

Outbound Study Abroad Pre-Departure Guide

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Basic Pre-departure Checklist

☐ Completed all paperwork on time.

- Read the terms of admission and signed all forms that commit me to attend the program or institution that admitted me by the advertised deadlines.
- Picked up the NMSU Study Abroad Agreement-Transfer Credit Programs from the Office of Study Abroad, filled out the requested information, obtained all required signatures, and returned it to the Office.
- If transfer credits is part of my last thirty hours before graduation, obtained a waiver from my college.

☐ Reviewed Program Costs and Obtained Financial Aid Confirmation

- Filled out Financial Aid Information and had it certified by Office of Financial Aid.
- Reviewed benefits provided by exchange programs.

☐ Obtained Final Clearance from Office of Study Abroad

- Turned in the Study Abroad Agreement and all other required documents by deadlines.
- Paid all deposits and fees required before departure.
- Completed WebCT Study Abroad Orientation 101 by deadlines.

☐ Finalized Travel Arrangements

- Arranged travel to site.
- Obtained a passport or checked if current one is valid 6 months beyond end of program.
- Obtained a student visa if required for travel to host country (left lots of time to do this!)
- Arranged for airport pick up in country if the service is provided by your program.
- Confirmed arrival date at host institution and confirmed details of what I need to do upon arrival.
- Copied all important documents and prepared power-of-attorney forms.
- Checked on how I will handle financial affairs while abroad, determined the best way to take or obtain money, and checked the latest currency rates for the country of my program.

Essential Steps for Successful Transfer of Credit

Step 1-Understand the Terms of Transfer Credit and Obtain College Approval

- Prepare Section C-Transfer Credit Advising Agreement of the NMSU Study Abroad Agreement by obtaining information about courses offered at your host institution, matching them with NMSU course equivalents, and reviewing these with your advisor, advising center, and, if enrolled in intensive language courses only, with the Foreign Study Advisor in Languages and Linguistics.

Step 2-Enroll in Classes Abroad and Complete All Course Requirements

- Arrive and enroll in classes on time. For university programs, inform the Office of Study Abroad after you have enrolled by filling out the Certification of Full-time Status on Exchange (students enrolled in summer language institutes only need to inform the office that you have arrived).
- Contact the Office if you are unable to enroll in the classes for which you planned and want to obtain pre-approval for other transfer credit.

Step 3-Adjust to the New Cultural and Educational Environment

- Be prepared to handle differences in teaching, assessment, attitude of professors, and other matters that may affect your studies.
- Consult with the Host Program Coordinator and others to help you with any academic or cultural adjustment problems.
- Fill out the Initial Arrival Evaluation Form provided by NMSU to let us know what problems you faced initially.

Step 4-Complete All Course Requirements at Host Institution Before Departing for Home

- Make sure you take all required exams and complete all other assignments.
- Contact the Host Institution Coordinator to determine how an official transcript will be prepared and when it will be sent to the Office of Study Abroad. (Note: All study abroad transcripts and/or evaluations must

be sent to the Office of Study Abroad, not to your college or the Office of the Registrar.)

Step 5-Check in with the Office of Study Abroad After Returning

- Attend the scheduled returned students debriefing session or report to the Office upon return to check on the status of your transcript and to fill out the program evaluation form (Note: Transfer credit will not be processed until you submit a program evaluation).

Key Procedural and Legal Issues

Student Responsibility

Students studying abroad are expected to follow standards of conduct consistent with the maintenance of a positive reputation of themselves and the university and to abide by all applicable rules, regulations, and policies of NMSU and the host institution abroad. Students are expected:

- to comply with all participation requirements established by the University for the program,
- to complete the academic requirements of the program in which they enroll,
- to obtain required immunizations and carry medical insurance coverage for travel abroad, and
- to be aware of the safety challenges inherent in traveling abroad
- to fulfill the terms and conditions of any contracts they enter into for study abroad

The University expects students to conduct themselves legally, morally, and ethically at all times while studying in another country as an NMSU student.

