

# Study Abroad Handbook



## Be an International Blazer!

International Programs Office  
Elms College  
College Center 208  
413-265-2462

Check us out online:

<http://www.elms.edu/academics/international-programs/study-abroad.xml>

## **Table of Contents**

**Study Abroad Checklists**

**Policies & Procedures**

**Steps to Study Abroad**

**Study Abroad Opportunities**

**Financial Aid**

**Study Abroad Scholarship Opportunities**

**Preparation for Study Abroad**

**Practical Packing Tips**

**Communication**

**Health & Medical Care**

**Safety**

**Security**

**While Abroad**

**Cross-Cultural Competency and Etiquette**

**Returning to Elms**

**Important Elms Contact Information**

**Appendix- Elms College Required Study Abroad Forms**

## **How to Use this Handbook**

We are delighted that you are interested in studying abroad with Elms. Study abroad is a wonderful way to learn more about other cultures, languages, and ultimately yourself.

Please read this guide carefully, as it contains information about your responsibilities as a program participant, and also highlights important information about preparing for travel, health, and safety.

We look forward to assisting you throughout your study abroad experience!

Happy Trails,

*Jami A. Brunelle*

Coordinator of International Programs &  
Latino Academic Success

## Study Abroad Checklist

### **I want to study abroad. What should I do first?**

#### ***2-3 semesters prior to study abroad experience:***

- Complete a Study Abroad Interest form
- Meet with the International Programs Coordinator & bring a copy of your Degree Audit
- Review this handbook and program-specific literature
- If you have a disability, make this known early so that you can work with the International Programs Office and Disability Services to find a program that will meet your needs
- Choose the program(s) to which you wish to apply

### **I know which program I want to apply for. What should I do next?**

#### ***1-2 semesters prior to study abroad experience:***

- Complete the program application
- Meet with the Financial Aid Office about financial aid opportunities. If you plan to use financial aid, make sure that you have completed the FAFSA by the required deadline.
- Apply for Nationally Recognized Study Abroad Scholarships, listed in this handbook if eligible.
- Meet with your primary advisor, bring a copy of your Degree Audit, & review your prospective study abroad program(s) with your advisor.
- Apply or renew your passport at least 4-5 months before your time abroad; you may need to allow more time if applying for a visa. Your passport must also be valid for at least six months *after* you return to the U.S.
- Inquire about student visa requirements with your study abroad program provider or leader. You can also find this information at <http://travel.state.gov> and the specific country's embassy website.
- Participate in the semester registration for students at Elms. The International Programs Office highly recommends that you register for classes at Elms College for the semester you plan to study abroad. This way if your study abroad plans don't work out you'll be registered for class at Elms. Once your study abroad acceptance is confirmed and you have secured your finances for your study abroad program, you will work with the Coordinator of International Programs to Add/Drop classes.
- Meet with Student Accounts. If you plan to use federal financial aid to fund your study abroad program, find out how and when a refund check will be given to you if applicable. This is a key step in the financial planning of your study abroad program.

### **I have been accepted to my program. What should I do next?**

#### ***1 semester prior to study abroad experience:***

- Meet with your financial aid again, if you have any further questions about your financial aid package.
- Meet with Student Accounts again, to confirm that you are all set to receive your refund check if applicable.
- Give a copy of your Study Abroad acceptance letter to Coordinator of International Programs, Financial Aid Office, Student Accounts, the Registrar's Office, and Residence Life if you live on-campus. Inform the offices what semester you plan to study abroad as well.
- Inform the Coordinator of International Programs when you have secured finances for your study abroad program and you feel confident with your decision to study abroad. The Coordinator of

International Programs will work with the Registrar's Office to drop the Elms courses you registered for and add study abroad credits if you are doing a fall or spring semester abroad.

- Complete the top half of a TRANSFER CREDIT Prior Approval Form. You will submit this form to the Coordinator of International Programs who will submit it to the Registrar's Office.
- Ask your study abroad provider to send a copy of your bill to the Bursar at Elms College, her email address is [balickis@elms.edu](mailto:balickis@elms.edu).
- Meet with your primary advisor, bring a copy of your Degree Audit and discuss how the potential courses offered by your host institution may fit into your degree audit and keep you on track to graduate on time.
- Complete all required Health Forms and make any necessary doctor appointments. Check for availability and legality of prescriptions you may need abroad.
- Check your current address in Blazernet. The address listed in Blazernet, is where all your Elms postal mail and Disbursement check will be sent during your time abroad. If needed, complete a CHANGE OF ADDRESS form with the Registrar's Office.
- If you live on-campus, contact Residence Life and let them know you will be studying abroad. If you are going abroad and plan to live on campus the following semester, inform Residence Life of your plans.
- Register your time abroad with the State Department; <https://step.state.gov/step/>
- Attend all pre-departure meetings and read information provided. Take this handbook and any other handouts given at your predeparture orientation. This handbook is also available on Elms Study Abroad website.
- Learn about your host country: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>
- If you plan to travel outside your study abroad country, DO research on visa requirements for the countries you plan to visit while you are studying abroad. You can also find this information at <http://travel.state.gov> and the specific country's embassy website.
- Notify your bank and credit cards of your travel dates & locations, so that use of your cards during your travels will not be flagged or blocked as suspicious activity. Inquire about fees or added costs that may be associated with using your credit card abroad.

### **I am studying abroad. What do I need to do?**

#### ***During semester abroad:***

- Check your Elms email often for information from the International Programs Office, Registrar's Office, Financial Aid, and other on-campus offices, or have it forwarded to an email account you will check regularly.
- Maintain full-time enrollment status in an approved study abroad program, which is equivalent of **15 Elms credits** or at least 12 Elms credits. If you are receiving financial aid, you must be enrolled in at least **6 credits for a summer program**.
- Complete the bottom half of the TRANSFER CREDIT Prior Approval Form, write in the classes you are taking on your study abroad program and get your primary advisor at Elms to sign it. The completed form needs to be submitted to the Coordinator of International Programs or to the Registrar's Office. **International Programs staff can't complete this form or sign this form on behalf of your advisor.**

- Be mindful that the maximum number of transfer credits that can be awarded each semester is 18 credits. Inquire how the host institution credits will transfer back to Elms with your study abroad program provider.
- Participate in the semester registration for students at Elms for the next semester. You will receive information about registration via email from the Registrar's Office.
- Contact your primary advisor and discuss your class registration with for the following semester.
- Contact the Financial Aid Office regarding your financial aid for the next semester.
- Contact Residence Life about your campus housing needs for the next semester, if applicable.
- Save syllabi and coursework samples if you need to seek post approval.
- Request that your study abroad program provider or host institution send an official copy of your transcript to the Registrar, Registrar's Office, Elms College, 291 Springfield Street, Chicopee, MA 01013, USA
- Keep a journal or blog.
- Take photos and share them with the International Programs Office.

### **I am back at Elms. What do I do?**

#### *When you **return to campus**:*

- Share your study abroad experience, stories, blogs, and pictures with the International Programs Office. They may be posted on the website or in printed materials. Future students want to hear firsthand about your experiences.
- Integrate your study abroad experience into your on-campus activities and academic studies.
- Remain in contact with friends you made during study abroad.
- Become involved in student organization focused in international or cultural activities.

## **Policies & Procedures**

### **Eligibility Requirements**

To be eligible to participate in a Study Abroad program, the minimum requirements are:

- Must be an Elms student OR have permission of the Elms Faculty Leader or International Programs
- Must be in good academic standing or have written permission of instructor to participate
- Must be in good disciplinary standing with your academic institution: Elms reserves the right to deny participation to a student with current or previous disciplinary sanctions or conduct violations. Meet all individual program prerequisites.

### **Student Academic & Conduct Responsibility**

Students who study abroad are responsible for attendance at all classes and scheduled activities. All Elms academic regulations apply while students participate in any type of study abroad program.

