

Congratulations on your decision to study abroad!

This Pre-Departure Orientation (PDO) has several sections which will explore:

PDO1: Introduction

PDO2: Health & Safety

PDO3: Finances, Technology, & Insurance

PDO4: Culture

Please refer to each section in [your study abroad account](#), under the Pre-Departure Orientation headings to complete the entire orientation. You must read all of the PDO content, receive 100% on each quiz, and upload screenshots of each quiz result in the PDO forms in your study abroad student account in order to complete Pre-Departure Orientation requirements.

This Introduction includes information on how to manage WSU business while you're away, and practical tips for studying abroad. Please review the information carefully, then take the quiz in the PDO forms of your study abroad student account.

Pre-Departure Orientation 1: Introduction

Next Steps

Before international learning can begin, there are several steps that must be completed.

1. Apply to your program/host institution.
2. Direct questions to the institution or program contact after you have applied and been accepted, including information on housing, registering for classes, etc.
3. Continue completing all required post-decision materials both through WSU & your particular program.
4. Once you are accepted by your program, you may book your flight, paying attention to the arrival date indicated by the program.
5. Complete your itinerary information in your WSU study abroad online account.
6. Research visa requirements; begin gathering documents for your visa and apply when ready.

WSU Business

As we explain how the process and billing work, it is helpful to understand what type of program you

have chosen. Find your program or institution in the list below to determine the type of program you have chosen.

If you are going to AIFS, API, Arcos, Augsburg, Barcelona SAE, CEA CAPA, CIEE, CIS, DIS, IFSA-Butler, SAI, U of MN, or UW-Platteville...then you are on a **Provider** program.

If you are going to Akita University, Chung-Ang University, Kansai Gaidai, Koblenz Landau University, Kristianstad University, Nursing Clinical Experience in Sweden (Gothenburg), Sophia University, Tamkang University, Toyo University, University of Duesto, University of Hong Kong, or University of Salford...then you are on an **Exchange** program.

If you are going to Hebei University, Queen's University, Sant'Anna Institute, Southern Cross University, or University of Aberdeen...then you are on a **Direct Enroll** program.

Email

Your WSU Email is the official means of communication even while you are abroad. Please ensure that you continue to check it!

Billing and Payments

Billing for program fees/tuition will be placed on your WSU student account.

- Housing charges for **direct enroll/exchange** programs are often charged to the student by the host institution and payable directly to that institution according to their deadline
- Housing charges for **provider** programs are often included in the program fee

Payment deadlines for program fees adhere to the WSU payment schedule

- Please see the [Study Abroad cancellation policies](#) for detailed information.

WSU Registration

For the semester you are abroad, the Study Abroad office will enroll you in a Study Abroad course (STAB).

Semester students: You will register for the next semester just like normal, so check your WSU email. You will receive an email on your assigned date/time with information about how to register for the upcoming semester(s). You will NOT need a code. Confirm selected coursework with your advisor before you leave.

Course Transfers

Keep the syllabi from classes you take abroad. This information is necessary for the Registrar to determine how the course transfers for credit here at WSU.

Grading

Grading and credits will vary country to country. You can check credit number & grading equivalency in your host country:

<https://applications.wes.org/country-resources/resources.asp>

Your grades and credits **WILL transfer back** and will be reflected in your **Transfer GPA** on your transcript.

Remember to **request an official copy of your host institution/partner's transcript** for future use (graduate school, university transfer).

Transcripts can take 3-6 months to arrive and appear in your Degree Audit Report (DARS).

WSU Laptop

Consult [Tech Support's e-Warrior Program](#) page (scroll down to Academic Status, Study Abroad drop-down) to decide whether you'd like to take your WSU laptop abroad.

Housing Information

If you currently live in university housing (residence halls or apartments) and will be studying abroad, you may need to contact the Housing office (housing@winona.edu) to cancel your agreement. See the [Housing cancellation policy](#) for more information, and be sure to check out with your RA. You may be charged an administrative fee for cancelling the agreement. Please provide written documentation that you are studying abroad so you will not be charged an additional cancellation fee. Contact the Housing Office (Kryzsko Commons 230, 507.457.5305, or housing@winona.edu) for cancellation instructions and cancellation fees information.

Extending your Stay

If you plan to extend your Study Abroad experience, please let the Study Abroad office know as soon as possible. We will waive the application fee, but there is paperwork involved for Financial Aid and other credit-transferring arrangements that our office needs to approve.

