



HEALTH AND SAFETY

Information for Outgoing Study Abroad Students



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Health and Safety Information for Outgoing Study Abroad Students

Introduction

There is a growing awareness of health, safety and security issues amongst students involved in programs abroad and, often more so, amongst their family and friends. This document is intended to provide a guide to the key issues of which students should be aware, and advice on how to deal with these issues should they arise.

It is the intention of Clarkson University to help its students studying abroad to live and study in as safe and secure an environment as is possible, and to provide advisory material on as wide a range of issues as we can.

You are expected to give careful consideration to these issues and to behave and act in a responsible and safety-conscious manner at all times while representing the University abroad. Our study abroad students remain subject to Clarkson University rules and regulations at all times while abroad, including the requirements with regard to health and safety and to discipline.

This kind of guide may make for unsettling reading and potentially make the world appear threatening and increase nervousness about studying abroad. Please understand that this is not the intention here. The aim of this guide is to help you think seriously about your health and welfare away from Clarkson/the US and to remain safe, healthy and secure at all times. At the end of the day, it is important to us that your experience while abroad is a positive one, and the hope is that this guide will offer advice and guidance to ensure that.

Our office remains in contact with our colleagues at our partner universities on a regular basis and, when an issue arises which may affect our students abroad, we will take steps to contact you at the earliest opportunity. You and your family should all be aware that all of our partner universities are internationally reputable, with well-developed safety policies and professional support services.

Although Clarkson University and your host university will keep you briefed about the issues that may affect you, and may issue guidance from time to time, you have a clear responsibility to monitor information on health and safety matters abroad. You are the only person who can make the final decision about whether to study abroad or, if a serious issue arises abroad, to return.

The University may, however, in an emergency situation, choose to recall some or all of its students from an exchange program which is no longer able to provide a safe or healthy environment.

Ultimately, common sense is key!

Study Abroad Travel Checklist

Passport Number	
Date of issue	
Date of expiry	
Ensure you carry all documents with you. Do not pack in checked baggage!	
Travel Insurance Policy number	
Dates coverage begins	
Date coverage ends	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry emergency cards with you at all times. • Take all policy documents with you. • Make copies/scans of all documents – store in CU Global. • Copy first 2 pages of passport and carry with you. If passport is lost then will expedite replacement. 	
Name of contact at university abroad	
Email/Phone of contact	
Address and Phone Number of Nearest American Embassy/Consulate	
Take any medication you need with you, with a doctor letter if appropriate. List of medications:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave details with family/friends of where you are travelling. • When you are abroad let friends/family know if you are leaving campus to travel and where you are going. 	
Plan your travel details beforehand. When is the last train/bus? Find the number of a reliable local taxi company near the university (check with the host university).	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't leave baggage unattended and keep valuables on your person. Be aware of pickpockets who operate in crowded areas. • Be friendly when out but stay alert to strangers. 	
Learn about what the healthcare system is in the country you're going. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where is the nearest healthcare facility? • Is there a health center on campus? 	

Resources

You have been advised to prepare yourself for your semester abroad by researching health and safety issues in your host country or any country you plan to visit.

The US Department of State is the primary source of information you should consult and refer to this site whenever there is a new emergency issue arising such as a health alert. The US Department of State website provides specific country guidance as well as general alerts for travelers. We strongly recommend that students read the section related to their destination prior to departure.

US Department of State: <https://www.state.gov>

Alerts and Warnings: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html>

International Travel: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html>

(CU Global has an active link to these travel warnings.)

- **Enroll in STEP** – The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a free service to allow U.S. citizens and nationals traveling and living abroad to enroll their trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.
 - Benefits of Enrolling in STEP - <https://step.state.gov/step/>
 - Receive important information from the Embassy about safety conditions in your destination country, helping you make informed decisions about your travel plans.
 - Help the U.S. Embassy contact you in an emergency, whether natural disaster, civil unrest, or family emergency.
 - Help family and friends get in touch with you in an emergency.



Traveler's Checklist: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/travelers-checklist.html>

Not all exchange students, of course, are US citizens. If this is the case then we advise you to use this as a guide and also check the website of your own country's equivalent of the US Department of State.

Commercial guides

Guidebooks provide excellent information, especially for the student traveler. The guides below are very helpful to refer to and are available both online and in book format:

Third Year Abroad - <http://www.thirdyearabroad.com>

Lonely Planet - <http://www.lonelyplanet.com>

Let's Go - <http://www.letsgo.com>

(these are written mainly by students and are therefore very student-centric but not necessarily comprehensive)

Rough Guides - <http://www.roughguides.com>

GoInGlobal – A resource available for students to Job/Internship Search and **Cultural Resources** by country. Go to:

<http://internal.clarkson.edu/internationalcenter> then click on the link to GoInGlobal; sign in with your Clarkson username and password.

