatory sentences – even for possession of a small amount of marijuana or cocaine. A number of Americans have been arrested for possessing prescription drugs, particularly tranquilizers and amphetamines that they purchased legally elsewhere. Other U.S. citizens have been arrested for purchasing prescription drugs abroad in quantities that local authorities suspected were for commercial use. If in doubt about foreign drug laws, ask local authorities or the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

Some Americans take advantage of an offer they could refuse in exchange for carrying a small package in the luggage. When, to their surprise, they are caught. They might not have known they were carrying drugs. But that fact will not reduce the charges against them.

According to the U.S. State Department, many aspects of a drug arrest abroad can be different from U.S. practice. For instance:

- few countries provide a jury trial
- many countries do not permit pre-trial release on bail
- pre-trial detention, often in solitary confinement, can last several months
- prisons may lack even minimal comforts, such as beds, toilets, and washbasins
- diets are often inadequate and require supplements from relatives and friends
- officials may not speak English
- physical abuse, confiscation of property, degrading treatment and extortion are possible.
- persons convicted may face sentences ranging from fines and jail time, to years of hard labor, and even the death penalty

- penalties for drug possession and for drug trafficking are often the same abroad, so possession of one ounce of marijuana could result in years in a foreign jail

If caught and charged with a drug offense, there is little if anything Cal Poly can do for you. Obey the laws of the country, and do not put yourself or others at risk. Take the initiative to educate yourself on the laws related to drug use in your destination country. Exercise personal accountability and sound judgment while abroad.

Pre-Departure Orientation: Cultural Adjustment

Introduction to Cultural Awareness

"Many people think that the study abroad experience begins the day you step off the plane, but it really begins before you go, during the time that you are preparing to go. There are many questions running through your head that are important. Only if you are aware of these can you help yourself." -A.J Fleming

A. Cultural Awareness

Iceberg example: The iceberg illustrates that what we see on the surface as defining a culture is only a small part of what shapes a culture.



What is culture?

Culture can be defined as:

- The total way of life of any group of people
- Manners, customs, beliefs, ceremonies, rituals, laws, language, morals, religious beliefs, myths & legends, values, social institutions, concept of self, and accepted ways of behaving

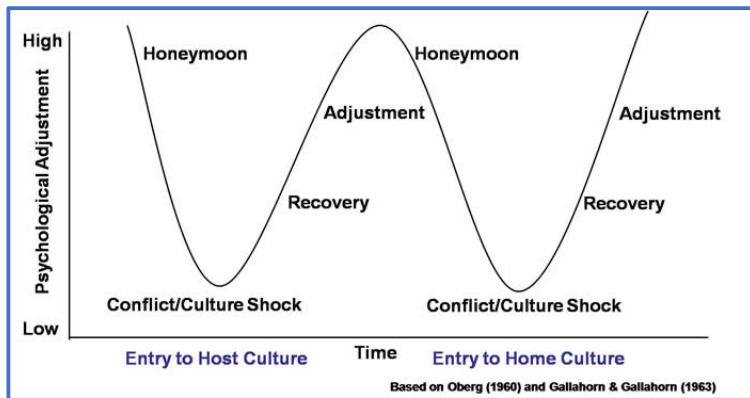
How can you improve your ability to recognize culturally based values and belief?:

- Practice
- Become familiar with the culture
- Increase your contacts with members of the culture
- Don't overemphasize differences
- Recognize and Be Aware of impact on behavior
- Understand values and beliefs of own culture

B. Culture Shock

Adapting to a new environment takes time and the pace of transition varies from person to person. The typical pattern of cultural adjustment often consists of distinct phases: Honeymoon, Crisis, Adjustment, and Adaptation. Notice that this cycle is then repeated upon re-entry to one's home country or culture of origin. With the two U shaped adjustment curves from entry into the host culture and re-entry back into home culture, the adjustment curve looks like a 'W'.

W- Shaped Adjustment Curve



Universal experience - four stages of culture shock:

- **Honeymoon:** You arrive and you're in love!
- **Crises or culture shock phase:** Critical of host country. Feel like packing up and going home!
- **Adjustment:** Well, I guess it's OK...
- **Adaptation:** Feel comfortable and competent. Develop positive feelings and interacting with host nationals.

Symptoms of Culture Shock?

Culture shock manifests itself in different forms with different people but some symptoms can be:

- changes in eating habits and sleeping habits
- acute homesickness; calling home much more often than usual
- being hostile/complaining all the time about the host country/culture
- irritability, sadness, depression
- frequent frustration; being easily angered
- self doubts; sense of failure
- recurrent illness
- withdrawing from friends or other people and/or activities

Adjustment

Suggestions for easing the transition:

- **Realize that what you are going through is normal.** Remember that the unpleasant feelings are temporary, natural and common to any transition that a person makes during their life. Be patient and give yourself time to work through the process.
- **Keep in touch with your home country.** Read newspapers from home, international magazines, etc. Watch international television channels or surf the internet. Call home regularly but not every day. Too much contact with family and friends can increase homesickness. Have familiar things around you that have personal meaning, such as photographs or ornaments. If you can, find a supplier of familiar foods or visit restaurants that are similar to your home cuisine.
- **Take care of yourself.** Eat well, exercise, and get enough sleep!
- **Talk to someone.** Find friends who are going through a similar process, call your family back home

- **Have fun and relax!** Become a member of a club. Join student groups. Get out of your room and volunteer to help others. Take up a new sport. Participate in activities, clubs and student organizations of interest to you.
- **Improve your language skills.** Cultural adaptation is greatly enhanced by improving your language skills. Not being able to clearly communicate can create isolation and loneliness. Make a point to join activities that give you the opportunity to share in conversation and express your identity.
- **Blog/Journal:** Writing can be an incredible outlet for processing your experience. Whether or not this is something you would like to share with people on a blogging platform is totally up to you. Bring a journal with you even if you are not sure you will use it. It can also be a great way to look back on your experience and see how you have grown and/or changed.