Graduation

If this is your last semester before you graduate, please make the necessary contacts to determine the required paperwork to be added to the graduation list. Be aware that international transcripts take some time to process and get to WSU. You will be able to walk for graduation, however your DARS and certificate will not be available until after your international transcript has arrived. (IF those credits you are transferring in are needed for you to graduate.)

WSU Policy Links

One of your post-decision materials is a Student Release and Waiver, which is required to be signed in order to participate. Links to WSU's full conduct policies and study away policies can be found below.

- [WSU Conduct & Citizenship Policies](#)
- [WSU Study Away Policies](#)

Practical Information Before Departure

General Visa Application Process

Students all over the globe commonly need to apply for a visa to study in a foreign country.

- *What is a visa?* A visa is permission to enter a country. Some countries require you to apply for a visa for any length of time, while other countries may only require one if you're staying longer than 90 days or six months.
- *Why do I need a visa?* Student visas allow you to study and remain in the country longer than a typical tourist.
- *What does a visa look like?* A student visa is typically a sticker that is placed directly inside of your passport. Some visas may be on a piece of paper attached to your passport, others are issued electronically.
- *Who will get my visa?* You are personally responsible for gathering materials, completing all of the visa application requirements, and turning them in unless otherwise notified.
- *Where do I turn my visa application in?* Some countries require you to turn in and pick up your visa paperwork in person at a consulate (locations vary, but many countries have consulates in Chicago). Other countries require you to mail in your application, or complete one online. Some consulates allow one authorized individual to turn in a group of visa applications.
- *What do I need for a visa?* *Requirements vary depending upon the country.* If your host institution or program has not communicated with you about the requirements, you can always check the State Department website (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel.html>). Some common items include:
 - Completed visa application
 - Passport
 - Passport sized photos (2 x 2)
 - Letter proving international health insurance
 - Evidence of funds
 - In some cases, an FBI background check and a medical certificate may be required

Travel Alerts

The Study Abroad office will monitor all travel warnings and alerts, but you must register yourself for the [STEP \(Smart Traveler Enrollment Program\)](#) through the US Dept of State as well. The State Dept will send real-time updates about health, weather, safety, and security in your country while you are abroad. The embassy or consulate can also contact you if there is an emergency.

Our office also make decisions based on the State Departments advisory level. We will communicate with you via your WSU email if the need arises.

Packing

Pack sensibly in order to travel light. It'll be easier to keep track of your belongings and you'll be less tired dragging them around. It may be helpful to check out some website with tips on how to pack for study abroad, including what not to pack:

- [What to Pack for Study Abroad](#)
- [Study Abroad Packing List](#)

Flights

When can I buy my flight?

Please wait until you receive confirmation of acceptance from the provider or partner institution. Here are some websites students commonly use for international travel. Be sure to compare!

- [Cheapoair.com](#)
- [Google flights](#)
- [Studentuniverse.com](#)
- [Kayak.com](#)
- [Skyscanner.net](#)

When can I arrive?

Please check with the partner or provider for arrival details. If you arrive early, you are responsible for your own housing. There may also be visa and insurance implications.

How can I reduce the environmental impact of my travel?

Consider purchasing carbon offsets for your flight. Many airlines offer this option. Try to book tours or transportation with environmentally responsible companies.

Immunizations

If specific immunizations are required for entry into a particular country, you will be notified when applying at the host university or when applying for your visa.

We recommend checking with your personal health care provider to see if there are any inoculations recommended or required for your program's destination(s).

Mental Health

Mental health is just as important as physical, so if you are in need, please reach out. Minnesota State has partnered with Mantra Health to offer a crisis number & a peer support network while you are abroad. The phone number will depend on your country. Before departure, you should call 1-800-464-2083, email hi@mantrahealth.com, or use the chat function in the Care Hub on the app, and indicate the country you will be in. The Care Operations team will provide you with instructions on accessing crisis support while abroad.

Electricity

Outlets can be different shapes for different countries. You need an adapter in order to fit an American-style plug into an outlet in another country.

Electrical current varies around the world from 100-240 volts; most US devices run on 110V, but some are designed to run on 220V as well.

Check any devices you plan to bring along to see if you'll actually need to bring a converter to run your device in the program destination(s)

Voting While Abroad

In most cases, faculty-led programs do not coincide with elections. If your program does happen to overlap with an election and you'd like to vote while on your program, review the State Departments [Absentee Voting Information for US Citizens Abroad](#).

