

Study Abroad Pre-Departure Checklist

Acceptance to 6 months prior:

- Obtain/renew your **Passport**. Make sure it is signed and valid for at least 6 months after your return.
- Make sure you have applied with your program provider and completed an External Program application with CGE.

Materials to Complete in Terra-Dotta:

- Statement of Understanding**
- Contact Information for Home & Abroad**
- Financial Aid Inquiry**
- Foreign Institution Information**
- Copy of Passport Identification Page**

6 to 3 months prior:

- Verify that your financial aid** is in place and you have filled out all the paperwork.
- Sign your FAFSA** for the next academic year, if necessary (spring students especially). This application must be signed by the student and not a power of attorney or parent.
- Research** the country and city in which you will be living. Know the local weather for the timeframe you'll be living abroad. Read books on the culture/general area. Purchase an app or guidebook to use abroad. Buy or download a map of the area, transportation system, etc. Invest in a phrase book to brush up on some basic vocabulary.
- Schedule a doctor's appointment** or physical prior to departure. The University Health Center provides an international travel clinic. A consultation costs \$10 and can be scheduled online at jmu.edu/myjmuhealth. The Health Center staff can provide information on the required and recommended vaccinations, vaccinations at a low cost, prescriptions for travel medications, and information on safe travel.
- Consult Program regarding courses** offered for your chosen semester. Discuss study abroad courses with your academic or faculty advisor.

3 months prior:

- Attend External Pre-departure orientation**. Look for email notification of dates/times. It occurs between a month to 3 before departure, as program start dates vary.
- Apply for your visa (if necessary)**. This may be done in conjunction with your program provider. All programs and country requirements vary.
- Purchase the local currency** prior to departure. It's a good idea to start with 100-200 dollars in smaller bills. You may need that for taxis or food upon arrival.
- Contact your bank and credit card** to make sure your cards and PIN will work abroad. If you don't have a 4-digit PIN, ask how to use your cards abroad. Be sure to learn about their international transaction fee (0-5% for each purchase).
- Book your flight, after verifying specifics with your Program Provider**. Make sure you are arriving at the designated airport on the correct date and time. Also, consider signing up for any frequent flier miles now.
- Talk to your doctor about prescription medications** that can be found in the country you will be studying in. Consider options for generics. Have sufficient quantities of prescriptions to last through your time abroad. Again, consider using the University Health Center's Travel Clinic.
- Check MyMadison for any holds**, financial or academic.
- Plan your returning semester courses at JMU**. Special enrollment permission may be required, as the courses you are taking abroad will not be visible in the JMU system until you return.
- Share a copy of your study abroad program information** with your family.

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1 month prior:

- Register with the Department of State** – (CGE does that for you - you're welcome!).
 - If you travel beyond your host country, be sure to register your travel.
- Develop a communication plan** with your family and friends. Consider setting up a Skype account and practicing with your family prior to your departure.
- Determine whether your cell phone will work**, if you plan on using it while abroad.
- Make sure family and friends **understand international dialing instructions**.
- Start a packing list**. Check your airline for any baggage restrictions.
- Purchase voltage **converters or adapters**, if needed.
- Obtain traveler's insurance** for any electronics or valuables you will bring, consider trip cancelation insurance to safeguard you in personal or medical emergencies.
- Obtain international health insurance** or confirm you are covered by your provider.
- Verify payment of External Program Fee**. Payment is due by the on-campus tuition dates or prior to departure, whichever comes first.
- Put together a budget for your time abroad** of estimated and fixed expenses.

2 weeks prior:

- Inform your credit card company and bank** that you will be out of the country and making transactions from abroad. What is your plan if you lose your wallet? Think about alternative options.
- Make photo copies of important items** to save at home (passport, visa, credit cards, insurance, and itineraries).
- Check holds and confirm payment – AGAIN!** You will not be able to make any schedule changes if you have a hold on your account or have not paid tuition and fees in full.

- Gather phone numbers and email addresses** for all necessary onsite staff. We'll get you started:

Center for Global Engagement
1.540.568.5209 | studyabroad@jmu.edu.

- Buy a journal** or establish an online journal or blog.
- Begin writing** in your journal or start blogging prior to departure to capture the entire experience.
- Pack and Pack Efficiently**. Be sure to bring clothes that layer well, wash well, and are season appropriate. Consider stepping up your wardrobe, as you won't want to look like an American college student abroad, trust us! Ladies, sacrifice a pair of sweats and flip flops for a nice dress and shoes. Gents, trade in one of your hoodies for a polo/dress shirt and blazer. Overall, with the amount of stuff, follow this rule - When it doubt, leave it out!

Other items to consider:

- Refer to <http://studentsabroad.state.gov/> for information about absentee voting, *if applicable*.
- Get information about filing taxes while you are abroad, if applicable.

Add your own:

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