

Student Guide for Study Abroad



Office of Study Abroad and Outreach
Center for International Studies
Western Illinois University



Office of Study Abroad
& Outreach



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This Guide has been prepared to help you get ready for your study abroad experience. If you complete the steps in a timely manner, you will have an unforgettable adventure! We advise you to take the Guide abroad with you because it will answer many of the questions you may have.

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Part 1 - Completing the application process

Checklist of required steps

- 1. Familiarize yourself with the program of your choice
- 2. Obtain cost information and assess your program finances, including application and deposit fees
- 3. Meet specific deadlines associated with your program
- 4. Complete and sign all online signature documents
- 5. Complete all application questionnaires
- 6. Make plans for health insurance and turn in Medical forms
- 7. Complete, sign and return the Academic Approval Form
- 8. Complete, sign and return all program provider/foreign university forms

1. Familiarize yourself with the program of your choice

Carefully read and study all the information about the programs available to you, and make a decision. Although you cannot eliminate all questions completely, the more you know and understand, the fewer difficulties you will have in finding a program that is right for you.

Make sure you:

- know which program will work best for you; academically and personally;
- have information concerning living costs and various institutional costs;
- are aware of the foreign educational system and grading methods; and
- have correct information about the specific program dates.

Many more questions will occur to you as you ponder your future study abroad experience. When they arise, be sure to ask your Study Abroad Advisor. Our office can also connect you with our student group, Western's Ambassadors for Study Abroad, or other returned students who did programs in a similar location to your program. Answers are not always assured, but we guarantee a willingness to search for them together!

2. Obtain cost information and assess your program finances

Studying abroad can be more expensive than staying at home. Make sure you can afford it and discuss your plans with your family. Seek out scholarship information. Know how much to expect from financial aid. Before you get too far along, you should have a clear picture of the program costs and your ability to meet those costs. Obtain cost information about the program from brochures, the internet and/or cost sheets, and discuss this with your Study Abroad Advisor. Students are responsible for study abroad expenses; **WIU takes no responsibility for costs incurred during your study abroad experience.**

Financial aid

If you are currently eligible for financial aid and you enroll in a program that continues your progress toward a degree, you may use it to help meet the cost of study abroad. The only change in your status

will be that you will operate under a 'unique' budget submitted to the Financial Aid Office by the Study Abroad Advisor.

The amount of aid will be based on several factors:

- the cost of your study abroad program
- your level of eligibility
- your level in school (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, etc.)
- any scholarships you (may) receive

There are some restrictions on what financial aid can cover. As financial aid packages are based on the individual, any specific questions should be addressed to your Financial Aid Advisor.

Scholarships/grants

There are scholarships available for study abroad, both locally and nationally. Many of the national scholarships are competitive and require significant time for planning, writing and revising essays, and obtaining recommendations. Most scholarship application deadlines occur long *before* program deadlines, so **do not delay the search**. If you currently hold a WIU scholarship, you should check with the WIU Scholarship Office in Sherman Hall 308 (309-298-2001) to see if your scholarship can be applied to the selected study abroad program. The Office of Study Abroad and Outreach also has many resources for study abroad scholarships. Please set up an appointment with your study abroad advisor to discuss scholarship opportunities and application processes. Your study abroad advisor will support you throughout the scholarship application process. Here is a link to some scholarship information: <https://wiu-sa.terradotta.com/?go=scholarships>

3. Meet the priority dates

Please submit all WIU and program application materials to your Study Abroad Advisor before the priority dates stated below. Everything will be checked thoroughly before being mailed, and copies will be placed in your study abroad file. *It is your responsibility to make sure that all materials are complete and have been received on time!*

Completed applications (both for WIU and your specific program) must be submitted to your online application no later than:

October 1	for Spring semester programs
March 1	for Summer, Fall and Academic Year programs

Some programs may have earlier deadlines! Please contact your Study Abroad Advisor to find out which deadline applies to you.

4. Complete and sign all online signature documents

Here is a list of the signature documents you will need to complete on your online application:

- Agreement and Releases form
- Release of Information Form
- Illegal Drug Use Policy Form
- Participant Information Form
- Health Insurance
- Student Guide review

5. Complete all application materials and questionnaires

You will be required to complete the following materials and questionnaires. The hours and GPA material and the student judicial record will be acquired by the Office of Study Abroad and Outreach.

- Application fee and deposit
- Emergency Information
- Health insurance questionnaire (different from the signature document!)
- Pre-departure RSVP for both student and parent
- Proof of passport and passport photos
- Statement of Purpose
- Study Abroad goals
- Academic approval form

Please note: check with your Study Abroad Advisor before completing any online forms for the program provider or foreign university!!

6. Make plans for Health Insurance and turn in medical forms

You are required to have health insurance for any of the programs offered through the Office of Study Abroad and Outreach. You have the option of using WIU health insurance or health insurance through the International Medical Group (IMG). Please note that if you are currently covered under your parent or guardian's health insurance *it CANNOT be applied toward a study abroad program*. Please contact your study abroad advisor if you are unsure which plan to choose.

7. Complete, sign and return the Academic Approval Form

Academic credit

Academic credit is central to your study abroad experience. You must maintain fulltime status at both WIU and your host institution. For a semester program, undergraduates must be minimally enrolled for the equivalent of 12 WIU semester hours, and graduates for a minimum of 9 hours. However, your host institution may require you to be enrolled for more hours, to fulfill their fulltime status requirements.