Power of Attorney

It is helpful to appoint a power of attorney to take care of any legal or financial business you may have while you are away.

Do I need a Power of Attorney while I am abroad?

Many students who are studying, working, or traveling abroad appoint a trusted person to take care of their personal, business, and financial affairs while they are out of the country. It is recommended that all students, especially financial aid students, arrange for a Power of Attorney. Some instances when a Power of Attorney may be necessary are:

- Completing financial aid paperwork
- Handling issues related to some types of financial aid checks
- Processing banking transactions, including checks made payable to you and Winona State University
- Processing insurance transactions

What are the steps to assigning a Power of Attorney?

Granting a Power of Attorney is a legal process that involves the drafting of a document which assigns to another person the power to act as your legal representative (Attorney in Fact) in specific situations. There are two ways to go about assigning Power of Attorney.

The first is to make an appointment with an attorney or other type of legal service to draft a Power of Attorney document. This may require a fee which will cover advice on the legal implications of assigning Power of Attorney, the drafting of a Power of Attorney document, and the notarizing of that document.

The second approach does not require a lawyer's assistance and involves purchasing a generic 17 Power of Attorney form from an office supply store, filling it out yourself, and then having your signature(s) notarized.

Since granting Power of Attorney is a legal process with serious implications, it is strongly recommended that you seek legal advice before drafting a Power of Attorney document.

Note: If someone is currently taking care of your financial paperwork, this does not mean they have Power of Attorney. It may only be granted by completing the legal document with a notarized signature.

Who should I ask to be my Attorney in Fact?

You should select a person you consider trustworthy to make decisions in your best interests and sign on your behalf. Most students select a parent, long-term significant other, or long-term friend. A casual acquaintance is not recommended.

What type of Power of Attorney form do I need?

There are several types of Power of Attorney forms. Students usually only need to complete the statutory short form, as you will most likely limit the powers granted and the duration.

For what period of time should I have a Power of Attorney?

The Power of Attorney should include the entire time you plan to be away, including terms of study, work, and travel.

How far in advance should I begin arranging Power of Attorney?

You should take care of arranging your Power of Attorney well in advance of your departure.

Discount card

You may wish to purchase an International Student Identity Card (ISIC) which can give you discounts on some entry fees, particularly in Europe. However, this card is NOT an official identity card (only your passport or U.S. driver's license are official identity documents). Find out more at <http://www.isic.org/>

Research Your Country!

Get to know the:

- Climate
- Customs (Traditions, Holidays, Meal Time, etc)
- Time Zone (time difference from home)
- Cultural Norms/Taboos
- Clinics/Hospitals/Emergency info

“When in Rome...”

- Consider learning and using the language at your destination.
- Develop friendships with locals or other travelers.
- Be aware of the environmental impact you have on the destination. Keep in mind the saying: "Take only pictures - Leave only footprints". For example, if you're snorkeling, don't step on coral. If you're observing wildlife, don't touch or interact with it. Never litter. Recycle where possible. Be open minded!

Your background

How might your identity impact your experience? DiversityAbroad.com has developed information for students who would identify in any of the categories below at BeGlobalii.com/articles. They've also written Culture & Diversity guides based on country/region. Feel free to explore their site, and/or click on any applicable links below to read more about how your identity can impact your experience.

- [First Generation Students](#)
- [Heritage Seekers \(studying abroad to connect with your ancestry\)](#)
- [LGBTQIA+](#)
- [Students with Disabilities](#)
- [Women](#)

Bias and Discrimination

While abroad, you should make every effort to understand cultural differences, but there may be times when you experience something beyond genuine cultural curiosity.

If you feel you have experienced bias or discrimination, we urge you to discuss it with the appropriate people or resources. Depending upon the situation and cultural context, these may include your resident director, your host university's international education office, local police, and/or the WSU Director of Study Abroad (Susan Pham, spham@winona.edu).

If you are nervous or scared to report the situation, or uncertain who to start with, please contact Susan to discuss the situation or ask for advice on how to proceed.

Pre-Departure Orientation 2: Health and Safety

The following is an introduction to the topics of Health and Safety while at your destination. Please review the information carefully.

