

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Faculty-Led International Immersion Programs (FLIIE and IFP)



Student Handbook

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INTRODUCTION

Who Should Use this Handbook?

This handbook contains policies, procedures, and general information that apply to all students participating on any international Immersion programs—including both FLIIE (Faculty-Led International Immersion Experience) and IFP (International Fellows Program) international Immersions. These are short-term immersion programs primarily for full-time University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire (UW-Eau Claire or UWEC) undergraduate students, led by UWEC faculty and staff, and coordinated by the Intercultural Immersions Office under Academic Affairs at UWEC.

How to Use this Handbook

Read it carefully and refer to it when you have questions. You are responsible for the content of this handbook. Note that you can print the information from this PDF if you prefer to have a hard copy of the handbook.

The handbook complements every program guide, which contains information specific to your host country and program. For FLIIE programs, you can [search for your program guide here](#). Then enter the name of your program you're interested in, click the Search Programs button, and you will arrive at that program's website where you can find the program guide.

International Immersions at UW-Eau Claire!

Congratulations! You have decided to be one of the nearly 25% of UWEC students in your graduating class who will have participated on an international Immersion program and / or studied abroad. UWEC ranks in the top 30 Master's granting institutions in the country for the number of our students who study abroad on their own or through an Immersion program.

Mission of the Intercultural Immersion Office: To enhance the Blugold student experience by

administering and supporting high-impact intercultural immersion programs that are integrated into the curriculum. We aim to deepen student intercultural competence through experiential learning opportunities and engagement with people, cultures, languages, environments, and systems different than their own, in order to foster engaged citizens who have personal and professional skills for lifelong learning in a diverse world.

We fulfill our mission through a commitment to

1. Work with Faculty / Staff and departments to develop and promote a diverse array of high-impact intercultural immersion programs through mutually beneficial collaborations with international and domestic partners.
2. Foster development of intercultural competency and a respectful understanding of diverse cultures, populations, and environments through transformative learning opportunities.
3. Increase access to immersion experiences and encourage participation by all students, particularly those traditionally underrepresented in off-campus high-impact practices.
4. Develop faculty expertise in building global relationships through cultural immersion and international research opportunities.
5. Bring knowledge, increased capacity, and understanding back to UW-Eau Claire.

Blugold Commitment FLIIE Funding

FLIIE Programs are made possible through Blugold Commitment Differential Tuition (BCDT) funding. The goals of the Blugold Commitment are to extend access and affordability to these exceptional high-impact practices for all UWEC undergraduates, to ensure that more of these opportunities are available for these students, and to increase the numbers of students who participate.

All FLIIE programs receive BGDТ funding (stated on your program’s website), which is automatically granted to all full-time undergraduate UWEC students. No additional application is necessary to receive FLIIE funding. The specific amount of FLIIE funding per program is listed on your *Cost Estimate* sheet.

While students are encouraged to participate in multiple high-impact immersions, each student is eligible to receive BCDТ funding for only one FLIIE experience. Any student who has participated in a previous FLIIE experience is not eligible to receive BCDТ funding for a second FLIIE experience. You will be notified upon acceptance if you do not qualify for the FLIIE funding.

STUDENT CONDUCT

Your Responsibilities as a UWEC International Immersion Participant

Predeparture: As stated in the Statement of Participation you signed as part of your post-acceptance materials, participating in a UWEC Immersion program is a privilege, with that privilege comes several responsibilities:

1. Turning in all forms / materials required for your program by the stated deadlines.
2. Attending the mandatory Orientation the semester before travel.
3. Being responsible for the information in this handbook and the corresponding guide for your program.
4. Checking your UWEC email account at least weekly.
5. Remaining in good standing (academic, financial and conduct) at UWEC the semester prior to departure.
6. Applying for and obtaining a visa, if required by your host country.
7. Educating yourself on your host country’s laws.
8. Making all program payments on time.

Failure to live up to these responsibilities may result in termination of participation. You can

review the full Statement of Participation in the Materials section of your online Immersion Program account.

While abroad: While you are abroad, you are still a UWEC student, and you are subject to the same code of conduct and disciplinary measures that are in place on the UWEC campus. The [Blugold Code](#) includes policies for both academic and non-academic misconduct.

If we receive a notice of misconduct involving you from abroad, we will consult with the Dean of Students Office to determine whether misconduct as defined by the Blugold Code has occurred and what disciplinary actions may apply.

If the Dean of Students Office determines misconduct has occurred, based on the information they have been provided, they will contact you to arrange a conference. This may happen after your return. At the conference you will have an opportunity to present your information. You will then be notified as to whether you were found responsible or not, details regarding any sanctions assigned and information on how to file an appeal.

As stated in the Enrollment Agreement that you signed in your online Immersion Program (Study Abroad) application, the following behaviors may result in termination of participation:

- failure to maintain good academic standing or academic requirements of the program
- personal conduct that adversely affects other students or faculty
- conduct that violates the rules and regulations published in the Blugold Code
- conduct which violates the law of the country in which the program occurs

You can review the full Enrollment Agreement in the Materials section of your online application.

Upon Return: You are responsible for completing all program requirements due after the travel portion of the program ends. This might include a final project, reflection paper, or presentations on your experience.

Specific Program Policies

Each FLIIE program also has its own program policies around student behavior and conduct. These are put in place to minimize risk and ensure your safety as a participant on the program. This could include but is not limited to a program curfew, rules around rental car use, limited free time, and group dynamics. On all programs, you are expected to demonstrate respect for yourself, your Faculty / Staff leaders, other students, and the local partners or organization of the program.

Staff Resources

Academic Affairs and Undergraduate Studies are the units on campus responsible for UW-Eau Claire faculty-led immersion programs. Below is the staff of the Intercultural Immersions Office:

Intercultural Immersions Coordinator: Jeff DeGrave (degravjr@uwec.edu or (715) 836-4471) with questions about the program, activities, academics, health and counseling services, housing, the cost estimate for your program, and UW-Eau Claire course credits.

Assistant Program Coordinator: Andrew Akey is the Immersions Program Assistant. You can reach Andrew at akeyal@uwec.edu or (715) 836-5940. Andrew works with all faculty-led immersion programs, particularly with the many documents you have uploaded into your online application. Please contact Andrew with any questions regarding your online application, outstanding forms, arrival and departure itineraries, and CISI enrollment.

Faculty / Staff Leader: Your program will include between 1 and 3 UW-Eau Claire Faculty / Staff Leaders who are responsible for leading the

program as well as teaching your course abroad, if applicable. They will also work with you before you leave to get you ready for the program, complete any academic preparation and readings, and discuss cultural adjustment. Please contact your Faculty / Staff Leader with questions regarding the in-country itinerary, course requirements or syllabus, or local accommodations or activities.

Written Resources

You will receive information at different points throughout the process of getting everything in order to prepare you for your Immersion program. To help you keep it all straight, here is a list of what you receive, and when!

Acceptance: You received an acceptance email directing you to information in your online Immersion Program application.

Prior to Orientation: You will receive emails notifying you of:

- new learning content in your online Immersion Program (Study Abroad) account about finances / orientation
- this handbook
- your program guide (a program-specific companion to this general handbook)

At Orientation, you will receive:

- Health and safety information
- Insurance information
- Program specifics and packing list
- Travel advice
- Information about your student bill
- Policies and procedures
- And more!

The rest of the semester before travel: You will receive email updates from your Program Coordinator or Faculty / Staff Leader with any important information. Read the updates carefully and often!

ACADEMICS

Program Prerequisites

To participate in a UW-Eau Claire faculty-led immersion program, you must be in good standing (academic, conduct, and financial) and have the minimum cumulative GPA required. Check your program guide for details.

The Immersions Office checks grades and academic standing at the end of the semester prior to your departure. If you are on academic warning or probation, we will need to check with your Faculty / Staff Leaders to see if you will be allowed to participate. If you are suspended, you will not be allowed to participate on the program. Please contact the Immersions Coordinator if you have concerns about your academic performance at any time prior to your planned departure.

Registration at UW-Eau Claire

If your immersion program is offered for UWEC academic credit (aside from non-credit immersion programs such as Guatemala or the Taiwan non-credit option), you will need to go to your MyBlugold CampS account and sign your online PPA for the term abroad, just as if you were going to be on campus. A delay in registration can have significant consequences for students who use financial aid.

You will have to register yourself for the course associated with your immersion program, just as if you were going to be on campus. However, the date you can register might be later than the date you would normally register for other courses during that term. You will receive an email when you can register for the course.

Upon successful completion of the course, your grade will appear on your transcript. Credits earned abroad on this program are considered UW-Eau Claire resident credits. The class you take abroad will count towards the total credits

needed for graduation, and the grade will be figured into your GPA.

Class Attendance

While on your Immersion program, you are required to follow the attendance policies of the university and your Immersion program. In general, you are expected to attend all regularly scheduled classes and participate in all program activities unless illness or other unavoidable circumstances make this impossible. Absences must be approved in advance by the Faculty / Staff Leader and may result in lower grades.

General Education / Liberal Education Requirements

All Faculty-Led International Immersion Experiences (FLIIE programs) fulfill the Responsibility 2 (R2) Global Learning Outcome upon satisfactory completion of all program requirements. Some FLIIE programs may also offer a second Global Learning Outcome.

Service-Learning

Some Immersion programs also provide the opportunity to complete your service-learning requirement abroad. Service-learning is a hands-on learning approach that helps connect abstract theory with practice, strengthen interpersonal and communication skills, promote the value of diversity, and foster civic engagement.

For FLIIE programs, please navigate to the [Academics page on your program's webpage](#) to determine whether or not the program will fulfill any of the requirement. For some programs, you must obtain prior approval of your service-learning project from your Faculty / Staff Leader and the Center for Service Learning.

Mini-grant programs are also available for new and creative service-learning projects. These grants are designed for students who may incur additional costs while completing their project. Grant amounts are available up to \$500 and are available on a first-come basis. Please contact the

Center for Service Learning (svrlearn@uwec.edu) for more details.

Transfer Credit for Non-UWEC Students

UW-Eau Claire will provide one free copy of your transcript to your home university. In order to receive the no-charge transcript for your semester / summer / winter abroad, you must return the *Transcript Release Form* due with your acceptance materials. If you did not return the form, it is your responsibility to request official transcripts from UWEC to be sent to your home institution. You can request a copy from Credentials Inc.—the company retained by UWEC to accept transcript requests. Visit [UWEC's Transcripts page](#) to request a copy of your transcripts. Please note that you will need to pay a service charge if you request your transcript online. Your home institution may need to see course syllabuses, reading lists, etc., to determine how the credits will transfer.

Accessing the UW-Eau Claire Library

As a UWEC student, McIntyre librarians are available to assist you, even when you are in another country. You can reach a librarian by emailing library.reference@uwec.edu, via online chat, or by clicking Ask Us (all available on the [McIntyre Library homepage](#)).

Journal Articles: You have access to McIntyre Library's entire journal article collection (digital or print) even when you are not on campus. McIntyre Library will scan and email articles to students abroad at no charge.

Books: You also have access to more than 8,000 e-books on a broad range of subjects through the library's [Distance Education Service](#).

MONEY MATTERS

All currently enrolled full-time UWEC undergraduate students who are in good academic standing are eligible to receive Blugold Funding for one FLIIE program during their

academic career at UWEC. UWEC prioritizes "high-impact practices" such as Immersion programs and, as such, financially supports students to allow them a greater opportunity to participate on Immersion programs.

Each full-time UWEC undergraduate student who has been accepted into a FLIIE program receives \$500 of Blugold Funding for every week that the program takes place, up to \$2,000. For example, a three-week Immersion program will provide each student on that program a total of \$1,500 (\$500 x 3 weeks) that will be applied to the program fees. The Blugold Funding amount is automatically calculated into your costs that you see on MyBlugold CampS. To understand how this total is calculated, please see the Cost Estimate Sheet on your program's website.

The most current Cost Estimate sheet for your program is available on your program's webpage. The sheet includes the amount of Blugold Funding each student is receiving, estimated costs you will pay directly to UWEC, costs you will pay while abroad, and additional costs to anticipate. Details are also included in your program guide.

Please note that the UW-Eau Claire Cashier's Office cannot post any costs on your MyBlugold CampS account until December for Winterim term and May for summer term. If the cost estimate changes significantly due to exchange rate fluctuation or a different number of students than expected, you will be notified directly.

Payment Deadlines at UW-Eau Claire

By the time you receive this handbook, you will have paid a non-refundable application fee (\$40) and a non-refundable deposit (\$150). The rest of the fees you pay to UWEC are due on the regular UWEC campus billing cycle for your term abroad.

Final Immersion Program Bill

For non-credit immersion programs, you will receive an email with the exact due date,

amount, and payment directions for your final payment (early December for Winterim programs and early May for summer programs). For all for-credit programs, your final bill will be available for viewing on MyBlugold CampS. Immersion Program final payments follow the normal campus billing cycle. For final payment deadlines, visit [Blugold Central](#).

Your final charges will be posted to your MyBlugold CampS account. You will receive an email when bills are ready to be viewed on MyBlugold CampS. The \$40 and \$150 deposits you have already paid will be credited to this amount.

To find your charges:

1. Log into your student MyBlugold CampS account
 - a. Choose Self-Service
 - b. Choose Student Center
2. Under Finances:
 - a. Choose Account Inquiry
 - b. Choose Summary, [term]. This will give you your total amount due.
3. If you have been awarded financial aid or scholarships for that term, choose Financial Aid. You will be able to see your Financial Aid award on the first day of the term.
 - a. To figure out the total amount you owe, subtract your financial aid from your total amount due.

Your final payment amount should equal the final program charges minus any past payments you have made (i.e. \$40 non-refundable application fee, \$150 non-refundable deposit) and any financial aid or scholarships you have been awarded. For example, if your final program cost is \$5,000 and you have received \$1,000 in financial aid, your final payment should be \$3,820 (\$5,000-\$180 in payments-\$1,000 in aid = \$3,820 final payment). Pay the amount due to [Blugold Central](#) by the due dates provided in your online application.

Additional In-Country Costs: Remember that the amount on CampS is only what you pay to UW-Eau Claire. You can find the approximate breakdown of the program fees, plus estimates of additional costs you will pay directly while abroad, in your online Immersion Program (Study Abroad) account, or in your program guide.

Consequences of Failing to Pay

- If you do not pay in full by the first final payment due date, you will receive a late charge.
- If you fail to pay in full by the second due date, you will have a hold placed on your record and will not be able to register for the next semester.
- During the last month of the semester, a final letter will be sent out telling you of your delinquent balance and giving you the opportunity to set up monthly payments. If you do not respond to this letter, Blugold Central will begin adding collection charges and will notify an outside collection agency.
- You can normally register for summer term before a hold would be applied during the spring semester. If your summer bill remains unpaid in mid-July, Blugold Central-Business Office will send a letter notifying you that your summer account must be paid in full by August 1, or your fall classes will be cancelled.

UWEC Withdrawal Deadlines

The \$40 application fee is non-refundable. The \$150 deposit is also non-refundable, except in the case of a documented medical or family emergency, or if cancelled from the program due to academic ineligibility or conduct violations. However, we are able to apply the \$40 deposit to a future Study Abroad or Immersion program.

The refund deadline for Winterim programs is October 1 and for summer programs is March 1. No refunds are available after this date. All withdrawals must be made in writing.

If you withdraw after the refund deadline, you will still need to pay some or all of the program costs as listed in the cost estimate. In addition, if you receive financial aid and withdraw or are cancelled after the program begins, you may be required to both pay back your financial aid and pay the full program costs.

All Immersion programs receive Blugold Commitment funding. Undergraduate students who withdraw after the no-refund deadline will lose their FLIIE funding. As such, they will be expected to pay ALL non-refundable program costs paid to UWEC. A student who withdraws after the refund deadline will be responsible for paying the full program fee, which is the true cost of the program without the Blugold Funding. In other words, the students would have to repay the Blugold Funding amount, as well. In most cases, if a student withdraws after the refund deadline, it will cost more to NOT participate in the program than to actually participate in the program, as the student would lose the FLIIE funding and therefore owe the full cost of the program. The amount of FLIIE funding each student receives is based on the length of the program and can only benefit students actually participating in the program. Please speak with the Immersions Coordinator before withdrawing after the no-refund deadline has passed.

Withdrawing After Your Program Begins

Withdrawing from an immersion program after the start date involves a number of serious academic and financial consequences. You should contact the Intercultural Immersions Coordinator as soon as possible if you are considering withdrawing to discuss these consequences. The process and outcomes are governed by the academic / registration and billing calendars at UW-Eau Claire.

Academic consequences. Depending on when you withdraw, you will most likely either receive a "W" or an "F" for your program, if offered for

credit. If you withdraw after the UWEC last day to drop a class with no record, UWEC requires that an academic record be submitted on your behalf.

Financial consequences. Since the Immersion program refund deadline will have passed by the time your program begins, you will be expected to pay your full UW-Eau Claire program costs, including any flight change or cancellation fees or additional costs associated with leaving the program early.

Financial aid implications. If you received any type of financial aid (e.g. grants, scholarships, or loans) to fund your international experience, you may be required to return all or a portion of the aid. Your withdrawal date and the UWEC refund and financial aid repayment notice will govern how much of your aid you will need to repay.

Additional Required Costs

Depending on your program, you may be responsible for paying some costs, such as meals, travel or personal expenses while in country. You will also need to pay the cost of airfare, visa fees, and personal expenses such as telephone, laundry, or academic supplies.

Be sure you understand what you will pay for, how much the cost is estimated to be, and when payment is due.

FINANCIAL AID

If you qualify for UW-Eau Claire financial aid and your program is offered for academic credit, your financial aid applies to your program, as long as:

- Winterim Programs: you are enrolled full-time for the spring semester and make advance arrangements.
- Summer Programs: you are enrolled in at least 6 credits for summer term and make advance arrangements.

You must verify the amount of aid you will receive with the Financial Aid office. Students on non-credit immersion programs are not eligible for financial aid through UW-Eau Claire.

Applying for Financial Aid

To apply for financial aid, you must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), at www.fafsa.gov. See the [Financial Aid website](#) for details.

Fill out the FAFSA just as if you were going to be on campus at UW-Eau Claire. We will notify Financial Aid of all students going abroad, and Financial Aid adjusts your financial aid budget, which is based on the actual costs in your host country, including the cost of tuition, fees, housing, personal expenses, books, local and round-trip international transportation. Additional personal travel you plan to do is not covered by financial aid.

Applying for Summer Financial Aid

There is a separate application for summer financial aid in your MyBlugold CampS student center, under the Finances section. Undergraduate students must be enrolled in a minimum of six credits for the summer to receive financial aid; graduate students must be enrolled in a minimum of four credits. If your Immersion program is fewer than six credits, you must enroll in additional credits / courses for summer in order to meet the minimum requirement for financial aid.

Financial Aid Amount

To view your financial aid award, go to MyBlugold CampS, sign in, and select "Self Service" then click "Student Center" and finally "View Financial Aid".

Adjustment: Your aid cannot be adjusted to reflect the actual cost of your Immersion program until you are registered at UWEC for your term abroad. As mentioned, you cannot be

registered until all students have signed their online PPA. Take care of that promptly!

Disbursement: Your aid cannot be disbursed until the beginning of the semester / term at UWEC. However, the amount of aid you receive can be applied to your final bill just as if you were on campus.

Financial Aid Estimate

To receive an estimate of how your financial aid may be adjusted for your term abroad, complete the top half of the [Financial Aid Estimate for Study Abroad worksheet](#) and take it to Blugold Central.

Financial Aid Paperwork

Before you leave for your program site, be sure that you have signed all paperwork required to release your financial aid. This may include both online and hard copies of promissory notes or other release forms.

Refunds of Financial Aid

If you receive more aid than what you owe to UWEC, Blugold Central is able to issue refunds via direct deposit. To sign up, go to your CampS account and click on: Student Center > Account Inquiry > My Account Links. Please email Blugoldcentral@uwec.edu with questions or check the [Refund Schedule website](#) for additional information.

If, for some reason, you are not able to set up direct deposit, your refund will be issued as a paper check. Important things to know:

- Checks are mailed to the mailing address you have on file at UWEC
- Keep your mailing address up to date on CampS so that checks mailed to you are received in a timely manner.

Power of Attorney

While this information may be more relevant to students studying abroad for a whole semester or year, a Power of Attorney is a legal document

that assigns another person the power to act as your legal representative (Attorney in Fact) in specific situations. If you complete the process, your Attorney in Fact can then take care of things such as completing some financial aid paperwork, handling issues related to deposit of financial aid checks, or processing banking transactions. (Please note: a Power of Attorney cannot sign a Perkins Promissory note. Be sure to do that yourself before you leave campus!)

There are two ways to assign Power of Attorney. The first is to make an appointment with an attorney to draft a Power of Attorney document. This will require a fee to cover advice on the legal implications of assigning Power of Attorney, the drafting of a Power of Attorney document, and the notarizing of that document. The [campus attorney](#) is able to assist with this.

The second approach does not require a lawyer's assistance and involves purchasing a generic Power of Attorney form from an office supply store or downloading one online, filling it out yourself, and then having your signature(s) notarized.

There are several types of Power of Attorney forms. Students usually only need the statutory short form, as you will most likely limit the powers granted and the duration. The Power of Attorney should include the entire time you plan to be away, including terms of study, work, and travel. You should provide a copy of the Power of Attorney form to Rebecca Lasure in Blugold Central - Financial Aid.

Paying Back Financial Aid

If you are paying your program expenses with financial aid and you drop below full-time registration or withdraw / are cancelled from the program before completing the term, you may be responsible for paying all program costs AND most likely for paying back your financial aid. Be sure to discuss all possible financial obligations

with the Immersions Coordinator before making a final decision to withdraw.

SCHOLARSHIPS AND GRANTS

UW-Eau Claire Foundation Grants

If you are enrolled in a for-credit program, you are eligible to apply for a number of study abroad / Immersion grants from the UW-Eau Claire Foundation. Scholarship applications open in January for summer students and in June for Winterim students.

To learn about and apply for Foundation Grants through Gold for Blugolds and other grants, visit the [online application here](#). The deadline for Winterim programs is August 15 and summer programs is February 15. If you are chosen to receive a Foundation grant, you will be notified. Non-credit program participants are not eligible for Foundation Grants.

Benjamin Gilman Scholarship

Undergraduate UWEC students in good standing, who meet the below requirements are eligible to apply for the [Benjamin Gilman Scholarship](#)

- U.S. citizens
- Currently receiving a federal Pell grant.
- Participating in a program with at least 4 weeks in the same country (England Public History and SPED in Scotland)

Approximately 2,700 awards of up to \$5,000 will be made nationwide.

Additional Scholarships

If there are other scholarships available for your specific program or region, they are listed in your program-specific orientation guide. There may also be other opportunities for which you meet the eligibility requirements. Visit the

[Study Abroad / Immersions Scholarships](#) webpage as well as the [Financial Aid](#) website for more information.

MONEY ABROAD

Budgeting

Many students are on a tight budget while abroad. Before you go, estimate as closely as you can how much money you have available for your time abroad, and then estimate your expenses. Use this [budget worksheet](#) to help you figure out the total cost of your program. The most significant item missing from the worksheet is personal expenses. If this is part of your plan for your time abroad, do not forget to budget it in!

Once you know the total amount you have available, deduct those expenses that need to be paid before you arrive. These expenses generally include tuition, fees, insurance, a visa (if required), and international airfare and may include housing as well as some/all meals, depending on the program.

Next, figure out how much money you will need at different points while abroad. Finally, take whatever amount you have left and divide it by the number of weeks you will be abroad. Then, figure out how much this is in the currency of your host country. You can use this [currency converter](#). You now know your weekly budget limits!

Strategy: Several Ways to Get Money

Past participants suggest a combined approach to bringing money abroad.

- Bring a debit (check / ATM) card for cash withdrawals. You can withdraw cash from an ATM at the airport immediately upon arrival.
- Bring a credit card for purchases.
- Bring \$40 U.S. dollars as “just in case” money.
- Do not bring traveler’s checks.

Debit Cards

It is strongly recommended that you bring a debit card to access cash while you are abroad. Check with your bank for details about acquiring a debit (cash or ATM) card that can be used at ATMs internationally. When you use the ATM abroad, it will give you the currency of the country you are in. Before you leave the U.S., let your bank know you will be abroad.

Things to note:

- Debit cards draw directly from your bank account. Most banks charge a fee for each transaction. Therefore, taking out larger amounts of cash rather than several small withdrawals will save you money.
- U.S. banks are allowed to block use of debit cards in “high fraud” countries as determined by the U.S. government. Check with your bank to be sure you will be able to use your card in your host country and in the countries where you plan to travel!
- If you make the necessary arrangements with your bank before you leave, someone at home can put more money into your local account for you to use.
- Find out what your daily withdrawal limit is, alert your bank or card company that you will be abroad, and keep a copy of your card (front and back), so that you have all of the necessary information should your card be lost or stolen.

Credit Cards

It is strongly recommended that you bring a credit card with you while you are abroad. Visa is the most widely accepted credit card. Discover or American Express are rarely accepted.

- Use your credit card for purchases, rather than cash advances. Most card companies begin charging high interest rates (9-18%!) immediately on cash advances.
- Know your daily credit limit.

- Before you leave the U.S., let your card company know you will be abroad. Without prior notice of your travel plans, many companies will block transactions from abroad as a fraud prevention measure.
- If you need to use your credit card for a cash advance, you will need your PIN (personal identification number). Most international ATMs require a 4-digit PIN.
- Keep a copy of your card (front and back), to have all of the necessary information should your card be lost or stolen.

Moving Money Quickly

If you have budgeted in advance and followed the strategies for accessing money, you should be in good shape while abroad. But the unexpected can happen—well, unexpectedly! If you need to have money sent to you from home, it can take anywhere from 72 hours to 30 days, unless you have a debit card. Have an emergency transfer plan worked out with your parents or another trusted person at home. Sometimes Venmo and PayPal can come in handy.

Things to consider:

1. Have someone at home listed as a joint signatory on your checking account. Doing so will allow a family member to deposit money into the account which you can then access electronically through your debit card, make payments to cover bills, etc.
2. If you cannot access money electronically (i.e. your cards were lost / stolen), a Foreign Bank draft can be sent to you in the currency of the country you are in. A Foreign Bank draft works like a money order: the sender pays for it in U.S. dollars, but the check is written in pounds or pesos, for example. You can then take this check to a bank and cash it. This process usually requires 5 to 10 days.
3. Someone at home can go to a Western Union office (often a travel agency can help) or online to MoneyGram and wire money to a Western Union office or bank abroad.

MoneyGram offers their online services for a small fee.

4. Money can also be wired directly from a U.S. bank to a bank account in your name, if you have opened one abroad: 5-7 working days.

INSURANCE

CISI Insurance

UWEC requires that all students going abroad on a UWEC program carry CISI insurance. CISI coverage is included in your program fee. Details are below and contact information is provided later in this handbook. Your program may have additional or different insurance requirements; if so, they are described in your program guide.

All CISI information is available to enrolled participants via the [CISI Participant Portal](#). The Immersions Office will enroll you in CISI coverage after you have attended the required Immersions orientation session. You will receive an email once your enrollment is complete.

Creating a CISI Account & Logging In

Once you are enrolled, download the CISI Traveler app and / or go online and log-in to the “myCISI” to create an account and reset your password. You will receive instructions for creating an account and resetting your password. You can also access these instructions online by visiting the “myCISI” portal on the [CISI website](#).

CISI App

Upon completing the previous step, you can manage your CISI enrollment via the CISI Traveler app. From the app, you can:

- download and / or print your insurance card,
- download and / or print your proof of insurance letter for a visa application (if required for your program),
- view country-specific travel alerts,
- search medical providers,

- access policy information, documents, and claim forms,
- access emergency assistance numbers,
- email information to a trusted friend or family member.

The app also has a “Check In” feature that can be used if you are in a city / country that suffers from a natural disaster, terrorist attack, etc. By checking in, UWEC will be notified that you are safe or need assistance. We strongly encourage all students to download this app. You can [download the app for iPhones](#) or [download the app for Android phones](#).

Pre-Existing Conditions

Losses (medical expenses incurred) due to pre-existing conditions are covered up to \$100,000 in the current UW-System CISI policy, if you have been treated for that condition in the past 6 months. CISI does not cover expenses incurred while in your home country. If you have a pre-existing condition that will require treatment while abroad, please:

- Consult with your current US insurance company to see how care abroad will or will not be covered, and
- Contact Assist America, CISI’s global assistance provider, at medservices@assistamerica.com or 1 (800) 872-1414 to open a case so that medical care while abroad can be coordinated. Assist America can:
 - Locate a provider and a treatment facility as close as possible to where you will be studying.
 - Check the availability and legality of medicines that you are currently using and possible alternatives
 - If needed, try to schedule the next appointment for while you are participating on your Immersion program.
 - If you will be studying in a non-English-speaking country, they

can also try to find an English-speaking doctor.

When contacting Assist America, please provide your full name, date of birth, Assist America ID, coverage start and end dates (if already enrolled), Immersion program location (city, country, address if possible), diagnosis / condition, current treatment details, and any current medications.

Claims to CISI

Keep in mind that with CISI insurance, you will have to pay all expenses up front (e.g. at a hospital while you are abroad) and then file a claim, since the foreign physician and / or hospital may not be able or willing to process medical bills through a U.S. insurance company. You can file a [claim for reimbursement](#).

CISI Policy Exclusions

A complete list of exclusions is included in the CISI brochure on the CISI portal. Several high-risk activities are specifically excluded from CISI coverage. The current policy specifically excludes: injury sustained while taking part in mountaineering where ropes or guides are normally used; hang gliding; parachuting; bungee jumping; racing by horse, motor vehicle, or motorcycle; and parasailing.

Extending your CISI Coverage

The CISI coverage is purchased in one week increments for the length of your program. If you are planning to travel independently either before your program begins or after your coverage ends, you may purchase additional coverage directly from CISI through the on-line portal. You are only able to extend your coverage with CISI at the UWEC rate by exactly one month—no more, no less—by choosing "Extend Coverage." You can also print a new insurance card that includes the extended coverage dates. There are minor differences in the coverage and cost when you extend your policy for personal travel than what you have while you are on your

Immersion program. You can read the policy for your extended plan on the CISI portal.

24-Hour Assistance

Included in your CISI benefits is access to 24-hour Medical Assistance, Personal Assistance, Travel Assistance & Security Assistance. The company providing these benefits is called Assist America.

You can find all details about this benefit and the emergency assistance provider, Assist America, at the CISI portal: <http://www.culturalinsurance.com/> or access the [Assist America Global Emergency Services](#) website for additional details.

Continuous U.S. Coverage

The CISI insurance will cover you abroad and includes things such as medical evacuation and repatriation that are not usually covered by a standard policy. However, you should also keep your U.S. coverage in order to have continuous coverage before, during, and after your time abroad. If you stop coverage and are injured or become ill while abroad, you may experience a lapse in coverage while you are seeking to become re-insured and/or higher premiums due to your newly acquired pre-existing condition.

Also, you should contact your U.S. health insurance company prior to your departure to see what type of coverage you will have while abroad. In particular, this is important if you have any pre-existing conditions that would not be covered under the CISI policy.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Overview

The risk of becoming ill while traveling depends on where you go. Additional information will be provided in your program guide. If there are specific health concerns related to your program.

“Travelers’ Diarrhea” is a common affliction that may strike a few days after you arrive in a new country. It seldom lasts longer than four or five days. If you get it, drink lots of fluids to prevent dehydration. Your physician may be able to prescribe medication to take along for relief of the symptoms. If symptoms last longer than 4-5 days, seek local medical assistance.

Before You Go

[Student Health Services](#) at UW-Eau Claire or your regular healthcare provider can assist you with your health care needs when preparing for your international Immersion program. You can schedule an appointment to discuss your upcoming travels, your current health care needs (including medications), and any health and safety needs while living and studying abroad. This may include your current medications that may be restricted or illegal in other countries as well as medications for preventing communicable illnesses such as malaria, traveler’s diarrhea, or the need for immunizations prior to leaving the U.S. You should make an appointment at least two months prior to leaving the U.S. to accommodate preventive medications and immunizations that must be taken prior to travel.

We recommend that you consider the following health precautions before you go abroad:

- have a complete physical
- have an eye exam (be sure you bring your current prescription information with you)
- have a dental check-up
- update all routine immunizations
- follow up on any other program-specific information mentioned in your acceptance email or program-specific orientation guide
- talk to your counselor or psychologist, if you see one, specifically about going abroad
- call your U.S. health insurance provider to learn about what type of coverage you will have while abroad, especially for pre-existing conditions

- familiarize yourself with all of the great resources available to you through the [CISI website portal](#). (Note that you will not have access to the portal until after you have been enrolled in the CISI policy. You will receive an email when your group has been enrolled, typically shortly after orientation.) Under "Resources and Links" on the left side, choose "Health & Vaccinations." Click on "Personal Security Assistance" on the left sidebar, then choose "Services" at the top of the next page. Of particular interest there is the "Global Health Information."

Prescriptions

If you take prescription medication, bring a supply for your entire time abroad. This can take time to arrange--so start now if you haven't already! Bring a copy of the prescription with the generic name of the drug abroad. To go through customs, have all medicines in their original containers and have your doctor write a note on letterhead, explaining why you have the prescription.

You can also review the "*Bringing Medication Abroad*" handout that is linked in the Learning Content: "Study Abroad Update: Prescription Medication, Classes/Contacts, and Allergies" in your online Immersion Program (Study Abroad) account.

Disability Accommodations Abroad

It is important to remember that not all countries, cities, and / or universities around the world have the same resources available to their students as one may be used to at UW-Eau Claire or in the U.S. Depending on where you are studying, you may or may not have immediate access to disability accommodations, student health services, or mental health services. Check with your faculty / staff leaders to inquire about what services are available in the areas to which you are traveling.

It is also important to look at the level of physical accessibility your host country has. To find more information on this topic, please see the [State Department Country Specific Information page](#). If you have questions or concerns, please contact your Program Leader(s).

Mental Health

If you currently see a mental health professional, it is important that you speak with them prior to going abroad. Cultural adjustment is a normal part of going abroad, but sometimes feelings of sadness, anxiety, and / or depression may be more than culture shock. You and your mental health professional should develop a mental health plan and some coping strategies to deal with mental health challenges while abroad—particularly if services that you are accustomed to here in the U.S. are unavailable.

If you do not currently see a counselor and would like to discuss concerns about going abroad, or any other matter, Counseling Services on campus are available. Please contact them at (715) 836-5521 or visit them in Vicki Lord Larson Hall 2122 to make an appointment.

If you would like to know more about the support services available at your host site, please make an appointment to meet with your Program Leader(s).

Health Records

Bring personal medical records with you in case of an accident or illness, and leave a copy with someone at home, in a readily accessible place. This is particularly important if you have a pre-existing medical condition which may require care while you are abroad. A good record includes the names of all medications you are taking and identifies any chronic ailments or allergies. It also lists your immunization history, blood type, eye-glass prescription, personal physician, health insurance, and policy number.

Zika Virus

The Zika virus is spread through mosquitoes and can be passed from a pregnant woman to her fetus. Currently, no vaccine or medicine exists for Zika. Not all areas of the world have cases of Zika. To see if the country you will be studying in has Zika, please see the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) website](#).

The CDC does recommend that all pregnant women avoid travel to areas where there is Zika. In addition, if you are pregnant or your partner and you are planning to become pregnant, this article has recommendations for both males and females who are or will be traveling to Zika virus areas. If you have questions or concerns, please contact your Program Coordinator.

Immunizations

The [CDC website](#) has up-to-date information on required and recommended immunizations/vaccinations for every country. CDC recommendations should be taken very seriously. Because the CDC recommendations depend on the type of travel you anticipate or the length of time you are staying, you need to meet with a doctor to determine what's best for your individual situation.

There are very few required vaccinations for travelers anywhere in the world. Requirements can only be placed by the government of the country, and because such requirements often discourage tourists, governments are reluctant to establish them.

UWEC's Student Health Service offers immunizations (IG, tetanus, Hepatitis B, etc.) and health education on international travel. For more information, call: (715) 836-5360.

Your U.S. health insurance may cover the cost of immunizations. If your immunizations are not covered by your health insurance and you receive financial aid, you may want to meet with

a financial aid advisor to inquire if these can be added to your financial aid budget.

Food Restrictions

Food Allergies: Depending on your level of severity, you should plan in advance and disclose your food allergies to your faculty / staff leaders IMMEDIATELY. They will help remind you to inform your host families (if applicable), restaurants, etc., about your specific allergies. Plus, faculty leaders can help you avoid potentially harmful situations. There are a variety of food translation apps that you can download to your phone. There are several apps that can help you with your food translation needs. Google Translate, Waygo, PicTranslator, and others can come in handy. However, you should still communicate with your homestay family, servers in restaurants, and with your faculty leaders as no app is 100% perfect in translating.

If you have a severe allergy, it is recommended that you purchase a medical ID bracelet and wear it on you.

Vegan & Vegetarian: Depending where you are going, finding suitable vegan / vegetarian options may be challenging. One helpful resource is: <https://www.happycow.net>. Some cultures do not understand why people decide to be vegan / vegetarian so you should be prepared to answer any questions as to why you are vegan / vegetarian. Also, meat is seen as a delicacy in some cultures and local folks may offer it to you out of respect or as a sign of welcoming. While you can choose to turn away this kind gesture, you may want to think in advance how you will handle a situation like this. In the past, some students have decided to discontinue their vegan / vegetarian diets during certain aspects of their time abroad and is a personal decision that you must make. More information, specific to your location, can be found in your program guide. If you have questions or concerns, please contact your Faculty / Staff Program Leaders.

Staying Healthy

You can take some basic steps to help yourself stay healthy abroad. These include:

- **Give yourself time.** Students abroad have a tendency to try to see everything, taste everything, and go everywhere in their first few days! Allow yourself time to settle in.
- **Watch what you eat.** Eat and drink in moderation for several days after your arrival, until your system has a chance to adjust to changes in climate and food. Adjusting to a new diet may slightly unsettle your stomach or cause other temporary health problems.
- **Take measures to reduce the risk of exposure to sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS.** Be sure to take the same precautions you should at home.
- **Avoid illegal drug use.** In addition to increasing the risk of exposure to HIV (the virus causing AIDS), in many countries, drug use is subject to stringent laws. Your status as a U.S. citizen does not protect you from such laws, and if you are reported using illegal drugs during a program, all of the usual UW-Eau Claire disciplinary processes, including suspension from the program or expulsion from the university, may apply, and you may have consequences under the Blugold Code upon return.
- **Know where to get treatment.** When you settle in, find out where health care facilities are and how to access them *before* the need for treatment arises. If you need to access healthcare while traveling, you can use the [CISI portal](#) to find out if there is an English-speaking doctor.

SAFETY ABROAD

Traveling Safely

The primary rule for safe travel is to use common sense. When everything around you is new and exciting, it is easy to forget the simple safety precautions you would use at home or when

traveling in the U.S. Suggestions for safe travel include:

- Use a money belt or neck pouch to keep your passport, credit cards, and cash under your clothing. Do not carry valuables in a purse, wallet, or backpack.
- Never carry large amounts of cash. Use debit / credit cards as needed. With the increasing presence of ATMs across the globe, only keep as much cash on your person as you may need for the day, much like you do here at home.
- Keep a photocopy of your passport and visas. The copies should be separate from the passport itself. In addition, leave a copy with someone at home. Copies will help you obtain a replacement passport in the event your passport is lost or stolen.
- Travel itinerary. Make sure someone has your itinerary and that others are aware of your travel plans in case of unexpected emergencies. The travel itinerary also helps friends and family locate you in the event you do not arrive at your location on the expected day and time.
- Use common sense! Hold your bags when checking train schedules; do not carry your passport or other valuables unless necessary; lock doors, especially at night.
- Know local laws and abide by them. Your U.S. citizenship offers no protection if you are arrested while traveling. Ignorance of the law is no excuse.
- Avoid illegal drug use. Aside from increasing the risk of exposure to HIV (the virus causing AIDS), in many countries, drug use is subject to stringent laws. Neither claims of ignorance nor your status as a U.S. citizen protect you from such laws.
- If you drink, do it responsibly. If you choose to drink, please do so in moderation, respecting yourself and others. Many countries have laws against public drunkenness, and an intoxicated person is an easy target for a criminal.

- Do not walk alone at night. This advice applies to both men and women, especially if you have been drinking, are in unfamiliar parts of a city, or are in isolated areas. Walking alone at night makes you an easy target for assault, theft, and even transportation accidents.
- Do not fight with a mugger. Just as in the United States, if you are mugged, do not try to fight with the robber. Give them your belongings and get away from the situation. Notify your on-site program staff immediately.

Ride-sharing / Home-sharing Services

Ride-sharing and home-sharing companies, such as Uber or Airbnb, are regulated differently in different countries, and sometimes even in different cities within the same country. In some countries they are illegal; in some countries they are legal but essentially unregulated. Because of this ever-changing environment, you need to monitor the status of such companies in your host country and places you will be traveling, in order to make an informed decision about whether or not to use them.

Crime Victim or Arrest Abroad

If you are a crime victim or if you are arrested abroad, notify your Faculty / Staff Leader and / or get in touch with the nearest [U.S. consulate or embassy](#).

Sexual Assault

Sexual assault occurs abroad just as it does in the U.S. Sexual assault is 100% the perpetrator's fault; victims / survivors are not to blame. Anyone can be a victim of sexual assault, and the most important thing you can do for yourself if you are a victim is to get support and medical care. For more information on sexual violence prevention and response information for students going abroad, please visit the [UWEC Counseling Services website](#).

Safety in Your Host Country

Information on crime, road safety, drug penalties, and terrorist activity in your host country is included in the [State Department Consular Information](#) for your host country. Safety in and around your host city will be discussed during your orientation abroad.

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)

Shortly before the beginning of your program, the Immersions office will enroll your faculty / staff leaders into the [Smart Travel Enrollment Program](#) (STEP) through the U.S. Department of State for the dates of your program. The nearest U.S. Embassy in your host country can then contact your faculty / staff leaders about safety conditions in the country, helping you make informed decisions about travel plans. It will also help the Embassy, family and friends get in touch with you in an emergency situation.

Staying Safe in Times of Global Unrest

Here are some tips that will also keep you from being victimized in general, as tourists are often seen as easy targets for theft:

1. Do not wear clothing with U.S. logos (team / university logos, U.S. flags, etc.).
2. Stay away from "typical" U.S. hangouts abroad (McDonald's, Hard Rock Café, etc.). If you need to visit a U.S. Embassy, please do so. But don't hang around just to see it.
3. Maintain a low profile. Try to use "6-inch voices." Don't yell across the room at your friend in loud, U.S. American tones. Don't wear lots of jewelry or carry lots of expensive technology.
4. Do not stop in the street to be "interviewed" or "surveyed" by anyone. This is often a cover for theft.
5. Cooperate 100% with the international office staff at your host site and follow their advice. If they say to stay away from somewhere, do it!

Emergency Contacts

All UW-Eau Claire programs have an on-site Faculty / Staff Leader who is available for consultation if difficulties arise. You will receive the emergency contact information Travel Information Form before you depart; be sure to keep it handy. Some of this information also appears in the *Contact Names & Addresses* section of your program guide.

24-Hour Assistance

If you are traveling outside the framework of the academic program, you may not be able to contact the Faculty Leader for help. Remember that you have 24-hour assistance through your CISI insurance. Find all details at the Assist America, at the CISI portal: <http://www.culturalinsurance.com/> or access the [Assist America Global Emergency Services](#) website for additional details. Please print out the brochure and emergency assistance benefit card to carry with you whenever you travel.

Nearest U.S. Embassy

[U.S. embassies and / or consulates](#) can also offer some assistance to U.S. citizens abroad. They will assist in the following:

- provide a list of local physicians and lawyers
- contact next of kin in event of emergency
- provide assistance during civil unrest or natural disaster
- contact relations on your behalf to request funds or guidance in an emergency

Reporting Health / Safety Concerns to UW-Eau Claire

Why Report? In the event that you or a friend experiences a health or safety incident abroad, we strongly encourage you to report the incident to the Program Coordinator and Faculty Leader.

1. Most importantly, reporting allows us to provide support or resources that might be needed to manage a health or safety concern abroad.

2. In some instances, UWEC has a legal obligation to report incidents that occur on international Immersion programs under the [Clery Act](#). Your report will help us determine if an incident needs to be reported to the federal government. No personally identifying information will be shared.
3. Finally, reporting in-country incidents assists UWEC in evaluating the safety of existing Immersion locations.

What to Report? Although our partners abroad often report serious concerns involving UWEC students abroad, UWEC would like to be made aware of any of the following incidents that occur on UW-Eau Claire study abroad programs:

- Aggravated Assault
- Arrests
- Death
- Sexual Assault or Harassment
- Theft
- Illness
- Injury
- Missing / Separated Person
- Other Safety Concerns: disease outbreak, fires, floods, equipment failure, etc.

How to Report?

You can report an incident via the [Study Away Health and Safety Incident Report Form](#). This form allows you to report an incident anonymously and / or to provide your name and contact details.

You can also report by contacting your program coordinator with the following information:

- Date of the incident
- Time (in-country time) of incident
- Country / city of incident (note these may be different than your program site if you are traveling)
- Nature of the incident (e.g. illness, injury, assault, theft, etc.)
- Individuals involved
- Activity/location at time of incident

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

Passport

If you followed the instructions emailed with your acceptance letter, you already have your passport. If you do not have one, please apply for a passport immediately. Also be sure that your passport is valid for the entire period that you will be abroad.

Prior to leaving the U.S., sign your passport and make three photocopies of the page with your picture and passport number on it. Upload one copy into your online application so the Immersions Office and your program leaders can access it; leave one copy at home with your family; and carry the third copy with you, separate from your passport, in case the original is lost or stolen.

If you do lose your passport while abroad, report the theft immediately at the nearest U.S. consulate or embassy. They will assist you in replacing it. Local police authorities should also be notified.

Visa

A visa is official permission to visit a country and is granted by the government of that country. It is your responsibility to keep up to date about visa requirements for your host country and, if required, to apply for and receive a visa from their consulate or embassy.

You will receive a visa application form and instructions at orientation if, at the time that we prepared orientation materials, your host country required you to apply for a visa. Those forms/instructions were current at the time of printing. However, visa requirements change frequently and without notice. It is possible that no visa was required when orientation materials were printed but a new requirement has gone into effect prior to your departure.

Therefore, it is crucial that: prior to sending in your visa application, check the website of the consulate or embassy of your host country to make sure no changes have been made since you received your orientation materials.

The granting of a visa is completely at the discretion of the consulate or embassy, as a branch of the government they are representing. They can choose to issue the visa **ONLY** for the dates of study, or they can refuse to issue a visa if your dates of study are shorter than the required time for a visa, even if you wish to extend your time with personal travel. They are free to deny any visa application without any explanation whatsoever. (The U.S. government reserves this same right with any foreign nationals requesting a U.S. visa.) Therefore, be sure that you are always pleasant and polite when dealing with consular officers, whether via email, on the phone, or in person.

Visas for personal travel: If you plan to travel to other countries while you are abroad, you should verify visa requirements for each country by contacting the nearest consulate, embassy or your travel agency. Many countries do not require U.S. citizens to obtain visas for tourist visits of less than three months, but you need to know before you go!

Documents for Non-U.S. Citizens

Non-U.S. citizens should immediately contact the consulate of the country where they wish to study and follow their instructions. Obtaining a visa for non-U.S. citizens can be a lengthy process in some countries.

If you are an international student, contact International Student Services to let them know as well, as they may have additional signatures to provide to allow you to return to study at UW-Eau Claire.

PACKING TIPS

Rule number one of international travel: **PACK LIGHT!** You need to get all of your luggage from the airport to your host site by yourself. The week before you leave, pack everything you think you need, pick up your bags, and walk around the block. If you have trouble, you have packed too much. To become the ultimate light packer, visit the [one-bag website](#).

Rule number two: never pack essential documents or items in checked luggage (i.e. passport, immigration documents, meds, anything you could not do without for a few days). You should have important documents along with personal items in your carry-on such as a toothbrush, contacts, eyeglasses, medications, and a change of clothes.

Because of flight security, there are many personal items you cannot pack in your carry-on. See the [Transportation Security Administration website](#) for current information.

Some other ideas for packing include: rolling your clothes, putting items inside of shoes (e.g. socks or underwear inside dress shoes in your suitcase), using space saver bags, and putting items such as underwear in Ziploc bags (if security searches your bag, they will quickly be able to see what is inside, and your personal items won't be strewn about!). A word of caution: just because you now have more space doesn't mean you need to fill it! And you'll want to save room to bring home souvenirs and gifts.

Luggage

Though most airlines operating international flights allow 1-2 pieces of checked luggage, you are better off not bringing any large bags that need to be checked. Bags can get lost or delayed along the way to your destination and they may take several days to reach. This situation is particularly problematic if your program does not stay in the same city the entire time. You are also

generally allowed one carry-on. A weight limit is set for each of the two checked bags. Requirements vary by airline; verify this information with your travel agent or the airline itself. Be aware that airlines have become very strict about carry-on luggage.

Past participants highly recommend bringing a backpack as one of your pieces of luggage. If you do not choose to carry a backpack, a suitcase with wheels, or a collapsible luggage carrier are useful. And you can avoid checking your luggage if you choose to travel with small bags instead of large ones. It is also easier to carry two medium-sized suitcases than one large one.

Clearly mark all of your bags with luggage tags with the address of your host site. You do NOT want your home address on your luggage tags, as it is better to have the lost luggage delivered to your host country, rather than having it sent back to the U.S. All luggage should lock for travel within the country, but do not lock it for the airport sections of your journey. Padlocks can also be purchased for backpacks, or you may wish to purchase an external mesh covering for your pack, since you will likely not have enough locks to keep every pocket locked shut.

Clothing

Specific packing suggestions are included in your program guide. In general, take clothing that is machine washable and does not wrinkle easily. Bring garments that can be worn interchangeably and can be layered. Past students suggest choosing a color scheme and bringing mix-and-match clothing. Dark colors show dirt less quickly when you travel. Do not bring expensive clothes.

Suggested Packing List

These are general suggestions of things you will want to bring. Remember that other items specific to your program are listed in the packing tips section of your program guide.

Documents:

- Passport & Photocopy (packed separately)
- Visa (if required)
- Credit Card(s)
- Debit (ATM) Card and PIN numbers
- CISI Insurance card / proof of insurance (in your phone)

Travel Accessories:

- Cell phone
- Money belt
- Electric adapter / converter (if needed)
- Traveling necessities: maps, guidebooks, backpack, water bottle, hat, sunglasses

Personal First Aid Kit:

(Definitely bring to developing countries!)

- Antihistamine / decongestant (for colds)
- Aspirin or ibuprofen (in original containers)
- Band-Aids / bandages
- Antiseptic/antibacterial cream or ointment
- Motion sickness remedy
- Antacid / anti-diarrhea for upset stomach
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent (containing DEET)
- Prescription medications (in original containers)
- Extra eyeglasses / contact lenses and solution
- Alcohol wipes
- Water purification system / tablets
- Women's sanitary supplies
- Toilet paper

Gift Suggestions

Past participants suggest the following items as possible gifts for new friends or host families:

- Clothing and items with university logos
- Cookbooks / American recipes with metric conversions (i.e. pancakes, chocolate chip cookies, BBQ chicken)
- Scenic potholders, aprons, mugs, glassware
- Calendars with U.S. scenery
- U.S. style paraphernalia (e.g. things from Disneyworld, Warner Bros., Mt. Rushmore, World Cup, NBA, NFL, etc.)

COMMUNICATION

UW-Eau Claire Webmail

In order to receive official emails from UW-Eau Claire while abroad, for registration, billing, etc., you must use your UW-Eau Claire email address, or you must forward your UW-Eau Claire email account to the web-based account you are checking (e.g. Gmail, Yahoo, etc.). Contact UW-Eau Claire's Helpdesk at (715) 836-5519, via email at helpdesk@uwec.edu, or via the [Helpdesk website](#) for details and helpful information.

Cell Phone

Check with your cell service provider about a temporary international plan. Having an international plan will allow you to have cell phone access while traveling—particularly in case of any unexpected travel delays, flight cancellations, medical emergencies, etc.

Calls or Texts? International phone plans and packages often offer more affordable texting rates without data usage. Check with your cell phone provider to find out the costs of calls and texts from your program site.

Questions to ask your cell phone provider.

- Will my phone work in my program country?
- Does it make sense to buy an international voice, text, and / or data plan?
- How do I turn off my data to avoid charges?
- When and for what will I be charged? What additional fees should I expect?
- Would a pay-as-you-go phone or buying a SIM card in the local country make more sense?

Other Options

Communication apps: WhatsApp, Signal, Line, and Viber are free phone apps that you can download to make free international texts, video chats, and / or regular calls over Wi-Fi to anyone else who has that same app. They all use a lower bandwidth so successful calls are much more

likely through one of these apps as compared to Facebook Messenger, Skype, FaceTime, or other similar communication apps.

FaceTime: FaceTime is a popular tool for iPhones that allows video or voice calls to other Apple users. You can use FaceTime via your data package or where Wi-Fi is available.

SIM Cards: SIM cards are another option to gain access to the cellular network in the country you are traveling to. You simply buy a SIM card from a technology / cell carrier store after you have arrived and temporarily replace the U.S. SIM card that you use every day. You can inquire about which SIM card at which price works best for you. Plans will vary based on how many gigabytes (gb) of data you need and if you plan to use the SIM to call the U.S. or just call locally. One drawback to this approach is that you will likely not have normal access to regular texts unless your phone can hold this international SIM card and your usual U.S. SIM card at the same time.

Keeping in Touch via Social Media

Friends and family will be anxious to hear about your adventures abroad, and social media makes keeping in touch easy. However, if you have a clear plan for how and when you will communicate, you can make life easier for everyone.

First, you may want to let loved ones know that they may not hear from you every day. While it is important to keep in touch, it is equally important to live in the moment. You never know when you will have the chance to be abroad again, and you want to use your time to experience where you are. Agreeing upon expectations for communication before you leave can reduce stress on both sides.

Think before you post, tweet, or snap. Ask yourself what your friends and family on the other side of the world will think of that video

you made, particularly if they don't understand the context.

It's important to note that your online persona may follow you forever. Employers are increasingly looking to social media to get the "real story" about job applicants. A funny drunken post from today may mean not getting a job tomorrow.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

For most programs, it is your responsibility to make travel arrangements to your host site through the UW-system mandated company, [Fox World Travel](#). The Immersions Office will include your name on an "Administrative List" that Travel Incorporated will have access to. When you call, provide your name and Travel Incorporated should be able to assist you with your flight. If your program is arranging group flights, you will be notified.

More information about dates and airports will be provided during orientation about halfway into the semester. Please do not book your flights until your faculty leader indicates you may do so. We encourage you to consider traveling with another program participant—a travel companion can make arrival in a new country much less intimidating!

You may wish to purchase travel or trip cancellation insurance when you purchase your ticket in case your plans change unexpectedly. Discuss your options with your travel agent and be sure you know exactly what the policy covers.

Customs

Once you clear immigration, follow the signs to baggage claim. You must carry your own luggage through customs.

If your luggage does not arrive with you, don't panic. Contact any airport official in the baggage

claim area. Fill out a *Lost Luggage Claim* with your address abroad (or with the address of the international office at your host site) and find out how to claim your bag once it arrives. You may be tempted to wait for your luggage to appear, but experienced travelers recommend that you do not. It is almost always a waste of time.

Getting to Your Site

Your program guide will have specific information on how you get from the nearest airport to your host site.

TRAVEL WHILE ABROAD

Immersion programs offer organized in-country group travel. Details about these opportunities are in your program guide. You may also wish to take advantage of your time abroad to do some personal travel after or prior to your Immersion program. Remember that extra travel is not an essential element of any Immersion program.

Travel guides such as Lonely Planet, Let's Go, and Frommer's Budget Travel all receive positive reviews from student travelers and are available at any major bookstore. Both the University library and the Eau Claire public library have several such guides. You may wish to compare before you buy.

CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

Studying abroad can be one of the most exhilarating learning experiences of your life. Or it can turn out to be a series of bewildering and frustrating incidents that leave you longing for home. Aside from the basic preparation of the “hows” and “wheres” of your program, take some time to investigate the “what am I likely to encounter”—that is, things that will happen as you live with people whose values and attitudes are different from your own. By thinking and preparing for these encounters, you will certainly

enrich your experience abroad. To see a visual representation of cultural adjustment, please refer to the end of this handbook.

Cultural Differences—What Are They?

Our own culture influences who we are and how we relate to the world. Because we have grown up with this culture, we are comfortable in it. We have learned our values and attitudes about who we are and how things “should be” in our native culture. What happens when we suddenly lose those cues that orient us to situations of daily life? What happens when facial expressions, gestures, and words are no longer familiar? The psychological discomfort which we feel in this unfamiliar situation is commonly known as “culture shock.”

Reactions to Cultural Differences

Culture shock is a logical reaction to differences we encounter in a foreign culture. Luckily, it is only one phase in the process of getting into the culture of a foreign country. The various phases which you might find yourself going through in this process include:

- Being fascinated with all the new things you are experiencing.
- Feeling uncomfortable that you don't belong.
- Rejecting the new culture / people as strange.
- Learning to decipher behavior and customs.
- Accepting and enjoying the new culture.

Our reactions to these various phases will influence how we relate to local citizens. Naturally, being excited and fascinated with new behavior and customs will help to pave the way for positive interaction. Conversely, acting hostile and aggressive toward those “strange and un-American” customs will perpetuate the “ugly American image” and cause others to want to avoid us.

Preparing for Cultural Differences

To begin, read as much as possible about where you are going. Your bibliography might include guidebooks, international newspapers and

magazines, novels, plays, poetry, and political and economic analyses. Talk with international students and past participants from your program.

Multicultural Students

UW-Eau Claire defines multicultural students as students who identify as Asian American, African American, Hispanic or Latino, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, American Indian, and Alaska Native.

Immersion programs can be an incredibly enriching experience for students of color, but they can also pose challenges. While we believe there is inherent value in studying abroad, we suggest thinking about issues below to help you better prepare for the experiences you may have abroad.

Racism is a Global Phenomenon: While racism does not typically define experiences for students of color studying abroad, racist statements or gestures are always painful and difficult experiences. Your own level of racial literacy and understanding of related issues are valuable in helping you address these experiences.

The University of Washington's [Identity Abroad](#) page addresses common considerations for and concerns of U.S. students of color studying abroad. The website also contains a few short articles from multicultural students who have studied abroad. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your program coordinator.

LGBTQA+ Students

It is important to remember that when abroad you will no longer be protected by U.S. laws. Some countries may have discriminatory laws against same-sex behavior and expressions of LGBTQ+ identity. Resources such as [ILGA directory](#) may help you recognize which countries have the harshest laws against LGBTQA

forms of expression. This [country information page](#) includes [Spartacus Gay Travel index rating](#) of countries where UWEC currently sends students on an ongoing bases. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your faculty / staff program leaders and / or the Immersions Coordinator.

A Sense of Purpose

Have a clear idea of what you specifically want to accomplish by going abroad. During your free time, keep in mind your own priorities for what you think is important to experience. And keep an open mind and be willing to pursue the unexpected, especially if this means taking advantage of opportunities with your host family or local friends.

It might be helpful to try to figure out what you want to accomplish in your time abroad by answering the following questions:

- Who am I? (Awareness of my personal beliefs and attitudes.)
- Where do I come from? (Awareness of U.S. cultural beliefs and customs.)
- Where am I going? (Awareness of foreign culture customs, behaviors, and values.)
- What am I going for? (Interest in foreign countries, to see famous sights, to leave the U.S., to impress my friends.)
- What am I willing to consider? (How open will I be to different ways of doing things? Will I "try on" some of the behavior and values of the local population?)

Getting Over "Culture Shock"

Culture shock can happen during the first few days in a new culture, but it is more common after you've been somewhere for a few weeks. The main thing to know is that whenever it strikes it is perfectly normal. The next thing to know is it usually only lasts a little while. So don't give in to that urge to change your plane ticket and come home! Instead, realize that culture shock is a specific type of stress. Think about how

you handle stressful situations at home. A few possibilities include exercising, talking/emailing with friends or family, journaling, joining a club or activity, or planning a weekend trip. Above all, give yourself time to adjust, and you'll do fine.

How Cultural Differences Relate to You

Discovering cultural differences and experiencing "culture shock" are both powerful learning tools. Through these, you gain a high degree of self-understanding and personal growth. Past students have pointed out that by studying abroad, you gain a great education in what it means to be an American and also in how the rest of the world's population lives and thinks. Many have noticed that bad moments (even days) are quickly forgotten, and even the experiences that seemed trying at the time are priceless.

NOTE: Just as you will be going through many adjustments while you are abroad, if you are leaving a significant other at home, s/he may also have some difficulty adjusting to your absence. University Counseling Services asks that you let your significant other know that staff is available to help students deal with such separations.

RE-ENTRY

(The reverse of culture shock)

A lot of time is spent encouraging students going abroad to prepare for the experience, and students are generally motivated to do so. After all, spending time in a new culture is something that deserves careful thought and planning. Returning to the U.S., on the other hand, is easy. After all, you're coming home, back to familiar faces, customs, foods -- or are you?

Study abroad research has shown that returning home can be more unsettling than going abroad was. There's even a term, "reverse culture shock," used to describe the way many returned students feel in their first weeks or months back home. The very fact that everything and

everybody at home seems the same can contribute to the shock. International returnees often find that they themselves have changed a great deal and it can be difficult to find people who truly seem to understand their new perspectives. Don't panic! There are several ways to work through the reentry phase—and keep your international experiences alive at the same time.

Re-entry shock is something that affects each individual in a different way and for varying lengths of time. Common symptoms of re-entry shock include experiencing difficulty readjusting to the home culture, missing some aspect of their international experience, and experiencing a heightened awareness of the home culture's values, customs, and traditions. For some, it may be easy to focus on the negative aspects of the re-entry process. However, having a positive mindset about returning home can have tremendous benefits as you re-adjust and re-learn your home culture. Asking yourself the following questions before you leave your host site can help you begin the re-entry process:

1. How have you changed as a result of studying abroad?
2. How might things have changed at home during your stay abroad?
3. How, if at all, has your identity changed? How might you accommodate this new identity back in your home culture?

Visit the [U.S. Department of State's Reverse Culture Shock](#) webpage for more information about reverse culture shock and other elements related to returning home after being abroad.

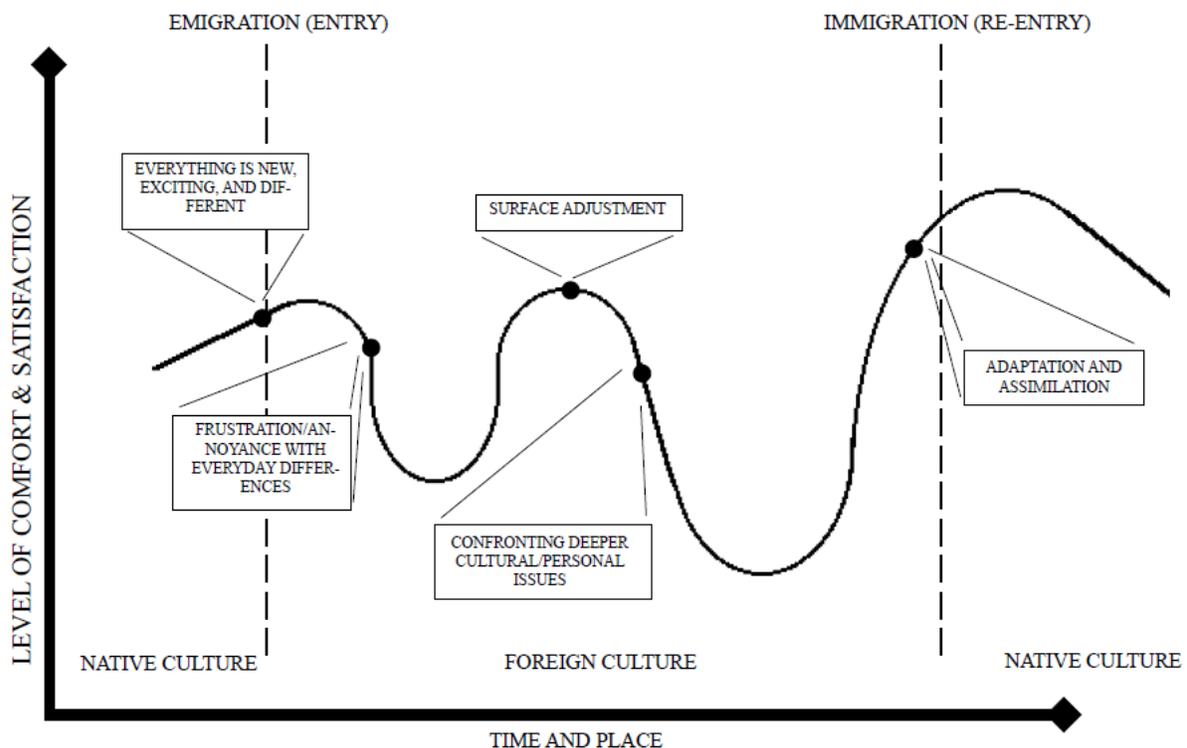
Also, keep an eye out for events for returnees of UW-Eau Claire study abroad and Immersion programs hosted by The Center for International Education. Make sure to keep up to date with these events and more by reading your emails & subscribing to the study abroad and international Immersion newsletter for returnees, Global

Outlook. Liking our Facebook page also allows you to keep up with all of our activity before, during and after you're abroad!
www.facebook.com/UWECstudyabroad

TOP 10 PRESCRIPTIONS FOR RE-ENTRY WOES

- 1) Participate in orientation for students going to your site
- 2) Get involved with international students and faculty on campus
- 3) Become an International Classroom Speaker
- 4) Promote your International Immersion program
- 5) Correspond with friends in your host country
- 6) Take internationally-focused courses
- 7) Join an internationally-focused student organization
- 8) Organize your photographs into an on-line or physical scrapbook
- 9) Subscribe to a newspaper from your host country
- 10) Start planning how you might go abroad again!

Cultural Adjustment Curve



ADDITIONAL CONTACT INFORMATION

Jeff DeGrave

Intercultural Immersion Coordinator
Schofield Hall 17
degravjr@uwec.edu
(715) 836-4471

Andrew Akey

Immersion Program Assistant
Schofield Hall 17
akeyal@uwec.edu
(715) 836-5940

Louisa Rice

Associate Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs
Schofield Hall 208A
ricelc@uwec.edu
(715) 836-5276

Blugold Central / Financial Aid

*Questions about your specific student account
as well as help with registration*
Vicki Lord Larson Hall 1108
Phone: (715) 836-3000
Email: blugoldcentral@uwec.edu

After-Hours Emergency Medical Services

UW-Eau Claire After Hours Numbers

In an after-hours emergency, you can call one of these numbers and the University police will contact someone from the Immersions Office.

UW-Eau Claire Police Department

(715) 839-4972 or (715) 577-9045

Counseling Services

Vicki Lord Larson Hall 2122
(715) 836-5521
counsl01@uwec.edu

Center for International Education

3 Schofield Hall
Tel: (715) 836-4411
Fax: (715) 836-4948
cie@uwec.edu

CISI INSURANCE

Policy Number: Policy #STB009987903

<http://www.culturalinsurance.com>

Claim Questions:

claimhelp@culturalinsurance.com

1-203-399-5130

24 Hr. Assistance Access Numbers from

ANYWHERE Abroad, call collect:

1-609-986-1234

From within the US, call toll free:

1-800-872-1414

Medical Emergency Email:

medservices@assistamerica.com