By completing the Academic Approval Form with your study abroad advisor, the foreign courses will be equated to WIU courses, and you will be pre-registered at WIU; later, *you* will register for

the foreign courses at the host institution. This process assures full recognition of credits earned abroad. ***The foreign grades will count as WIU grades (after conversion) and will be calculated into your GPA.***

Departments have the ability to equate a foreign course directly to a WIU course, but they can also award WIU credit for unique, non-WIU courses. Each department can use special course numbers reserved exclusively for study abroad. These 279/379/679 course numbers may be used when a foreign course has no direct WIU equivalent, yet the department is willing to grant you the credit. Graduate students may count only 6 hours of 679 courses toward degree requirements. See also 'Process' below.

Academic approval process

1. The process begins with program approval by your Study Abroad Advisor. This includes exploring and discussing your course options, collecting relevant foreign course descriptions.
2. Next, you or your Study Abroad Advisor will take the foreign course information to the Chair of each department where you are seeking credit. He/she will determine equivalencies to WIU courses.
3. Once equivalencies have been determined, your Study Abroad Advisor will prepare the Academic Approval Form.

Substituting 279/379/679 courses for required classes (see above): if a department accepts 279/379/679 courses in place of a required major/minor course, the Chair will complete the box on the back of the Academic Approval Form and will designate which class the 279/379/679 course replaces.

4. You must meet with your Academic Advisor to discuss the coursework you plan to take while abroad. Your Academic Advisor understands your degree plans and will help you to determine if the courses you have selected meet your requirements. Your Academic Advisor must sign the form and make sure *you* sign it as well (on the back).
5. When you have completed this process, return the form to your Study Abroad Advisor by the application deadline. The Study Abroad Advisor will sign the form and send it to the Registrar.

Uncertain what classes to take abroad?

Talk to your Study Abroad Advisor and your Academic Advisor. Also, if a program's course offerings are unavailable, WIU can pre-register you for OVST (Overseas Studies). This allows you to register now and select your courses during the registration period at the foreign institution. As soon as you can register at the foreign university, you have to consult your Study Abroad Advisor about the courses you wish to take, as they need to be equated to WIU courses first! **It is your responsibility to know how they might affect your degree progress.**

1. **Apply for a passport (if applicable)**

If you already have a passport, make sure it will still be valid: most foreign countries require passports to be valid for six months after your time abroad. If you need to apply for a passport, either go to the Courthouse (for Macomb: first floor, east end, Mon-Fri, 8 AM-4 PM; no appointment needed), or to the Post Office (for Macomb: 205 S. Randolph St; you must call for an appointment: 833-5593). Detailed information about the application process and requirements can be found in your acceptance packet, as well as on the U.S. State Department website: <http://travel.state.gov/passport>.

Passport processing time may take 6-8 weeks. Therefore, you should apply early, especially if your program requires a student visa; you will need your passport for the visa application. You should always check the U.S. State Department website for current waiting times. Expedited processing is possible, but for an extra charge.

2. **Apply for a student visa (if applicable)**

YOU are responsible for finding out if you need a visa. Know if you must apply for the visa yourself or if the program provider will request it for you. Also, find out whether you need to obtain it while still in the U.S. or whether you can get it after you arrive in the host country.

Visas are issued by the host country (Consulate or Embassy). Each country has different rules and fees. Most likely, you will need a letter of acceptance from the foreign institution/program provider. If required by the Consulate, the Office of Study Abroad will also provide you with a letter stating that you are a registered WIU student and will return here after your study abroad term.

Some countries require a medical examination (some even require an AIDS test). Fees and processing times (from a week to three months) vary widely. Most countries require you to go to the consulate/embassy in person, but some will have you send your passport to them. The process could easily take two or three weeks. Therefore, make sure that you have enough time for the consulate/embassy to return your passport to you prior to departure. Call the nearest consulate of your host country or visit www.embassyworld.com for more information.

Part 2 - Preparing for departure

Checklist of required steps

- 1. Make your travel plans
- 2. Supply your Study Abroad Advisor with copies of passport, visa and flight itinerary
- 3. Attend the mandatory pre-departure meeting(s)
- 4. Things to take care of before leaving WIU
- 5. Make financial arrangements
- 6. Packing
- 7. Health insurance and health information
- 8. Familiarize yourself with your host country
- 9. Set up a communication plan
- 10. Familiarize yourself with your host country

1. Make your travel plans

Before booking, make sure you know when the host institution/program provider wants you to arrive, and when you should leave after your study abroad experience. Some program providers (like AIFS or GlobalLinks) give you the option of having discounted (group) airfare as part of your program fee.

If you are arranging your own travel, it is worthwhile to do some research on the many travel websites. A short list of these can be found on page 14. Also check the airlines' websites directly, and consult a local travel agent. Reserve tickets as early as possible - rates usually rise the closer you get to your departure date. Also, be sure to find out whether you will be met at the airport, and/or what arrival instructions the host institution/program provider may have for you.

2. Supply your Study Abroad Advisor with copies of passport, visa and flight itinerary

We need the following information to complete your file: (1) a copy of your passport; (2) a copy of your visa, as required; and (3) a copy of your travel itinerary including travel date, departure information, flight number(s), etc. We will keep this information on file.

3. Attend the mandatory pre-departure meeting(s)

The Office of Study Abroad will announce one or more MANDATORY pre-departure meetings, depending on the program of your choice. It is very important to attend these meetings, so that you are well prepared for your study abroad experience. The Office of Study Abroad staff cannot instruct each student individually.