NMSU Responsibility

The Office of Study Abroad is responsible for helping students to find and apply to a program that will help them fulfill their academic objectives through study abroad. The Office is also responsible for providing mandatory orientation so that all students are exposed to information that will help them study abroad safely and successfully. The Office also verifies that students are enrolled and disburses financial aid checks received from the Office of Financial Aid. During the program the Office will maintain contact with students. At the end of the program the Office will receive, verify, and distribute foreign transcripts so students receive financial aid and transfer credit. The Office will collect program evaluations from students and periodically, Office will conduct site visits to evaluate programs.

Colleges make final decisions about which courses completed abroad are transferred into NMSU.

Limits of NMSU Liability

The Office of Study Abroad cannot guarantee the absolute safety of students or ensure that risk will not at times be greater than at home. Nor can we monitor the daily personal decisions, choices, and activities of individual participants that may violate local laws and norms of behavior. The university will consult with host institutions to encourage them to solve any student problems that may arise and to fulfill any terms of agreement that are in force.

The Office cannot intercede, however, to solve problems related to contracts for housing, meals and other services entered into independently by students.

By signing Section-E of the Study Abroad Agreement, students acknowledge that study abroad carries risks and liabilities acceptable to them and that they will not hold the university liable for any claims, injuries, damages, or losses incurred.

Power-of-Authority (Attorney-in-Fact)

Students on exchange should designate an individual, such as a parent or close relative, to take care of financial, legal, and medical matters on their behalf while abroad. Samples of General Power-of-Authority and Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care decisions documents are available from the Office of Study Abroad. Students sign a Limited Power-of-Authority with the Office of Study Abroad to disburse their financial aid and continue their registration in their absence.

U.S. Income Taxes

Make arrangements to have your W-2 form and other forms needed to file income tax sent to your Power-of-Authority (if you are away Spring Semester). You may obtain 1040 and other forms to file taxes at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in your host country, or you may access most forms via the Web at:

http://www.irs.ustreas.gov/prod/forms_pubs/

Voting

If you are of legal age to vote and want to vote absentee, be sure to make arrangements for an absentee ballot with your county election board, or to have your power-of-attorney do this for you.

Financial Aid

You need to disclose to the Office of Study Abroad how you plan to pay for your program before Dr. Huntsberger will sign off on your Study Abroad Program Agreement form. If you are going to be using some sort of financial aid (scholarship, Pell Grant, Stafford Loan, etc.) in addition to personal funds, you need to meet with the Financial Aid Advisor for Study Abroad in the Office of Financial Aid immediately.

- a Be certain to submit a FAFSA by the due date for the next academic year, which is usually March 1. Your file needs to be complete before you can meet with Financial Aid

- b. BEFORE you make an appointment with the Financial Aid Advisor for Study Abroad, who is responsible for your add-ons, you need to complete the estimate in Section D of the Study Abroad Agreement and then have it signed by the advisor.
- c. Make an appointment with the Financial Aid Advisor for Study Abroad (6-6119). Tell the person who answers the phone in Financial Aid that you are a student who will be on a study abroad program next semester and you need an appointment with the Financial Aid Advisor for Study Abroad.
- d. Make sure you have signed all necessary documents that Financial Aid will require during your semester/year abroad before you depart.
- e. IMPORTANT- When meeting with the Financial Aid Advisor for Study Abroad, be sure you discuss your exchange dates and your financial aid benefits dates. Do not assume you have benefits for Summer Session or Fall/Spring Semester just because your exchange period covers those dates. Know your benefits before you leave campus. Problems are more difficult to resolve after you have departed the country.
- f. Advise the Financial Aid office at least one month before you are leaving if it is possible for you to be issued any of your aid in advance. This is especially important for students leaving for programs in the southern hemisphere when Fall semester starts in July.