C. Re-Entry Culture Shock

Re-entry shock is the often unanticipated unsettled feelings one experiences upon returning to your home culture, from abroad. Re-entry shock is very common for students when they return from studying abroad. It is often more intense than the culture shock you may have experienced when you first went abroad. Re-entry shock is a normal part of the re-adjustment process and can last from a few days to months.

There are many ways to overcome reverse culture shock. Some suggestions include:

- Staying in touch with fellow study abroad students and sharing your re-entry experiences.
- Get involved in cultural or international activities in your community or on your home campus.
- Stay connected to the world through global news networks and newspapers with an international/global focus (The Economist, BBC World, The Christian Science Monitor, etc).
- Journal your thoughts and emotions.
- Share your experience through writing contests, photo contests, being an active alumni, etc.
- Plan your next abroad experience, whether it be backpacking through SE Asia, teaching English in Eastern Europe, or returning down under.

Remember that while you were away, life continued on at home. Your friends may quickly tire listening to your stories of your experience at abroad so be sensitive to that.

Pre-Departure Orientation: Gender Identity, Gender Roles and Sexuality Abroad

A. Gender Abroad

Gender Identity and Gender Roles

It's important to consider your host country's cultural attitude towards gender identity and gender roles. How gender is viewed is culturally determined. You may be treated differently because of these cultural values. How might you handle these gender perceptions? How might the host country's norms impact your experience? Societal expectations based on gender can influence your interaction with the host country.

Ask yourself:

- What is the attitude towards gender in my host country?
- What are considered typical gender roles in my host society?
- What are the society's perceptions and behavioral expectations for female, male and transgender individuals in my host country?
- What are the gender stereotypes of Americans in my host country?
- How do women/men treat one another in my host country?
- Are there differences in political and social power based on gender?
- How do my personal values compare with my host country's attitudes about socially accepted gender roles?

Behavior and Relationships Abroad

Inform yourself to the best of your ability about behavioral expectations, dating, and relationships in your host

culture. Talk with students who have studied in your host country before and locals your own age to figure out what's typical. You may find that acceptable behavior in your host country is offensive to you or makes you feel uncomfortable.

Dating "rules" vary from culture to culture. Some cultures may make female-male friendships more difficult. Think about how you communicate. You may be sending messages that you do not intend. Evaluating societal differences when it comes to these relationships and modifying your behavior is part of adapting to, and learning about, another culture.

Cal Poly Campus Resources:

[Student Life & Leadership - Gender Equity Center](#)

This module has used the following resources:

NAFSA - Sexual Health Abroad: A Guide to Healthy Practices During Education Abroad

Northwestern University Study Abroad Office - Gender Abroad

B. LGBTQIA Students & Study Abroad

You may already identify as a lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex or asexual student, or you may still be questioning your identity. Either way, you will find that the social norms, laws, and personal interactions of other cultures will often differ from those in the U.S. While preparing for departure, it is essential to your health & safety to reflect on the cultural definitions of gender identity and sexual orientation. Consider carefully how your identity as a LGBTQIA person may influence your relationships with host nationals, your cultural adjustment, and your overall education abroad experience.

Please note: A few years ago, the U.S. State Department Bureau of Diplomatic Security (OSAC) issued advice for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) individuals traveling or studying abroad in Sub-Saharan Africa. The report states that LGBT students face challenges ranging from verbal harassment, stalking, intimidation, and sometimes even violence. Simply disclosing alternative gender and sexual identities can have dangerous consequences.

Many African countries have pending or implemented anti-gay legislation that limits the rights of gay men and women and criminalizes same-sex relationships. Of the 53 African countries, 38 have criminalized consensual gay relationships, and many colonial sodomy laws remain on the books. South Africa is the only country in Sub-Saharan Africa that has legalized same-sex marriage, though anti-gay violence remains high, and crimes such as "corrective rape" continue to occur. Uganda, Cameroon, Nigeria, Senegal, Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Ghana criminalize homosexuality and have pursued prosecution against suspected homosexuals.

Prior to departure, inform yourself on laws in countries you may be visiting. Check out the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) website - [LGBTQ rights around the world.](#)

Before you go

In some cultures, concepts of 'gay' and 'straight' may not carry the same significance as they do in the U.S. People involved in same-sex relationships may not see this as an identity. In other cultures, there are active social movements for civil rights for sexual and gender minorities. In preparing for your study abroad experience, it is important for you to research the LGBTQIA climate of the country you will be visiting.