Failure to attend the meeting(s) or make appropriate alternative arrangements will result in the postponement or possible cancellation of your study abroad participation.

4. Things to take care of before leaving WIU

Before you leave WIU for your study abroad experience, remember to do the following:

- If you live in a residence hall and are studying abroad during the Spring semester, go to University Housing and Dining (Seal Hall) and cancel the residence hall contract. Study abroad is an acceptable reason and will not incur a contract breakage penalty. At the same time, find out what you need to do to reserve space when you return.
- Clear all charges with Billing and Receivables; the Office of Study Abroad cannot register you or update your foreign registration if there is a Hold or any other financial encumbrance on your student account.
- List important people/offices and addresses -especially e-mail- such as your Study Abroad Advisor, your Academic Advisor, the Housing Office, the Financial Aid Office, etc. in the back of this Guide and take the Guide with you.
- Know your WIU e-mail address and password; it is the only e-mail address used for communicating important information to you while you are abroad. If you don't know or have lost your password, contact University Technology at (309) 298-1177 or wiu.edu/utech.
- The annual renewal for financial aid comes every year starting in January. If you will be abroad in January and want to renew, go to the Financial Aid Office prior to leaving campus. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for the following year will be available in December. If you fail to pick up a copy, you can renew the FAFSA application via the WIU web site: www.fa.wiu.edu. If you are unable to access the web abroad, send a request letter directly to Financial Aid, Western Illinois University, 1 University Circle, Macomb, Illinois 61455-1390 USA, and a FAFSA will be sent to you.
- Take some pictures of WIU along! You will meet people abroad who will enjoy seeing pictures of an American university.
- Take along a WIU view book (available in the Admissions Office, Sherman Hall 115). It provides handy information and pictures of your home school.
- Take along a copy of your study abroad registration so you can remember how you are registered at WIU.

It is important that you communicate with your Study Abroad Advisor regularly. This can correct issues before they become problems. Our goal is to ensure a successful study abroad experience.

5. Make financial arrangements

Moving money across international boundaries can be complex. Commonly used financial arrangements include:

Debit and credit cards

Electronic banking is becoming increasingly desirable and popular around the world. More and more students are going abroad with credit cards, debit cards, or a combination of both. You will need a personal account if you want to use a card to obtain cash from foreign ATMs. You must be the primary cardholder to use your ATM card abroad.

Check with your bank to see:

- a) if you can use your debit card in a foreign ATM
- b) if your bank is willing to waive the fees for using an ATM other than their own
- c) if you will need a PIN code for your credit card. You may need this PIN code to purchase train tickets or merchandise in stores with a credit card. Be aware that credit cards may not be as widely accepted in your host country as they are in the U.S., so you may find yourself using an ATM more often than here. Also, your credit card company may charge a conversion fee on international transactions. Researching different U.S. bank and credit card company policies can pay off.

Let your bank and your credit card company know when and where you will study abroad. They will be less likely to block your card(s) for security reasons, if notified of your travel plans.

Cash

You may want to take a small amount of cash (in the foreign currency and some U.S. Dollars), just to get you through the first couple of days. This gives you time to locate ATMs, and helps avoid problems such as banks being closed for a national holiday or the weekend. Be aware, however, that it can be difficult to locate foreign currency here in Illinois. You may have to purchase some at the U.S. airport, which is not ideal for exchange rates and fees.

Electronic transfer of funds

If you study abroad for an entire academic year, you may choose to open a temporary or student account in a host country bank. This will allow you to transfer funds electronically. In addition, having a local account will be more convenient. If you are in remote areas, a local account may be accepted before a credit card, debit card, or traveler's checks. Ask your local bank about wire transfer policies and any possible fees.

Other financial arrangements include the following:

Joint checking account or power of attorney

If you retain a U.S. checking account, you need someone here to manage it - to make deposits or arrange fund transfers. Inquire about giving a parent or guardian power of attorney to authorize such transactions. You could also make your parent or a friend co-owner of your personal account while you are abroad.

Processing of financial aid

Make some detailed financial plans if you are expecting financial aid to help fund your study abroad experience. Financial aid is received at the beginning of WIU terms, and you may already be abroad. The aid is deposited into your WIU student account. After appropriate WIU charges have been subtracted, the remainder will be directly deposited in your bank account. Make sure you have Direct Deposit Authorization (DDA) set up; you can do so on STARS. For more information about financial aid, visit www.fa.wiu.edu.

6. Packing

Luggage

You will want to contact your airline to confirm their luggage policies as these vary from airline to airline. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has implemented restrictions on items allowed through airport security. Visit their website (www.tsa.gov), to find the most current 'restricted and prohibited items' list.

Packing Tips

Remember that you have to 'drag around' what you pack. Take fewer clothes and plan to wash more often. A useful, but challenging rule of thumb is: lay out everything that you plan to take on the bed, and then cut it in half! For some tips on packing light, check out 'The Art and Science of Travelling Light' at www.onebag.com.

Here are some tips for securing valuables:

- *Valuables* - don't carry them in one place.
- *Essential documents* - pack essential documents in your carry-on bag and keep a copy in a different place.
- *Cash* - never carry large amounts of cash; rather, take some traveler's checks. Exchange one of them for foreign currency at a money exchange in the U.S. airport before you leave (in case the currency exchanges at your destination are closed).