NMSU Required Approval Forms

Before you leave for your exchange, you need to have completed the following documents and submitted them to the Office of Study Abroad:

- ***NMSU Study Abroad Agreement-Transfer Credit Programs***

The purpose of this form is to gather student personal and academic information to incorporate into the Study Abroad data base. It also contains 5 sections that require signatures or special information:

Section C-Transfer Credit Advising Agreement. Every student needs to consult with their college to determine what courses will be taken while abroad and to designate which NMSU equivalent courses will be transferred upon successful completion of the study abroad program. This form must be signed by the associate dean of the student's academic college.

Section D-Financial Information. Every student needs to fill out this section which will help to estimate the costs of the program and the sources of funds being arranged to pay for the proposed program. Students claiming financial aid benefits, such as scholarships, grants, or loans administered by the Office of Financial Aid must have this section signed by the Financial Aid Advisor for Study Abroad. Students should carefully estimate costs and be prepared for additional costs that may arise.

Section E-Acceptance of Terms of Agreement. Every student is required to sign this agreement which establishes the code of conduct in effect while on study abroad. It also certifies that each student has been informed of the inherent risks of travel and that they accept all conditions set for the program.

Section F-Confirmation of Insurance. Every student is required to purchase NMSU's HTH study abroad insurance for the duration of their program. Waivers are granted for students who are required by their study abroad program to purchase their insurance.

Section G-Limited Power of Attorney. Every students needs to sign this section in front of a Notary Public. This allows the Office of Study Abroad to serve as your disbursement agent for financial aid and to handle any related registration matters. The secretary in the Office of Study Abroad will notarize with no fee charged.

Once completed, a copy of the Study Abroad Agreement is sent to the Office of Financial Aid, one is given to the student, and the original is kept in the student's file. When the form is completed and the NMSU application or processing fee for study abroad has been paid, the office records your international exchange status on the registration system so you remain as a continuing student while on international exchange.

- ***NMSU Study Abroad Agreement-Resident Credit Programs***

Students who register for classes at NMSU but then go outside the U.S. to study, conduct research, participate in a Co-op internship, or other activity for which they will receive resident credit or are sponsored by the university (such as a conference) are required to fill out the Student Participant List of this form and sign it to verify that they accept the Terms of Agreement for Students Traveling on Resident Credit Programs. They must verify that they have the required insurance for study abroad.

- ***Visiting Student Consortium Agreement***

This form is used only with students planning to attend a study abroad program with a university or other organization for which we do not have a standing affiliation agreement. It is required in order for NMSU to disburse your financial aid, even if the fees are to be paid to the other institution.

Refund and Penalty Policies

The Office does not give refunds of application or processing fees except when students could not be placed in a program for which they applied. Students who accept their ISEP placement but then subsequently withdraw will be charged a minimum \$200 program fee as an unrecoverable expense. Student who accept an academic year ISEP placement and then withdraw early may be held liable for paying NMSU the full cost of the program not attended if

the host institution refuses to adjust the exchange balance. Even if the host institution agrees to adjust the exchange balance to zero, students may be liable to pay for unrecoverable costs.

Each program to which students make payments directly will have their own refund and penalty policies and students will need to learn about these and be prepared to pay accordingly.

Private Contracts

Students enter into private contracts when abroad at their own risk and peril. Students should be wary of making large pre-payments to private individuals in other countries since they may be stuck with a loss they cannot recover.

Registration and Registration Holds

Students going abroad to earn transfer credit do not register for classes at NMSU for the semesters they are abroad. Instead, when they have completed all program approval requirements, the Office of Study Abroad records them on the registration system as a “transient student on international exchange.” This “administrative” registration allows them to receive financial aid and to be considered a continuing student so they do not have to reapply after an absence.

Some students choose to complete NMSU registration for the Fall and/or Spring semester as a precaution in case future circumstances force them to withdraw before the start of their approved exchange program. They don't make a down payment, however. If they do leave for the exchange, then the registration is cancelled because they didn't pay the down payment. Our office will send a list of all students studying abroad each semester to the Office of the Registrar so that students who failed to cancel their registration are changed from regular to exchange student status.

Prepayments

Some direct enrollment programs require students to make pre-payments such as deposits or for tuition and fees. All prepayments are the responsibility of the student who must make arrangements with the sponsoring organization to meet their requirements and deadlines. When a program starts earlier than the start of our normal semester, students need to be prepared to make these pre-payments before their financial aid is disbursed.

Key Travel Issues

Passport

A valid passport is required for you to enter other foreign countries except Canada and Mexico. **The Office of Study Abroad encourages all students to obtain a passport, whether one is required or not.** To obtain a U.S. passport, students must apply six to eight weeks prior to departure at a U.S. passport agency or a U.S. post office. You will need the following:

- completed application
- two (2) identical passport photos (Las Cruces Post Office will take these)
- proof of U.S. Citizenship (original birth certificate with seal from office of record)
- evidence of identity

A passport is valid for 10 years. Applications and fee schedules can be obtained from the Post Office or at www.travel.state.gov/passport_services.html.

If you already have a passport, check that it has not expired and that it will be valid for at least six months beyond your planned return to the United States. Make a copy of the identification page and carry it in a separate location. If your passport is lost or stolen the copy will aid you in obtaining a new passport.

Host Country Visa

A visa is a document (usually a stamp in a passport) that permits a person to enter a country and determines the conditions of the stay. All countries require students to obtain permission to enter them. Some countries, such as Mexico and Spain, do not require students to obtain a student visa if they are going to be in the country for 90 days or less to study at a language school. They only require students to obtain a tourist permit upon entry in the country. Some countries always require students to obtain a student visa. Some charge and fee and others provide them for free. Since visa requirements vary by country, your host institution should provide you instructions on what type of visa to obtain and how to obtain it. A visa cannot be issued without a valid passport, so it is important to apply for a passport immediately. You can look up visa requirements on the web at:

<http://www.embassy.org/embassies>.

Note 1: Some countries, such as Spain, now require U.S. students to appear in person at the Consulate that serves the student's home state. For example, residents of New Mexico would have to take their application in person to Houston, Texas. An NMSU student whose residence officially is Arizona would have to go to Los Angeles. Several companies help people to obtain visas for a modest fee, such as VIP Services at www.vippassports.com. However, some of these companies are restricted from processing some student visas.

Note 2: Some countries also now require students studying abroad to report to the local police and obtain a residence permit. Some charge a substantial fee for this, such as the Netherlands. Make sure to ask your host institution about residency permit requirements.

Miscellaneous Insurance

Students may consider additional insurance beyond the basic accident and health insurance required. Types of insurance include:

- Baggage insurance, to cover your luggage if lost or stolen.
- Flight accident insurance may be purchased at most international airports and covers you only when you are on the airplane.
- Trip cancellation, to reimburse airline cancellation penalties that may apply if you must cancel your trip or change your itinerary because of accident or sickness.
- Property insurance to cover any losses of valuable equipment (cameras, computers, etc.) or other valuable items you take abroad
- Traveler's assistance, a 24-hour hotline to help in case of medical, legal or financial emergencies.

ISIC Card

NMSU students may purchase the International Student Identity Card (ISIC) from the Office of Study Abroad. The ISIC is a convenient document for any full-time student to have. It will verify your student status and qualify you for discounts on travel, tours, accommodations, museums, theaters and cultural attractions. Some of the discounts are more readily available in Europe than in other regions of the world.

Other Travel Documents

Birth Certificate

A photocopy of your birth certificate is helpful for purchasing travel tickets that are restricted to specific age limits.

Rail & Bus Passes and Hostel Cards

Rail passes may be a good way to save while traveling through Europe and Japan. Traveling through Europe with a bus pass can be hundreds of dollars cheaper than rail passes! Staying in hostels is a cheap way to pay for accommodations while traveling away from your study site. You can learn about these travel products and purchase them at http://www.istc.umn.edu/html/trav_prod.html.

Extra Photographs

It is a good idea to carry additional passport-sized photographs with you for identity cards, visa applications, university registration, club memberships, and for giving to new friends and host families.

Budgeting

Every student is asked to make a realistic estimate of anticipated costs on a study abroad program (Section D of the Study Abroad Agreement). Students who are paying room and board to NMSU **need to understand that they will not receive exactly what they paid to NMSU from their host institution.** Instead, they will receive a room and board package that is typical for local students studying at their host institution. While it is hoped that this will be sufficient to cover your basic room and board costs, sometimes it is not 100% adequate. Students need to read the institutional sheets that outline these benefits thoroughly before agreeing to accepting their placement. They also need to budget an extra 25 to 30% in their total budget to cover shortfalls or unanticipated costs.

Banking

You should carry your money in traveler's checks when they are widely accepted and easily cashed at local banks (check with local host institution to determine if traveler's checks are easily cashed). These are replaceable if lost or stolen. Traveler's checks are sold by several agencies and by banks everywhere in the U.S. The rate of one percent over the value of the checks is what you pay unless your bank waives this fee. Be sure to keep your receipts in a separate place, away from the checks, in case you need to have them replaced.

It is a good idea to take some cash with you, usually \$50-\$100 in the local currency of your destination to pay for initial expenses before you go to the bank. It is possible to exchange money at currency exchange bureaus at the airport (but the fees tend to be high).

You may want to carry a credit card and get a pin number. Most ATM machines will accept Visa and Mastercard and it's an easy way to obtain quick cash without paying high conversion fees. Be aware, however, that credit cards are now charging an extra fee on international transactions.

You may consider obtaining local currency from International Currency Express, Inc., which operates out of Beverly Hills, CA. They also can arrange to wire money to banks around the world. Their toll free number is 888-278-6628. Several students have had good service from them. Or you may contact your bank about obtaining some local currency before you leave.

NMSU Mementos and Other Gifts

Since you will be representing your university, you should begin to assemble a few items, such as a t-shirt, pen-

nant, book on the State of New Mexico, map of New Mexico, etc. Most of these can be purchased from the NMSU bookstore. Consider taking a few small gifts to present to a host family or other people who have helped you. In some countries, such as Mexico and Japan, gift giving is very important. Read up about the cultural values of the country in which you will be studying to determine protocol for gift giving.

Mandatory Orientations

NMSU's orientation is now WebCT based and mandatory to be approved for study abroad and receive transfer credit. Students have to complete the orientation on line by a deadline each semester, and they must take two quizzes that have a passing score of 85%. Students who pass both quizzes do not have to attend the predeparture orientation sessions scheduled each semester for the purpose of answering questions about study abroad

NMSU also requires your attendance at your host institution's orientation. Housing and meal benefits are provided for in-country mandatory orientations at ISEP institutions, which have been calculated in your exchange program fee.

Health & Safety Concerns

Medical and Accident Insurance for Study Abroad

As a condition of studying abroad in Transfer or Resident Credit Status, every NMSU student must be covered with NMSU's medical and/or accident insurance that will pay for medical care abroad. Insurance coverage must be effective the day you arrive in your country of destination outside the U.S. and continue until you return to the U.S. The insurance requirement may be fulfilled as follows:

1. Resident Credit Student Day Trip to Mexico or other short trips (30 days or less) to any country:

Purchase the BETA insurance plan, or for day trips, purchase HTH's Medx Plus (medical evacuation only).

2. Transfer Credit Programs (any length of time):

Purchase the HTH Study Abroad Insurance, or show proof that you have purchased an acceptable insurance plan from a program provider, such as ISEP. Students required to purchase a country's student insurance plan (such as Australia) will need to supplement this with BETA since these do not cover medical evacuation.

Immunizations

Students are required to check on up-to-date information about required and recommended immunizations for travel to their host country. Current information on health conditions in countries abroad can also be found on the Center for Disease Control's Web site at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/travel.html>

Students should also carry with them copies of medical histories (including blood type) to assist local medical providers in treating routine or emergency medical problems. If you have any serious medical condition that could require special care overseas, you need to share this with your host institution.