General Safety Notes

Although our students tend to study abroad in countries which are thought of as being 'safe', this is not a reason for you to assume that nothing can go wrong. Take our student who was in Mexico during the earthquake in Fall 2017, for example, she had made a plan in the event of an earthquake. You should not be complacent and assume that you know everything that you need to know about your host country and its potential challenges to you in terms of health, welfare and safety.

This is why it is a compulsory part of the program that you take part in our pre-departure orientation meetings and, even more importantly, the arrival orientation/induction program provided by your host university. You must go to all orientation meetings! Be sure your travel arrangements are correct so you do not miss these sessions.

We ask all students to think carefully about what it means to be safe. Among the issues that you need to be aware of are appropriate immunizations and vaccinations, the safety of water while travelling, alcohol-related injuries and assaults, car accidents on both public or private transport, local infectious diseases, safe sex, drug issues and even common occurrences such as insect bites.

In the countries of our partner universities, just as here in the US, just about the biggest cause of death and serious injury is from traffic accidents rather than those dangers that make their way into the media headlines. It is essential that you remain aware of your surroundings, your actions, and the actions of others.

Some of our partners are located in major international cities. At these locations, students can expect to encounter the problems associated with dense urban living, including increased crime, pollution, and the stresses of higher population density and its associated lack of privacy. Students used to Clarkson, or who come from smaller towns and cities, should anticipate that there will be more tensions and some adjustments to be made to fit into their new environment. It is almost always true that cities like these, glamorous though they appear, present a different face when someone has to live in them for a few months rather than just a few days.

Flexibility and preparation will be very important in overcoming these potential problems. You will no doubt find a sense of perspective – you are only there for a short time in the great scheme of things – and a sense of humor invaluable while you make your adjustments.

Although very few past students have been victims of crime, after your arrival you will be on unfamiliar ground both physically and culturally. Images familiar through TV and film should not be regarded as accurate or as a guide to the host country and its way of doing things.

Once on site, you will have orientation sessions and you should take it upon yourself to learn which areas of the city or locality are safe, to become familiar with the best means of transportation and well-travelled routes, and to achieve total independence regarding money, access to transport, housing etc. The International Office at your host university will be a great resource to you in these early stages as you are figuring things out. It's part of their job, so don't ever be afraid or embarrassed about asking!

Insurance

•**Travel Insurance** insures your financial investment in your trip. Typically, it covers such things as the cost of your lost baggage and cancelled flights, but it may or may not cover costs of medical attention you might need while abroad. Some credit cards include insurance if you have purchased your airfare with the credit card.

•**Travel Medical Insurance** covers the cost of various levels of overseas medical treatment.

•**Medical Evacuation Services** provides air ambulance, medical evacuation or medical escort service coverage for overseas travelers.

We advise students studying abroad to obtain a fully comprehensive insurance plan. If you currently have health insurance be sure it will cover you while you are abroad.

Many foreign medical facilities and providers require cash payment up front and do not accept U.S. insurance plans. Medicare does not provide coverage outside of the United States. Check your US health care policy to see if it will cover you overseas. If not, consider buying [supplemental insurance](#). Make sure the insurance you purchase covers any special medical needs or risks you anticipate on your trip.

Essential insurance requirements can include the following:

- Emergency Medical Expenses including the cost of medical treatment
- Repatriation costs (ie returning you to your country of residence or the nearest available medical facility in the event of injury/illness and bringing back the remains in the event of death).
- Personal injury – lump sum payments in the event of death or permanent disabling injuries.
- Personal liability
- Personal belongings / Money / Bank Card and Passport replacement
- Cancellation / Delay / Missed Departure
- Dental injury
- Legal Expenses

You are responsible for your own personal property. You can safeguard your possessions from damage or theft by locking your rooms and securing money, jewelry, passport and other possessions. As thefts can happen most readily while travelling, it is doubly important to lock cases, keep bags in sight and to keep passports, money, credit cards (and so on) in a very secure place.

Such policies will cover you for any accident, emergency or health problem from the moment you leave home until the time you return. Although some of our exchange partner universities require that you purchase their own health insurance coverage, not all of these are fully comprehensive (i.e. dental care will likely be excluded), nor do they cover your possessions, nor do they come into effect until you actually register. For this reason, it is important not just to rely on these policies, but to take out the fully comprehensive policy suggested, even though this is an additional expense. What you will be buying is peace of mind.

