

# PRE-DEPARTURE



LATRAJARB, ICELAND. PHOTO BY MERRITT COLLEGE PROFESSOR FELZER ON NATURAL HISTORY PROGRAM , 2016

A HANDBOOK ADMINISTERED BY THE OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION  
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# A Message from the Office of International Education

At Peralta Community College District our mission is to promote student success, provide our diverse community with educational opportunities, and to transform lives. We strive to educate students that become active community members and global citizens. One way to achieve this goal is to encourage our students to seek study abroad opportunities. Each year over 300,000 U.S. students study abroad. With an increasingly interconnected globalized world, international education has never been more important than it is now. The Office of International Education has designed this Study Abroad Handbook to assist its students in achieving an international education that will result in the knowledge, skills and attitudes that prepare them for personal, professional, and academic success.

# HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

**Congratulations on your acceptance to your study abroad program! The OIE and PCCD are very proud to have you represent our campus internationally.**

Your program should provide you with a detailed pre-departure planning tool kit. This handbook is developed specifically for PCCD students and should be utilized as a supplement to your existing resources. We encourage you to reach the OIE and share your upcoming study abroad details. You can contact the International Services Manager Drew Gephart to discuss all things Study Abroad at (510) 587-7834 or [dgephart@peralta.edu](mailto:dgephart@peralta.edu).

\*Upon return, be sure to check out our **Re-Entry** Handbook for tips on how to make the most of your program



**Visit Our Website:** <http://web.peralta.edu/international/study-abroad>



# BEFORE YOU GO

Advanced preparation is the key! Now that you have your program set, you should start planning the logistics as far in advance as possible.

## Apply for a Passport and/or Visa

In order to travel abroad your passport must be valid for six months after your return travel date. Remember that if you do not have your passport, you should apply for one immediately.

Processing generally takes six weeks but can take longer during peak travel season. Your program will advise if a VISA is needed and how to apply for one. For more information about passport and VISA applications visit [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) and click on “U.S. Passports and International Travel”. International students will need to visit the OIE for passport information.

Use the checklist below to guide your process:

- ☐ Obtain or renew your passport. Begin process as soon as possible! You will to complete the following steps:
  1. Complete & Submit Form DS-11: Application for A US Passport
  2. Submit Evidence of U.S. Citizenship- This includes:
    - Previously issued, undamaged U.S. Passport
    - Certified Birth Certificate issued by the city, county or state
    - Consular report of Birth Abroad or Certification of Birth
    - Naturalization Certificate
    - Certificate of Citizenship
  3. Present Identification at the Time of Application- This includes:
    - Previously issued, undamaged U.S. Passport
    - Naturalization Certificate
    - Valid Driver's License
    - Current Government ID (city, state or federal)
    - Current Military ID
  4. Submit a Photocopy of the Identification Document (s) Presented (in Step 3)
  5. Pay the Application Fee- approximately \$110, but could vary
  6. Provide a Passport Photo. *This can be done at stores with photo counter and usually at the office where you present the application (please confirm with location before arrival)*
- ☐ Make color photocopies of your passport. Leave one copy at home with a trusted family member or friend. While abroad, remember to keep your passport in a safe and secure location. Always carry your passport and/or a photocopy of your passport.





## Book Travel Arrangements

If flights are not included with your Study Abroad experience, you will want to purchase far in advance. Check with your program, they may have Facebook groups or other platforms that allow you to coordinate with students departing/returning from the same airport.

Tips for travel arrangements can be found below:

- ☐ Book your flight using sites such as Kayak, Student Universe, Air Zen, STA Travel
  - Google Flights is a good tool to predict flight rates and suggest lower fares dates
  - Try to book your flight so you land in the morning. Navigating a new location is much easier when there is daylight.
- Secure lodging. A majority of time this will be covered by your program, but if not, booking in advance is the best option. Use sites such as Airbnb, Kayak, Hostel World
- ☐ Map out your location. You can purchase physical maps or download maps that can be used offline via the Google Map App.
- ☐ Figure out inner-country transportation to lodging destination. Public transportation- bus or subway, train, rental car, taxi. Purchase tickets in advance if possible.

## Cell Phone

For most American telecommunications providers, there are huge fees for texting and calling while abroad. However, there are ways around this. For safety and convenience, it is recommended that you have a functioning phone while abroad. Consider the following options when planning for mobile phone use:

- ☐ Purchase an international plan for your phone through your current phone provider. This is probably the most expensive option but can be very convenient as you will not have to purchase a phone and/or SIM card on-site.
- ☐ Look into pay-as-you-go phone plans while in country. Does your phone have an accessible SIM card slot? If so, you may be able to purchase a SIM card in-country and use it for relatively cheap costs.
- ☐ Consider using free apps that work through Wi-Fi to connect with family and friends while abroad. This option has limited use as it depends on your access to Wi-Fi. Some apps that you could use include WhatsApp, Google Hangouts, Facebook Messenger, and Skype.
- ☐ Certain smartphones like Android and Iphone, will allow you to activate Airplane Mode (which switches off all of your smartphone's antennas and wireless transmitters) and Wi-Fi simultaneously. This means you can use wi-fi apps such as IMessage, Facetime Audio, etc. without incurring international charges. Contact your cellphone carrier for additional questions.



## Financial Affairs

There are other financial logistics you must consider before you depart.

It is recommended that you use a combination of cash, credit and debit cards, traveler's checks, and ATM cards while in abroad. You should become familiar with the currency of the country you're visiting and the exchange rate. Up to date exchange rates can be found at: <http://www.x-rates.com/> Additional items to consider include:

### Cash

Purchase foreign currency at your local home bank or currency exchange location before departing. This will allow you to have local currency on hand in case of emergency. We suggest around \$300 to start you off.

- Avoid Cash Exchange Counters if you can. Their exchange rates, especially at airports, are higher than most other locations.

### Cards

- ☐ Check with your bank about their policy for using credit and debit cards and withdrawing cash from ATMs while abroad.
- ☐ Make sure you understand the foreign currency conversion fees
- ☐ ATMs are available at many banks. If you plan on withdrawing cash while abroad, inform your bank about the destination and timeframe of your study abroad program.
- ☐ Be sure to check ATM fees for withdrawing money while abroad. It may make sense to withdraw large amounts of cash and storing it in a safe place.
- ☐ Be careful to not rely entirely on ATM services. If your card is stolen, you will not have any means withdrawing money. It is advisable to bring traveler's checks as an emergency in case you lose your card.


### Using Traveler's Checks

- ☐ Most major banks will provide traveler's checks. Be sure to order them several weeks in advance.
- ☐ When signing traveler's checks, make sure the signature matches the name on your passport.
- ☐ Only cash traveler's checks at banks. Do not change them at hotels or stores.
- ☐ Traveler's checks are not for making purchases. They must be cashed first at a bank.

### Other Considerations

- ☐ If you go abroad longer than a month, consider opening a local bank account. Coordinate with your program to discover which bank is the most student friendly.
- ☐ Check if your bank is apart of the Global ATM Alliance, a joint venture of several major international banks that allows customers of their banks to use their automated teller machine (ATM) card or debit card at another bank within the Global ATM Alliance with no international ATM access fees.
- ☐ Check local currency in country and the current exchange rate.
- ☐ Be aware of how much money you are spending. ATMs are easy access to money and it can be easy to go over budget.
- ☐ Since checks written in U.S. dollars can take up to months to clear, it is advisable not to use U.S. checks.
- ☐ Make photocopies of the front and back of your credit/debit cards. Leave one copy at home with a trusted family member or friend.



The background of the entire page is a photograph of the Leaning Tower of Pisa, showing its iconic white marble arches and columns. The tower is slightly tilted, as is characteristic of it. The image is used as a background for the text boxes.

## Health

Being healthy and secure are key components to having a positive study abroad trip. It can be difficult to find even commonly used over-the-counter medications while abroad. Don't forget to pack a first aid kit inclusive of all personal medication and purchase student health insurance.

Please utilize the below suggestions if applicable:

- ☐ Obtain all vaccinations required for host country and other countries you may travel to.
- ☐ Bring necessary quantities of over-the-counter medications as well as sufficient quantities of prescriptions. Be sure to carry a written prescription from your Doctor.
- ☐ Visit your doctor, dentist, and (potentially) optometrist for a check-up.
- ☐ Purchase a health insurance plan. This should be done through your program, but other independent options are HTH, ASA Inc., Cultural Insurance Services International, World Nomads Insurance, and International Student Protection.
- ☐ Contact the insurance company about extending coverage if you plan to travel before or after your official program dates
- ☐ Obtain letter confirming full-time student status, if necessary for your private insurance plan
- ☐ Obtain additional personal property and personal liability coverage, if desired
- ☐ Create a personal health plan with your program to accommodate special requirements

## Legalities

There are certain legalities all study abroad participants should consider, especially if you are going on a semester or year-long program:

- ☐ Register with the US State Department STEP Program.
- ☐ The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a free service to allow U.S. citizens and nationals traveling abroad to enroll their trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.
- ☐ Complete a Power of Attorney form. This is a legal document that gives a designated the authority to act for another person in specified or all legal or financial matters. It is important to have should anything happen.
- ☐ Get information about absentee voting, if applicable
- ☐ Get information about filing taxes abroad, if applicable



## Preparing your Home Support System

Leaving the country is a great opportunity for growth, not only for you, but your family and friends as well. They will want to be involved in your international experience, especially if you are the first to leave the country! 1-2 months prior to leaving on your trip is a great chance to set expectations for yourself and support system. Use the below talking points to guide your discussion.

- ☐ What are your worries about me going abroad? What can we do to address your concerns?
- ☐ How often will we communicate? Should we set a schedule?  
*Remember this is a time for to immerse in another culture and gain more independence. You should consider limiting contact back home.*
- ☐ Am I expected/willing to share my experience while abroad? If so, how?  
*Facebook, Blogs, Instagram and Snapchat are great options. Like communication, try to limit social media usage to maximize your new cultural experience.*
- ☐ If you have received the emergency procedures from your program, share them with your support system.
- ☐ You may return home with new interests and traits. Your support system should be aware of this to ease your anticipated re-entry process. Please visit our Reentry Section for more information.

## Reflection

You are guaranteed to make several memories over the course of your program. Some exciting, others stressful. The common ground with each memory is that you've learned something from the experience. Most of your experiential learning will transfer into your academic and professional life when you return. Reflecting in the moment is a key way to articulate what you have felt and learned from an experience, which help you in a huge way in the future. In reflection, there must be intentionality. It requires metacognition (thinking about your thinking), articulation of that thinking and the ability to make connections (past, present, future, outliers, relevant information, etc.). Below are tips to make the most out of your reflection:

- ☐ Use a notebook, journal or electronic source to keep your reflections.
- ☐ Set goals at the beginning of your journey.
  - These goals can and will change- that is perfectly fine. The point of the goals are to set expectations and measure your change
  - Make your goals SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-Based
- ☐ The more you reflect, the better. Realistically, you will be busy but if you can reflect on at least 5 different experiences- good and bad, you will find value in the material, especially in the reentry process
- ☐ During reflection, try to answer these questions
  - Remembering: What did I do?
  - Understanding: What was important about it?
  - Applying: Where could I use this again?
  - Analyzing: Did I see any patterns in what I did?
  - Evaluating: How well did I do?
  - Creating: What should I do next?



## Your Diversity Abroad

Students abroad face a new cultural context that includes different historical and cultural understandings of diversity and inclusion around issues like race/ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, and disability. Customs, beliefs, laws, facilities, and social practices are likely different than in the U.S. Students are often concerned about how they will be perceived in their host country. Sometimes students have the experience of being in the minority for the first time. Others are concerned that their race, sexual orientation, language, ethnicity, religion, gender, etc. will impact their experience.

Before you depart, think about what it is going to be like to be "you" abroad, the various ways you might identify yourself, and how these identities define you in the U.S. These definitions might change in your host country, and you may encounter stereotypes, questions, and curiosity surrounding your identities. Think about your expectations versus what the reality might be abroad, and be prepared if your experiences lead to feelings of frustration, isolation, and fatigue. However, while you may face challenges, remember that being in a new cultural context is a wonderful opportunity for change and growth -- and it will provide you with a new perspective on the structure of different societies.

Below are a few things you can do to prepare yourself:

- ☐ Read about the host country's history, culture, laws, and demographics.
- ☐ If reading news articles, commentaries, or blogs, consider the lens through which the information was written
- ☐ Reach out to students who have studied abroad in your host country
- ☐ Make use of online resources, (even social media which may be less "filtered" than news sources in some countries, or may include current events/stories that aren't "news-worthy") that offer advice, personal narratives, and other information



# RESOURCES FOR YOUR DIVERSITY ABROAD

## **Older Adults**

*Diversity Abroad*

<http://www.diversityabroad.com/guides/diversity-and-inclusion-abroad-guide/adult-study-abroad>

*Road Scholars*

<https://www.roadscholar.org/>

## **DACA**

*NAFSA*

[https://www.nafsa.org/Resource\\_Library\\_Assets/Regulatory\\_Information/Resource\\_Page\\_On\\_Deferred\\_Action\\_for\\_Childhood\\_Arrivals/University of Texas at Austin](https://www.nafsa.org/Resource_Library_Assets/Regulatory_Information/Resource_Page_On_Deferred_Action_for_Childhood_Arrivals/University_of_Texas_at_Austin)

<http://world.utexas.edu/abroad/vision/daca/studyabroad>

## **Students with Disabilities**

*Go Overseas*

<https://www.gooverseas.com/blog/how-students-with-disabilities-can-study-abroad>

*NAFSA*

[https://www.nafsa.org/\\_/File/\\_/educationabroad\\_iesepoct.pdf](https://www.nafsa.org/_/File/_/educationabroad_iesepoct.pdf)

*Abroad with Disabilities*

<http://abroadwithdisabilities.org/>

## **Veterans**

*Institute of International Education*

<http://www.iie.org/en/Programs/GI-Bill-Benefits-for-Study-Abroad#.WFlopCMrLaY>

*Veteran Affairs*

[http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/docs/factsheets/post\\_911\\_study\\_abroad\\_fact\\_sheet.pdf](http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/docs/factsheets/post_911_study_abroad_fact_sheet.pdf)

## **Students With Dependents**

*University of Oregon*

<https://geo.uoregon.edu/inclusion/dependents>

*Study Abroad Map*

<http://www.studyabroadmap.com/study-abroad-and-family/>

*Go Overseas*

<https://www.gooverseas.com/blog/things-to-consider-before-teach-abroad-with-family>

## **Racial/Ethnic Minorities**

*Diversity Abroad*

<http://www.diversityabroad.com/guides/diversity-and-inclusion-abroad-guide/racial-ethnic-minority-students-abroad>

*Northwestern Study Abroad*

<http://www.northwestern.edu/studyabroad/guide/identity-and-diversity/race-and-ethnicity-abroad/index.html>

*All Abroad*

<http://allabroad.us/>

## Cultural Transitions

Often times when you find yourself in a culture different than your own, you experience a heightened cultural awareness. You may not immediately immerse with the culture and feel a sort of discomfort. Because every person is different, there is no “normal” way to experience this transition. Some students may feel one or all of the below:

### Cultural Exploration

Surprise and excitement of a new culture

### Cultural Fatigue

Stress and Shock from being in a new culture

### Cultural Adjustment

Adopting the beliefs and behaviors of the host culture

It is best to create a written or mental plan to prepare for your transition. Use the below questions to guide your plan and ensure to add any personal aspects:

- ☐ What are your existing skills and how will that make it easier to settle into your new program?
- ☐ Describe a time you asked for help. Whom did you approach? What happened?
- ☐ How do you know when you feel overloaded or stressed? What strategies work for you to feel calmer?
- ☐ Reflect on an experience where everything was new and you figured out/found help to adjust (e.g. starting college, moving). What was the challenge? How did you approach the situation? What worked? Who helped? What was the hardest part?
- ☐ How do you take care of yourself when you run out of energy? How will you practice self-care while abroad?

If at any point during your time abroad you feel anxiety, overwhelmed, overstressed, disconnected, depressed, and/or unhappy, we urge you contact your on-site advisor. These emotions are normal for students in a new environment, and cannot be adequately addressed unless the staff is aware. Another tool to assist with your cultural transition, is having basic knowledge of the country you are headed to. The more you know about the history, culture and society of the country, the more opportunity you will have to learn while on-site. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the country

- ☐ What languages are commonly spoken?
- ☐ What are the main methods of travel in the country?
- ☐ What relationship does the country have to the U.S.?
- ☐ Check CIA factbook country page for a brief but detailed description of the country.
- ☐ Check for travel advisories.
- ☐ Check the Center for Disease Control (CDC) website for information
- ☐ regarding vector-borne illnesses.



## Personal Language Plan

All Study Abroad programs have the potential to promote language learning. This is especially true if you are headed to a country which has a native language other than English. Regardless, even in an English-speaking country there are new words, sentence structures and idioms to learn which can broaden your linguistic horizons.

- ☐ Prior to your trip abroad develop individualized personal goals to help you maximize your learning opportunities. This can be as simple as memorizing and using greetings or as complex as attaining local language fluency.

## Packing Checklist

It is important that you bring appropriate clothing, adequate toiletries and extra accessories and supplies. It may be difficult and costly to purchase many of these items while abroad. Your program will provide you with a country specific packing list. Be sure to read over carefully!

*Consider this:* Put luggage tags on both your checked and carry-on luggage. Pack enough clothes in your carry on to last 3 days in case your luggage is delayed. Remember to check your airline's baggage and weight requirements!

## Final Checklist

One last final check! After all this careful planning, you don't want to forget any of the major items listed above. Go through the final checklist one last time before heading out on your study abroad trip.

- ☐ Luggage with clothing, toiletries and extra accessories and supplies.
- ☐ Passport, Airplane/Train/Bus tickets, Printout of directions for when you arrive.
- ☐ Phone with international phone plan or plan to purchase coverage while abroad.
- ☐ Credit/Debit cards, Traveler's checks ready for use during specific dates and/or plan to withdraw local currency upon arrival.
- ☐ A copy of all important documents left at home with a trusted family or friend



# NEXT STEPS



**Have a safe, enjoyable and enriching experience abroad!**

Please keep the OIE in mind during your journey. We'd love to see any photos or blogs and support you in any possible way. When you return home, please read our Re-entry Handbook. Here you will find information on how to integrate your international education experience into your academic, professional and personal daily life and tips for readjusting to your home community.



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