Medicines and Prescriptions

Students should obtain any medications they will need before they leave. They should contact their physician and obtain permission to obtain medication to cover them while they are abroad. Medicines should be carried in carry-on luggage, and should be stored in the original prescription container. You may have to obtain a prescription for some medicines from a doctor in your country of destination. Some medicines that require a prescription here may be sold over the counter in other countries.

Physicals

Before departing, it is a good idea to have a physical if you have not had one recently. This also includes a visit to have your eyes and teeth examined. You should make your host institution aware of any physical limitations you may have. Students with disabilities want to be certain that their special needs can be accommodated while they are abroad.

Basic Precautions

Every student as part of the WebCT orientation course has been required to read information about their country of destination provided by the U.S. State Department's Consular Information Sheets. These provide a wealth of information about health and safety in other countries. They also should have viewed information about health issues abroad provided by the Center for Disease Control.

Students need to maintain a nutritional diet and get plenty of sleep when abroad to keep healthy. Plenty of rest after first arrival is important to overcome jet lag. They need to be aware of problems with food and water borne diseases. They need to avoid abuse of drugs and alcohol. Remember that laws are different in all countries and those arrested for drug or alcohol abuse are subject to the penalties of the host country (which may be more severe than in the U.S.). Since AIDS is prevalent in many countries, precautions must be taken with regard to sexual relations. Remember that traveling to another country does not give you a license to do what you would not consider doing at home.

Medical Service Availability

Check with your host coordinator what medical services will be available to you (doctors who speak English, hospitals, clinics, etc.).

State Department Travel Advisories

Before traveling to other countries, you should assess any safety concerns about travel. The Office of Study Abroad encourages you to at least view the Web site of the Department of State to review current travel warnings:

Determine if the risk factors are at an unacceptable level. Students should also follow these tips for reducing the risk of crime, violence, terrorism, and accidents:

Tips for Safety

- Keep a low profile and try not to identify yourself by dress, speech, or behavior as a targetable individual.
- Avoid potentially volatile situations such as protest rallies.
- Keep abreast of local news.
- Make sure the resident director, host family, or foreign university official who is assigned responsibility for your welfare always knows where and how to contact you in an emergency. When you travel, even if only overnight, leave your itinerary.
- Know local laws. Laws and systems of justice are not universal. Do not assume that because something is legal in the U.S., it is legal abroad.
- Use banks or approved exchange houses to exchange money. Do not exchange money on the black market, that is, on the street. Do not carry on your person more money than you need for the day. Carry your credit cards in a very safe place (and keep a list of credit card numbers in a separate safe place for reference).
- Do not impair your judgment through excessive consumption of alcohol, and do not fall under the influence of drugs.
- Female travellers, who are more likely to encounter harassment, should dress conservatively. Avoid walking alone late at night. Be aware that some men from other countries tend to mistake the friendliness of American women for romantic interest.

Above all, students should develop a family communication plan for regular telephone or e-mail contact, with contingencies for emergency situations. Keep in touch with home and the university frequently, and let family and the university know you arrived safely.

Safe Road Travel

Driving customs vary greatly and pedestrians are frequently not given the right of way. Find out which roads are safest and whether it is safe to travel on overnight trains and buses. Inquire about the safety record of various modes of transportation. Avoid renting a car unless you feel very comfortable with the driving habits of the locals.

Packing and Travel Tips

Packing for an extended trip is probably an art more than a science. It is always important to pack as light as possible, taking into consideration those items you must have, versus those that might be nice to take but aren't essential.