- *Credit and debit cards* - keep a separate list of the card numbers and emergency telephone numbers in a safe place in case your cards are lost or stolen. Leave a duplicate list with a family member or friend.
- *Insurance* - carry the WIU insurance card in a safe place.
- *Luggage* - mark your luggage distinctively (e.g., a strip of colored tape). Write your name and home address on the luggage tag and place this information inside the bags as well.
- *Medications* - take copies of your prescriptions with you, including the prescription for your eyeglasses. Keep prescription medicines in the original bottles.
- *Extra identification* - include extra passport pictures, a copy of your passport (picture page) as well as a certified copy of your birth certificate in case your passport is lost or stolen. Leave a duplicate list with your family. Report the loss to the local police, get written confirmation of the report, and take the above documents to the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate to apply for a replacement.
- *Ticket* - make a copy of your ticket/flight information (include all flights), and the name/address of the issuing agent. Leave a duplicate list with a family member or friend.

7. Health insurance and health information

You are required to be covered under WIU Student Health Insurance or IMG Health Insurance for the term you are participating in a study abroad program. We do not accept other providers. If you are already covered by a parent or guardian's health insurance, you **will** still need to choose one of these choices. If you would like more information or have questions about which choice will work the best for your program, ask your study abroad advisor.

It is important to address the following before you leave:

Identify health needs

Share your health needs when you apply for a program and make housing arrangements. Describe known allergies, disabilities, treatments, and medical needs, so that adequate arrangements can be made. Resources and services vary widely by country and region, so enlist the help of your Study Abroad Advisor in making such arrangements.

Check health advisories

Find out about immunization requirements and recommendations for your host country and check on any regional health or medical advisories. Ask questions such as:

- What illnesses are endemic to the region?
- What precautions are recommended to avoid sexually transmitted diseases?
- What are the customs, beliefs, and laws of the host country concerning sexual behavior and the use of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs?
- How safe for consumption is the public water supply in the host country?
- What laws govern the import of medications and contraceptives?

Answers to many of these questions can be obtained from:

- your personal health care provider
- Beu Health Center (309-298-1888)
- McDonough County Health Department (phone 309-837-9951—call at least two weeks in advance)
- Center for Disease Control & Prevention (www.cdc.gov/travel)
- State Department Overseas Citizens Emergency Center (travel.state.gov)
- Mobility International for travelers with disabilities (www.miusa.org)

Assess emotional health and lifestyle at home

By going abroad, you will not leave personal problems behind. Take time to assess your own health and behavior patterns. If you have certain fears or phobias, confront them before you leave home. However, other lifestyle tendencies may be less obvious. Be aware that travel may increase rather than reduce tendencies you may have, and could lead to a crisis while you are away from home. Do not expect other cultures to view alcohol consumption the way it is viewed in the U.S.

Pack a medical kit

You should always travel with an emergency kit with items such as:

- band-aids
- sunscreen and sunburn ointment
- anti-diarrhea medication
- anti-bacterial ointment
- pain reliever
- any prescription medications you take

Prepare for airport and border security

While carrying prescription drugs, be aware that customs officials are looking for illegal drugs. Carry the prescription from your doctor and keep the medication in the original containers. Be prepared for and be patient with airport security measures; the procedures are for your protection. For up-to-date security information, visit the Transportation Security Administration website at www.tsa.gov.

8. Familiarize yourself with your host country

Travel publications and books

A good guidebook provides essential information about transportation, accommodation, cultural and historical background, health and safety precautions, maps, etc. Plan to purchase these books before you travel, because it gives you a chance to read up in advance.

Accommodation and transportation

Make full use of public tourist information websites and offices. They can provide information on a variety of services in their city, including a room-finding service. Often, there is a charge if they call ahead to reserve a room for you.

If you plan some backpacking travel, don't mind doing without some conveniences, and you can put up with occasional rules (curfews, making your own bed), then youth hostels will be a bargain.

In many countries, especially Europe and Japan, rail travel is fast, popular, and efficient. Some have outstanding high-speed trains like the TGV in France, the ICE in Germany, and the Shinkansen in Japan. Trains are more expensive than buses, but students can often get discounts with the proper ID card. You can also purchase a Britrail Pass, Eurail Pass, and Japan Rail Pass in the U.S. before departure.

If you want to visit other countries, especially in Europe, check out airlines such as Ryanair or Easyjet; they offer very cheap flights, especially if you book last-minute.

Legal matters

Laws differ from country to country. Knowing the host country restrictions can help prevent problems. If you are uncertain of the propriety of something you would like to do, be observant of others and/or discreetly ask about the customs in the country you are visiting. Also remember that you are still a WIU student and a representative of the university and must adhere to the WIU Student Code of Conduct http://www.wiu.edu/student_services/student_judicial_programs/codeofconduct.php

9. Set up a communication plan

Talk with your family/friends to figure out a plan for communicating. Because you will be far away from home for an extended period of time, it is important to discuss with them what to do in case of a family emergency while you are abroad. This should include what to do if a family member becomes ill or dies. It is also important to consider what your loved ones will do if you are involved in an accident or severe illness while abroad. Perhaps one or both parents should have a current passport for any emergencies.

Although you may want to set up a specific day/time to call, both parties should be aware that events may occur to make that phone call impossible (a train delay, unavailability of an international phone line, etc.). Often, emailing is cheaper and more convenient than making a phone call. You may also want to look into SKYPE. Visit www.skype.com for more information on this service that allows you to talk from computer to computer, or from your computer to a phone.