If you are open about your gender and/or sexual identity, consider the following:

- The host culture might make you feel like you are either "sent back into the closet" or, in countries that are more progressive than the U.S., freer to express yourself.
- If your host culture is NOT progressive or accepting of the LGBTQIA community, make sure you understand the political climate and consider your personal safety before confronting this way of thinking.

If you are not open about your gender and/or sexual identity, along with the above, consider the following:

- Some cultures will make it easier for you to come out; make sure that you have a support network during this time.
- If you are not public about your identity, realize that finding that community will be a bit more difficult while abroad. Finding groups or organizations before you go.

Questions to ask

As part of your pre-departure preparations, ask these questions of yourself, your study abroad advisor, your faculty, and your study abroad program.

- Does your right to be LGBTQIA conflict with your host country's religious or cultural values and traditions?
- How will you reconcile your human rights with the cultural values of your host society? Challenging local cultural norms may have repercussions.
- Are there safety considerations that you should be aware of?
- What are gender relations in the host culture?
- What is considered typical female and male social behavior in the host culture?
- What is the social perception of members of the LGBTQIA community?
- What roles do trans people play in the host culture?
- Does your study abroad program offer LGBTQIA friendly housing?
- Does your study abroad program discuss LGBTQIA considerations during their orientation?

Legal issues to consider before going abroad

As stated above, the laws governing LGBTQIA relationships and sexual activity differ from country to country. U.S. citizens must abide by the laws of a host country; knowing these laws may help you to decide what countries you might like to visit if you will be out abroad or if you will pursue relationships while abroad. Even if you do not plan to have a sexual relationship while away, you should be informed about specific laws pertaining to sexual behavior and sexual/gender identity. When doing your research, try to ascertain:

- The legality of same-sex sexual behavior
- The age of consent for sexual behavior

Restrictions on freeLGBTQIA) students to promote personal growth and education. The Pride Center advocates for social justice, empower and retain our LGBTQIA and ally students, and create opportunities for all students to be more culturally competent. While the Pride Center may not have all the answers for you when you are studying abroad, they can provide insight on how to protect yourself emotionally if host country norms are not supportive or accepting.

Resources:

[Student Life & Leadership - Pride Center](#)

[LGBT Student Guide for Education Abroad](#) by Kristen Shalosky

C. Sex, Sexual Harassment & Sexual Violence

Sex

While abroad you may choose to be sexually active, and it's important to realize that sexual norms and behaviors may be very different in your host country. It is in your best interest to try and discover what these norms are prior to departure. We encourage you to connect with someone who has traveled or lived in the destination country (friends, faculty, or staff) about dating and sexual norms, and to view/read related media and literature.

If you're thinking about being sexually active, it can be helpful to consider the following:

- If you're not sexually active, are you ready for sex?
- How could being sexually active impact your experience abroad?
- Are you comfortable enough to ask about your partner's sexual past? As STIs, AIDS, etc. are present in every destination country, it's important to consider our partner's history.

- What are you and your partner’s sexual boundaries (e.g., only kissing, oral sex, must use a condom)?
- Would you be comfortable communicating your boundaries? How and/or when could you communicate these boundaries?
- What are you and your partner’s relationship expectations (e.g., dating, one night stand, friends with benefits)?
- How will sex impact these expectations?
- How could alcohol affect your sexual boundaries?

Cultural differences extend to misunderstandings about body language. For instance, you may encounter people who do not understand that an easy-going manner is a gesture of friendship or politeness. The way you smile or how you make eye contact can be interpreted differently depending on the culture.

Sexual Harassment

While studying abroad, you want to be culturally sensitive, respectful, and inoffensive. But being culturally sensitive never requires you to accept behaviors that infringe on your personal space and that make you feel unsafe or uncomfortable. If it feels inappropriate or makes you uneasy, get yourself out of the situation. Never sacrifice yourself or your sense of safety for the sake of cultural sensitivity.

In some countries, you may experience objectifying comments, hissing, whistling, leering stares, blatant sexual advances, or unwanted physical contact, all of which can negatively impact your comfort and enjoyment of the study abroad experience and local culture.

While sexual harassment is not your fault, it is impossible to prevent it from occurring. What you can do is prepare yourself with the knowledge of what to do if and when harassment occurs.

Carnegie Mellon Study Abroad Office offers tips (mostly to women) on how to deal with harassment:

- **Ignore it.** Chances are the harassers are just looking for a reaction.
 - NOTE: If possible, and if the harassment is not too severe or violent, assertively addressing the harasser may be useful.
 - Name the behavior specifically and confidently; state why it is wrong/bothering you; and tell the harasser to stop.
- **Avoid large groups of men.** Discreetly cross to the other side of the street and continue walking.
- **Observe the local women.** Find out how other women deal with any harassment that they may receive. Mimicking their behavior will help to reduce or eliminate verbal harassment and stares. Sometimes something as simple as making eye contact can be viewed by men as an invitation. Recognizing that local women do not make eye contact and following their example can often eliminate the unwanted attention. If the opportunity presents itself, ask local women how they respond to certain situations and/or how they avoid harassment.
- **Learn key phrases.** Sometimes just the right words are the best solution.
- **Act confident.** Always walk with confidence.
- **Leave and find somewhere safe to go.** If ignoring the situation does not help, leave and get to a safer location. For students harassed on the street, getting on a bus or going into a store can usually solve the problem. Bus drivers and store owners are often very helpful in these situations.