Health

You have the best odds of staying healthy while traveling if you:

- have researched your country and come prepared (see "before you go" section below)
- are careful about what you eat and drink
- don't engage in risky behavior that can jeopardize your health

Before You Go

Research your destination to learn about health and safety concerns, as well as the social, cultural, and political situations. If your destination is international, or a US Territory, you can use the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) website](#) to find:

- Which diseases might be prevalent at that destination
- Which vaccinations might be required for travel to or in that destination, including Covid vaccines
- Other information including how to stay healthy and safe

Prescriptions

- Bring sufficient quantities in case you can't get refills at your destination (ask your physician about this)
- Know the generic name
- Carry your prescriptions in their original medication bottles
- Research your destination in advance to make sure that your prescriptions and over-the-counter meds are legal (for example, Ritalin is illegal in Japan; Sudafed is illegal in New Zealand)
- if you need special storage (i.e. refrigeration), check to see that it's available
- Bring extra contacts (and glasses) and the prescription if you have it

Pre-Departure Exam

After you have reviewed the CDC website, you may need to schedule an appointment with a health care provider for a physical exam. When making the appointment, let the doctor's office know where you are traveling so they can have any vaccinations ready. You may be able to use WSU Health Services, your personal physician, or a Travel Clinic.

WSU Health Services

WSU's Health & Wellness Services can do many lab tests for you, as well as provide many vaccinations. Contact Health Services with any questions at 507-457-5160.

Your Personal Physician

You may prefer to visit your personal physician for a health check-up before you travel, to discuss any concerns you may have about Covid and/or other diseases, to get advice about how to stay healthy while traveling, and for vaccinations. However, your personal physician may not know very much about your destination. Make sure you check the CDC website before you visit your doctor!

Travel Clinics

A third option is to visit an International Travel Health Clinic, which is knowledgeable about diseases like Covid and required vaccinations for destinations around the world. The [Minnesota Department of Health website](#) lists all the travel clinics in the state, including options in Rochester and La Crosse.

Food

The food at your destination may be quite different from what you're used to. The local diet may be based on meat, entirely vegetarian, very spicy, or just "odd" by Minnesota standards. Try to give your stomach time to adjust. If possible, include some familiar foods in your diet. Look around for a grocery store that sells some foods that you would eat back home, but also be willing to try new foods in moderation.

The Old Adage: "Peel it - Boil it - Cook it - or Forget it!"

Consult with your program director/host family/locals in your host country for advice about what to eat. When in doubt:

- Peel all fruits and vegetables before eating them; anything that can't be peeled should be cooked thoroughly. This means no green salads at some destinations!
- In areas where sanitation is poor, avoid unpasteurized milk and cheese made from unpasteurized milk.
- In some areas it is unhealthy to eat food sold from stalls on the street. In others, "street food" is fresh and high quality.

Can You Drink The Water?

Find out before you go whether the local tap water is drinkable. The CDC website will provide this information for international/US Territory destinations.

If the tap water isn't drinkable, drink bottled water. Also remember to brush your teeth with bottled water, or water that has been boiled for at least ten minutes. In restaurants, order bottled water and

don't request ice (it is usually made from tap water). If you want to reduce your disposable bottle waste, consider bringing a water purifier such as a SteriPen.

Diarrhea

No matter how careful you are about what you eat and drink, you can still contract diarrhea. Travelers commonly experience this temporarily debilitating illness after a few days in a new country. In most cases, it lasts no longer than about five days, and the only treatment required is to replace lost fluids by drinking bottled water, fruit juice, or carbonated drinks. If diarrhea persists or is severe, please contact your host institution/program provider and ask to see a doctor.

Mental Health

Exercise

Regular exercise will help fight the culture shock blues and speed you through your initial jet lag. If possible with your itinerary, you will feel more energetic and less stressed if you regularly stay active.

Crisis support

Mental health is just as important as physical, so if you are in need, please reach out. Minnesota State has partnered with Mantra Health to offer a crisis number & a peer support network while you are abroad. The phone number will depend on your country. Before departure, you can call 1-800-464-2083, email hi@mantrahealth.com, or use the chat function in the Care Hub app (search in your app store for "Mantra Health"), and indicate the country you will be in. The Care Operations team will provide you with instructions on accessing crisis support and the [peer advisor network](#) while abroad.

While abroad, you can still email hi@mantrahealth.com or use the chat function in the Care Hub app to get the crisis number.

AIDS and Other STDs

In some locations, HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, is a widespread health problem. If that is true at your destination, the CDC website will give you that information. Take the same steps to avoid this disease as you would at home.

