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## Chapter 2: Policies

### USA STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

Key points of conduct that you should be aware of:

- Off campus illegal activities, including possession of a false identification is a violation of USA policies.
- You may not engage in sexual activity with another person without their verbal consent and/or action that explicitly implies their consent.

\* If the University is made aware of any misconduct, severe consequences and dismissal from the program may occur.

### THE FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 is a federal law that protects the privacy and confidentiality of information contained within a student's educational records. The University of South Alabama is in compliance with FERPA's confidentiality protections. This means that without your consent we will not release any information from your educational record that would be in violation of this law.

## Chapter 3: Emergency Plan

While most who study abroad have a safe and healthy experience, some students may encounter minor crises such as pick-pocketing, petty theft, or minor illness, or injury. In an unfamiliar environment with communication and cultural barriers, a minor crisis may be more difficult to handle. Similar to the realities existing on a U.S. campus, there may be a few students who encounter a major emergency while abroad, such as a serious illness or injury, traffic accident, natural disaster, or violent crime.

In case of emergency situations, students abroad should adapt an Emergency

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## Chapter 4: Finances

*Currency* t You know, of course, your host country does not use U.S. dollars. Research the currency used and the exchange rate. Rates change continually so check them regularly. Onada (<http://www.onada.com>) and the

*ATM Cards and Debit Cards* are convenient abroad to obtain local currency. Find out from your bank your international PIN for overseas transactions (some are 4 digits, some 6). Also, ask if your card is connected to a world-wide system (like Cirrus or Plus), if fees are charged for using a foreign ATM, and your daily withdrawal limit (some banks will raise it if you ask).

*Wiring Money* Funds may be wired to you from the U.S. through any U.S. bank that has a corresponding bank in the city where you are staying. Funds are typically received within 2 to 10 business days from the time the wire is processed. Wiring fees are generally paid on the U.S. side, but occasionally on both. This can be expensive, so plan accordingly. Western Union may be a more affordable option.

## Chapter 5: Travel Documents

A *passport* is a document from your home country that confirms your citizenship.

A *visa* is a document provided by the government of the country to which you will be traveling that confirms your legitimate status as a foreign visitor.

You will need a current passport that is valid for a minimum of six months after the time you are scheduled to return home. It is necessary to obtain a passport before applying for a visa. Some visas are free and easy to acquire, while others may have a significant cost and require documentation. Check with the U.S. State Department or your host country's embassy or consulate to determine if a visa is needed and for information on how to apply.

Being granted a visa by a foreign government should not be taken lightly. There are regulations for being in a country with or without a visa. You must know

## Chapter 6: Health and Safety Matters

Consider your mental and physical health issues when applying for a study abroad program. Provide the necessary information to the program's administrators so they can assist you with any special needs and advise you on the risks you might face. Study abroad can present both physical and mental challenges for students.

It is important that you are familiar with the health care system of the country where you will be studying, including the quality of facilities and the cost of services. Locate the nearest hospital to where you are staying and know how to file a claim for your insurance policy on both your private health insurance and international insurance.

### MEDICAL CONCERNS

*Availability of Medical Care* The availability of medical care will vary from country to country. In some countries it will seem similar to the care in the U.S. In others, finding an English-speaking doctor or medical facility might be difficult. It is important to research these conditions before travelling outside the parameters of your program.

*Medical History* Have a checkup to know your current medical conditions. Your doctor or nurse can also advise you on what special precautions to take based on your medical history and your host country. You may need to go to a special travel health clinic to get clear advice on medical care abroad and what vaccinations and medications for vaccine-preventable diseases and other diseases you might be at risk for at your destination.



*Special Accommodations* If you need any special accommodations, regulations for accessibility may not be as updated in other countries as they are in the U.S. Check to determine if accommodations like wheelchair ramps are provided in all modes of transportation, and to determine if the housing facilities are equipped to serve people with special needs.

*Infectious Diseases and Inoculations* Research infectious diseases common in countries in which you will be traveling. Get the appropriate shots and pills, and bring the appropriate medications with you if your doctor thinks it is necessary. Know about any potential side effects of shots and pills you take. For more information on diseases prevalent in your destination country, please see the CDC website <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx>

*Medications* If you regularly take any over the counter medications such as Aleve, antacids, Tylenol, sleeping aids, multivitamins, supplements, etc., be sure to find out how you will get these while abroad. If they are not available and you plan on taking a supply with you, check with your host country's consulate to see if there are any laws against having these over the counter medications in large quantities. It is useful to get a prescription from your doctor verifying why you take them.