Bystander Intervention

If you witness a fellow student being harassed, it is important to realize your potential as a bystander—someone who can intervene. The goal of any intervention is to separate the person being harmed from their perpetrator(s), without exposing yourself or the person you’re helping to additional harm. Many people think intervening means they have one of two choices: intervening physically and possibly expose themselves to personal harm, or do nothing. In fact, there are often many ways to intervene without exposing one’s self to physical harm. Your goal as a bystander is to creatively discover what you can do to interrupt the violence you’re witnessing.

If the harassment continues, do not wait—tell someone. Contact your in-country service provider or Cal Poly

faculty. If the in-country service provider is the person perpetrating the harassment, contact the Cal Poly International Center at 001-805-756-1477 or email international@calpoly.edu immediately. You will be asked if you feel safe at your current location. Together a decision will be made to leave the program or to discover an otherwise feasible solution.

Sexual Assault

Sexual Assault is defined as any non-consensual sexual act may be sexual assault. This may include unwanted oral intercourse, penetration of the anus or vagina with a foreign object, or unwanted touching on an intimate area of a person's body. Sexual assault can include unwanted kissing or bodily contact that is sexual in nature.

The new surrounding and language can make study abroad students particularly susceptible to assault. Walk in groups after dark, especially if intoxicated; avoid from poorly lit areas; do not leave beverages unattended or accept a drink from a stranger. Essentially, use common sense and follow the same precautions as in the U.S.

What to Do if You Are Sexually Assaulted

If you have experienced any kind of sexual assault or abuse, it is most important to know that it is not your fault, and that there are resources available to help you.

First Steps:

- Get to a safe place as soon as you can and ask someone you trust to stay with you.
- Contact someone who can help you: a friend, the police, or other campus and community agencies.
 - NOTE: You may also contact Cal Poly Safer by phone: (country's exit code) 1-805-756-2282 between 9am-5pm (PST), or by email: safer@calpoly.edu.

Your in-country service provider or Cal Poly faculty are great resources for initially seeking help. They can advise you of the best course of action.

For countries with reasonable systems of government and laws, reporting these crimes to police may be a viable option. Unfortunately, consular officers at your embassy will probably do little more than tell you to report it to the police, although they may keep a statistical account of the complaints they receive.

Being a Supporter

As a friend of a survivor, you have an important role in their support. When a person is sexually assaulted their power has been taken away from them. Allow your friend to regain control by letting them make their own decisions moving forward.

How You Can Help:

- Let them know they are not alone and thank them for sharing with you.
- State that you believe them and validate their feelings.
- Encourage them to talk to people who can provide help and guidance.
- Support your friend's decision to report or not. Reporting is a deeply personal decision for some people, and is sometimes not their most immediate need.
- Listen without judgment. Try not to ask too many questions about the incident and leave the investigating to the professionals.
- Keep in mind it is normal for survivors to have a range of reactions, including depression, anxiety, difficulty concentrating, social withdrawal, impaired memory, even an increase in risk-taking behavior, such as over- intoxication and sexual behavior.
- Do not confront an alleged offender. This may result in escalation of violence or retaliation.
- Protect your friend's privacy, do not share their experience with family or friends without their expressed permission.
- **If your friend is at risk of hurting themselves or others, immediately contact emergency services, and your in-country service provider or Cal Poly faculty.**

Cal Poly Campus Resources

Cal Poly Health & Counseling Center provides information for students about sexual health & sexual assault. It provides resources for those students who have been sexually assaulted. Take a look at the website for insight on how to seek help from abroad and when you return home.

[Cal Poly Health & Counseling Services - Self Help - Sexual assault Study Abroad Safety Plan](#)

Cal Poly Safer: (805) 756-2282; safer@calpoly.edu

Cal Poly Health and Counseling Services: (805) 756-1211; health-counseling@calpoly.edu; hcs.calpoly.edu/

National Resources

National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

American Overseas Domestic Violence/ Sexual Assault Crisis Center: 866-USWOMEN (879-6636)

Local U.S. Embassy or Consulate

- Look up your local U.S. Embassy/Consulate at www.usembassy.gov
- Department of State from overseas (not an emergency contact): (202) 501-4444

This module has used the following resources:

Carnegie Mellon - Study Abroad - Sexual Activity

NAFSA - Easy Planning for Good Health Abroad.

Northwestern University - Study Abroad - Sexual Harassment

Pre-Departure Orientation: Health Abroad

Health Abroad

It is important to familiarize yourself with conditions at your study abroad destination that could impact your health (required immunizations, types of medical facilities, availability of over-the-counter and prescription medications, problems with crime, etc.) Understanding the health & safety risks will help you make more informed decisions.

A great place to get your answers about health issues is the [Center for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) Traveler's Health website](#). The CDC website outlines destination-specific health risks, precautions, vaccinations recommended (or required) for your site, and tips on how to stay healthy while you are abroad.

Campus Health & Wellbeing - International Travel Clinic

Cal Poly Campus Health & Wellbeing has an [International Travel Clinic](#) to assist students with recommended vaccines when traveling abroad. You are advised to make an appointment 4-8 weeks prior to your departure date.

Contact [Campus Health & Wellbeing](#) to schedule an appointment. Campus Health & Wellbeing also provides resources on a variety of health & safety issues that can be helpful to you both prior to departure and while you are abroad.