- Use a condom if you are sexually active.
- Never share needles or use a needle that has been used before. This applies to ear or body piercing, tattoos, and acupuncture, not just injecting drugs!
- Other sexually transmitted diseases such as syphilis and herpes, are also present worldwide. Use the necessary precautions to avoid these diseases.

Summary

Remember: Staying in good health is up to you.

- Visit the CDC website to learn about health issues in your destination.
- Once you've arrived, stay healthy by eating well and getting sufficient rest.
- If you become ill, take care of yourself by getting the proper care. Don't be afraid to visit a doctor or hospital because you don't speak the local language.
- If you aren't sure what to do, talk to your program provider, your host family, or contact the Study Abroad office (studyabroad@winona.edu).

Safety

Safety & the State Department

If you're traveling internationally, know where your US Consulate is located. Visit the [State Department website](#) and search for your destination(s) to learn more information.

You must enroll yourself in the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#) (STEP) if your destination is outside of the United States, which alerts the nearest US Embassy or Consulate to your presence. By enrolling, the State Department will:

- Keep you informed about safety conditions in your destination
- Contact you in an emergency
- Help family & friends get in touch if needed

Illness or an Emergency

In the event of illness or an emergency, you should do the following IN THIS ORDER:

1. Contact the Program Coordinator on site if on a program provider (such as CIS) or exchange/direct enroll.
2. Contact the WSU Study Abroad office, 507-457-5081 (office hours 8am-4:00pm M-F) studyabroad@winona.edu
3. If after hours, contact WSU Security (507-457-5555).
4. Contact your parents.

Top Five Safety Tips

1. Inform yourself ahead of time about safety issues at your destination.

- Be informed and pay attention to the news.
- Do not participate in demonstrations.
- Always plan where you are going so that you are aware of your surroundings.
- Check out the US State Department [Country-Specific Information](#)
- View the following video: "Know Before You Go" at <https://youtu.be/XgpYhz0awzo>

2. Be prepared to respond to emergencies. Ask yourself these questions:

- Do you carry a list of phone numbers of people to contact in case of emergency?
- Is your cell phone charged and with you at all times?
- What will you do if you are a victim of a crime or are injured?
- What will you do if someone else needs help?

3. Avoid high-risk activities.

- Avoid certain activities like bungee jumping, whitewater rafting, mountain climbing, and other "high-risk" adventures.
- Above all, do NOT at any time ride on a motorcycle.
- The insurance that covers you while you are on study away specifically EXCLUDES these activities from coverage, except when these activities are part of the curriculum. If you have questions about the insurance, please contact the Study Abroad office for clarification (studyabroad@winona.edu).

4. The effects of alcohol and drugs can hurt you.

- Although alcohol may be legal at a younger age abroad, its use and abuse is many times tied to becoming a victim of crime, violence, accident, and/or injury.
- Drug use can result in severe consequences.
- Plan on being treated as guilty (in jail). There is little the university, or a US embassy can do on your behalf in these cases, and the laws in many countries are more severe than at home.
- View the following video: [Health and Safety Abroad](#)
- Policies - Also remember that you must abide by [WSU policies](#) while you are on your WSU study abroad program, including the [WSU Alcohol and Drug Policy](#). Violations of these policies may result in disciplinary action once you return to campus.

5. Be able to communicate at all times.

- Some methods of communication include cell phones, regular phones, email, satellite phones (for remote locations), Skype, Zoom, Whatsapp, etc.
- Always know how to contact people who can help you!
- Keep your cell phone on your person at all times! Don't leave it in a bag with a friend while exploring; have it with you in case you need it or get separated from your friends.

Culturally Appropriate Behavior

Appropriate behavior for young women and men varies from country to country, and even within some countries. For instance, you may find that behavior and dress that are acceptable in major cities are inappropriate in rural areas, or vice versa. Observe how local women and men your age act and dress, and try to do likewise.

Observing Behavior

In particular, observe how young people interact with each other. In some countries, simple friendliness on the part of a US woman may be interpreted as flirtation to a man from a country where gender roles are more rigid than in the US. Likewise, the way a US man interacts with a local woman may be perceived as aggressive when it was only intended to be friendly. In many parts of the world, US women and men are perceived as promiscuous. This may be a stereotype, but remember it derives from the images that are projected by US movies and media.