*Prescriptions* Check with your host country's consulate to see which prescriptions are legal. If you want the help to determine if and in what quantity you may take your prescription into your host country, you will need to disclose what prescriptions you are currently taking. Get a doctor's signed prescription for any medication you have to take abroad. Some prescriptions may need to be translated if you wish to fill them abroad. Bring your glasses or contact lens prescription, as well. Take an extra pair of glasses if possible.

*First-Aid Kit* - Consider bringing a well-stocked first-aid kit as a first line of defense. Some items to consider including are bandages, flashlight, batteries, sterile pads, insect repellent, adhesive tape, aspirin, antacid, anti-diarrhea tablets, anti-malarial medication, extra bottled water, rubber gloves, etc.

## WATER AND FOOD

*Potable Water* Find out if water is safe to drink in the countries where you will be traveling. Purify unsafe water before drinking. Make sure water



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## LOCAL CURRENT EVENTS

*International Sources of Information* Inform yourself as much as possible about your new environment, making use of as many different sources as possible (online, libraries, television, radio programs, newspapers, etc.) Do not limit yourself to U.S. sources. Instead, collect information from other countries to contrast with information provided by the U.S.

*Political Rallies* Avoid political rallies, which can increase tensions, raise emotions, or breed angry mobs for which a U.S. citizen may serve as a scapegoat.

*Political Conversations* Expect to hear criticism of the United States. If you educate yourself on U.S. politics and foreign policies, you will be more prepared to handle these discussions as they occur. Criticism of U.S. policies typically meant as a personal attack. Most foreign nationals are very interested in the U.S. and will want to know your opinions about our political system.

Try not to engage in conversations about contentious local political issues and avoid retaliating against hostile or bigoted remarks about Americans. It is

## Chapter 7: Travel Information

*Packing* Most travelers pack too much. A little bit of research will go a long way. Look up weather conditions and seasons for your host country/location and o02 0.502 0lan



## TRANSPORTATION AND TRAVEL

Studying abroad gives you many opportunities to travel. Your program should have sufficient study breaks to enable you to visit neighboring countries or travel within your host country. It is important to know what the safest modes of transportation are in order to avoid accidents while traveling.

*Public* We encourage you to use public transportation including buses and metros to help familiarize yourself with your host country. Additionally, it is often the most convenient and affordable option. You should be able to find navigation information in travel books or online. Be wary of pickpockets and use safety precautions when traveling. If possible, do not travel alone, at night, or on unsafe highways.

*International Rail* If you plan to travel to neighboring countries, traveling by international rail is often convenient and affordable. You can reserve your seat online before purchasing your ticket. Trains travel directly between city centers and are sometimes faster than flights with layovers. Traveling by train is usually much faster than by bus and can be a better option if you want to see more places in a short amount of time. You should avoid traveling alone at night, particularly in more urban areas. Take advantage of special promotions and rates for students when available.

*Flying* If you are traveling between countries or distant cities (i.e., London and Rome), consider air travel. Flying can save time, especially if you only have a long weekend to complete your trip. There are several reliable and inexpensive

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*Bus* Buses may be the cheapest way to travel and are often a very popular choice. They can take you to short distance destinations and even to nearby train stations. If you can't find service to a particular location on national or regional bus lines, local service should be able to take you to your desired destination.

*Metro* In major cities especially, you will find the metro system to be the most convenient form of transportation to move about the city. Always beware of your surroundings and watch out for pickpockets. Never put your bag or purse under the seat.

*Cars/Driving* Renting a car can be a great way to see the countryside, but can also be stressful and sometimes dangerous. Many countries have driving laws significantly different than the U.S. (such as the UK or Hong Kong where drivers travel on the left side of the road). Insurance is often a requirement and may function under a different system than that to which you are accustomed. Obtain full coverage insurance when renting vehicles in any country. If a driver is involved in a vehicle accident resulting in damages or injuries to another party, local authorities may detain the driver until a settlement is arranged with the injured party. Also, depending upon the extent of damages or injuries to the other party, you may face charges resulting in heavy fines or even jail time.



## Chapter 8: Communication

*Internet Access* Email is by far the cheapest form of communication. Having a laptop or smart phone makes email quite easy with free Wi-Fi available in many public places. Having a computer also makes class assignments and uploading photos more convenient. The AC adapter of most laptops is universal voltage and can be used anywhere in the world with a plug adaptor.