Health Insurance

All students must have insurance that covers routine and emergency medical care while abroad. Check your own personal insurance policy to see if it covers international medical cost and medical evacuation in the event of an emergency. All Cal Poly Global Programs and International Exchange Programs are required to provide health insurance that covers routine and emergency medical treatment for all students. For these programs, CSURMA/ACE insurance coverage is included in the program fee. Some Cal Poly partner programs will provide insurance as part of their program fee. Please consult the Cal Poly International Center with any questions about the insurance coverage related to your study abroad program.

Overcoming Jet Lag

Besides adjusting to a new time zone, you will be adjusting to a new physical environment, new food, a new culture and a possible new language. Cut yourself some slack while you adapt. This might take a day, a week or longer, but if you are finding it difficult to adapt, consult your Faculty Leader or on-site program staff for advice on how to cope. For a smoother arrival and initial transition, here are some tips on how to defend yourself against jet lag:

- Sleep well before you travel.
- Avoid alcohol while en route.
- Drink a lot of water.
- Take it easy. Side effects of jet lag such as fatigue, irritability and insomnia can zap your stamina
- Re-sync your internal body clock. Try to get to sleep at a normal time for your new time zone.
- Rehydrate by drinking water and juice. Avoid caffeine, alcohol, and junk food.
- Reset your watch. This will help you adjust to your new time zone.
- Monitor your health. Don't overwhelm yourself by trying to see everything and sampling all culinary delights. Moderation will pay off.
- Eat a well-balanced diet and watch what you eat when traveling.

Prescription Medications

If you have a pre-existing medical condition that requires regular medication, bring an extra quantity with you and pack it in your carry-on, just in case your checked baggage gets lost. Keep medication in its original container and make sure that it is clearly labeled — you don't want to create the impression you are carrying drugs that have not been prescribed specifically to you.

Check with the embassy or consulate of the country you are traveling to make sure that your medication is legal to carry into the country. Some countries may consider your prescription medication, particularly narcotics, to be illegal. Carry a letter from your doctor describing your medical condition and any prescription medications prescribed. Doing your research and having a letter can help prevent any misunderstandings as you pass through customs and immigration. Over-the-counter medications should also be kept in their original packaging. If there is an over-the-counter medication you prefer to use while abroad, be sure to pack a enough for the length of your stay.

Know the generic name of your medication in case you need to purchase it while in country.

If you have allergies, reactions to certain medications, foods, or insect bites, or other unique medical problems, consider wearing a 'medical alert' bracelet. You may also wish to carry a letter from your physician explaining required treatment should you become ill. Bring a written prescription for your glasses and/or contacts. Bring an extra pair of eyeglasses and sufficient number of contacts, as well as cleaning solution if needed.

Medical Facilities & Services

Medical facilities vary from country to country and you might find some to be inadequate when compared to those in the United States. Your in-country program staff will give you information on how to find a clinic or hospital if you need routine medical care or in case of emergency. The [U.S. Department of State website](#) also provides information on where to find medical care. This website will be particularly helpful if you are traveling out of the city or area you are studying in for the weekend or during school breaks.

Mental Health

Mental health care may be lacking or nonexistent in certain countries. Studying abroad may increase stress, so plan ahead as to how you will handle these changes.

- Ensure that you have an adequate supply of medication for the duration of your stay, or that you can obtain your prescription medications while abroad.
- Know the contact information for the Faculty Leader or on-site program staff so that you can contact them if you need support.

- If things become difficult for you while abroad, consider ahead of time how will you cope. Identify a support system, whether at home or abroad. Consider arranging phone or Skype counseling sessions, and make sure you have your home doctor or counselor's email contact information.

It is important for you to recognize when you are experiencing emotional and mental health problems and how to seek help. Check out the [Cal Poly Counseling Services](#) resources to consider before you go abroad.

- Cal Poly Counseling Services After Hours Crisis Line: 001 (805) 756-2511

Dietary Considerations

- If you have food allergies and will be visiting a country where English is not widely spoken, be sure to be able to write and pronounce the names of any food items to which you are allergic.
- If you have dietary restrictions, be proactive by looking into the foods that are available, those you will need to avoid, and how you might best navigate social and cultural situations involving foods that you do not eat. Plan ahead.
- Consider where you are willing to be flexible, and where you want to be firm in adhering to your dietary preferences. If you will be living with a homestay family, be sure to clearly communicate your plan prior to arrival.
- Check on the relative safety of tap water, meat, fruit, and vegetables of the country or countries you will be visiting.
- Know where to get treatment before a medical problem arises. Ask your on-site program staff for the name of a doctor and the location of a health care facility.

Pre-Departure Orientation: Safety Abroad

Safety

[The U.S Department of State – International Travel Information](#) is a website that provides information about every country in the world. Here you will find information on location of the nearest U.S. embassy and any consular offices, visa information and entry requirements, crime and security information, health and medical conditions, medical facilities, drug penalties, and localized hot spots to be avoided.

The U.S. Department of State website offers practical tips to protecting yourself, your money, and your personal belongings while abroad.

- Think about what you pack. If you would hate to lose it, don't bring it!
- Pack light. You can move more freely with less luggage. You will become less fatigued and will be less prone to injury.
- Read the tips for women through [Journeywoman - What Should I Wear - Where?](#) This resource provides a country-specific guide to help you choose appropriate clothing to help keep you comfortable and safe.
- Make photocopies of your passport, visa (if applicable), credit/debit cards, and any other valuable documents in case they are lost or stolen. Store copies in separate locations in your luggage and leave copies with parents/family at home. It is also helpful to save electronic copies of your documents in your email account.
- Know the contact information for the closest embassy or consulate in case you need to replace a lost or stolen passport.
- Know your bank's toll free phone number in case your credit/debit card becomes lost or stolen.
- If you must carry important documents with you, place them in a secure location, such as:
 - a sturdy shoulder bag with a strap that goes across your chest.
 - a pouch or money belt that is worn under your clothes.
 - AVOID – outside pockets or backpacks where thieves have easy access.

Remember that communication is a key factor in safety while abroad. Be sure to know whom (and how) to contact the Faculty Leader or on-site program staff if a safety issue or incident arises. Keep emergency contact information in your phone and wallet.

Safety on the Street

Be cautious in (or avoid) areas where you may be more easily victimized. These include crowded subways, train stations, elevators, tourist sites, market places, festivals and crime-ridden neighborhoods.

- Don't use narrow alleys or poorly lit streets.
- Use the buddy system – DO NOT travel alone at night.
- Avoid public demonstrations and other civil disturbances.
- Keep a low profile and avoid loud conversations or arguments.
- Do not discuss travel plans or other personal matters with strangers. Remember that not everyone has your best interest in mind.
- Avoid scam artists by being wary of strangers who approach you and offer to be your guide or sell you something at bargain prices.
- Beware of groups of vagrant children who could create a distraction to pick your pocket.
- Beware of pickpockets. They often have an accomplice who will:
 - jostle you,
 - ask you for directions or the time,
 - point to something spilled on your clothing,
 - or distract you by creating a disturbance.
- Wear the shoulder strap of your bag across your chest and walk with the bag away from the curb to avoid drive-by purse-snatchers.
 - Keep your bag in front of you and try to keep one hand on it at all times
- Try to seem purposeful when you move about. Even if you are lost, walk confidently and with awareness. Try to ask for directions only from individuals in authority.
- Know how to use a pay telephone and have the proper change or token on hand.
- Learn a few phrases in the local language or have them handy in written form so that you can signal your need for police or medical help.
- Make a note of emergency telephone numbers you may need: police, fire, your hotel, and the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.
- If you are confronted, don't fight back - give up your valuables.

How to Handle Money Safely

- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash.
- Do not flash large amounts of money when paying a bill.
- Make sure your credit/debit card is returned to you after each transaction (Double check this before leaving!).
- Deal only with authorized agents when you exchange money, buy airline tickets, or purchase souvenirs. Do not exchange money on the black market. If your possessions are lost or stolen, report the loss immediately to the local police. Keep a copy of the police report for insurance claims and as an explanation of what happened. Inform the Faculty Leader or on-site program staff of the occurrence.

After reporting missing items to the police, report the loss or theft of:

- Credit/debit cards to your bank
- Airline tickets to the airline or travel agent
- Passport to the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate

Avoiding Legal Difficulties

When you are in another country, you are subject to its laws and are under its jurisdiction. You can be arrested overseas for actions that may be either legal or considered minor infractions in the United States. Carrying a U.S. passport is no protection if you break a country's law. Familiarize yourself with legal expectations in the countries you will visit. Review the Students Abroad information on the U.S. Department of State website.

Photography

In many countries, you can be detained for photographing security-related institutions, such as police and military installations, government buildings, border areas and transportation facilities. Also, you may find some cultural groups do not want their photo taken. If you are in doubt, ask permission before taking photographs.

Safety Tips from the Peace Corps

- The situations that place students at greatest risk are:
- Being out after midnight
- Being alone at night in an isolated area
- Being in a known high crime area
- Sleeping in an unlocked place
- Being intoxicated

Remember - your safety abroad depends largely on the decisions you make.

Pre-Departure Orientation: Travel Basics

Practical Travel Basics

This module will cover some practical travel basics and important tips to remember for planning your study abroad experience. These tips are meant to prepare you to be a smart and safe traveler abroad.

A. Travel Documents

Passports

- **A valid passport is required for international travel.** Applying for a passport can take 6-8 weeks so be sure to start the process early.
- Each country has its own entry requirements, so it is important to review those requirements for the countries you plan to visit. For example, some countries require that visitors have a valid passport for at least a year upon entry, whereas other countries only require six months. For information on entry requirements for a specific country, please visit the Entry/Exit requirements section in the Country Specific Information pages on the [U.S. Department of State website](#).
- Make copies! Make copies of the first page of your passport. Leave a copy with your emergency contact at home and have additional copies put in various place in your luggage. If you lose your passport while abroad, taking a photocopy to the nearest U.S. Embassy makes the process of getting a new passport easier
- In your passport – pencil in all emergency contacts & housing accommodations
- For information on applying for a passport you can visit the [U.S. Department of State website](#)

Visas

A visa is official permission to enter a specific country and is granted by that country's government. Americans who plan to go abroad should check the visa requirements for the countries they plan to visit by contacting the nearest consulate for that country.