Checklist of Items to Take

Essential:

Bilingual Dictionary	Camera and Film
Sewing Kit	Cosmetic, Toiletry Items
Electric Outlet Adapter	Travel Alarm Clock
Small Calculator	Travel Guide
Metric Conversion Chart	Sense of Humor
Good Walking Shoes	Copy of Medical and Dental Records

Nice To Have:

Address Book-small	Journal Book
Cookbook	Bottle/Can Opener
Flashlight and Batteries	Photos of Family and Friends
Sunglasses, Sun Screen, Lip Balm	Small Radio/ Tape Player/ Tapes
Posters, Pillow, Stuffed Animal	Travel Iron

Airline Baggage Allowances

It is important that you pack wisely and efficiently. Charges on luggage that exceed the weight limit can be very expensive. Check with your airline about weight/baggage restrictions. Do not carry on your person or in your carry on luggage knives, scissors, box cutters or any other items that could be construed as a weapon.

Luggage

Choose luggage carefully. Keep in mind that some suitcases are already heavy before they are packed. Put labels inside and outside your luggage with your name, home and in-country address, and telephone numbers. Mark your bags in some distinctive way, since a lot of luggage looks very similar. It may be wise to put a change of underwear and shirt/blouse and some essential medicines and cosmetics in your carry-on luggage in case your checked baggage is delayed or lost.

Wardrobe

It's better to bring more socks, hose and underwear and fewer pieces of clothing. This will reduce the amount

of laundering needed while studying and traveling. Most of your clothes should be comfortable, casual campus wear. Add at least a few nice outfits for special occasions. Permanent press fabrics or knits will eliminate the need for ironing. Layering is the answer to changing temperatures. A hooded rain coat with a zip-in lining is ideal for wet or cool weather. If you are going to a cold climate, check with the host coordinator for advice on what clothes to bring.

Documents

Passports and other documents should be carried with you in a safe place but should be readily accessible at immigration points. A travel pouch around your neck or waist is handy.

Containers

Double check all container caps. Put shampoo, toothpaste, shaving cream, etc. in sealed plastic bags. Airline pressure can open bottles. Try not to carry anything in glass bottles—they break!

In-Country Issues

Being A Responsible Guest

An important part of preparing to study in your host country is to conduct thorough research. Know the customs, culture, attitude, religion, taboos, and anything else that might be important when you're there. Remember, you are representing your country, your university, and yourself. If you're knowledgeable about the country before you go, you will feel more comfortable when you arrive and are less likely to act in a way that will offend others or embarrass yourself.

When you arrive at your host institution, the exchange coordinator will organize an in-country orientation program for you. The coordinator may already have sent you orientation materials needed to prepare you to travel to the host institution.

As soon as you arrive, let your family and the Office of Study Abroad know that you arrived. As soon as you enroll in courses, fill out the Certification of Full-time Status on Exchange and fax it to the Office of Study Abroad before mailing it. We need this to maintain your financial aid eligibility

The Cultural Adjustment Process

A period of cultural adjustment is expected when a person moves from a familiar surrounding to a new setting where language, food, climate and people's actions are different. This process affects people in various ways and may not even affect you at all. These tips should help you think about what it takes to adjust to a new culture.

- When you arrive, **keep an open mind**. Avoid comparisons to your own country.
- Avoid forming cliques with students from your own country or other international students.
- Try to make contacts & form relationships with local citizens.
- Immerse yourself in the culture early into your stay.
- Participate in cultural activities.
- Find your own way around your community. It will give you confidence when traveling to new places.
- Know the laws and customs before you go. Research the country as much as possible.

Cultural baggage is brought with you as no one enters a new culture simply as an individual. The history, values and attitudes of your home culture that travel as part of you is labeled cultural baggage. Many of these attitudes, values and beliefs are so taken for granted that you are not even aware of them. Keep in mind that each culture is different. It is not better or worse than the other.

You should expect to feel excitement and anticipation at first as you explore your new surroundings. After several weeks you may find yourself with less and less energy and a less optimistic attitude to your surroundings. Your home culture will become more desirable. You may become irritated with the food, people and actions of the host country. Excitement changes to confusion and loneliness.

This disorientation is a perfectly normal experience of living in a new culture, and the depressive feelings will pass. When you have learned to accept your host culture, both the good and the bad, you will begin to once again enjoy your unique experience. This process can be painful but it can be a mind expanding process that will give a better understanding and tolerance for host and home cultures.

Positive actions can help to overcome feelings of loneliness and withdrawal. Foremost is to stay busy and set goals for yourself that you feel are important. Activities to consider are:

- Keep a journal.
- Make new friends and talk to people—Be friendly!
- Share feelings with other foreign students—most likely they'll have experienced the same.
- Speak with advisors or instructors.
- Learn about your new school and settings.
- Pursue a new or old hobby.
- Join a school club.
- Plan trips to take during holidays.
- Decorate your room with favorite items from home.

Sending Letters and Packages

Letters that are sent airmail can take from 4 to 10 days to arrive at their destination. Keep in mind that the amount of time varies according to what country the package is sent from. All items sent airmail must be clearly marked "AIR-MAIL," preferably on the front and back.

Packages sent abroad should have the mailing address on the outside and inside of the package. Items that are not sent airmail generally take 6-8 weeks in transit, and longer if sent during late November and December when the mail volume increases dramatically.

Any item valued over \$25 is subject to customs tax. Mark gifts that are inexpensive "GIFT-VALUE UNDER \$25" and no duty will be charged. Be prepared to open the gift and show it to customs inspectors if they ask.

Books mailed home are usually sent at a special rate if they are packed according to certain specifications. Mark "BOOKS" on the box and they are exempt from duty regulations.

Be aware that U.S. Customs opens packages regularly and randomly—not just "suspicious looking" ones. Making false statements on declaration forms is very serious and can involve fines, confiscation, and charges being levied against you.

Returning Home Issues

While your exchange will seem to be a long time to be away, soon it will be time to return. It is important to prepare for returning home as carefully as you did for going abroad

Preregistration

Preregister for classes at NMSU, on the Web if available, or by sending our office the courses you want to take so we can register you. We will send you information about preregistration, but mail is slow and the NMSU Home Page is the quickest way to register (if it works!).

Clearing Debts

Clear all outstanding debts to the host university, host families, etc. Failure to clear debt will delay the sending of your host university transcript to NMSU. **Credit cannot be transferred until an official transcript is received. The Office of Study Abroad is obligated to place a hold on future registration at NMSU when NMSU students leave debt at the host institution.**

Other Important Matters

- Fill out any evaluation forms given you in country.
- Check with your exchange coordinator to determine if there will be any problems with issuing a transcript, and ask how long it will take to send one.
- Bring course papers, catalogs, other materials that describe the courses offered at the university you attended (the office would appreciate receiving any catalogs we can put in our resource library).
- Bring back photos of your study abroad experience to enter in the Study Abroad Photo Contest.

Back on Campus Issues

Transfer Credit Procedures

All transcripts for study abroad are required to be sent to the Office of Study Abroad. Our office will certify these and send an original to the Registrar's Office as a permanent record. Copies will be then sent to the Associate Dean of your College for evaluation and recommendation of transfer credit; to the Office of Financial Aid to prove you were a full-time student; and to you for your records. We will keep a copy in your file in our office in case you lose yours.

We will not forward or certify transcripts until students have attended a debriefing session and have filled out the NMSU study abroad evaluation form.

Usually, only courses passed at C or above will appear on your transcript graded as CR. Check with your advising center or Associate Dean if you have questions about transfer credit.

International Involvement

The Office of Study Abroad has a Study Abroad Peer Mentor program which uses students as volunteers to talk to classes and at study abroad meetings about their study abroad experience. They also greet the incoming exchange students and help them get settled. We encourage returned students to consider joining the NMSU Rotaract Club, which is a group of domestic and international students who have international interests and who volunteer to become involved in community service projects. If you are interested in the volunteer programs, contact the office about how to join. Get involved with international students is a good way to get over return culture shock and to keep involved internationally.