Bias and Discrimination

While abroad, even though you have made every effort to understand cultural differences, there may be times when you experience inappropriate behavior.

If you feel you have experienced bias or discrimination, we urge you to discuss it with the appropriate people or resources. Depending upon the situation and cultural context, these may include your resident director, your host university's international education office, local police, and/or the WSU Director of Study Abroad (Susan Pham, spham@winona.edu).

If you are nervous or scared to report the situation, or uncertain who to start with, please contact Susan to discuss the situation or ask for advice on how to proceed.

Sexual Harassment

In spite of your efforts to be culturally appropriate, you may still find you are harassed.

In some countries, women are routinely whistled at, pinched, and even grabbed, especially foreign women. Young men may be harassed by locals who have stereotypes about US Americans. If you are sexually harassed, do the following:

- get to a safe place as soon as possible
- contact on-site program provider support staff and/or the local police

Sexual Assault

Here is the definition of sexual assault used at WSU: "Sexual assault means an actual, attempted, or threatened sexual act with another person without that person's consent." This includes the acts "in which there is force, expressed or implied, or use of duress or deception upon the victim".

If you are sexually assaulted:

- Get to a safe place as soon as possible.
- Immediately contact on-site support staff
- Contact the Study Abroad office or WSU Security if after office hours.
- Evidence collection procedures vary by country. Contact on-site program staff for advice if you would like to preserve evidence for the police or local authorities.
- **Get support!** You can reach someone at the Advocacy Center of Winona's 24 hours a day at 001-507-452-4453. You can also access Mantra Health crisis resources by contacting hi@mantrahealth.com to get the crisis number for your specific country.

Keep the Following in Mind:

- Alcohol is the number one date rape drug.
- Be careful what you drink, and with whom. It is very easy for someone to put a date rape drug in your drink. Rohypnol is the best known, but it's not the only one.
- It is your responsibility to take care of yourself and be attentive to your own safety, but if you are assaulted, *it is not your fault*. No one has the right to assault you. Even if you are passed out drunk and you are raped, that is sexual assault and you have been the victim of a crime.

Safety Advice

- Ask for advice from locals about safe and unsafe areas.
- Do not swim at an unfamiliar beach unless you are positive it is safe. If no one is in the water, think twice. The locals may know something you don't.
- Use the buddy system when you go out, especially at night. Watch out for each other.
- Use common sense if confronted with a dangerous situation. At times it may be best to attract attention by screaming or running. Other times it might be better to just give up your valuables. Your personal safety is far more important than any property.
- Carry a whistle. Blow on it hard if you feel you are in danger.
- Don't assume that every person you meet wishes you well. Don't be too paranoid, but don't be too trusting until you get to know someone.
- Always remember - if you or someone you know is sexually assaulted, it is not your fault. Somebody chose to do that to you.
- Be informed and pay attention to the news. Do not participate in demonstrations and always plan where you are going so that you are aware of your surroundings.

Transportation safety

- Learn the traffic signals and patterns when you arrive in a new area.
- Take only taxis clearly identified with official markings and when you get in note the cab number. Beware of unmarked cabs.
- Lock taxi doors if possible, especially at night in unfamiliar cities.

Watch out for thieves

- Pickpockets usually do not work alone. Be aware of distractions by strangers (including children), as the "lift" often follows.
- Beggars may approach you with children. They may offer to carry your bags. Some beggars are in genuine need, but others make a good living scamming travelers like you. Giving money is a personal decision, but use common sense. If you are hassled or uncomfortable in a situation, speak angrily and loudly and move away.
- If someone tries to take your purse, backpack, or other property by force, let them have it. Your personal safety is far more important than your property.

- Cell phones and cameras are the most often lost or stolen items. Be careful when using your cell phone in public places or leaving it sit in places where it can easily be grabbed.

Residence safety

- Keep your hotel/residence doors locked when you are there and when you leave.
- Do not open your door to people you don't know and don't give your room number to persons you don't know well. Meet visitors in the lobby. Let someone know when you expect to return, especially if you will be out late at night.
- Know your exit options (stairways and exit doors).
- If you are alone, do not get on an elevator if there is a suspicious-looking person inside.
- Close curtains after dark and lock ground floor windows.
- Keep valuables in a safe place.

The Most Important Factor in Safety Abroad.....is likely to be your behavior!