- Every country has different visa requirements and application procedures
- Check the embassy website of each country you will be visiting to see what the visa requirements are.
- The [U.S. Department of State website](#) provides a list of Foreign Embassies in the United States
- You are responsible for ensuring you have the appropriate documents to enter each country you plan to visit
- If you receive your visa in your passport prior to your departure, make a copy of it for your records

B. Money Matters

Budgeting

- You will be responsible for personal expenses abroad including toiletries, entertainment and transportation. These expenses will vary depending on your location and your personal spending habits.

- To help you create a budget for personal expenses in your host country, consult a returned student or speak with your Study Abroad Program Coordinator/Advisor.
- The estimated total budget for your program can be found on the program brochure on Cal Poly Abroad. As a reminder, these budgets are estimates and for planning purposes only
- You should set aside at least \$500 for unexpected emergencies. If you need access to more money in an emergency, your stateside contact can deposit money into your account or wire you money through Western Union. Before you leave the U.S., you and your family should decide how they should send you money if you need it, and you should also identify at least one backup method of receiving funds.

Banking

- Inform your bank prior to departure that you will be leaving the country. Notify them of the location(s) and length of stay you will be traveling
- Before you leave the USA, research availability of ATMs in the location(s) you will be visiting or ask previous participants of your program
- Be aware of international banking fees and exchange rates
- Be sure your credit and debit cards will not expire while you are abroad
- Make sure you have a 4-digit PIN code for your debit card
- Know the contact numbers of your bank cards in case they are lost or stolen
- Have a trusted family member or guardian monitor your bank account while you are abroad to help prevent fraud
- Make copies of credit/debit cards and keep them in a secure place in your luggage

Currency Exchange

- An ATM in a foreign country will give you local currency. Be aware of the exchange rate to know how much you are withdrawing from your account in U.S. dollars.
- Many banks have a daily withdrawal limit. Understand yours (if applicable) in both U.S. dollars and the currency of your host country.
- Currency can be exchanged at most international airports and at most major banks and railroad stations abroad. They will afford you the fairest exchange rate available.
- Avoid exchanging currency at hotels, restaurants, or retail shops because the exchange rate tends to be outrageous in these places. Expect to pay a commission every time you exchange currency; 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 amount.
- You can check the exchange rate before your departure by visiting the following websites:
 - xe.com
 - oanda.com
- Consider getting a credit card that has no foreign transaction fees. Many banks out there are ideal for college students studying abroad.

C. Packing

When packing for your study abroad program, be smart about what you bring and how you pack it.

Important tips to consider:

- Don't pack more than you can carry! Remember, you will be walking through airports, up and down stairs, and navigating new cities while carrying all of your luggage by yourself. Be sure you can do this comfortably and safely.
- Pack light! Bring multipurpose clothing: appropriate for weather, occasion, culture, etc. Leave room in your suitcase for bringing back the things you'll buy in your host country
- A good carry-on is a small bag or backpack that can also be used for weekend travel.
- Be sure your carry-on bag contains anything you might need if your flights are canceled or delayed or if your luggage is lost. This includes medications, contact information and arrival instructions for your host country,

essential toiletry items, and a change of clothes. Pack important documents (passport, visa, tickets, prescriptions, etc) in carry-on luggage.

- All medications should be carried in their original, clearly labeled containers. Always carry prescription and other important medications with you in your carry-on bag in case your checked luggage is delayed or lost.
- If you are not prepared to lose it, don't bring it! Think before bringing valuables and expensive electronics
- Bring comfortable shoes. In most places, you'll be doing much more walking than you're used to at home.
- If there are specific toiletry products or brands that you can't live without, bring them with you. However, you can usually purchase something similar abroad.
- You should label each piece of your luggage, both outside and inside, with your U.S. address and your address in your host destination. It is not uncommon for your luggage to arrive later than you do, and labeling makes it easier for your luggage to find you. Bring luggage locks to secure your belongings
- Bring battery operated alarm clock
- If you plan on picking up souvenirs or clothing while abroad, consider packing an empty duffel bag so you are able to bring these items back with you

Packing Electronics

- In order to use your electrical appliances in most foreign countries, you will need to use converters and adapters. Be sure you have appropriate adapters/converters for electrical appliances you bring
- [World Electric Guide](#)

D. Transportation

Air Travel

- Check with your airline about fees and/or limits on checked and carry-on luggage. The number of bags and weight allowed varies by airline and destination.
- The Transportation and Security Administration has prepared the TSA Traveler's Guide to help ensure passengers have the answers they need to common security screening questions. Visit [TSA – Traveler Information](#) for more information about getting through the line faster and rules on carry-ons.
- Be sure to follow the weight & size restrictions for both your carry-on and checked luggage for each mode of transportation during your journey
- Below are some helpful links from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security:
 - [Guidelines for carry-on luggage](#)
 - [Prohibited items](#)

Flight Tips

- Be sure to purchase a flight that arrives in your host country at the time and date specified in your pre-departure materials.
- Unless instructed otherwise, you should plan flights that arrive during daylight/business hours as a safety precaution.
- Some useful online search engines for finding flights are www.kayak.com, www.studentuniverse.com and www.statravel.com.
- Pay close attention to cancellation and change fees. Some tickets will allow you to change return dates for a small fee. Others do not allow you this option or charge a substantial fee.
- Student discounts may be available, and student tickets are often more flexible regarding changes.
- You may want to purchase additional travel insurance, which covers lost or damaged luggage and flight cancellation or delays.

Pre-departure Orientation: Academic and Career Planning

Academic Planning

All students are conditionally accepted to their study abroad program through the term prior to going abroad. You must maintain good academic, disciplinary and financial standing to be eligible to go abroad.

Plan ahead with academic advisors and seek course pre-approvals.

- Students participating in the Cal Poly Partner Programs (i.e. CEA, CIEE, DIS, EARTH, USAC), CSU IP, National Student Exchange, and the international exchanges will want to complete course substitutions for Major, Minor, or GE courses prior to going abroad
- The *GE Course Substitution for Study Abroad* forms are available at the International Center (52-E32). If you consider adding any new GE courses while abroad, you may contact the Cal Poly Evaluations Office for **INFORMAL** advice via email at evaluations@calpoly.edu.
- Major or Minor substitution forms are available at the respective Academic Department or Advising Center. We recommend that you keep your advisor's contact information available while you are abroad, in case you need to consult with them regarding any new courses you plan to take.
- Keep copies of course substitution approvals.

Academic Credit and Grades

You will receive one of two kinds of credit

1. Resident Credit – Cal Poly Global Programs (faculty-led), International Exchanges, CSU IP
2. Transfer Credit – International Exchanges, National Student Exchange, Cal Poly Partner Programs (i.e. CEA, CIEE, DIS, EARTH, USAC)*

Study abroad grades will count and are calculated into either your Cal Poly GPA (**if receiving Resident Credit**) or your higher education GPA (**if receiving transfer credit**).

*Students participating in the Cal Poly Partner Programs, CSU IP, International Exchange, and the National Student Exchange will be provided with instructions for enrolling in a Cal Poly "placeholder course" for the Quarters that you are abroad. You register for the placeholder course once your normally scheduled Cal Poly registration period begins. It is important that you follow the instructions for the placeholder course in order to ensure that you are maintaining your status as a full-time Cal Poly student during your term(s) abroad. This is quite important for students who are on financial aid for maintaining your academic progress for future registration rotations.

Transcripts

Be aware that transcripts that are issued from overseas universities can take 3-4 months after your program end date to arrive at Cal Poly. If you are receiving transfer credit, it can take up to two quarters for the courses to be evaluated by the Cal Poly Evaluations Office and for the credit to appear on your Degree Progress Report. Please plan accordingly!

Academic Planning Checklist

- Review your Degree Progress Report in order to stay on track with graduation requirements.
- Make sure to stay up to date with your Poly Planner and follow instructions from the Cal Poly Registrar's Office.
- Check your Cal Poly Portal while abroad for registration rotation/PASS information for next term
- Keep in mind the time difference when planning for Cal Poly Registration

Career Planning

Study abroad is one of the most exciting and challenging experiences you will have during your college years. It may be the first time you will live in another culture, travel internationally, or learn a foreign language. It has the potential to provide you with a fresh outlook and unique perspective on a career you've been thinking about after graduation. However, even if your career goals are not clear, studying abroad has the potential to clarify the direction you'd like

to take, give you a new perspective on your academic work, and strengthen skills that will be beneficial to you when you begin your job search during your senior year. Research shows that studying abroad gives you valuable skills and qualifications that can make you more competitive during job search.

Skills gained while abroad can include: cultural awareness, cross-cultural communication, adaptability, flexibility, tolerance, independence and language skills.

Study abroad may not automatically provide you with a career advantage. Be prepared to articulate how you obtained the knowledge, skills and abilities required by potential employers by providing examples from your overseas experience.

Career Planning Checklist

- Develop a plan for how you can incorporate career exploration into your study abroad experience
- Explore whether any experiential opportunities exist with your program (e.g. volunteering, service learning, internships)
- Make a list at least five skills you may gain from your study abroad experience

Career Planning Upon Return to U.S.

- Attend the Cal Poly *Study Abroad Returnee Conference*. The Conference is designed specifically for Cal Poly students to help them apply and utilize their study abroad experience in future endeavors
- Meet with your Career Counselor to formulate your resume and cover letters that will help showcase your study abroad experiences
- Attend workshops sponsored by the Career Services and International Center focusing on reentry and leveraging your international skills
- Work on articulating the meaningfulness of your study abroad experience to prepare for professional job search

Subletting your SLO Apartment

Options to post a room/place to sublet for local SLO students or incoming exchange students:

- San Luis Obispo Craig's List: <http://slo.craigslist.org/apa/>
- College Huts: <http://www.collegehuts.com/>
- ZZ Star: (click on Central Coast of California, then Real Estate Rentals): <http://www.zzstar.com/realstatedisplay.php>
- ASI Classifieds: <http://www.asi.calpoly.edu/classifieds/>
- Cal Poly International Club (I-Club) Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/132930852688/>
- Cal Poly ULoop: <http://calpoly.uloop.com/housing/>
- In addition, you can email international@calpoly.edu. Our office is aware of all exchange and international students coming to Cal Poly so, please provide all relevant information when you send an email (if the room/apartment is furnished, dates it is available, distance to campus, rent & utilities amounts, if you prefer a male/female, try to highlight the nice qualities of your place). Our colleagues can post your information to send an email with your contact to incoming exchange students.