

Pre-departure Orientation Topics

Pre-departure orientation is a critical part of making sure students stay safe, healthy and happy while abroad. Below are some resources and reminders for Faculty Directors to help ensure that students are well-prepared for their program. Student orientation happens in several ways, which include a required SPU Study Abroad facilitated pre-departure orientation, as well as pre-departure and on-site orientations with you, their Faculty Director.

Your role in this process is crucial to ensure that your students are organized prior to your program and have a positive experience once your program begins. It is also an opportunity to establish reasonable student expectations and manage those expectations. We encourage you to review the information below so that you are familiar with what is required of students.

Please plan on covering all of the necessary information for your own program in your pre- departure orientations with students.

Pre-Departure Orientation

Your job as a faculty director is to orient students to the culture of the host country and counsel them on a range of social, academic and other practical issues.

Meet with your students (at *least* twice) during the prior quarter to discuss your program, answer questions, make preparations for departure, and allow students to get to know each other. Use your pre-departure meetings to lay the groundwork for a positive and enriching study abroad experience.

SPU Study Abroad must be in attendance at one of your meetings to cover health, safety, and lifestyle expectations, and to answer students' general questions. In addition, the session may cover practical information such money matters, packing, and electricity. Orientations are approximately one hour in length.

Onsite Orientation

Upon arrival, your program provider should facilitate an onsite orientation for your students. These typically cover location-specific health and safety, emergency protocol, as well as logistics such as: Keys, deposits, maps, transportation, facilities and housing.

PRE-DEPARTURE & ON-SITE ORIENTATION TOPICS

Please cover all of the following topics with your students
before the program begins

Health Screening, Vaccinations & Insurance

- Basic health and safety issues are covered in the mandatory student orientation. Make students aware of any country and/or site specific health concerns and possible risks/exposure. Provide resources for more information, but do not dispense medical advice!
- Student Health Services is a great resource for students traveling to locations outside of the United States. The center offers pre-travel counseling, advice on needed prescriptions,

vaccinations (fee-for-service), etc. Vaccinations may be necessary for travel to certain locations, and a health professional is the best person to give these recommendations.

- Additional international health information can be obtained at the CDC website: <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/>.
- SPU *requires* study abroad participants to carry medical insurance and this will be included in the program fees .

Passports & Visas

- Students are responsible for having all necessary travel documents or visas for the program. SPU Study Abroad does not provide assistance with travel documents or visas.
- Make sure all your students are allowing adequate time to apply for and receive their passports: http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html.
- Be sure to check all entry requirements for your destination, some countries require visas. Many countries require passports to be valid for up to 6 months *after* departure from the country. For more info: http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html.
- Non-US citizens participating in your program may have different entry requirements, so these students need to check with the destination consulate/embassy to verify what additional documents (if any) they need for entry/travel in the host country.
- State Department “Tips for Traveling Abroad” http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/tips_1232.html.

Flights & Contact Information

- Organize a meeting place for all students at the start of the program. This may be at SeaTac Airport, en-route to the final destination, the group hotel, classroom site, etc. Make sure students have very clear directions (in English and the local language) and a good idea of how to get there.
- The onsite provider should be available and easy to contact prior to students' designated arrival times. Make sure students have local contact information and a back-up plan.
- Set out clear guidelines ahead of time for what students should do if they do not arrive at the initial meeting place as planned.
- Address how to access money and any other logistical issues related to traveling to the meeting point.

Local Program Site Information

Basic Needs: Housing & Food

- Provide information about housing arrangements, regulations, etc. Establish clear expectations for students regarding housing, policies, property damage, etc.
- If students are staying in "home-stays", discuss specific cultural norms and practical issues. Address concerns and encourage dialogue if problems arise on site.
- Discuss dining and food options, costs, local customs, and any food risks.
- Discuss local alcohol laws and culture, and risks associated with excessive drinking, as well as reminding students about SPU Lifestyle Expectations.

Local Transportation

- Availability and use of local transportation. Point out which modes of transportation are preferred, those recognized as unsafe, general costs associated, what transportation passes are included or how to purchase tickets.
- Discuss hitchhiking, motorcycles, and other tempting yet unsafe ways to get around.

Community

- General introduction to the community and its physical surroundings.
- Give details about living and traveling conditions with as much detail as possible to avoid "surprises" and student concerns.
- Discuss what it will be like to live and travel as a large group. Address apprehensions about privacy, personal time, etc. Students will need to share, cooperate, and sacrifice individual needs and look after the group.
- Address in-country weather conditions and suggest items to pack (i.e. comfortable walking

shoes). Discuss appropriate attire, both with regards to climate and cultural expectations.

Cultural Behavior

- Remind students of their important role as ambassadors of SPU and the USA while abroad.
- Discuss what it means to be an American student/traveler in an international context.
- Cultural norms and traditions, gender roles, communication styles, etc. of host country.
- Remind students that culture shock is a normal part of many students' experience abroad. Discuss this with them, and help to normalize the feelings that your students may encounter.
- Mention normal aspects of culture shock and let students know they can and should come to you if they are having trouble at any time throughout the trip.

Communications, Banking & Money

- Highlight facilities for and access to mail, internet and telephones.
- Set expectations for frequency of access to phone and internet. Encourage students to set communication frequency expectations with family and loved ones before the leave.
- Laptops and cell phones: To bring or not to bring? Discuss in relation to required coursework.
- Explain options and any barriers to managing money on-site (ATMs, banks, exchange rates, cash, travelers checks, credit cards).
- Help students plan how much money of their own they will need during the program.
- Consider procedures for financial emergencies. Remind students of what they are responsible for (Personal spending, health, food, shopping, communications, etc).

Non-Program (Personal) Travel

- Discuss non-program-related travel: When is it okay and when is it not okay?
- Inform program leaders of travel plans, and if possible, leave contact addresses and/or phone numbers for use in emergency situations.
- Students are responsible for all costs and safety issues of non-official program travel.

Course & Academic Expectations

Academic Expectations

- Go over syllabus and program itinerary with students, answer questions, and discuss “what to expect” related to workload, travel, group work, learning outcomes, etc.
- Discuss in detail your expectations of students as they relate to grading and evaluation.
- Grading for study abroad is often based on non-traditional “work.” Make sure students are well-aware of expectations and what their grades are based on. To avoid confusion and conflict, put it in writing!

Behavioral Expectations

- Discuss expectations (yours and theirs) for living, studying, traveling, and functioning as individuals and as a group. Consider creating a group “code of conduct” for the program. This can facilitate discussion and be a tool you can refer to if/when behavior issues arise.
- Explain the roles of program leaders and in-country staff.
- Remind students that they are bound by the SPU Lifestyle Expectations and all local laws (that may be very different from U.S. laws) at all times during the program. Discuss with students how you will handle behavioral and disciplinary issues during the program.
- Discuss local laws concerning drug use, political activism, and other risky behavior, etc.
- Students may need to discuss and process the things they are experiencing on the program. Plan time for (and encourage) reflection and feedback between you and the students from the start of the program.
- Encourage your students to consult with Student Health Services to discuss any issues fears or concerns that may come up regarding health and safety.

Health & Safety

Emergency Planning

- What to do, where to go, and who to contact in case of emergencies.
- How to get a hold of program leaders and other key local contacts.
- Assure students that emergency protocol has been developed and that you are prepared.

- Inform students that it is advisable to have a cell phone and review options to obtain a cell phone in the destination you are visiting.

Review of medical and health facilities

- Remind students that they are responsible for ALL medical expenses in-country and that they will be carrying medical insurance while participating in the program. Insurance policy information will be uploaded in to the students' online study abroad accounts.
- Guide students to take charge of their own health while abroad. For routine medical issues, students should be able to find a clinic and a doctor through the provider or their insurance company. Directors should obviously help very ill students, but need not be fully responsible for basic health maintenance. Non-emergency clinic visits need to be scheduled in advance in order to be free at the time of service. Students can pay and get reimbursed for last minute non-emergency clinic visits.

Safety

Discuss country-specific safety concerns in as much detail as possible:

- Areas, neighborhoods, types of transportation to avoid
- Common crimes of concern, and tricks used to dupe foreigners
- Common gender roles and customs, and any specific safety concerns for women
- Alcohol and drug use (local norms & laws, program expectations)
- Political and social issues, including local attitudes towards foreigners
- Traveling alone
- Weekend travel policy; checking out and back in with leaders
- Water/food safety
- Sex-related risks (harassment, assault, etc.)
- Establish a common code for group safety, watching out for each other, etc.