It is wise to remember:

- Don't go out alone at night.
- Only take clearly marked official taxis.
- Don't flash expensive jewelry, cameras, or electronic equipment.
- Dress like a local. Many students who study abroad dress in a way that immediately identifies them as American, which makes them conspicuous and can bring unwanted attention. College or fraternity sweatshirts, baseball caps, and white athletic shoes worn for non-athletic events will immediately mark you as an American.
- When crossing streets, keep in mind that pedestrians may not be given the right of way. Remember to look both ways! In some countries, traffic comes from the opposite direction from what you expect.
- Stay away from demonstrations or any kind of civil disturbance.
- Protect your passport.
- Make copies of your important documents (passport, driver's license, debit/credit cards, etc.). Scan these and email them to yourself, then keep a copy in a password-protected folder on your laptop. Keep a paper copy hidden below the lining of your suitcase, and a paper copy in your backpack. Leave a copy with a trusted friend or relative back home, just in case.
- Do not accept anything from a stranger.

It is important that you take your own safety very seriously!

But it's also important to remember that, comparatively, the U.S. is one of the most dangerous countries in the world. Our street crime statistics back this up. No country has as many guns or gun-related injuries or deaths. U.S. drug and alcohol abuse is among the highest in the world. So, take our safety advice very seriously, but don't become paranoid or fearful about what may happen to you. Above all, know before you go.

Pre-Departure Orientation 3: Finances, Tech, and Insurance

The following is an introduction to the topics of Finances, Technology, and Insurance while abroad.

Finances

Money

There are a number of ways for you to have access to funds while studying off-campus:

- ATM debit card
- credit card
- exchanging US currency into foreign currency prior to departure or after arrival

Of these options, we recommend that you carry an ATM debit card and a credit card. It is always good to have a back-up means of accessing funds in case of loss or theft or inability to use one of the cards. The usefulness of Traveler's Checks is increasingly limited now that ATMs are widely available and credit cards are accepted at many destinations.

Currency Conversion for International Destinations

One of the aspects that will contribute to your growth and self confidence while traveling internationally is to master the currency conversions. Stay away from exchange booths that change US currency into local currency. The rates are never as good as at a bank or by using your debit/credit card.

Research

Do some research on your destination before you go to find out if:

- debit/credit cards can be widely used,
- and if tap to pay is common. In some cases, this might be more acceptable than cash or card payments.

Remember

- Memorize your PIN, and keep a copy of it in a safe place, separate from the card itself.
- Keep a copy of your passport and credit/debit card numbers and not in the same safe area as where you store your originals

International Transaction Fees

Make sure to contact your credit/debit card companies for information regarding additional charges, such as:

- fees applied to your account for using an ATM at your destination
- and/or for converting dollars into foreign currency into dollars.

Most credit/debit card companies and banks charge an international transaction fee for using the card abroad.

Card Suspension

Wherever you travel, it's a good idea to inform your bank and/or credit card company of your plans. If you are traveling outside the U.S., you must contact your bank and credit/debit card company and inform them of the dates and the specific places you will be visiting during your absence from the U.S. If you fail to do this, an automatic safety mechanism may be activated which may prohibit you from using your card.

Even if you do inform them, they may flag international activity as suspicious. Be prepared with the international contact phone number to resolve any issues.

Contact Information

Make sure you record and keep in a safe place the telephone contact number for your credit/debit card in order to report a lost or stolen card. This step will be critical if you find yourself in the unfortunate situation of losing your card.

You may also need to make a number of other calls should you lose other personal information. Evaluate the items you're bringing with you, and keep a record of any phone numbers you may need in order to replace them.

Making Payments

Check any bill due dates to see if they will come due while you are away. Most students work closely with family members back home to replenish credit lines and pay bills. We strongly suggest you discuss this issue with members of your family who will provide this support for you.

Discount card

You may decide to purchase an International Student Identity Card (ISIC) which can give you discounts on some entry fees, particularly in Europe. However, this card is not an official identity card (only your passport or U.S. driver's license are official identity documents). Find out more at <http://www.isic.org/>.

Technology

Cell Phones

Check with your phone provider to ensure that you understand your phone, its functions, and the costs to operate it wherever you travel. If you are using your regular U.S. based cell phone abroad be sure to turn off or disable the international data roaming option.

The Federal Trade Commission produces a thorough [guide to understanding and using your phone abroad](#) that is general to most major US carriers. Reading this will help you understand how it works and the steps you need to take, but be sure to check with your specific carrier.