While you are abroad, you will be viewed as an unofficial ambassador of Elms College, the United States, and/or your country of citizenship; International Programs recommends that you act in a way that reflects positively of Elms and yourself. As a visiting student in a foreign country, you are subject to the laws of that country, and to the academic and disciplinary rules and regulations of the institution and/or study abroad program that you are engaged. You should act in a manner that is respectful of your host culture. As a participant of study abroad, understand that you are still considered an Elms student you are required to follow:

- The rules and regulations stated in the *Elms Student Handbook*, which can be found online at <http://www.elms.edu/Documents/StudentServices/12-13-Student-Handbook.pdf> including the Academic Policies and Conduct Standards
- All instructions presented by program leaders, faculty or staff members, whether written or oral
- All ground rules as covered in pre-orientation session(s), documents, or webpages
- Failure to comply with Elms Academic Policies and Conduct Standards and/or your Study Abroad Programs rules and regulations may result in disciplinary action. Elms College reserves the right to dismiss any participant from any study abroad programs for reasons of unacceptable behavior. Such dismissal will be without refund, and any expenses incurred for return transportation will be the responsibility of the student. Dismissal from an affiliated study abroad program may also result in academic or financial consequences, which are solely the student's responsibility. We strongly recommend that you should strive to be the best citizen diplomat possible throughout your time abroad, your actions do represent yourself, Elms, and our nation.

## Steps to Study Abroad

- **Complete Study Abroad Interest Form.** Think about where you'd like to go, when you'd like to go, and how long you'd like to go for. Meet with the Coordinator of International Programs to discuss Study Abroad options.
- **Contact Study Abroad program(s).** Ask questions or concerns you may have about your interested program. **Check the study abroad admission requirements and application deadlines for each program.** Be mindful of required supplementary application documents. *Ex: Transcripts, Letter of Recommendations, Proof of Language Proficiency, Passport Photo & application, etc.*
- **Meet with your Primary Advisor.** Share information about the study abroad program(s) you're interested in with your advisor. Review your degree audit to find a study abroad program that works best with your major and keeps you on track to graduate on time.
- **Meet with Financial Aid.** Find out what federal financial aid options are available when you study abroad. Please check out page 3 of this document for additional study abroad scholarship opportunities!
- **Stay in touch with the Coordinator of International Programs.** This person will serve as your Study Abroad Advisor and is available to help you throughout your study abroad experience- before, during, and after when you return to campus.

## Study Abroad Opportunities

### Elms Semester Exchange Programs

These are semester long study abroad exchange programs that are offered to Elms College students.

- **University of Kochi, Japan** Spend a semester in Kochi, Japan studying the language, history, and culture of Japan. This program is available to one Elms College student per year.

**Applications due: by December 1st.**

**For more information contact** Joyce Hampton- [hamptonj@elms.edu](mailto:hamptonj@elms.edu)

- **[University of Wales Trinity Saint David](#)** Spend a semester at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David's Carmarthen campus. This program is available to two Elms College students per year. <http://www.tsd.ac.uk/en/international/> **Applications due: April 15th.**  
**For more information contact** Tami A. Brunelle- [brunellet@elms.edu](mailto:brunellet@elms.edu)
- **[Irish American Scholars Program](#)** Spend one or two semesters at a university or college in Northern Ireland, **tuition free**. Three Elms students are nominated each year for this program. <http://www.accunet.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3771>  
**Applications due: Must be postmark by February 1st.**  
**For more information contact** Tami A. Brunelle- [brunellet@elms.edu](mailto:brunellet@elms.edu)

### **Elms Short-Term Programs**

These are study abroad opportunities that are directly offered by Elms College faculty. Typically these international travel trips are under 1 month and students pay a program fee. Programs offered vary from year to year.

- **Faculty Led Programs:** Elms College faculty lead and travel abroad with a small group of students. Any course(s) are taught by Elms faculty. Credits and grades earned are posted on students' Elms transcript.
- **Service Trips:** Involve volunteer work. This may include work with children and families, home visits, healthcare clinic, and light manual labor. Students can earn thirty hours of community service.
- **Application Process** In order to participate in a short term program, students must have a cumulative GPA of 2.5 as of the semester preceding application (or with approval from the vice president for academic affairs) and must have no record of aggressive or antisocial behavior. If a student has been the subject of any disciplinary action, a letter of clearance from student affairs must accompany the application. Decisions about participation are made on a "rolling admission" basis, and may include conversations with faculty or administrators in residence life and/or student affairs. Initial acceptance to all programs may be revoked at any time if a student's behavior before departure raises doubts about suitability to study or travel off campus.
- **Admission** Short term program faculty leaders will notify students about acceptance to programs. To participate, students must complete all forms and pay a non-refundable, non-transferable deposit to hold a place in a program. Each program may have different deadlines because of contract obligations. Please contact your Elms program leader for specific information about the program you're interested in.
- **Short Term Program Costs** Elms College strives to keep short term program fees as low as possible in order to encourage participation in short term program. The cost of each program includes tuition for coursework that is part of the experience. Students are responsible for deposit costs and making all payment deadlines in a timely manner. Many factors influence the cost of travel, including: location, length and timing, faculty, type of housing & meals, additional activities such as theater, museums, etc., and transportation. In general, costs range from \$1,000 to \$5,000.

### **Study Abroad Programs Providers**

These are study abroad program providers that Elms College is affiliated with and Elms students have gone on in the past. These providers offer semester, summer, and year- long programs with or without foreign language skills.

- **[Academic Programs International \(API\)](#)** Offers programs in Europe, Latin America and the Middle East for students.  
<http://www.apistudyabroad.com/>

- **[Arcadia University](http://www.arcadia.edu/abroad/index.html)** Offers more than 60 programs in 20 countries for students.  
<http://www.arcadia.edu/abroad/index.html>
- **[Council on International Educational Exchange \(CIEE\)](http://www.ciee.org/study-abroad/)** Offers programs in Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East for students.  
<http://www.ciee.org/study-abroad/>
- **[Spanish Studies Abroad The Center for Cross-Cultural Study](http://www.spanishstudies.org/OurPrograms-id-727.html)** Offers programs in Spain, Argentina, Cuba, and Puerto Rico.  
<http://www.spanishstudies.org/OurPrograms-id-727.html>

## Financial Aid

To be considered for financial aid, students need be enrolled full-time (the equivalent of 15 credits each semester or at least 12 credits) while abroad. For post-semester programs (January and May), each student must register for a course that will be completed with the off-campus study program in the semester **PRIOR** to the program dates. This is will maximize eligibility for financial aid. Students should plan to meet with financial aid several times before go on their study abroad experience. International Programs recommends that students meet with financial aid during their study abroad application process and again after they have been accepted into a study abroad program.

- **Complete a FAFSA if you have not done so for the academic year** The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) should be filed online by March 15th for each upcoming school year. An academic year begins with the fall semester and ends with the summer session. It takes approximately 1 month for aid to be processed after a FAFSA has been filed. If you haven't filed a FAFSA but want to apply for financial aid for a summer program, contact the Office of Financial Aid in Blow Hall.
- **Update Address** Check your current address in Blazernet. If needed, complete a CHANGE OF ADDRESS form with the Registrar's Office. The address listed in Blazernet, is where all your Elms postal mail and Disbursement check will be sent during your time abroad.
- **Financial Aid for Short Term Programs** Only those programs that include credit-bearing courses are eligible for financial aid. Service trips during school vacations are educational, but they are not eligible for financial aid. Students may receive some support for service travel from fund raising.

## Withdrawal from Study Abroad Programs

Students who want to withdraw from a study abroad program must do so in writing. Withdrawals will not be accepted over the phone or by e-mail. If a student withdraws after the deposit deadlines, any funds credited to the student's account are forfeited.

## Disbursement Process

Disbursement checks are "refunded" by Student Accounts to the student or guardian, whoever is responsible for paying tuition. Elms College does not pay study abroad programs providers such as **API, CIEE, etc.** directly. It is the responsibility of the student or guardian to their study abroad program provider directly.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Disbursements are made no earlier than the first day of classes for Elms academic semester calendar. For programs beginning after that date, disbursements will occur on the first day of

the study abroad program. Students should be prepared to pay fees, airfare, etc. before receiving their financial aid disbursements. Many study abroad providers will accept payment of program fees after the published deadline if you contact them and submit the appropriate paperwork confirming your financial aid package.

## Study Abroad Scholarship Opportunities

### Nationally Recognized Study Abroad Scholarships

- **[David L. Boren Scholarship](#)** Competitive scholarship that focuses on geographic areas, languages, and fields of study that are critical to U.S. national security, broadly defined, and underrepresented in study abroad. Intended for long-term study abroad and students commit to seek work in the federal government for a specified amount of time after graduation.
- **[Freeman-ASIA](#)** The primary goal of this scholarship is to increase the number of U.S. undergraduates who study abroad in East and Southeast Asia by providing students with the information and financial assistance they will need.
- **[Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship](#)** *For Pell Grant recipients only.* Preference for non-traditional students and non-traditional study abroad locations. Semester and summer scholarships available.
- **[George J. Mitchell Scholarship](#)** Competitive scholarship sponsored by the US-Ireland Alliance. It's is designed to introduce and connect generations of future American leaders to the island of Ireland, while recognizing and fostering intellectual achievement, leadership, and a commitment to community and public service.

### Study Abroad Program Providers Scholarships

- Each of the study abroad program providers that Elms is affiliated with offers their own scholarships for students going on their programs. For information regarding deadlines and specific scholarship application information, please visit their scholarship pages.

### Study Abroad Scholarship Search Engines

- **[DiversityAbroad.com](#)** For diverse students looking for funding.
- **[Institute of International Education Passport Study Abroad Funding](#)** This directory features detailed descriptions of hundreds of study abroad scholarships, fellowships, grants, and paid internships for U.S. undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate students, and professionals.
- **[Mobility International USA](#)** Provides tips for finding scholarships for students with cognitive, hearing, learning, mental health, physical, systemic, vision and other disabilities.

## Preparations for Study Abroad

### Passport

A valid passport is required for participation in and travel to all programs. Passport applications are available online at <https://www.usps.com/shop/apply-for-a-passport.htm>

**APPLY EARLY!** It's best to start your passport application sooner than later as it can take up two full months for processing. You can apply for your passport at most U.S. Postal Offices. The closest location

to Elms College is the Springfield Post Office at 1883 Main Street, Springfield, MA. (413) 731-0573.  
**Please call ahead before visiting to confirm hours of operation.**

An appointment to apply for a passport is **not** required at this Post Office location. Passport Photos can also be taken at Photography Shops, pharmacies or department stores with a photo shop as well.

You can also apply for your passport over the summer break as well. But, you will need to check with your local post offices to find out which one may offer passport processing hours.

If you need to get your passport quickly consult <http://travel.state.gov/passport> for information about expedited service. Additional fees will apply.

When you get your passport, please bring it by the International Programs Office so that I can make a copy of it to keep on file.

**Existing passport holders:** Note that your passport must be valid through 6 months from the ending program date. Check the expiration date and apply early for a renewal if necessary.

### **Visas**

A visa is an endorsement, usually a stamp or sticker, placed in the passport by the immigration authorities of the host country. The visa grants its bearer permission to enter the host country for the purpose stated.

### **Visas for U.S. Citizens**

Please check with your Elms faculty leader or study abroad program provider for information on entry requirements/visas. If you do need a visa, you will need to use your letter verifying your enrollment upon request. Specific directions on how to obtain a tourist visa will be available in the Program Specific Guide and also by visiting the U. S. Department of State Travel site at [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1765.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html).

### **Visas for Non-U.S. Citizens (Including Permanent Residents)**

Non-U.S. citizens (including permanent residents) will often need a visa, even if U.S. citizens do not. Please check specific entry requirements for your citizenship status with your study abroad program provider or by contacting the nearest Embassy/Consulate for your study abroad country.

### **Trip Cancellation Insurance**

International Programs strongly recommends that students purchase trip cancellation insurance. Depending on the policy, trip cancellation insurance may cover the cost of your airline ticket, lost luggage, or program fees in the event that you are unable to attend due to illness or an emergency. Ask your travel agent and/or insurance provider about trip cancellation insurance and policy coverage.

**Note:** In the past, students have said that they did not purchase trip cancellation insurance because they did not expect or intend to cancel. Do not avoid purchasing trip cancellation insurance for this reason! Every year students cancel due to unforeseen financial difficulties, new job opportunities, family emergencies, accidents, and illness. We cannot offer refunds or fee forgiveness outside of our refund schedule.

### **Money Matters**

There are a variety of ways to handle one's finances while abroad. Do not rely solely on one method. Bring local currency, a credit card, and an ATM card that will work in your destination.

## **Notify Bank and Credit Card Companies**

Confirm that your cards will work abroad. It is also wise to notify your credit card company and bank that you will be abroad so they don't freeze your account due to suspicious charges.

## **ATM Cards**

In most countries, ATM cards on the PLUS and CIRRUS networks may be used. Transactions will be given in local currency and will be withdrawn from your account at the current currency exchange rate. Most banks will carry an additional service charge for this type of transaction. Before departure, check with your bank to be sure the PIN is valid abroad. Review bank policies prior to departure to be sure you understand restrictions, fees, etc. **NEVER** carry your PIN with your card.

## **Credit Cards**

Credit cards are convenient and good to have in an emergency. To receive a cash advance, you will need to know a PIN number. Verify the PIN with your credit card company and inform them that you will withdrawal funds while traveling outside the U.S. Again, **NEVER** carry your PIN with your card.

Please consider the following:

- Will your ATM card and credit cards work abroad? Most do, but you should ask your study abroad leader or program provider about the usage of your ATM card abroad. Be sure you have a four-digit pin.
- Does your bank limit your daily access to funds? Most international ATMs have a daily limit.
- What kind of fees will be involved? Check with your bank and credit card company. Some companies have affiliation agreements with banks abroad that will allow you to access funds without paying a fee. Review policies prior to departure to be sure you understand restrictions, fees, etc.

## **Exchange Money**

International Programs suggests that you convert about \$100 into the local currency before you leave. Cash in local currency will allow you pay directly for transportation, meals, and small items until you get acquainted with the area, especially if you will be arriving to your destination at night when money exchange centers at airports will be closed.

## **Budget**

Learning how to budget your money while abroad will take some time and careful observation. The International Programs Office highly recommends that you have a budget and know what you can spend. Keep a daily expense account the first couple of weeks to be able to plan a budget for your entire stay, if you're going on a semester or academic year study abroad program. You will probably spend more money on arrival than at any other point. Be prepared. It will take time to learn where to get the best bargains.

Some small businesses may not accept debit or credit cards. It's a good idea to have some local currency available at all times. Returning or exchanging merchandise isn't commonly practiced abroad so be sure to ask in advance when making purchases.

Some programs include the cost of most meals or access to an equipped kitchen; others require that students purchase their own meals. Try to avoid eating out during the week; cooking for yourself and/or eating with your host family will save a lot of money for weekends, travel, souvenirs, etc. Avoid American restaurant franchises – they are more expensive. Try local food is usually more affordable and part of the study abroad experience!

In addition to daily personal expenses (such as meals, personal items, and local transportation), be sure to have a plan for emergency expenses including medical expenses or flight change requirements.

We also recommend researching costs in your host country by looking at travel information books and websites about your destination.

We highly carry your local student ID or International Student Identity Card (ISIC) with you, as many places offer students discounts or youth rates are available to anyone under the age of 26 in many countries. Don't forget t it never hurts to ask!

### **Exchange Rates and Value Added Taxes**

To plan and maintain your trip budget, it is extremely important to understand how much your dollar is worth abroad. Keep an eye on the exchange rate. Never exchange money outside of official banks or exchange offices. You can check exchange rates and currency conversions at <http://www.xe.com/ict>

Many locations charge a VAT or Value Added Tax that is not shown on the purchase price of goods and services. Be aware of and inquire about the fee before committing to your purchases.

## **Practical Packing Tips**

### **Baggage**

Careful consideration should be given to the size, weight, and maneuverability of baggage. Most airlines currently impose additional fees for bags weighing more than 50 pounds, and in some cases, similar restrictions apply to carry-on bags. Students are expected to carry their own luggage, so it is a good idea to pack a few days before the trip to experience the demands of moving with luggage. Remember the golden rule of packing: **Less is more.**

### **What to Bring**

- **Carry-on bag** suggested items: a change of clothes, all medications, basic toiletries, extra eye glasses or contact lenses, and information about your destination. All prescription medications should be in their original labeled container, with a prescription or letter from your physician if medications contain narcotics. All luggage, including carry-on bag, will be subject to search by security officials.
- Don't pack things that you can buy in your host country. You will be able to buy toiletries and school supplies almost anywhere. You don't need to weigh down your suitcase with bottles of your favorite shampoo. Be aware, however, that certain American favorites may not be sold abroad. Check the manufacturer's Web site for information regarding where their products are sold.
- Don't pack a lot of clothes. In most countries people wear clothing several times before washing it. You may buy clothes while you are abroad so you may want to save room in your suitcase.
- Some countries might require more culturally-sensitive clothing. Keep this in mind when packing and aim to buy more clothing once in your host country.
- Pack clothing that is versatile and sturdy. You'll want at least one set of nicer clothing for evenings out, but otherwise make sure your clothing can take a good hand washing. Good walking shoes or hiking boots are a must.
- Pack necessary prescription medicine, contraceptives, tampons, etc. Many of these items are not readily accessible abroad. Bring a copy of your prescription with the generic name of the drug in case you need to buy more.

- Pack some things from home. You'll want to have pictures of your home, family and friends. This will make a big difference when you get homesick. Also, bring some small gifts to give to friends and neighbors.

### **Important Documents Needed**

- Passport and visa, if applicable
- Photocopies of passport and visa
- Health insurance card
- Photocopies of airline tickets and flight itineraries
- Photocopies of health and travel insurance coverage
- Elms Study Abroad handbook
- Any Study Abroad Program information you received from your program
- Local currency , travelers checks, credit cards, ATM card
- List of Important Contact numbers in event of an emergency
- Photocopies of the travelers checks, credit card(s), ATM card for reporting lost or stolen cards and travelers checks.
- Money belt or neck wallet
- **International Student Identity Card (ISIC) *Optional suggestion***- The ISIC is the most widely accepted proof of student status internationally. It comes with basic health insurance coverage, travel insurance, and includes ISICConnect, a complete communication tool with both calling card and cell phone options. Additionally, the ISIC gives you access to the Student Travel Association's discounted rates & confirms your eligibility for student discounts in the countries you visit. This isn't required, but it's recommended that you check it out, depending on where you are going in the world. Do some research on the applicability of your ISIC to the country you are studying in or plan on traveling in. The value of the ISIC depends on where you are going and your interests abroad.

### **Gift Suggestions**

- Clothing and items such as pens, pencils, key chains with Elms logo.
- Cookbooks with American recipes (pancakes, chocolate chip-cookies, etc.)
- Non-perishable foods (maple syrup, peanut butter, etc.)
- Baseball caps
- CDs of American music (jazz, folk, pop, rock, etc.)
- Calendars or postcards with US scenery
- US-style paraphernalia (things from Disney World, Warner Brothers, NBA, NFL, etc.)
- Notepads with an American logo, or scenery

### **Items you can and can't bring back to the U.S.**

When packing for your return home, make sure that you do not bring items that are considered prohibited or illegal by the United States. Upon entry into the U.S. you may be subject to a search, even if you have nothing to declare. There are limits on the amount of alcohol, tobacco, and perfume you can bring back. You are responsible for knowing these limits. **Review U.S. Customs regulations online:**

- Know Before You Go! <http://www.customs.ustras.gov/xp/cgov/travel/>
- U.S. Customs Website <http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/home.xml>

## **Communication**

### **Keep in Touch with Elms College and most importantly International Programs**

Check your Elms email regularly! It will be your main source of communication with Elms campus or forward it to an email you check frequently.

### **Update Your Contact Information on Blazernet**

If your permanent phone number and/or mailing address has changed, complete a Change of Address Form with the Registrar's Office.

### **Keep in Touch with Family and Friends While Abroad**

Since communication options can vary dramatically from country to country, International Programs advises checking with Elms faculty leader or study abroad program for advice about what might be the best option for your particular program.

### **Make calls to the U.S. from Abroad**

Many U.S.-based long distance phone companies provide special services that make it easy for you to phone home from abroad. Some provide toll-free access numbers that connect with an operator in the U.S. Some provide the means to charge long distance calls to a credit card or to a third party. Some provide better long distance rates. Others provide access to emergency, medical, legal, translation, and entertainment information. Students are encouraged to investigate these options before departure and to shop for the best services and rates.

### **Global Cell Phones**

Most wireless providers will offer the option of international phone plans, and can unlock your phone for use abroad. There will be a cost, of course, and make sure you look into this before travel.

### **iPhones and other Smart Phones**

Turn your data service OFF before traveling abroad because it can be extremely expensive if you don't have an international data plan.

### **Phone Cards**

Many travel agencies and specific phone providers carry great options for phone cards. Check the rates available from your long distance provider. You can often buy phone cards in your host country.

### **Skype**

Skype is a computer program that you can download for free that allows you to talk (for free) on the phone over the Internet with anyone else who has Skype. Go to [www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com) to download the program. For an extra fee (as low as .02 cents/minute) you can enable your Skype to call land lines instead of just other computers. You will need a microphone and earphones so that you can talk to the person on the other line. Skype also includes a chat option for instant messaging.

### **Instant Messaging Systems**

Instant messaging systems are also a great free way to communicate with people back in the states. There are a ton of options for messaging systems from Gmail Instant Messenger to Yahoo Messenger. Just about every messaging program can be downloaded for free online.

### **Email**

Check your Elms email regularly! It will be your main source of communication with Elms campus or forward it to an email you check frequently.

### **Internet Access**

Computer and internet access varies by program.

### **Letters and Packages**

Letters and packages can take as long as one month to reach the intended address. It's best to use a courier service such as FedEx, UPS or DHL when sending packages to your host country. Be aware that items sent may be subject to taxes and import fees.

## **Health and Medical Care**

### **Immunizations**

It is your responsibility to obtain any necessary immunizations and health screenings for your study abroad experience. If you plan personal travel to other countries before, during, or after the program, it is also your responsibility to know which immunizations and medical tests are required. Health insurance may not cover the cost of travel immunizations. Please check with your health insurance provider to determine coverage.

You may need immunizations and health screenings specific to your program location and/or personal travel destinations. It may take a minimum of two months to complete all immunizations for your travel, so plan ahead. The Centers for Disease Control ([www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)) provides the most recent health information by country. Immunization requirements can change depending on prevailing health conditions, so please recheck those requirements with the CDC before beginning any round of immunizations. As each student's personal health situation differs, we recommend you consult with your personal physician or campus health services about the advisability of receiving certain medications and immunizations.

### **Prescription Medications and Over-the-Counter Medicine**

If you regularly take prescription medication, be sure to:

- Please meet with your doctor(s) for any advice or recommendations concerning your health while abroad. If your prescribing doctor advises against taking along a large supply of medication, he or she should provide a diagnosis/prescription describing the medication so that an abroad physician may fill the prescription properly. In some cases a physician may not fill a prescription provided by a U.S. doctor without doing an examination and confirming the diagnosis.
- Keep medications in the original prescription container and along with a letter from your physician. The letter should include a description of the problem, the dosage of medication (to assist medical personnel during an emergency), and the generic name(s) of medicine listed. Bring an adequate supply for the duration of your trip (provided it is not perishable).
- Consult the embassy pages of the countries you will visit before departing the U.S. to see which medications- prescriptions and over-the-counter medications you can bring into the country.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Some over-the-counter medications may not be available abroad, or may be sold under a different name. While many prescription medicines that require a prescription in the U.S. can be purchased over the counter in other countries, please be cautious. It cannot be guaranteed that the

same pharmaceutical standards have been used in preparation and/or storage of the prescription, and the medicine may not be up to the standards of the highly regulated U.S. pharmaceutical industry.

- Glasses or contact lenses, take an extra pair and the written prescription abroad. Take sufficient quantities of contact lens solution since it is not always readily available abroad.

### **Health Care Abroad**

The manner in which medical help is obtained, the way patients are treated, the conditions of abroad medical facilities, and how health care is afforded often are very different from US practice. Be prepared for the reality that US health-care values, assumptions, and methods are not universally practiced. Even the notions regarding the onset of illness or points at which expert attention is required will vary from country to country and from culture to culture. If you need a medical attention abroad, ask for a hospital or clinic with English-speaking doctors or staff so that you are better able to receive proper care.

Consider your physical and mental health and any special needs when choosing a program. Communicate any health requirements you have when applying for a program and making housing arrangements—allergies, psychological therapy, dietary requirements, and any other medical or special educational needs. Identifying your health issues prior to studying off campus will help you determine what resources will or will not be available while abroad. If you have questions about the resources available at your program site, please contact the International Programs Office.

### **Medical Emergencies**

In cases that require immediate medical attention, have someone call the paramedics right away. If you are not with your program/resident director, or Elms faculty leader, contact her/him as soon as possible. Give the health care provider your health insurance card. **PLEASE NOTE:** You may be responsible for paying for the total or a partial amount of your health care treatment at the time of service. After seeking treatment, you can submit the claim to your health insurance provider, but filing a claim doesn't mean that your claim will be covered by your insurance provider.

### **Tips to Stay Healthy**

Your general health can be compromised by travel. Staying healthy while abroad requires following many of the same good habits needed for staying healthy at home—with a few additional precautions.

### **Jetlag**

Airline travel is exhausting, especially when you compound it with a multiple-hour time difference. You are going to feel less than refreshed when you arrive in your program location. We recommend that you get as much daylight as possible when you arrive and go to bed according to local time so you can get yourself on a normal schedule as soon as possible.

### **Cultural Adjustment and Stress**

Living in a foreign environment can be exhilarating and at the same time, stressful. Adjusting to a new culture and/or communicating in a foreign language require flexibility and the ability to try and fail without much concern. While studying abroad, mild physical or psychological disorders that may be under control at home can be exacerbated under the additional stresses of adjusting to a new culture. If you are finding the adjustment period to be challenging, please let the program director or staff know.

### **Food and Water**

Expect that your diet will change while you are visiting your host country and prepare to be flexible in this area. Be sure to eat regular, well-balanced meals (and get plenty of rest). Vegetarians should be particularly aware that obtaining meals without meat or dairy products can be difficult—depending on your location.

To ensure food is hygienic, we recommend that you eat at established restaurants, not from street vendors, and that you purchase bottled water. Further, if you are in a country with untreated water, avoid “hidden” sources of potential untreated water, such as salads and uncooked vegetables and fruits.

### **AIDS and other Sexually-Transmitted Diseases (STDs)**

AIDS and STDs are serious health illnesses. Many countries abroad have been unsuccessful in adequately controlling some STDs. Lack of adequate protection in preventing contraction of AIDS and STDs could lead to serious complications. If you choose to be sexually active abroad, please be careful. Remember that the risk of contracting AIDS and STDs is very real. The CDC has a very informative site regarding precautions against contraction of AIDS and STDs at <http://www.cdc.gov/std/>

### **Health Advisories**

When traveling, you are advised to keep current on possible health problems in each country you plan to visit. The Traveler’s Health section of the Centers for Disease Control’s (CDC) website includes a section on “Staying Healthy During your Trip” that features destination-specific advice on topics ranging from insect bites to food and water safety. Gastrointestinal disorders, sore throats, and colds often occur more frequently in a foreign country than at home, particularly soon after arrival and may result from the change in climate, environment, diet, water, and personal habits.

Students may wish to obtain professional advice before departure and take along familiar medications. For more information, visit the “Safe Food and Water” section of the CDC site. In addition, the program orientation will advise students about specific local conditions and let students know whether they should avoid tap water, uncooked greens, or other foods.

### **Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO)**

It is the student’s responsibility to be aware of new health information regarding the locations to which they plan to travel. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) provide a wealth of information for the traveler.

#### **For more travel health information please visit the following website:**

- **U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC)** <https://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm>
- **World Health Organization (WHO)** <https://www.who.int/en/>

### **Safety**

Each student’s safety is very important to International Programs. Please take time to review our safety suggestions, be proactive and responsible for your safety while abroad. A good rule of thumb is if you wouldn’t do it in the U.S., don’t do it while outside the U.S.

### **Smart Travel Enrollment Program (STEP)**

The **Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)** is a free service provided by the U.S. State Department to U.S. citizens who are traveling to, or living in, a foreign country. STEP allows you to enter information about your upcoming term abroad so that the Department of State can better assist you in an emergency. STEP also allows American residing abroad to get routine information from the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. Please take a few moments to register for this service at <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>

### **Registration with Local Authorities**

In many countries, you will be required to register with the local police station upon arrival. Your program/resident director will inform you of local requirements, for semester or academic year study abroad students.

## **Important Contact Information**

As a precautionary measure, it's important to keep contact information for your program/resident director or Elms faculty leader, host family, roommates, loved ones in the U.S., Elms International Programs Office, Elms Campus Safety in one place so that you can access them quickly. Please be sure you provide the program/resident director with your local phone number and any travel itinerary if you are traveling over weekends or breaks in the event they need to contact you while you are traveling.

## **Emergency Procedures**

After a critical incident of any kind in your host country, please contact your program/resident director, or Elms faculty leader, the International Programs office, and your loved ones as soon as possible. If you cannot reach your program/resident director, or Elms faculty leader, please report your status to the International Programs. If calling collect, students will need to identify themselves as a Study Abroad program participant.

## **Safety Tips**

It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with your new host country and city. Preparation should begin before departure with independent reading about the host country and attendance at the pre-departure orientation.

Your safety abroad largely depends on using good judgment in your everyday decisions. For example, pedestrians in other nations do not have the same rights or respect that pedestrians in the USA do. In fact, the most common cause of injuries and death for students traveling abroad is traffic-related accidents. So be alert when using public or private transportation—and look both ways before crossing the street.

To learn more about health and safety for your specific destination, please consult the U.S. Department of State information below. U.S. Department of State Information

Review the safety and travel information provided by the U.S. Department of State's travel site at <http://www.travel.state.gov/travel>. You should also check the U.S. State Department status of any locations you plan to visit outside of the program.

## **Personal Safety Tips**

- Trust your instincts. If you ever feel uncomfortable remove yourself from the situation, immediately.
- Keep a low profile and try not to make yourself conspicuous by dress, speech, or behavior that might identify you as a target.
- Study a map before going out; once on the street, use a pocket-size guidebook to avoid looking like a tourist. The staff at your accommodations and your instructor can mark any dangerous areas on your map. Avoid going places alone and never go anywhere alone with a new acquaintance. If you must go out alone, avoid being out after dark and always **LEAVE A TRACE**. Leave a note or let someone know where you are going, with whom, when you expect to return, and what you are wearing.
- Look confident, even if you don't know where you are going.
- Avoid demonstrations, protest groups or other potentially volatile situations.
- Avoid high-risk activities.
- Be wary of suspicious persons loitering around your residence or persons following you.
- Do not allow strangers into your rooms / buildings.

- Keep your room locked.
- Be aware of local events and cultural differences. Doing so can help you avoid misunderstandings and/or confrontations.
- Never go out at night alone and do not invite casual acquaintances to your residence.

### **Host Country Laws**

Students are subject to the laws and penalties of their host country and are not protected by U.S. laws, which may be stricter, than the U.S. laws. Students should not assume they will be treated gently because you are an American. In many countries, you do not have the right of "innocence until proven guilty." Ignorance of local laws and foreign customs are not considered valid reasons for dismissal of criminal charges.

It is important that students learn about the local laws and regulations of their host country and obey them. Approximately 3,000 Americans are arrested abroad each year. One-third are arrested on drug charges. Many countries, you may not have the right to bail and you may be detained without formal charges against you. In addition, prison conditions in many countries can be extremely harsh and officials may not speak English.

If you become involved in a legal problem, immediately contact your Elms faculty leader, your program/resident director, and/or the International Programs Office. The International Programs Office can contact your emergency contacts and inform them of your situation. Please be aware, the International Programs Office won't be able to get you out of jail. If needed, citizens of the U.S. can contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for a list of lawyers. Citizens of other countries should contact their Embassy or consulate for possible assistance.

### **The U.S. Embassy or Consulate WILL:**

- Issue you a new passport or replace one that is lost/stolen.
- Contact the State Department at their expense for further instructions if you cannot verify your citizenship.
- Help you find medical or legal services in the case of an emergency and help notify friends or family members.
- Tell you what to do if something is stolen and have funds wired on your behalf, if necessary.

### **The U.S. Embassy or Consulate WILL NOT:**

- Give or lend money or cash checks.
- Serve as a travel agent or information bureau.
- Act as interpreters or couriers.
- Provide bail or get you out of jail.
- Arrange for free medical or legal services.

### **Alcohol**

You should never feel pressured into drinking more than you wish to drink (or engaging in any other potentially dangerous, illegal, or unhealthy personal behavior against your will) because you think you may offend another culture. Instead, find ways to say "no" that are not offensive. Usually a friendly but firm "no thank you" or hand-over-the-glass gesture does the job.

If you decide to drink and your drinking becomes disruptive or leads to a violation of your participant agreement, you can be expelled from the program. Also keep in mind that in most countries excessive drinking is not culturally accepted. The best advice is "Everything in moderation, nothing in excess."

## **Illegal Drugs**

Know the laws of your host country. In many other nations, the use of illegal drugs is punishable by severe penalties—including death. Illegal drug use is a violation of your participant contract and can be the cause for your dismissal from Elms College. If you are caught with illegal drugs, you are subject to local (not U.S.) laws.

For more information, read the U.S. Department of State's Travel webpage on Drugs Abroad: [http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/living/drugs/drugs\\_1237.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/living/drugs/drugs_1237.html).

## **Civil Unrest, Political Unrest, Acts of Terrorism and Natural Disasters**

International Programs tracks U.S. State Department Public Announcements and Travel Warnings and uses this information when advising students' study abroad endeavors. Should the political situation in your host country become volatile, we may cancel the program and ask everyone to return to the U.S. as quickly as possible.

If you are suddenly in or near a volatile situation, like a riot, or caught in severe environmental conditions (hurricane, earthquake, flood, etc.),

- Get to a safe location as quickly as possible.
- Treat any injuries or seek treatment for any injuries, as soon as possible.
- Follow emergency instructions given by your program leader.
- If you find yourself in a volatile situation or caught in a natural disaster, immediately contact your Elms faculty leader, your program/resident director, and/or Elms College Campus Safety 24/7: 001-413-265-2278. They will be able to contact the International Programs Staff on your behalf. The International Programs Office can contact your emergency contacts and inform them of your situation.

## **Sexual Harassment**

Cultural difference in interactions on romantic or sexual levels can be a problem area: some behaviors might be very inappropriate in the US, but considered perfectly acceptable in the culture in which you are living, and vice-versa. Some of the new behaviors will be relatively easy to adjust to, but others pose more of a problem. Sexual harassment is a particularly difficult area because of the extreme variance in acceptable behavior between cultures. Combined with the different social and legal responses to such behavior, sexual harassment when abroad can be a difficult scenario to deal with; fortunately there are ways to prevent or lessen the negative consequences.

In the United States many people believe that it is possible for a non-sexual relationship (i.e. friendship, companionship) to exist between men and women. However in many other cultures this belief can be just the opposite; stated simply it is difficult or impossible for non-sexual relationships to exist between men and women. Until one is fully aware of the cultural norms combined with the verbal and non-verbal clues that he or she is sending, one must be very mindful of the emotions and expectations that are evolving. In our society it is not uncommon to rebuff an unwanted sexual encounter by saying, "I'm seeing someone," or "I have a boyfriend/girlfriend." While the contextual clues for that type of statement are generally understood in the US to mean, "Leave me alone" or "I'm not interested," in another cultural context it might actually be understood as an encouraging response rather than a signal of discouragement. Clear, direct and unambiguous responses may be difficult for many Americans to deliver, but these strong responses are crucial for clear understanding in a cross-cultural situation. "I do not want to go out with you, please do not ask me again" is a much more direct and stronger way of expressing your true thoughts about the situation.

Informal resolution of your sexual harassment problem may be possible. You are encouraged to contact your Elms faculty leader, your program/resident director, to report any behaviors that you feel are sexually harassing. This person should be able to assist you in sorting out the situation in a culturally appropriate way. If your Elms faculty leader, your program/resident director is unable to assist you, please contact the International Programs Office, and we will assist you with this matter.

### **U.S. Department of State Travel Warning Policy**

However, the college recognizes the risks to safety and security of students engaging in such travel, particularly the risks outlined by the U.S. Department of State when it issues a Travel Warning. Travel Warnings are issued when long-term, protracted conditions that make a country dangerous or unstable lead the State Department to recommend that Americans avoid or consider the risk of travel to that country. A Travel Warning is also issued when the U.S. Government's ability to assist American citizens is constrained due to the closure of an embassy or consulate or because of a drawdown of its staff. The Travel Warning policy applies to all student study abroad opportunities offered or affiliated by Elms College. This policy establishes the circumstances under which student travel to countries subject to a U.S. State Department Travel Warning is permitted. Details can be found at:

[www.wm.edu/offices/compliance/policies/student travel to travel warning countries/index.php](http://www.wm.edu/offices/compliance/policies/student%20travel%20to%20travel%20warning%20countries/index.php)

## **Security**

Do not make a habit of carrying extra money and credit cards with you. If you are not planning on using them, leave them in a secure place. The same holds true for your personal documents: IDs, driver's license, passport, etc. Always have a copy of your passport with you, but the original documents should stay at your residence unless your host country's laws require you to carry the actual passport or you anticipate needing it (to change traveler's checks or check into a hotel, for instance). Choose carefully which documents you bring with you.

### **Secure Personal Property**

- Leave expensive items at home, locked up.
- Don't wear jewelry. If you must travel with expensive items (cameras, laptops) use them discreetly and secure them when you go out.
- Keep an eye on your valuables when traveling on overnight flights, buses, or trains. Put your valuables in a security waist pack (rather than leaving them in your stowed carry on) and wear it while sleeping. When you go to the restroom, take your purse/valuables with you.
- Wear your handbag, across your chest, instead of off your shoulder or arm. This makes it more difficult for pickpockets to take your bag.
- Carry only enough money on your person for that day's purchases. Keep all other funds in a safe & secure location.
- Do NOT go alone to withdraw money from an ATM or cash traveler's checks at a bank.
- Be alert when getting off a bus or train, or when riding escalators; that's when pickpockets tend to strike. Also be careful about people distracting you (asks for directions, bumps into you, grabs onto you) while someone else does the pickpocketing.
- Don't exit a taxi until you're sure you've arrived at your destination. Pay while still in the car so that you can be sure you've gotten the proper change.
- Carry just one credit card and photocopies of important documents. Divide money for small and larger purchases so you don't have to expose a wad of bills. Become familiar with foreign currency before you need to use it.

- Put your foot through carry-on bags, backpacks or purses you set on the floor of restaurants or other public areas; don't leave these items loose.
- Do not leave your bag at the table when returning to a buffet line or using the restroom at a restaurant.
- For additional protection, purchase a policy as part of your travel insurance to insure your possessions before departure.

## **While Abroad**

**Check Elms Email** often for information from the International Programs Office, Student Accounts, etc. or forward it to an email account you will check regularly.

### **Confirmation of Courses (Semester or Year Students Only)**

Soon after you have registered for your courses, you need to complete the bottom half of the TRANSFER CREDIT Prior Approval form. Write in the classes you are taking on your study abroad program and get your primary advisor at Elms to sign it. The completed form needs to be submitted to the Coordinator of International Programs or to the Registrar's Office. **International Programs staff can't complete this form or sign this form on behalf of your advisor.** If you do not complete this form, a hold will be placed on your student account, and you will be unable to participate in registration for students at Elms for the next semester.

### **Full-Time Course Load Requirement (Semester or Year Students Only)**

Undergraduate students studying abroad are required to take an equivalent full-time course load. A full course load is the equivalent of 15 Elms credits per semester, or at least 12 Elms credits per semester.

**Contact Financial Aid Office** about applying for financial aid next semester

**Contact Resident Life** if you want housing on-campus next semester

### **Don't forget to Pay Your Bills**

Have a plan in place so that your bills are paid (credit card, car insurance, etc.) while you are abroad. Either set up electronic payment or ask a trusted person to make payments while you are gone.

### **Culture Shock & Coping Strategies**

Culture shock may include some or all of the following symptoms: homesickness, boredom, withdrawal, loneliness, irritability, excessive sleep or inability to sleep, compulsive eating or drinking, not eating, stereotyping of host nationals, hostility towards host nationals, unexplained fits of weeping, and an inability to work effectively. Know that what you are feeling is a normal part of cultural adjustment. Varying degrees of these reactions are common, and will pass with time. Meanwhile, here are some strategies to help you cope with the symptoms of culture shock:

- Research customs and traditions of your host country. The more you understand your host culture, the smoother your transition will be.
- Accept that daily life will be different. Daily experiences like navigating public transportation and grocery shopping may seem uncomfortable and frustrating, but try to go with the flow and appreciate the differences.
- Embrace the difficult moments as learning experiences. This can be difficult, but we grow most in our moments of discomfort, so take time to reflect on what's bothering you.
- Try not to reinforce negative stereotypes of Americans. Many cultures consider Americans to be loud, obnoxious, presumptuous, and unable to drink sensibly. Observe how the locals interact with one

another, etiquette, rules, and dress codes. Blending in will make you feel more comfortable and less like an outsider.

- Talk to other students, your resident director, or the local staff at the host university about your feelings, but not to the extent of dwelling on them.
- Bring some of “home” with you, such as your favorite books, movies, and music, pictures of loved ones, your favorite recipe and non-perishable items you may need to create it. Be aware of custom regulations in your host country for bringing food.
- Make new friends! Try not to insulate yourself only with Americans.
- Be open to new experiences.
- Keep track of how you are feeling and what you are learning. You can do this by maintaining a journal or blog, corresponding with friends from home, using other media such as photography, drawing, or painting to express your feelings. Try to make this activity a regular part of your daily routine.
- Try to maintain important elements of your daily routine from home; if you exercise regularly, try to find a place where you can continue that regimen, etc.
- If you continue to struggle with cultural shock, talk with your resident director, program provider or international office staff member at your host university to find out what resources are available for you.

### **Living Arrangements**

Living arrangements for study abroad vary from residence halls, homestay, and apartments to such accommodation as the students arrange for themselves.

- **Residence hall:** A university residence or dormitory experience allows students to live and interact with students from the host country and often from students all over the world. Roommates may be either local students, other international students, or American Students. Residence halls overseas may be operated by the university, but are seldom physically on-campus in the same way as residence halls at Elms, and students have a short commute. Usually, dormitories are set up in a suite style where a group of students co-habit together. Each student has his or her own bedroom and share a common living room, kitchen, and bathroom. In some cases, students do have their own private bathroom. Meals may be provided by university dining hall or most students will have a “self-catering” accommodation which means they will go shopping and prepare their own meals in the dormitory.
- **Host family:** A homestay experience is the living arrangement that allows students to most fully experience the native culture, facilitating true immersion into the culture. If the host family does not speak English, the living situation demands total immersion in the language, which greatly improves the speed of language acquisition. Daily interactions with the host family (and their friends and relatives) let students learn countless cultural nuances. Many students develop very close relationships with their homestay families which last for many years following the study abroad experience. A homestay experience will allow for the great cultural immersion into the host country. Try always to be polite, respectful, and helpful. Here are some tips to keep in mind:
  - Take note and be respectful of your family’s customs, meal times, and hours.
  - Greet your host family upon arriving home & give salutations when leaving home.
  - Do not walk around in your bare feet if others do not. Wear shoes (if your host country’s customs allow), slippers, or flip-flops.

- Some cultures have specific customs about using certain rooms in the home, particularly in the kitchen. Make sure you understand and follow their rules.
  - Electricity and hot water can be very expensive and unreliable. Do not leave the lights on if you are not in the room and try not to take long showers. In many countries, using multiple electric items at the same time (hair dryer, laptop, etc.) will blow a fuse. In many countries, laundry is also expensive and done less frequently. Be sure to understand your options and family's customs.
  - In some cultures, it is not common to have guests over; people tend to socialize in cafes, bars, and restaurants. Make sure you ask permission to bring guests over to your host family's home, or simply agree to meet friends elsewhere.
  - Make the most of your time with your host family to practice the language, learn more about the culture, etc.
  - Be respectful of your family by letting them know where you are going and when you plan to return, especially if it is overnight, a weekend, or several days, or simply if you'll miss a meal.
  - Always leave your space in good order; it is considered a sign of great disrespect to leave beds unmade, clothes on the floor, the bathroom in disarray, etc.
- **Apartment/House:** Student arranged apartments and houses are less common for study abroad programs as usually housing accommodations are factored into the planning and experience. Living in an apartment or house may also be more isolating and there may not be as many opportunities for integrating into the host culture and college age peers.

### **Dealing with Personal/Family Tragedy While Abroad**

It is unlikely that your family will experience a tragedy while you are away. However, if such an event occurs, you may feel helpless and alone being so far away from home – that is not the case. Here are some ideas to help you during such a difficult time.

- Report the tragedy to your Resident Director or head of the International Office as soon as possible. They may be able to intercede on your behalf with faculty members or other administrative offices if necessary. They must know if you plan to return home for a short or extended stay.
- Contact the Office of International Programs Office, so that we know about the tragedy and to see how we may be able to assist you.
- Ask your Resident Director or International Office about counseling services that are available in your host community.
- Share with friends or your host family for support

### **Cross-Cultural Competency & Etiquette**

Be aware that appropriate behavior in the U.S. may not be considered acceptable in your host country. Did you know that eating while walking is taboo in Japan? That certain gestures that Americans use regularly are considered highly insulting in other cultures? Investigate the practices and norms of your destination culture before you depart so you don't accidentally offend anyone and so you don't come back with wrong assumptions about your host culture. More information on the customs and etiquette of your destination country will be covered in your pre-departure orientation.

#### **Etiquette**

Guest lecturers and special guides from the host country frequently speak to study abroad students. These professionals are our guests and should be treated with respect. Students should be attentive and should treat the learning environment as if it were a business meeting. Do not eat; do not listen to your

ipod; do not speak with other students or in any way disrespect these speakers. Your instructor will provide guidelines for dressing appropriately for special occasions.

### **Dancing/Night Clubs**

Americans (especially women) should be aware that foreigners can interpret some styles of American dance as being very sexual and crude. Some American dancing styles may bring unwanted attention and may give the person you are dancing with mixed messages about intimacy.

### **Harassment**

No student should have to deal with any type of abuse. If you are harassed or threatened in any way, please report the behavior to your program leader immediately. If you feel uncomfortable talking with your instructor, you can call or email International Programs, and we will try to help and/or put you in touch with other campus resources. We will maintain complete confidentiality.

### **Gender and Sexuality**

Students may be viewed according to the gender expectations of the host culture. As a result some students, particularly female and LGBTQI students, may find themselves the target of unwanted attention, discrimination, or harassment.

You are your own best resource in preparing to face a range of possible situations. Educate yourself about your host country's language, religion, customs, and appropriate dress. When living abroad, follow examples of culturally accepted dress and demeanor.

If you receive unwanted attention, try these tactics:

- Turn the conversation around by asking some questions. Bring up other subjects such as sports, food, or film. Use a gracious sense of humor, so that saying no can allow the other person to save face.
- If this tactic doesn't work, tell the other person very directly to stop. Be specific.
- Develop the skills necessary for assertive behavior.
- Give personal information only to people who can be trusted.
- Be aware and respectful of local values and customs.
- Don't go anywhere alone with a new acquaintance.
- In an extreme situation, appeal for help from local authorities.

### **LGBTQI Resources**

LGBTQI students should become educated about attitudes they can expect in their host country. Helpful online information for LGBTQI travelers is available from:

- **LGBTQI Students Abroad** <http://overseas.iu.edu/lesbigay/int.htm> or <http://overseas.iu.edu/lesbigay/int.htm>

## **Returning to Elms**

### **Reverse Culture Shock**

Be aware that you may also experience culture shock upon your return home; indeed, for many students this transition is more difficult than the adjustment to life abroad. For some students, this process begins even before leaving your host country. Feelings of loss are common, as you prepare to leave your friends and life abroad. Readjusting to life at home may be difficult, and you may feel isolated since people at home may not be able to relate to or express much interest in your experience. You may also

struggle with an idealized view of home, expecting everything to be exactly the same as when you left, which may not be a reality. It is also common to feel a loss of independence and to miss life abroad intensely.

If you experience reverse culture shock, it is important to remember that, in time, things will slowly fall back into place and you will feel more at home in your home country and at Elms. To ease your transition, look for ways to pursue your international interests and meet people who have had experiences similar to your own. Get involved in some of the many internationally focused clubs, organizations, and programs Elms has to offer.

Nevertheless, you may still find that you see things differently after studying abroad... which, in fact, is the purpose of the experience. Time you spend abroad, the people you meet, have the power to change and challenge your attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives; embrace these changes and find ways to integrate them into your life.

### **Get Involved**

Whether you have just returned to campus from time abroad or are looking forward to the day you study abroad, you can promote your own international education right here at Elms. We encourage you to get involved in some of the international opportunities offered at the college and meet others who share your passion for international education.

### **Share your Photos**

Once you've had a chance to unpack and readjust, choose your best photos to share with the International Programs Office will receive an email from the International Programs Office upon your return, inviting you to submit photos. Please label your photos and identify the location.

### **Final Transcripts**

Final transcripts must be received from the host institution before credits can be evaluated. Please arrange to have your final transcript sent to:

Frances Bliss, Registrar  
Elms College  
291 Springfield St.  
Chicopee, MA 01013 U.S.A.

Phone: 001 (413) 265-2462  
Email: blissf@elms.edu

If for any reason your host institution sends your transcript to your home address, do not open the envelope. Bring the transcript in the sealed envelope to the International Programs Office; we cannot accept opened transcripts. If the transcript has been opened, you will need to request a new transcript to be sent directly to the International Programs Office at the address above.

## **Important Elms Contact Information**

### **Directory of Campus Offices**

<http://www.elms.edu/about-elms/campus-information/campus-directory.xml>

### **International Programs Office**

Elms College  
291 Springfield St.  
Chicopee, MA 01013 U.S.A.

Phone: 001 (413) 265-2462  
Fax: 001 (413) 265-2466

**International Programs Staff**

Tami A. Brunelle, M.A. TESOL  
Coordinator of International Programs  
Phone: 001-413-265-2462  
Email: [brunellet@elms.edu](mailto:brunellet@elms.edu)

Joyce Hampton, Ed.D  
Associate Academic Dean of Student Success  
Phone: 001-413-265-2423  
Email: [hamptonj@elm.edu](mailto:hamptonj@elm.edu)

**Campus Operator:** 001-413-594-2761

**Campus Safety:** 001-413-265-2278

**Counseling Center:** 001-413-265-2275

**Financial Aid:** 001-413-265-2249

**Registrar's Office:** 001-413-265-2314

**Residence Life:** 001-413-265- 2461

**Student Accounts:** 001-413-265-2208

**Dean of Students:** 001-413-265-2210

**Appendix  
Forms**

**Educational Travel Application**

**Health Information**

**Acknowledgment of Risks and Release of Responsibility**

**Short Term Study Abroad Application**

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Permanent Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Numbers cell \_\_\_\_\_ home \_\_\_\_\_

Major/Year of Grad \_\_\_\_\_ Current GPA \_\_\_\_\_

To which program are you applying? \_\_\_\_\_

Briefly describe why you want to take part in this program.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been subject to disciplinary action at Elms College? \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, please explain

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # cell \_\_\_\_\_ home \_\_\_\_\_ work \_\_\_\_\_

All information provided is factually correct and honestly presented.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Study Abroad Health Information Form

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ First Name \_\_\_\_\_

Student ID # \_\_\_\_\_ Study Abroad Program \_\_\_\_\_

*Please answer all questions openly and honestly. While it may be difficult to share health information, completion of this form enables International Programs to obtain information regarding facilities available for study abroad students who have specific health concerns. Mild physical or psychological disorders can become serious under the stresses of life while studying abroad. It is important that Elms be made aware of any medical or emotional problem, past or current, which might affect you abroad.*

*This form is a confidential document and any and all information you provide will be disclosed only as necessary to provide for your health and well-being. The International Programs will do its best to assist you, but may not be able to accommodate all individual needs or circumstances. The information you provide WILL NOT preclude you, in any way, from studying abroad. The information may be helpful in the event you become injured or ill. All information will be kept confidential in accordance with HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability Accountability Act of 1996.) Visit [www.hhs.gov/policies/#hippa](http://www.hhs.gov/policies/#hippa) for more information*

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ 1. Are you generally in good physical condition? If no, explain.

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ 2. Have you ever been treated or are you currently being treated for any psychological or emotional problems? If yes, explain.

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ 3. Do you have any allergies? If yes, please describe allergy (i.e. foods, chemicals, bee stings, medicines, etc.), reactions, and treatments, if exposed.

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ 4. Are you taking any medications? If yes, please list the name of medication, how often taken, for what condition, and the approximate length of treatment. Please note that in some countries it is not possible to fill prescriptions written in the U.S. or sent through the mail.

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ 5. Have you had any major injuries, diseases, ailments, or operations in the past five years? If yes, please explain.

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ 6. Do you have any dietary restrictions, physical activity restrictions or a health condition (vegetarian, cardiac condition, or attention deficit disorder) that may require reasonable accommodations to fully participate in the study abroad program? If yes, explain.

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ 7. Is there any addition health, physical, or learning information that would be useful? If yes, please explain.

*I certify that I have read this authorization. I understand that by signing this form, I am confirming my authorization that Elms may use and/or disclose the protected health information described in this form to all persons and organizations, who would need to know. Furthermore, I certify that all of the responses made on this Health Information Form are true and accurate, and that I will notify the International Programs Office hereafter of any important changes in my health that occur prior to the start of the program.*

*I understand that the International Programs will do its best to accommodate my needs, although not all accommodations may be possible. I also understand that I cannot expect accommodations for those situations that I have not disclosed and that any false or inaccurate information may affect my program participation. I also understand that the cost of medical attention and ambulance are not the responsibility of Elms College, its employees, agents, representatives, teachers and/volunteers.*

Participant Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Acknowledgment of Risks and Release of Responsibility

**Elms College**  
**International Programs**  
291 Springfield Street  
Chicopee, MA 01013

Phone: 1-413-265-2462  
Fax: 1-413-265-2466  
E-mail: [brunellet@elms.edu](mailto:brunellet@elms.edu)

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ First Name \_\_\_\_\_

Student ID # \_\_\_\_\_ Program \_\_\_\_\_

Elms College offers students the opportunity to enroll in experiential learning programs. Certain risks to personal health and safety are associated with travel and residence in a different region or foreign country. You should not participate in a study abroad or travel program unless you are willing to accept the associated risks. Elms College cannot guarantee the health and safety of participants in a study abroad or travel program or eliminate all risks from such environments. Please read, sign and return this form before your program begins. Students who fail to return this form will not be allowed to participate in any travel program offered by Elms College.

- 
- I understand that there are certain risks associated with travel and residence in a different region or foreign country and that Elms College and its staff cannot control these risks.
  - I understand that these risks may include exposure to potentially serious health and safety hazards, including but not limited to: transportation accidents, storms, floods, earthquakes, and other natural disasters; infectious diseases, inadequate medical care, remote access to medical treatment; armed insurrections; and terrorist activities.
  - I understand that Elms College is not in a position to guarantee my personal health or safety during my participation in a study abroad or travel program.
  - I understand and hereby acknowledge that I assume all risks incurred by my participation in this program offered through Elms College.
  - In consideration of being allowed to enroll and participate in a study abroad or travel program, the undersigned hereby release Elms College, its Board of Trustees, officers, agents and employees from any and all claims arising out of or in any way connected with this program and the undersigned's participation in the program, including, but not limited to, the risks as outlined above.
  - I understand that it is a privilege to participate in a travel program and that I not only represent myself but also Elms College community. Therefore, I pledge to behave responsibly and follow all rules set forth by program directors.

Participant Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **Parental Consent (Required if student is under 18 years of age at beginning of program)**

The undersigned parent of legal guardian of the above-named student, a minor, hereby consents to the participation of said student in the study abroad or travel program named above, subject to the warnings stated above.

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_