Useful Websites

U.S. Department of State <http://travel.state.gov>

Bureau of Consular Affairs • passport information • travel safety for students • services and information for American citizens abroad • how Consular officers can help in an emergency • important telephone numbers • links to U.S. Embassies and Consulates worldwide • American citizens services and crisis management

Airport information Airline phone number directory: www.travel-watch.com/airphones.htm
Airport locator: www.loglink.com/airports.asp

Currency converters Oanda: www.oanda.com/converter/classic
Xenon Labs: www.xe.com/ucc

Date, time, weather Date and time anywhere: www.timeanddate.com
Weather: www.weather.com - click on "World"

Travel Governments of the world: www.gksoft.com/govt/en/world.html
Countries of the world: www.infoplease.com/countries.html
STA Travel: www.statravel.com
AESU: www.aesu.com
Thomas Cook: www.thomascook.com
Student Universe: www.studentuniverse.com
Sidestep: www.sidestep.com
Kayak: www.kayak.com
Ryan Air: www.ryanair.com
EasyJet: www.easyjet.com

Health Center for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/travel
World Health Organization: www.who.int/ith

Accommodations Cheap Hostels: www.hostelworld.com

Part 3 - What to do while abroad

Checklist of required steps

- 1. Carry appropriate documents
- 2. Confirm your safe arrival - send your foreign address and phone number within a week
- 3. Send your actual class registration, including any program changes, within 2-3 weeks
- 4. Maintain academic records
- 5. Academic Differences
- 6. Be aware of stress
- 7. Set high standards for your personal behavior
- 8. Become a keen observer
- 9. Exercise appropriate caution
- 10. Stay in touch!

1. Carry appropriate documents

As you cross international borders, you will be required to produce your passport. In addition, some countries will require more information in order to allow entrance on a student visa. ***It is your responsibility to know which documents will be required when entering the foreign country.*** They may include:

- *Student visa* - Most countries require you to obtain a student visa before you arrive.
- *Letter of admission* - Some countries will issue you a student visa at the border when you produce an official admission letter from your host institution.
- *Financial affidavit* - you may be required to present a bank statement or notarized form showing that you have sufficient funds for your period of study abroad.

The WIU Office of Study Abroad and Outreach will also provide you with a letter confirming your registration at WIU. You may have to produce this letter when applying for a visa or when entering your host country. You may also want to make copies of all important documents and keep them in separate luggage in case of emergency.

2. Confirm your safe arrival

If you are traveling independently, make sure you have clear instructions on where to go after arrival. You should always have the name, address and telephone number of a contact person at the host institution/program provider.

Contact your Study Abroad Advisor after you arrive. We want to know that you have arrived safely. Although you are off-campus, you remain a WIU student, so we need to maintain an up-to-date file. Within a week of your arrival or as soon as you have the information, send us your foreign address and your telephone number.

3. Send your actual class registration within 2-3 weeks

As soon as you are registered abroad, you have to confirm your registration with your Study Abroad Advisor. The direct credit system used for study abroad at WIU depends on parallel registrations at home and abroad. It is *your responsibility* to inform your Study Abroad Advisor of your registration as soon as possible! This must include the following:

- List the course number and/or names of any classes you have added (off the list of pre-approved classes).
- List the course number and/or names of any classes you have dropped.
- If a pre-approved course is not available, register for one of your approved back-up courses and let your Study Abroad Advisor know. If none of your back-up courses are available, look for an alternative course, and *send the syllabus to your Study Abroad Advisor immediately*. It is very important that you send the syllabus or description, so your Study Abroad Advisor can try to get the course approved. Approval is not guaranteed.

4. Maintain academic records

Even though you are directly registered for pre-approved study abroad classes, occasionally there are questions, or you may want to petition for special credit for a class upon return from abroad. Be sure to keep adequate records! Keep *all* records from abroad: syllabi, reading lists, reports, papers, notes, journals, essays, etc.

5. Academic differences

U.S. students are comfortable with our system of evaluation which involves class attendance, completing weekly assignments, and being tested frequently with a variety of testing methods (T/F, multiple choice, short answer, etc.). Final examinations often comprise only a portion of the student's grade. In many other cultures -especially those influenced by the British tradition of higher education- the final grade for a course may rest on one's performance in a single essay examination. In other cultures, there may be a completely different system of evaluation. Make sure to check with your provider or school before your study abroad experience about the system of evaluation typically used in courses there. Study abroad is an exciting adventure, but it is also an academic challenge which will be reflected in your WIU grades when the semester is completed. Your foreign grades will count as WIU grades (after conversion) and will be calculated into your GPA.

6. Be aware of stress

Jet lag

If you have not experienced transcontinental flights before, you may be unprepared for jet lag. Jet lag occurs when the time clock changes faster than the 'body' clock. It results in extreme tiredness, plus the overwhelming desire to fall asleep when you want to stay awake, and to remain alert when you want to sleep. The condition can persist for up to a week after arrival. Help your body adjust during this period by eating nutritious food, drinking plenty of non-alcoholic fluids, trying to adapt to the local daily routine immediately, and getting plenty of rest.