Useful advice to remember

- Avoid carrying valuables, wearing obviously expensive clothing or jewelry, and going to questionable parts of town/city, especially at night or when alone.
- Don't wear clothing that has 'USA' or other U.S. references printed on it.
- Be cautious about inviting casual acquaintances home or accompanying someone you don't know well, especially if you are suffering from slightly impaired judgement.
- In the dark, especially late at night, it's best to avoid walking in less travelled areas, instead take a taxi.

- At airports, rail or bus stations, be extremely careful about where you put your bags and suitcases; keep valuables out of sight and in inaccessible places (zipped into a coat pocket).
- When waiting in the line at the airport security check, etc., do not place possessions on the belts until it is your turn and keep an eye on them as they go through the checkpoints so that only you pick them up again.
- Beware of scams, especially those where you are offered a generous payment but only after you put forth some money of “good faith”.
- If staying in a hotel, do not leave your door open at any time.

Drugs and Alcohol

Only in the US do you need to be over 21 to buy or consume alcohol. In other countries, those under 21 may buy and consume alcohol but laws may vary from state to state or country to country so be sure to find out.

Using or buying illegal drugs is an activity which may result in prosecution or worse. If you are found to be in possession of illegal drugs abroad, you will be prosecuted by their laws. You may be deported and unable to travel to that country again.

- **KNOW AND KEEP THE LAW!**

Natural disasters

Host universities are well aware of what problems might arise and have excellent emergency procedures in place.

Should a weather emergency occur, you should keep in touch with us in the International Center so that we know what is happening, especially if you are evacuated from your residence. **If communications are temporarily cut by a storm or other emergency, please re-establish contact with us at the earliest possible opportunity.**

In any emergency, it is important to stay calm in order to deal effectively with what the situation presents. We would also expect you to take precautions beforehand – forewarned is forearmed!

Emergencies while abroad

Emergencies while traveling abroad can come in all shapes and sizes, from a natural disaster to political upheaval, from an accident or illness to becoming the victim of crime.

1. **Outline a plan. Who, when and how you will communicate with people to let them know you are OK.**
2. **Let your country of origin know you’re there – registering with the US embassy or your local embassy.**
3. **Know your general information: Your address abroad, phone number, and contact info for someone you can reach out to in a time of need in your host country.**

Health

It is very important that all students who go abroad are healthy enough to do so. It is recommended that students check with their own doctor prior to going abroad so that any potential problems can be identified and precautions taken.

Students with additional support needs

Students with any specific medical condition, special needs, or disabilities are very welcome to study abroad. Our partner universities do have support services for students but they may not be what you are accustomed. Knowing the differences in advance may make the difference in whether you go to that university or not. Recommendations based on experience:

- Engage with Clarkson University support services before your study abroad. Sessions with university counselors can be continued using Skype or phone sessions during the semester abroad.
- Disclose your needs to the partner university. They are best placed to advise you about the support networks in place for students on their campus.
- Get in touch with the International Center if needed: 1-315-268-3943

Inoculations / Vaccinations

Some countries have specific immunization and other requirements that must be fulfilled before departure. Students should inform their doctor of any plans to travel to other countries in addition to the host country so that all necessary immunizations can be received prior to departure.

Prescriptions, vitamins and other medicines

Students who regularly take any medication should take an adequate supply of it to last for the entire period abroad (providing it is not perishable). Students should label all medications and keep them in containers which clearly show the prescription details on the label - this facilitates Customs clearance in and out of countries. Students who need to obtain their regular medication while abroad should take with them a letter from their own doctor which states the nature of the condition to be treated and the recommended medication. This should be taken to the host university's medical service when registering for or receiving treatment.

While many prescription medicines can be purchased over the counter and at less cost overseas, students should be cautious. It cannot be guaranteed that the same pharmaceutical standards have been used in preparation. Poor storage in high heat and / or humidity, for example, could negatively impact the effectiveness of some drugs.

Students who wear glasses or contact lenses should take spare pairs and a copy of their prescription.

Students who must regularly inject insulin, or allergy or other medication, should pack a good supply of syringes; not all sizes are readily available abroad. It is well worth contacting the medical service at the host university if possible to enquire about obtaining supplies whilst overseas.

Other issues that you will want to consider include any special dietary requirements, food and other supplements and the availability of certain health care products. In the UK, Europe and Australia, most of the types of products available in the US are also available, though brands may vary. However, when travelling, these may be harder to source.

Information about university health services, or alternative medical care, will be provided in pre-arrival information or soon after arrival. Students should make sure they know how the medical system works at their host campus and in their host country.

NOTE – If you have concerns, be sure to discuss travel plans with your doctor, and inform him or her about any physical or psychological condition that could put you at risk. This is of particular importance if you have any pre-existing conditions. Pre-existing conditions should also be disclosed and discussed with your health insurance provider as this may affect your coverage.