Be Thorough!

If enabled, your phone's International Data Roaming may be in use without you even realizing you've tapped into it. You do not want to be surprised with a huge phone bill (one student's bill was over \$3000 for a month. Quite unexpected!)

Keeping Connected

There are some great free ways to stay connected with family and friends back home...

- Blogs (wordpress, tumblr, blogger, etc)
- Travel journal to share with others
- Social media (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc)
- Calling/texting apps (Facetime, WhatsApp, Skype, Viber, etc)

...but it can be easy to stay TOO connected. Be sure to learn about and enjoy your surroundings much more than you communicate with home.

Laptops

Students that are enrolled in study abroad, an internship away from campus, or student teaching for a semester are NOT required to have a laptop computer unless specified by the host organization. Please check with your provider regarding any laptop requirements.

Please also review the information available through the e-Warrior program Academic Status section, Study Abroad drop-down at <https://www.winona.edu/student-life/support/tech-support/ewarrior-laptop-program/>

Insurance

International Health Insurance

All WSU students participating in international faculty-led, summer, semester or academic year programs must have adequate international health insurance. The international health insurance you will be enrolled in will serve as your primary health insurance in your host country and will provide medical benefits for injury and sickness.

Program Differences

Students enrolled on Direct Enroll or Exchange programs are automatically enrolled by Study Abroad in the World Class Coverage insurance plan through CISI, regardless of whether the host institution requires in-country insurance. In some cases, this may mean a student is doubly covered.

Students on provider programs (such as AIFS, CIEE, CISabroad, API, etc.) are automatically enrolled through the provider's insurance program and the cost is included in the program fee.

If you are uncertain which kind of program you are on, just ask!

CISI Plan

This coverage includes (per person):

- \$100,000 medical expense limit (per accident or sickness)
- \$10,000 accidental death & dismemberment coverage
- \$250,000 emergency medical evacuation
- \$25,000 repatriation coverage
- Prescription drugs 100% of Covered Expenses

Coverage

Once you are enrolled under CISI, you will be provided with a login to access your insurance card as well as the wealth of information on their website. Coverage begins the day you leave for your off-campus study program and continues until the final date of your program.

Be aware that the insurance provider, not WSU, makes all decisions regarding what would actually be covered under this policy.

Some medical providers abroad *insist on being paid in cash* for routine services. Make sure you get a receipt as this is what you will need to submit a claim for reimbursement.

Travel Insurance

Students may also individually and independently purchase travel insurance or Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) insurance when planning for a study abroad program. Study Abroad will not advise on CFAR policies, nor endorse a particular company/policy. The WSU Study Abroad Cancellation Policies will be enforced uniformly regardless of a student's purchase of CFAR insurance.

Pre-Departure Orientation 4: Culture

The following is an introduction to the topics of culture & cultural adjustment.

Regardless of location, you will encounter another culture while on this program.

Please follow the links to the presentations, worksheets, and activities, and review the information carefully.

What Is Culture?

View the [What is Culture presentation](#).

Being An American

What Does It Mean To Be An American?

Read through the BeingAmericanWorksheetInstructions PDF, then complete BeingAmericanWorksheet3 PDF, thinking carefully about your reactions to these generalizations about Americans, and why someone from another country might have this impression.

Even within the US, there are variations on what it means to be an American. How might that differ in your destination?

Then read the information found on the BeingAmericanWorksheet4 PDF. Think about the reasons given for each generalization. How might that impact how others interact with, or treat, you?

View the [presentation on "What Does It Mean To Be An American?"](#), thinking about the generalizations discussed here.

How true are they? What are the generalizations you have about your host culture?

Just as you may think "not all Americans are like that", beware that some of your own notions about your host culture may be too broad.

To access the PDFs and learn more about these resources, see your study abroad or go to <https://www.peacecorps.gov/educators-and-students/educators/resources/americans/>

Culture Shock

View [this presentation](#) to learn more about what culture shock is, and how to minimize it. People can experience culture shock, regardless of their destination - domestic or international. There is no way to avoid it - everyone goes through it - but being prepared for it can help it pass more easily and quickly.

Pre-Departure Orientation Conclusion

This concludes our online orientation. Please feel free to reach out with questions, or talk over any topics with your faculty leader and/or the study abroad office. Be sure to take the quizzes linked in your study abroad account online, found at <https://wsu.via-trm.com/>