*Laptops and access to social networking sites may not be allowed in some countries.* Failure to research this difference could lead to confiscation of your laptop or even deportation. If you do not take a computer, most universities have computer labs. Internet cafes are also common and cheap in many large cities. In some areas, Internet access may not be readily available and connection speeds may be different. Unless you find an Internet café or use the host university computer lab, do not expect Internet to be immediately accessible upon your arrival. It may take a few days to establish your account with an Internet provider.

*Cellphones and Calling Cards* Cellphones have become more common and less expensive all around the world. Although local calls may be inexpensive, international calls often have a high cost. Texting may be a less expensive way to communicate internationally. Some multi-band phones used in the United States can also be used while abroad. You can also purchase your own cell phone in your host country. A cellphone may also be included in your program fee. The most reasonable way to communicate by phone between the country where you will be studying and the United States may be by purchasing an international calling card, available through various companies or providers.

*Skype* (<http://www.skype.com>) is both a fun and cost efficient form of communication. Skype is a program you can download to make phone calls from your computer to another Skype user. For a small fee you can also make calls to any landline or cell phone in the world using this program.

*Blogging and Pictures*   **Blogging is an excellent way to keep everyone updated on your adventure as well as an easy way to keep a journal of your experiences.** If you're interested and mee &

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## Chapter 9: Social and Cultural Considerations

### BEHAVIOR / CONDUCT

*Diplomat* We cannot stress enough that you ~~are~~ at all times a representative of the United States, the University of South Alabama, and your family. Everything you do will be seen through the eyes of those stereotyping who you are and where you come from. It is important to remember that some people in your host country may have never met an American. You may be the one person on whom they base their opinion of all Americans.

*Stereotypes* A stereotype is a preconception, usually over-simplified, of a person or group. They may be based on generalizations from limited personal



*Female Travelers* In certain locations and programs, women may have a difficult time adjusting to attitudes they encounter abroad, both in public and private interactions between men and women. It is not uncommon to be honked at, stared at, verbally and loudly approved of, and in general, to be actively noticed in ways that many American women may find offensive, simply for being a woman. Local women who often get the same sort of treatment have learned through their culture how to respond to the attention.

Uncomfortable situations may not always be preventable, but consider taking the following precautions:

- Dress conservatively; while short skirts and tank tops may be comfortable, they may encourage unwanted attention.
- Avoid walking alone late at night or in questionable neighborhoods.
- Do not agree to meet a person whom you do not know well in a non public place.
- Be aware that some men from other cultures tend to mistake the friendliness of U.S. American women for romantic interest.

It is ok to be frustrated or angered while adjusting to a new culture. You most likely will not purposefully do anything to attract unwanted attention; if you become uncomfortable, the best way to deal with it is to follow the example of local women and mimic their responses.

*Race and Ethnicity* As a multicultural student, you may be concerned about facing potential racial bias and prejudices without the comfort of your usual support system. On the other hand, you may be looking forward to being part of the majority population. You may be planning a self-discovery sojourn to the country or region of your family's heritage. Whatever reasons you have for studying abroad, you will find adjusting abroad can be a positive growth experience. It can present a unique learning opportunity that will serve you well in the future.

*Political and Religious Views*

*Discrimination* If you believe you are being discriminated against, please discuss it with the resident director, faculty leader, or on-site staff. Discrimination is built on negative stereotypes and prejudices that are influenced by a variety of factors, including the media. Although these attitudes may be frustrating at times, remember that one of the main reasons for your participation in study abroad is to learn about other cultures. This includes both the positive and negative aspects. What you perceive as a discriminatory act or remark may not necessarily be one in the context of the host culture, but rather a cultural difference.

## MODERN CONVENIENCES

*Electricity* Electrical systems are different around the world. In some countries you will need a converter to use U.S. sold appliances due to voltage and outlet differences. However, even with an adapter U.S. appliances still might not work properly. A converter/adapter kit can be purchased so that you can still use your U.S. appliances, but know that some U.S. appliances use different voltage and some outlets may not be able to accommodate your device.

*Plumbing* The idea of a western toilet with a porcelain bowl and a seat is not universal. You may find things are different even in British bathrooms (or the ). Bathroom facilities abroad can literally be holes in the floor, outhouses, the local river, or non-existent. Bidets are common, especially in Europe. Toilet paper is often not available, not commonly used, or something you must purchase even in public restrooms. You may want to carry a pocket pack of tissues with you just in case.