Culture shock

Culture shock is a condition that strikes almost everyone who leaves home for an extended time period. It is the emotional effect of numerous changes in values, habits and lifestyles that you experience by entering an unfamiliar culture. It can leave you impatient, irritable, and depressed. How do you know it is culture shock? You will know when the host society ceases to please you. The trouble is, you are usually unaware of the numerous subtle cultural differences that are bombarding you daily, including unusual smells, sounds, and especially manners of human interaction (Why don't they smile? Why are they always staring at me?). These differences undermine your sense of well-being.

Studies have revealed that there is a *pattern in culture shock*. It begins as initial exuberance, followed by depression and, eventually, equilibrium. It is during the depression period (you may view this as homesickness) that you must be on guard and not allow yourself to react foolishly or improperly. Instead, remind yourself that your homesickness is part of a natural pattern and that it will pass more quickly if you accept the differences and overcome the temptation to be critical and judgmental of the host culture.

7. Set high standards for your personal behavior

Remember your unique status as a representative of WIU and the United States. You are never completely anonymous, even though you do not know anyone. Like it or not, people label other people until they get to know them. Stereotyping is universal. That means that people are going to stereotype *you* initially. Until they get to know you, you're *just* an "American" in their mind. And you may be the

first American student they have ever met. Unfortunately, Americans can be typecast because the Hollywood movie culture is so widespread. Everything you do will be compared with someone's stereotype, so remember that you cannot be anonymous just because you are abroad. Be a diplomat at all times.

Avoid reinforcing or creating negative stereotypes:

- Become a 'people watcher'. Become observant at an intense new level!
- Be flexible. Remain true to yourself, but learn to bend (Eat their food without wincing. You may soon learn to love it! Shake hands often, even if you're not used to it, etc.).
- Join various student activities. Force yourself to reach out more than you did at home. How often did you reach out to an international student at WIU before you left Macomb? Now you are in their shoes!
- Do not limit yourself to American friends. How do you feel when you see foreign students, ethnic groups, or cliques of friends walking, talking, and eating together? Does it seem impossible to break in? If you hope to form acquaintanceships -much less friendships- in the short time you will be in your host country, you must open yourself up to others. The more you speak English, and go out with fellow Americans, the more you send out the message that you prefer American friends. If you cannot stand isolation, avoid the insulation created by an American gang. Avoid moving about in 'parties'. Go out with only one or two friends and venture to meet nationals and make new friends.

8. Become a keen observer

Become a student of the host culture. As a study abroad student, you have entered a foreign culture in order to learn. You will make friends with others if you make a conscious effort to become familiar with the host culture. Go sit in the park or a sidewalk café, and watch. How do people greet one another, visit, and say goodbye? How do friends act? How does one show respect? What seems to be typical dress for the different age groups? Can you spot an American? What are the American giveaways in dress, movement, voice and gesture? Try to behave like a national, using the same silent language, blending into the culture. You might not be mistaken for a native, but that is okay.

Avail yourself of every opportunity to learn, including excursions and private tourist experiences. Educational travel should be part of your study abroad experience. Keep a journal/diary of your travels and observations. It will provide you with a running chronology of where you have been and will serve as a forum for reflecting on insights you have had. Later, you will benefit from the notes you made when your memory of specific events begins to fade.

9. Exercise appropriate caution

Keen observation is for your own protection. Be careful at all times while abroad. Your physical and emotional safety are involved, so do not take foolish risks. Although alcohol may be legal at a younger age abroad, its use and abuse is often tied to being a victim of crime, violence and injury. Drug use abroad can result in severe consequences- plan on being treated as guilty (in jail) until proven innocent outside the U.S.

Always carry the address/phone number of the U.S. embassy/consulate and your foreign address. Know the word for 'Help' in the foreign language. Stay away from demonstrations or large groups of people. Remember that you are experiencing the host country's culture, not taking American culture there. This means not wearing a lot of American-defined clothing (e.g., American flag t-shirts).

Be especially cautious about your sexual behavior and practices. Observe the host culture carefully, as sexual behavior varies widely from country to country. Be careful to avoid situations that can be physically or emotionally threatening. While you are in an unfamiliar environment, take all necessary precautions, such as locking your door at all times. If you become intimate with someone, practice caution. Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) know no borders, and some, like AIDS and Human Papilloma Virus (Genital Warts), are life-threatening, so act accordingly.

10. Stay in touch!

Send us your pictures, thoughts on your experience, and observations you make about your host country and host institution. We are here to help and support you through every phase of your study abroad experience!

Part 4 - Returning home

Checklist of required steps

- 1. Have the official transcript sent to your Study Abroad Advisor
- 2. Pay all debts before departure
- 3. Retain class work
- 4. Evaluate your experience
- 5. Be aware of reverse culture shock
- 6. Share your international experience and join WASA!
- 7. Utilize your experience for your future education and career
- 8. Participate in further international experiences

1. Have the official transcript sent to your Study Abroad Advisor

Make arrangements to have your transcript sent back to WIU. As soon as possible, find out which office at your host institution will prepare your final grade report. Ask the host institution to send your *official* transcript/grade report to:

*Office of Study Abroad and Outreach
Center for International Studies
Western Illinois University
Horrabin Hall 08, 1 University Circle
Macomb, Illinois 61455-1390
USA*

Incompletes

While you are still abroad, your parents may receive a WIU grade report with an entire semester of Incompletes and an 'S' for OVST at zero credit. *Do not be alarmed.* This is only a temporary status while WIU awaits the arrival of your official transcript from the host institution. Processing the grades is dependent on the foreign university, international mail, and the regular WIU process for changing Incompletes to actual grades. It may take a month or two. If the delay is longer, contact the Office of Study Abroad.

2. Pay all debts before departure

A few students have inadvertently left unpaid bills, such as library fines, etc., at their host institutions. As a result, their grade report was held until they sent a check back to the host institution to clear the foreign debt. ***Students are responsible for all study abroad expenses.***

All institutions function the same way: unpaid bills mean no transcript, and no transcript means no WIU credit until you pay any debt. In addition, WIU has the authority to delay further registration at WIU until these bills are paid. If Incompletes are not replaced with grades, they will eventually lapse to failing grades.

3. Retain class work

After you finish classes, make sure that you take/send all your important papers (syllabi, reading lists, papers, exams, etc.) home. You want to remember what you have learned. Moreover, the records may have future uses. Sometimes students have petitioned for special status or even re-numbered a specific course abroad. When this occurs, this class work become crucial because Department Chairs may need to review the course material before making a decision.

4. Evaluate your experience

Take a few moments to fill out the study abroad evaluation provided to you when you return home. We depend on your input in order to better advise future students.

5. Be aware of reverse culture shock

You have been treated to a very unique and personal growth experience in which you have consciously and unconsciously compared your native culture with one or more foreign cultures. You have successfully lived in a foreign culture, absorbed their linguistic qualities, their unique architecture and cuisine, and their lifestyle. When you come home, there will be things that you will miss, and nobody else at home will appreciate your perspective. Be prepared for a minor -or major- jolt as you adjust to your native culture.

6. Share your international experience!

We love to hear your stories and look at your pictures! Also, plan to get involved after you return. This is the best way to make reverse culture shock less severe. There is a unique group of other U.S. and international WIU students who understand your perspective perfectly; they have experienced it too or have just arrived in the United States and are beginning to live through a similar experience to what you just completed. You have so much in common with them - so why not share your friendship with these students? Sign up as a volunteer for International Student Orientation, or help develop Western's Ambassadors for Study Abroad (WASA). Join the WIU International Friendship Club, or become a Conversation Partner. Help with our Study Abroad Fairs, the International Bazaar, classroom presentations and special events. Join Phi Beta Delta International Honor Society to participate in internationally focused events in Macomb. For more information on any of these programs, contact your Study Abroad Advisor.

7. Utilize your experience for your future education and career

Many employers are looking for candidates who have international and intercultural experiences. However, simply stating that you studied abroad on your resume is not enough. Visit the Career development office in Memorial Hall 125 (309) 298-1838 to learn more about how to talk about your experience in cover letters and job interviews with potential employers.

8. Participate in further international experiences

There are many opportunities available to students who want to go abroad. If you decide that you are interested in going abroad again, stop by our office to talk to an advisor about opportunities available with Fulbright, Peace Corps, internships and other programs. There are some programs available that are fully funded.

Part 5 - Miscellaneous information

- 1. Important academic dates
- 2. The Office of Study Abroad
- 3. Non-discrimination statement
- 4. Important addresses in the U.S.
- 5. Important addresses abroad
- 6. Conversion tables

1. Important academic dates

March 1 or October 1

Deadline for applying to study abroad. All WIU and program application forms have to be in the Office of Study Abroad by that date. Some programs may have earlier deadlines!

August, January, and June

Beginning dates of WIU Fall, Spring, and Summer terms. These dates can be important even if the starting date abroad is different. You will receive WIU bills after the tenth day of classes at WIU. Also, financial aid disbursements are sent to students after the tenth day of classes at WIU.

November and April

Pre-registration periods. On-campus students will register for the next term at this time. If you are concerned about pre-registration while abroad, please contact your Academic Advisor via e-mail; he/she can then pre-register you in absentia. Your Study Abroad Advisor cannot register you!

November, April, and July

Freezing of files. If you changed classes abroad without contacting your Study Abroad Advisor, changes can no longer be made after the university files are 'frozen' for that particular term. This happens in approximately mid-November, mid-April, and mid-July.

December, May, and July

Ending dates for WIU Fall, Spring, and Summer terms. At the end of each term, grades for on-campus courses are submitted. You are also registered at WIU even though you are abroad. Your on-campus courses will all receive an 'I' (Incomplete) until grades are received from abroad. In spite of form letters, you should not worry - Incompletes will be removed once transcripts have been received from abroad.

2. The Office of Study Abroad and Outreach

Your Study Abroad Advisor is your primary contact with Western Illinois University while abroad. Our office is here to help you while you are away. If there are any questions about courses, financial aid, registration, billing, or any other problem, please call your Study Abroad Advisor **first** at (309) 298-2504. When you notify us of the issue, we will work with you to get the problem solved.

However, there are a few things that the Office of Study Abroad and Outreach cannot do. For example, we cannot give your address or other information to any unauthorized person. We cannot pay your bills, arrange your housing upon return, or register you for the next term. By supplying you with this Guide, we hope to assist you in making the study abroad experience positive and productive.

3. Non-discrimination statement

Western Illinois University is an equal opportunity educational institution and does not discriminate in any aspect of its educational programs or activities on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, disability, or status as a disabled veteran.

4. Important addresses in the U.S.

Office of Study Abroad and Outreach, Center for International Studies
Western Illinois University
Horrabin Hall 08, University Circle
Macomb, IL 61455
Phone: (309) 298 2504
Fax: (309) 298 2405
Web: www.wiu.edu/studyabroad

Your Study Abroad Advisor: _____

E-mail: _____

Phone: _____

Your Academic Advisor: _____

E-mail: _____

Phone: _____

Your Financial Aid Advisor: _____

E-mail: _____

Phone: _____

5. Important addresses abroad

International Office(r):

Contact person _____
Address _____
E-mail _____
Phone _____

Your nearest U.S. Embassy/Consulate:

Contact person _____
Address _____
E-mail _____
Phone _____

Your place of residence abroad:

Contact person _____
Address _____
E-mail _____
Phone _____

Other:

Contact person _____
Address _____
E-mail _____
Phone _____

Other:

Contact person _____
Address _____
E-mail _____
Phone _____

Other:

Contact person _____
Address _____
E-mail _____
Phone _____

6. Conversion tables

International shoe size conversion chart

Europe		36	37	37.5	38	38.5	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46.5	48
Mexico					4.5	5	5.5	6	6.5	7	7.5	9	10	11	12.5
Japan	M	22.5	23	23.5	24	24.5	25	25.5	26	26.5	27.5	28.5	29.5	30.5	31.5
	W	22	22.5	23	23.5	24	24.5	25	25.5	26	27	28	29	30	31
U.K.	M	4	4.5	5	5.5	6	6.5	7	7.5	8	8.5	10	11	12	13.5
	W	3.5	4	4.5	5	5.5	6	6.5	7	7.5	8	9.5	10.5	11.5	13
Australia	M	4	4.5	5	5.5	6	6.5	7	7.5	8	8.5	10	11	12	13.5
	W	4.5	5	5.5	6	6.5	7	7.5	8	8.5	9	10.5	11.5	12.5	14
U.S. & Canada	M	4.5	5	5.5	6	6.5	7	7.5	8	8.5	9	10.5	11.5	12.5	14
	W	6	6.5	7	7.5	8	8.5	9	9.5	10	10.5	12	13	14	15.5

International clothing size conversion chart

Women's dresses and suits (Misses)

Europe	32	34	36	38	40	42	44	46	48	50
UK	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22
Japan	5	7	9	11	13	15	17	19	21	23
USA	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20

Women's dresses and suits (Junior)

Europe	28	30	32	34	36	38	40	42
UK	3	5	7	9	11	13	15	17
Japan	0	2	4	6	8	10	12	14
USA	1	3	5	7	9	11	13	15

Men's suits, coats and sweaters

Europe	42	44	46	48	50	52	54	56	58
UK	32	34	36	38	40	42	44	46	48
Japan	S	S	S	M	L	L	LL	LL	LL
USA	32	34	36	38	40	42	44	46	48

Men's dress shirts (collar sizes)

Europe	36	37	38	39	41	42	43	44
UK	14	14.5	15	15.5	16	16.5	17	17.5
Japan	87	91	97	102	107	112	117	122
USA	14	14.5	15	15.5	16	16.5	17	17.5

Men's pants

U.S. (inches)	28	30	32	34	36	38	40	42	44	46	48
Int'l (cms)	71	76	81	86	91.5	96.5	101.5	106.5	112	117	122

Temperature conversion**Convert °F to °C**

- subtract 32
- divide by 1.8

Example: to convert 80°F

$$80 - 32 = 48$$

$$48 \div 1.8 = 26.66^{\circ}\text{C}$$

Convert °C to °F

- multiply by 1.8
- add 32

Example: to convert 27°C

$$27 \times 1.8 = 48.6$$

$$48.6 + 32 = 80.6^{\circ}\text{F}$$

Oven heats

250°F (120°C) = very slow

350°F (180°C) = moderate

450°-500° F (230°-260°C) = very hot

300°F (150°C) = slow

375°F (190° C) = moderately hot

325°F (165°C) = moderately slow

400° F (205°C) = hot

Electrical current

The standard U.S. current is 110 volts, 60 cycles alternating current (A.C.). Many other countries operate on 220-240 volts. U.S. appliances *will not work* abroad without a 110/220 converter, unless they are dual voltage. You will still need a plug adapter for these devices. Many retail stores, such as Walmart, and Radio Shack, carry converters and adapters that will work on most electrical appliances.

Metric conversion

Length		Area	
1 millimeter (mm)	0.0397 inches	1 square cm (cm ²)	0.1550 in ²
1 centimeter (cm)	0.397 inches	1 square meter (m ²)	1.1960 in ²
1 meter (m)	1.0936 yards	1 hectare (ha)	2.4711 acres
1 kilometer (km)	0.6214 mile	1 square km (km ²)	0.3861 mile ²
1 inch (in)	25.4 mm	1 square inch (in ²)	645.16 mm ²
1 foot (ft)	0.3048 m	1 square foot (ft ²)	0.093 m ²
1 yard (yd)	0.9144 m	1 square yard (yd ²)	0.8361 m ²
1 mile	1.6093 km	1 square mile (mile ²)	2.59 km ²
Volume/Capacity		Mass (Weight)	
1 cubic cm (cm ³)	0.0610 in ³	1 gram (g)	0.0353 oz
1 liter (l)	0.2642 U.S. gallons	1 kilogram (kg)	2.2046 lb
1 cubic foot (ft ³)	0.0283 m ³	1 ounce (oz)	28.350 g
1 U.S. gallon	3.7854 l	1 pound (16 ounces)	0.4536 kg

While every attempt has been made to provide accurate information in this Guide, please note that changes can occur at any time. You may need to verify that the information is up to date.