As always, the safety of students is the highest priority. Your host institution will, as will the study abroad office here at Stirling, provide advice, guidelines and precautions directly to students in any affected areas. However, you still have the ultimate responsibility to educate yourself about health issues that might affect you as an exchange student, and to take the appropriate precautions.

Cultural Expectations

Many of the problems encountered by students studying abroad arise from cultural differences. Although we may expect the English-speaking countries abroad to share many of the same values, you need to realize that these countries are actually incredibly diverse and some groups may have more conservative attitudes (for example) than may be expected. Cultural differences, in these countries, can extend to body language, eye contact, a familiar way with strangers, a hairstyle, posture, clothing, the distance between people talking – all can have profoundly different interpretations from culture to culture.

As international students, you may encounter these issues with other students from other countries than perhaps with locals, but it is important to be aware of how you are perceived and how you perceive others at all times. Students are their own best resource in preparing to face a range of possible situations, from sexual comments or harassment, to the rare extreme of a physically threatening situation.

[GoinGlobal](#) – A resource available for students to Job/Internship Search and **Cultural Resources by country**. <http://internal.clarkson.edu/internationalcenter> then click on the link to GoinGlobal; sign in with your Clarkson username and password.

Other precautions

Precautions also apply socially. Most likely, you will find the people you meet to be interesting and interested in you. However, you cannot make judgements regarding your safety based on another person's appearance or financial status. The following tips may help you when faced with an uncomfortable situation:

1. Turn the conversation around by asking some questions. Be in control by initiating rather than reacting. Bring up other subjects.
2. If this fails to deter, then tell the other person very directly to stop whatever is disturbing you. Be specific. A calm and serious tone is usually the best. Body language should match what is said. A giggle, smile or apology will undermine the message.
3. Develop the skills necessary for assertive behavior.
4. Firmly say no to any unwanted invitation, and give address information only to people who can be trusted. Be cautious until familiar with local customs and values. Respecting the local social rules will facilitate relationships with host nationals.
5. Don't go to a secluded area (or even be alone in a room) with someone who you do not know well.
6. In an extreme situation, appeal for help from others or local authorities.

Only you can determine how best to handle a situation. However, preparation before you leave will create more options for dealing with new situations.

Encountering intolerance abroad

Students going from one country to another may have concerns about how they will be viewed and received in other societies. The range of concerns encompasses ethnicity, gender, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, and physical disabilities as well as reactions abroad to US government policies and widely-held stereotypes about the US or the countries other international students are from.

In general, residents of our partner countries are very welcoming although their knowledge of the US may not always be as good as they think! Stereotypes taken from TV and film and their knowledge of the US can sometimes be off the mark entirely. Their interest, however, is almost always well-meaning and friendly. (sidebar: you might want to examine your own pre-conceptions before taking offence...)

However, bear in mind that the host universities, like Clarkson itself, will have students from all over the world studying there. Also, remember that most of the host regions / cities / states etc. will have very much more diverse population than either Clarkson's or even US and so you, as well as they, may have stereotypes and preconceived ideas to overcome.

Other societies do not necessarily share prevailing US approaches to the issues mentioned above or, indeed, to your own values or opinions. Encounters with prejudice in particular can be distressing for students who feel very strongly that their views are correct and that the prevailing views in the host society are wrong.

As international students, you are guests in the universities and residence halls of other countries. It is crucial that you give serious thought before you go abroad to the question of how to respond to attitudes and behaviors that you maybe consider unacceptable or objectionable.

You should try not take these things personally, or to feel hurt or angry. Be analytical about it wherever possible unless your own rights are being affected adversely. You should seek some intellectual understanding of the behavior, and merely observe it, even though you may strongly disagree. Another strategy is simply to remove yourself from the course of the offensive behavior and to discuss it later with other members of the host society whom you trust.

You should take it upon yourself to read about social and political issues abroad, and you should think about and discuss these issues before departure. You should resolve to practice personal tolerance, and to be mature and realistic in your expectations.

Sexual harassment

As a Clarkson student, you should have been trained on Title IX, specifically sexual harassment.

You should trust your judgement and intuition. If a situation makes you uncomfortable, it needs to be addressed. You should seek help from the Study Abroad/International Office (non-confidential) at your host university, or from a counsellor (confidential) who can advise and act on your behalf to remedy a problem. You may also reach out to someone at Clarkson as outlined on our website: <http://internal.clarkson.edu/nondiscrimination/gethelp.html>

DISCLAIMER: Every effort has been taken to ensure that the information and guidance provided in this booklet is both accurate and up to date. However, Clarkson University disclaims responsibility for any errors, inaccuracies and omissions or changes in information may occur from time to time.