Sinks and running water to wash your face and hands or brush your teeth may not always be an option. If sink water is an option, be sure to ask if you can drink it or brush your teeth with it. If not, you may need to use bottled water. Showers may also be different, as some cultures prefer to bathe in a tub or another water source instead, like a river or the ocean. Handheld water sprayers may replace U.S. style fixed showerheads.





*Culture Shock* - You may experience some discomfort before you are able to settle in to your new surroundings. From food, hygiene, weather, language, dress, or even political and social norms, *culture shock can be shocking.* It.917.g( )-1491

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Gradual Adjustment- With time, you'll begin to orient yourself to a different set of cultural practices and feel increasingly comfortable and confident in your new surroundings. Your sense of humor will reemerge.

Re-entry or Reverse Culture Shock- Upon returning home, you will be faced with integrating your abroad experience with life in the United States. You might feel disoriented, out of place, or changed by your experience in a way that makes relating to family and friends difficult.

#### *Dealing with Culture Shock*

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## PREPARING TO RETURN HOME

*Packing* You will return home with more than you initially brought. Packing lightly and efficiently is important in the beginning and will become even more so as your trip ends. Consider shipping your souvenirs and purchases home. This can sometimes be cheaper and less of a hassle than having extra bags on the plane.

*Souvenirs* Buying local goods and souvenirs is an excellent way to remember your time abroad. Shopping in a new country can be fun but 3tw(u)

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## Chapter 10: Upon Return

Congratulations on completing your study abroad experience! But never fear, your journey is far from over!

Adding an international component to your education is a wonderful accomplishment. However, what you do with the experience is just as important as what you learned while abroad. We look forward to hearing from you as you get involved in the many activities available to you as a new international ambassador. Below is useful advice and opportunities for tapping into your new world perspective and sharing it with others.

### REENTRY AND CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

Similar to the cultural adjustment pattern you experienced when arriving in a foreign country, you may also experience stages of cultural adjustment when returning home.

*Euphoria (Honeymoon Phase)* The first few hours, days, or weeks back home are often characterized by the excitement of sensory overload. Both adrenaline and expectations are running high.

*Irritability and Hostility* Once the initial "honeymoon" phase subsides, you may feel anger, depression, or boredom with being home. You may feel some or all of the following symptoms: a sense of no longer belonging to your home culture, frustration of adjusting to a different pace of life in America, a sense that friends, family, or colleagues are not interested in discussing your experience, friends made abroad are missed as well as the culture and way of life in the host country.

*Gradual Adjustment* With time, you'll begin to feel more comfortable in your home country. You may fall into some of your old routines, but you will be different than when you first left. The key is to find a way to positively blend your old life with the new life you created abroad.

*Preparing for Re-entry* There are ways to prepare for re-entry before returning home. While away, keep up on what's going on with friends and family and try to keep track of local and national news so you do not feel totally lost when you get back home.

Recognize that you will develop at a personal level. People at home are growing and changing, too. Think about what you want to do when you get back and try to have a plan for your return. Resist the tendency to think that your friends and family have not done anything while you were away. Plan your finances for your return: How will you pay for school, rent, gas, and food? Do you need to apply for student loans or other financial support?

It may take some time to feel at home again. Use patience to ease the transition.

- Keep your cultural sensitivity. Observe American culture the same way you observed foreign culture. Consider what you like about America and what you want to keep from the culture you experienced abroad.
- Stay positive and active. There will be frustrations and disappointments but work through it with the same enthusiasm that you brought to your overseas experience.
- Friends and family may have a difficult time understanding your readjustment difficulties. Try to explain that it is a normal phase in any traveler's journey.



## Chapter 11: Helpful Packing Guide

Packing requires planning and careful consideration. Below is a general list of suggested items you may consider packing.

### Carry on

- Passport and any necessary visas
- Entry letter from host institution or provider
- Airline ticket(s)
- U.S. and foreign currency
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## Checked Luggage

- Extra copies of important documents and emergency contact information
  - Seasonally and culturally appropriate clothing, undergarments, bathing suit, shoes, and accessories
  - Toiletries
  - First aid kit\*
  - Sewing kit\*
  - Eyeglass repair kit\*
  - Nail clippers\*
  - Electric or manual razor for shaving\*
  - Over-the-counter pain relievers
  - kit\* h/MCID 18 >>BDink /TT0 1 T3f 18.222539.35 rg 2.025539TdT[4ht\* iate ://w
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Additional Notes: